

**Mark L. Melcher** Publisher  
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

**Stephen R. Soukup** Editor  
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

## THEY SAID IT

If the bear sees you and is closer than 300 feet, or if the bear is approaching you, remain calm and try to look as large as possible . . . keep an eye on the bear, but avoid direct eye contact. Do not be aggressive . . . Play dead if a grizzly bear or polar bear makes a non-predatory attack. If the bear (other than a black bear) is attacking you in self-defense, you can put it at ease (and save yourself) by playing dead by lying completely flat on the ground . . . To play dead, lie flat on the ground protecting your vital parts with the ground, and your arms protecting your neck with your hands laced behind the neck. Keep your legs together and do not struggle. Once the bear leaves your immediate vicinity, wait several minutes before carefully looking to see if the bear is still around. A bear may look back and may return if it sees you moving.

--"How To Escape From A Bear." [www.wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com).

## A NEW PLAN FOR IRAQ.

Of all the charges that President Bush's many critics have leveled at him over the past six years, the most dishonest and unfair is the accusation that he had no plan in Iraq. No plan? Are they joking? He had one of the most elaborate and far reaching plans in the entire history of warfare and diplomacy. His plan, lest you missed it, was to bring democracy and liberty to Iraq at the point of a sword, then to use this accomplishment as a springboard to introduce these foundational principles of Western civilization to the other nations of the Middle East, and then to spread them across the globe. No plan? Posh! Bush's plan was worthy of Alexander, who once set out on a similar task of remaking the world in the image of his own nation.

Sword in hand, Alexander not only conquered virtually the entire known world of his time, from Gibraltar to the Punjab, from Egypt to Siberia, he deliberately and systematically Hellenized it. He founded scores of Greek cities throughout this vast region. He introduced and integrated Greek politics, law, literature, philosophy, religion, and art into the various cultures he encountered. He established Greek as the universal language of commerce and trade throughout this vast region. In the process, he changed the world.

We cannot know how historians will treat President Bush and his plan to spread democracy and liberty across the globe. The ancient Greeks would probably have viewed him as a tragic figure who made an heroic attempt to perform a great and noble task that was beyond the power of an ordinary mortal. Certainly, the twelve labors of Hercules were child's play compared to even the first step in President Bush's ambitious, self-appointed mission, namely to establish a Western style democracy in a nation that is rife with tribal hatreds, religious intolerance, and endemic corruption; a nation teeming with millions of young, uneducated men who have no prospect for meaningful employment; a nation with a large, indigenous, well-armed

### In this Issue

A New Plan for Iraq.

The State of Nature and the War  
on Terror.

Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842  
Phone 540.477.9762 Fax 540.477.3359 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

insurgency movement; a nation that is culturally antagonistic to democracy, free markets, secular legal systems, and the concept of the separation of church and state.

Some of the President's detractors say his was a fool's errand. Some argue that it was evil to even try. These charges bring to mind Hegel's comment that no man is a hero to his valet, not because the former is no hero, but because the latter is a valet. The fact is that while the odds were strongly against the President's plan, it was not foolish to try, given the available alternatives in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11. Nor was it iniquitous in any sense of the word.

In any case, it was a plan. It was an answer to the difficult question of how a huge, global, highly complex, open society can defeat a large, determined, fanatical, well financed, globally diverse cult, which has declared that all of the various manifestations of terrorism are its weapons of choice, ranging from relatively small attacks against targets all over the world to large strikes on the nation's major cities and population centers using chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons.

President Bush believed that simply fortifying the United States with stepped up law enforcement and surveillance tactics would not achieve victory against such an enemy; that indeed, the enemy would simply get stronger and more dangerous if America limited itself to defensive actions. So he launched a multi-faceted offensive, which included not only a military invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, but intelligence operations throughout the world designed to identify, capture, and kill individual members of the cult, to uncover terrorist plots, to cut off the cult's finances, and to help allies in their efforts to protect themselves against the threat.

He also concluded that while these tactical activities were integral and vital to the battle, there had to be something more if the United States hoped to ever achieve a permanent victory over this enemy. There had to be a plan to destroy the movement itself, to dry up the cultural swamp that was producing the hatred that was fueling the violence. This plan

had to address the tragedy of the Muslim world, a world of extravagant wealth marked by widespread and crippling poverty, economic sclerosis, illiteracy, oppressive governments, widespread corruption, willful ignorance, state-sanctioned murder, medieval superstitions, and ancient hatreds. So he developed such a plan and he set about implementing it.

