Police Militarization?

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"Security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary and fundamental purpose of any government, and a government that cannot fulfill that purpose is one that cannot long command the loyalty of its citizens. History shows us - demonstrates that nothing - nothing prepares the way for tyranny more than the failure of public officials to keep the streets from bullies and marauders."
—Barry Goldwater, accepting nomination as the Republican presidential candidate, 1964

The evening after his daughter's first day of kindergarten on September 3rd, 2014, police officer Daryl Pierson was killed by a paroled felon with an illegal weapon during a routine traffic stop. The killer, Thomas Johnson III, according to a witness, pretended to be cooperating, then charged into the police car, and shot Pierson as Pierson grabbed him.

Pierson, who had served in Afghanistan, also left behind a four-month-old baby and wife. This happened in my hometown, Rochester, New York, in an area that was once a thriving, ethnically diverse, working class neighborhood.

Goldwater's words were spoken during the decade of increased defendants' rights, increased crime rates, and waves of riots across America, including Rochester in 1964. That year, my feelings of safety as a seven-year-old changed as I walked past boarded-up corner stores and barber shops.

Fifty years later, it happened again in Ferguson, Missouri. The headlines of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on August 10 prematurely announced that calm had been restored after protests against the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer had turned into a night of looting. Per usual, the liberal newspaper editors thought that once the rioters had done some justified "venting," things would return to normal. Increasingly hamstrung by criminals' rights and campaigns against "police brutality" by radicals, and now the Justice Department, the police stood back while rioters rampaged.

The strategy did not work. It hadn't worked in Rochester in 1964. Nor did it ever work in any American city during the Decade of the Riot: the 1960s.

Fifty years after Barry Goldwater reminded Republicans of the need for law and order, many Republicans have joined in with liberals to blame "police militarization" for the rioting in Ferguson. Never mind that the riot equipment came out *after* the escalation of the rioting.

And I thought our side had the logic.

The anti-cop forces, somewhat dormant since the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, found a cause to latch onto in Ferguson.

In October 2011, I saw for myself the harm that such anarchists are capable of, even as they simply "occupy" streets and public places. Even an out-of-control (un-policed) parade can create a life or death situation.

I visited the "Occupy Atlanta" encampment in downtown Woodruff Park, which Occupiers had renamed Troy Davis Park after a cop-killer, and described what I saw in an article for PJ Media. During a Friday evening rush hour, the Occupiers set out to protest the purchase by Emory Healthcare of a building used as a homeless shelter.

I followed their rag-tag march up Peachtree Street, the main downtown thoroughfare. The marchers took up two of the four lanes, chanting and banging plastic buckets. One of them directed traffic with wild gestures. Car horns started blaring, as traffic ground to a halt. I passed by three police officers radioing in about a "protest," which seemed to have taken them by surprise.

Then I heard sirens. An ambulance and a fire truck were trying to get through.

A motorcycle policeman, blue lights flashing, appeared. So did three punks in orange "Cop Watch" t-shirts holding up video cameras. The policeman ignored them, and expertly cleared the way for the ambulance.

The Occupy crowd was finally forced onto the sidewalk, and marched up to the Midtown branch of Emory Hospital, where they blocked the entrance.

Soon about a dozen police officers converged on the scene and told protestors to move off the private property. Even as they were forced off the hospital property to the other side of the street, the protestors chanted back, "all property is public" and continued their noise-making. The police stood stoically, confining the nonsense, so patients could get into the hospital.

The Cop Watch punks, mostly scrawny white guys in need of haircuts and baths, were ready. They got into the police officers' faces, filming them with their hand-held cameras, taunting them, hoping to provoke them into doing something that could be used as "evidence" of "police brutality."

I saw them do the same thing at the 2012 Republican Convention in Tampa. Protestors, inches away from the police, called them "pigs." They teased police by dangling donuts from the ends of fishing lines. The police displayed incredible restraint, laughing off the antics, and even sending sandwiches to underfed protestors at "Camp Romneyville."

