

WORLD NEWS

CHINA'S WORLD | By Andrew Browne

Skeptical of Chinese Innovation? Meet Jack Ma



BEIJING— After revolutionizing e-commerce in China, Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. may end up becoming the world's biggest stock-market listing.

Now's a good time to bury the myth that China can't innovate.

Skeptics abound. Alibaba, they note, was an e-commerce idea borrowed from companies like Amazon.com Inc. and eBay Inc.

common in China, that's often underrated but nonetheless groundbreaking. Alibaba has 80% of the e-commerce market in China and Baidu a similar share of search.

They figured out a way to dominate their markets by adapting existing technologies and business models. That's not the same as invention.

Alibaba's online shopping platform, Taobao, is a classic case. The American business model stood little chance in China because few people had faith in the Internet to protect their credit card details, or in merchants to deliver the promised goods.

Alibaba came up with "the architecture of trust which allowed e-commerce to thrive in China," says Duncan Clark, the chairman of BDA, a Beijing-based business consultancy.

at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel last week as investors lined up around the block to catch a glimpse of Mr. Ma ahead of an IPO expected to raise as much as \$25 billion.

"We now think of innovation as a big bang. But it's not," says George Yip, a co-director of the Centre on China Innovation at the China Europe International Business School in Shanghai.

It relies on armies of low-paid scientists and technicians who focus on small improvements to products: fractionally quieter air conditioners; fridge drawers more conveniently

sized and arranged. It's plodding, unglamorous work. But, over time, it can unlock enormous value.

Of course, China has the incomparable advantage of scale with a domestic market of 1.3 billion people and the world's biggest export machine.

And Chinese government protection for national champions helps, too. The online space is particularly cosseted. Foreigners are prohibited from owning Internet companies, and must work through local partners.

Still, the number of Chinese global success stories like Ali-

baba is small. And there are many failures. "Whenever China tries to go big and be revolutionary, they almost always fail," says Scott Kennedy, director of the Research Center for Chinese Politics & Business at Indiana University.

But incremental invention creates its own virtuous cycle: The profits it generates can be plowed back into research and development or used to buy global cutting-edge companies.

Besides, innovation that simply makes products more affordable and accessible can be revolutionary, too.

Beyond Alibaba: Rising Internet Stars

Continued from Page One nearly three billion Internet users are in Asia, according to the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations information-technology agency.

like Google outside of Asia. Their innovations also are seen as more practical than groundbreaking. For example, Tencent's mobile instant-messaging service WeChat (called "Weixin" in China), which has about 440 million users, is also used as a platform to sell goods, helping Tencent generate far more revenue than larger rival WhatsApp Inc., which has about

So far, the formula has been highly profitable. Tencent's profit margin in the second quarter was 32%, compared with 27% at Facebook and 21% at Google. Tencent's stock-market value is \$148 billion, compared with Facebook's \$194 billion.

Last year, Japanese messaging app Line Corp. had revenue of \$323 million from mobile games, sales of cutesy emoticons and advertising—or 16 times the estimated revenue of WhatsApp. Success will force at least some of Asia's strongest Internet firms to become more ambitious elsewhere, says Takeshi Idezawa, Line's chief operating officer.

Line is preparing for a possible initial stock offering in New York or Tokyo. "I do think we are at a turning point," Mr. Idezawa says of Internet companies in Asia.

Rakuten Inc., Japan's biggest online-shopping site, is so determined to expand in other coun-

tries that it has required since 2012 that all in-house meetings and memos be in English.

Last week, Rakuten said it would buy U.S. online-coupon website Ebates Inc. for about \$1 billion. Rakuten has said it hopes to increase its business outside Japan to about 50% of sales from the current 10%. Ebates was Rakuten's third big purchase of a non-Japanese firm so far this year.

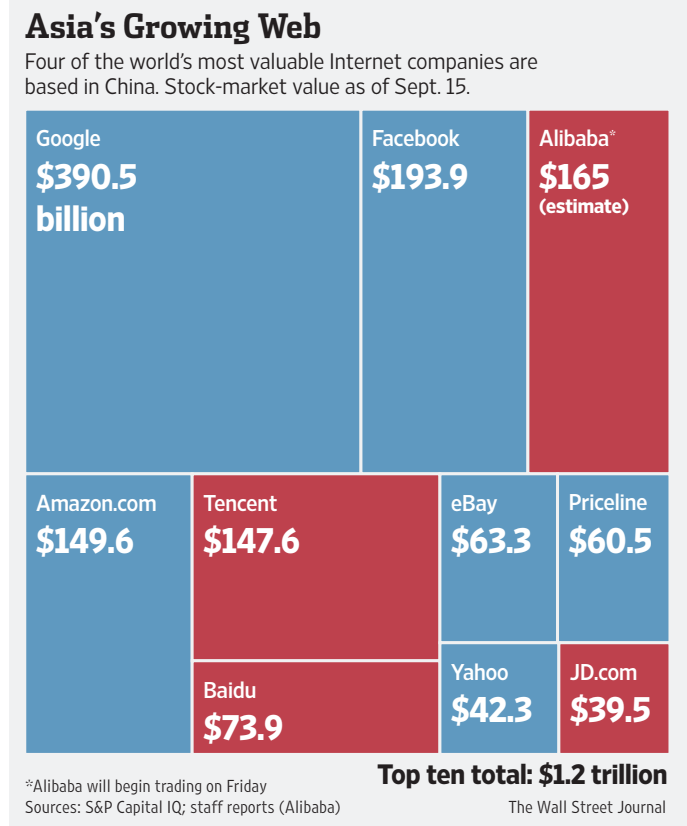
Baidu has a 79% market share of the Internet search business in China, but is barely a blip elsewhere. Baidu's search engine in Japan has gained little traction. In July, Baidu launched a search engine for Brazil, and the company is considering expanding into Egypt and Thailand.

