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THEY SAID IT

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

The Blind Men and The Elephant, as taken from John Godfrey Saxe's version of the famous Indian legend.

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IT'S THE CULTURE, STUPID.

Over the past few months we have read and listened to a great many excellent analyses of "what this election is about." Some observers maintain that its about the "quagmire" in Iraq, others say it is about conservative disenchantment with the Bush administration, others cite the combined impact of Katrina, Mark Foley, Abramoff and other Republican "scandals," and still others talk of the "six year itch" that historically hits the parties of two-term presidents.

What comes to mind after reading and listening to these and a great many other similar efforts to explain tomorrow's election is the old, Indian fable about a group of blind men, each of whom touches a part of an elephant and then describes the animal. The point that is generally associated with this tale is that none saw the whole picture, so while each was partially right, all were wrong. We prefer to think that each made a genuine contribution to the task at hand, and working together, got it right.

So this week, we thought we would offer a somewhat different perspective on the election, not as a unified theory refuting all the others, but as a supplement to them, providing a view that no one else seems to have considered in an attempt to add something worthwhile to the sum of knowledge about the event. Before beginning, we will note in advance that this narrative involves a bit of whimsy, which we hope will serve as a small but welcome offset to the gravity that other conservatives are bringing to the task of viewing tomorrow's elections. So here goes.

We will start by noting that classic American liberalism is dead. We have been saying this for a long time, beginning with an article entitled "The New Political Paradigm" in 1997 and one called "Liberalism RIP" in 1998. We will further note that this fact is not apparent to a great many older Democrats who have yet to recognize that the values they respected in the old Democratic Party are not the same as those that the party embraces today.

Now if you're wondering why this is the case, we contend that it is because the death of what we will call paleoliberalism, for lack of a better term, was the kind that came several million years ago to pliohippus, the ancestor of today's horse and by extension, the Democratic donkey. If one is to believe the great 19th century wizard, Charles Darwin – and who pray tell would admit to skepticism – on one great and historic day, now lost in the mists of time, a pliohippus gave birth to something that was not a pliohippus, but was, in fact, an equus, or horse. This was an equine example of the solution to the well known conundrum, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” – the Darwinian answer being that it was the egg, which contained a chicken but was laid by a bird that was not a chicken.

Of course, there was no homo erectus (or even a homo limpus) around at the time that the first equus's emerged from the wombs of the last pliohippus's. But if there had been, it seems unlikely that even the smartest and most observant, slope headed, hairy little fellow would have noticed that the pliohippus's had been replaced by a new model. And most certainly, he would not immediately have given the new creature a different name, but would have continued to call it a pliohippus.

Such has been the case with the demise of paleoliberalism. Sometime, in the not too distant past, say a few decades ago, paleoliberalism gave birth to something that was not paleoliberalism and then proceeded down the path to extinction. And not even the smartest and most observant of the slope headed, hairy little fellows in the mainstream media and pundit community at the time noticed that this momentous event had occurred.

Yet, in this case, there was no excuse for not noticing. After all, at the same time, all of the contemporary ideological species of left wing political thought, whose common, founding ancestor had been conceived in France in the mid 18th century and born in Europe in the early days of the 19th century, were in the process of either becoming extinct or evolving into something else. Did it not make sense then to

expect that American liberalism would undergo some similarly significant changes?

To be more specific, at this very time, Russian Communism and Chinese Communism, each of which is a cousin of American liberalism, were undergoing Darwinian-like evolutions. In each case, the particular species of communism in question had grown incapable of survival in what evolutionists describe as “changing circumstances,” and was, as a result, evolving into an entirely new species, yet unnamed, but which can accurately be described today as some sort of a new genus of global criminal enterprise.

Moreover, an even more closely related kin to American liberalism, namely European socialism, was quite clearly in the early stages of becoming an endangered species, a sort of political version of the Dodo bird, which was an evolutionary dead end, described by those who were living at the time of its extinction as being too stupid to defend itself when its comfortable, protected environment became home to a newly introduced immigrant population of feral pigs and dogs. What's to know?

