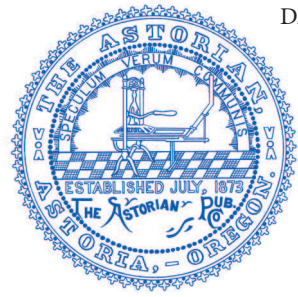


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OUR VIEW

Port is right to back away from cargo deal

So, let's see: A salesman knocks on the door and offers to sell you a case full of marvelous things, but he wants you to pay before he opens the case, and the price he is asking is far more than you have in your wallet.

Would you buy the case?

That's exactly the scenario entrepreneur Rece Bly put the Port of Astoria in with a proposal to develop a bulk terminal at the Port's leased dock space at North Tongue Point. The Port and Bly have gone back and forth with proposals and counter-proposals for months on a proposed contract that would compensate Bly for bringing an unspecified cargo to the dock facility located at the long-underutilized former U.S. Navy base east of Astoria. The Port's interest in the facility is for its access to both rail and a channel of the Columbia River.

The dock site is currently used only as a temporary location for Pacific Seafood Group, along with storage and work space for two ship-building and repair companies. The Port has entertained numerous development proposals since it leased the land in 2009, but none have come to fruition. Although the Tongue Point lease expires in 2019, there are extension options. Thus far, however, the Port and the Montana-based property owner have disagreed on a sale price. The Port contends the price should be far lower than the company wants because significant investment would be required to modernize the facilities.

In Bly's proposal, the Port would buy the land and upgrade the facilities and he would provide an unspecified cargo that would generate an estimated \$3 million annually for the Port. On the surface, it sounds attractive, and for a governmental entity struggling to generate revenue to cover its costs, it's almost like a description of a fabulous prize behind one of the curtains on a game show.

Bly wrote a white paper, an authoritative report on the proposal, and wants the Port to compensate him for it even though he has not identified what the cargo would be. Additionally, Bly has estimated the facilities upgrade and maintenance costs would be about \$100 million, while Jim Knight, the Port's executive director has said he has heard other estimates that run as high as \$1 billion. Bly's cost estimate would mean a minimum time for a return on investment would be 34 years, and if the higher costs are more accurate the Port more than likely would never achieve a positive return.

The costs and risks of this deal are far too high, and the Port was more likely to get zonked by choosing Door No. 3 than winning the wonderful prize.

It was right to walk away from this one.

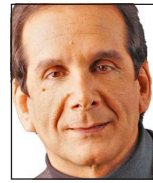
The Port was more likely to get zonked by choosing Door No. 3 than winning the wonderful prize



The stillborn legacy of Barack Obama

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — Only amid the most bizarre, most tawdry, most addictive election campaign in memory could the real story of 2016 be so effectively obliterated, namely, that with just four months left in the Obama presidency,



its two central pillars are collapsing before our eyes: domestically, its radical reform of American health care, aka Obamacare; and abroad, its radical reorientation of American foreign policy — disengagement marked by diplomacy and multilateralism.

Obamacare

On Monday, Bill Clinton called it “the craziest thing in the world.” And he was only talking about one crazy aspect of it — the impact on the consumer. Clinton pointed out that small business and hardworking employees (“out there busting it, sometimes 60 hours a week”) are “getting whacked ... their premiums doubled and their coverage cut in half.”

This, as the program's entire economic foundation is crumbling. More than half its nonprofit “co-ops” have gone bankrupt. Major health insurers like Aetna and UnitedHealthcare, having lost millions of dollars, are withdrawing from the exchanges. In one-third of the U.S., exchanges will have only one insurance provider. Premiums and deductibles are exploding. Even The New York Times blares “Ailing Obama Health Care Act May Have to Change to Survive.”

Young people, refusing to pay disproportionately to subsidize older and sicker patients, are not signing up. As the risk pool becomes increasingly unbalanced,

the death spiral accelerates. And the only way to save the system is with massive infusions of tax money.

What to do? The Democrats will eventually push to junk Obamacare for a full-fledged, government-run, single-payer system. Republicans will seek to junk it for a more market-based pre-Obamacare-like alternative. Either way, the singular domestic achievement of this presidency dies.

The Obama doctrine

The president's vision was to move away from a world where stability and “the success of liberty” (JFK, inaugural address) were anchored by American power and move toward a world ruled by universal norms, mutual obligation, international law and multilateral institutions. No more cowboy adventures, no more unilateralism, no more Guantanamo. We would ascend to the higher moral plane of diplomacy. Clean hands, clear conscience, “smart power.”

This blessed vision has just died a terrible death in Aleppo. Its unraveling was predicted and predictable, though it took fully two terms to unfold. This policy of pristine — and preening — disengagement from the grubby imperatives of realpolitik yielded Crimea, the South China Sea, the rise of the Islamic State, the return of Iran. And now the horror and the shame of Aleppo.

After endless concessions to Russian demands meant to protect and preserve the genocidal regime of Bashar Assad, last month we finally capitulated to a deal in which we essentially joined Russia in that objective. But such is Vladimir Putin's contempt for our president that he wouldn't stop there.

