

Stephen R. Soukup Publisher
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

Mark L. Melcher Editor
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

It was back in nineteen forty-two,
I was a member of a good platoon.
We were on maneuvers in-a Loozianna,
One night by the light of the moon.
The captain told us to ford a river,
That's how it all begun.
We were – knee deep in the Big Muddy,
But the big fool said to push on . . .

Well, I'm not going to point any moral;
I'll leave that for yourself
Maybe you're still walking, you're still talking
You'd like to keep your health.
But every time I read the papers
That old feeling comes on;
We're – waist deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool says to push on . . .

Pete Seeger, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy," 1967.

AFGHANISTAN AND THE POLITICAL CLASS.

Two weeks ago, when Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele declared that Afghanistan is Barack Obama's "war of choice," he caused more than a bit of consternation, not least among his fellow Republicans, some of whom reacted viscerally and immediately called for his resignation. Ironically, despite the shock and seeming tactlessness of his comments, Steele was absolutely, incontrovertibly correct. Even more ironically, in spite of the accuracy of his comments, Steele nonetheless overstepped his bounds as chairman of the party apparatus and, at the very least, complicated the lives and the political fortunes of the elected members of his party, many of whom are undoubtedly grappling with sentiments similar to those expressed by Steele.

Let us explain.

For starters, let us be clear: we know that George W. Bush was president when the United States was attacked by al-Qaeda, which was holed up in Afghanistan and safeguarded by that nation's Taliban leadership. We also know that it was George W. Bush who warned the Taliban to hand over the leaders of al-Qaeda or face retribution. And lastly, we know that George W. Bush was the president who, upon rejection of his demands by Mullah Muhammad Omar and the rest of the Taliban, had this country's military forces invade Afghanistan. We get that.

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But still, there is no denying the fact that Barack Obama, upon his ascension to the Oval Office, had a choice with regard to this particular war and chose – freely and categorically – to change its nature and potential outcome radically and irreversibly. As the hard-left journalist David Corn put it:

The war in Afghanistan is President Obama's war and partly of the president's choosing. Sure, Obama inherited the conflict. Bush initiated the military action in Afghanistan after 9/11 – and then veered into Iraq before the war in Afghanistan was resolved. Yet Obama, after much deliberation, decided to change the nature of the Afghanistan war. In December, following many weeks of review, he announced he would send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, and he embraced the counterinsurgency plan proposed by Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who was then commanding U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

Part of the reason that Steele's words seemed so shocking, despite their manifest truth, is the fact that to date, the focus of the reporting on the political ramifications of Obama's wartime posture has been exclusively on the Democrats. Oh, woe unto the poor "progressives," who are anti-war and want the boys to come home, who want desperately to spend the "nation-building" funds building *this* nation, and who remember fondly the good old days of beating the bongos, singing Kumbaya, and dodging the draft; but who feel obliged to support, at least publicly, a president not just from their own party, but from their own wing of the party. For them, it really is "the big muddy" all over again, with another one of their own big fools saying to push on.

And while that's a really neat story – assuming you're a near-retirement, anti-War Baby Boomer lefty – it's hardly the most exciting or the most relevant story at present. The bigger, more immediate story, which was largely ignored until Steele ran his mouth, is the dilemma that all of this poses for the Republicans,

who not only profess to be "pro-national defense," but who also spent the preponderance of the last decade insisting that anyone who dares to question the commander-in-chief while troops are in the field is, at the very least, a big, stupid jerk. Given the dynamics at work in Washington, the Republicans face a choice, a difficult choice, a politically perilous choice, the very same choice that the Democrats faced from 2001 to 2009. Those Democrats chose poorly, yet were rewarded by the voters. The question now is what lesson the Republicans have learned from that seeming paradox.

Early this month, right about the time that Steele was waxing eloquent, John Podhoretz, neocon royalty and a darned good editor and writer in his own right, penned a pre-Independence Day column purporting to describe how "patriotic" opponents of President Obama's might continue to be both: patriotic and the opposition. His concern, apparently, was the risk that opponents of the current administration would imitate too closely their predecessors and appear to disparage the country when meaning only to disparage its president's policies. To wit:

How are those of us who stand in opposition to the domestic agenda and foreign-policy views of President Obama and his administration to think about this country in 2010 as we approach the nation's birthday on Sunday?

