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THEY SAID IT

"We exaggerate the ambition of great men; we mistake what the nature of it is. Great men are not ambitious in that sense; he is a small poor man that is ambitious so. Examine the man who lives in misery because he does not shine above other men; who goes about producing himself, pruriently anxious about his gifts and claims; struggling to force everybody, as it were begging everybody for God's sake, to acknowledge him a great man, and set him over the heads of men! Such a creature is among the wretchedest sights seen under this sun. A great man? A poor morbid prurient empty man; fitter for the ward of a hospital, than for a throne among men. I advise you to keep-out of his way. He cannot walk on quiet paths; unless you will look at him, wonder at him, write paragraphs about him, he cannot live. It is the emptiness of the man, not his greatness. Because there is nothing in himself, he hungers and thirsts that you will find something in him. In good truth, I believe no great man, not so much as a genuine man who had health and real substance in him of whatever magnitude, was ever much tormented in this way.

-- *Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, Thomas Carlyle

KERRY AND VIETNAM. . .AGAIN

The New York Times reported on Saturday that a new poll, the National Annenberg Election Survey, showed that by late last week, more than half of all Americans had heard about the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ads criticizing John Kerry and his record in Vietnam.

This is a truly astonishing number and one that should make the Kerry camp very uneasy. As Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the supervisor of the poll, put it, "Having heard about it is a sign of effective advertising. If you can put information in place that is hostile to a person, you increase the likelihood that you are going to change attitudes."

And while Senator Kerry and his campaign were initially caught flat-footed by the overwhelming impact of the ad, they responded aggressively late in the week and over the weekend. On Friday, the Kerry team filed an FEC complaint against the "Swifties," charging collusion with the Bush campaign and other related violations of the McCain-Feingold campaign finance restrictions.

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On Sunday, *The Chicago Tribune* published a long piece by Kerry's fellow Swift Boat commander and the *Tribune's* own metro desk editor William B. Rood, who disputed some of the charges made against Kerry, but who conceded that Kerry had called him personally to ask him to "go public" with his recollections of what happened on February 28, 1969, the day on which Kerry performed the actions that earned him his Silver Star. Also on Sunday, *Boston Globe* columnist Thomas Oliphant echoed Kerry spokeswoman Stephanie Cutter, suggesting in his column that this controversy is bound to backfire on the Republicans, causing damage in the long run to President Bush, not Kerry.

I expect that over the next week or so, leading up to the GOP National Convention, which begins a week from today, Kerry and his team will continue to work furiously to undermine the Swifties and their charges and to try to link the Swift Boat campaign to President Bush. And they will almost certainly have some success on both fronts. Already the Kerry counterattack has compelled retired Air Force Colonel Ken Cordier, a former POW who appeared in the Swift Boat Veterans' second ad criticizing Kerry's 1971 Congressional testimony, to resign his unpaid position on the Bush-Cheney campaign's veterans' steering committee.

But even if the Kerry counterattack were to convince every single voter that nearly everything the Swifties have said is false and that the perpetrators of this ad are all on the payroll of the Bush campaign (neither of which is true, of course), it will, I believe, prove to be too little, too late. The damage has been done and simply cannot be undone.

Mark and I thought long and hard about addressing the Swift Boat Veterans and the potential impact on the campaign last week, but decided to pass on the story. At the time, we figured that it was too fast moving to be given adequate coverage in a weekly newsletter such as this, and that the national press was covering it like a blanket anyway.

But it occurred to us over the last week that this story is not really about the variety of specific allegations made by the Vietnam Vets who oppose Kerry, or about the Kerry team's response or lack of response to each charge. Indeed, when all is said and done, only a handful of political junkies, like us, will have had both the time and the desire to follow every development in the saga, and of those, only a handful will actually remember all of those developments.

What matters in the case of the Swift Boat Veterans is what their general charges say about John Kerry, what they have compelled Kerry to admit about himself, and what all of this says about the biographical narrative Kerry has crafted throughout his adult life and which he expected would ensure his election to the Presidency. In short, this story is important because it exposes a significant weakness in Kerry's case for his ascendance to the presidency, a weakness that is not unique to him and which the GOP has successfully exploited before.

