

Stephen R. Soukup Publisher
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

Mark L. Melcher Editor
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

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

After Virtue, Alasdair MacIntyre, 1981.

BEYOND ISLAMOPHOBIA.

Let us be perfectly clear about something: the political dustup over the Ground Zero mosque, Islam, and religious tolerance has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with said mosque, with Islam, or even with religious tolerance. Nothing at all. No matter what our betters tell us.

What it has to do with, in truth, is our “betters” themselves, those who not only know what is best for this country but will brook no dissent on the matter.

And please, no whining about how such absolutism is unfair or how it impinges on your freedom. That’s immaterial, you see. And besides, you still remain perfectly free. Free to shut up, that is.

But you should know, even as you are bullied and browbeaten into submission, that despite their seeming confidence, our betters are faltering, falling back onto platitudes and slogans, reduced to name-calling and tendentious derision.

Anyone who tries to tell you – in person or, more likely in writing – that this “debate” is about religious freedom or that it is a “test” of American tolerance is a liar. Either that or an idiot, a “useful idiot” to use the parlance of the Cold War.

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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

Those who use the word “Islamophobia” in any context except to mock the use of the word Islamophobia are likewise either liars, or idiots, or both because the utility of the word is questionable. Better yet, they are frauds, intellectual poseurs substituting conceit for intellectual argument.

Americans are, almost without question, the most tolerant people on earth. And the fact that most Americans readily concede that this “debate” isn’t about *whether* a mosque should be built, but *where* it should be built, should serve as evidence enough of this contention. That it doesn’t prove a thing to our betters in the ruling class is itself strongly denotative that they are not looking for proof. Proof is irrelevant to them. Their conclusions were long ago pre-determined. To them, the Ground Zero mosque is an unqualified good. And any opposition to the mosque – regardless of reason or explanation – is an unquestioned evil. Period. Which is also to say, in other words, shut up already.

There are three phenomena extant simultaneously in this dispute, two at work in the hearts and minds (such as they are) of our betters in the ruling class, the left-wing elites who insist that this entire matter is tiresome and embarrassing, even as they use it to demonstrate their splendiferous liberality and profound tolerance to the unwashed masses at home and the adoring throngs abroad; and one, a long-building and potentially incendiary reaction, at work amongst the rest of us, those whom Angelo Codevilla terms the “country class.”

The first phenomenon is really quite simple, quite petty, and quite coarse. You see, our political class, despite its manifest belief in its own self-worth, is strikingly insecure; and it therefore defines itself, to a great extent, strictly in the language of negation, rather than affirmation. The political culture insists and reiterates that the political right is the embodiment of the forces of reaction. Yet, it is the ruling class that, time and again, cannot resist its reactionary impulses. The elites define themselves, in other words, not in terms of that which they support, admire, or envision, but wholly in relation to that which they presume to be distasteful or unenlightened.

In practical terms, this produces a political and cultural elite who support the Ground Zero mosque, by and large, because the “common folk” can be counted on to oppose it. The masses – vulgar and unexceptional, by definition – are simply incapable of mustering the munificence necessary to grasp the necessity and the virtue of a mosque at Ground Zero, juxtaposed so shrewdly against the backdrop of the horrific consequences of cultural alienation. Or some such blather.

In short, anything that “the people” dislike, the elites in the political class can be expected to like, even if – or *especially* if – they can’t explain why. This is a characteristic of American liberalism that the *American Spectator’s* founder and publisher R. Emmett Tyrrell described in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal’s* James Taranto as the “only one political value that they [liberals] have stood by through three generations, and that is the political value of disturbing your neighbor.”

The second phenomenon is closely related to, and perhaps even derived from the first. But it is, in its essence, more intellectual and less reflexive, which is to say that it is, at least in theory, based on principles rather than mere reaction.

Last week, in our Pulitzer-candidate piece on Barack Obama and his alien-ness, we noted that Obama seems alien to “normal” Americans because he embraces, is indeed steeped in, the ideology and political beliefs of the far left, which abhors, as a matter of principle, all that is common and “normal.” To wit:

He is “the other” specifically because he is a part of and a creature of this same academic left, which is to say that he is part of a political faction that explicitly seeks to distance itself from the normal, “mean,” and boorish American masses and to be more generally cosmopolitan and urbane.