Or, to put it another way: How should a self-described patriot think, act and talk about the United States if that self-described patriot believes the elected leadership of the United States has led the country into a ditch that threatens to expand into a bottomless chasm?

That's an interesting question. Unfortunately, Podhoretz never answers it, which makes sense, we suppose, since the question presumes something not in evidence, namely that all of President Obama's opposition is patriotic. It would have been interesting if Podhoretz had answered the question, not to

mention helpful to those looking to imitate his patriotism. But it would have lacked any broader application to the political class, whose opinions tend to shape the day-to-day political and policy debates. You see, their patriotism, while undoubtedly robust, is likely not the consideration that moves them most eagerly and forcefully.

Podhoretz presumes – as any normal person would – that the political class is, in this sense, just like the non-political class. He presumes that it, like the majority of the people in the country, wants what is best for the country, irrespective of how that affects the political fortunes of the two political parties. But that, we're afraid, is naïve, to put it mildly.

In a two party system, politics is a zero-sum game, which is to say that anything that is good for one party is, by definition, bad for the other party. So if the health-care reform turns out, by some miracle, not to be a complete and utter disaster, that's good for the Democrats, which means that it's bad for the Republicans. If the employment picture unexpectedly takes a turn for the positive and the unemployment rate drops precipitously, then that would be good for the President and for his economic policies (such as they are), which means that it would be bad for the Republicans. And on it goes. If the leaking well in the Gulf is capped and there are no more oil-covered bird pictures, that's good for the Democrats, bad for the Republicans. *Etc., etc., ad infinitum.*

In a very real sense then, the opposition party is left cheering – but not too loudly – for things to go wrong, for the in-power party's policies to prove failures. That's just the way it goes. And that's the way it always goes.

But only to a point.

Traditionally, that “point” has been thought of as the “water's edge,” which is to say that criticism of the president and, more definitively, the hope that he and his policies will fail, has generally been restricted to domestic policy matters. That this distinction exists more in fantasy than reality is interesting and noteworthy, but not all that relevant

for our purposes. Generally speaking, most people believe that there has traditionally been an unwritten prohibition against criticizing a war-time president while troops are fighting and dying. At the very least, today's Republican political leaders believe that such a prohibition has always existed, which explains their unhappiness with the Bush-era Democrats and helps illuminate their current political motives.

This brings us back to Michael Steele and what he said about Barack Obama, about Afghanistan, and most relevantly, when he said what he said. As we noted above, what Steele said – that this is a “war of Obama's choosing” and that such large-scale operations in Afghanistan have, historically, been failures – is accurate. But so what? It is clear from the context that Steele's sin was not in misrepresenting the history of Afghanistan and the current conflict there – since he did no such thing – but in seeming to take such pleasure in the commander-in-chief's struggles with regard to that conflict. Steele joked about Obama's problems with General Stanley McChrystal being “comical.” And while it may be true that Obama looked foolish, the idea that the opposition party's chairman would be chuckling about that foolishness while troops may be dying because of it is unseemly at best.

In our estimation, there is no question whatsoever that Steele's intention was to score political points, not just at Obama's expense, but at the expense of the war effort. How do we know this? Well, we don't. But we can infer it based on the comments, based on the setting, and most notably, based on the fact that Obama has done very little wrong with regard to Afghanistan over the last several weeks. Indeed, what Obama has done is remarkably similar to what Bush did in Iraq.

It is true, of course, that Obama's ponderous neo-Hamlet routine last fall was tiresome and that his singular nod to the political left with his pre-emptive declaration of a withdrawal date was counterproductive, to put it mildly. But, beyond these two failings, the man has actually done far better than could have been expected. He has generally avoided public disputes with his generals, and when such

disputes have taken place, as with McChrystal, they've not been of his creation. More to the point, over the last two weeks, Obama has made some rather stunning and rather stunningly aggressive personnel changes. There is no question that moving the "savior of Iraq," General David Petraeus, back from CentCom, into theater command was a stroke of strategic and political brilliance. But that may not have even been Obama's boldest stroke. Naming Marine General James Mattis as Petraeus's CentCom replacement likely takes that honor. As the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* put it:

If all Barack Obama had to do as President is pick generals, his approval rating probably would be flying high. Yesterday Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced that Marine General James Mattis would succeed David Petraeus as head of U.S. Central Command, which includes Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq . . .

