

**Stephen R. Soukup** Publisher  
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

**Mark L. Melcher** Editor  
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

## THEY SAID IT

The very idea of a discipline of history is regarded as disingenuous or hypocritical. Similarly, the idea of fact (the word now appears almost invariably in quotation marks) is derided, as are the ideas of truth, objectivity, and reality. What passes as history, like all forms of knowledge, is presumed to be a “construct” of the “hegemonic” class. There is no truth to be derived from history – not even partial, incremental, contingent truths. There is no objectivity – not even an approximation of it or any reason to strive toward it. There are not even any events – only “texts” to be interpreted in accord with the historian’s interest and disposition, just as the text of a poem may be an occasion for the free-floating imagination of the literary critic. It is in this spirit that all the humanities have been relativized, subjectified, “problematized” (as the deconstructionist say) – and thus politicized. For if there is no reality, no truth, no facts, no objectivity, then there are only will and power...

Out of postmodernism, with its suspicion of logic as “logocentric,” of reason as “phallogocentric,” of objectivity as “authoritarian,” there has emerged a new subjectivism – a new “personalism,” one might call it – that exalts the scholar’s own feelings, sensations, emotions, and private experiences.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, “Academic Advocates,” *Commentary*, September 1995.

## OBAMA, ISRAEL, AND AMERICAN EDUCATION.

In the nearly two weeks since Barack Obama described his “new” vision for the Middle East, a sort of loose consensus has emerged to explain the two most infamous aspects of that vision, which taken together have served to raise the question of whether he simply doesn’t understand the Israeli-Arab conflict, or, even more simply, wants it resolved to the detriment of the Israeli people.

The first these two components of Obama’s “vision” is his insistence that Israel must accept its pre-1967 borders as a precondition to negotiations, thereby compromising its security cushion and compelling the division of Jerusalem. And the second is his refusal specifically and explicitly to reject the Palestinian “right of return,” thusly calling into question the long-term sustainability of an unambiguously “Jewish” state.

So why would an American president – particularly one running for re-election in exceptionally difficult economic times – want to run the risk of alienating his nation’s only real, long-term ally in the Middle East, not to mention the millions of American Jews who have, on the whole, been loyal Democratic Party voters and among the most dedicated and prolific fundraisers for Democratic presidential candidates? Even Jimmy Carter – heretofore the most overtly anti-Israel American president – had enough sense to maintain the pretense of friendliness toward the Jewish state and, according to his unhappy Secretary of State Cyrus Vance,

Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842  
Phone 540.477.2696 Fax 540.477.3359 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

### In this Issue

Obama, Israel, and American Education.

A Superpower or a Welfare State.

hadn't intended to sell out Israel until *after* his re-election in 1980. What could possibly have moved Obama to do something so foolish, so galling, and so potentially perilous?

The answer, it seems – at least according to this loose consensus – is that the guy simply couldn't help himself. He is who he is. And who he is is someone who dislikes Israel rather intensely. In an astonishing and stirring defense of Israel and takedown of Obama, Walter Russell Meade – the James Clarke Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs at Bard College, a self-proclaimed “liberal” and an Obama voter last time around – put it this way:

As the stunning and overwhelming response to Prime Minister Netanyahu in Congress showed, Israel matters in American politics like almost no other country on earth. Well beyond the American Jewish and the Protestant fundamentalist communities, the people and the story of Israel stir some of the deepest and most mysterious reaches of the American soul. The idea of Jewish and Israeli exceptionalism is profoundly tied to the idea of American exceptionalism. The belief that God favors and protects Israel is connected to the idea that God favors and protects America.

It means more. The existence of Israel means that the God of the Bible is still watching out for the well-being of the human race. For many American Christians who are nothing like fundamentalists, the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land and their creation of a successful, democratic state after two thousand years of oppression and exile is a clear sign that the religion of the Bible can be trusted.

Being pro-Israel matters in American mass politics because the public mind believes at a deep level that to be pro-

Israel is to be pro-America and pro-faith. Substantial numbers of voters believe that politicians who don't ‘get’ Israel also don't ‘get’ America and don't ‘get’ God. Obama's political isolation on this issue, and the haste with which liberal Democrats like Nancy Pelosi left the embattled President to take the heat alone, testify to the pervasive sense in American politics that Israel is an American value. Said the Minority Leader to the Prime Minister: “I think it's clear that both sides of the Capitol believe you advance the cause of peace.”

