

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

Mark L. Melcher
President
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

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THEY SAID IT

"But in its fundamental aspects it was like all military parades from Julius Caesar to Eisenhower. It was a ceremonious procession stepping to martial music, carrying flags and deadly weapons--a reminder, cast into a form as ritualistic and devotional as the ceremonies of a church, that the process of government, laboratory science, liberalism, and expertism must be depended upon sometime, somewhere, to reach a breaking point, at which breaking point the army takes over and the ancient battle begins once more."

"Some Day, In Old Charleston," a 1957 essay by Donald Davidson.

THE REAL "MOTHER OF ALL BATTLES." It was inevitable that as the time grew near for America's military assault on Iraq that the debate over the wisdom of the venture would sharpen, and that the fence setters would be forced to jump to one side or the other. Nevertheless, it is a fascinating process to watch.

One of the most politically interesting developments in this process was the storm of criticism that blew in last week from a group of leading Senate Democrats, including Tom Daschle, Ted Kennedy, Joe Biden, Dianne Feinstein, and John Kerry. One by one these individuals blasted Bush for his belligerent attitude toward Iraq and his seeming unwillingness to wait as long as it takes to let the United Nations decide what course of action would be appropriate.

Kerry's remarks, while not necessarily the harshest, summed up the argument of his fellow Democratic Senators quite well. "I believe the Bush Administration's blustering unilateralism is wrong, and even dangerous, for our country. In practice it has meant alienating our long-time friends and allies, alarming potential foes and spreading anti-Americanism around the world."

I don't have an inside track on what this sudden storm of criticism was all about. But unlike many conservative critics of these comments, I think it would be a mistake to assume that they spring entirely from cynical political motives.

Subscriptions to The Political Forum are available by contacting:
The Political Forum
8563 Senedo Rd., Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842
Tel 540-477-9762, Fax 540-477-3359, Email melcher@thepoliticalforum.com,
or visit us at www.thepoliticalforum.com

I think the better explanation is that these Senators were saying exactly what they believe. They are, after all, unapologetic, vocal supporters of the United Nations, and as such, they almost certainly believe, quite sincerely, that any action that weakens the global authority of that organization threatens the prospects for world peace.

I think it is also fair to say that they are political “doves,” in the sense that they genuinely shrink from the prospect of using military force to settle international disputes, even if that means having to overlook the possibility of even more serious threats somewhere in the future.

Why this should surprise anyone is beyond me, since this has been the heart and soul of the philosophy of the Democratic Party’s foreign policy establishment since the mid-1960s. My old friend Angelo Codevilla, now professor of International Relations at Boston University, once described the individuals who make up this establishment as follows: “They did not spend their formative years worrying about how to maximize their country’s power or studying the principles of international statecraft. After opposing the United States in Vietnam, they made their careers restraining, diminishing, denigrating American power, and arguing that power is not fundamental to world affairs.”

Strobe Talbott, one of Bill Clinton’s leading foreign policy gurus, spoke for them when he approvingly wrote in *Time* magazine in the early 1990s that sometime in the 21st century “nationhood as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single global authority. A phrase briefly fashionable in the mid-20th century – ‘citizen of the world’ – will have assumed real meaning by the end of the 21st.”

Warren Christopher, Bill’s first Secretary of State and Jimmy’s chief negotiator with the Iranians during the hostage crisis, spoke for them when he wrote in his book, *The Hostages in Iran*, that that U.S. foreign policy disaster should be taken “as a clear vindication of talking as a means to resolve international disputes.”

In short, I think these Democratic Senators are reflecting their Party’s deepest, most fundamental ideological beliefs. As was noted in last Friday’s “From the Archives” piece, the principle components of this philosophy are that negotiations should be the centerpiece of foreign policy; that all actions should have approval of multinational organizations, such as the U.N. or NATO; and that the use of military power is de facto evidence of a failure in the negotiating process.

Needless to say, I disagree with this philosophy. In fact, I think Eric Voegelin accurately described the consequences of these beliefs when he wrote the following paragraph in his book *The New Science of Politics*.

"Gnostic societies and their leaders will recognize dangers to their existence when they develop, but such dangers will not be met by appropriate actions in the world of reality. They will rather be met by magic operations in the dream world, such as disapproval, moral condemnation, declarations of intention, resolutions, appeals to the opinion of mankind, branding of enemies as aggressors, outlawing of war, propaganda for world peace and world government, etc. . . . Gnostic politics is self-defeating in the sense that measures which are intended to establish peace increase the disturbances that will lead to war."

