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THEY SAID IT

Take up the White Man's burden--
 The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine,
 And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
 (The end for others sought)
Watch sloth and heathen folly
 Bring all your hope to nought . . .

Take up the White Man's burden,
 And reap his old reward--
The blame of those ye better
 The hate of those ye guard--
The cry of hosts ye humour
 (Ah, slowly!) toward the light:--
"Why brought ye us from bondage,
 Our loved Egyptian night? . . .

Take up the White Man's burden--
 Ye dare not stoop to less--
Nor call too loud on Freedom
 To cloak your weariness.
By all ye will or whisper,
 By all ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
 Shall weigh your God and you.

Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man's Burden*, 1899.

WILL "THE SURGE" SUCCEED?

As antiwar movements go, the current one is pretty feeble. Yes, it's noisy, and it has the entire mainstream press on board. And it does have some Hollywood "celebrities" involved, although it must be said that the phrase "star studded" doesn't come immediately to mind when the headliners are Jane Fonda, Sean Penn, Danny Glover, Susan Sarandon, and her boyfriend Tim Robbins. Indeed, the presence of this crowd of yesterday's supernovas at the recent antiwar rally in Washington was more reminiscent of Woodstock in August 1969 than the "days of rage" in Chicago two months later.

To paraphrase a well-known song from those days, "Where have all the angry young men gone?" Where are the Abbie Hoffmans, the Rennie Davis', the Jerry Rubins', the David Dellingers' who provided a little panache to the Vietnam antiwar movement? Where are the Black Panthers? Somehow a dissipated, bloated,

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and aging Jesse Jackson doesn't project the same image of resolve and intimidation that Bobbie Seale did. And while it is pretty strong stuff to compare George Bush to Hitler, as was done at the rally, it is not all that imaginative and is increasingly meaningless to younger generations of Americans, who, as the song goes, don't know much about history, or, for that matter, much about anything that happened before their fourth birthday, including the Vietnam War.

If the crowd that came to the antiwar rally in Washington last week is representative, the energy behind this movement is coming almost entirely from those individuals who are 50 or older and who have fond memories of the antiwar days of the 1960s. Jack Langer began his article on the rally for *Human Events* with the line, "A man could make a fortune selling Geritol to these people." As such, it should come as no surprise that the most popular chant among the participants seemed to be "Hey, Hey, Uncle Sam. We Remember Vietnam."

Certainly, there were some young people in the crowd, but by all accounts they were a small minority and clearly not in the leadership. Of course, the absence of the draft is the big reason for this, but it's also true that, for young men in the heady, "girls-gone-wild" culture of today, the prospect of meeting a flower child with the morals of alley cat at the next antiwar rally is not as enticing as it was in the 1960s.

And how about that crowd of soft brains on Capitol Hill, who are falling all over themselves to pass "non-binding resolutions" against the "surge," after having just voted to confirm the nomination of the general who came up with the idea and is on his way to Iraq to implement it. And then there are those Senators, like John Kerry, Chuck Hegel, and Harry Reid, who complained for several years that President Bush hadn't sent enough troops to Iraq and now oppose the buildup?

So what do they want? You can listen to their speeches, read their interviews, watch their debates, but you can't identify a well-defined, common

objective. This makes catchy slogans hard to come by. "Pull out LBJ, like you're father should have" doesn't work.

Generally speaking, these politicians want to go with flow of public opinion, which is marked by apprehension about the war. But the smart ones, like Hillary Clinton, do not want to get too far out in front of the pack in case the situation improves markedly in the next two years. And all but a few of them are wary about becoming involved in a successful demand for a precipitous withdrawal, since that could result in a geopolitical disaster.

So they pass "non-binding resolutions," offer twaddle in the guise of thought, reminiscent of the great Lewis Carroll -- "If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?" Senator Lugar wants a "potent redeployment of U.S. troops." Jack Murtha wants to send the troops to Okinawa, where they would be available for a "timely response" if needed. Madam Pelosi wants to "quickly transition U.S. troops from a combat mission to a training mission." Ted Kennedy wants Jane Fonda.