So why did almost no one notice when American paleoliberalism started down the evolutionary path to extinction? The answer is, of course, that evolution is a slow process. One can assume, for example, that the pliohippus's hung around for quite some time with their equus offspring before disappearing. Moreover, putting aside all the attendant excitement of the appearance of a new and improved species, the plain fact is that each new species is actually only marginally different in appearance from the old one. That is, archaeopteryx's didn't evolve immediately into blue birds. Even today, for example, it is difficult for all but the most discerning observer to distinguish between a member of the dying species of murderous Chinese communist crooks and the emergent species of murderous Chinese global mogul crooks.

In any case, the Democratic herd in Washington had then and still has quite a few old paleoliberals within its ranks, along with numerous hybrids, which

represent the inevitable intermixing of the two species as the one dies out and the other takes its place. Nevertheless, the fact remains that paleoliberalism is dead. Kaput. Fini. Soooooo 60's. The paleoliberals are slowly dying out and no new ones are being produced. The neoliberals, on the other hand, are multiplying like rabbits. They are, of course, still popularly known as liberals, and thought by many contemporary observers to be no different from their antecedents, even though many members of this new species are calling attention to the difference by describing themselves as "progressives."

So what is the nature of this new beast? Which characteristics of paleoliberalism disappeared in the evolutionary transition to neoliberalism? What new traits did neoliberalism gain?

Before we address these questions, we should note that there is nothing in Darwin's theory that holds that the process of evolution necessarily moves toward higher, nobler, or more attractive forms. From Darwin's perspective, the ascent of man from monkey is no more important than that of a slug evolving into a snail. As such, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the evolution from paleoliberalism to neoliberalism appears to be from a more attractive species to a meaner one.

The old liberals, although intellectually muddled, still had an aura of respectability and rectitude about them. They gave no ground to conservatives on the subject of either patriotism or faith. Relative to the latter, it was not unusual for leaders of this species to maintain that their religious beliefs provided the basis for their concern for the poor, the rights of minorities, the well-being of the working stiff, as well as their insistence that the federal government be used as a means for achieving a just distribution of the nation's great wealth and for generally making life better for the little guy. As with all humans, they had moral failings, but they generally did not argue that the traditional standards used to judge such failings were in error.

The neoliberals are, by comparison, a louche and loutish crowd. Bill Clinton was the first neoliberal

to climb onto the world stage. It wasn't clear at the time whether he represented a New Democrat, as he claimed, or was simply a variation of the old. But he quickly established his *bona fides* as an entirely new breed when he flew home to Arkansas during his campaign for the presidency to make certain that the death penalty was imposed on a black man who was so severely impaired that he did not eat the desert at his last meal, telling the guards he would save it for later.

Later, as president, Bill took credit for large cutbacks in welfare spending; signed legislation that virtually abolished due process for illegal immigrants; signed the "Effective Death Penalty Act," which severely limited death row appeals; opposed international efforts to ban land mines; supported legislation authorizing "roving wire-taps;" doted on and accepted campaign contributions from the very same Chinese whom he once referred to as the "Butchers of Beijing;" shredded virtually all tenets of the radical feminist community regarding sexual harassment; and exhibited no qualms about bombing the hell out of people in third world nations if he considered it to be politically expedient.

He was no more licentious or corrupt than many other politicians of both parties who have come to Washington over the years to seek their fortune. The important difference between Bill and the miscreants who came before him is that he, like the above-mentioned snail, had developed an entirely new defense for use against his enemies. Of course, he utilized the standard ones, such as noisy declarations of innocence and the use of his political position to discredit his critics, but in an entirely new maneuver, he declared that the conventional rules by which people such as he have been judged in Western society for several thousand years were not applicable to him. He maintained that character was not a function of an individual's personal actions, but is demonstrated "most effectively" by "what you fight for and for whom you fight" on the battlefield of politics.

As we've noted before in these pages, this view was a favorite of the postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty, a frequent guest at the Clinton White House in the early years, who argued that the mere "expression

of liberal opinions guarantees personal innocence in a cruel world.” The extent to which this view became an identifying characteristic of the neoliberals was demonstrated by the success of Bill’s argument during the impeachment proceedings that lying under oath about extramarital sex was not only excusable but laudable, given that he was doing it to protect his family.

As one might expect, the neoliberals have retained many of the characteristics of the paleoliberals, including their most notable one, i.e., a strong bias in favor of using the federal government to solve any and all problems, large or small, real or imagined. But this trait is not dominant in the neoliberal ideology, having been replaced by a new, definitional characteristic, namely an abiding antagonism toward traditional mores, morals, social conventions, and religious beliefs, especially those that are associated with Judeo-Christian teachings and traditions.