In a sign of growing interest in Silicon Valley, Baidu is spending \$300 million to build an artificial-intelligence research center there. It will be run by Andrew Ng, the former chief of Stanford University's artificial-intelligence lab.

Tencent has bought stakes in two large U.S. game makers as part of its push to bring popular games into China. The company's international expansion beyond China consists largely of WeChat, which has been downloaded more than 100 million times outside the country.

Seven of this year's 10 biggest Internet acquisitions by value were made by Asian firms, with Alibaba and Tencent spending a total of more than \$11 billion, according to Dealogic.

Alibaba founder and Executive Chairman Jack Ma said Monday that the Chinese e-commerce firm plans to expand aggressively in the U.S. and European markets after its stock sale. In an earlier



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ISIS Cruelty Deserves Our Strongest Condemnation

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Any form of violence against innocent civilians or persecution of minorities contradicts the principles of the Qur'an and the tradition of our Prophet (upon whom be peace and blessings). ISIS members are either completely ignorant about the faith they proclaim, or their actions are designed to serve individual interests or those of their political masters.

I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased in Iraq and Syria, and to the families of James Foley, Steven Sotloff and David Haines. May God give them strength, patience and perseverance, and alleviate their suffering. I also pray for the immediate and safe release of hostages and ask God, the Merciful, to lead us all toward mutual respect and peace.

Fethullah Gulen Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate

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Fethullah Gulen's original August 22 statement on ISIS is available at www.afsv.org.

Who Ordered 770 Pounds of Frozen Squid?



Scientists in Wellington, New Zealand, on Tuesday examined a colossal female squid, weighing 770 pounds and thought to be only the second

intact specimen ever found. Some 142,000 people streamed online footage of the exam. The squid was caught in Antarctica's Ross Sea and had

been frozen for eight months until scientists thawed out the animal to inspect it—once they used a forklift to maneuver it into a tank. —Associated Press

WORLD WATCH

FRANCE HOLLANDE'S GOVERNMENT SURVIVES CONFIDENCE VOTE

President François Hollande's government survived a confidence vote in Parliament on Tuesday, but failed to garner a margin of support large enough to create momentum for his shift toward pro-business policies.

In a vote of 269 to 244, the lower house of France's Parliament supported a government that Mr. Hollande hastily assembled in August. But support for Mr. Hollande was hampered by abstentions and no-shows that left his government 20 votes short of an absolute majority of the 577-seat assembly.

The failure to secure a strong majority risks undercutting Mr. Hollande's pivot toward business-friendly policies. —Stacy Meichtry

GERMANY PROSECUTORS CHARGE MAN IN NAZI CAMP ATROCITIES

Prosecutors in Germany have charged a 93-year-old man with at least 300,000 counts of accessory to murder while a member of Adolf Hitler's SS unit at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Prosecutors accuse Oskar Gröning from Lower Saxony of having collected money from Nazi victims' luggage on their arrival, which he turned over to SS headquarters in Berlin.

In 2005, Mr. Gröning described to the magazine Der Spiegel his role as tallying money seized from victims, most of them Jewish, but said he didn't commit any crimes. —Harriet Torry

VIETNAM ADOPTIONS BY AMERICANS TO RESUME AFTER 6 YEARS

Americans will be allowed to adopt from Vietnam again after a six-year break. Vietnam's Ministry of Justice on Tuesday said only children with special needs, children aged 5 and older, and ones with biological siblings will be available for U.S. adoptions.

—Vu Trong Khanh and Nguyen Anh Thu

FRANK BRUNI

Apples And Hurricanes

Whenever Barack Obama seems in danger of falling, do we have to hear that George W. Bush made the cliff?

It happened with the economy. For the president's staunchest defenders, legitimate questions about whether the stimulus was wisely crafted and whether Obamacare was rushed took a back seat to lamentations over the damage that his predecessor had done. Obama wasn't perfect, but at least he wasn't Bush.

And with the Middle East, those defenders sometimes turn Bush's epic mistakes into Obama's hall pass. Perhaps he hasn't figured out what's right, but he isn't guilty of the original wrong, which is constantly being litigated anew, as if a fresh verdict on the events of 2003 could alter the challenges and stakes of 2014.