For the time being, these attacks on Bush are probably of little importance. But together they convey an important message that should not be ignored by anyone who is trying to assess the future course of America's foreign policy. Simply stated, this message is that there is a large and politically powerful group of senior Democratic politicians, who are not only politically disposed to oppose Bush's actions, but are ideologically at odds with him, and are waiting in the wings to join an assertive, aggressive anti-war coalition, should that movement's current leaders succeed in forming a critical popular mass in support of it.

As was the case with the anti-Vietnam-war movement, the big time politicians won't throw their weight behind such a venture unless and until it gathers a large enough head of steam to capture the support of the liberal media and the imagination of a large plurality of voters.

So far, of course, it hasn't. But you can bet that Tom, Ted, Joe, Dianne and John will be at the head of the parade if such a thing were to happen, and that Hillary and a host of other Democrats would be there with them. And you can further bet, that if this were to happen, it would have far reaching effects, not only on American foreign policy but on domestic issues as well.

Frankly, I think the only thing that is keeping the Democrats reasonably quiet right now is Bush's popularity and their concern that the war might go well and leave them looking foolish in its aftermath. But last week's outbursts are a sign that some Democrats are getting restless and starting to test the strength of that line.

On the international scene, the most interesting development last week on the pre-war choosing-sides front was the decision by France and Germany to oppose any immediate military action on the part of the United States. Frankly, I did not expect this. As I have said often in these pages, I had thought that, when the time came, both of these nations would support America, if for no other reason than to be around to help divide up the spoils in a post-Saddam Iraq.

I don't pretend to have any inside knowledge on why they did what they did. But my guess is that a variety of important considerations entered into the decision making process, and that liking or disliking America was the least of these, despite what so many American pundits seem to think. Certainly, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and French President Jacques Chirac are not oblivious to widespread anti-Americanism among their citizens. But I think they have more important things to consider.

For starters, I believe their stance had a lot to do with the huge Muslim presence within their nations and throughout Europe. Given the size of these Islamic populations, and the fact that they tend to be extremely active politically, it stands to reason that politicians in these countries will be sympathetic to the Muslim position.

But more important is the fact that these communities contain large and active terrorist elements. Centered in Brussels, home to a population of some 350,000 Muslims, these neo-colonial extremist groups are on the verge of being able to establish an unassailable, de facto religious state within this tiny country, which is, it is worth noting, also home to the government of the European Community.

With tentacles throughout Europe, these groups are rapidly growing beyond the reach of Brussels' flimsy law enforcement establishment. And considerable evidence exists that they are already large enough to put the fear of Allah into the European populace and their political leaders, none of whom appear to have enough spirit left to launch much of a fight against the terrorists within their borders.

It is worth noting also that these terrorist factions are linked to extensive organized crime networks that operate throughout Europe, trafficking in everything from narcotics, white slavery, and financial fraud to petty street crime. This not only provides money to help finance terrorist activities abroad, but to buy the support of European politicians at home.

I also think that economic concerns helped fuel the reactions of both countries, but most especially Germany. Its economy is, for all practical purposes, in the tank already, and given the morons that run economic policy in that nation the only hope they have is to muddle through, a chance that could be foreclosed by a war in the Middle East.

And finally, there is, I believe, a strong possibility that if Saddam falls, the U.S. military is likely to find considerable evidence, as it sifts through the rubble, that a great deal of extremely dirty business has been transacted over the past decade or so between Saddam and a host of European governments and European companies, which it is worth noting, are virtually indistinguishable from each other.

The immediate consequences of the actions by the Germans and the French are not great. Bush will do what he intends to do with or without their support, and my guess is that he intends to go to war sometime in late February.

In the short term, the Europeans might buy themselves a temporary dispensation from the terrorist attacks that could occur in the aftermath of an American assault on Iraq. Over the long term, I think this is a Faustian bargain on their part and reinforces my long held pessimism about the future health of European society. But that's another story, for another time.

In the meantime, the really big and important pre-war show begins today at the United Nations. Legally, I think America will be able to make an ironclad case that, under the terms of prior U.N. resolutions, including the one passed just a few months ago, the Security Council has no choice but to move ahead aggressively against Iraq.

Frankly however, I doubt that this argument will win the day this time around. But, call me a Pollyanna if you wish, I think it is basically a win-win situation for the Bush administration. Either the U.N. stands behind its own resolutions, in which case this would be seen as a victory for Bush. Or it fails to do so and owns up to the irrelevancy that has marked its existence since it was founded, which wouldn't be such a bad thing either.

In the end, it all comes down to a question of the success or failure of the military action against Iraq. If the war goes well, along with the subsequent occupation, clean up, and installation of a friendly government, as I assume it will, Bush will be riding high in the polls; the markets will react favorably; the administration will be in a position to address other problems with a high degree of confidence, including such important matters as the tax bill, health care reform, and

North Korea; and the Democrats will find that it is difficult to get any traction for the upcoming presidential race.