You see, for a variety of reasons, some ideological, some generational, and some personal, the Democratic Party seems to have spawned an odd and arrogant cohort of politicians, who share two characteristics that make winning the Presidency somewhat difficult. The first is that these men have believed all their lives that they are destined for high political office. And the second, which stems from the first, is that they tend to have acted oddly at times while growing up, in an effort to pad their resumes in anticipation of achieving this greatness.

Of course, I can't prove this statement, but I suspect that the practice of resume padding is actually fairly widespread among those who aspire to power in Washington, and is particularly (but not exclusively) so among Democrats. Indeed, just last week, we were treated to the spectacle of one of the Democrats' longest serving and most influential Senators and a former presidential wannabe, Iowa's Tom Harkin, waxing apoplectic about Dick Cheney's failure to serve in Vietnam, despite the fact that Harkin himself skulked out of the '92 primaries after it was shown

that his claims about having flown combat missions in Southeast Asia were entirely fabricated and that his service in the Navy had never taken him any closer to Vietnam than offshore Japan.

Harkin's story is, of course, hardly unique among big shot Democrats. Recall, for example, that Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking member Joseph Biden had his own aspirations to greatness dashed when he was credibly accused of plagiarism. More to the point, it is worth noting that a look at each of the last four presidential campaigns, including this one, reveals a Democratic nominee whose youthful political ambition extended beyond mundane service to include aspirations for the highest office in the land, and who lived his life accordingly.

It is well known, for example, that Bill Clinton decided when still a very young man, a teenager, in fact, that he would aspire to the presidency. Everyone who knew him well from this time onward understood this ambition, and many earnestly believed that it would actually be fulfilled. In his case, this strange Demo-Boomer conceit and its effects on his behavior were not fatal to his plans, but only because he was a man possessed of extraordinary political skills. His vision, his charisma, his unparalleled ability to empathize and to communicate that empathy, and his complete indifference to the moral conventions that stood between him and success all helped him overcome the exaggerations and deceptions that were necessary to build the image of a man who would be president.

But very few of those same political attributes are possessed by either of Clinton's two successors as standard bearer of the Democratic Party. Neither Al Gore nor John Kerry possesses any extraordinary charm or charisma. Indeed, neither is particularly likeable, and in Kerry's case at least, he has never been well liked at all by those with whom he has contact on a day-to-day basis. Neither is an especially talented communicator. Neither of these scions of privilege connects terribly well with "the common people." And neither man ever thought it would be possible for him to coast to success, a la Clinton, on his skills alone.

Yet both men believed at a very young age that it was their destiny, their birthright, to be President. And so each man set about from a young age to build the kind of biography that would make it possible for him to fulfill that destiny.

In a recent article, the incomparable Mark Steyn suggested that the biography Kerry constructed makes precious little sense. To whit:

John Kerry is too strange to be president . . . With Kerry, even before any gaffes or scandals, the official narrative makes no sense. He's publicly opposed to the Vietnam War. But he volunteers for it. Then he comes back disgusted with his experience in war, publicly hurls his medals away (or someone else's: that story keeps changing), denounces his fellow veterans as war criminals, torturers and rapists, and claims that he personally committed atrocities.

With all due respect to Steyn (who is unquestionably among the smartest, most imaginative, and most prolific conservative writers working today, and who was an inspired choice to replace the equally brilliant Florence King on the back page of *National Review*), the narrative actually makes perfect sense, if you first stipulate that its author intended all along to be President of the United States someday.

Bill Clinton famously (infamously?) confessed in his 1969 letter to his ROTC Director that he, like most of the rest of his generation, was morally opposed to the war in Vietnam and to the draft; but unlike countless others, he did not want openly to resist the draft because he wanted to maintain his "political viability within the system." Like Clinton, both Al Gore and John Kerry also joined their cohorts in opposing the war. But unlike Clinton, both felt that military service at a time of war simply couldn't be avoided, and both therefore took the "maintaining political viability" thing one step further, actually joining the service of their own volition.