On Tuesday there was another spasm of this. As Congress debated the escalation of airstrikes against Islamic extremists, Representative Lloyd Doggett, a Texas Democrat, digressed to inveigh against "the wholly unnecessary Bush-Cheney invasion of Iraq," a bell that was rung 11½ years ago and can't be un-rung now.

And to judge from my inbox lately and the chatter I overhear, what matters to many of Obama's most stalwart fans isn't whether he erred in the way he spoke of those extremists, turned his attention to them quickly enough or is now confronting them with the correct dose of belligerence: not too little, not too much.

At least he's not Bush. He didn't hallow weapons of mass destruction, make a spurious case for war or condone torture. I hear so much about Bush's failings and Bush's sins that

Obama can be measured without the yardstick of Bush.

you'd think he were still huddled over a desk in Washington rather than dabbing at a canvas in Texas.

Enough. It's true that Obama hasn't replicated Bush's offenses, and it's consoling. But it isn't exactly reason for a parade, and it doesn't inoculate him. The culpability that lies elsewhere doesn't relieve the responsibilities that are now his.

And not being as bad as someone else is hardly the same as being good. Obama can rise far above Bush and still fall short. The presidency isn't "The Voice" (though it is a little like "Survivor"). You're not judged only in relation to the other performers who've been on stage. You're judged by how well you respond to the unique circumstances of your time and place — by your ability to clean up the mess, not whether you made it.

This not-as-bad-as defense is a pointless partisan tic. We've seen a lot of it over the course of this presidency and will no doubt see a lot of it during the next, be it Democratic or Republican.

The I.R.S. scandal was not as bad as Watergate. (Nothing's ever as bad as Watergate, which serves a nifty historical function as the gold standard of executive malfeasance and mendacity.)

The bungled rollout of Obamacare was not as bad as the botched response to Katrina.

It's apples and hurricanes, but they're put in the same basket, in a manner that recalls a child trying to evade punishment by ratting out a sibling for something worse. Don't be mad, Mommy, about Operation Fast and Furious and all those guns that ended up with Mexican drug cartels. Ronnie traded arms for hostages as part of this whole Iran-contra affair!

I sometimes like to imagine presidential campaigns waged along these lines and what the candidates' not-as-bad-as bumper stickers might say.

"Fewer Lies Than Nixon." "Fewer Sweaters Than Carter." "Fewer Interns Than Clinton." "Better Speller Than Quayle."

It works in the other direction, too, and Obama has definitely suffered plenty of not-as-good-as slings. Former presidents are held up not merely as yardsticks; they're rulers used to rap the knuckles of the Oval Office's current inhabitant and beat him over the head.

Smack: That Teddy Roosevelt certainly understood the power of the bully pulpit! *Thwack:* That L.B.J. really knew how to schmooze! A president is like a second spouse living in the saintly shadow of a first one who perished too soon.

Edmund Burke famously said that those who don't know history are destined to repeat it. But are those who fixate on it blind to how peculiar the present is, and to the fact that no degree of longing for a lost hero or blaming of a departed villain is going to change what lies ahead?

If we're determined to glance back at a figure who flatters Obama, let's really have at it and look all the way to Warren Harding. Golf wasn't his only distraction. He also had a thing for poker. And when it came to seeming and feeling overwhelmed, the 29th president, an Ohio Republican, reputedly confessed to friends that he was lost in the job.

By that measure Obama is a rock. But it doesn't make him a boulder. □



OTTO DETTMER

Israel's N.S.A. Scandal

By James Bamford

WASHINGTON

IN Moscow this summer, while reporting a story for Wired magazine, I had the rare opportunity to hang out for three days with Edward J. Snowden. It gave me a chance to get a deeper understanding of who he is and why, as a National Security Agency contractor, he took the momentous step of leaking hundreds of thousands of classified documents.

Among his most shocking discoveries, he told me, was the fact that the N.S.A. was routinely passing along the private communications of Americans to a large and very secretive Israeli military organization known as Unit 8200. This transfer of intercepts, he said, included the contents of the communications as well as metadata such as who was calling whom.

Typically, when such sensitive information is transferred to another country, it would first be "minimized," meaning that names and other personally identifiable information would be removed. But when sharing with Israel, the N.S.A. evidently did not ensure that the data was modified in this way.

Mr. Snowden stressed that the transfer of intercepts to Israel contained the communications — email as well as phone calls — of countless Arab- and Palestinian-Americans whose relatives in Israel and the Palestinian territories could become targets based on the communications. "I think that's amazing," he told me. "It's one of the biggest abuses we've seen."

It appears that Mr. Snowden's fears were warranted. Last week, 43 veterans of Unit 8200 — many still serving in the reserves — accused the organization of startling abuses. In a letter to their commanders, to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and to the head of the Israeli army, they charged that Israel used information collected against innocent Palestinians for "political persecution." In testimonies and interviews given to the media, they specified that data were gathered on Palestinians' sexual orienta-

Is American intelligence data being used to persecute Palestinians?

tions, infidelities, money problems, family medical conditions and other private matters that could be used to coerce Palestinians into becoming collaborators or create divisions in their society.

