



'I feel so bad for his children. It must be quite embarrassing for them, and, you know, it's an irresponsible and pretty disgusting thing that he did, pretty much denying that he had a child for 10 years.'

SARAH PALIN ON ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER



GLOBAL JOURNALS

Money-eating monsters

THE US-led alliance of nations fighting to democratise Afghanistan has created a monster in funding (greasing the palms of) nefarious groups and individual warlords in the all-but-lawless country, according to Christopher Sims in *Standpoint*. "Non-state actors who perform their roles in a grey area of law" such as "Commander Ruhullah" were part of the monster. Ruhullah, who ruled over 600 armed guards and was the prototype of a "new class of warlord in Afghanistan" was "the single largest security provider for the US supply chain in Afghanistan and operates along Highway 1, the main transportation artery between Kabul and Kandahar". Afghanistan's multi-million-dollar opium trade was another arm to the monster. "The drugs network, vital to the insurgents, is a fundamental challenge to NATO: it links a number of shadow economies, propagates transnational movement and destabilises attempts to create security on the ground. The question now becomes: how do we defeat our own monster?"

Silvio par for the course

A RECENT poll by Italy's state-run TV and radio network RAI found 59 per cent of voters wanted to keep their playboy leader Silvio Berlusconi until the end of his government's term in 2013. After all the scandals that have damaged Mr Berlusconi, the office of prime minister and the very standing of the nation, why do they still want him, asks Roland Flamini in *World Affairs*. Pollster Renato Mannheimer cites two reasons: there is no practical alternative and voters see scandal as par for the course with Mr Berlusconi. Flamini offers a third: "Longevity. From 1945 to 1990, Italy had a succession of more than 60 governments, almost all of them coalitions and some lasting no more than a few months. The main government party in those years was the right-of-centre Christian Democrats. It had strong US backing, the main American objective being to stop the communists. To shut out the communists, the runner-up Christian Democrats cobbled together an endless series of often quarrelsome coalition governments with smaller parties, which would inevitably fall apart."

Taste for glorious bustards

THE ancient art/sport/occupation of falconry, practised in the Middle East and other regions for centuries, is placing in peril one of its most sought-after quarry, the Houbara bustard, a good eating bird that also sprouts an attractive stole of black-and-white feathers at breeding time, writes Meera Subramanian in *Bidoun*. "Houbara bustards have been virtually extinct in Arabia since the 1960s, and they are endangered across their full range, from China to the Canary Islands. The greatest threat to the Houbara remains man's desire to eat them." A ban imposed in the UAE in 1999 gave the bustards some respite. Abu Dhabi last year released into the wild 70 Houbara bustards bred in captivity. So how does a falconer partake in his cultural heritage? He travels to North Africa or Pakistan, the latter offering special dispensation to hunt the bustards on their southerly autumn migration. "One hunting party can spend \$US10 million to \$US20m in a single month of living in concert with the land. According to conservation officials, the hunts bag about 6000 Houbaras each year."



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MAN CRUSHES

A TEXAN school teacher has been given a rare interview with Vladimir Putin after writing on his blog that he had a "man crush" on the Russian PM, Britain's *The Daily Telegraph* reports.

Mr Putin sent an 8000-word response to Gayne Young's interview request after Mr Young, 42, used the website of *Outdoor Life*, a magazine for hunters and fishers, to declare his admiration for Mr Putin, who is frequently photographed in rugged outdoor scenes.

Mr Putin expressed his love for the novels of Ernest Hemingway and said that Russians and Americans had "a rather similar mentality".

In the interview's most thoughtful section, he reflected on human existence itself. "Despite all the achievements of civilisation," he wrote, "the human being is still one of the most vulnerable creatures on earth" — beset by crime, epidemics and natural disasters. "However, this is not a reason to hide away from life," added Mr Putin.

Mr Young, who teaches high school English, said: "I found a man that was more captivating than I expected. He had a self-deprecating humour and he was real and honest."

His next subject: Pippa Middleton.

AGENCIES

COMMON CURRENCY IS KILLING EUROPE

A revolution is about to sweep the zone

STEFAN AUER

THE common European currency is a failed project. The elaborate Ponzi scheme worth billions of euros is nearing its end.

