

## Identifying the terrorists

by John Heuer

The USA is a mighty and righteous nation, declaring its right to invade any nation or assassinate any alleged enemy. Other nations are denied these prerogatives by virtue of the exceptional virtue of the USA. When the US military destroys a hospital, as it did last fall in Kunduz, Afghanistan, it was an unfortunate mistake.

When a Russian airstrike hits a hospital or school in Syria, it is an act of terror.

Perhaps it's time to recognize that the invasions, occupations, bombings and drone warfare against populations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and elsewhere constitute a level of terrorism that identifies the US as the "primary purveyors of violence in this world," just as MLK Jr. described his beloved nation in 1967.

After all, the US spends more on the military than the next seven nations combined, and most of those are our allies!

Twenty bombing sorties a day since August, 2014 (Time magazine February 22) translates to 10,000 US bombing missions in Syria, leading to a torrent of refugees escaping US bombs. According to the PBS News Hour, two children drown every day as their families attempt to escape the carnage.

Meanwhile we have resumed bombing in Libya, where we led NATO in destroying that country just a couple of years ago. As in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is sometimes difficult to know when we have rained enough bombs.

How did we become such an evil nation while pretending we are the paragon of virtue?

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## Winners and losers in the energy business

by Julian Sereno

Conservatives are constantly squawking about Lib-ruls penchant for using the government to pick winners and losers in the marketplace in the name of advancing some environmental or social goal. They have been particularly incensed over government support of clean, renewable energy. They crowed about one particular high-profile boondoggle — Solyndra, the Silicon Valley solar startup gone belly-up, leaving tax payers to pick up the tab for \$535 million in government-insured loans.

"Don't interfere with the market — let the magic of the market pick winners and losers," they proclaim.

But a funny thing happened after the Republicans took control of North Carolina in 2010. They started doing the exact same thing — picking winners and losers in the energy sector. And while the Lib-ruls picked clean and renewable energy, the Republicans backed fossil fuels, and they bet our money on a loser.

They fast-tracked fracking, hoping to get in on the shale oil and gas boom. Because the size of North Carolina's gas reserves is unknown, they dug some test wells at taxpayer expense. Last May North Carolina was officially opened to fracking. But the oil boom

went bust. There is a glut of oil on the market and the price keeps falling. To date only two wildcatters set up shop in North Carolina and both went under. Neither drilled a well, one departed the area with bill collectors snapping at his heels.

Remember the scorn heaped on the government's subsidy of solar energy? North Carolina has become a national leader in solar energy, with 188 solar companies employing 6,000 people. The installation of almost 400 megawatts of solar capacity in 2014 ranked second nationally. As of 2015 North Carolina's solar generating capacity ranked fourth nationally.

The reason for the boom has nothing to do with politics. It came about because solar panels cost a lot less than they used to — about half what they cost in 2010. And those widely-scorned subsidies helped people pay for them. An estimate from 2012 is that a typical 5kW solar array pays for itself in six years and then generates a profit.

Surprise, surprise. North Carolina Republicans, long opponents of solar energy, have started to support it. They have firmly rejected the idea that solar panels suck up all the sunlight. Let the sun shine.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.*

## Campaign themes

by Don Lein

Hilary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have been arguing about who is the most "progressive" candidate. Progressivism had its roots in the U. S. around the turn of the last century with two of its most vocal adherents being Woodrow Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt. Wilson articulated it best when he wished to move "beyond the Declaration of Independence... and to interpret the Constitution according to the Darwinian principle" and recognize the nation is a living evolving entity. When you accept Darwin, you ultimately wind up with the segregation of the "fit" and "unfit" a la Margaret Sanger, which was very much in vogue at the peak of progressivism.