He blatantly violated his own cease-fire with an air campaign of such spectacular savagery — targeting hospitals, water pumping

stations and a humanitarian aid convoy — that even Barack Obama and John Kerry could no longer deny that Putin is seeking not compromise but conquest. And is prepared to kill everyone in rebel-held Aleppo to achieve it. Obama, left with no options — and astonishingly, having prepared none — looks on.

At the outset of the war, we could have bombed Assad's airfields and destroyed his aircraft, eliminating the regime's major strategic advantage — control of the air.

Five years later, we can't. Russia is there. Putin has just installed S-300 antiaircraft missiles near Tartus. Yet, none of the rebels have any air assets. This is a warning and deterrent to the only power that could do something — the United States.

Obama did nothing before. He will surely do nothing now. For Americans, the shame is palpable. Russia's annexation of Crimea may be an abstraction, but that stunned injured little boy in Aleppo is not.

Burial ground

“What is Aleppo?” famously asked Gary Johnson. Answer: The burial ground of the Obama fantasy of benign disengagement.

What's left of the Obama legacy? Even Democrats are running away from Obamacare. And who will defend his foreign policy of lofty speech and cynical abdication?

In 2014, Obama said, “Make no mistake: (My) policies are on the ballot.” Democrats were crushed in that midterm election.

This time around, Obama says, “My legacy's on the ballot.” If the 2016 campaign hadn't turned into a referendum on character — a battle fully personalized and ad hominem — the collapse of the Obama legacy would indeed be right now on the ballot. And his party would be 20 points behind.

Social intimacy for the avoidant in the internet age

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

Over the past generation there seems to have been a decline in the number of high-quality friendships.

In 1985, most Americans told pollsters that they had about three confidants, people with whom they could share everything. Today, the majority of people say they have about two. In 1985, 10 percent of Americans said they had no one to fully confide in, but by the start of this century 25 percent of Americans said that.

All of this has left people wondering if technology is making us lonelier. Instead of going over to the neighbor's house, are we sitting at home desperately surfing everybody else's perfect lives on Facebook?

Over the past decade, the best research has suggested that no, technology and social media are not making us lonelier. These things are tools. It's what you bring to

Facebook that matters. Socially engaged people use it to further engage; lonely people use it to mask loneliness.

As Stephen Marche put it in *The Atlantic* in 2012, “Using social media doesn't create new social networks; it just transfers established networks from one platform to another.”

Saturation level

But recently, people's views of social media have grown a bit darker. That's because we seem to be hitting some sort of saturation level. Being online isn't just something we do. It has become who we are, transforming the very nature of the self.

Earlier this year, Jacob Weisberg had a fine essay in *The New York Review of Books* reporting that, according to a British survey, we check our phones on average 221 times a day — about every 4.3 minutes.

A decade ago almost no one had a smartphone. Now the average American spends 5 1/2 hours a day with digital media, and the young spend far more time. A study of

female students at Baylor University found that they spent 10 hours a day on their phones.

A lot of this traffic is driven by the fear of missing out. Somebody may be posting something on Snapchat that you'd like to know about, so you'd better constantly be checking. The traffic is also driven by what the industry executives call “captology.” The apps generate small habitual behaviors, like swiping right or liking a post, that generate ephemeral dopamine bursts. Any second that you're feeling bored, lonely or anxious, you feel this deep hunger to open an app and get that burst.

A 'friend'

Last month, Andrew Sullivan published a moving and much-discussed essay in *New York* magazine titled “I Used to Be a Human Being” about what it's like to have your soul hollowed by the web.

“By rapidly substituting virtual reality for reality,” Sullivan wrote, “we are diminishing the scope of (intimate) interaction even as we multiply the number of people with whom we interact. We remove or

drastically filter all the information we might get by being with another person. We reduce them to some outlines — a Facebook ‘friend,’ an Instagram photo, a text message — in a controlled and sequestered world that exists largely free of the sudden eruptions or encumbrances of actual human interaction. We become each other's ‘contacts,’ efficient shadows of ourselves.”

At saturation level, social media reduces the amount of time people spend in uninterrupted solitude, the time when people can excavate and process their internal states. It encourages social multitasking: You're with the people you're with, but you're also monitoring the 6 billion other people who might be communicating something more interesting from far away. It flattens the range of emotional experiences.

As Louis C.K. put it in a TV appearance, “You never feel completely sad or completely happy. You just feel kinda satisfied with your products. And then you die.”

Perhaps phone addiction is making it harder to be the sort of person who is good at deep friendship. In lives that are already crowded and

stressful, it's easier to let banter crowd out emotional presence. There are a thousand ways online to divert with a joke or a happy face emoticon. You can have a day of happy touch points without any of the scary revelations, or the boring, awkward or uncontrollable moments that constitute actual intimacy.

When Montaigne was describing the accumulating intimacy he enjoyed with his best friend, he described an emotional interaction that was full and progressive: “It was not one special consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand; it was some mysterious quintessence of all this mixture which possessed itself of my will and led it to plunge and lose itself in his; which possessed his whole will and led it, with a similar hunger, and a like impulse, to plunge and lose itself in mine.”

When we're addicted to online life, every moment is fun and diverting, but the whole thing is profoundly unsatisfying. I guess a modern version of heroism is regaining control of social impulses, saying no to a thousand shallow contacts for the sake of a few daring plunges.