If it weren't so sad, it would be funny. But the saddest thing of all is that this inherently weak antiwar movement grows stronger every day not because it offers a truly viable, publicly popular alternative to what President Bush is doing, but because President Bush has done a simply awful job fighting back. What is even more worrisome is the fact that that there is no ground for hope that his performance on this front is going to improve.

Conventional wisdom among the press, the public, and even at the White House seems to be that the future of the war in Iraq is now entirely dependent on the success or failure of the surge. The feeling is that if the surge goes well, support for the war will grow and the antiwar movement will weaken. If it goes poorly, an American pullback in Iraq is all but a sure thing.

As with all conventional wisdom, there is some truth to this assessment. But it ignores a very important point, namely that unless the surge is overwhelmingly triumphant, its success or failure will be decided in the same manner that the success or failure of the war itself has been decided, i.e., by a verbal battle at home between those who oppose the war and those who support it. And this means that we will be back where we began, with a muddle headed president who is largely incapable of offering an effective defense of the surge against those who will charge that it has failed, even if it has succeeded.

In a November 2003 article entitled “How Bush Could Lose The War In Iraq,” we argued that the “task of convincing Americans that the venture in Iraq is worth the cost has, over the past few months, become one of the most important fronts in the war” and we expressed our concern that the President was in danger of losing this battle because he wasn’t making a convincing case that victory in Iraq is crucial to the long term security of the United States.

In the intervening three-plus years, our fears were realized and the consequences of Bush’s failure to perform what is arguably the single most important task of a U.S. President during wartime have become even more obvious and more important. The following is our current analysis of the cause of this failure. We offer it not to be critical of the president but as a factor that should be considered when pondering whether the surge will be successful enough to keep the antiwar crowd at bay and keep the war itself going.

For starters, we would state our belief that President Bush has two fundamental problems that will work against him. These are unrelated, but they feed on each other. The first is that he continues to insist on defining and explaining the mission in Iraq as an experiment in nation building rather than a war against a dangerous enemy. This is a mistake of monumental proportions. We put it this way in the above-mentioned article.

Americans are a generous people. They will spend billions of dollars to help other nations fight against a variety of troubles and evils, including disease; environmental catastrophe; brutal government; shortages of food, clean water, electricity and other necessities; or even belligerent neighbors . . . But by the same token, Americans are very protective of the men and women who serve in their armed forces. Time and again Americans have demonstrated great reluctance to put their military forces in harm’s way for any cause other than national security, and narrowly defined national security at that. . . .

Under most circumstances, there is no conflict between these two traits. But on occasion when the compulsion to offer benevolent aid involves putting American military forces in harm’s way, the public gets very restive, as we saw in Somalia . . . So the task ahead for the Bush administration involves convincing the American people once again that the battle over Iraq is directly — very directly — linked to American security.

The argument that the enemy over there killed 20 American soldiers but that that is okay because the Iraqi people now have more electricity than they had when Saddam was running the place simply won’t sell. . . . the vast majority of Americans don’t give a damn whether the Iraqi people have electricity, or even candles for that matter, if the cost of providing them with this luxury is the life of a single American soldier.

Needless to say, President Bush has not yet recognized this crucial fact. In fact, he continues to emphasize in his speeches the noble and purely theoretical aspects of the war, a modern day modification of Kipling’s famous poem, which is generally regarded as an exhortation to spread the glories of Western civilization for the benefit of both the barbarians and the West itself. Some lines from the President’s recent State of the Union speech are instructive.

“We must remove the conditions that inspire blind hatred.”

“Free people are not drawn to violent and malignant ideologies.”

”We advance our own security interests by helping moderates and reformers and brave voices for democracy.”

“The great questions of our day is whether America will help men and women in the Middle East to build free societies and share in the rights of all humanity.”

Now this may all be true. The democratization of Iraq may indeed be a noble cause both as a tribute to the goodness of a great nation such as the United States, and because it benefits America’s practical interests in many ways. But it’s a lousy way to sell the war to the American people at a time when combat deaths are rising in the real war, the hot war, and when a blue ribbon panel of “experts” has recently announced that the military situation there is “gave and deteriorating.”