This summer, I was reminded of what I saw in Tampa in 2012, in Atlanta in 2011, and in Rochester in 1964.

In 1964 conservatives like Barry Goldwater condemned the violence in the streets and leniency for criminals. In 2014, to my horror, many conservative columnists and politicians came out blaming "police culture," "police militarization," and prejudice for the rioting in Ferguson. I have yet to see a prominent conservative columnist or politician condemn the fact that Officer Pierson's killer, Thomas Johnson III, who had an extensive criminal history in two states, was paroled for the second time after violating his first parole.

In Rochester this month, there was no rioting because a black career criminal, Thomas Johnson III, had executed a white police officer. Nor is there rioting or political grandstanding at any other time a police officer is killed by a thug—no matter the race of either one.

In Atlanta, in 2011, about 10 of the dozen police officers who kept the Occupy Atlanta protestors from blocking the entrance to the hospital were black. The motorcycle cop clearing the path for the ambulance blocked by anarchists, cop-haters, ne'er do-wells, and professional agitators, was black. Of course, the picture of white cop-haters taunting black police officers with video cameras inches from their faces does not fit the narrative of race and police brutality.

Overwhelmingly, police of all races, risk their lives to keep our streets free from bullies and marauders. It's the cop-haters and race-agitators who are threatening tyranny, as Barry Goldwater warned fifty years ago.

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Nationalists Rise in Europe

Will Swett | *Staff Writer*

The growing influence of far-right nationalist groups in Europe grips the continent's political landscape, as its people react to their social and economic frustrations. Although previously acknowledged as "fringe" groups, after the most recent European parliamentary election, nationalist parties have gained significant ground. By stressing hostility to the EU and immigration from African and the Middle East, these groups have become more and more appealing to those skeptical of the EU's involvement in national affairs. Right-wing nationalist parties have made

impressive gains in France, Great Britain, Austria, Denmark, and Greece.

This nationalism did not emerge overnight. Decades of immigration from developing countries have threatened the idea of a mono-ethnic society in Europe. Further impairing the EU's reputation is the over half-decade-long economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures, which have led to immensely high levels of unemployment and low or negative economic growth. Nigel Farage, leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), strives to delegitimize the European Union because of the "fundamentally undemocratic nature of a supranational political organization" acting with "unaccountable broad reaching legislative powers."

European conservatives have long held anti-European Union beliefs. However, ethnic nationalism in the 1930s damaged the reputation of European conservatives. Nations wary of overzealous nationalism restricted their own elected governments in favor of an international legislature. However, contemporary social and economic distress has allowed for right-wing politicians to gain ground in national legislatures and the European Parliament. The rise of the right in Europe indicates that the effect of the Long European War, from 1914 to 1989, is over.

The opposition to the EU is a worthy cause that unfortunately has been embraced by radical political parties that also maintain xenophobic and anti-Semitic platforms. As a result of the EU's unpopularity, extremist nationalist groups have gained broad support. In Greece, the Golden Dawn Party, whose logo invokers the swastika, won 9.4 percent of the vote, despite openly identifying of racist. In Hungary, as well, the anti-Semitic Jobbik Party earned 14.7 percent in the recent European parliamentary election.

Although the 21st century version of ethnic nationalism is a diluted version of that which devastated Europe 60 years ago, it still causes much social tension in nations with high ethnic diversity. In France, for example, the National Front, under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, has gained popularity among disgruntled French citizens. Le Pen's nationalist platform has emphasized its disdain for the European Union and called for a halt on immigration from Arab countries, specifically Libya and Tunisia. In the recent European parliamentary election the National Front made sweeping gains, boasting more voter support than the two other major parties with 26 percent. The rise of the National Front represents a nationalist reaction among French citizens seeking to maintain the Franco-cultural values of France.