President Obama probably understands this intellectually; he understands many things intellectually. But what he can't seem to do is to incorporate that knowledge into a politically sustainable line of policy. The deep American sense of connection to and, yes, love of Israel limits the flexibility of any administration. Again, the President seems to know that with his head. But he clearly had no idea what he was up against when Bibi Netanyahu came to town.

*The Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto followed up Meade's essay, concurring and adding that Obama's detachment from Israel is “of a piece” with his “evident detachment from his own country.” Taranto concludes:

Disesteem for Israel is rare in America, but it is concentrated in certain cultural pockets, the most notable of which is the academic left. Some of our friends on the right imagine that Obama is a secret jihadist or a hater like his erstwhile pastor. To put it charitably, we think this overexplains matters. The trouble with the president is simply that he spent too much time in the faculty lounge.

Now, long time readers will note that the principal argument here – that Obama is intellectually inclined to favor the academic fashions that are hostile to the West and specifically to America – is a familiar one. We have made it ourselves countless times. Indeed, nearly two years ago, in a piece titled “Post-Western Obama,” we said it this way: Obama has always been “associated, both personally and intellectually, with the strains of American leftism that have always tended to see the United States and its Western progenitors as forces for evil rather than good in the world, the pseudo-intellectual types whom the late Ambassador Kirkpatrick famously described as the ‘blame America first’ crowd.” We noted as well that “these intellectual strains have been all too evident in [his] foreign policy.”

All of this is to say that we agree, in large part, with the assessment offered by Meade, seconded by Taranto, and adopted by a great many on the right, and indeed across the political spectrum. At the same time, we think that there is a risk here of minimizing the prevalence of the type of intellectual flaccidity and arrogance that has produced in Obama this unshakeable belief that the cultural, philosophical, and political heritage of West – *notably including Israel* – is somehow deeply defective and must therefore be abandoned in favor of a more sophisticated cultural framework.

Meade argues that Obama is politically “isolated” on the issue, while Taranto notes that “disesteem for Israel is rare in America.” And while both may be true in a very narrow sense, the fundamentals that underpin Obama’s worldview and his distaste for Israel are far broader than either appears to admit – and growing broader all the time, which is to say that this isolation may be but a temporary phenomenon.

At its heart, Obama’s rebuff of Israel is an example of our ongoing “clash of moral codes” story, pitting the traditional, Judeo-Christian morality against what might be described, in short-hand, as a post-modern morality. (We’ll spare you another rehashing of this argument but will note that anyone who is interested can find several articles on it and its relevance in our archives at [www.thepoliticalforum.com](http://www.thepoliticalforum.com).) Additionally,

this is a cautionary tale about the transmission of this post-modern moral code from one generation to the next and from its fabricators to their charges. Or, to put it a little differently: this is also an education story.

While there is no question that Obama was exposed to the pathologies of the leftist intellectual establishment from an early age – being the son of a leftist anthropologist interested in “international development” – he is also the “victim” of America’s elite academic institutions and their proclivity to trade in faddish garbage and leftist intellectual drivel. This is not to dismiss entirely the establishments that Obama attended; they are, obviously and in many ways, precisely the institutions of excellence their reputations suggest. But it is to say that to certain students, of certain political proclivities, and with certain academic interests, these institutions can be far worse than merely useless. Indeed, they can be downright dangerous.

Obama was precisely the kind of enthusiastic and self-possessed kid who would tend to get excited about courses and professors who teach “intellectual” rebellion against tradition and who promise that this rebellion can “change the world.” Obama was also the kind of bright-enough-seeming student who, in turn, attracted the attention of those professors eager to have their egos stroked for developing a “new” and wondrous conception of “truth,” and who therefore cultivate student protégées. It is easy to imagine how Obama could have – despite his own lack of intellectual accomplishment or even capacity – become enmeshed in the intellectual and cultural milieu that dominates the humanities at many of this nation’s most prestigious universities, adopting as his own the philosophy and the moral code that predominate on the academic left.