If on the other hand, the Iraq initiative turns into a disaster, in which thousands of American are killed, oil deliveries are halted, weapons of mass destruction are used by both sides, Israel is forced into the fight, and horrendous terrorist incidents occur throughout the world in its wake, then Bush's presidency is almost certainly down the chute, followed by the financial markets, the global economy, and the long-term fortunes of the GOP. It is also certain that Bush's policy of preemption as a means of protecting the United States from terrorism would be replaced with a policy of negotiation.

One could argue that Bush's presidency could survive a disaster in Iraq. But I don't think so. While I have always enjoyed the poetic sentiment behind the famous claim by the child prodigy poetess, Nathalia Clara Ruth Crane, that "There is glory in a great mistake," I have never actually seen or heard of any proof that this is true, with the possible exception of the famous charge of the light brigade at Balaclava, and that "glory" is really only a reflection of Tennyson's incurable romanticism.

A severe defeat would, I believe, so cripple Bush that the Democrats could finish him off in 2004 with relative ease. This is, after all, *his* war, and his alone. From a political standpoint, he does not have to fight this war. In fact, many people, including some within his own administration have advised against it. There is a clear alternative to this war. And there has been no highly visible aggression against Americans or American assets on the part of Saddam, which has been a *sine qua non* for American military action for most of its history.

Wilson couldn't join World War I until the Germans began unchecked submarine attacks against American ships. Roosevelt desperately wanted to enter World War II, but felt he could not until Pearl Harbor provided the justification. Johnson had to provoke the Gulf of Tonkin confrontation to justify escalating America's then-limited involvement in Vietnam. Bush has no such excuse. And he claims he doesn't need it.

Many people maintain that President Bush is acting out of principle. Others say he is being irresponsible and foolish for risking so much for so small a provocation. In the end, history will decide who is right. And it will do this on the basis of whether Bush's venture is a success or a failure. Any way you look at it, it's a huge gamble for very high stakes. One might even call it a real "mother of all battles."

MY NEW HERO. The following is an op-ed piece from the September 11, 2002 issue of the left-leaning London tabloid the *Daily Mirror*. I received it the other day as an e-mail from my sister, who received it from a friend, who received it from a friend, who... well, you know. It was written by Tony Parson. I had never heard of him, so I checked him out on www.mirror.co.uk, and while I probably wouldn't agree with everything he has written, I like him a lot.

Get these opening paragraphs from a column about the firemen's strike in London, dated January 24, 2003 and entitled "Where the Blazes Were You Mr. Blair."

It is completely barmy to compare firefighters with other public service workers. Teachers do not risk getting burned alive when they are giving double geography. Nurses are not in danger of being buried alive in tons of steel and concrete every time they change a bedpan. Tube drivers are not in peril of their lives when the lazy bastards are looking for any excuse to take another day off work.

And if, God forbid, a major terrorist attack is launched on this country, who is going to be in the front line of fire? John Prescott? No, it will be Britain's 55,000 firefighters. How about showing these men and women some respect?

Or these closing paragraphs from an item in the same column entitled "A Much Missed World," about the controversial Miss World contest that was moved out of Nigeria because of protests from people whom Parson describes as "fanatical nut jobs."

Although long derided by our politically-correct culture, Miss World has always been a celebration of women, rather than a degradation. I hope that even the hairy-legged harpies who drove Miss World out of the civilised world will applaud the contest. And thank God we live in a part of the world where you can still say: "Up with beauty."

Anyway, the following piece is really worth reading, in light of all the America bashing that is going on right now all over Europe. And three cheers for Tony Parson, says I.

SHAME ON YOU AMERICAN-HATING LIBERALS

One year ago, the world witnessed a unique kind of broadcasting - the mass murder of thousands, live on television. As a lesson in the pitiless cruelty of the human race, September 11 was up there with Pol Pot's mountain of skulls in Cambodia, or the skeletal bodies stacked like garbage in the Nazi concentration camps. An unspeakable act so cruel, so calculated and so utterly merciless that surely the world could agree on one thing - nobody deserves this fate.

Surely there could be consensus: the victims were truly innocent, the perpetrators truly evil. But to the world's eternal shame, 9/11 is increasingly seen as America's comeuppance. Incredibly, anti-Americanism has increased over the last year. There has always been a simmering resentment to the USA in this country - too loud, too rich, too full of themselves and so much happier than Europeans - but it has become an epidemic. And it seems incredible to me. More than that, it turns my stomach.

America is this country's greatest friend and our staunchest ally. We are bonded to the US by culture, language and blood. A little over half a century ago, around half a million Americans died for our freedoms, as well as their own. Have we forgotten so soon?