Consistent with the fit/unfit paradigm, Wilson believed in racial superiority. His favorite movie was Birth of a Nation, which glorified the Ku Klux Klan, which he showed in the White House to visiting dignitaries commenting "it is all so terribly true". Fellow Progressive Theodore Roosevelt also embraced racial inferiority. He was against the 15th Amendment, granting voting privileges to Blacks, on the grounds that the black race was still in its adolescence. He contended that "race suicide", a term coined by eugenicist Edward Ross, was the "greatest problem of civilization". Ross contended that the presumption that "races are equal...leads to monumental follies". The Progressive era also featured the notorious Plessy v Ferguson Supreme Court decision, which gave birth to the "separate but equal" doctrine, which legitimized Jim Crow racism.

It is clear that today's Progressives have the same contempt for the Constitution as their predecessors did. To clear the

air it would be appropriate for Progressives to disavow their ugly racist past. It has been suggested that perhaps a more appropriate name for Progressives would be "compassionate totalitarians". Bernie Sanders did add a bit of humor to the 2016 lexicon with its leading joke "In the Bernie Sanders drinking game, every time Bernie mentions a free government program, you drink someone else's beer"

While Hilary and Bernie are duking it out to see who can be more leftist, the Republican candidates are vying to be the most anti-establishment candidate. In all fairness Bernie does comment on the social, economic and geopolitical wreckage that is so prevalent in America — he has yet to be honest enough to share with the voters who for the previous 7 years presided over this wasteland of stagnant wages; rising inequality; corporations, in whole or in part leaving the U. S.; a disappearing middle class; debt-ridden millennials and an expiring American Dream. Bernie without the Brooklyn accent could be a Republican.

Actually his cures for these ailments are very similar and as practical as Trumps are. Sanders and Trump in New Hampshire were victorious by Sanders promising free college education, free universal health care, guaranteed \$15 minimum wage, world peace, presumably free — all obtained by taxing the "rich", while Trump promised jobs galore from companies moving back to the US, universal health care, veterans being taken care of, drug traffic stopped cold, etc. How?? That question is no longer deemed germane. Trump's blatant and Bernie's less open contempt for "the establishment" played well in New Hampshire. Serious Republicans are asking themselves — do we need a Republican egocentric know-it- all to replace the

Democratic one that is currently in the White House.

My personal favorite, Dr. Ben Carson, has faded. A true product of the ghetto, who proved hard work and dedication still count. He is a person who can relate to the underclass having lived through it, rather than relating to the underprivileged by driving through the ghetto in a Mercedes convertible with the top down. There are still too many people who believe his lack of proven managerial skills, lack of foreign policy experience would be too much to overcome. However, when compared to Obama's record and skill set when he took over the job of trying to run the one true superpower both militarily and economically in the world, Dr. Ben would be a superstar. The governors in the race have proven records to rely upon — both good and bad. Rubio is quite shy of experience and accomplishments. Cruz has an admirable record as an Attorney General of Texas and could be the first Hispanic-American President. Following the first African American, it has a nice symmetry. Trump has touched a resonant chord in those who still value American exceptionalism/freedom.

Frankly, I find it difficult to believe the Democratic Party will ultimately wind up with Clinton or Sanders. There are too many mines in the minefield Hilary is going to have to negotiate, particularly if Bill loses more faculties or Hillary has another of her meltdown, "What difference does it make?" moments, and Bernie is simply not credible, economically. Elizabeth Warren, perhaps? A brokered convention, perhaps??

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## Let's clear the air and move forward

by Randy Voller

In the world of politics and Hollywood it is far easier to frame every argument as a battle between people in white hats and those wearing black hats than to actually acknowledge the give and take and nuance that pursuing and securing good public policy requires.

Depending on whose ox was being gored or who disagreed with an opinion or a policy position that I took in my career, I have been viewed as a menace, a savior, an advocate for justice, a sell-out, a pragmatist, a visionary or a jerk.

As a former publicly elected official and leader I signed on for these reactions.