One year on, having made commitments, guarantees and pledges in the realm of a trillion dollars, the EU is no closer to resolving the problems of the eurozone.

Following a secret meeting two weeks ago, the EU's finance ministers vehemently denied that they might have discussed the possibility of Greece leaving the eurozone.

They were either lying or — worse — are living in denial. What was true at the beginning of the crisis is becoming blindingly obvious one year on: the only way to rescue the European project is

to accept that the eurozone in its current form cannot survive. It is clear that Greece does not simply have a liquidity problem, but deeper structural problems that will not be solved through spending more taxpayers' money that no nation in Europe has.

The bailout of Greece was presented as being necessary in order to prevent contagion to other countries.

A year on, we have two more countries, Ireland and Portugal, dependent on other nations' taxpayers. The unfolding revolution in Spain is a foretaste of challenges to come.

What is ominous for the EU is less the intractable economic situation than its political repercussions. The failure of main-

stream parties to contemplate alternatives to policies that are not working means that the dissatisfied electorates in EU member states will have no other option but to support radical alternatives.

Germany's economy might be growing, but its confidence in carrying the rest of Europe is not. Last week, German Chancellor Angela Merkel berated the nations of southern Europe, suggesting they should work more, take fewer holidays and give up on their early retirement.

In fact, it turned out that she was factually incorrect: Germans have more holiday entitlements than Greeks. But this is beside the point.

Merkel's suggestion must sound hollow to millions of unemployed young people in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. Almost every second person in Spain under 25 is without a job.

Even official EU statistics show that the eurozone is a two-speed

The liberty and self-government of whole nations is now in question

economy. Thanks to a relatively low euro for Germany, its economy is growing — driven by exports.

Thanks to a stubbornly high euro for Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, their economies lag behind, registering declining or sluggish growth. Australia has its own problems with a two-speed economy, but they pale into insignificance when compared with Europe.

The major complication is that the discrepancies in wealth and life opportunities in Europe are not just divided territorially; they separate nations: if you are Finnish, German or Dutch you are doing OK right now. If you are Greek, Portuguese or Spanish your prospects are bleak.

The policies the EU and its key national leaders have pursued are failing, leading to more division rather than unity. Their aim, as Merkel postulated last year, was to ascertain the primacy of politics over markets.

As Friedrich Hayek understood better than anyone, one can defy the logic of free market only at the expense of liberty. And the liberty and self-government of whole nations is what is now in question.

A revolution is about to sweep Europe — or so the desperate young people in Spain and Greece might wish — but what its aims would look like is far from clear. European people no longer feel represented by their elites. And who would blame them?

What difference will it make whoever Portuguese end up voting for next month, when their fate is being decided in Brussels, Berlin, Paris and Frankfurt rather than their national capital. Is

Ireland more likely to regain control over its own destiny, led since March by Fiana Gael rather than Fiana Fail? And what of Greeks asked to accept painful reforms of their expensive welfare state with no prospects for any genuine improvement in their indebtedness and economic growth?