Interestingly, as we thought this week about Obama and about his superficial preoccupation with the philosophy of the academic left, we discovered that we are hardly alone in believing that Obama’s education and connection with the academic leftists of the Ivy League not only shaped his personal political ideology but affect him and his presidency profoundly. Apparently, someone called James Kloppenberg has

just written a book titled *Reading Obama: Dreams, Hope, and the American Political Tradition* in which he makes precisely this argument. In his review of Kloppenberg's book, David Greenberg explains:

Kloppenbergs concludes that Obama, despite appearances, does have a clear political philosophy. Kloppenberg calls it pragmatism. By pragmatism, Kloppenberg explains, he does not mean "vulgar pragmatism," which he defines as "an instinctive hankering for what is possible in the short term"—a trait, it is worth noting, that all successful politicians need. When they possess it to the exclusion or betrayal of loftier principles—as some have, from Alcibiades to Nixon—we call this trait opportunism, expediency, spinelessness, or careerism. What Kloppenberg finds in Obama's writing, however, is emphatically not opportunism, but something more explicitly philosophical. He believes that Barack Obama belongs in the venerable strain of American thought that runs from William James and John Dewey to Richard Rorty and his disciples. This pragmatism deems ideas as valuable for their real-world utility and consequences: true ideas, it holds, are those that work. It rests on a commitment to experiment, a frank acknowledgment of human fallibility, an impatience with the search for a grander truth, a rejection of *a priori* absolutes . . .

Obama is a product, he explains, of elite universities, having attended Occidental, Columbia, and Harvard Law School in the 1980s and early 1990s. In these years the academy was in intellectual ferment, and in many disciplines—literature and history, politics and law—pragmatism was enjoying a revival. In earlier decades, pragmatism, with its radical

tolerance of uncertainty, had been on the outs intellectually; the times called for vital-center liberalism, a robust citadel of ideological conviction to gird the nation in its war of ideas against the fanaticisms of left and right. But as the Cold War urgency ebbed and liberalism came under fire, new ideas challenged the old axioms. Historians such as Gordon Wood directed scholars' attention to the traditions of civic republicanism, alongside Lockean liberalism, in American political culture. Legal scholars such as Frank Michelman and Cass Sunstein stressed the importance of republican values such as civic participation. Thomas Kuhn and Clifford Geertz influenced practically everyone with their arguments that meaning resides within historical and cultural contexts, not in timeless absolutes . . .

Kloppenbergs links his history of pragmatism to Obama by noting that precisely as the academy experienced its pragmatic revival, Obama came along as part of a generation of students seeking an alternative to Reaganite conservatism—and also hungry for something more fortifying than a ubiquitous but seemingly etiolated rights-based liberalism.

So Obama is a devotee of Dewey, eh? And of Richard Rorty. Who didn't know? Rorty, of course, is the intellectual heir to the likes of Nietzsche, Mill, and Rousseau, who devoted his life's work to continuing the process of undermining "absolutes" and the arbiters of absolutes, namely the Christian churches. Lionel Trilling called this "tradition" the "adversarial culture of the intellectuals," and Rorty, without question represents the most famous and venerated modern member of this culture. That Kloppenberg would conclude that Obama's "writings" reflect an

appreciation of Rorty's tenets is hardly surprising. As we said, we, among others on the right, have made such arguments before.

Of course, the difference between our take on this claim and Kloppenberg's is that we see this as a negative, as an indictment of the "elite universities" Obama attended and of the American humanities education establishment more broadly. Kloppenberg, by contrast, sees it as a positive; indeed, a glorious and wonderful thing, perhaps the most wonderful development in American politics in almost a century. And why is this? Because Kloppenberg is, as Greenberg notes, "a prominent intellectual historian at Harvard." Anyone surprised?

Kloppenbergr calls Obama's two auto-hagiographies "the most substantial books written by anyone elected president of the United States since Woodrow Wilson." On the one hand, this is preposterous, since it wildly exaggerates Obama's intellectual capabilities. On the other hand, the comparison to Wilson is telling in that Obama's belief in the relevance of his personal and intellectual philosophy to global and political events is undoubtedly the most inflated since the 28<sup>th</sup> President, though unlike Wilson, Obama lacks any actual intellectual *bona fides*.

In any case, it appears that Kloppenberg understands the roots of Obama's political philosophy quite well. He just doesn't understand that this philosophy is both shallow, particularly when adopted by a lightweight like Obama, and potentially dangerous, as Bibi Netanyahu and the rest of the Israelis are learning right now, as Obama "frees" himself from the fetters of "Western" chauvinism and instead embraces the pragmatism of social justice for the Palestinians – or some such jargony drivel.

