

# The Political Forum

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

Mark L. Melcher  
Publisher  
[melcher@thepoliticalforum.com](mailto:melcher@thepoliticalforum.com)

Stephen R. Soukup  
Senior Editor  
[soukup@thepoliticalforum.com](mailto:soukup@thepoliticalforum.com)

Monday, August 25, 2003

## THEY SAID IT

“The Council on American Islamic Relations has claimed that the term ‘Islamic fundamentalist’ is itself racist and that writing about Islamic terrorism leads to ‘hate crimes.’ The council has defended Hamas chieftain Musa Marzuk, defended the Sudanese Islamic government and characterized the trial of Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman, convicted for his role in the World Trade Center bombing conspiracy, in its annual roundup of ‘hate crimes’ and acts of ‘bias’ against Muslims. CAIR officials have been invited to White House receptions hosted by Hillary Clinton, the most recent being in January to mark the end of Ramadan. Several months later CAIR co-sponsored a rally at Brooklyn College in New York, where a visiting Egyptian cleric led the audience in a song, ‘No to the Jews, Descendants of Apes.’”

--From a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed piece dated August 24, 1998 (three years before the catastrophe of September 11, 2001) entitled “How to Really Fight Terrorism,” by Steven Emerson.

**THE OTHER WAR ON TERROR.** I have no polling data to support this claim, but I feel quite sure that when most Americans think about the domestic side of the “war on terror” they see it as a grand contest between federal, state and local law enforcement officials and a host of young Arab men furtively plotting to commit acts of violence against innocent U.S. citizens, while pretending to be average, peace loving Americans.

This belief is reinforced by a President who routinely speaks of “hunting down” terrorists, and by the occasional dramatic arrest in some U.S. city of a group of young Arab men, who, we are told, have trained in al Quada terrorist camps in Afghanistan or the Philippines.

And while this kind of police activity may well be the most important element of the immediate domestic war on terror, I believe that when this conflict is over, historians will conclude that victory was achieved not solely by the law enforcement community’s face off with actual terrorists, but also by the efforts of a small group of brave journalists and academics, who unselfishly set aside other preferred pursuits and placed their careers, their peace of mind, and

---

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](mailto:melcher@thepoliticalforum.com),  
or visit us at [www.thepoliticalforum.com](http://www.thepoliticalforum.com)

often their lives and the safety of family members on the line in order to alert and educate Americans to the nature of the threat that faces them.

I have been fortunate for the past decade to number among my friends two of the most prominent of these American heroes, Steve Emerson and Daniel Pipes. These two men were not just among the first to call attention to the serious threat facing Americans from Islamic terrorism, but were also among the first to devote themselves to the important task of educating the public, as well as government officials, about the quasi-religious motives that drive these errant Muslims to terrorism and the nature of the large, sophisticated infrastructure that makes it possible for these terrorists to operate in the midst of the very people that they plan to kill.

The enemy combatants in this, what I call the “other war on terror,” are not scruffy, religious fanatics diligently planning specific acts of murder and mayhem, and spurred on by the promise of umpteen virgins in the afterlife.

They are, for the most part, educated, well spoken individuals who are invariably associated with one or more of a number of well financed, politically powerful, dual-purpose organizations that represent the legitimate interests of American Muslims and Christian Arabs living in the United States, but which concentrate a substantial portion of their activities on promoting militant Islamic teachings throughout the U.S. Muslim community; hindering efforts of law makers and law enforcement agencies to develop and implement policies that will help them find and prosecute terrorists; and attempting to intimidate advocates of stronger actions to protect America against terrorism.

The two largest and most prominent of these groups are the American Muslim Council (AMC) and the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). Others include the Islamic Society of North America, North American Islamic Trust, Islamic Circle of North America, Muslim Student Association, Muslim Public Affairs Council, Arab-American Institute, International Institute for Islamic Thought, United Association for Studies and Research, Muslim Arab Youth Association, American Muslim Society, and American Muslim Alliance. (Each, by the way, has a website, if you are interested.)

In the fight against their civilian critics, the favorite weapons of these combatants include character assassination, via the use of spurious charges of racism, insensitivity to minorities, and violations of academic and journalistic ethics. They also employ covert threats of violence, as well as the promiscuous use of slander and, to borrow a term from Nazism, “the big lie.”

