

# The Political Forum

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

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## THEY SAID IT

Patriotism cannot be what it was because we lack in the fullest sense a patria . . . But my present point is not that patriotism is good or bad as a sentiment, but that the practice of patriotism as a virtue is in advanced societies no longer possible in the way that it once was. In any society where government does not express or represent the moral community of the citizens, but is instead a set of institutional arrangements for imposing a bureaucratized unity on a society which lacks genuine moral consensus, the nature of political obligation becomes systematically unclear. Patriotism is or was a virtue founded on attachment primarily to a political and moral community and only secondarily to the government of that community; but it is characteristically exercised in discharging responsibility to and in such government. When however the relationship of government to the moral community is put in question both by the changed nature of government and the lack of moral consensus in the society, it becomes difficult any longer to have any clear, simple and teachable conception of patriotism. Loyalty to my country, to my community--which remains unalterably a central virtue--becomes detached from obedience to the government which happens to rule one."

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 1981.

**THE EUROPEANS ARE DIFFERENT FROM US, REDUX.** President Bush marched into the belly of the beast last week, when he journeyed to Vienna to meet with representatives of the Europe Union. And everyone had a wonderful time. The European press was elated about having been presented with another opportunity to compare George Bush to Hitler and the President gained the right to say "I told you so" to the Europeans when the bill comes due for allowing Iran to deploy nuclear weapons.

As for the rest of us, we were treated to another round of stories and analyses in the mainstream media about the origins and deeper meaning of European anti-Americanism. Liberal columnists were virtually unanimous in their assertion that this was very bad for the United States and that it

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was all George Bush's fault. *Washington Times* columnist Suzanne Fields stated what I think is the consensus conservative view. She attributed it all to envy, as follows: "Its more consensus than conspiracy – this ganging up on the most powerful nation in the world. Uncle Sam, meet Gulliver. Much of the envy, of course, is because America is the most powerful nation in the world. Envy easily becomes animosity . . ."

Now we like and respect Suzanne Fields and we think she has a point. But what she and everyone else who commented on this phenomenon last week, liberals and conservatives alike, seem to be missing is that tension between peoples and nations is the natural state of affairs and has been throughout history. Where international relations are concerned, alliances and friendships ebb and flow, subject to the ever-changing tides in the affairs of men and to that never-changing aspect of human nature, rooted in the instinct for survival, that makes men suspicious of those who are different, those who dwell outside their immediate circle of friends and associates.

America and Western Europe became extremely close in the aftermath of World War II when both found themselves threatened by Soviet communism and each believed that its long-term prosperity and security depended upon building a firm military and economic alliance with the other. When the Berlin Wall fell almost two decades ago, the pressing necessity for this close alliance disappeared and the relationship began to return to the more natural state of competitive friendship that existed prior to World War II. It is worth remembering when considering this that during the interval between the two great wars, America's bond with Europe was so weak that Roosevelt had a difficult time convincing Americans that they should help their European friends in their fight against a murderous Nazi aggressor who was destroying all of Europe.

NATO lives on, of course, as a monument to those exhilarating, by-gone days of a shared threat, and as witness to a truth famously noted by Ronald Reagan when he remarked that "government programs are the closest thing to eternal life on earth." But the common enemy that NATO was established to confront disappeared a long time ago, so it should come as no surprise to anyone that relations between the United States and Europe are more in line today with historic norms and more reflective of the differences that exist between the two peoples.

For indeed, as we noted in the title of an article we wrote in the February 24, 2003 issue of this newsletter, "the Europeans are different from us." As we further noted, Americans seem to have a hard time understanding this. We put it this way:

Most Americans believe that the differences between themselves and Europeans are largely superficial, related to such things as habits, customs, manners, fads and the like. In other words, they believe that Americans and Europeans are different in the same way that Texans are different from New Englanders. They are of the opinion that the average European is virtually indistinguishable from the average American when it comes to defining the importance and the meaning of such fundamental concepts as morality, ethics, individual freedom, personal responsibility, property rights, the role of government in human affairs, and the notion of "truth." After all, Americans seems to feel, we are all products of Western Civilization, or what used to be called Christendom. Right?