Unfortunately, Kloppenberg is wrong if he thinks that this type of educational malpractice was limited to the "1980s and early 1990s" or is relegated exclusively to "elite universities." If anything, the intellectual demolition of the humanities has continued apace over the last quarter century and has spread nearly universally throughout higher education. As the great Harvey Mansfield put it just this week:

In this happy season of college graduations, students and parents will probably not be reflecting on the poor choices those students made in selecting their courses and majors. In colleges today, choice is in and requirements are out. Only the military academies, certain Great-Books colleges and MIT (and its like) want to tell students what they must study. Most colleges offer a cornucopia of choices, and most of the choices are bad.

The bad choices are more attractive because they are easy. Picking not quite at random, let's take sociology. That great American democrat Archie Bunker used to call his son-in-law "Meathead" for his fatuous opinions, and Meathead was a graduate student in sociology. A graduate student in sociology is one who didn't get his fill of jargonized wishful thinking as an undergraduate. Such a person will never fail to disappoint you. But sociology has close competitors in other social sciences (including mine, political science) and in the humanities . . .

Now the belief that there can be no knowledge of values means that all values are equally unsupported, which means that in the university all departments are equal. All courses are also equal; no requirements can be justified as fundamental or more important. Choice is king, except that there can be no king.

It's no wonder, then, that students make poor choices, avoiding difficult courses, stumbling into easy ones, embracing counterfeit majors. One might hope that with common sense they could learn from experience, but according to the fact-value distinction, experience cannot

be shown to give one better judgment. There is no “better” judgment. That’s what colleges teach their students these days.

Sadly, a recent report from the National Association of Scholars confirms that Mansfield is trying very hard to laugh about this – and to make us laugh – simply to keep himself and us from crying. Students really do have no requirements – or at least none of any real substance – that might help to prevent them from being indoctrinated rather than educated by the likes of James Kloppenberg. Certainly, they are not exposed to the types of books and essays that would allow them to experience the great traditions of Western civilization for themselves and to determine on their own whether these traditions are worth embracing or are, merely, the abstract constructs imposed upon society by rich and powerful white males. To wit:

In 1964, students studying the liberal arts and sciences at the most academically competitive colleges and universities in the United States often took a two semester sequence of courses on the history of Western Civilization. In our survey of 50 such colleges and universities, 20 percent of them required these courses. The rest of the institutions—80 percent—made students familiar with Western Civilization in some form, whether as part of general education distribution categories, Great Books surveys, or other required courses focused on cultural or intellectual history. By 2010, the picture had changed drastically at this cohort of fifty elite institutions. Courses on the history of Western Civilization are not now required at any of them, and are available in some form at only 32 percent.

Put another way, for much of the twentieth century the Western history survey course was the standard means

by which colleges and universities provided American undergraduates with a coherent narrative of their civilization’s rise. Now, this vehicle has been abandoned with nothing equivalent put in its place.

This is disturbing. It is frustrating. It is galling. But it is hardly surprising. We have written for the better part of two decades now about the damage being done to the educational system in this country by the so-called intellectual left. And the complete and utter abandonment of the Western Civ. legacy merely confirms our fears. Ironically – though again unsurprisingly – this did not happen by accident. The academic left knows full well that the best way to keep students from embracing the intellectual tradition of the West is to keep them from experiencing it. There is freedom to choose in academia, of course. Unless that choice involves choosing to embrace the traditional and eschew the post-modern.

What this means, ultimately, is that Obama may be “isolated” right now in his abandonment of the West’s consummate “progenitor,” Israel, but that’s merely a historical artifact. He is less isolated in the electorate at large than among his fellow politicians, largely because his fellow politicians are, for the most part, old enough to have received at least some semblance of a quality education, while many in the electorate – Obama’s much heralded “youth voters” – are just as ignorant and indoctrinated as he.

And it’s only going to get worse.

We’re not really in the business of giving advice to global leaders. And they’re not really in the business of taking advice from us. But if we could make one point to Prime Minister Netanyahu it would be this: take advantage of the situation you have now. The President may be against you. But today, he is alone. In the future, he – or his successors – will not be.

Such is the state of American politics. And American education.

