

FOCUS: Republicans Say: Democrats Must Be Responsible, & So Give Us an Advantageous Campaign Issue!:



I am tired of this game. It is not a good game. Republican Michael Strain writes:

Michael Strain: Averting a Debt-Ceiling Disaster: "House firebrands aren't bluffing. Biden and congressional Democrats need to accept this reality: acknowledge the more widely shared Republican argument that federal spending has reached problematic levels. find some spending that can be cut. Responsible members of Congress [might write] a [discharge petition](#). McCarthy could bring a debt-ceiling increase over the objections of the rabble-rousers, knowing that it would likely cost him his speakership. Put the country's welfare first. All responsible politicians must get to work immediately."

The meta-game here is:

1. Republicans demand that Democrats be responsible with respect to the debt-ceiling.
2. Democrats offer policy concessions.
3. In exchange, the Republicans allow a debt-ceiling increase to pass with only a few Republican votes attached to it.
4. Republicans point to the debt-ceiling increase as evidence Democrats are always borrow-and-spend
5. The press repeats the Republican talking point.
6. Republicans solidify their base, attract a few low-information undecideds, and win a few more elections

This does not seem to me to be a very good game for the country.

Michael Strain wants this game to continue. In order to avoid a debt-ceiling crisis triggering partial government default, Michael Strain asks:

1. Democrats put the country first and offer policy concessions,

2. Kevin McCarthy to put the country first and risk losing his Speakership, and

3. non-Handmaid Caucus Republican members of the House toâ€¢ what? â€œBe responsibleâ€¢ What does â€œresponsibilityâ€¢ entail? Michael does not say.

Hereâ€™s my take on what â€œresponsibilityâ€¢ entails here:

- Democrats in the Senate lead on passing a clean debt-ceiling bill.
- Biden announces he will sign a clean debt-ceiling bill, but veto anything with riders attached and, instead, either sell high-yield bonds, mint the coin, or let some Social Security checks bounce, depending on what looks like the least-bad option when the crisis comes.
- 150 Republican House members write and sign a discharge petition for a clean debt-ceiling bill.
- A major, major financial effort by Republican donors to find and fund attractive candidates so that all Handmaid Caucus members lose their next primaries.

Michael envisions, instead, a discharge petition signed by 212 Democrats and 10 Republicans, or a replacement of McCarthy as Speaker by Scalise.

Please forgive me for not being impressed.

[Share](#)

ONE IMAGE: Alternate Brad's:





Now I need a caption for each oneâ€!

[Leave a comment](#)

BRIEFLY NOTED:

Very Briefly Noted:

- **Tyler Cowen:** [China is one of the hardest countries to predict](#): â€~You periodically get these very major sudden flips that most observers are not predicting. I'll just predict that China will stay hard to predictâ€! *A very safe prediction indeed.*
- **James Fallows:** [OK, There Was Something Positive in the Speaker-Vote Debacle](#): â€~What Hakeem Jeffries said was notableâ€!. Jeffries built from his own story of opportunity to a â€œthis we believeâ€!â€□ credo for the Democratsâ€!. Out of many, we are one. That's what makes America a great countryâ€! *Damned if I can understand why anyone looks at Hakeem Jeffries and looks at Kevin McCarthy and has any problem figuring out who would be a better Speaker for America.*
- **Mark Gurman:** [Apple Is Working on Adding Touch Screens to Macs in Major Turnabout](#): â€~Steve Jobs famously decried idea of touch displays for laptops. MacBook Pro with OLED poised to be the first touch-screen Macâ€! *I am fearful of the quest for one single interface between our eyes, our fingers, and our machines.*
- **Suresh Naidu:** [â€œLooking forward](#) to our inaugural "economists write books" talk series with the great Leah Boustanâ€! *This will be extremely enlightening!*
- **Madeleine Neighly:** [â€˜Learn from Leah_Boustan](#) as she discusses her book *Streets of Gold* with Columbia Professor Mae Ngai on Thursday, Jan. 19. Register at <<https://t.co/F9ZkcDEgwi>>â€! *As I saidâ€!*
- **Robert Shrimley:** [British politics is still suffering from â€˜long populismâ€™](#): â€~Sunak is refusing to confront reality, just like his predecessorsâ€! *Damned if I can understand why anyone looks at Starmer and at the clown show and has any problem figuring out who would be a better Prime Minister for Britain.*
- **Barry Eichengreen:** [Sympathy for the Algorithm](#): â€~The release of ChatGPT, a new artificial-intelligence chatbot, is forcing us to rethink what tasks can be carried out with minimal human intervention. If an AI is capable of passing the bar exam, is there any reason it canâ€™t give sound legal advice?â€! How worried should we be? Type â€œWrite an 800-word commentary on AI for Project Syndicateâ€□ into ChatGPT and judge for yourselfâ€! *I have swing around the team: not at all worriedâ€ for now.*
- **Dan Moren:** [Tapbots shares road map for Mastodon client Ivoryâ€™s development](#): â€~â€œMan, they opened like two thousand new testing slots for the Ivory beta and they were all gone within five seconds!â€□â€!. Tapbots has gone ahead and [posted a road map for the app](#)â€! *I really, really want this program.*
- **Duncan Black:** [Chaos Agents](#): â€~The Tea Party-era nuttersâ€! mostly just enjoyed the attentionâ€; [of being] the main characters of reality. But when the right people called them up and said "don't blow up the economy," they listened. I'm not sure the [current crew will](#). They like showing off for the teevee, and they also like burning things downâ€! *it is not the 20 members of the Handmaid caucus. We really have to worry about. It is all their enablers â€“ the other 200 Republican House members, the other Republican politicians, and there are useful idiots in the press.*

[Give a gift subscription](#)

Â§s:

Well, yes: my brain can't concentrate on very few things, and can remember only a few more. I desperately need external aids to remind me of what I know and direct to my attention. I could barely think at all without themâ€"and I am supposed to have a pretty good memory, and to have a very good ability to focus:

Larissa MacFarquhar: [The Mind-Expanding Ideas of Andy Clark](#): â€~The tools we use to help us thinkâ€"from language to smartphonesâ€"may be part of thought itselfâ€!. Any human who uses language to think with has already incorporated an external device into his most intimate self, and the connections only proliferate from there. In Clarkâ€™s opinion, this is an excellent thing. The more devices and objects there are available to foster better ways of thinking, the happier he is. He loves, for instance, the uncanny cleverness of online-shopping algorithms that propose future purchases. He was the last fan of Google Glassâ€!. One day, he lost his laptop, and felt so disoriented and enfeebled that it was as if heâ€™d had a stroke. But this didnâ€™t make him regret his reliance on devices, any more than he regretted having a frontal lobe because it could possibly be damaged. The idea of an extended mind has itself extended far beyond philosophy, which is why Clark is now, in his early sixties, one of the most-cited philosophers aliveâ€!

I wish I had some hope for a secular, center joint Palestinian Israeli political movement. It would be a good idea:

Michael Manekin: [Are Demographics Destiny?](#): â€~I share Halkinâ€™s fear of this new government and am worried about categoric changes that will be challenging to fix. But I do not share his dark determinism. I think we have a way out of the current political crisis, but only if we stop thinking in terms of religious and ethnic â€œdemographics.â€□ Instead, we must attempt to build a coalition based on liberal democratic values or, more fundamentally, shared moral concerns. Such a coalition must include Arabs who desire communal self-determination and Jews who want the same, including secular traditionalists, Modern Orthodox, and yes, individuals and communities among the ultra-Orthodox. Such a coalition should put forth a vision of Israel that is neither an illiberal regime run by rabbis and warmongers nor a state whose legitimacy rests on tribal secular Zionist demographic calculations. If Halkin wants a secular Jewish vision to prevail, one where many national cultures, including his, can thrive, he will need to look for partners outside his own dwindling tribe of secular Zionists. And if he does, he will find themâ€!