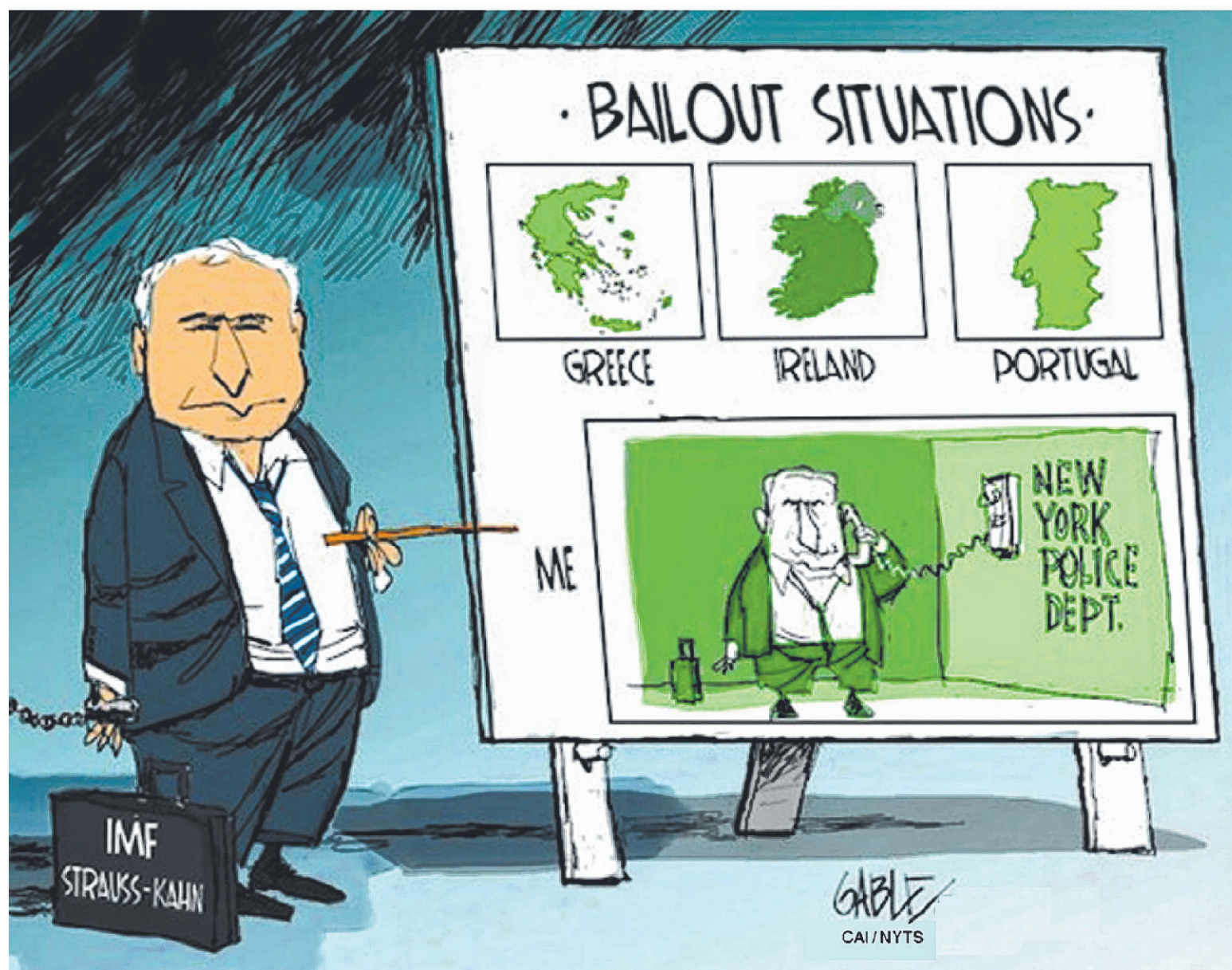
The party of "true Finns" might have a point, opposing all bailouts. Alas, these sentiments are not heeded. Are European elites waiting for the "true Germans" to speak out? We've had a foretaste of it and it wasn't pretty; the German Chancellor advising southern Europeans to work more and enjoy themselves less.

This is what you get in a continent-wide redistribution system that resembles a massive welfare state that nobody wants (and no one can afford to finance).

Mainstream politicians should do better than this. To rescue European integration they need to sacrifice the eurozone.

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GLOBAL CARTOON GABLE, THE GLOBE AND MAIL, TORONTO



LOVE MAY HURT, BUT IT BEATS OBESITY

Turns out mum and dad were right

KATHLEEN PARKER

ONCE upon a time, Ma would say, "Sit up and eat your vegetables." Pa said, "Don't talk with your mouth full." Other common utterances included "Go outside and play" and "After you finish your chores."

Families may not have been happier — and family dinners may have been daily rituals of tiny tortures (the ennu that passeth all understanding) — but then neither was "childhood obesity" part of the vernacular.

Fat kids (can we say that?) have always been among us, but obesity was not the plague it is today.

Nor was it necessary for the federal government to instruct families about how and what to eat.

We all knew the pyramid scheme of nutrition. I seem to remember it tacked to school bulletin boards, just beneath the portrait of George Washington.

This isn't nostalgia speaking. And, though I tried to provide family dinners most nights when the kids were small, I told my son

when he left for college: "You're gonna miss my takeout."

Then again, it's no mystery why kids are fatter these days or what is required to fix the problem. Eat less, move more, listen to your parents — if you can find them.