From the beginning, we here at the Political Forum have been skeptical concerning the success of the venture. Indeed, early in the process we argued that the President "may as well try to raise caribou over there" as to build a democratic Iraq. But never did we wish that he would fail. And as time went on we recognized that this plan of his had one characteristic that all really good plans have, which is that it could fall short of achieving its grand, final goal and still advance the cause for which it was established. We recognized that the very act of attempting to introduce democracy into the heartland of the Muslim world was a worthwhile endeavor, and tactically sound as well, even if it failed. We put it this way.

Bush's critics can argue on and on about how democracy in Iraq is a chimerical dream, indeed a sign of the President's ignorance. But the ignorance resides with those who fail to realize that in the greater war against Islamic fundamentalism this initiative is the ultimate doomsday weapon. What President Bush understands that his critics do not is that the promise of freedom and democracy instills in a citizenry a desire for a better life and provides them with a path for achieving it. And even if this desire is not immediately realized, even if it is brutally suppressed, the promise does not die or even retreat as liberating armies often do, as in fact they did after the first Gulf War, but stays within the hearts and minds of the population and spreads to others until it becomes powerful enough to launch another assault on the totalitarian project.

So what is the alternative Democratic plan? WWNJD? What would Nancy (Pelosi) and "Jack" (Murtha) do? Well, for lack of a better term, we will call it, "not

the Bush plan.” Simply stated, it calls for the United States to remove its troops from Iraq *tout de suite*, and leave that benighted nation to its own devices. From the standpoint of the greater war against militant Islam, the Democratic plan resembles what hikers are told to do if they encounter a bear in the woods. Some of the details are listed in the “They Said It” section above, but the highlights include, “look as large as possible,” “don’t be aggressive” and “play dead” if attacked. This is known in Europe as the “French Plan,” in recognition of that nation’s unswerving dedication to its principles over more than a century of conflict.

In contrast to the Bush plan, this plan does not contain a blueprint for vanquishing the enemy. Its goal is not victory, but survival. It emphasizes various defensive measures, including early bluster, followed by meekness, prostration, and the presentation of a lesser sacrifice as a means of satiating the enemy’s appetite. Success is dependent on the enemy’s lack of interest in victory, and measured by how few wounds one suffers, which is in turn dependent on one’s determination to look as unthreatening as possible and one’s willingness to accept maiming and death with passivity and resignation.

Needless to say, this plan works better against some enemies than others. Reason would dictate that this is not an ideal response to an enemy that flies large, commercial airplanes into skyscrapers, straps bombs around young men and women and sends them into pizza parlors to blow themselves up, takes videos of its leaders cutting off the heads of prisoners who are bound and blindfolded, and dreams of inflicting massive deaths on civilian populations via the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical agents.

Nevertheless, it has the advantage of being a politically popular response to an unpopular war and an unpopular president, especially among liberal baby boomers, many of whom view their role in America’s defeat in Vietnam as the most glorious political event in their lives and would like to participate in one more massive, American military defeat before meeting the grim ferryman.

This appeal to the public is no small thing when considered from the perspective of a Democratic Party that is struggling to gain back its majority status. Indeed, in a democratic nation like the United States, it is often much more important that a war plan be popular with the masses than to be strategically and militarily superior. Thus, it might be argued that the principal flaw in the Bush plan is that the timetable involved is far too long for a nation whose most popular television chef is known for her “30 minute meals.”

Now, it is worth noting that the Democrats have very little chance of seeing their plan adopted and implemented during the next two years, unless both President Bush and Vice President Cheney were to die and Nancy Pelosi were to move into the White House. On the other hand, by pushing hard for immediate withdrawal, Democrats have a very good chance of forcing President Bush to make changes in his plan that would significantly enhance the chances for withdrawal during the next presidency.

Which brings us to the highly anticipated, upcoming release of a report from an organization called the Iraq Study Group, which was established by Congress last March and charged with delivering an “independent assessment” of the war in Iraq and to make recommendations concerning “alternative policies” for pursuing this war.

The ISG, as it is called, is made up of an odd mixture of old political hacks and a few honorable, well-meaning public figures who have no more “expert” knowledge about the subject at hand than a hog has about Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The word bipartisan is routinely used to describe the group, which old Washington hands understand is usually a clear signal that something disreputable is about to take place.

There have been a great many reports about what the group is likely to recommend, most of which we can assume have been reasonably accurate, so there is no need for us to dwell on the details. What is most important is that the report will begin the public

dialogue that will begin the process by which the Bush administration will make the changes that will bring its plan for Iraq more into line with public sentiment and thus advance the case for withdrawal.