The veterans of Unit 8200 declared that they had a "moral duty" to no longer "take part in the state's actions against Palestinians." An Israeli military spokesman disputed the letter's overall drift but said the charges would be examined.

It should trouble the American public that some or much of the information in question — intended not for national security purposes but simply to pursue political agendas — may have come directly from the N.S.A.'s domestic dragnet. According to documents leaked by Mr. Snowden and reported by the British newspaper The Guardian, the N.S.A. has been sending intelligence to Israel since at least March 2009.

The memorandum of agreement between the N.S.A. and its Israeli counterpart covers virtually all forms of communication, including but not limited to "un-evaluated and unminimized transcripts, gists, facsimiles, telex, voice and Digital Network Intelligence metadata and content." The memo also indicates that the N.S.A. does not filter out American communications before delivery to Israel; indeed, the agency "routinely sends" unminimized data.

Although the memo emphasizes that Israel should make use of the intercepts in accordance with United States law, it also notes that the agreement is legally

unenforceable. "This agreement," it reads, "is not intended to create any legally enforceable rights and shall not be construed to be either an international agreement or a legally binding instrument according to international law."

It should also trouble Americans that the N.S.A. could head down a similar path in this country. Indeed, there is some indication, from a top-secret 2012 document from Mr. Snowden's leaked files that I saw last year, that it already is. The document, from Gen. Keith B. Alexander, then the director of the N.S.A., notes that the agency had been compiling records of visits to pornographic websites and proposes using that information to damage the reputations of people whom the agency considers "radicalizers" — not necessarily terrorists, but those attempting, through the use of incendiary speech, to radicalize others. (The Huffington Post has published a redacted version of the document.)

In Moscow, Mr. Snowden told me that the document reminded him of the F.B.I.'s overreach during the days of J. Edgar Hoover, when the bureau abused its powers to monitor and harass political activists. "It's much like how the F.B.I. tried to use Martin Luther King's infidelity to talk him into killing himself," he said. "We said those kinds of things were inappropriate back in the '60s. Why are we doing that now? Why are we getting involved in this again?"

It's a question that American and Israeli citizens should be asking themselves. □

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

Take a Deep Breath

LONDON

An existential struggle is taking place in the Arab world today. But is it ours or is it theirs? Before we step up military action in Iraq and Syria, that's the question that needs answering.

What concerns me most about President Obama's decision to re-engage in Iraq is that it feels as if it's being done in response to some deliberately exaggerated fears — fear engendered by YouTube videos of the beheadings of two U.S. journalists — and fear that ISIS, a.k.a., the Islamic State, is coming to a mall near you. How did we start getting so afraid again so fast? Didn't we build a Department of Homeland Security?

I am not dismissing ISIS. Obama is right that ISIS needs to be degraded and

could spread to them."

Therefore, he concludes, the best U.S. strategy rests in us "doing as little as possible and forcing regional powers into the fray, then in maintaining the balance of power in this coalition." I am not sure, but it's worth debating.

Here's another question: What's this war really about?

"This is a war over the soul of Islam — that is what differentiates this moment from all others," argues Ahmad Khalidi, a Palestinian scholar associated with St. Antony's College, Oxford. Here is why: For decades, Saudi Arabia has been the top funder of the mosques and schools throughout the Muslim world that promote the most puritanical version of Islam, known as Salafism, which is hostile to modernity, women and religious pluralism, or even *Islamic* pluralism.

Saudi financing for these groups is a byproduct of the ruling bargain there between the al-Saud family and its Salafist religious establishment, known as the Wahhabis. The al-Sauds get to rule and live how they like behind walls, and the Wahhabis get to propagate Salafist Islam both inside Saudi Arabia and across the Muslim world, using Saudi oil wealth. Saudi Arabia is, in effect, helping to fund both the war against ISIS and the Islamist ideology that creates ISIS members (some 1,000 Saudis are believed to be fighting with jihadist groups in Syria), through Salafist mosques in Europe, Pakistan, Central Asia and the Arab world.

This game has reached its limit. First, because ISIS presents a challenge to Saudi Arabia. ISIS says it is the "caliphate," the center of Islam. Saudi Arabia believes it is the center. And, second, ISIS is threatening Muslims everywhere. Khalidi told me of a Muslim woman friend in London who says she's afraid to go out with her head scarf on for fear that people will believe she is with ISIS — just for dressing as a Muslim. Saudi Arabia cannot continue fighting ISIS and feeding the ideology that nurtures ISIS. It will hurt more and more Muslims.