In truth, Gore's primary concern was maintaining his father's political viability within the system (an aim he failed to achieve), but the move served to burnish the son's political resume as well, as he well knew it would. As for Kerry, he doesn't even try to hide the fact that his decision to join the Navy was a calculated attempt to imitate his presidential idol, not a conscious decision to involve himself in active combat. As *The Washington Post* noted in a long, front-page piece on the Swift Boat controversy yesterday:

When Kerry signed up to command a Swift boat in the summer of 1968, he was inspired by the example of his hero, John F. Kennedy, who had commanded the PT-109 patrol boat in the Pacific in World War II. But Kerry had little expectation of seeing serious action. At the time the Swift boats – or PCFs (patrol craft fast), in Navy jargon – were largely restricted to coastal patrols. “I didn't really want to get involved in the war,” Kerry wrote in a book of war reminiscences published in 1986.

Now, as you may recall, the biography Al Gore actually lived turned out not to be impressive enough to ensure his political success. And so he padded it, only slightly, but significantly enough to get caught. I don't have either the time or space to run down the entire list of Gore's exaggerated accomplishments in a newsletter such as this, but it should suffice to say that he stretched it in all phases of his career, including, ironically enough, his service in Vietnam, where as a journalist he saw no combat, but nonetheless talked in his various Senatorial campaigns about combat experiences.

By the time he was halfway through his run at the White House in 2000, Gore's resume padding was a standing joke. When the GOP convention rolled around, Gore's exaggerations had become fodder even for his opponent. During his acceptance speech, then-Governor Bush defended his proposals and, at the same time, had a little fun at Gore's expense. He said:

Every one of the proposals I've talked about tonight he's called a risky scheme over and over again. It is the sum of his message, the politics of the roadblock, the philosophy of the stop sign. If my opponent had been at the moon launch, it would have been a risky rocket scheme. If he had been there when Edison was testing the light bulb, it would have been a risky anti-candle scheme. And if he had been there when the Internet was invented . . .”

Historians will likely debate for years to come how Gore could have blown his virtual gimme shot at the White House (seemingly good economy, popular outgoing President, etc.), but there can be no doubt that one of the most important reasons for the loss was the fact that too many people had come to see the Vice President as a blowhard, not simply a politician who lies, mind you, but a politician who lies about himself, making things up in order to make himself appear more important than he really was.

And this brings us back to Kerry and the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. If for no other reason, the Swifties have had a significant impact on this campaign because they have called into question Kerry's truthfulness about his exploits in Vietnam. And more to the point, they have all but forced Kerry's campaign essentially to concede that the Senator did, in fact, embellish a little.

The Kerry backers and the Kerry opponents may well bicker forever about what happened on what night and who was shooting at whom and who filled out what after-action reports. But one thing that is almost universally acknowledged is that Kerry's “seared” memories of being sent into Cambodia on a secret mission for the CIA on Christmas Eve 1968 were entirely fictional. Being fired at by drunken South Vietnamese soldiers? Made up. Receiving a camouflage “magic” hat from the CIA on his boat was ferrying? Made up. Kerry's realization that Nixon was lying to the soldiers and the American people because he denied that we had soldiers in Cambodia? Made up. Nixon was not even President yet on Christmas Eve 1968. And as blogger James Lileks noted last week:

This is like Bush insisting that he flew an intercept mission with the Texas Air National Guard to repel Soviet bombers based in Cuba, and later stating that this event was “seared in his memory – seared” because it taught him the necessity of standing up against evil governments, such as the ones we face today. In other words, it would not only be a lie, but one that eroded the political persona he was relying upon in the election. Kerry has made Vietnam central to his campaign. If he’s making crap up, it matters.

The threat here to Kerry is that recent revelations of exaggerated claims will be followed by others, and these will similarly diminish his credibility and suggest that he, like Gore and Clinton, padded his resume for the express purpose of convincing Americans that he is presidential material.

