

## JAZZ, GOLF & TAKI

Your magazine is almost too wonderful for words! I have adored Taki from his days at *Esquire* and *National Review*. Mr. Buchanan has long been my favorite spokesman for right-thinking and behaving. Twenty years or so ago, I would write to his residence. He would always respond, in longhand! The responses were terse but treasured.

*TAC* comes closest of all publications to actually telling the truth about who's responsible for the ills that afflict our declining society. That requires a boatload of courage. Bravissimo!

Two of my passions are golf and classical music. I play jazz professionally, as a trombonist. I discovered, through Stan Kenton, circa '66, Wagner. He is the greatest composer since Mozart and Beethoven. I have a decent library here devoted to him. Your recent piece on Wagner was just terrific, as was the reference to him in Mr. Stove's review of the new book by Michael Steen.

Steve Sailer is another long-time fave. His piece on golf course architecture was brilliant, written, as are all of *TAC*'s entries, without fear. I could go on, but I'll just offer another thanks!

HARRY F. HAGAN  
*Atlanta, Ga.*

## TRADE & TRADE-OFFS

The article on the GE plant making refrigerators ("Lights Out at GE," May 9) was a breath of fresh air. You now have everything on the table to discuss, rationally, protection against foreign production.

While there is no question that well paying jobs for people who are not very educated will be saved by such protection, there is also no question the refrigerators will cost more. Unlike many, I am willing to concede the trade-off might be worthwhile.

What needs to be added to the discussion is the mechanism for determining

which industries merit protection and by how much, unless there is simply a blanket of tariffs covering all imports. I am skeptical that our government will not treat industrial tariffs any differently from any thing else it ponders: no facts and gobs of demagoguery.

What also needs to be discussed is the likely opposition from people 65 and older. This group is concerned only that people under 65 give them money and that anything not given to them costs as little as possible. They care not one whit for jobs or the general welfare other than the general welfare of Social Security checks.

GILBERT BERDINE  
*Southlake, Texas*

## CONSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION

I would like to extend my gratitude to the founders and contributors of this magazine. It seems to be a true source of the political Right and not just another mill of propaganda for the established order. Your magazine has given me political hope (spiritual hope in the Lord) that there are many more like-minded people.

With what has been going on with the judicial branch in the last few years, I feel that the American political establishment has failed us. What we are left with are parties with two different names but a common aim: to subvert the U.S. Constitution for their own gain. I read your latest issue and saw an advertisement for the Constitution Party. I cannot help but think that our next choice should be outside that which is established to serve itself and that which will serve us. Many in the judicial branch were nominated by the Republicans. So it seems that toeing the party line for the sake of filling seats does not justify my throwing a vote away to a party that courts me and then dumps me after election day.

It was Alexis de Tocqueville who said if America stops being good, she will cease to be great. Our new oligarchy has helped us to move from any objective standards to a degenerate path without perceiving any threat from the Constitution.

I thank you again for your magazine, your insight, and your vigilance.

In Christ,  
PROTOPRIEST DIONYSI  
Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church  
*via e-mail*

## THE REAL RIGHT

I occasionally follow the *New York Times* op-ed forums and stumbled upon an old Norman Mailer article in your magazine while doing a search.

Not being an American (in fact, I am a Canadian mining engineer resident in Peru for the past 10 years), I find no fault with your logic. In fact, I applaud it.

As a third-generation mining engineer who insists on wearing a blue button-down oxford shirt and navy-blue dress pants, even to the beach, you could not possibly call me less than conservative, with very traditional values (like paying my bills on time, paying taxes, marrying once, and respecting the law). However, the neo-cons have nothing to do with conservatism, and I see something closer to Germany circa 1935.

I have not yet had the time to review your publication fully, but you seem to be on the right track, and I hope that you continue your fine work.

JIM SHEPHERD  
*Lima, Peru*

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*The American Conservative* welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to [letters@amconmag.com](mailto:letters@amconmag.com), by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.



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BY MATTHEW SCULLY Modern farming practices are a predatory enterprise, unnaturally propped up by political influence and government subsidies. Conservatives can do better. **Page 7**

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BY GREGORY COCHRAN While it's politically advantageous to complain about failing schools, the data don't support the decline theory. **Page 15**

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## [POLITICS]