In the end, the ISG will not endorse the Democrats' plan for immediate withdrawal, which is no big deal, since they knew that was a non-starter anyway. The group will, however, disparage President Bush's plan for creating a democratic Iraq, without suggesting any alternative plan for how a huge, global, highly complex, open society can defeat a large, determined, fanatical, well financed, globally diverse cult, which has declared that all of the various manifestations of terrorism are its weapons of choice.

No one will either recognize or remark on the fact that this leaves the United States with no plan whatsoever for victory over militant Islam, not even a bad one. Even the White House will be silent about this as it begins work on implementing a new plan that is limited to keeping some semblance of order in Iraq until a new president is elected with a mandate from the people to do something different.

In the meantime, the ISG will do what all such study groups have done since the beginning of time. It will recommend that it not be disbanded even though its report has been released and its mission thus accomplished. It will propose instead that it be made a permanent part of the Washington landscape, which will be the one recommendation that is certain to be honored.

This will assure that each of the ISG's esteemed members retains a spot in the warm limelight of Washington's big debate over the war, complete with staff and limos and VIP trips to exotic locales at public expense. More importantly, it will allow Jim Baker a shot at becoming the front man for a high profile round of "shuttle diplomacy" with Iran and Syria, thus allowing him to relive some of his old glory days, even if the White House has doubts about the project.

And this will give the rest of us time to learn to lie flat, protecting our vital parts with the ground, keeping our

hands laced behind our necks and our legs together, while resisting the natural inclination to either struggle or complain while being gnawed upon.

## THE STATE OF NATURE AND THE WAR ON TERROR.

The last few weeks have not been good ones for President Bush's "war on terror." It is not that the terrorist have succeeded in striking the homeland or even American assets on foreign soil. Even in Iraq, the war continues much as it always has. The problem is that those who are skeptical of the war have grown politically stronger, raising the specter of a series of significant retreats, not just on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, but in the political war in Washington over whether the other wars – and the "war on terror" in general – are worth fighting.

To many, Republicans and Democrats alike, this battle in Washington makes no sense. Why, they wonder, would any American, regardless of party, oppose doing whatever is necessary to protect their nation against an enemy that has publicly vowed to bring death and destruction upon it. Who could oppose the natural inclination of a society to protect itself against such a threat?

We don't have answers to these questions. In fact, we are as mystified as anyone about the motivations of the most vocal factions of the antiwar crowd. But this week we thought we would offer some thoughts on the subject from a very different perspective than other conservatives have employed. For lack of a better term, we'll call it "food for thought." So here goes.

One of the most persistent social myths in Western civilization is that which the historian Norman Cohn has termed the "egalitarian State of Nature," which posits the belief that man's natural, pre-historical state was a "Golden Age" "in which all men were equal in status and wealth and in which no one was oppressed or exploited by anyone else; a state of affairs

characterized by universal good faith and brotherly love and also, sometimes, by total community of property and even spouses.”

The problem with this “Golden Age” (in addition to the whole spouse-swapping thing) is that it is not merely one of the most persistent, but also one of the most pernicious social myths in all of Western thought. It is not only preposterous but dangerous. This irrational, fantastical belief in a utopian State of Nature underpinned the greatest threat to global civilization in the last century. And today it aides the new greatest threat to civilization by undermining the impulse to stop its deadly spread.

According to Professor Cohn, the myth of the egalitarian State of Nature is one of only a handful of “phantasies which have gone on to make up the revolutionary eschatology of Europe.” And like most of the other such “phantasies,” the State of Nature had its origins in ancient Greece and Rome and was modified and revised considerably by early and pre-medieval Christians.

The myth made its first modern (or pre-modern) appearance in a work of literature in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, in the epic poem *Roman de la Rose* by the Parisian poet Jean de Meun. According to Cohn, “no other vernacular work in the whole of medieval literature was so popular,” or so influential, and in it, Meun described the “Golden Age” of humanity thusly:

Once upon a time, in the days of our fathers and mothers, as the writings of the Ancients bear witness, people loved one another with a delicate and honest love, and not out of covetousness and lust for gain. Kindness reigned in the world.

There they danced and disported themselves in sweet idleness, simple quiet people who cared for nothing but to live joyously and in all friendship with one another. No king or prince had yet, like a criminal, snatched up what belonged to others. All were equals and had no private property of their own.

They knew well the maxim that love and authority never yet dwelt companionably together . . . The Ancients kept one another company, free from any bond or constraint, peaceably, decently; and they would not give up their liberty for all the gold in Arabia and in Phrygia.”