Unlike the paleoliberals, who had few complaints against the long-established social norms of American culture, neoliberals greet any restraints on personal behavior, or even the mere advocacy of such restraints, whether in the form of legal barriers or traditional and religious based social conventions, with rage and charges of bigotry, racism, and fascism. The mere mention of God’s guidance, prayer, or religious objections to abortion, adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, marriage between homosexuals, and certain scientific procedures having to do with cloning and related matters is enough to send neoliberals into paroxysms of defiance and expressions of concern about the very future of the nation.

The paleoliberal view of an ideal society was remarkably similar to Edward Bellamy’s utopian fantasy of a highly regimented nation, ruled by a liberal elite, where private capitalism has disappeared and everyone is employed by one big business corporation. Their dream was of a perfectly organized, industrial state, which, by reason of the close interlocking of its wheels, works with a minimum of friction to provide a maximum of wealth and leisure to all.

The neoliberals generally share this dream of Fabian socialism. But they are much more influenced by the originator of socialist utopianism, Karl Marx himself, and the pleasures attendant to a society that has thrown off the restraints of convention and religion. It is worth noting in this context that Marx’s favorite myth was the story of Prometheus. Indeed, the prefix to Marx’s doctoral dissertation was the speech of Prometheus to Hermes in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*. (“...And dost thou suppose I crouch and cower in reverence and awe To Gods of yesterday?...I hate all Gods...”)

Neoliberals also have a different view as to how such a society should be brought about. Paleoliberals leaned toward a Marxist belief in the natural progress of history toward collectivism. The neoliberals are less patient. Like their Jacobin antecedents, they are filled with a sense of exaggerated moral righteousness and hatred for anyone who stands in their way or does not share their vision of a society without moral constraints. With Danton, they declare, “These priests, these nobles are not guilty, but they must die, because they are out of place, interfere with the movement of things, and will stand in the way of the future.”

From this perspective then, tomorrow’s election is about the culture. The neoliberals are desperately trying to wrest control of the federal government from the Bush conservatives, whom they despise, not because of the war in Iraq, Republican “scandals,” denial of “rights” to terrorists, electronic surveillance, questions about “global warming,” attitudes toward immigration, or the GOP’s spendthrift ways. Neoliberals want to defeat conservatives because they threaten their dream of an America that is free from the fetters of religion and conventional morals and mores.

This is what the last election “was about,” and the one before that, and the one before that. In the aftermath of the Democratic defeat in 2004, the pollsters and pundits all agreed that “moral values” had played a key part in the results. Democrats were shocked. But they didn’t argue. They pledged to fight back on this very battleground, stating that their “moral values” were as good if not better than those of the Republicans.

Nancy Pelosi, for example, told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that because "faith is such an important part of the lives of most people in our country" Democrats have to convince voters that "many of the people who are in politics on the Democratic side do so according to the – the gospel of Matthew and indeed the Bible." She admitted that "we don't demonstrate it clear [sic] enough" but argued that "Democrats are faith-filled" and vowed to get this fact across better in the future.

Hillary joined in on this theme in a post-election speech at Tufts University, asserting that Democrats should, in response to the use of the Bible by conservatives to support their opposition to gay marriage, routinely cite the words of Jesus to support the liberal agenda for helping the poor and doing other good works.

In the intervening two years, Democrats changed their minds, apparently deciding that fighting Republicans on that turf was not wise, since the neoliberals, who are a dominant force within the party, would not appreciate a lot of "Jesus talk," even if it were nothing more than a ploy to garner the votes of Christians, whom the *Washington Post* once described as "poor, uneducated and easily led." So they chose instead to go after President Bush and his fellow Republicans with everything they had, changing the topic of conversation from their own cultural beliefs to President Bush's performance in office. And it's working. So be it.

But make no mistake about it, this election isn't *primarily* about Iraq or about any of the other above-mentioned temporal "issues." Indeed, we think it is fair to say that the neoliberals would have enthusiastically defended Bill Clinton if he had taken the same position as George Bush on most of them.

This election is all about a sense of anger and hatred among the neoliberals that is so deep and so intense that they have no qualms about providing comfort and moral support to America's enemies during wartime if that is what it takes to destroy their own enemies. And you know what? The next election is going to be about that also.