We, too, have to stop tolerating this. For years, the U.S. has "played the role of the central bank of Middle East stability," noted Mousavizadeh. "Just as the European Central Bank funding delays the day that France has to go through structural reforms, America's security umbrella," always there no matter what the Saudis do, "has delayed the day that Saudi Arabia has to face up to its internal contradictions," and reform its toxic ruling bargain. The future of Islam and our success against ISIS depend on it. □

EDITORS' NOTE

An Op-Ed article last Wednesday about Russia's role in tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan did not disclose that the writer has been an adviser to Azerbaijan's state-run oil company. Like other Op-Ed contributors, the writer, Brenda Shaffer, signed a contract obliging her to disclose conflicts of interest, actual or potential. Had editors been aware of her ties to the company, they would have insisted on disclosure.

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ISIS is not the first group to use religious rhetoric to mask its cruelty—Al Qaeda did so 13 years ago and Boko Haram more recently. What they all have in common is a totalitarian mentality that denies human beings their dignity.

Any form of violence against innocent civilians or persecution of minorities contradicts the principles of the Qur'an and the tradition of our Prophet (upon whom be peace and blessings). ISIS members are either completely ignorant about the faith they proclaim, or their actions are designed to serve individual interests or those of their political masters. Regardless, their actions represent those of a terrorist group and, as such, they should be brought to justice and compelled to answer for their horrific crimes.

I send my heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased in Iraq and Syria, and to the families of James Foley, Steven Sotloff and David Haines. May God give them strength, patience and perseverance, and alleviate their suffering. I also pray for the immediate and safe release of hostages and ask God, the Merciful, to lead us all toward mutual respect and peace. I invite everyone around the world to join me in these prayers.

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The high cost of punishment

By Newt Gingrich and B. Wayne Hughes Jr.

IMAGINE YOU have the power to decide the fate of someone addicted to heroin who is convicted of petty shoplifting.

How much taxpayer money would you spend to put that person in prison — and for how long? Is incarceration the right form of punishment to change this offender's behavior?

Those are questions states across the nation are increasingly asking as the costly and ineffective realities of incarceration-only

policies have set in. Obviously, we need prisons for people who are dangerous, and there should be harsh punishments for those convicted of violent crimes. But California has been overusing incarceration. Prisons are for people we are afraid of, but we have been filling them with many folks we are just mad at.

Reducing wasteful corrections spending and practices is long overdue in California. The state imprisons five times as many people as it did 50 years ago (when crime rates were similar). And as Californians know, the state's prison system ballooned over the last few dec-

ades and became so crowded that federal judges have mandated significant reductions.

Contributing to the growth in the number of prisoners and in prison spending has been a dramatic expansion in the number of felonies. In addition, mandatory minimum sentences have been applied to an increasing number of crimes. These policies have combined to drive up the prison population, as more prisoners serve longer sentences. On top of that, California has an alarmingly high recidivism rate: Six out of 10 people exiting California prisons return within three years.

It makes no sense to send nonserious, nonviolent offenders to a place filled with hardened criminals and a poor record of rehabilitation — and still expect them to come out better than they went in. Studies show that placing low-risk offenders in prison makes them more dangerous when they are released.

Over-incarceration makes no fiscal sense. California spends \$62,396 per prisoner each year, and \$10 billion overall, on its corrections system. That is larger than the entire state budget of 12 other states. This expenditure might be worth it if we were safer because of it.

Across the nation, states are realizing they lock up too many people.

But with so many offenders returning to prison, we clearly aren't getting as much public safety — or rehabilitation — as we should for this large expenditure.

Meanwhile, California spends only \$9,200 per K-12 student, and the average salary for a new teacher is \$41,926. And as California built 22 prisons in 30 years, it built only one public university.

California is not alone in feeling the financial (and public safety) consequences of over-incarceration. Several states — politically red states, we would point out — have shown how reducing prison populations can also reduce cost and crime.

Most notably, Texas in 2007 stopped prison expansion plans and instead used those funds for probation and treatment. It has reduced its prison population, closed three facilities and saved billions of dollars, putting a large part of the savings into drug treatment and mental health services. Better yet, Texas' violent crime rates are the lowest since 1977.

Another red state, South Carolina, made similar reforms for nonviolent offenses. The drop in the number of prisoners allowed South Carolina to close one prison and also lower its recidivism rate. Other states (Ohio, Georgia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Mississippi) have similarly shifted their approach to nonviolent convictions.

Now voters in California will have a chance to do the same, using costly prison

beds for dangerous and hardened criminals. It is time to stop wasting taxpayer dollars on locking up low-level offenders. Proposition 47 on the November ballot will do this by changing six nonviolent, petty offenses from felony punishments (which now can carry prison time) to misdemeanor punishments and local accountability.

The measure is projected to save hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars per year, and it will help the state emphasize punishments such as community supervision and treatment that are more likely to work instead of prison time.