UKIP has denounced the "blood and soil" nationalism of extremist parties, ruling out any alignment with the National Front. Instead, UKIP has stated a belief in civic nationalism, which is "open and inclusive to anyone who wishes to identify with Britain, regardless of ethnic or religious background." Although the right-wing party has very little representation in British domestic politics, it won more seats in the European parliamentary election than either the Labour Party or Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives. Winning 24 of the UK's 73 seats, the election marked the first time in over a century that a party has outperformed the Labour or Conservative parties in a UK-wide election. Despite the fact that most Europhiles hope these nationalist parties share the fate of countless other failed political movements, the broad support of these parties across Europe suggests that they will permanently alter the European political landscape.

The Poor Measures of Poverty

Sarah Larson | *Staff Writer*

We need to reevaluate poverty metrics in America. Currently, several different government agencies and departments have distinct definitions of poverty and the needs of those impoverished. The definitions contradict each other and need to be resolved in order for policies to be more effective.

The Census Bureau sets one poverty standard. Their metric assumes that two things determine poverty: age and income. The CB uses income before taxes to determine thresholds in which a household is deemed above or below the poverty line. That number does not include income from capital gains, savings, inheritance, or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). The CB's metrics do not vary by geographic location—those living in poverty in Albuquerque, New Mexico are indistinguishable from those living in San Francisco, California.

The CB poverty thresholds are also distinct in how the organization uses age as a poverty prerequisite. The poverty threshold for a household of two 65 year olds is $1,467 lower than a household of two 64 year olds. Under the CB's charts, having more dependents under 18 year old raises the bar that deems a family impoverished. The CB determined that a household of three, including one income earner over the age of 18 and two residents under 18 years old, needs to earn less than $18,123 to be in poverty, regardless any other factors. Add another individual under 18 years old to that household and the bar rises to $22,891. If a family's total income is less than the listed threshold, then that household (and every individual in it) is considered in poverty.

Under the CB's standards, tens of millions of Americans live in poverty. For the past two decades, the CB has reported that over 30 million Americans were living in below the poverty line. In 2010, they reported that a shocking one in seven Americans were impoverished.

Their metrics led to a variety of misconceptions about poverty in America and made it easy for institutions like the Heritage Foundation to mock current measures of poverty. In a 2011 study named "Air Conditioning, Cable TV, and an Xbox: What is Poverty in the United States Today?" the authors found that the typical poor household, as defined by the government, has "a car and air conditioning, two color televisions, cable or satellite TV, a DVD player, and a VCR" and that in a typical 'impoverished' family's kitchen there is a "refrigerator, an oven and stove, and a microwave... clothes washer, clothes dryer, ceiling fans, a cordless phone, and a coffee maker". These households seem hardly destitute.

Down the street from the Census Bureau, the Department of Health and Human Services uses a completely different system of metrics. A household of three (one income earner over the age of 18 and two under 18) living in Washington D.C. must collect less than $19,790 in order to be below the line. Add one more person and the poverty line rises to $23,850.

The Dept. of HHS does not take age into consideration when determining poverty, but it does take into account location. For the Dept. of HHS, there are three places that matter when determining poverty: Hawaii, Alaska and everywhere else. The poverty line in both Alaska and Hawaii is significantly higher than the 'everywhere else' category. Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program,

and the Children's Health Insurance Program use the Dept. of HHS metrics to determine eligibility. Cash public assistance programs, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and Supplemental Security Income, and the Earned Income Tax Credit program do not.

To further complicate the system of standards, individual cities and states also set their own metrics for defining poverty. The fact of the matter is that poverty is not a line nor should it be treated as such. Mismatched metrics and other "qualifiers" such as disability status and military service, perpetuate the failures of welfare programs to '"fight the War on Poverty". Our bizarre system of determining need is often abused as a result of its inability to determine what is need and who is needy. Eligibility for welfare should be tailored narrowly. Measuring need should be specific. What are we trying to measure? Need of what? Food? A job? Money? Healthcare? Education? Debt? Lack of home weatherization? There should be no discrepancy or haphazardness in defining something so serious as poverty.