I am the same person who worked with the Town Board and pushed to fix and repair Pittsboro's water and distribution system, invest in its waste water treatment plant, advocated to build sidewalks, secured grants to expand our parks and greenways, finished the reuse line to 3M, secured the 55 acre donation of park land from 3M to the Town, helped get our Town a Main Street designation from the Department of Commerce, pushed for transit to Chapel Hill, advocated for liquor by-the-drink, and put the Town officially on record as opposing Amendment One, supporting Shakori Hills, and opposing Hydraulic Fracturing.

I also plainly told the leaders of Pittsboro Matters and other political colleagues in the summer of 2013 that when I was done being the Mayor of Pittsboro that I would work with Chatham Park and others in the community and region to pursue policy initiatives that I thought would be best for the future of Pittsboro, Chatham County and the region.

I even advised them to find ways to leverage the momentum and energy of Chatham Park to address issues of mutual interest such as the water quality of the Haw River River, the Rocky River and Jordan Lake as well as an opposition to fracking in Chatham County. This was probably a bridge too far for some since the preferred positions of many is one of distrust and disgust toward construction and development as opposed to

finding ways to bridge the gaps and solve problems.

I write this because the demonization of political opponents and community members is the simple and shorthand method for mobilizing people on the basis of fear and anger.

There are many good and substantial reasons to advocate for sound public policy and question various aspects of Chatham Park, its small area plans, and the additional elements of the master plan.

Further, such advocacy can and should focus on how to make the project better and use its size as leverage to positively impact all kinds of areas within the purview of planning, design, development, and construction.

Already the project has committed to building greener street scenes, bridges to cross nearly every stream which will lessen the impact stream on buffers, installing reclaimed water systems, building a 20 megawatt solar farm, requiring every home to have a 220 volt outlet in every garage to charge electric cars, as well as being prewired for solar panels.

Public policy advocates need to stop accusing elected officials and community leaders of being ignorant and/or corrupt because we work with Chatham Park or voted for its zoning approval.

This is the simplistic frame of white hats vs. black hats and frankly it's counter productive.

I empathize with the leaders of Pittsboro Matters and I understand their concerns, but I have little tolerance for their penchant to tar and feather folks who do not subscribe to their methods, tactics or strategies.

So I will answer its chair, Amanda Roberston, who posed four misleading and loaded questions last month in the Chatham County Line:

1. Organizing a series of information sessions for staff and elected officials with Chatham Park was a needed building block to get to quarterly updates for all publicly elected bodies. The meetings were neither secret nor was Chatham Park seeking any public financing as was alleged. If Pittsboro Matters were not continually suing the Town and/or Chatham Park, their leaders

could have been invited to the meetings as well, but typically litigants are not invited to joint meetings for obvious reasons.

2. I emailed the County Manager on December 14 and reported that my firm, VRC, Ltd., is working with Chatham Park Investors on public policy initiatives such as the potential for a special assessment overlay district and/or regional infrastructure initiatives that could be beneficial to all parties and strategic for the long term economic viability of our area. (As previously stated, this is consistent with what I communicated to the leaders of Pittsboro Matters back in the summer of 2013 regarding my future intentions.)

3. I have no idea about the financial relationship between Dr. Goodnight and Chatham Park and don't understand why Pittsboro Matters keeps flogging this dead horse. Chatham Park Investors owns their property without debt. In the world of finance and development that is the definition of patient money and should speak volumes to the community.

4. Chatham Park does not need the County to financially support their infrastructure. Chatham Park is proposing to the Town and County to explore and eventually implement a special assessment overlay district which will have the effect over time of lowering risk to the project and the County and ensure that millions of dollars of needed public infrastructure is paid for up front by Chatham Park and reimbursed over time through the overlay district that only covers future homes and businesses in Chatham Park. (For example, if a two lane road is needed now and a four lane road would likely be needed twenty years from now, this tool will allow the project to build the four lane road today and avoid saddling the community with any future costs or expenses.)

Although I did not grow up in Pittsboro this is where my family has made a home and I will continue to work on public policies that I believe will be beneficial to the community as a whole.

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