But as we further noted, Americans are wrong about this. Europeans are not just different from us, they are *very* different from us. Centuries of wars, lengthy experiments with communism, socialism, fascism, along with a deeply ingrained and officially sanctioned antagonism toward all forms of religion has assured that their aspirations, their heroes, their most relevant philosophers, their economic system, and their attitude toward the work ethic are vastly different from those of most Americans.

We discussed these and other cultural differences and their historic origins at some length in the above-mentioned piece, so we won't go over that ground again. But in light of the recent, renewed interest in European anti-Americanism, we thought it would be worth noting that the differences between the American and the European responses to the threat from militant Islam are reflective of more than a simple disagreement over tactics and strategy. They are, in fact, deeply rooted in the separate cultures and as such are unlikely to be assuaged by military exchanges and diplomatic nice-nice. In fact, it seems probable to us that not only will the Americans and the Europeans fight the war with militant Islam differently, and often be at odds with each other, but they will achieve different outcomes.

To understand why this is so, it is necessary to reflect on the fact that European history for the past 450 years has been little more than one long chronicle of wars and short intervals between wars that are marked by puzzled reflections over "what went wrong." Year after year, decade after decade, century after century, while Americans were building a powerful capitalist society based on the twin concepts of freedom and democratic participation, the war drums were rarely silent in Europe.

This is, of course, a well-known story. What isn't so well understood is that, ironically enough, throughout this period, the Europeans have been obsessed with the idea of creating a world without war. A cursory glance at European history reveals an astonishing array of councils, treaties, pacts, agreements, accords, and concords between and among the various nations, all designed to prevent wars between and among themselves, but more often than not creating circumstances that turn small conflicts into large ones by obligating all to go to war against all when one goes to war against one.

But even more importantly, in addition to these flowery documents designed to promote peace, the Europeans have been experimenting for the past 217 years with a seemingly endless stream of wacky political, economic, and social engineering schemes that promise to deliver a happy, prosperous, and peaceful society but invariably deliver economic hardship, moral decay, spiritual ennui, and war.

Like country bumpkins, lining up and handing their dollars to the snake oil salesman at the carnival, these people have a centuries long history of being willing to buy and try any nostrum on the market that promises peace, prosperity, justice, equality, and happiness, as long as no hard work and no moral discipline is required on the part of the buyer.

"Step right up folks. Try a bottle of Dr. Marx's famous 'Elixir of Happiness.' Why wait for Paradise in the afterlife, when you can have Heaven on earth right now? There's a miracle in every bottle. Peace and happiness guaranteed. Just try it. Step right up, folks."

If men fight wars over religion, the solution is to do away with religion, or as Voltaire famously put it to the cheers of the European masses, “Ecrasez l’infame!” Never mind the obvious fact that it isn’t religion that is causing the wars, but evil men who refuse to follow the tenets of the religion they profess to be following. Never mind the obvious truth that when religion is abolished, these evil men will have an even greater license to pursue evil, and wars will multiply.

If men fight wars over property, the solution is to take the property from its owners, declare that property ownership is a crime, or as Proudhon put it, “La propriété, c’est le vol!” Never mind Locke’s contention, for which there is an abundance of empirical evidence, that private property is the foundation of a civil society. Who are you going to believe, a famous English philosopher or a home-grown, nihilistic anarchist?

If men go to war because the bourgeoisie are exploiting the working class, then destroy the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system that supports them, or as Marx put, “Workers of the world, you have nothing to lose but your chains. Unite!” Never mind the abundant evidence that the bourgeoisie are the backbone of all successful and prosperous modern societies. Could this misanthropic, little wack job, pseudo-economist be wrong? Of course, not.