In all of their activities aimed at undermining America’s free and democratic system of government, they employ the fundamental tenets of this system to protect themselves from prosecution, among which are the nation’s civil rights laws; its free and open judicial and political systems; its freedoms of speech, association, and religion; and its tradition of welcoming minorities into its society. They are also highly skilled in the use of the crown jewel of modern day liberalism’s distorted ideology, political correctness.

Now I am not saying here that all of these individuals and organizations are overtly and consciously part of an organized effort to commit terrorist acts within the United States.

In fact, some probably viewed September 11, 2001 as harmful in the near term to their various and sundry goals, the most important of which is the establishment of a radicalized, politically and financially powerful Islamic vanguard in every state in the union, which can be called upon to produce financing for terrorist activities throughout the world, and eventually to provide a base from which militant Islam can launch a broad, multi-faceted assault on the economic, social, and political foundations of America.

If this latter goal sounds farfetched, one need only refer to the words of the CAIR's board chairman, Omar Ahmad, who announced in 1998 that "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Koran, the Muslim book of scripture should be the higher authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on Earth."

In any case, there can be little question that the sum total of the efforts of these individuals and organizations has been to make it easier for terrorists to operate within U.S. borders. Indeed, prior to September 11, most of these groups had direct financial and personal relations with one or more of such terrorist groups as Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and even al Qaeda. Many also routinely helped known terrorists and individuals with direct ties to terrorist organizations to obtain both legal and illegal visas into the United States so that they could be featured speakers at their conventions and go on hate-filled lecture tours of mosques throughout the nation.

Since September 11, 2001, a large number of members and associates of these groups have been incarcerated or deported, and numerous affiliated "charities" have been closed down when it was revealed that they were not charities at all but fundraising arms for terrorist organizations.

But their work goes on, mostly outside the view of the average American. Occasionally, however, one or more of these groups will take on a high profile cause, which provides a rare public look into the surprising political power they still wield and a partial list of their key political allies.

Such is that case of the recent well publicized attempt by several of these groups, led by CAIR, to block the appointment by President Bush of the aforementioned Daniel Pipes to a spot on the board of directors U.S. Institute of Peace.

CAIR is a militant organization with close historic ties to the terrorist group Hamas. It was founded in 1994 by Nihad Awad, who was at the time, among other things, the editor of the Islamic Association for Palestine's (IAP) *Muslim World Monitor*, a bi-weekly Hamas propaganda publication that championed Hamas terrorism and promoted crude anti-Semitism and anti-western conspiracies.

In its early days, CAIR's board of directors was made up entirely of major Hamas leaders, and it openly praised Hamas and other Islamic militant groups, such as the Sudanese National Islamic Front and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Its most prominent spokesman is a man named Ibrahim Hooper, who is widely known in the counter-terrorism community as a fierce ideological proponent of Islamic militancy.

Like anyone who has followed this "other war on terror," I have a large clip file on CAIR. One item in this file serves two purposes. It provides some background on the organization and

explains why it fears and detests Pipes. This item is a statement released by Pipes in September 1999 (two years before the catastrophe of September 11, 2001) in response to a public demand by Hooper that Pipes support his charge that CAIR has apologized for “killers such as Hamas . . . and Osama bin Laden.” The following is an extract from that document.

(1) CAIR was a coordinator of a press conference on May 10, 1996 protesting the extradition order of Mousa Abu Marzuk by Federal Judge Kevin Duffy (who concluded there was “probable cause” that Marzuk engaged in terrorism). I have a June 1996 copy of the “Newsletter of the Marzuk Legal Fund” detailing Nihad Awad’s comments on this topic. CAIR also signed a letter, reprinted in the same newsletter, protesting Judge Duffy’s extradition order as “anti-Islamic” and “anti-American.” Isn’t that apologizing for Hamas?

(2) As for Usama bin Ladin: When a billboard went up in California last year with the headline “the sworn enemy” next to a picture of Osama bin Laden, CAIR demanded the removal of the billboard as “offensive to Muslims.”

(3) Nor is this all. CAIR has issued alerts to defend several other individuals suspected by Federal authorities of being tied to Hamas. One example: Abdelheem Ashqar, who was jailed for contempt of court for refusing to testify before a grand jury about his knowledge of Hamas fundraising.