Already the campaign has been forced to blame staffers for demonstrably false claims that Kerry captained his Swift Boat on missions in January 1969 that were actually captained by Edward Peck (the commander of Navy Boat No. 94 just prior to Kerry) and for claiming that Kerry served as Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee (a post once held by Bob Kerrey, but never by John Kerry). If similar exaggerations are discovered, then Kerry runs the very real risk of being discredited as a blowhard like Gore. And the Swift Boat Vets, for their part, will be able to claim credit for having set the table for that dishonor.

Time will tell whether Kerry’s little white lies will be fatal, as were Al’s, or insignificant when compared to the rest of his personal accomplishments and political skills, as was the case with Bill Clinton. But at some point, it seems to me that the Democratic Party might want to find a presidential candidate whose presidential ambitions, from an early age onward, have not dominated his or her life story to the point of dishonesty.

It is, I think worth noting by way of comparison, that the Republican nominee this time around is not a man who has always thought of himself as President, but who lived most of his life with other ambitions. Indeed, during his first presidential contest in 2000, liberal icon Maureen Dowd famously compared George W. Bush to the *Godfather’s* Santino “Sonny” Corleone, the son who was never expected to wield power, but who stumbled on it by accident.

Unfortunately for Dowd and similarly disposed partisans, while George W. may indeed remind some of Sonny, the accidental Godfather, recent vintage Democratic nominees don’t exactly resemble the brilliant and cunning Michael who was, in fact, destined for greatness, so much as they do the hapless and ultimately doomed Fredo.

VICTORY? HOW WILL IT LOOK?

Along with the rest of America, I have been treated of late to a great deal of information outlining the differences between the leadership skills and governing philosophies of President George Bush and Senator John Kerry, all professionally created by their respective campaign staffs to persuade me and some 200 million or so other Americans who will vote in November to choose one over the other.

Some of this information is informative, as one might expect. But on two important issues I can find no real differences between the two men. The first involves the question of whether the United States will eventually win what both insist on calling the “war on terror,” despite widespread agreement that it is, in fact, a war against militant Islam. In any case, each candidate naturally maintains that, under his leadership, victory in this conflict is a sure thing. And this is good. I mean, if both of these big shots say it is so, how could it be otherwise?

The second, related issue is a bit more worrisome, however. It has to do with the fact that neither of these men appears to have a clear notion of what victory will look like when it comes. Or if either does, he has yet to describe it to us.

In World War II, Americans understood that the war would end when Germany and Japan surrendered, which they did, on VE Day, May 8, 1945, and on VJ Day, August 14, 1945, respectively. Victory was not achieved in Vietnam, of course. But we all knew back then what the elements of it would be. Basically, North Vietnam would abandon its military effort to annex the South, the fighting would stop, and U.S. combat troops would come home.

So how will we know when victory has been achieved in the “war on terror?” Will the terrorists surrender? Will the heavy security at airports and public buildings disappear, along with preparations for and fears of chemical, biological and nuclear attacks and truck bombs? Will the government announce that militant Islam no longer has the means to kill Americans? Will the Department of Homeland Security be closed? Will there be parades?

And how will victory come to pass? When they confidently speak of their plans for “winning the war on terror,” do Bush and Kerry envision killing so many terrorists and terrorist supporters that there are no longer enough of them to carry on the fight? Or is the idea to take away their hiding places and sources of finance, so that they simply abandon the cause for lack of a suitable base of operations and a paycheck?

Or will John Kerry’s much touted global coalition be so formidable that the terrorists will just give up? Or will George Bush’s efforts to promote democracy in the Middle East succeed in changing the culture of the Islamic world to such an extent that Muslim anger toward the United States and Israel is replaced with a yen for international commerce?

Or will America be so successful in building a protective wall of technology around itself and its assets abroad that terrorists will find it all but

impossible to conduct operations without being detected? Or will victory involve some combination of these factors, along with others of which I am unaware? Or what?