It would be like Arminius sending a message informing Rome that he was in the Teutoburg Forest and about to lose his head along with one the most decisive battles in the history of Western civilization to Arminius, but that he had a plan for eventual victory, which involved building schools to teach the children of the murderous Germanic barbarians the nuances of Roman culture.

The following is the President’s analysis of the enemy from his State of the Union speech. “What every terrorist fears most is human freedom.”

Once again, this may be true. Who can know what fears occupy the days of religious fanatics? But the kind of people that George Bush needs on his side in the battle for the hearts and minds of the American people don’t believe it. And more importantly, they would not be impressed about a military campaign that is based on this premise.

They believe that what every terrorist fears most is that the United States is going to hunt him and his colleagues down and kill them, destroy their organization, destroy their hiding places, destroy their training camps, drive them out of their safe havens, relegate their vision of a medieval Islamic world ruled under Sharia law to the dustbin of history, convince their kids that I-Pods are more fun than guns, and convince their women that getting an education would provide a more meaningful life than running around with a sack over their heads.

Moreover, they would like to hear that the President has a plan for making these fears a reality, not some pie in the sky vision of “removing the conditions that inspire blind hatred” from a barbarian society that feeds on this very hatred like buzzards on carrion.

If actions speak louder than words, then the surge is a step in the right direction. But as we said earlier, this surge will have to defended against charges that it is ineffectual, whether it is or not. And herein again, we have concerns about President Bush’s ability to wage this fight.

We believe that President Bush is a decent, honest man. We further believe that, all and all, he has been a good president. He is determined and decisive. He has a clear vision of what he wants and how to accomplish it. But he has no fight in him, no sand, as the expression goes. He may as well be wearing a “Kick Me” sign. We fear that he doesn’t have the stomach for the kind of good old fashioned, knock-down-drag-out, up-close-and- personal political fight that he would have to wage to regain support even if he understand why he has lost it. Indeed, we wonder why Democrats would want to impeach a Republican president who is so easy to beat up.

Call him Hitler. Give aid and comfort to Islamists who are killing American troops in Iraq. Demean the intelligence of the men and women in the U.S. military. Call them mercenaries. Take huge campaign contributions from anti-American scumbags like George Soros, who compare the United States to Nazi Germany. Demand an immediate pullout from

Iraq, but offer no alternative strategy for defeating the enemy. Publish information that is unquestionably damaging to American security. He is all but silent.

Steal shamelessly from the United Nations. Turn Russia into a fascist police state. Militarize space. Finance Islamic schools all over the world that teach hatred for America. Provide safe havens in the mountains to terrorists bent on killing American troops in Afghanistan. Fan the fires of hatred for the United States throughout Europe. He is all but silent.

North Korea builds a nuclear weapon and tests long-range missiles. Iran begins building a nuclear weapon and threatens to destroy Israel. President Bush says this is a job for the United Nations, an organization that is not only ineffective but also deeply corrupt and antagonistic to America's goals in the world.

Democrats call him every name in the book, question both his honesty and his motives. What does he do? He embraces them, calls them friends. He "understands" why they hate him. His White House spokesman describes their attacks on him as examples of the glories of "free speech." President Bush may "turn the other cheek," but it is hard for even the most loyal Republicans to get excited about following a man who is content to be a punching bag for every low life in the Democratic Party.

Most Republicans and all conservatives believe that John Kerry is a mealy-mouthed creep, that Jack Murtha is a crook, that Hillary is a dishonest, scheming, fence sitter, that Jane Fonda is a traitor, that the proposition that Democrats can provide comfort to the enemy and still claim to "support the troops" is a load of crap. They don't expect President Bush to say these things directly. But they do believe that an effective president and leader would chew on them a while and get as angry as they are at the hypocrisy of these people and the despicability of what they want to do to the cohesiveness of this nation during wartime. They expect their president to have a little fire in him, to be capable of the kind of controlled anger and indignation that is the *sine qua non* of effective leadership during troubled times. Americans are an aggressive lot. They are extremely

competitive. Their kids are competitive. Whether it is sports, academics, video games, or preference for television shows such as American Idol and The Survivor, Americans like a good contest. They like winners.