(4) CAIR officials have publicly denied that Hamas or other terrorist groups exist on American soil, despite repeated FBI confirmation of this in public testimonies and statements.

(5) CAIR listed the arrests of Mousa Abu Marzuk and Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman [the blind sheikh who planned to blow up New York City landmarks] in its annual “hate crimes” survey, giving these as examples of “discrimination” toward Muslims.

(6) CAIR has defended the Islamic Association for Palestine, dubbed a “Hamas front” by Oliver Revell, a former top FBI official in charge of all counter-terrorism. (That defense is no surprise; according to the organization’s 1994 Articles of Incorporation, CAIR’s three incorporators were Nihad Awad--who worked at the time for the IAP-- and two presidents of IAP, Omar Ahmed and Rafeeq Jaber.) The close connection between Hamas, IAP and CAIR reveals CAIR’s true purpose.

(7) In an interview with AOL after the African embassy bombings in August 1998, Hooper refused to condemn Usama bin Ladin; in fact, when asked to ascribe responsibility for bin Laden’s bombings and the U.S. counter-strikes, Hooper refused to answer, characterizing the events as a result of “misunderstandings on both sides.”

Here’s the full statement by Hooper: “Well, I can’t speak to the specifics of the bombings and the counter-bombings but I believe a great deal of what happened is responsible due to misunderstandings on both sides and that much can be solved by dialogue and education.” Attributing bin Laden’s terrorist attacks to “misunderstandings” is a classic of terrorist apologies.

In a separate, more recent article in the *New York Post*, dated July 19, 2003, Pipes adds this additional information on CAIR.

“Nor does CAIR just excuse violence. Two of its former employees, Bassem Khafagi and Ismail Royer, have recently been arrested on charges related to terrorism. And a member of CAIR’s advisory board, Siraj Wahhaj, was named by the U.S. attorney as one of the ‘unindicted persons who may be alleged as co-conspirators’ in an attempted terrorist assault.”

Pipes, on the other hand, is a well known Islamic scholar with impeccable credentials. He is Director of the The Middle East Forum, a Philadelphia-based think tank that “works to define and promote America’s interests in the Middle East.” He holds an undergraduate degree and a PhD from Harvard University. He has taught at the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and the U.S. Naval War College. He also spent six years studying abroad, including three years in Egypt. He currently serves on the “Special Task Force on Terrorism and Technology” at the Department of State.

CAIR’s charges against Pipes are basically a tired, boiler plate repetition of the claims that the organization makes against any and all individuals and groups, both private and public, that have called for a vigorous governmental response to the threat posed against America by Islamists. Among other things, the organization says that he is an “Islamophobe” and that he holds “bigoted” and “pro-war” views.” And predictably, they pick and choose out-of-context snippets from his many books, scholarly writings, and newspaper columns to support their claim.

But anyone who paid attention to the confirmation hearings before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee was quickly struck by the realization that this fight was not about whether Pipes is of good enough character to serve on the board of this largely ceremonial institute. Indeed, the fact that Senators Ted Kennedy, infamous for his gross indulgences, and Chris Dodd, Teddy’s skanking buddy from the good old days, took an active role in debating the question of character came close to reducing the entire proceeding to a farce.

The fact is that this fight, as everyone in the committee room knew, was about the conduct of the “other war on terror;” a war, as described above, which is being fought on the American side by a handful of people, like Pipes, who recognize that the danger stems not from a few individual terrorists, but from a large, well financed and politically well connected conglomeration of groups and individuals who share a common hatred for the United States.

The good news for the nation is that CAIR has lost the fight, and Pipes will go on the board of the United States Institute of Peace, where his extensive knowledge of militant Islam, the single greatest threat to peace in the world, will be put to good use.

The bad news for the nation is that this will be accomplished by a recess appointment because CAIR, one of the leading apologists for militant Islam in the United States, demonstrated convincingly that, despite its shameful public record, it had more than enough political clout in Washington to keep the nomination from being reported out of the committee.

**THE DEMOCRATS' DILEMMA.** There has been considerable discussion of late about the apparent vulnerability of President George Bush in next November's election. Like his father before him, young George appears to have squandered unparalleled popularity and the respect and admiration afforded a victorious commander-in-chief, and thus appears to be in for the fight of his political life.