I listen in vain for a clear description of victory from either man. And I wonder, if neither can give one, how can either achieve it? I can understand why neither can say when victory might occur, given the uncertainties that accompany warfare. But the one, George Bush, is placing enormous resources behind an effort to “win” the “war on terror,” and the other, John Kerry, in what commentators described as “the most important speech of his political career,” promised Americans that he would never ask them to “fight a war without a plan to win the peace.”

So it seems reasonable, to me at least, to assume that President Bush’s highly aggressive, multi-dimensional, global actions are not random shots in the dark, but are part of a unified plan to achieve a specific end, which he could, if he wished, define and explain. And, in light of Senator Kerry’s public assertion that he will pursue the war aggressively if elected, shouldn’t one assume, considering the remarks cited above, that he has, and could explain in detail if he chose to do so, a very specific plan to “win the peace” and a clear idea of what this peace might look like when it is won?

Yet, as has been widely noted of late, the only real clue that Kerry has offered so far as to his overall strategy for “winning the peace” in Iraq and the war on terror was his assertion that he will, if elected “have a significant, *enormous* [emphasis added] reduction in the level of troops in Iraq” in his first year in office.

Integral to this broad-based troop reduction promise is Kerry’s claim that he can attract significantly more allied military and financial help for America’s war effort. But without knowing what Kerry plans to do with the military and financial assets that are freed up by the increased help he hopes to get from U.S. allies, it is impossible to discern whether this proposed dramatic reduction in troops is an important part of, or only incidental to, his overall victory plan. However, in the absence of any specific information

from the Kerry camp, one could be forgiven for suspecting that it has nothing whatsoever to do with defeating America's enemies and has all to do with defeating George Bush.

We do, of course, have a great many insights into the President's war plans. But the overall picture is still exceedingly murky. I wonder, for example, whether his highly publicized campaign to spread democracy across the Middle East is integral or incidental to his overall victory plan. As with Kerry's troop reduction promise, I believe it is reasonable to suspect that it is political window dressing. In fact, I must say that I hope that neither Kerry's troop reduction nor Bush's democracy building is essential to their respective victory plans. If both are I would say that America is in a whole lot of trouble.

As for Kerry's troop reduction idea, I could be wrong, but my guess is that before this war with militant Islam is over, the United States will have to commit more troops to the Middle East theatre, not less, and that a "significant" and "enormous" reduction next year could easily increase troop requirements later, especially if it allows the insurgency movement to gather strength and fuels the belief that the United States is retreating in the face of enemy efforts.

As for Bush's democracy-building, as I have said many times in these pages, I believe he will find that those Middle East nations that befriend the United States will, as they grapple with the balance between security and freedom, find that they must lean heavily on the side of security, just as the United States is doing today. Or to put it another way, I think Bush will find that security precedes democracy, freedom and free enterprise. It isn't the other way around.

So what is the pathway to victory, you ask? And where does it end? Well, I think that the best way to address these questions is to begin with the understanding that there are reasons that neither Bush nor Kerry has done so.

The most important of these is that it would be political suicide for either man to promise to launch

the kind of super aggressive, multi-faceted, and global offensive that would be necessary to significantly reduce militant Islam's ability to inflict damage on American citizens and assets worldwide. And it would be beyond the scope of reality to expect either to propose the kinds of measures that it would take to actually "win," if winning is defined as a formal, definitive end to the threat of Islamic terrorism, à la VE Day and VJ Day, and if the assumed time frame for victory is short enough to be meaningful to the lives of people living today.

It is worth noting here that as long as there is one Islamic fanatic around who yearns for a shot at 72 virgins in paradise, the "war on terror" will not have been "won." So both men find it politically expedient to assure victory and to be vague about how it might be achieved and how we will recognize it when we see it.