And if all of this experimentation with faulty and fraudulent schemes leads to weak economies, a fraying social fabric, the collapse of society’s moral foundations, don’t question the efficacy of the various elixirs, blame it on the Jews. Buy a bottle of the great French huckster Charles Maurras’ “Anti-Semitism Cure All.” Mussolini tried it and “revitalized” Italy. Hitler drank deeply and the Third Reich rose out of the German ashes of World War I.

Yes, Virginia, the Europeans are different from us, *very* different. They are not bad people. They are not evil people. They want good things. They strive for peace, harmony, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. But they want these things on the cheap. They don’t want to earn them through efforts to build decent societies through hard work and a commitment to moral behavior and love of their fellow man. They are inclined instead to try every stupid, half-baked idea that comes down the pike.

Indeed, they are presently up to their rear ends in a new, wacky scheme to assure peace. This one is called the European Union. It was a project of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who rejected Aristotle’s contention that people can be taught what to dislike and what to like so that they can develop “ordinate affections” and “just sentiments.” He rejected Plato’s belief, as noted by C.S. Lewis, that while the little human animal will not at first have the right responses, it can be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting and hateful.

Kohl had no faith that the little European human animal could learn any such thing, but he thought he might be persuaded from going to war with his neighbors once again if he were stripped of the evil of love of country. After all, Kohl reasoned, wasn’t nationalism the principal cause of the past European wars? Certainly it was not a human failing. Hadn’t Rousseau taught Europeans that men are fundamentally good and that the evil that they do is a result of their institutions? So why not abolish the nation-state, combine them into one large, faceless, bureaucratic colossus in Brussels (“Its formula escapes you; it has lost The certainty that constitutes a thing.”) that not even a European could love, much less go to war to defend?

Never mind Dr. Johnson's assertion that "that man is little to envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."

Never mind that if a threat to peace appears from outside the borders of Europe, Europeans who have been bled of their patriotism and national pride may lack the will to confront that threat. Indeed, they may get angry at those who are still willing to wage war to protect their country and their heritage. They may blame the existence of the threat on those against whom the threat is aimed. They may even fall for a new scheme to achieve peace, one that involves nothing more than agreeing to become a "moderate" Islamic society. Of course the price of peace is high. But it is valuable, is it not? And after all, what difference does it make if American tourists come to see the Basilique du Sacré Coeur or the very same building renamed the Mosque on Butte Montmartre? Ça m'est égal.

**THE ANTI-PATRIOTS.** If you're looking for heroes in the war on terror, John Kerry and John Murtha have a couple of names for you: John Kerry and John Murtha. You see, the real heroes of this war aren't who you think they are. They aren't the soldiers, sailors, and marines who put their lives at risk each day to protect the United States from terrorists and to bring the chance of a better future to the people of the Middle East.

No, the real heroes are the brave men like Kerry and Murtha, yesterday's warriors, who have the courage of their convictions, whatever they happen to be this week, and the guts to stand up to the President and his evil henchmen, even if that means that they will be subjected to the horrors of lavish media praise and fawning attention from the nation's "opinion makers." It would be difficult even to imagine anyone braver than Kerry or Murtha, except, perhaps Al Gore, who, unlike the other two, didn't support defending this nation and ending the Saddamite tyranny before he opposed it.

What distinguishes the likes of Kerry, Murtha, and Gore from the military poseurs who are actually fighting the war is their willingness to "dissent." Kerry is fond of noting that dissent has a long and noble tradition. As he so often puts it: "No wonder Thomas Jefferson himself said: Dissent is the greatest form of patriotism."

It doesn't really matter all that much to Kerry and his fellow Democrats that Jefferson never actually said that or anything like it, that the quote is of recent origin, made up out of whole cloth by, so far as anyone can tell, Nadine Strossen, President of the ACLU. But it sounds neat. And more to the point, it fits the impression they have of themselves as the noble rebels. "Dissent" has been an essential part of liberal Baby Boomers' self image and a fundamental principal of their ideology for some forty years now.