Both the President's political opposition and the mainstream media have spent a great deal of time playing up the similarities between George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush in an attempt to make the '04 race look more competitive. George W., they claim, has much in common with his father, including a disquieting war in Iraq, runaway fiscal deficits, a lack of a decent domestic energy policy, a mildly, though persistently, soft economy, a striking slide in approval ratings.

And this, they continue, suggests that this Bush presidency could very well end in much the same way as the last one, in a humiliating re-election collapse. The son has repeated the mistakes of the father and may repeat his ignominious fate as well. Or so the theory goes.

I, for one, don't buy it.

Now, it's not that I think George W. Bush is unbeatable. Indeed, I am perfectly willing to admit that he is anything but a shoe-in to win re-election next year. His popularity is waning; the war in Iraq is losing public support; and Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, the two primary targets of the "war on terror" are purportedly still alive and at large. And besides, there are almost no "sure things" in Washington.

Nevertheless, a scenario for his defeat that is based on the similarities between the situations faced by the two Bushes is specious at best. Though the similarities between the presidency of George W. and that of his father are in many ways extraordinary, they are, at best, superficial. When all is said and done, I believe that the similarities between the two Presidents Bush will prove little more than interesting historical trivia, and the much more substantial differences between the two will determine the outcome of the election next November.

One of the most notable differences is the fact that Bush the Younger will, unlike his father, not face a serious and hostile challenge from within his own party. As I've written time and time again, most observers credit Ross Perot with fracturing the political right and siphoning enough votes away from George H.W. to put Bill Clinton over the top in 1992. And while that may be so, the real rupture on the right began with Pat Buchanan in New Hampshire. George W. will face no such internecine insurgency.

A second of the more readily apparent dissimilarities involves the timing and causes of the Bushes' respective recessions. George W.'s came much earlier in his term than did his father's, and, more importantly, he has always been credibly able to deny responsibility for it. More to the point, come next November, a full-throated expansion will, in all likelihood be more than a year old, and the recession, mild as it was, will be a distant memory.

Another important though less discussed difference between the two Bush presidencies is the disposition and timing of the respective wars in Iraq. In this regard, Bush the Elder's war came

too early in his term. By the time voters headed into the booths, the war was long since forgotten, as were his 90+% approval ratings.

Bush the Younger's war with Iraq will certainly not be similarly forgotten, since it is actually part of a broader conflict that will still be ongoing next November. And while it would seem right now that that could actually hurt Bush, since the war appears to be going poorly, I doubt strongly that it will.

To wit, I expect one of three scenarios to play out between now and November with regard to Iraq. Either: the Bush team's plan is working as well as they say it is, despite the apparent chaos at present, and things will improve dramatically over the next several months; or Bush, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, et al. have an undisclosed strategy for dealing with Iraq that will become apparent and will bear fruit in the next several months; or, absent the first two, Bush will realize that what he's doing isn't working and that this failure threatens both his political future and the future of the nation, and he will take steps to correct the problem.

Bush is not LBJ; Rumsfeld is not Robert McNamara; and, no matter how badly the left may wish it were, Iraq is not Vietnam. If the current plan (whatever that may be) doesn't work, the Bush crowd will, in all likelihood, find one that does, even if that means simply installing a puppet and moving on to the next global hotspot.

Finally, and almost certainly most importantly, George W. Bush, is, unlike his father, blessed with a uniquely hapless cast of would-be challengers. Though the Democratic field is crowded, it is at this point populated exclusively with political nobodies, not one of whom, in my opinion, has what it takes to win a national election.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that for a long time in 1992, most observers thought Bill Clinton was a nobody, and just look at what he did. Well, yes and no. Clinton *was* a nobody. But by just about any standard you wish to use, he was a far superior caliber of nobody than any of the nobodies in the current crop. He was, after all, the president of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council (DLC); he was (and still is) a uniquely gifted politician; he was (and this is key) the governor of a Southern state; and (this too is key) he embraced a centrist platform that included further middle class tax cuts.

Of the current Democratic hopefuls, only Senator Joseph Lieberman is similarly well credentialed, though he is quite manifestly a significantly less brilliant politician than is Bill. And over the last several weeks I have come to the inescapable conclusion that Lieberman is also the only one of the so-called "first tier" candidates who has absolutely no chance at all of winning the nomination.