Think about it. If the polls are correct, some 50% or more of the American voting public supports a candidate who wants to reduce the troop levels in Iraq by an "enormous" amount in calendar 2005, and who recently said that if he were president he would conduct a "more sensitive war." So is there any question how these voters would react to a candidate who pledged to threaten Syria and Iran with all out war if they did not cease trying to undermine the new government in Iraq, cease supporting terrorist organizations around the world, and in the case of Iran, cease working on a nuclear weapons capability? Yet, could anyone argue with the contention that the "war on terror" cannot be won unless and until Syria and Iran cease these activities?

Or how would the American public react to a candidate who pledged to seek legislation that would allow the government to surveil and gather information on individuals to the full extent of the available technology, and to significantly expand the government's legal authority to detain and deport individuals with suspected terrorist ties? Yet, this is what it would probably take to protect the public from the above-mentioned lone terrorist with a death wish. Or how about supporting a plan to assassinate or

kidnap known terrorist leaders no matter where they are in the entire world, whether in Tehran, London, Paris, or Beijing, which may turn out to be the only way to kill the snake? Better to speak of “bringing the boys home” and waxing eloquent about the pacific benefits of nation building.

But this does not mean that the rest of us cannot make educated guesses as to how victory will be achieved and what it will look like. In pursuit of this elusive end, I would begin with the observation that the enemy will continue to dictate the intensity of U.S. participation in this war.

On the home front, for example, if there are no significant new terrorist incidents, Americans will assume that current measures offer sufficient protection. But if terrorists succeed in conducting an awe-inspiring attack, which kills thousands of civilians, public outrage will lead to a host of radical new measures of the kind that, if taken earlier, may have prevented it. If you recall, this is what happened after September 11, 2001. The harshness of these new measures, and the extent to which they push the limits of America’s traditional open society, would be directly related to the size, intensity and nature of the new assault. But the assault and the consequent deaths have to happen first.

In Iraq, if things go reasonably well for the new government, the United States will continue its current policy of diminished direct, public involvement in the affairs of that nation. However, if the insurgency movement launches a major offensive that threatens the government, the U.S. military will reengage. And once again, the harshness of the reaction and the extent to which it pushes the limits of American sensitivity to world opinion would be directly related to the size, intensity and nature of the hostile action.

I am not saying here that the U.S. role in the war on terror will be entirely passive. In fact, as I said several weeks ago, I think that the United States will eventually engage Iran over its nuclear weapons program with air strikes and possibly even military incursions. If President Bush wins in November, I

expect this to come sooner than if John Kerry wins. But, either way, it will be a reaction in response to Iran’s provocative pursuit of nuclear weapons and its interference in Iraq.

Of course, this reactive approach to the “war on terror” seems reasonable to most Americans today, which is why both candidates endorse it, each in his own way. However, several things about it are worth carefully noting, if one hopes to gain insight into the future course of the conflict.

The first is that it is not just unusual but possibly unique in the entire sweep of human history for a nation like the United States, which has overwhelming military power, to engage in endless hand wringing over whether it is using this power justly against self-described enemies, and whether it is magnanimous enough toward its defeated foes.

I am no “student of history,” but I have read some and I cannot recall ever reading about a single major military power, from the Greek city-states over 3,000 years ago, to Russia, China and the United States during the Cold War, that has ever been as concerned as the United States is today about “world opinion.” Homer tells us that when the Greeks won the Trojan War, some 3,200 year ago, they burned Troy and murdered all of its citizens save a few who escaped. Thucydides relates how the Athenians, 2,400 years ago, did somewhat the same thing to the Melians, although they didn’t kill the women and children, but kept them as slaves. Plutarch describes how Alexander totally destroyed Thebes 2,300 years ago. Polybius describes how 2,150 years ago Scipio the Younger burned the entire city of Carthage to the ground, buried the structural remains, and covered everything in salt so that not even plants would grow there again.

And lest one think that this is “ancient history,” it should be recalled that the United States ended the war in the Pacific by dropping atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing approximately 100,000 civilians and injuring another 100,000 or so. And this was after hundreds of American B-29s destroyed half of Tokyo in a firebombing raid that

killed an estimated 100,000 civilians. It is also worth noting that in the closing days of the war in Europe, Germany's cities met with a similar fate, minus the atomic bombs, in which tens of thousands of civilians were killed.