### SCAPEGOATING BOLTON

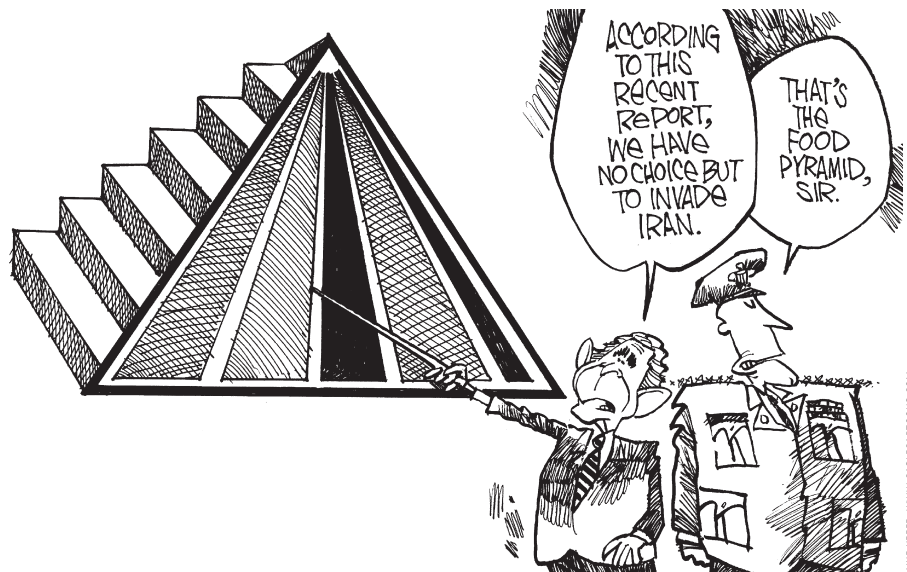
Some of the arguments made in defense of the embattled nomination of John Bolton make perfect sense. The president has a right to appoint people of his choice to the executive branch. The post in question is ambassador to the United Nations, not Miss Congeniality. And we're inclined to believe the myriad U.S. senators who say that most members of their body have been curt with colleagues or underlings at various points in their careers.

But it was clear—or should have been—that Bolton is not twisting in the wind before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because of his gruff manner. Nor is he being held up by the breathless leaks that insinuate—without actually claiming—that there is something that might be construed as bullying or sexual harassment in his background.

In fact, Bolton has become a symbol of the Bush approach to international relations—not rudeness to subordinates but unilateralism, including the policy of preventive war, telling allies to stay in line and shut up, and manipulation of intelligence estimates. The hapless Bolton has become a poster child for the Iraq War and the overall Bush foreign policy.

Bolton did not have much to do with planning the Iraq War. That was a project for those higher up in the neocon pecking order. But Bolton is up for questioning and confirmation now, and suddenly not only Democrats but centrist Republicans like Hagel and Voinovich and liberal Republicans like Chafee—no doubt after extensive polling of their constituents—are recognizing that the Bush Doctrine is not very popular and not very effective at serving the national interest.

Of course, it would have been far better if the leading lights of the Senate



had asked tough questions in 2002, when the neocons were plotting the Iraq War. But better late than never.

## [RELIGION]

### A GOOD SHEPHERD

The election of a new pope, Benedict XVI, was met with much gnashing of teeth among liberal pundits and much cheering elsewhere. Press predictions that Cardinal Ratzinger would prove a divisive pontiff have been dispelled by even the earliest returns—a *Washington Post*-ABC News poll of American Catholics, hardly the most orthodox sheep in the flock, shows that eight in 10 support the new pope, while 73 percent say they are “enthusiastic.” There’s good reason for that.

Benedict is a reassuring figure, a man who as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith helped shape the pontificate of John Paul II. And the good he will do promises to extend well beyond the Catholic community. The hallmark of his career has been his refusal to subordinate faith to politics, a commitment evidenced both by his resistance to “liberation theology” within the church and by his remarks on the Iraq War: in 2002, he noted that the “concept of a preventive war does not appear in the catechism of the Catholic Church.” A year later, he affirmed, “There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq.”

The new pope, a scholar conversant in 10 languages, cannot be accused of *naïveté*. He experienced modern warfare at firsthand in 1945 as a conscript in—and soon deserter from—the German army and an inmate of an Allied POW camp. And his statements last year opposing Turkish entry into the European Union—“Europe,” he said, “is a cultural and not a geographic continent”—suggest that he understands the peril facing the West today. Benedict is a man of peace but not, in the face of a rising Islam and receding Christianity, a man of appeasement.

## [BUDGET]

### \$300,000,000,000

Asked back in March 2003 by the House Appropriations Committee what the reconstruction of Iraq would cost, Paul Wolfowitz testified, “There’s a lot of money for this that doesn’t have to be U.S. taxpayer money ... We’re dealing with a country that can really finance its own reconstruction.” He wasn’t alone in his rosy prognosis. According to Donald Rumsfeld, “The Office of Management and Budget has come up with a number that’s something under \$50 billion. How much of that would be the U.S. burden and how much would be other countries’ is an open question.” (Recall that White House economic advisor Lawrence Lindsey was fired shortly after saying that the cost would be between \$100-\$200 billion.)