ALLEN VS. WEBB AND THE FUTURE OF U.S. POLITICS.

Regardless of the outcome tomorrow, the next several weeks will be filled with endless analyses and explanations about what happened and why. As with the predictions we are seeing today, some of these will be excellent, but most will be just awful.

If the Democrats manage to secure one house of Congress, we will hear over and over again about the resurgence of liberalism, the ongoing collapse of conservatism, and the emerging "progressive" majority. If the Democrats take both houses, or if they happen somehow to win a working majority in the House (meaning a pickup of more than 25 seats), we will read about the "realignment" in American politics and the death of the historical anomaly that was Reaganism. And all of this will be pure bunk.

As far as we can tell, the only outcome that would be significant in a historical sense would be a Republican victory in both houses, meaning that Republicans manage to hold their majority in both, irrespective of seats gained or lost. As so many commentators have noted, if the Democrats can't win this year, then it's possible that they never will and should therefore rethink the entire premise of their party. In addition, if Republicans can manage to hold on, that will make George W. Bush four-for-four in electoral victories, an unprecedented record of success in American politics.

For all the complaining by Republicans, mocking by Democrats, and the media's obsession with slumping poll numbers, a Republican victory would mark George Bush as the most successful electoral president in U. S. history. In any case, most "experts" think that's unlikely, which means that Tuesday's results will be historically rather meaningless. Columnist Charles Krauthammer put it this way on Friday:

What to say about such a victory?
Substantial, yes. Historic, no. Before proclaiming a landslide, one has to ask Henny Youngman's question: "Compared to what?" (His answer to: "How's your wife?")
Since the end of World War II, the average

loss for a second-term presidency in its sixth year has been 29 House seats and six Senate seats. If you go back to Franklin Roosevelt's second term, the House loss average jumps to 35. Thus a 25/6 House/Senate loss would be about (and slightly below) the historical average.

Now, for the record, that doesn't mean that we believe that the results will be completely inconsequential. Indeed, we think this election will provide a great deal of useful information about the electorate and the respective parties. But we further believe that the overwhelming preponderance of that useful information will be overlooked by the mainstream media-types, who will find in the results only what they're looking to find, allowing their biases to direct their post-election interpretations, much as they have let their biases direct their pre-election forecasts.

In our estimation, one of the most important races of this election cycle is the race for the Senate seat in Virginia. And no, we don't believe this just because we both live there. The Virginia contest pits the incumbent, Republican George Allen, who was once considered a front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination in 2008, against Democratic challenger Jim Webb, a novelist, historian, philosopher, and onetime Reagan Secretary of the Navy. Irrespective of which candidate wins, this race will say – indeed, already has said – a great deal about the respective parties and the course that each is taking in its ideological evolution.

Rest assured, we are hardly the only analysts who will look to Virginia to catch glimpses of the future. Because it is likely that this race will be very close, and because it is possible that the Democrat may actually win this seat, the Old Dominion will be the focus of a great deal of attention after the election, in large part because media analysts and pundits will believe that it tells the story they want told, i.e. underdog Democrat takes on powerful and successful Republican in “Red territory,” manages to win (or at least come close) by “running to the center,” and thereby sets a precedent for the future in this (and presumably other) “purpling” states.

This is, by the way, the same story that's been told over and over again about Virginia for the last five years. In 2001, Democrat Mark Warner was elected governor and, because of his purported centrism, became a media darling, a hero to Democrats, and, until he dropped out a couple of weeks ago, a serious challenger to Hillary Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination in '08. Last year, Warner was able to help his friend and lieutenant governor, Tim Kaine, win the governor's mansion as well, thereby extending both Democratic control of Richmond and the truism about Virginia growing more Democratic. Win or lose, simply by making this race close, Webb will further convince many observers and pundits that Virginia and other Southern states are, indeed, tiring of GOP governance and can be won by smart centrists.

This is very a nice story. And certainly, there is a grain of truth in it. But it does not, in any way, tell the entire tale of what has happened in Virginia. Nor, for that matter, does it offer any guidance for the future.

The fact of the matter is that the principal reason that the Republican stands to lose this year is precisely the same as the principal reason that the Republican lost last year, namely because he ran one of the worst, most stupidly managed political campaigns in recent memory. Last year, the artless and insipid Republican Jerry Kilgore focused his campaign on the death penalty, an issue roughly a decade past its prime, and used his opponent's personal opposition to capital punishment to denigrate his religious beliefs. Unsurprisingly, Virginia's “values voters” were turned off by both aspects of Kilgore's campaign, rightfully judging him too obtuse to correctly assess the concerns of voters and too self-righteous to understand the mean-spiritedness of his attack on Kaine's religiousness.