Jim Mattis knows the importance of winning against the U.S.'s current, unrelenting enemy—Islamic terrorists. He served as a lieutenant colonel in both Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. He commanded a Marine brigade in Afghanistan after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Two years later, he led a Marine division into Iraq.

Most famously, he helped to lead the Marine effort in 2004 to regain control of Fallujah in Iraq's Anbar province. General Mattis's experience in these theaters made him one of the earliest proponents of the counterinsurgency strategy later deployed with success in Iraq by General Petraeus.

What this means, then, is that Barack Obama, for all his silly apologizing and reset-button nonsense, is actually conducting this, the most urgently relevant portion of his foreign policy, in a manner of which

even George W. Bush would likely approve. Obama may, in the deepest, darkest recesses of his soul, be a weak, pacifistic, McGovernite lefty who abhors the exercise of American power. But you'd never know it from his conduct of the war in Afghanistan. Which is to say that what all of this also means is that Michael Steele's critique of Obama was, in actual fact, directed not at any policy mistakes on Obama's part, but at Obama himself. And that critique would have been the same, no matter what Obama had done. Good, bad, or indifferent, Steele would have bitched, not at the policy, but at its author. And this, we're afraid, is the politicization of national security writ large.

All of this is not to say that Michael Steele is not patriotic. We're sure that he is. In his open-letter to Steele calling upon him to resign, the *Weekly Standard's* publisher Bill Kristol begins with the very concession that "You are, I know, a patriot." We have no reason to believe otherwise.

The problem isn't that Steele doesn't love his country. It's that he loves himself more. A peculiar disease afflicts our political class today, the chief symptom of which is an overwhelming and frankly unwarranted belief in its own omnipotence. This disease afflicts not just the body in aggregate, which therefore sees no problem that it cannot solve through government intervention, but each member of the class individually as well, producing in each a belief that he – and he alone – is capable of handling the problem, whatever it may be, most effectively.

Here, sadly, we believe that Steele is representative of the political class more generally. It's not that Obama is currently doing anything wrong in Afghanistan, it's that *he* is doing something. *He* shouldn't be doing anything. Someone else should be. Steele most likely believes that that someone else is him. And as long as it's not him doing the somethings, then the guy actually doing them should be knocked around a little bit, even if, as in this case, that guy is doing everything reasonably well. Thus believes and behaves our political class.

If the traditional distinction between domestic and foreign-policy criticism has any basis in reality, we would, historically, likely find it here. It is far easier in many ways, to criticize the domestic agenda than a foreign policy agenda, if for no other reason than a detailed empirical record exists. One can argue fairly confidently, for example, that Keynesian demand-side stimulus won't work and will be painfully wasteful because the historical record documents that Keynesian demand-side stimuli have always been ineffective and painfully wasteful.

The same empirical record does not exist in any real sense with respect to the war-waging component of foreign policy. One may argue reasonably that Obama's submissiveness is Carter-esque in a broad sense and is therefore doomed to produce similar poor results. But one may not argue that a surge of troops into Afghanistan and the re-imagining of counter-insurgency strategy to deal specifically with the Taliban is doomed to failure, based on precedent, because there simply is no precedent on which to base such a conclusion.

The same, naturally, was true of Iraq in 2006 and 2007, not that it stopped the Democrats from insisting that President Bush was doing everything wrong. The Democrats criticized Bush and everything he did simply because he was Bush, and that's how they had come to handle foreign affairs. Whatever the guy did was cause for shrieking and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It was a disaster, a tragedy, an epic defeat in the making. It didn't matter what he did or, more to the point, what damage they, his critics, did to the country and to its war aims by their behavior. All that mattered was that they had an obligation, if not to their partisans then at least to their egos, to insist on the injustice and ineffectiveness of everything that Bush did.

Interestingly and unfortunately, the voters rewarded the Democrats for their intransigence by giving them all the levers of power in Washington.

The question now, as we noted above, is what lesson the now-minority GOP learned from this calamity.

The Democrats allowed their egos to drive their policy positions and were rewarded by the voters. Will the Republicans do the same? Do you have any doubt?

The problem that all of this creates in analyzing politics and policy is that one can never know for certain who or what policies are actually concerned principally with the well being of the nation. We're certain that there are more than a few among the 535 legislative egos on Capitol Hill that can be moderated in favor of the national interest. We're also quite certain that a case can be made against Barack Obama's Afghanistan policy that isn't motivated principally by partisanship and the hope of personal political gain.