For Boomer Democrats, who came of age after the "repression" of the Cleaver-Eisenhower '50s, dissent is not merely the highest form of patriotism, but the highest form of intellectualism, the highest form of artistic expression, the highest form of honor, blah, blah, blah. It doesn't matter whether they are right or wrong. All that matters is that they defy "the man"; that they "get with the program," and join everyone else in their conformist nonconformity. As the inimitable Mark

Steyn recently put it, “the high holiness of dissent for its own sake is now the core belief of the Democratic Party: It’s not what you’re for, it’s what you’re against.”

Unfortunately, more often than not, what they’re against is America. Kerry, you may recall, first came to the public’s attention thirty-plus years ago when he bravely stood up before Congress and blathered on endlessly about things that never happened, falsely accusing his fellow soldiers of behaving like some guy named “Jenjiss Kahn,” claiming that American servicemen in Vietnam “raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, [and] razed villages . . .” More recently, Kerry could be found making the rounds of the Sunday talk shows again falsely alleging misconduct on the part of American soldiers, claiming that Americans in Iraq are “going into the homes of Iraqis in the dead of night, terrorizing kids and children, you know, women . . .”

As for Murtha, not only does he believe that the American armed forces are overmatched in Iraq, fighting a war they are unable to win, but also apparently believes that American Marines, who have yet to be charged with anything, pending the completion of two investigations (known to non-Murthites as “due process”), are in the habit of murdering civilians in Iraq “in cold blood.” Moreover, as Murtha sees things, “American presence in Iraq is more dangerous to world peace than nuclear threats from North Korea or Iran.”

In John Murtha’s learned opinion, everyone would be much better off if American troops were simply “redeployed” to a nearby country. For our part, we’re not sure which country would want anything to do with the United States after it ran away from Iraq, leaving the Iraqis to face the head-hackers alone, but Murtha seems partial to Okinawa, which – and we didn’t realize this until he pointed it out – is apparently somewhere near Kuwait.

Of course, the real trouble is that it isn’t just Murtha or Kerry or Gore who has a problem distinguishing the good guys from the bad guys in this war. The trouble is that the entire liberal establishment – from the universities to the mainstream media to Hollywood to Capitol Hill – believes that the United States is the problem, not the solution, or at the very least, part of the problem.

The “enlightened” Europeans have it all figured out. They tell us that if we were more like them, the world would be a much better place. But we just can’t make this noble transition. We Americans, with our cowboy and Christ fetishes, remain stuck in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or worse, are, under current leadership, poised to turn the entire nation into an Evangelical theocracy, not entirely different from that embraced by the Islamists, with the only exception being that it would be Christian – and white – and therefore more depraved.

Now we have neither the time nor the inclination to dig deeply into the causes and manifestations of this tendency to “blame America first.” But suffice it to say that this predilection has at least part of its origin in the old Marxist preference for the “oppressed” over the “oppressor”; is at least as old as the Vietnam War; and has been particularly intense during the last five years, which makes sense since a Republican has been running the nation during that period.

In just the last year, we’ve been treated to round after round of America’s wickedness, from its insensitivity to other cultures, as demonstrated by the fictional flushing of Korans at Guantanamo; to its lingering racism, which was allegedly exposed in the aftermath of Katrina; to

its enduring selfishness and refusal to play nicely with the global “climate change” activists; to its unwillingness to observe the norms of civil society, as shown by its failure to treat terrorists as POWs or to observe terrorists’ right to privacy. In the last week alone, the spewing forth of “I told you so’s” from the left regarding the torture and murder of two kidnapped American soldiers and the revelation yet again of a classified anti-terrorist operation by the nation’s “newspaper of record” have provided further, undeniable evidence that this nation’s elites sincerely believe that the bad guys in this war live in Washington, not in the nether regions of Baghdad.

We concede that we are not exactly the first people to notice the left’s partiality to theories of American depravity. Indeed, it has now been more than two decades since Jeanne Kirkpatrick said of her former fellow partisans that wherever they see a problem, “somehow, they always blame America first.” But while the left may not know it, the country is currently at war. And in the midst of a war, implications of this tendency described by Ambassador Kilpatrick, which might otherwise be overlooked or ignored, become perilous.