Now, this myth of a pre-historical utopia is critical in Western thought and the development of Western civilization for at least a couple of different reasons. First, as Cohn notes, it was only natural that the egalitarian State of Nature would eventually give rise to the egalitarian Millennium; the social myth became a revolutionary myth over time as the “Golden Age irrecoverably lost in the distant past” was replaced by a Golden Age “preordained for the immediate future.”

From the 14<sup>th</sup> century on, the idea that human society was on the verge of a great revolution that would end the current mean state of affairs and return mankind to its natural, pre-historical condition, was ascendant in Western civilization. Many Reformation-era social upheavals, from the Hussite (Taborite) rebellion in Bohemia to Thomas Muntzer and the Peasant’s War in Germany, to militant Anabaptism throughout central Europe, were anarcho-communistic movements that assailed the powerful institutions of human society – the “prince,” the “rich,” and most notably, the Catholic Church – and promised their adherents the elimination of these “unnatural” institutions and a return to the true, egalitarian natural state.

Obviously, these movements served as the intellectual and spiritual precursors to later, post-Christian movements that also promised egalitarian utopias. As Cohn put it, “the old religious idiom has been replaced by a secular one,” as the revolution against “the great ones” (i.e. “the powerful”) was revised to fit a purely secular context. That is to say that the intellectual roots of the post-Enlightenment, quasi-religious radical egalitarian movements – from Utopian socialism right up to Marxism – can be traced backward through the early peasants’ revolts and the overtly religious eschatological rebellions right back to the State of Nature myth. The fundamental tenets of modern revolutionary egalitarianism, including

the belief in the primacy of the struggle between “oppressed” and “oppressor” and the repudiation of religion, were hardly modern creations and, in fact, predated Marx by some four hundred years.

But the insidiousness of the myth of the State of Nature is hardly limited to the fantasies of communism and socialism. Would that it were so. The utopian State of Nature is also the foundation for the myth of the “noble savage.” Obviously, if an idyllic state exists or existed, someone had to inhabit it, and that someone was archetypical man, man uncorrupted by evils of materialism and modern society.

In the opening line of *Emile*, Jean Jacques Rousseau, the intellectual forefather of the modern left, declared that “Everything is good in leaving the hands of the creator of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.” Rousseau’s critique of modern society and his lionization of pre-societal man are, perhaps, his most consistent themes. They are also his most powerful and far-reaching contributions to political philosophy.

In *The Second Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Rousseau argued forcefully that private property was the source of society’s ills. “The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, to whom it occurred to say this is mine, and found people sufficiently simple to believe him, was the true founder of civil society.” More to the point, he argued that human existence in the absence of societal and societal contrivances was far nobler.

Observation fully confirms what reflection teaches us on this subject: Savage man and civilized man differ so much in their innermost heart and inclinations that what constitutes the supreme happiness of the one would reduce the other to despair. The first breathes nothing but repose and freedom, he wants only to live and remain idle, and even the Stoic’s *ataraxia* does not approximate his profound indifference to everything else. By contrast, the

Citizen, forever active, sweats and scurries, constantly in search of ever more strenuous occupations: he works to the death, even rushes toward it in order to be in a position to live, or renounces life in order to acquire immortality. He courts the great whom he hates, and the rich whom he despises; he spares nothing to attain the honor of serving them; he vaingloriously boasts of his baseness and of their protection and, proud of his slavery, he speaks contemptuously of those who have not the honor of sharing it.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this conception of savage man as ideal man was literalized, expounded upon, and eventually became a staple of the intellectual case against European imperialism. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Rousseau’s intellectual heirs continued to romanticize primitive man, and, indeed, they made his inherent righteousness a fundamental component of their self-loathing critique of Western society.

Much of the left’s attack on Western civilization is premised on the idea that the institutions of society – and Western society in particular – are inherently corrupting. The revolt against globalization, the neo-Luddite attack on modern technology (most especially the attack on the internal combustion engine), the squishy left’s fascination with organic foods and opposition to “genetically modified organisms,” “back to nature communalism,” the incessant degradation of America and American actions and motives, the unrelenting and ill-informed charges of economic exploitation and neocolonialism, and the irrational and brutal assault on Christianity are all, at least in part, underpinned by the idea that modern Western society is, by its very definition, corrupt and corrupting.