## A SUPERPOWER OR A WELFARE STATE.

It has now been nearly three months since a “multi-nation” task force spearheaded by the United States, Great Britain, and France began bombing Libya in the hopes of aiding rebels fighting to “liberate” their country from longtime tyrant and terrorist Moammar Gadhafi. Over the course of these several weeks, the military commitment from the Western powers – NATO, specifically – has grown incrementally, as has its mission. NATO is now dedicated explicitly to the removal of Gadhafi and to replacing him with a new, presumably “better” government of some sort, though of what sort no one really knows.

But despite this amplified commitment, the Libyan rebellion remains hopelessly inert. The liberators can gain no traction against the dictator’s regime, and even NATO is proving woefully ineffective, which seems quite peculiar. After all, both Saddam Hussein and the Taliban were deposed in far less time than it’s taken to do nothing to Gadhafi, and both of those regimes were far stronger and far more deeply entrenched militarily. Gadhafi is a two-bit, tin-horn dictator who commands an “army” that is comprised principally of mercenaries and conscripts. His “strength,” such as it is, has always been his domestic secret police and a small but loyal collection of terrorist plug-uglies.

Of course, while NATO – meaning principally Britain and France – has increased its military participation, the United States has decreased its role concomitantly, which explains the results. For as much as one may think of “the West” as a militarily standardized band of allies who together defeated Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo and outlasted the Soviets, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is that the United States is, at this point in history, the only nation on the face of the earth capable of projecting military power globally. China can’t do it (yet). Russia certainly can’t do it. Iran can’t do it. And the once formidable “powers” of Europe can barely even pretend to do it. The Brits, who once governed and defended a global empire and who all but certainly possess the best trained, best equipped,

and strongest military in Europe, are incapable of deposing a defenseless lunatic in nearly three months, even with the help of all of Europe and a domestic insurgency. “Sad” doesn’t even begin to cut it.

Think we’re exaggerating about the Brits? We wish. As the military news site [hmforces.co.uk](http://hmforces.co.uk) reported nearly two months ago already, the Royal Air Force is stretched thin and becoming thinner every day that the Libya campaign continues:

Prime Minister David Cameron found himself under pressure from past and present military chiefs over cuts to the RAF, as he made a surprise visit to the base in Italy where British fighter jets operating against Gaddafi’s forces are based.

Mr Cameron went to announce four more Tornados would be deployed but left Britain to headlines about Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton calling for “more investment” in the RAF if it was to continue running the range of operations ministers demand.

Sir Stephen also warned the RAF was “stretched to breaking point”.

Stretched to the breaking point? Already? And The Mad Dog is just hanging around, dodging bombs. But then, maybe the French will get him. Oh dear . . .

Sadly, none of this should come as a surprise to anyone. It’s been nearly two decades since the world learned that the European contingent at NATO was not fit to play in the same sandbox with the American troops – or, to put it more accurately, since the world learned that NATO planes were not fit to be in the air with American planes over the Balkans. When, for example, American Captain Scott O’Grady’s F-16 was shot down by a Serbian missile in 1995, the culprit, it turned out, was a NATO Awacs plane, which did not have the technology that American Awacs have to warn O’Grady that he was being tracked by enemy

radar. The disparity between the American military capabilities and the European capabilities on display in the former Yugoslavia was shocking. As the military journalist Lawrence Kaplan recently reminded us:

In 1992, the foreign minister of Luxembourg, Jacques Poos, declared that “the hour of Europe” had arrived. The minister pronounced this falsehood in relation to the catastrophe in Bosnia, where, he assured, the reach of Luxembourg and that of its European neighbors would soon put an end to the slaughter. The hour of Europe stretched across three sickening years, culminating in the spectacle of Dutch troops cuffed to lampposts and ending only when an American column of 70-ton tanks from the First Armored Division crossed the Danube.

All of this is relevant today more than ever, though, because the American military, which is demonstrably the only thing that stands between global order and global chaos, is under attack – budgetary attack. And with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates leaving office this month, that attack is all but certain to grow more forceful and far more effective. This past Monday, Memorial Day, the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* summed up the current state of play as Gates prepares to leave the Pentagon and makes his farewell tour, begging for the Pentagon to be spared the budget-cutter’s knife that should rightfully and more effectively be used against entitlements alone. To wit:

On coming into office, the Obama Administration put the Pentagon on a fiscal diet—even as it foisted new European-sized entitlements on America, starting with \$2.6 trillion for ObamaCare. The White House proposed a \$553 billion defense budget for 2012, \$13 billion below what it projected last year. Through 2016, the Pentagon will see virtually zero growth in spending and will have to whittle down the Army and Marine Corps by 47,000

troops. The White House originally wanted deeper savings of up to \$150 billion.

