

can “strengthen a group’s resolve, result in retaliatory attacks, increase public sympathy for the organization, or produce more lethal attacks.”

Jordan compiled a data set of 96 organizations, such as Hamas and Germany’s 1970s-vintage Baader-Meinhof Gang, that experienced a total of 298 incidents of decapitation between 1945 and 2004. She found that as organizations grow and age, they become more resilient. For groups with fewer than 25 members, decapitation was successful 54 percent of the time in causing the group to fall apart. For groups with more than 10,000 members, it worked in just nine percent of instances. The age of a group was “highly significant” as well, with no groups that had been around for 40 years or more collapsing as the result of decapitation. Among organizations less than 10 years

old, nearly a third dissolved after losing their leader.

Jordan also found that the success of decapitation varied greatly depending on what type of group was involved—religious, ideological, or separatist. Religious groups are particularly resilient, perhaps because they have “a sacred element that inspires a level of dedication not seen in other movements.” Less than five percent of religious groups fell apart after decapitation. Ideologically motivated groups, on the other hand, are more susceptible to attacks on their leaders, collapsing one-third of the time. The data on separatist organizations were inconclusive.

How leaders are taken out of action turns out to matter a great deal. Arresting the top leader is less effective than killing him, possibly because he may still be able to communicate with

supporters or because remaining players rally together in an effort to free him. But it’s more effective to arrest second-tier leaders than to kill them, possibly because they provide intelligence to their captors or because there’s no martyr whose memory unites remaining members.

Overall, Jordan observes, organizations whose leaders are targeted fail *less* often than others. Seventy percent of those that did not experience decapitation collapsed. It’s possible that the assassination or arrest of a leader actually invigorates terrorist groups.

Of course, policymakers may be satisfied with wounding a terrorist group, even if it doesn’t fall apart. But Jordan cautions against that, noting that groups that do survive may become even more lethal in the years following decapitation, as younger, more radical leaders take the helm.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

System Failure

THE SOURCES: “Failed State” by William Voegeli, in *Claremont Review of Books*, Fall 2009, and “California in Crisis” by Donald Cohen and Peter Dreier, in *The American Prospect*, Feb. 1, 2010.

ALL CAN AGREE THAT CALIFORNIA is struggling to make ends meet. But nailing down the causes of the Golden State’s budgetary woes (a predicted \$20 billion shortfall this year) has re-

sulted in another left-right shouting match, with the two sides sharing little, if any, common ground, at least at first glance. Commentators on the left blame the state’s inability to levy higher property taxes; on the right, they wag a finger at public-sector unions, which have extracted generous pay and pensions. But both sides recognize that the problems

are structural: California’s governing system is broken.

The proximate cause of the state’s crisis is the recession. But a number of other hard-hit states have managed to avoid the sorts of massive cuts California will need to make in areas such as education and health care. The state is hardly poor. Its economy—\$1.9 trillion in 2008—would be the eighth largest in the world if U.S. states were counted as independent jurisdictions. Despite such wealth, last summer the state sent IOUs to taxpayers to whom it owed refunds. State employees have had to take

furloughs three days per month, equivalent to a 14 percent pay cut. And California has the lowest credit rating of any U.S. state.

William Voegeli, a contributing editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*, writes that today's crisis is the result of a century-old Progressive legacy. "Rome wasn't sacked in a day, and California didn't become Argentina overnight," he observes. When Progressives took over the government in the 1910 state elections, they made it their business to "collapse the constitutional space between the people and the government." Their systemic changes—direct primaries, nonpartisan election of judges, recall elections, and popular referendums and initiatives—were motivated by a deep suspicion of "dirty" politics and self-interested parties and politicians. But these reforms empowered government administrators who had interests of their own. Now it is state employee unions that stand in the way of efforts to trim the state's budgets, Voegeli writes.

Donald Cohen, the president of the Center on Policy Initiatives, and Peter Dreier, a professor of politics at Los Angeles-based Occidental College, agree that the Progressive legacy plagues the state, but they single out Proposition 13, the 1978 initiative that restricted property taxes and required a two-thirds majority in the legislature to pass any state tax increases. As a result, California is "virtually ungovernable," Cohen and Dreier write. To make matters worse, in 1990 voters ap-

proved a ballot initiative imposing strict term limits on state legislators. As a result, many are policy novices, with little time and incentive to build interparty coalitions.

There's one thing everybody can agree on: The joke is on today's liberals, ideological descendants of yesterday's Progressives. Time and again, California's ballot initiatives have stymied liberal aims: Gay marriage was banned last year, bilingual education in 1998. But the state's fiscal gridlock is a disaster for all. The Progressives wanted the people to run the state, but today it's clear that the only thing the people have run is aground.

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Hail, Divided Government

THE SOURCE: "The Curse of One-Party Government" by Jonathan Rauch, in *National Journal*, Feb. 6, 2010.

WHAT COULD BE HARDER FOR a president than dealing with a Congress controlled by the oppo-

America has two completely different settings: Mode 1 (unified government) and Mode 2 (split control).

sition party? Try governing with your own party in power, writes *National Journal* columnist Jonathan Rauch.

America today has two completely different government settings: Mode 1 (one party controls both Congress and the presidency) and Mode 2 (split control). Mode 2 works better, Rauch contends.

The underlying dynamic is that today's Republican and Democratic parties have effectively no ideological overlap. When one party controls both branches of government, its policies alienate moderate voters. The minority party (Republicans for the time being) has every incentive to do what it can to help the majority fail at governing; it will reap the benefits come election



Unified government has not been smooth sailing for President Barack Obama, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. A Democratic loss in November could be Obama's gain.