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Serious nonsense in America

Steve Bakke  August 24, 2021



Everything in our world seems upside down, or at least backwards. Thomas Paine, anonymous publisher of “Common Sense” in 1776, must have been similarly frustrated, yet hopeful, when writing “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

On bended knee in Afghanistan (*Humbly seeking permission from the Taliban to rescue stranded Americans – or I should say hostages.*) – President Biden suggested we have little national interest in Afghanistan. In fairness, President Trump initiated the drawdown which most Americans supported. But ultimately, there would have been no begging for permission coming from Trump. Trump’s withdrawal would have been controlled and secure. And we wouldn’t have made the Taliban a well-armed army by abandoning billions of dollars of weapons of war.

We’re giving up some advantages with full withdrawal. Our ground troops were involved in very little conflict. We were providing intelligence to the Afghan army, and our air support was crucial. Eliminating those enablers ensured the demise of the Afghan army. A relatively small contingent could have maintained the existing equilibrium had Trump never started the drawdown. Afghanistan will now revert to being a terrorist training ground and sanctuary.

We’re giving up access to Afghanistan’s plentiful natural resources such as copper, gold, natural gas, uranium, bauxite, and iron ore, among others. And perhaps the most important untapped resources are “rare earth metals” which are essential in most technology manufacturing. We are forfeiting that to the care of Iran and China.

Tragically, what’s happening in Afghanistan will follow us home.



Stumbling back into the Iran nuclear agreement – Wisely, Trump voided our involvement in that ill-advised deal in May 2018. Obama signed the deal but faced bipartisan opposition in the Senate, so no vote was taken, and the agreement never achieved treaty status.

We must remember that Iran never signed the agreement, making enforcement impossible. The claims of “verification” were fiction, and controls that were attempted left the U.S. out of the process. Iran’s missile technology development was permitted, and many unwritten side deals were struck. The agreement didn’t prevent nuclear proliferation. It delayed it.

Iran has renewed resolve to demand a new deal and the President seems inclined to pursue that if necessary. With our reputation of weakness, demise of geographic influence, and poor bargaining position, any thoughts of reentering the deal are unwise and foolish nonsense.

Stop or chase, a choice at the border – There’s nothing that makes more common sense than having a secure border wall. Democrats turned tail on prior support for a wall as soon as Trump chose border security as one of his biggest campaign promises.

Rather than just being a “barrier,” if controlling immigration is important, there’s no better way to provide order and control to the immigration process than having a border “wall.” Of course, it’s not just a physical wall, it also employs a significant amount of communication, video, and sensor technology.

Biden should have left in place Trump’s partially completed border wall.



Ignoring therapeutics – In April 2020 I wrote that drug development and approval protocols should exit “peacetime” mindset and enter pandemic “emergency mode.” That’s what we did for vaccine development, but what about therapeutics?

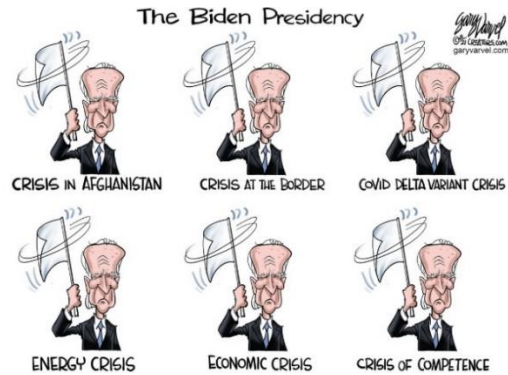
I had confidence in our ability to do things differently. We had the ability but not the inclination. The question of therapeutics was a political football. There were jokes, giggling, and finger pointing, but little serious thought. Ham-handed handling prevailed on all sides.

A war was fought against many promising therapeutic drugs. You know those names.

We all recall the discouraging pandemic reports coming out of India. Eventually, India’s aggressive use of off-label therapeutics resulted in far fewer per-capita death counts than in the U.S., and they are now reaching herd immunity. All that with only about a 10% vaccination rate. The U.S. lost lives unnecessarily.



The “new math” is all about lowering the bar – Critical Race Theory (CRT) is attracting attention with its impact on public-school education. Leading the “nonsense competition” is its impact on mathematics curricula. CRT’s “equity” goal is gaining support in math education. The problem was that certain minority math performance was deteriorating relative to other racial groups.



To qualify as “antiracist,” education policies must create equity, but not necessarily by improving performance. Oregon partnered in “ethnomathematics” training to aid in “dismantling racism in mathematics.” Teachers are taught that “white supremacy manifests itself in the focus on finding the right answer.”

Soon thereafter, Oregon’s Governor Brown signed trial 3-year trial legislation removing a requirement to show proficiency in Essential Learning Skills (reading, writing, and math) as a condition of receiving a high school diploma.”

I guess there’s no inequity if you don’t measure results. Are we abandoning standards to create “pretend equity”? Are we “dumbing down” parts of our education system?

All of this adds up to the fact that our adversaries are encouraged by our recent weak performance. Our allies are disappointed. Our leadership is exhibiting weakness and uncertainty in many areas. We seem willing to walk away from some good situations. Evil has gained significant ground in recent months. Simply put, common sense is tragically disappearing!