But when the egos dominate and everything else appears to be driven almost exclusively by self-absorption and self-aggrandizement, how is anyone to know the difference? How are we to tell the true patriots from the pseudo patriots, those who are concerned with the country, but only in how the country can benefit from their leadership?

These are critical questions and will become more critical in the aftermath of the midterm elections. As we said, there almost certainly is a case that to be made that the interests of the United States would be best served by withdrawal from Afghanistan. And that case will, in all probability, grow stronger the longer the status quo persists in that country. It would be incredibly helpful and literally lifesaving if there was some sort of test to determine which politicians are capable of making such arguments without concern for their own personal political advantage.

Unfortunately, no such test exists. And we are therefore left to wonder what, exactly, motivates anyone who even tries to accept that challenge. If there is any upshot from the Michael Steele fiasco, this is it. In a political culture that is already saturated with ego-driven cynicism and the belief in oneself above all else, any criticism, regardless of accuracy, will all but certainly be viewed first and foremost as a political stunt designed, at the very least, to raise one's political profile.

Needless to say, this is an awkward and uncertain predicament, one which breeds doubt and indecision. This is no way to run a war. And it bodes poorly for the outcome.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS. AGAIN.

It is far too easy sometimes to forget just how deeply and profoundly our lives have been affected by the subversive, anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism that have dominated academia since at least the 1960s. We tend, on the whole, to think of this as a problem for college kids or, more broadly, as an indictment of the “education system” and its hard-driving leftist establishment. We tend to think of “political correctness,” the spawn of this anti-Westernism, as a mere nuisance, something annoying and stifling, perhaps even comical, but, by and large, only marginally relevant. These perceptions are not just wrong, but dangerously so.

Today, we live in a nation that is, technically, governed by a man who is, by his own admission, ambivalent about “American exceptionalism,” which is to say that he is also ambivalent about the greatness that is Western civilization. The West’s accomplishments, in his estimation, must be balanced against its shortcomings, the latter of which he appears all too often to believe are the more relevant of the two.

In a scene that reads almost as if it were written for *The Onion* or some other such parody, we learned last week that the NASA administrator, Charles Bolden, believes, on orders from the President himself, that his “foremost” responsibility as head of the space agency is to “find a way to reach out to the Muslim world and engage much more with dominantly Muslim nations to help them feel good about their historic contribution to science and math and engineering.” Yikes. Or, as the inimitable Charles Krauthammer put it:

Apart from the psychobabble – farcically turning a space-faring enterprise into a self-esteem enhancer – what’s the sentiment behind this charge? Sure,

America has put a man on the moon, led the information revolution, and won far more Nobel Prizes than any other nation – but, on the other hand, a thousand years ago al-Khwarizmi gave us algebra.

Again, though, this merely feeds the perception that such ambivalence to the dominant values and accomplishments of the West in general and America in particular is comical. But it is not. There are serious and potentially monumental implications to the application of this deeply flawed leftist social science paradigm to the real world.

Consider, for example, the current wrangling over the immigration law passed by the state of Arizona earlier this year and set to go into effect at the end of this month. Obviously, this law has caused a great deal of controversy, despite the fact that it was designed specifically to allow law enforcement officials in the state simply to enforce *existing federal legislation*. Last week, the federal government sued Arizona to stop its enforcement of the state’s law, which is to say that it sued Arizona to stop it from enforcing federal law as well.

We’ll spare you our analysis of the law, of the lawsuit, and of the issues involved in the federal government suing one of the states for enforcing federal law. We have neither the time nor the energy to write such analysis. And trust us, you have neither the time nor the energy to read one.

Instead, we’ll simply note that one of the most critical and least discussed exacerbating factors in the immigration debate is the existence of “sanctuary” cities and other polities throughout the country. For those of you who don’t know, “sanctuary cities” are cities in which the controlling local government offers sanctuary to illegal immigrants. Or, as Wikipedia defines them:

Sanctuary city is a term given to a city in the United States that follows certain practices that protect illegal immigrants. These practices can be by law (*de jure*)

or they can be by habit (de facto). The term generally applies to cities that do not allow municipal funds or resources to be used to enforce federal immigration laws, usually by not allowing police or municipal employees to inquire about one's immigration status.