Americans view war as a competitive endeavor, bad guys against good guys. They expect to win the wars that they enter. And why not? They pay for the largest and most expensive military that the world has ever seen. They are proud of their military and they believe it should be used when necessary to protect them.

If President Bush believes that what he is doing is best for his country, then they expect him to show some emotion, to get angry at those who would thwart him, not because they thwart him but because they are opposed to doing what is best for the country. If the president believes that the war in Iraq is just and important to the long term security of the nation, then they expect him to make a forceful argument for fighting it and for fighting those who oppose it.

They expect him to talk about killing the enemy, defeating the enemy, emerging victorious over the enemy. He should leave out the part about building schools for the enemy's kids. Liberals would buy that stuff if Bill Clinton were selling it. They won't buy it from George Bush. The people who President Bush needs on his side in this fight aren't all that interested in high blown theories about the inherent goodness of democracy and about winning the war by doing good. They wouldn't be all that enthusiastic if it were working. They sure as hell won't support when it isn't.

The most important factor in winning this conflict right now is gaining the support of the American people to continue the fight. We hope the surge accomplishes this purpose. We fear it won't, not because of any failure on the part of the American military, but failure on the part of the man who has to sell it back home. We hope we're wrong.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

It is nearly universally accepted today – on the right and the left, among professional politicians and the general public, between hawks and doves – that the failures in the “war on terror” are George Bush’s failures. He, Vice President Cheney, and a small group of others are ridiculed, condemned, berated, and maligned by anyone and everyone who has a point to make about national security, public policy, the state of the world, and even the weather. But history will, we believe, judge this president and his allies far more gently. It will not absolve them of all mistakes, of course, but it will show that their failures were failures of strategy, tactics, and vigor, many of the same failures that have plagued most, if not all previous wartime leaders.

By contrast, the failures of President Bush’s opponents – domestic, foreign, conservative, liberal, and otherwise – will, we think, be shown by history to be far more serious and far more damaging to the cause of defeating radical Islam. Their failures include those of vision, consistency, honesty, patriotism, and decency. And they have already cost many lives and will cost countless more as this war continues to rage.

Just over a week ago, a diverse collection of those who oppose President Bush on the Iraq war and the broader war on terror gathered at Tufts University to bemoan once again Bush’s “conceptually misconceived” war and the damage it has purportedly done to the United States and to the global community. Various journalists, academics, former government officials, retired intelligence officers, and others discussed the war and its progress and, for the most part, concluded that George Bush is to blame for the current mean state of world affairs. Pierre Atlas, a professor of political science at the Franciscan Center for Global Studies at Marian College, approvingly described the conference’s conclusions thusly:

Several common themes emerged over the two days of presentations and discussion. The US response to terrorism has been overly militarized, without serious public

diplomacy, economic assistance, or efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A few panelists commented that the US military, although superb in combat, is not the most effective tool for counter-terrorism. One terrorism expert lamented that, in the Bush administration, “the DOD is the 800 pound gorilla and everyone else is teeny mice.”

All the panelists were in agreement that the invasion of Iraq has been a boon to the radical jihadist cause. Richard Shultz, director of the Security Studies program at Tufts noted that the Iraq war “has given Al-Qaeda an opportunity to engage the ‘far enemy’ [the US] up close, and an opportunity to spawn the next generation of warriors.” As Fawaz Gerges put it, “The same jihadists who denounced Al-Qaeda after 9/11 are now looking for ways to join the fight against the US in Iraq.”

The principal problem with this “analysis” (if it’s even appropriate to call it that) is that it is simply untrue. The “lack of diplomacy” line is little more than a tired canard, based more on personal contempt for Bush than on anything approaching historical fact. Moreover, the belief that Islamist aggression toward westerners in general and Americans in particular is driven by such things as a lack of economic assistance and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is dangerously trite. None of these things drive the Islamists. The pretense that they do amounts to oversimplification at best and rationalization or excuse-making at worst.