And exactly a year ago, thousands of ordinary men, women and children - not just Americans, but from dozens of countries - were butchered by a small group of religious fanatics. Are we so quick to betray them? What touched the heart about those who died in the twin towers and on the planes was that we recognised them. Young fathers and mothers, somebody's son and somebody's daughter, husbands and wives. And children. Some unborn.

And these people brought it on themselves? And their nation is to blame for their meticulously planned slaughter? These days you don't have to be some dust-encrusted nut job in Kabul or Karachi or Finsbury Park to see America as the Great Satan. The anti-American alliance is made up of self-loathing liberals who blame the Americans for every ill in the Third World, and conservatives suffering from power-envy, bitter that the world's only superpower can do what it likes without having to ask permission.

The truth is that America has behaved with enormous restraint since September 11.

Remember, remember.

Remember the gut-wrenching tapes of weeping men phoning their wives to say, "I love you," before they were burned alive. Remember those people leaping to their deaths from the top of burning skyscrapers. Remember the hundreds of firemen buried alive. Remember the smiling face of that beautiful little girl who was on one of the planes with her mum. Remember, remember - and realise that America has never retaliated for 9/11 in anything like the way it could have.

So a few al-Qaeda tourists got locked without a trial in Camp X-ray? Pass the Kleenex. So some Afghan wedding receptions were shot up after they merrily fired their semi-automatics in a sky full of American planes? A shame, but maybe next time they should stick to confetti.

AMERICA could have turned a large chunk of the world into a parking lot. That it didn't is a sign of strength. American voices are already being raised against attacking Iraq - that's what a democracy is for. How many in the Islamic world will have a minute's silence for the slaughtered innocents of 9/11? How many Islamic leaders will have the guts to say that the mass murder of 9/11 was an abomination?

When the news of 9/11 broke on the West Bank, those freedom-loving Palestinians were dancing in the street. America watched all of that - and didn't push the button. We should thank the stars that America is the most powerful nation in the world. I still find it incredible that 9/11 did not provoke all-out war. Not a "war on terrorism". A real war.

The fundamentalist dudes are talking about "opening the gates of hell", if America attacks Iraq. Well, America could have opened the gates of hell like you wouldn't believe. The US is the most militarily powerful nation that ever strode the face of the earth.

The campaign in Afghanistan may have been less than perfect and the planned war on Iraq may be misconceived. But don't blame America for not bringing peace and light to these wretched countries. How many democracies are there in the Middle East, or in the Muslim world? You can count them on the fingers of one hand - assuming you haven't had any chopped off for minor shoplifting.

I love America, yet America is hated. I guess that makes me Bush's poodle. But I would rather be a dog in New York City than a Prince in Riyadh. Above all, America is hated because it is what every country wants to be - rich, free, strong, open, optimistic.

Not ground down by the past, or religion, or some caste system. America is the best friend this country ever had and we should start remembering that.

Or do you really think the USA is the root of all evil? Tell it to the loved ones of the men and women who leaped to their death from the burning towers. Tell it to the nursing mothers whose husbands died on one of the hijacked planes, or were ripped apart in a collapsing skyscraper. And tell it to the hundreds of young widows whose husbands worked for the New York Fire Department. To our shame, George Bush gets a worse press than Saddam Hussein.

Once we were told that Saddam gassed the Kurds, tortured his own people and set up rape-camps in Kuwait. Now we are told he likes Quality Street. Save me the orange centre, oh mighty one!

Remember, remember, September 11. One of the greatest atrocities in human history was committed against America. No, do more than remember. Never forget.

EUROPEAN ANTI-AMERICANISM. As many of you know, every Sunday night I e-mail out a favorite poem of mine along with a brief comment on it and the author. I only send it to those who have requested to be put on the list, but I welcome all subscribers, sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, and friends. And its free! The response has been terrific. The Sunday before last, I chose a poem by Auden about the plight of German Jews in 1939. The following is an e-mail I received in response to that poem from my good friend Gary Glynn in New York. I thought you might enjoy it.

Dear Mark,

Thanks for the Auden. One of my heroes for turning on the left as he did and returning to Anglo-Catholicism. This poem brought tears to my eyes. . . . There was a poem in the letters section of the *Spectator* recently about European anti-Americanism, written by an American expat living in Britain who knows his Kipling. It went something like this.

For it's Yankee this an' Yankee that, and throw the bastards out,
But if it wasn't for the Yanks, my friend, you'd all be speaking Kraut.

Not up to the standards of your favorites but worth keeping in mind for European dinner parties after you've had too much to drink and can't take any more of this Euroweenie stuff.

Gary

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