For a long time, I believed that he held a very slim chance of remaining viable, if only because he is the only one of the Democrats who appears capable of winning in the general election. But I have recently concluded that this is entirely immaterial, as the left's overwhelming and frankly unprecedented detestation of George W. Bush will almost certainly render Lieberman, whom many of the party's activists consider "too conservative" or "too Bush-like," incapable of securing the nomination. In the current political environment, a Democratic centrist (as Lieberman professes to be) is quite simply not going to be nominated by his party.

That leaves Howard Dean, John Kerry, and Dick Gephardt as the only current candidates with any realistic shot of being the Democrats' nominee. And none of these guys appears to have any idea about how to win over the hearts and minds of the American public.

Just last week, for example, two of the three, Dean and Gephardt, appeared in prominent spots in extremely influential newspapers touting their plans for undoing the "catastrophe" that has been the Bush presidency. To say that the respective pictures the candidates painted were not pretty is an understatement if ever there was one.

Here is Dean, in his own words, on the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*.

As president, my economic policies will be focused and clear. I will begin by repealing the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, and using the revenues that result from the repeal to address the needs of the average American, invest in the nation's infrastructure and, through tax reform, put money in the hands of those most likely to spend it.

Now, even if one overlooks the tediousness of the prose, that's an awfully difficult paragraph to read. Americans may not support tax cuts as wholeheartedly as some on the right would wish, but they certainly don't like to hear anyone tell them that he's going to raise them, especially as significantly as Dean is promising. And if I recall correctly, the last guy to make such a promise was Fritz "I just told you" Mondale, who lost his bid rather decidedly.

But at least Dean promised to attempt to exert some control over the federal budget when he said that "maintaining fiscal discipline is essential to long-term growth" and that "discretionary spending must be sustainable, and the federal budget must be balanced over the business cycle." This is considerably more than Gephardt offered. As tough as Dean's statement is to read, Gephardt's is worse. The following comes from the front page of Friday's *Washington Post*:

A Gephardt administration would impose higher taxes on individuals, restrict foreign trade and pick up a huge chunk of the nation's soaring health care tab. At a time of near-record deficits, Gephardt would lobby Congress to increase spending for several education programs, including a universal preschool program, and create a new energy program.

So far, he has proposed upwards of **\$3 trillion** or more in new programs, including doubling the budget for homeland security and tripling the budget for the National Institutes of Health . . .

To help pay for these programs, Gephardt would repeal all the Bush tax cuts enacted over the past three years . . .

One of the biggest challenges facing Gephardt is explaining how the country, which is projected to run deficits next year approaching \$500 billion, can afford his new programs, especially the health care plan. Kenneth E. Thorpe, the Emory University health care expert asked by Gephardt to price his plan, estimates it will cost **\$2.5 trillion** over 10 years. (emphasis added)

This is, to put it mildly, a far cry from the modest, centrist platform that propelled Bill Clinton to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in 1992. Indeed, it's about as far from Bill Clinton as a Democrat can get. Unfortunately for Democrats, it is also probably about as good as they're going to get, unless Hillary jumps in, which seems increasingly unlikely.

In my opinion, the most serious blow to Democrats' hopes to recapture the White House was dealt last fall, when Sonny Perdue beat Georgia's incumbent Governor Roy Barnes, thus depriving Democrats of their only real legitimate contender for the White House, or at least their only legitimate contender not named Clinton. Had Barnes won, he would be well positioned to capture the center, as Bill did, and to break the GOP's lock on the South, as Bill also did. As it is, they've been left with a handful of middling Washington insiders and the former Governor of arguably the most liberal state in the union, which is also, by the way, home to fewer people (~500,000) than most mid-size cities. It is, to say the least, hardly a stellar cast.

So while Washington's cognoscenti will continue, for the next 14-plus months, to prattle on about the striking similarities between the Georges Bush, you can rest assured that it will be the dissimilarities that matter most. Barring a complete and unforeseen meltdown, George W. Bush will almost certainly be re-elected, if only because his opponent will be less than formidable.

Of course, that could all change if Hillary gets into the race, in which case the similarities just might be too overwhelming to ignore.

---

**THE POLITICAL FORUM**

Copyright 2003. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved. Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.