What is really going on in the Islamic world goes far beyond hackneyed leftist tropes about economic backwardness and psychological oppression. Fortunately, not all of those who have critiqued the war effort has done so as mindlessly and as vituperatively as those who gathered two weeks ago at Tufts (or who constitute virtually the entirety of the Democratic Party and good chunks of the GOP as well). *Newsweek International* editor and columnist Fareed Zakaria, for example, has been critical of the

president without being overly hostile to the man or to his presumed goals of a stable, freer Middle East. His column this week is important, both because it gets beyond the clichés embraced by too many of the President's critics and because it demonstrates just how difficult a definitive analysis of the war and its combatants can be. Zakaria suggests that American troops are largely irrelevant to what is going on in Iraq right now and that the events in Iraq, portrayed so grimly by most of the media, may not be entirely negative. To wit:

For those in the West asking when Islam will have its Reformation, I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the process appears to have begun. The bad news is it's been marked by calumny, hatred and bloody violence. In this way it mirrors the Reformation itself, which we now remember in a highly sanitized way. During that era, Christians of differing sects massacred each other as they fought to own the true interpretation of their religion. No analogy is exact, but something similar seems to be happening within Islam. Here the divide is between the Sunnis, who make up 85 percent of the Muslim world, and the Shiites, who represent most of the other 15 percent....

The dominant new reality in the Middle East today is the growing schism between these two groups. Look at the daily sectarian killings in Iraq, listen to the dark warnings of Saudi and Jordanian leaders about a "Shia crescent," watch the power struggles in Lebanon. Islam's quiet cleavage has come out into the open. At a recent demonstration in the Palestinian territories, opponents of Hamas taunted the Sunni Islamists as "Shiites" because of their links to Iranian-backed Hizbullah.

We in the United States have spent much time asking what all this means for Iraq, for U.S. troops in the midst of this free-for-all

and for America more generally. But think, for a moment, about what the trend means for Al Qaeda.

Zakaria determines that all of this is bad for al Qaeda, and he is probably right. But here is where things get complicated. Like the Bush-haters who met at Tufts, Zakaria misunderstands the relevance of al Qaeda and thus appears to be in denial of reality as to what any of this means to the war on terror and, by extension, to American national security.

For starters, Zakaria's straw man, "those in the West asking when Islam will have its Reformation," is absurd. No one in the West has been waiting for Islam's Reformation, assuming that by "Reformation" he means a period of conflict between various sects characterized by splintering of belief and intra-religious violence. That's been going on in Islam for some twelve centuries now without respite. What the West has been waiting for is Islam's Inquisition, its distillation of the "truth" of its religion and the purging of its heresies.

More to the point, when Zakaria argues that this Reformation-like conflict between Shi'ites and Sunnis is weakening al Qaeda, dissolving its claim to leadership of the Islamic Ummah, he presumes that this matters terribly. Like the Tufts crowd, who argue (in Atlas's words) that "the real terrorist threat to America [is] al Qaeda," Zakaria loses sight of the bigger picture.

The fact of the matter is that al Qaeda is only a very small, but very aggressive part of the anti-western, anti-American Islamist movement. And as such, its defeat would be only a small part of victory in this broader war. The insistence on al Qaeda as the "true" enemy springs from several fonts, all of which suggest that the fixation with Osama et al. is deeply flawed.

The first is a deep and abiding animus for George Bush and the consequent belief that anything he does or will do is, by definition, wrong or evil or incompetent. This has been the general theme of the public critique of George Bush since the 2004 election

campaign. If only Bush hadn't "distracted" us from al Qaeda with his adventure in Iraq, the argument goes, the "real" war against al Qaeda and the Tora Bora remnants could be fought effectively. A second is a related general anti-Americanism, which holds that anything that the United States (particularly the U.S. military) does is, by definition, wrong or evil or incompetent. A third and perhaps the most notable source of this obsession with al Qaeda is, for want of a better term, political correctness; the belief that Islamist terrorism is a narrow, political phenomenon couched in religious terms, but unrepresentative of any broader religious movement or trend within Islam; the refusal even to address the role of religion itself in the Islamist movement for fear of seeming "insensitive" to Muslims.