One of the most prominent such sanctuary cities, interestingly, is the state of Arizona's capital and the fifth largest city in the country, Phoenix. The government of Phoenix, for reasons that can only be described as foolhardy and motivated by the belief that federal legislation defining American borders is inhumane, decided long ago to disregard federal law and to harbor those who are, technically, fugitives from that law.

So what we had, prior to this year, was a state that has been flooded with illegal immigrants, that has seen many of its border communities ravaged by drug-cartel violence, that has seen its coffers emptied in the necessary though frustrating effort to accommodate those who are technically in violation of federal law, and a capital city that not only doesn't seem moved to action by these circumstances, but actually relished the opportunity to exacerbate them, all in an effort to make a point about the insufferableness of the country's political establishment, which had the gall even to pass legislation defining the country's borders. That's not only a mouthful, but a public scandal as well.

The political left in this country has tried to turn the debate over the Arizona law into a debate over race, ethnicity, and benighted Arizonans' inability to deal with their prejudices. In truth, the law is a response – perhaps the only reasonable response possible – to the overt and politically correct lawlessness of the polity of Phoenix (and Chandler, for the record).

As we've noted countless times in these pages, we're actually rather pro-immigration, particularly among the denizens of the political right. But even we understand that immigration policy cannot be effectively utilized if it is not even enforced. More to the point, we understand that Arizona's cry for

help – and that's essentially what this law is – was made necessary only because the forces of political correctness sought, aggressively and openly, to flout immigration law and thereby to undermine the government's ability to enforce any policy at all.

Of course, if immigration policy isn't quite your cup of tea, there are other, more disturbing and more dangerous consequences of anti-Westernism and related political correctness extant in this country. Consider, for example, the following.

In May of this year – that's two months ago, for those of you scoring at home – the American Academy of Pediatrics decided to amend its official position on what was once called “female genital mutilation,” i.e. the brutal practice carried out in many Third World and predominantly Muslim countries whereby the “external female genitalia” are partially or fully removed for “non-medical” purposes, which is to say to lessen the pleasure inherent in sex. The AAP, which one would presume would wish to serve as the protector of this nation's youth and thus as a vocal opponent of any such practice, actually decided to go the other way on the issue. The AAP position paper put it thusly:

Most forms of FGC are decidedly harmful, and pediatricians should decline to perform them, even in the absence of any legal constraints. However, the ritual nick suggested by some pediatricians is not physically harmful and is much less extensive than routine newborn male genital cutting. There is reason to believe that offering such a compromise may build trust between hospitals and immigrant communities, save some girls from undergoing disfiguring and life-threatening procedures in their native countries, and play a role in the eventual eradication of FGC. It might be more effective if federal and state laws enabled pediatricians to reach out to families by offering a ritual nick as a possible compromise to avoid greater harm.

You catch that? A ritual nick. To the external female genitalia. In an effort to “build trust” with certain communities. Awesome. Unless it’s your external female genitalia, that is. If it’s your genitalia, then it might not be so awesome, as anti-Islamist activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali describes: (Note to readers with weak stomachs: skip this block quote.)

Female circumcision is a custom in many African and Asian countries whereby the genitals of a girl child are cut. There are roughly four procedures. First there is the ritual pinprick. This is what Pediatrics refers to as the “nick” option. To give you an idea of what that means, visualize a preteen girl held down by adults. Her clitoris is tweaked so that the circumcizer can hold it between her forefinger and her thumb. Then she takes a needle and pierces it using enough force for it to go into the peak of the clitoris. As soon as it bleeds, the parents and others attending the ceremony cheer, the girl is comforted and the celebrations follow.

There is a more sinister meaning to the word “nick” if you consider the fact that in some cases it means to cut off the peak of the clitoris. Proponents compare “nicking” to the ritual of boy circumcision. But in the case of the boys, it is the foreskin that is all or partly removed and not a part of the penis head. In the case of the girls, the clitoris is actually mutilated.

Then there is the second method whereby a substantial part of the clitoris is removed and the opening of the vagina is sewn together (infibulation). The third variation adds to this the removal of the inner labia.

Finally, there is a procedure whereby as much of the clitoris as possible is removed along with the inner and outer labia. Then the inner walls of the vagina are scraped until they bleed and are then bound with pins or thorns. The tissue on either side grows together, forming a thick

scar. Two small openings roughly equal to the diameter of a matchstick are left for urination and menstruation respectively.