There has already been a great deal of discussion about the immediate and near-term effect that the left’s defeatism and tacit anti-Americanism has had on the country and specifically on the country’s armed forces. It has been unnerving, to put it mildly, for the soldiers risking and sometimes giving their lives in this war to know that the political and cultural leaders representing roughly half the nation neither appreciate nor support their efforts and sacrifices. The left scoffs at the very notion that its “dissent” might be interpreted as a lack of faith in the mission and its executors, yet soldiers themselves insist that the constant questioning of their ability and integrity has been unmistakably damaging to morale.

The flip side of that coin, which has also been much discussed, is the effect that the defeatism has had on the enemy. It would hardly be surprising to learn that Senators Kerry and Hagel and Congressman Murtha are among the most often quoted and most respected sources by al-Jazeera and other Arab media, since through their “dissent,” they’ve managed to provide the enemy with the hope that time is on its side. Intelligence gathered in Iraq and elsewhere has made clear that the terrorists believe that their success depends heavily on convincing the American people that the war is unwinnable and pointlessly bloody. And in this effort, the likes of Kerry and Hagel and the American mainstream press are proving invaluable.

But there are also long term implications of this blame-America-first-ism, some of which have been discussed, others of which have not, and all of which seriously threaten the ability of this nation to survive the assault leveled against it by radical Islam. For starters, there is a growing chasm in the United States between those who have served in uniform and those who have not. One of the reasons that Democrats are so taken with the likes of Kerry and Murtha is that they actually wore the uniform, which, liberals appear to believe, gives them license to criticize with impunity those who wear it today. But the fact of the matter is that it’s becoming increasingly difficult for Democrats to find such men and is likely to become more so in the future, since the Democrats have no love for the military and, in general, the feeling is mutual.

But this estrangement from the military is not merely the Democrats’ problem. Throughout society – on the right and the left – military careers are generally frowned upon by those who have other options. The armed forces’ ability to maintain troop levels throughout the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has been frankly amazing, particularly in light of the fact that today’s

secondary and post-secondary educational establishments indoctrinate their charges with the belief that the military is a refuge reserved exclusively for society's failures. To them, the very idea that defending the nation might be an honorable and noble enterprise is laughable; a pursuit best left to those who can do nothing else, who are not "college material."

Even more stunning and potentially damaging is the effect that the left's anti-Americanism has had and will continue to have on those whom it portrays as victims of American iniquity.

There has been a great deal of discussion over the last several weeks and months among political observers of various stripes – from Francis Fukuyama (erstwhile-neocon) to Michael Ledeen (proto-neocon) – about the dangers posed not by foreign jihadists, but by those already in the United States and Europe, those radicalized not in Tehran or Kabul, but *here* in the West, in London, Paris, and Chicago. Ledeen, for example, recently pointed to little publicized *Times* of London piece, which contained the following:

An American al-Qaeda operative who was a close associate of the leader of the July 7 bombers was recruited at a New York mosque that British militants helped to run.

British radicals regularly travelled to the Masjid Fatima Islamic Centre, in Queens, to organise sending American volunteers to jihadi training camps in Pakistan.

Investigators reportedly found that Mohammad Sidique Khan had made calls to the mosque last year in the months before he led the terrorist attack on London that killed 52 innocent people . . .

Mohammad Junaid Babar, one recruit from the Masjid Fatima Islamic Centre, has told US intelligence officials that he met Khan in a jihadi training camp in Pakistan in July 2003. He claims that the pair became friends as they studied how to assemble explosive devices.

Babar, 31, a computer programmer, says that it was at the Masjid Fatima centre that he became a radical.

Certainly, those like Ledeen who worry about the danger of Arabs becoming radicalized in the West have a point, particularly where Europe is concerned. But there is another danger lurking in our cities that is largely overlooked.