This year, the same people who brought Virginia's voters the self-immolating campaign of Jerry Kilgore reprised their shtick with the macaca-laced version that has been George Allen's quest for self-destruction. One would be hard-pressed to find a campaign that has been more poorly run or a candidate who has

been less disciplined in recent memory. Even John “Gosh, You’re Stupid” Kerry looked good on the stump by comparison to Allen. Between his bullying of young opposition staffers to his inability to quell rumors of past overt racism to an inordinate and frankly baffling obsession with his opponent’s fictional writings, George Allen has done virtually everything in his power to ensure that Jim Webb gets elected. To us, the surprise here is not that Webb might win tomorrow, but that *Allen* still might.

In fairness, we’ll concede that part of the problem the GOP has been having in Virginia is that the part of the state that is suburban Washington D.C. has been growing quickly and growing more Democratic. But the big problem for Republicans over the last two election cycles hasn’t been the amassing of political muscle in liberal Northern Virginia so much as the absolute political incompetence of their candidates. In any case, analysts and pundits who believe that they can see the future in Kilgore-Kaine and Allen-Webb races are, for the most part, wrong. Unless Democrats can figure out a way to get Republicans to nominate political incompetents in every contest, then the conventional wisdom about red state voters’ susceptibility to seduction by moderate Democrats will prove as useless as it is trite.

Does this mean that we believe that there is nothing to be learned from the Allen-Webb race? No it doesn’t. Indeed, we think that this contest gives very important, if very subtle, clues about the future of both parties and the direction each finds itself taking. It is just that the mainstream analysts are too intent on fitting this race into their own paradigms to see these clues.

Let’s start with the Republican, George Allen. Allen, as we’ve noted, has spent virtually the entirety of this campaign as the proverbial deer caught in the headlights, not knowing what to do or what to say and thus just winging it – disastrously. Part of this is simply Allen being Allen. But part of it is reflective of a larger reality among Republican elected officials.

Unlike most of the truly successful Republicans, namely George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, George

Allen appears not to know what he believes. Sure, he knows that taxes should be cut and that big government is, in general, bad. But beyond a few platitudes, the guy appears completely lost. And in this sense, his campaign is the perfect paradigm for the Republican Party as a whole.

This point is perhaps best illustrated in Allen’s strange and oddly pathetic attempt to woo women voters. For those of you who haven’t had the misfortune of being directly subjected to Allen’s campaign, the Senator and his advisors have spent an inordinate amount of time this election cycle trying to attract the feminist vote, centering their campaign on their opponent’s politically incorrect takes on women at the Naval Academy, women in combat, and the Navy’s Tailhook Scandal. The focus on the graphic perversions in Webb’s novels was also, apparently, designed to appeal to women voters.

What’s most notable about this campaign for women’s votes, besides its clumsiness and ineptness, is the fact that Allen and his advisors would even think it is necessary. In the elections of 2002 and 2004, Republicans closed what had been a yawning, decade-long gap between themselves and Democrats in the battle for women voters. The GOP’s willingness to support the full-throated defense of the United States and American values was enough to win back a great many of the women who had fled the party in the post-Reagan era. Soccer Moms became Security Moms, concerned not just with the material comforts provided their children, but with their safety as well. And, for obvious reasons, Republicans appealed to segments of this demographic better than did Democrats.

But in 2006, most elected members of the GOP are no longer able to offer voters such clear-cut vision on matters of national security and personal safety. Unlike their party’s leader, President Bush, most Republican officials don’t feel strongly about the war on terror or the war in Iraq and have tried to bring nuance to their positions in the face of slipping support for both. Rather than reassert their national security *bona fides*, most Republicans have chosen to denigrate those of their opponents, essentially saying

to voters, “we may not know what the hell we’re doing to win the war, but at least we’re not as bad as those guys.” Needless to say, this hasn’t exactly been a winning campaign theme, and many of the Security Moms have abandoned the GOP because of it.

Enter George Allen and his feminist-friendly campaign.