The natural outgrowth of this belief, of course, is the concomitant conviction that non-Western societies are, simply by virtue of being non-Western and non-Christian, less corrupt and therefore nobler. We have argued in the past that the left’s hatred of America, of Israel, of the West in general, derives at least in part from the Marxist concept of the struggle between oppressed and oppressor. This is certainly

true. But this hatred is also derived in part from the romanticization of primitive man, the fetishizing of the Third World.

The opposition to the Vietnam War was, by and large, pragmatic. Many Americans eventually conceded the pointlessness of the action when it became clear that the political class simply did not have the will to win it. And many of the more aggressive opponents of the war, young men under the age of 30, for example, resisted for the most part out of tacit fear camouflaged as idealism. Nevertheless there were those – the ideologues, the ideological and political leaders of the anti-war movement – whose opposition was based on the belief that the Vietnamese were the good guys and the Americans were the bad guys unjustly trying to impose Western customs and institutions on the noble people of Southeast Asia.

Why, for example, did Jane Fonda travel to North Vietnam in 1972, appear in public displaying solidarity with the enemy, call American soldiers liars and war criminals, and falsely declare to the world that American soldiers were being treated humanely? She did so because she believed it. Deep in her soul, she believed it, and no amount of evidence could convince her otherwise. She, like all of the ideological leaders of the anti-war movement, believed in the inherent nobility of North Vietnamese cause and the attendant wickedness of the American efforts to hinder that cause. The Vietnamese were right, simply by virtue of being Vietnamese.

Even today; even after the documented and irrefutable horrors of the communist regimes in Southeast Asia; even after Pol Pot and the killing fields; even after the millions of boat people and their horror stories of torture and murder, the left still insists that the Vietnamese communists and their ideological brethren in Cambodia, Laos, and throughout the region were right and were justified in their actions simply by virtue of their primitiveness.

A great many scholars and even intellectuals – even a small few who have evolved politically and have forsaken much of their anti-Americanism – continue to insist on the nobility of the Vietnamese and their

cause. Just this past June, Christopher Hitchens, who is without question one of the most brilliant, eloquent, and effective journalistic advocates for a muscular war on terror, nevertheless reiterated his belief that in Vietnam “we were vainly attempting to defeat a peoples’ army with a high morale and exalted standards.” He likewise declared that he “for one, will not have [the Vietcong] insulted by any comparison to the forces of Zarqawi, the Fedayeen Saddam, and the criminal underworld now arrayed against us.”

At least in Vietnam, Western opponents of the war could claim some semblance of ideological brotherhood with America’s enemies. But today, no such affinity exists. The Western left’s fixations on tolerance and diversity are anathema to the Islamists. Likewise, the Islamists’ attitudes toward governance, education, women, sexuality, homosexuality, and a host of other issues are deplored by the Western left – or at least they would be if they weren’t more than offset by virtue of their non-Christian primitiveness.

How else does one explain the ideological schizophrenia of America’s cultural elites? Harvard, for example, has banned ROTC (the Reserve Office Training Corps) from its campus and justifies the ban based on the military’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy toward homosexuality, a policy which tolerates homosexuals in military ranks as long as their sexuality is not discussed. Yet this summer the school warmly welcomed former Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, a man whose government’s official policy toward homosexuals is to bury them up to the heads or to drop stone walls on them or otherwise to torture and execute them. How does that make any sense unless the Iranian Islamists are given a pass simply because they are more primitive and thus more noble?

In the above piece and the “They Said It” quote that precedes it, we argue that the “Democratic plan [for Iraq] resembles what hikers are told to do if they encounter a bear in the woods.” That’s an apt analogy, but only to a point. In truth, the Democrats, or at least a great many of them, don’t believe it’s necessary to act as if they have encountered a bear in the woods because they don’t believe they have. They believe they’ve encountered something else altogether,

something that simply can't be as ferocious as a bear, can't be as deadly as a bear, and which has only been compared to a bear by fear mongers trying to stoke panic and consolidate power.

The left's position on the "enemy" boils down to this: Radical Islam is assuredly not the grave threat that some have made it out to be and even if it were, it would be entirely justified. The Islamists are not religious fanatics enamored with death; they are merely misunderstood Third Worlders who are tired of being exploited by Western imperialists. If the West stops the exploitation; if it stops the rape of the earth and the theft and abuse of the Middle East's natural resources; if it abandons its neo-colonialism; and if it quits taking the side of the Israelis and adopts a "balanced" approach to the Israeli-Palestinian question, then the noble savages will leave the West alone. And if they don't, it will be because the West had it coming. To them, and to the social myth to which they subscribe, the West is, after all, a debauched and corrupt civilization that deserves whatever it gets at the hands of the "noble savage."

Copyright 2006. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.