In contrast, the war news last week was dominated by U.S. reluctance to kill a religious fanatic, who is leading a small insurgency movement in Iraq that has taken the lives of many U.S. soldiers and who is holed up in a "holy site" that could be obliterated in a split second by a single air strike. Also last week, Americans were reminded that one of the issues in the campaign for leader of "the most powerful nation in the world" is how to deal with a group of religious fanatics who run Iran and the little nut bag in North Korea, all of whom are well along in the process of producing nuclear weapons for the sole purpose of threatening the United States and its allies.

And finally, of course, the controversy goes on and on over whether the Bush administration should have destroyed the regime of a mass murderer named Saddam, who had gassed his own people, started wars with two neighbors, persisted in defying U.N. mandates, and continuously hurled threats at the United States and missiles at U.S. aircraft that were enforcing the above-mentioned mandates.

Of course, all of this seems to make sense to an American public that has, since the end of the Vietnam War, become highly sensitive to charges, from both individuals and nations that have no moral authority to judge anyone, and in the face of ample evidence to the contrary, that the United States is a "bully," is prone to commit "atrocities" against the citizens of other nations, and is unkind to immigrants. And in the midst of tremendous angst over the morality of deposing a killer and his psycho kids, few Americans seem to question why the United States would spend billions of dollars on rebuilding efforts in the midst of what amounts to a hostile war zone, even though this is an historical anomaly of astonishing magnitude.

President Bush is, of course, fond of comparing this rebuilding program in Iraq to America's actions in Germany and Japan after World War II. But the differences are greater than the similarities. The Marshall Plan, for example, was not authorized by Congress until *three* years after the fighting stopped in Germany, a period which was marked by a full scale U.S. occupation, which included an intense program of what was known as denazification, significant economic and human hardship for the German public, including mass hunger if not starvation, mass arrests of tens of thousands of German men with no hearings process or *habeas corpus*, and summary executions of any Germans involved in attacks on the occupying forces.

As for America's rebuilding of Japan, this was done after the absolute defeat and total subjugation of the Japanese people, and then only after it became very clear that the Japanese people were overwhelmingly willing and eager to participate in the Democratization and modernization of their nation.

Now I am not arguing here that the United States should be unconcerned about either world opinion or the welfare of the people of Iraq. And I am certainly not suggesting that it should model its war policy after that of ancient Greece or even its own actions during and after World War II. I am simply noting that its policies in this "war on terror" are not in keeping with the norm of human behavior in warfare, as exemplified by several thousand years of human history up to and including its own conduct in both World War II and the Vietnam conflict.

And while it may be that this behavior represents the dawn of a new, more civilized era of warfare, my guess is that, unless America's fanatical Muslim enemies suddenly adopt similar policies, it will be a relatively short lived phenomenon, viewed by future historians as related to two odd artifacts of the late 20th century, the first being the fad of political correctness and the second being a belief by Americans in their own invincibility.

So, with all of this in mind, I will close with the following answer to the twin questions of how victory in the “war on terror” will be achieved and what it will look like when it comes.

Militant Islam will continue to threaten and continue to strike, and each time it does it will provoke an escalation in the intensity of America’s response. Eventually, this response will either force the Muslim world community to take collective action against the radicals in its midst, or much more likely in my opinion, the situation will spin out of control at the urging of the vast majority of Americans, who will abandon their concern about the sensitivities of their nation’s friends and enemies and demand that their government use all the force available to protect them from further harm.

The death toll in this end game will be extremely high, but concentrated among Muslims, and historians will look back and point out that this was avoidable, just as they do today when they note that the conflict with Hitler’s Germany could have been little more than a footnote in history instead of one of its greatest tragedies, if only the world had united and destroyed the madman when he was vulnerable rather than reacting to each outrage he perpetrated with a slightly more intense response.

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