If you take a look at the terror suspects apprehended in the country since 9/11, a significant percentage of them – or at least of the ones we know about – are not Arab radicals, but Americans who just so happened either to belong to a "victimized" ethnic or social group or to believe the left's decades-old harangues about American guilt and wickedness. Dirty bomber Jose Padilla and Shoe Bomber Richard Reid are both "oppressed" ethnic minorities (Puerto Rican and half-Jamaican, respectively) who were radicalized in prison (Reid, obviously, in a British prison), where they went after "the system" that failed them.

Of the al Qaeda wannabes busted last week in Florida, all seven are “underprivileged” minorities as well. Five are African-American, two are Jamaicans, and all are radicalized quasi-Islamists and quasi-devotees of the “Moorish Science”.

Though he is rarely if ever called an “Islamic terrorist,” Washington-area sniper John Allen *Muhammed* was, indeed, just that. During his trial, it was revealed Muhammad had, according to the *Associated Press*, “espoused racist and anti-American views and said ‘America got what it deserved’ on Sept. 11, 2001, according to a court filing made public Monday.” The AP also noted that Muhammad “was an unindicted co-conspirator on a federal charge of passport fraud in December 2002.” And while the AP didn’t expound on what would prompt Muhammad to revel in the 9/11 attacks or what sort of nefariousness he might have been involved in with regard to the passport fraud, the *London Evening Standard* did. To wit:

Evidence has emerged linking Washington sniper John Allen Muhammad with an Islamic terror group. Muhammad has been connected to Al Fuqra, a cult devoted to spiritual purification through violence. The group has been linked to British shoe bomber Richard Reid and the murderers of American journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan last year.

John Walker Lindh, the American Taliban, was the liberal son of liberals who, according to CNN, “spent his formative years in an affluent Northern California community known for its tolerance and open-mindedness” and first “became interested in Islam at age 12 after watching the movie, ‘Malcolm X’ . . .”

Since the arrests in Florida last week, American Muslim groups, such as CAIR (Council on America-Islamic Relations) have repeatedly shrieked that these seven wannabes should not be called “Muslims.” We don’t remember for certain, but we’d bet dollars to donuts that they said exactly the same thing four years ago when it turned out that a man named *Muhammad* was the sniper mastermind, rather than the “white loner” for whom the profilers had all been telling us to keep on the lookout. We’d also bet that they said similar things about Lindh and maybe even Lindh’s apparent hero, Malcom X. But while CAIR and the rest may, technically, be correct, they are also missing the point.

The bottom line here is that anyone who believes he’s been wronged by “America;” or who thinks that he’s gotten the short end of the stick (whatever stick that may be); or who feels that he is owed something by a racist, sexist government that has expended much energy in keeping him oppressed; or who feels extreme guilt for his part in perpetuating the racist American autocracy, has a natural ally in the Islamists. The Florida Seven may not have been Muslims per se, but like John Walker Lindh, they pledged a “blood oath” to Osama bin Laden. And like John Muhammad, they thought that 9/11 was “just desserts.” And like John Kerry and John Murtha, they think that George Bush and the American government are the real terrorists and the bad guys in the global war on terror.

It would, of course, be difficult to prove conclusively that the blame-America-firstism of the modern left has ever directly inspired homegrown jihadists. Certainly even the Murthas, Kerrys, and Gores of the world would argue that they oppose Islamism and have never uttered a sympathetic word about it. And they’d almost certainly be correct.

But the problem is that their anti-Americanism inspires anti-Americanism in others who, in turn, find still others who are similarly disposed and whose anti-Americanism is more than merely intellectual. In the 1960s and '70s, the most obvious supra-intellectual, anti-American "others" were Communists, which meant that every group of radicalized domestic malcontents was "Marxist" to some extent or another. Today, the Communist Millenarian cult has been replaced by the Islamist Millenarian cult, meaning that every group of radicalized domestic malcontents is "Islamic" to some extent or another.

And while Ledeen and Fukuyama are correct that radical Islam cannot be stopped until we deal with the internal threat it poses, it is also true that even defeating radical Islam at home and abroad will not entirely end the domestic threat, since the malcontents will simply find a new cult to provide the ostensible ideology for their anti-Americanism.

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