Often these operations are done without anesthesia and with tools such as sharp rocks, razor blades, knives or scissors depending on the location, family income, and education. It is thus more accurate—as does the World Health Organization—to speak of female genital mutilation (FGM) instead of the obscure and positive-sounding “circumcision.”

You’ll forgive us, we hope, for the graphic nature of this discussion. In our defense, all we can do is note that none of it is gratuitous. Indeed, it is perfectly necessary, given the nature of the procedure the AAP decided was acceptable, in the context of placating certain “communities.” Of course, as the peerless Mark Steyn notes, such placation starts as a means by which to avoid the more violent and hateful procedures described above by Ali, and ends with total capitulation:

Last week, the American Association of Pediatricians noted that certain, ahem, “immigrant communities” were shipping their daughters overseas to undergo “female genital mutilation.” So, in a spirit of multicultural compromise, they decided to amend their previous opposition to the practice: They’re not (for the moment) advocating full-scale clitoridectomies, but they are suggesting federal and state laws be changed to permit them to give a “ritual nick” to young girls.

A few years back, I thought even fainthearted Western liberals might draw the line at “FGM.” After all, it’s a key pillar of institutional misogyny in Islam: Its entire purpose is to deny women sexual pleasure. True, many of us hapless Western men find we

deny women sexual pleasure without even trying, but we don't demand genital mutilation to guarantee it. On such slender distinctions does civilization rest.

Der Spiegel, an impeccably liberal magazine, summed up the remorseless Islamization of Europe in a recent headline: "How Much Allah Can the Old Continent Bear?" Well, what's wrong with a little Allah-lite? The AAP thinks you can hop on the sharia express and only ride a couple of stops. In such ostensibly minor concessions, the "ritual nick" we're performing is on ourselves. Further cuts will follow.

To its credit, we suppose, after the firestorm that followed the release of its position paper, the AAP rescinded its "ritual nick" recommendation, which means that now, the official organization representing America's pediatricians no longer sanctions cutting female genitalia in an effort to appease Muslim radicals. That's a relief. We know we feel better.

Of course, this foray into politically correct self-subjugation to "foreign communities" says something deeply disturbing about this country's political and cultural elites. They were willing to sacrifice young girls to avoid confrontation – without much protest from the alleged "feminist" community, we should note – and one could be forgiven for wondering how much or who else they'd be willing to forfeit in order to maintain healthy cultural relations with erstwhile "oppressed" peoples.

Generally, when Westerners contemplate the fate of nations that cower in the face of Islam and the politically correct approach to it, they have in mind such places as Britain, France, and even Canada, where far larger Muslim populations really do wield significant power and really do have the wherewithal to threaten stability if not satisfactorily appeased. As

the author David Pryce-Jones put it just this weekend: "I think it may have been Sadiq el-Azm, a Syrian and a philosopher, who first formulated the choice that is currently working itself out: either Islam Europeanizes or Europe Islamizes." And we all know which is the more likely of the two.

But we should recall that it is not just Europe or Canada that faces threats related to the politically correct whitewashing of radical Islam. We have already seen in this country, for example, a United States Army Major who repeatedly professed his faith in and devotion to Islamism go on a killing spree at Ft. Hood in Texas. We have also seen an Islamist try to blow up Times Square, and, at the Congressional hearings investigating this attempted act of terrorism, the Attorney General of the United States refuse to utter the word Islam or even to attribute religious motives to the attempted violence.

The "ritual nick" is part and parcel of this surrender to radical Islam in the name of political correctness. And so, by the way, are the honor killings that are ignored, rationalized, or swept under the proverbial rug by the mainstream media. The United States may not be as immediately and permanently threatened by capitulation to Islam as are some its Western brethren, but nor is it immune from the temptations of *dbimmitude*.

Political correctness may, in other words, seem exasperating yet trivial. Likewise the deconstruction of Western civilization and of American culture may seem a purely academic pursuit best left to dour, bookish intellectuals and of no relevance to the "real world." But both are wrong.

None of this is cute or funny or even irrelevant. It's important. And it's deadly. And we would all be better off to keep that in mind. If not, Sadiq el-Azm will soon be stating that either Islam Americanizes or America Islamizes. And America's liberal elite will be arguing that the latter would be preferable because it would be more politically correct.

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