Hold the Nobel. Really. Bless Michelle Obama for trying to get the word out that eating vegetables and playing ball are, as Martha Stewart would put it, "good things". I'm as willing as anyone to be cynical about such insights — and hated nanny statism before it was cool. Yet the message is important and someone has to say it. Who better than the mother-in-chief?

But maternal advice is one thing and a government-enforced nutritional mandate is another. Trans fats are now outlawed in places; spuds in school lunches are the latest target. Personally, I wouldn't touch a trans fat if you wrapped it in gold and sprinkled it with diamonds, but this is because I can read, comprehend, digest, recall and

act on the free will allotted to all sentient adults. In the absence of willpower among some, should trans fats be forbidden to all? Where exactly does one stop drawing that little line?

The questions of when and whether the government should intervene in matters of personal taste are not harmless.

As government becomes more involved in health decisions, as inevitably will be the case under the Affordable Health Care Act, government necessarily will become more involved in personal nutrition issues.

The same strategy that created pariahs out of smokers is being aimed at people who eat unattractively. It isn't only that you're hurting yourself by eating too much of the wrong foods; you're hurting the rest of us by willfully contributing to your own poor health and therefore to the cost of public health. Fat is the new nicotine.

Once the number crunchers start quantifying the cost to society incurred by people who eat too much (\$US100 billion a year, according to one estimate), you can be sure that not-such-good-things are coming your way soon. Think Nurse Ratched in an apron. The stats are alarming, to

be sure, especially regarding children. The rate of childhood obesity has doubled for preschool children in the past three decades. About nine million children over the age of six are considered obese.

Thus it seems clear that the real solution to obesity isn't more government regulation, but more personal responsibility. I know, sheer genius. This now-dusty notion is the impetus behind the recently launched Together Counts campaign created by The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation, a coalition of 160 organisations.

Essentially, it's a private effort to encourage families to become healthier by spending more time exercising and eating together.

Once upon a time we called this "life", but we post-modernists need a little help with the basics. At minimum, we need a website: www.togethercounts.com.

Whatever works, I reckon, but, fuddy-duddily speaking, more chores and fewer gadgets — and married parents who torture their kids with rules — probably would do the trick as well.

As with most problems, the solution is family.

WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP

OBAMA TO TOAST HIS GAELIC ANCESTRY

The President wants to remind Irish American voters he is one of them

GILES WHITTELL

THERE are grand strategic reasons for most of US President Barack Obama's European stops this week. In London and Deauville, he will try to save the Arab Spring. In Poland, he will start building a new European missile shield. But in Ireland his most significant act will be a toast to his ancestors.

down in Dublin overnight at the start of a 22-hour visit added to his itinerary almost entirely for the benefit of the 37 million Irish Americans back home. There will be a set-piece speech on College Green in Dublin, but it will contain no policy statements. There will be meetings with President Mary McAleese and the Prime Minister or Taoiseach Enda

Kenny, for the President to thank the US for pursuing peace and riding the Irish debt crisis.

Wedged into the middle of the day will be the administration's most eagerly awaited photo opportunity of the entire six-day tour, when Obama visits Moneygall, the birthplace of his great-great-great-grandfather, sinks a pint of Guinness and reminds Irish American voters in swing states from Pennsylvania to Missouri that he is one of them.

With a poll bounce subsiding three weeks after Osama bin Laden's death, and unemployment at 9 per cent, every little helps in the campaign for a

second term. For all the artificial controversy over his Kenyan heritage, there is no doubt that Obama's ancestor, Falmouth Kearney, was born in what is now a hamlet of 298 souls and one pub.

"This guy really has one of the most authentic Irish ancestries that I have ever seen," Stella O'Leary, president of the Irish American Democrats, said last week.

Although senior advisers said the mood of the trip would be "celebratory", in private Obama is expected to express concern over the recent rise in violence in Northern Ireland.

THE TIMES

TIME PAKISTAN CALLED A HALT ON DOUBLE GAME

The country must back or reject the US

SANDEEP GOPALAN

A FOREIGN state stages a daring raid and kills the world's most wanted terrorist in his mansion a few kilometres from your version of West Point. The same foreign power conducts 240 drone strikes within your territory and kills as many as 2300 people. Are you still a sovereign state?