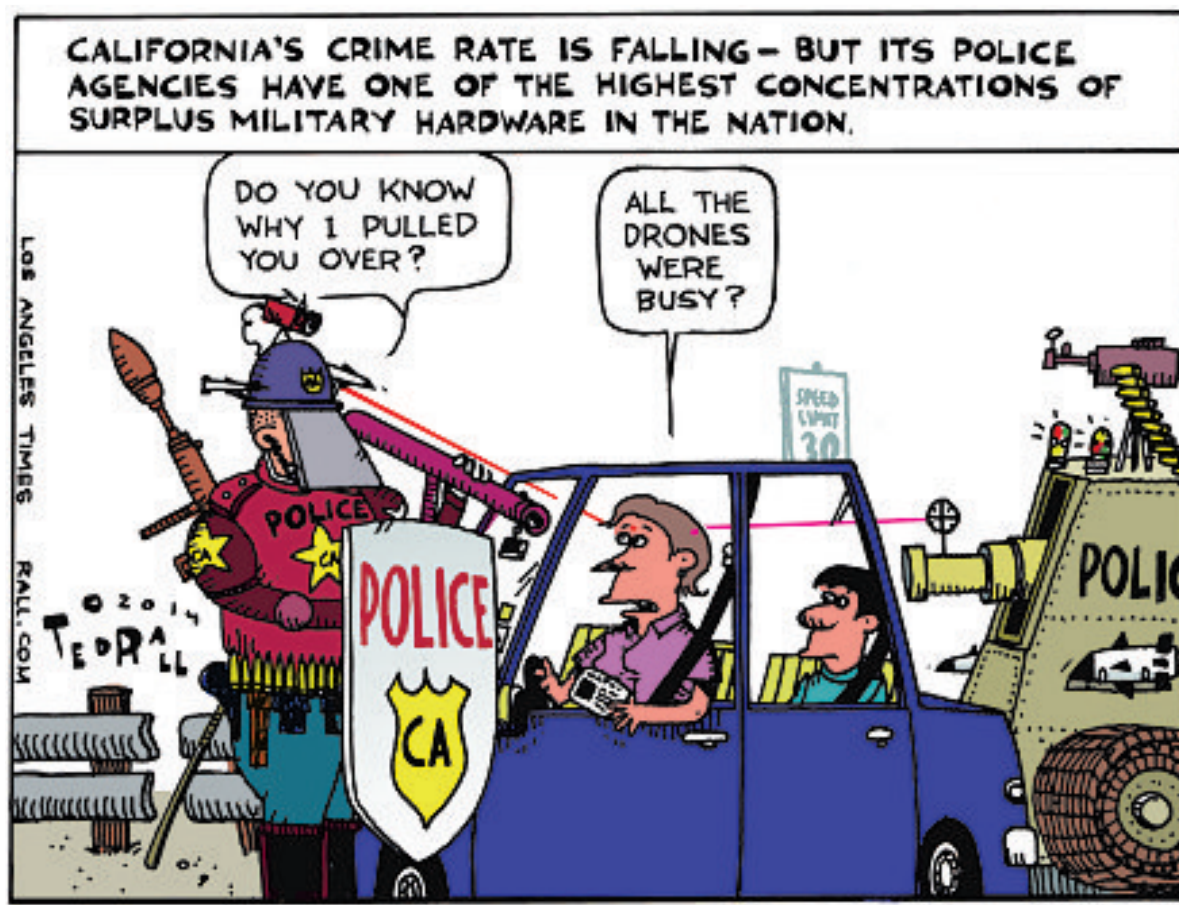
Take the example of Ray Rivera of San Diego, who represents a very common experience. Rivera was addicted to drugs from early in life. At age 24, he stole \$50 of merchandise from a store to buy drugs, and was sentenced to prison.

Instead of being held accountable and confronting his drug habit through treatment, Rivera languished in prison and came out in worse shape. It wasn't until he was out of the justice system that he sought and found the treatment he needed and cleaned up his life. Sending him to prison was a waste.

If so many red states can see the importance of refocusing their criminal justice systems, California can do the same. It's not often the voters can change the course of a criminal justice system. Californians should take advantage of the opportunity and vote yes on Proposition 47.

NEWT GINGRICH, a former speaker of the House of Representatives, is a co-host of CNN's "Crossfire." B. WAYNE HUGHES JR., a California businessman, is founder and chairman of the board of Serving California, a foundation that helps ex-offenders, crime victims and veterans.

TED RALL



TED RALL For The Times

The Senate will change, but how?

DOYLE MCMANUS

FOR MOST of the year, it seemed almost certain that Republicans would win the six additional Senate seats they need to oust Democrats from the majority and take control of Congress.

But the outlook has turned murkier recently. While a GOP majority is still the most likely outcome, it's no longer as sure a bet. Endangered Democratic incumbents in North Carolina and Alaska are waging surprisingly strong campaigns, and a Republican incumbent in Kansas is in unexpected trouble. "We don't have a lock on this thing at all," one GOP strategist told me recently.

It even seems possible that Senate elections could end in a draw, with a 50-50 split, in which case Vice President Joe Biden would cast votes as a tiebreaker.

And that's not even the most exotic possibility.