What all of this tells us about the state of the Republican Party in the post-post-9/11 world is twofold. First, George Bush and Dick Cheney are tremendous assets to their party. While the conventional wisdom has it that the administration is the proverbial albatross around the necks of its fellow Republicans, the particulars of this campaign tend to show otherwise. Both the President and the Vice President have been exceptionally successful campaigners this season, not only raising considerable cash, but bolstering support for flagging GOP candidates as well. A big part of their appeal, in our estimation, is that they deliver a certain confidence and nerve that is lacking in many other Republican politicians. Republican voters may not like that America is not winning the war in Iraq decisively, but they want to be reassured that someone still wants to. And that’s what Bush and Cheney have provided.

Second, Republicans have a great deal of soul-searching to do on national security matters before the 2008 campaign. Most observers assume that the GOP will spend the next two years rehashing the small-government versus big-government debate, trying to figure out what it truly means to be a “conservative.” Certainly, some of this will take place. But the party will also have a serious discussion about the direction of foreign and national security policy. And this latter discussion will be of considerably greater interest to the electorate at large.

We doubt that it is mere coincidence that the two prospective Republican presidential candidates who lead all early polls, John McCain and Rudy Giuliani, are also the two who have taken up positions in support of aggressive global pursuit of Islamists and their enablers. Neither of these two appeals to the

conservative base on domestic matters, be they fiscal or cultural, but both appeal to the broader electorate on the most important issue of the day, the war on terror. As the 2008 campaign takes shape, the Republican base will have to weigh the relative value of domestic versus foreign policy in the post-post-9/11 world, and Republican candidates will have to figure out whether they believe that the war on terror is worth winning on its own merits or whether it is worth winning only as long as it continues to produce votes.

As for Webb and the Democrats, here too we can see a great deal about the party and its current direction. Indeed, in many ways, Jim Webb is the perfect candidate for the Democratic Party. He is everything the party should project, yet carries many of its deepest neuroses. Like star-crossed lovers, Webb and the Democratic Party may have found each other late in life, but they appear on many levels to be one another’s true soul mates.

As we have noted over the last couple of weeks, Jim Webb is what might otherwise be called a paleo-conservative. He is, in the great Buchananite tradition, an isolationist and something of a nativist. And his views on matters of foreign engagement and American interventionism comport very nicely with the party that wants nothing more than to “bring the boys home” and which believes that the most effective way to win the war on terror (if there is such a thing) is to beef up defense of the homeland, up to and including banning foreign companies (from, say, Dubai) from holding the contracts to provide management services for American ports. The paleo-right and the anti-war left have had a great deal in common over the past five years, and Jim Webb is the embodiment of this heretofore unacknowledged collaboration.

But where Webb and his new party find the greatest measure of agreement can be seen in their respective views of the military’s place in American society. Now, most readers who know anything at all about Jim Webb will stop dead in their tracks at this assertion, understanding that Webb made his name as an

antagonist to the likes of John Kerry (whose hand he refused to shake for two decades), decrying the way in which American soldiers returning from Vietnam were treated by ungrateful Democrats and vilifying liberals for their general anti-military attitudes. But this isn't about the military *per se* so much as it is about the views shared by Webb and mainstream Democrats as to how society and the military should be organized and managed.

Two weeks ago, in a brilliant analysis of Webb, Andrew Ferguson penned the following, which uses quotes from Webb's novels to explain the candidate's critique of American society. Ferguson wrote:

The decadence of this nation of pussies shows itself most clearly in the relationship between the military and its civilian leadership. Out in the real world, military men "soldier on for the children still at home," knowing that "such a motivation seems medieval in modern America." Soldiers are atavists, grounded in reality, connected by blood to the soil of a place, and the farther one travels from the military life the more unreal America gets. Civilians live in a world of appearances and insincerity and false emotions, "going off to business school or playing Nintendo" while their betters take up arms to save their candy-butts. Politicians in Webb's telling are always "posturing . . . each of them possessed with the type of personality that could slap the back and shake the hand of a complete stranger [yuk!] . . . Touch pat shake smile. The human tools of American politics."

Invariably in Webb's novels the soldiers erupt in frustration against the civilian leaders. "You can figure it out for yourself," says one fed-up military man in *Something to Die For*. "The legislation after World War Two that created the Department of Defense and supposedly ensured civilian control over the military has been a disaster.