Whatever the source of this misspecification of the enemy in the war on terror (and for the record, most of President Bush's critics suffer from all three to some degree or another), the result has been an absolute steadfast refusal on the part of anyone involved in the public discourse on the subject to address the real nature and scope of the threat to the West. And this has left the West, now more than five years after it was attacked, in denial about the danger that exists. The extent to which the public discourse on Islamist terror denies the reality of conditions in the Islamic world was detailed recently by *The Jerusalem Post's* Michael Freund, who put the lie to the claim that "only a tiny minority of Muslims actually support the use of violence against Israel and the West." In his January 30th piece, Freund reported following:

- In a poll conducted five months ago, and broadcast on Britain's Channel 4 TV, nearly 25% of British Muslims said the July 7, 2005, terror bombings in London, which killed 52 innocent commuters, were justified. Another 30% said they would prefer to live under strict Islamic Sharia law rather than England's democratic system.
- A survey published in December found that 44% of Nigerian Muslims believe suicide bombing attacks are "often" or "sometimes"

acceptable. Only 28% said they were never justified.

- According to the annual Pew Global Attitudes Survey, released in July 2006, "roughly one-in-seven Muslims in France, Spain and Great Britain feel that suicide bombings against civilian targets can at least sometimes be justified to defend Islam." The report also found that less than half of Jordan's Muslims believe terror attacks are never justified. In Egypt, only 45% of Muslims say terror is never justified.
- After Cpl. Gilad Shalit was abducted by Hamas terrorists last summer, a poll conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center revealed that 77.2% of Palestinians supported the kidnapping, while 66.8% said they would back additional such attacks.
- More than six out of 10 Palestinians also said they were in favor of firing Kassam rockets at Israeli towns and cities.
- On the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks, a survey conducted by Al-Jazeera asked respondents, "Do you support Osama Bin-Laden?" A whopping 49.9% answered: yes.
- The July 2006 global Pew survey found that among Muslims, a quarter of Jordanians, a third of Indonesians, 38% of Pakistanis and 61% of Nigerians all expressed confidence in the mass murderer who founded al-Qaida.
- In Lebanon six months ago, the Beirut Center for Research and Information found that over 80% of the Lebanese population said they supported Hizbullah.
- Reuters reported on October 15, just 10 percent of Indonesian Muslims said they backed jihad and supported bomb attacks on

the island of Bali aimed at foreign tourists. But Indonesia is home to more than 200 million Muslims, so while 10 percent may sound like a small number percentage-wise, it is actually quite large in absolute terms. It means there are some 20 million Muslims in Indonesia alone who are willing to say out loud that they support the use of violence and terror against innocent human beings.

The standard response to all of this has been that this too is George Bush's fault. These numbers, we are told, have been inflated by Bush's unwillingness to address the real problems facing the Muslim people of the world and by his use of violence against Muslims in response to the threats of a few misguided souls.

But that is, to put it bluntly, a bald-faced lie. The truth is that Islamist terrorism against the West dates back at least some three decades. The attacks on the Israeli athletes at Munich, the murder of American ambassador to Sudan Cleo Noel, the abduction of American citizens and the confiscation of sovereign American territory in Tehran, the murder of more than 200 Marines in Beirut, the slaughter of hundreds of Israeli innocents, the bombing of Pan Am flight 103, the attacks on the Israeli embassy and the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the first attempt to bring down the World Trade Center, the slaughter of hundreds at two American embassies in Africa, the murder of American servicemen and civilians at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, and the attack on the U.S. Cole all predate George W. Bush's presidency, and most predate the emergence of al Qaeda as a serious global threat.

Moreover, the United States spent virtually the entirety of the 1990s expending its blood and treasure to protect and save Muslims around the world, from Kuwait to Bosnia to Kosovo. Yet somehow none of this accumulated "good will" purchased for the West any reprieve from the scorn and violence of the Islamists.

