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Shutting down the American dream

There is an old Chinese proverb, "May you live in interesting times." Americans are coming to understand why the saying is meant as a curse, not as a benediction.

Imagine your reaction 10 or 20 years ago if I described this scenario, set within the span of roughly a month:

An American President and his Secretary of State are openly defied (mocked, really) on the world stage, outmaneuvered by the Russians and Syrians, rebuffed by the Iranians.

The national government is shut down because the President refuses to negotiate with the opposition party, which holds a duly elected majority of one house of Congress. Instead, he refers to opponents as "hostage takers" and "terrorists."

The Administration deliberately deploys government agencies to inflict as much pain as possible on average Americans in an effort to blame the opposition party. Earlier, the same Administration perfected the punitive use of government by using the IRS to target political opponents to silence them before the last election. The national media depict the opposition party as the one at fault.

The nation sat on the verge of "default" on its debt, which totals \$17 trillion, almost double

what it was when this President took office. The President and his Administration exaggerate the specter of default to scare markets, seniors, and anyone else in order to increase the debt limit and keep spending unabated.

The economy has suffered from anemic growth for over four years. Unemployment is high, underemployment is even higher, and gas prices higher still.

Your closest guess might be that Jimmy Carter somehow came back and was re-elected.

Of course, that would be unfair to Carter. This is Barack Obama's actual tenure.

The shutdown stalemate was all the worse because Republicans are apparently unable to execute a strategy, unless by accident. Still, Republicans are firmly on the right side of what is awful policy for the country. My hunch is that the GOP is not in as bad a shape as the national media and Obama would have you believe.

The shutdown ended. In the meantime, one thing the Republicans have managed to do is force Democrats, including vulnerable Senate Democrats, to defend the indefensible. Obama's unsustainable government expansion will continue, with Obamacare as its poster child.

Indeed, Obama has benefited by the shutdown because without it, the country's attention would be focused on the disastrous rollout of Democrats' healthcare law.

Famously, the Obamacare exchange website doesn't work, even though the government spent an estimated \$500 million on it. Only 51,000 Americans signed up for health care through the site during the first week, despite millions more the government spent promoting the dawn of the Obamacare era.

But even the Administration's serious incompetence pales in comparison to the presumably intended effects of the law. Even some Obama supporters are now admitting that the American people have been sold a colossal bill of goods.

Remember Obama's central promises about his reform? "If you like your plan, if you like your doctor, you can keep them." Obama repeatedly stated that Americans' premiums would also go down \$2500 a year on average.

It hasn't worked that way. Allow a personal example. My premiums just went up around 20%, on top of a similar increase last fall. Much of the higher price is directly attributa-

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