Sovereignty — evolved from its historical construct of supreme, exclusive authority over a territory into a much looser variant in a global economy — underpins the modern international system. Independent states interact on the basis of non-interference and mutual respect for borders.

Those raised on this idea encounter difficult puzzles: states frequently meddle in the internal affairs of other states and power rather than sovereignty seems to underpin international relations. Part of the explanation is that many sovereign states never possessed the true attributes of statehood.

Created after long battles for self-determination from the ashes of colonialism, they never had the capacity for delivering upon the demands of statehood.

Decades of ineffective governance for their internal constituents and weak engagement with external counterparts were inevitable.

The Cold War's balance of terror kept a lid on the worst consequences of such a moth-eaten statehood for the international community, but even then there were visible cracks — notably with Pakistan: its sovereignty over them was destroyed and Bangladesh was born just 24 years after its independence from the British at a mammoth humanitarian cost.

Today's problems in Somalia, Rwanda, Libya, Yemen, Syria, etc, are just the culmination of that phenomenon: sovereign but ultimately failed states spilling out their problems on to the world.

Pakistan is just another variant. And it protests loudly. On May 13, its parliament denounced the Abbottabad raid as a violation of sovereignty. Former military dictator Pervez Musharraf issued a condemnation immediately after Osama bin Laden's killing.

Yet the drone strikes continue. There have been at least four strikes since bin Laden's killing.

These are either being conducted with the agreement of the Pakistanis (as the US claims) or despite the objections of the Pakistani government. The first conclusion is more persuasive because of evidence about Musharraf and his successors facilitating the strikes and telling the US that their public protestations were purely for domestic consumption.

It is also supported by the billions of dollars in aid Pakistan continues to receive from the US.

Surely a state affronted by repeated contempt for its sovereignty and the killing of its citizens — some of whom might be innocents — on its soil would not continue to receive money from the state responsible for these actions?

Pakistan cannot have it both ways.

It must publicly record its position on the drone strikes and other anti-terrorist actions being undertaken within its territory.

If it consented to these actions, it deserves all the credit that

comes with each drone strike. Equally, it shares responsibility for botched operations and the costs of fighting terrorism. Pakistan cannot selectively take credit for killing terrorists and pass on blame to the US when things go wrong.

Publicly accepting that terrorists are being killed with its consent destroys the myth about the US occupying Pakistan and violating sovereignty.

If Pakistan consented, there is no violation of sovereignty and these actions are in discharge of its duty as a state to fight terrorists.

There is another reason to force the Pakistani establishment to pick sides: accountability to its own people. Sovereignty and statehood in the modern sense are deeply rooted in democratic accountability and consent of the governed. Pakistan's history, ruled for an overwhelming period since independence by military dictators, has cheated its people of any say in formulating foreign policy. This was tolerable for outsiders as long as the consequences of such exclusion were limited to its own borders.

That is not the case now. When Pakistanis choose terrorism after falling for the lie peddled by their rulers that the US is the villain, it is no longer just Pakistan's problem.

Forcing the government to make the drone strikes and the killing of bin Laden very much a

Pakistan cannot have it both ways. It must publicly record its position on the drone strikes

part of explicit Pakistani policy will require its people to engage with the consequences of such a choice. They might support these actions because Pakistan has paid a massive price for its misadventures with terrorist causes. Otherwise they might cause the government to withdraw co-operation to the US.

While this creates operational difficulties in the immediate term, there will be clarity about where Pakistan stands and the international community can adapt. Absent consent, the strikes might still not violate Pakistan's sovereignty. This is because Pakistan has repeatedly claimed that the tribal area — federally administered — which borders Afghanistan is ungovernable, with limited authority for its government. Accordingly, there might be some dispute as to whether this territory is within the sovereign authority of Pakistan at all, especially because the local population seems to have resisted throughout its history. With regard to bin Laden's killing, the location of his mansion and the time spent in Pakistan suggests that the country was unable or unwilling to arrest him and hence the US strike did not breach sovereignty under international law.

Pakistan's double game cannot continue at the world's expense. If they consent to US strikes, they must stop biting the hands that feed them. The Pakistani establishment must fess up to its people.

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