Do you think I'm kidding? Ask yourself why we won every war before 1947, and we haven't won one since...." Webb asks himself the question in nearly every novel, and he has a ready answer: The country is run by people like "Chicken Hawk," the secretary of defense in *Something to Die For*. "They call him Chicken Hawk because he didn't have the guts to serve when there was a war on and now every time there's a crisis he wants to send them in."

As Ferguson notes, these beliefs form the foundation of Webb's opposition to the war in Iraq, which he believes was dreamed up by civilians who don't understand military culture and then screwed up by the same civilians. Ironically, this is precisely the same critique that has become the standard attack of the "responsible" left. Unable or unwilling to embrace the true anti-warriors, the Democratic Party has instead opted for criticizing the execution of the war, claiming that the bad guys here are Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Bush (in that order) who have disavowed the input of omniscient generals and have made a royal mess of war and its execution.

While most of the country obsessed over the question of whether John Kerry's insult of America's fighting men and women was intentional or merely the result of his inability to tell a joke, the most telling portion of Kerry's comments went largely ignored. What was most indicative, in our estimation, wasn't the stupid "joke," but Kerry's immediate response to his critics, which went like this:

I'm sick and tired of these despicable Republican attacks that always seem to come from those who never can be found to serve in war, but love to attack those who did.

I'm not going to be lectured by a stuffed suit White House mouthpiece standing behind a podium, or doughy Rush Limbaugh, who no doubt today will take a break from belittling Michael J. Fox's Parkinson's disease to start lying about me just as they have lied about

Iraq. It disgusts me that these Republican hacks, who have never worn the uniform of our country lie and distort so blatantly and carelessly about those who have.

The people who owe our troops an apology are George W. Bush and Dick Cheney who misled America into war and have given us a Katrina foreign policy that has betrayed our ideals, killed and maimed our soldiers, and widened the terrorist threat instead of defeating it.

Like Webb, Kerry's greatest anger is reserved for the so-called "chicken hawks," the civilians who have managed the military and directed the war effort. Kerry's position of disdain for these civilians is indistinguishable from that unofficially adopted by the rest of his party. And it fits very nicely with Webb's long-held views of the world and of the military-civilian relationship. Though there is no doubt that Webb's view of the military freed from civilian fetters is vastly different from that envisioned by John Kerry and the rest of the Democratic establishment, what is clear is that both share a dislike for the constitutionally enshrined principle of civilian primacy over the military.

Democrats who once decried the "military-industrial complex" have, over the last couple of decades grown less hostile to the military hierarchy. Part of this is the belief that many upper-level officers have been co-opted into the liberal-left's politically correct worldview and are therefore more "enlightened" and more trustworthy than they once were. But an even bigger part of it is Democrats' belief in the supremacy of "professional administration" and a concomitant belief in the irrelevance of "the people." In Federalist 28, Alexander Hamilton wrote that:

Independent of all other reasonings upon the subject, it is a full answer to those who require a more peremptory provision against

military establishments in times of peace to say that the whole power of the proposed government is to be in the hands of the representatives of the people. This is the essential, and, after all, the only efficacious security for the rights and privileges of the people which is attainable in civil society.

What one sees here is precisely the attitude toward "the rights and privileges of the people" that modern liberalism abhors. In the bureaucratic state, decisions are to be made by qualified, trained professionals, not the ignorant people or their equally ignorant representatives. What both the Democrats and Jim Webb share is a belief that the military command should be exclusively "professional," i.e. bureaucratized, and that decisions about the deployment and use of military resources should be made independently of the people's representatives. This is the bureaucratic state in a nutshell, and here Webb's beliefs on the military complement the Democrats' beliefs on society as a whole quite nicely.

If one were to ask the two of us what we think about the future of American politics in general, we'd have to give a halting and incomplete answer. For years we've argued that the paradigms in American politics are changing, but that the new paradigms are not yet fully formed. We would, of course, make some basic points about the future, suggesting that the Republicans will have to figure out what they believe and whether they are fully dedicated to activist foreign policy, and that the Democrats will continue to advocate a statist enterprise, emphasizing the importance of the "professional bureaucracy" and minimizing the will of the uneducated masses.

All of these trends are on display in the Virginia Senate race, which is why we believe that it is one of the most interesting and crucial races in the nation. It really doesn't matter which candidate wins. What matters is the way the campaign proceeded and the hints it gave us about the future of the parties.

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