Get your bivalent booster, people!:)

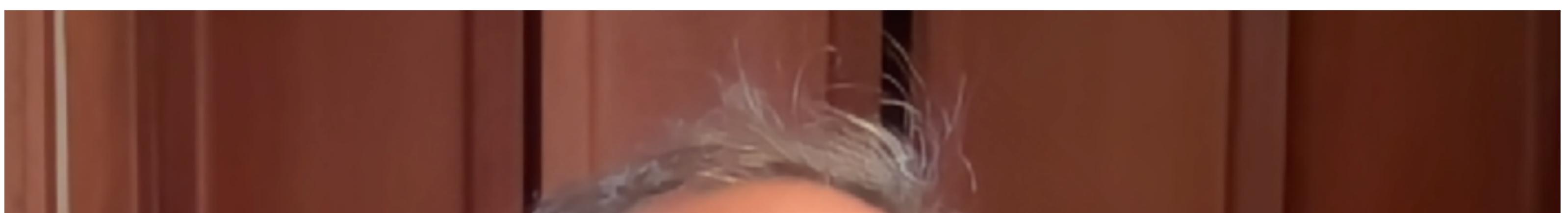
Eric Topol: [The bivalent vaccine booster outperforms](#): â€~You may recall that I was a skeptic about the bivalent BA.5 vaccineâ€!. Bivalent boosters work wellâ€!. They are not a panacea, by any meansâ€"their efficacy against infections is limited and of short duration, which has been the case for shots since the Omicron variant came along in late 2021. The spike protein of the BA.5 bivalent more closely resembles XBB.1.5 than the Wuhan ancestral spikeâ€!. The bivalent BA.5 booster has helped to bridge the big antigenic distance gap from the Wuhan strain to current Omicron subvariants. Weâ€™re lucky in the United States to have a big supply and itâ€™s frankly disappointing to see the divisiveness, cherry picking of data, and detractors that defy the body of evidence that has now accumulated. The bivalent booster impact of broadening our immune response has exceeded expectationsâ€!

On the one hand, I want to say: yes. On the other hand, Brinkâ€™s brain is massively, massively, more complicated and sophisticated than Chat-GPT. Evolution has done amazing things over the past 500 million generations of brain evolution. And analogizing our intelligence to its rotoscoped image of some average of human speech acts is to make a category mistake:

Brink Lindsey: â€~Musings inspired by Noah Smithâ€™s terrific essay on the â€œthird magicâ€□â€"namely, the expanding possibilities for control without understanding, power without knowledge, created by AI.â€! Pretty much all human technology before the 1800s was developed by trial-and-error tinkering. Pyramids, aqueducts, Gothic cathedralsâ€"nobody understood their underlying principlesâ€! [the] knowledgeâ€! was â€œknow how,â€□ not â€œknow thatâ€□â€! standard operating procedures which work even if we canâ€™t offer an analytical explanation for whyâ€!. My surprised recognition of how much my own brain works like ChatGPTâ€!. I have a big vocabulary because I read a lot. And I frequently will use an uncommon word that occurs to me as just the right one, even if Iâ€™m not at all sure of the dictionary definition when I stop to think about itâ€!. I knew just the right word to use. But that pattern-recognition know-how is different from the â€œknow thatâ€□ analytical description of the pattern (definition) or of how that pattern emerged (etymology). For all of us, I think, our know-how vastly exceeds our â€œknow thatâ€□â€!

[Get 33% off a group subscription](#)

[Donate Subscriptions](#)







Read Brad DeLong's *Grasping Reality* in the Substack app
Available for iOS and Android

[Get the app](#)

[Subscribe now](#)