One scenario is a Senate in which neither major party wins 50 seats. The next Senate will include two, maybe three independents. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Angus King of Maine, whose seats aren't up this year, may be joined by Greg Orman, a newcomer who leads the polls in Kansas. Sanders, a socialist, would continue to vote with Democrats, but King and Orman, both centrists, would be wooed by both parties — and could instantly become two of the most powerful politicians on Capitol Hill.

We could see senators switching sides. Republicans are talking hopefully about persuading Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.), the Senate's most conservative Democrat, to cross the aisle and sit with them. Manchin has so far dismissed the idea, but that won't stop the GOP from trying.

And the Senate's makeup could be in doubt for months after the election.

In Louisiana, if no candidate wins 50%, the state holds a runoff on Dec. 6 — and that's likely to happen, since the "jungle ballot" includes three Republicans running against incumbent Democrat Mary L. Landrieu. In Georgia, if no candidate wins 50%, a runoff is held on Jan. 6 — one day after the new Senate convenes. In other tight races, recounts could take months.

But the most intriguing scenario for next year's Senate is the least exotic one: What happens if Republicans win a slim majority of 51 or 52 seats?

The party would then be like the dog who caught the car and has to figure out what to do with it. When the two houses of Congress have been held by different parties, gridlock has made governance almost impossible. But if the GOP controls both the Senate and the House, its members will be under pressure to govern. At least in the Senate, where 60 votes are needed to move major legislation, they'll even have an incentive to compromise to rescue their wholly owned legislative branch from the cellar of public esteem.

"To elect a president in 2016, we're going to have to show in 2015 and '16 that the American people can trust Republicans with the government," Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), a leading GOP deal-maker, said recently.

But that won't be easy. The Senate GOP is deeply divided. On one side are pragmatic conservatives such as Alexander and Ohio's Rob Portman, who want to pass a budget, rein in federal regulations and even tackle tax reform — and are willing to work with Democrats to do it.

Portman even sounds enthusiastic about the prospect, pointing to earlier eras when Presidents Reagan and Clinton negotiated successfully with opposition majorities.

"I know I may sound naive," he said, but "when we have divided government, that's when we've done tax reform; that's when we've done entitlement reform."

Opposing them from within the party, however, is the take-no-prisoners caucus of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), conservatives who want to send uncompromising bills to the White House (beginning with the repeal of Obamacare) and force President Obama to veto them.

The man in the middle is Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the GOP leader, who wants to do a little of each. When he talks to conservative donors and voters, McConnell sounds as ferocious as any tea party militant.

Obama "needs to be challenged, and the best way to do that is through the funding process," McConnell told Politico last month. "We're going to pass spending bills, and they're going to have a lot of restrictions on the activities of the bureaucracy."

But when he realized that sounded as if he were threatening a government shutdown, McConnell told reporters that wasn't what he meant. "I'm the guy who gets us out of government shutdowns," he insisted.

Can the GOP's pragmatists resist their party's swing to the right, strike alliances with centrist Democrats and actually pass important legislation next year?

The odds are against them. But it's worth a try — and at least would offer a new, more interesting form of gridlock.

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Patt Morrison

Patt Morrison's interview will run on Thursday.

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Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate

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Fethullah Gulen's original August 22 statement on ISIS is available at www.afsv.org.

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COMMENTARY

Why some parents love the whip too much



CLARENCE PAGE

Retired NBA star Charles Barkley exposed a hazardous culture clash in the Texas grand jury indictment of Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson for child abuse.

If parents are going to be sent to jail for giving their children a "whipping," then "every black parent in the South is going to be in jail," Barkley claimed.

Some people were upset that Barkley, a black Alabama native, singled out black people and Southerners. But as a fellow offspring of Southern parents, I know Barkley was not gratuitously playing a race card.

A variety of academic studies have found that while spanking occurs in every major racial or ethnic group, African-Americans approve of the practice more often than others.

For example, an extensive study of spanking and ethnicity by Elizabeth Gershoff, a human ecology associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin, found 89 percent of black parents said they had spanked their children, compared with 80 percent of Hispanic parents, 79 percent of white parents and 73 percent of Asian parents.

By region, a 2013 Harris Interactive study found people are more likely to be in favor of spanking if they live in the South and Midwest than in the West or East.

And that, I quickly add, is not a good thing.

Regardless of how much some of us look back with wistful nostalgia on our own spankings



BRACE HEMMELGARN/USA TODAY

A Texas grand jury indicted Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson on Friday for reckless or negligent injury to a child.

— as my Alabama cousins and I jovially recalled at a recent family reunion — corporal punishment poses more hazards than it is worth when compared to many nonviolent alternatives.

Numerous theories have been raised as to why so many black parents approve of whipping, or "whooping," as my parents said in their Alabama accents. Some researchers have associated it with the legacy left by the brutality of slavery. Slaves whipped their children, it is said, to teach them to avoid being whipped by white slave masters, which would be so much worse.

Others point out that African-American parents are disproportionately more poor, Southern and religiously conservative, all of which are factors that correlate with support for corporal punishment, regardless of race. The biblical injunction about

sparing the rod is taken quite literally by religious conservatives, surveys show.