It is easy to blame George Bush for the rise of radical Islam and for the degeneration within the global Islamic community. After all, such assignation of

guilt fits perfectly the narrative that has dominated the left for decades and that has, by and large, become a guiding tenet of Western civilization as a whole. But it's wrong, not just in a moral sense, but in a practical sense as well.

There is a malignancy growing within Islam. To deny that is to deny reality. This malignancy has nothing to do with George Bush or the war in Iraq or the war in Afghanistan or even the state of Israel. The global Islamic community is not the first to confront such a malignancy, but it is the first to do so in the era of globalization and with relatively easy access to weapons of mass destruction. It is also one of the first to fetishize death on a massive scale

The irony here is that many on the left seem to have identified this basic problem with the "war on terror." Pierre Atlas noted that at the Tufts conference two weeks ago, "the panelists made two other important points . . . First, the very concept of the "War on Terror" is highly problematic." These panelists are right, of course, but not for the reasons they believe. As they noted, we are not fighting a war on terror, which is "a tactic available to all groups in conflict," but a war on Islamism, a war on the malignancy that grows unchecked within the heart of Islam. Yet our political culture makes it absolutely impossible even to acknowledge as much, much less to plan and fight such a war effectively.

On this point President Bush most assuredly deserves a significant measure of the blame. As we note in the piece above, President Bush has been absolutely dreadful even to the point of negligence with regard to his communication efforts regarding the war. The failure to identify and vilify the enemy is part and parcel of that failing.

But the larger part of the blame falls elsewhere. The media, academia, the bureaucracy, both political parties, and the culture as a whole have become so steeped in ideologically fostered nonsense about the nature of man, the nature of American society, and the nature of this struggle against a deadly enemy that it is quite possible that no amount of effort would have made any difference. Even if President Bush

had communicated aggressively and effectively, it is unlikely that he would have been any more successful in altering the opinion of the public or of the nation's elites than he has been.

Two weeks ago, the Vice President told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that the American people may not have "the stomach to fight" the Iraq War as it needs to be fought. Cheney was immediately ridiculed in the press. *Boston Herald* columnist Ann McFeatters declared indignantly that that "statement is amazing. Americans have given the administration a virtual blank check for four years in Iraq."

But the inconvenient truth here is the Vice President is correct and McFeatters doesn't have even the vaguest clue why. This isn't about fiscal burden or loss of American lives. It's about doing what has to be done to win, which is something the American people have thus far been unwilling to sanction.

Winning is not, as the experts would tell us, simply defeating and disbanding al Qaeda or finally subduing "the insurgency"; and it is not, as President Bush would tell us, fostering democracy and defeating freedom's enemies; and it is not, as the realists and neo-realists like Senator Chuck Hagel tell us, "engaging" the region's bad actors, namely Iran and Syria, to help bring some semblance of "stability" to the area.

As we have noted before, in order to win this war, the United States in particular and the Western world in general have to be willing to make the pain

of becoming a jihadist greater than the reward for doing so. The punishment for attacking the West in the name of Islam – both from the perspective of a nation and from that of the individual – must be so severe as to discourage the would-be jihadists from taking up arms.

We are told that it is America's brutality and George Bush's recklessness that encourage young Muslims to take up the cause of jihad. But it is far more likely that they are encouraged by the fact that there are no consequences for doing so. The political culture in the West, which revolves around false diversity and counterfeit sensitivity, precludes governments from taking appropriate action to halt the spread of Islamism, both in the Middle East and within the West itself.

But this will not always be the case. We continue to believe that at some point, the United States and whatever allies it has remaining will put aside their false pieties and confront the enemy. Unfortunately, that point is, in our estimation, unlikely to come until further disasters have refocused the minds of the public and its leaders. We believe as we always have that America will eventually triumph, but that things will get ugly and bloody before she does.

Anyone who wants to go on blaming George Bush for all of this is certainly welcome to do so. As we said, he is not without his share of culpability. But blaming Bush isn't going to win the war. And it most assuredly isn't going to prevent the slaughter of innocents that more and more looks inevitable.

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