Mr. Gates deserves credit for fighting off the worst White House instincts, but his biggest defeat was not getting a share of the stimulus. Instead he has cut or killed some \$350 billion worth of weapon programs. He told his four service chiefs last August to find \$100 billion in savings. The White House pocketed that and asked for another \$78 billion. Last year, Mr. Gates said that the Pentagon needs 2%-3% real budget growth merely to sustain what it’s doing now, but it could make do with 1%. The White House gave him 0%.

All of this, we should note, comes before any new proposals to cut defense spending, which will all but certainly accompany the debate to rein in the deficit and to reform entitlements. One thing you can count on for certain, when the right begins to discuss cutting entitlements and paring back the welfare state, the left will respond with calls to cut the “excessive” military budget. Never mind that this budget is, in terms of percentage of GDP, far below its post-war average, even after the post-9/11 buildup and even including the costs of Iraq and Afghanistan.

All of this, we should also note comes before Barack Obama gets to appoint his own Defense Secretary – his first – one of the principal job qualifications for which, we presume, will be his or her willingness to accept the budgetary directives of the White House.

Just under a year ago, our old friend and a professor of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Michael Mandelbaum, a Democrat by the way, published his most recent book, *The Frugal Superpower: America’s Global Leadership in a Cash Strapped Era*, in which he argues that the coming demography-induced entitlement crisis in this country will have a serious effect on American military and foreign policies, with devastating consequences for the rest of the world:

Because that foreign policy underwrites global stability and prosperity, the contraction of American power will adversely affect countries everywhere, even those that complain about the way the United States uses its power. The world will learn in the years ahead that one thing worse than an America that is too strong is an America that is too weak . . . .

The United States will have far less to spend on foreign policy because it will have to spend far more on other things. It has a large and growing national debt, which the measures designed to cope with the financial crisis and the deep recession that it worsened have substantially increased. Moreover, the costs of the country's principal entitlement programs, Social Security and Medicare, will soar in the decades ahead as the 75 million baby boomers—Americans born between 1946 and 1964—begin to retire and collect the benefits they have been promised . . . .

The American military presence around the world helps to support the global economy. American military deployments in Europe and East Asia help to keep order in regions populated by countries that are economically important and militarily powerful. The armed forces of the United States are crucial in checking the ambition of the radical government of Iran to dominate the oil-rich Middle East. For these reasons, the retreat of the United States risks making the world poorer and less secure, which means that the consequences of the economically-induced contraction of American foreign policy are all too likely to be anything but benign.

At the same time, the Iranians will continue their push to develop nuclear weapons and to ally themselves with various nuts throughout the world, including

Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. The Chinese, for their part, will continue to expand their own capabilities and to try to turn their regionally capable military into a globally capable force. In the wake of the bin Laden killing, the Pakistanis, apparently feeling vulnerable, offered to house another Chinese naval base at one of their ports. The Chinese rejected the offer, but the alliance between these two nuclear rogues continues to strengthen nonetheless.

What all of this means is that the purported leaders of the United States have some very serious and very important decisions to make in the coming months and years, and those decisions will impact literally hundreds of millions of people throughout the world for years and years to come.

No one wants the American military to be the world's policeman indefinitely. But at the same time, are we really prepared for the inevitable devolution into chaos and barbarism that will accompany American military decline? Increased American isolationism sounds well and good in theory, but we suspect it will be terribly messy and terribly bloody in practice. There simply is no one else that can do what the United States does. And the void America leaves when it withdraws will not be filled by "friendly" powers, who are demonstrating yet again their own inability to function independently.

*The Wall Street Journal* editorial on Defense Secretary Gates' farewell warnings was subtitled "America can be a superpower or a welfare state, but not both." The time for deciding which it will be is swiftly approaching and, unfortunately, we have little confidence that those who pass for leaders in this country will even ponder the "right" decision. It's too easy to do the wrong thing here and far too hard to do the right thing. As always.

Copyright 2011. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-2696, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable.

However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.