But that excuse also is rejected by such experts as Dr. Alvin Poussaint, the black Harvard psychiatrist who advised Bill Cosby's "The Cosby Show."

"There's an overuse of beating kids — corporal punishment," he said at a conference on black youth violence that I wrote about in 2006.

"So that you have 80 percent of black parents believing you should beat them — beat the devil out of them. And research shows the more you beat them, the angrier they get. It is not good discipline."

"Violence begets violence," Poussaint said, pointing out that disciplinary practices at home may help to explain why black children have been expelled from preschool at as much as

We are listening

Editor's note: Bob Foys, of Chicago, is the latest Tribune reader to join the editorial board as its community member.

Foys, 74, was born and raised in Pilsen and has lived in the Chicago area for 60 years. He taught



FOYS

writing and literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, ran a small security consulting and private investigation company for three years and worked in insurance brokerage at Aon for 30 years before retiring in 2005.

He is a graduate of Loyola University Chicago and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

In 2011, Foys received a surgical implant of a ventricular assist device — essentially a battery-powered heart — to treat end-stage congestive heart failure. After receiving the implant, a psychologist suggested he find a way to re-engage with the world, so he wrote a letter to the editor. He kept writing and has become one of the Tribune's most frequent letter writers.

He writes almost daily on his iPad and is most passionate about topics concerning "infringements on liberty and limitations on free choice."

He describes himself as curious, observant and skeptical but says he's generally optimistic about the world and smiles more than the average person. He likes to say he loves three women: his wife, Melinda, to whom he's been married for 49 years; his daughter, Susan; and his granddaughter, Sabrina.

— Jessica Reynolds, Tribune reporter

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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

UN oversight

No one was surprised to discover that Hamas was storing and shooting rockets from United Nations schools during the latest conflict.

However, we were shocked to learn that UNRWA, the UN body tasked with aiding Palestinian refugees, gave those very rockets back to Hamas to continue the rocket assault on Israel from its very schools.

That is why the American Jewish Committee is supporting a congressional letter to Secretary of State John Kerry calling for an investigation into how U.S. funding of UNRWA may have been misused and to institute proper vetting of UNRWA staff to ensure that members of Hamas and Hezbollah cannot join the organization.

This oversight is critical to make sure UNRWA does not continue to act in a way that jeopardizes both Israelis and Palestinians.

— Harry Seigle, president, and Amy Stoken, director, American Jewish Committee Chicago

Rejecting anti-Semitism

It was refreshing to see a professor appropriately rejected for his overt anti-Semitism.

I refer to Steven Salaita. It is one thing to disagree with Israel's position on issues.

It is entirely different to wish the deaths of its citizens.

But the hand-wringing of many in the academic community about feared infringements on "academic liberty" rings hollow.

When these same people begin to defend politically incorrect viewpoints as strongly as they do ones that are anti-Semite, anti-Christian and anti-American, I may believe they are genuine.



PAUL OSBUN

But just consider their silence when an ardent Christian professor is denied tenure, or note that when anyone questions the group-think of man-made global warming or evolution, these strident advocates of "free thought" are not to be found!

— Thorin Anderson, Chicago

Revolt statements

I wish to compliment the University of Illinois for denying a position on the university faculty to Steven Salaita, who has written truly despicable and cruel statements about Israel.

I agree that Salaita's statements are as revolting as those of Bill Ayers, who dedicated his book to the man who murdered Robert Kennedy.

Many supporters of Israel feel as I do that the loss of life in Israel and Gaza in this recent war is tragic.

Salaita's opinion is that we should only murder more Israelis.

My thanks go to the university.

— Sarah Rabens, Chicago

Freely expressed thoughts

Regarding Steven Salaita, every citizen has the right to freely express his or her thoughts, but in doing so, he or she runs the risk that some people will not agree with him or her.

However, any employer has the right to accept or reject anyone applying for a job.

This subject case has a complicating fact in that the applicant quit his existing job and sold his home.

The university may have some liability here, but only for the costs incurred by the applicant in anticipation of a new position.

— Bud Glickman, Northbrook

Term limits

When you think about it, the lack of term limits for political office is probably the root cause of most of society's biggest problems and the primary reason for government waste.

When one individual can inhabit a powerful public office for a period of decades, he clearly possesses an undue influence on public policy.

Without term limits there is an endless campaign process in motion, which necessarily precludes the public servant from spending the appropriate time devoted to solving the problems he was hired to fix in the first place.

A person occupying a public office for too long is simply not in the long-term public interest.

It becomes only in the interest of the office holder.

I believe politicians should only be able to hold elected office for two terms or no longer than eight years.

Upon leaving office they should be paid one month's pay for each year served as severance pay.

No pensions. After their public service, they can re-enter the private workplace.

If they can't find a job, then maybe they should have worked more closely with the business community to create a more prosperous economic environment.

— Mike Simon, Glen Ellyn

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