Of course, this explanation is not original on our part. Last week, *The Wall Street Journal’s* James Taranto put the same idea this way.

The Ground Zero mosque is an affront to the sensibilities of ordinary Americans. “The center’s association with 9/11 is intentional and its location is no geographic coincidence,” as the Associated Press has reported. That Americans would find this offensive is a matter of simple common sense. The liberal elites cannot comprehend common sense, and, incredibly, they think that’s a virtue. After all, common sense is so common.

The British philosopher Roger Scruton has coined a term to describe this attitude: oikophobia. Xenophobia is fear of the alien; oikophobia is fear of the familiar: “the disposition, in any conflict, to side with ‘them’ against ‘us’, and the felt need to denigrate the customs, culture and institutions that are identifiably ‘ours.’” What a perfect description of the pro-mosque left.

The pro-mosque left, as Taranto calls them, is no different from the anti-American left in general. The feelings, emotions, sentiments, and ideas that would lead one to consider the possibility that a mosque at Ground Zero might not be the best idea in the world are the very same feelings, emotions, sentiments, and ideas that the elitist left abhors in general. Or as Taranto puts it:

American patriotism is not a blood-and-soil nationalism but an allegiance to a country based on an idea of enlightened universalism. Thus our oiks masquerade as – and may even believe themselves to be – superpatriots, more loyal to American principles than the vast majority of Americans, whom they denounce as “un-American” for feeling an attachment to their actual country as opposed to a collection of abstractions.

Yet the oiks’ vision of themselves as an intellectual aristocracy violates the first American principle ever articulated: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . .”

Patriotism. Love of country. Faith in the institutions of the West – these things are gauche and closed-minded. They are unworthy of a people as noble as our ruling class believes itself to be.

And this brings us, at last, to the broader American public, which opposes the mosque at Ground Zero by overwhelming margins and, for its trouble, has been repeatedly accused of anti-Muslim hatred. The argument, such as it is, is that the public opposes the mosque simply because it has an irrational and revolting fear of or dislike for Muslims – and for no other reason. This “argument” is wrong on two counts.

First, the charge of “Islamophobia” is itself absurd, in that it presumes that there is a “phobia,” which is to say an “irrational fear,” at work in the public’s opposition to the location of this mosque. The screenwriter (turned blogger) Roger Simon put it thusly:

Of course we all know what a phobia is — an irrational fear. It comes from the Greek phobos, meaning “fear” or “morbid fear.” Common ones are acrophobia (heights) and agoraphobia (crowds).

With very minor exceptions, I have seen little irrational fear of Islam in our society. What I have seen is a lot of serious and justifiable dislike of the religion for its ideology — notably its heinous treatment of women and homosexuals and its opposition to the separation of church and state, all codified by its all-encompassing Sharia law that seeks to legislate all facets of existence while instituting a global caliphate.

More to the point at this specific location in New York City, in the name of this religion, 19 men slaughtered some 3,000-plus Americans. And while it is unquestionably true that most Muslims are not

terrorists and the overwhelming majority of them abhor the murder of innocents, Islam was perverted in a way to sanction these murders and in a way that has never been definitively or authoritatively rebuked. Globally, it is estimated a mere 5% of Muslims express a belief in the religious sanctification of violent jihad, yet that translates into roughly 80 million potentially violent extremists worldwide. Given all of this, it strikes us that a little wariness, particularly given the symbolism of the specific site, is anything but “irrational.”

Of course, as we said above, this really isn't about Islam at all. This is about the interaction between the ruling class and its minions. We can't say for sure, but we suspect that the majority of Americans neither knew about nor cared about the Cordoba House mosque until it had been approved by the city of New York and any and all opponents had been dismissed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg as “un-American.”

Now, Bloomberg is, quite possibly, the most loathsome petty autocrat on the national political scene today, but his reaction to this mosque and to any who would dare to question it is more than adequately representative of the ruling class as a whole. “We said this mosque is going to happen. And don't you dare to question us.”

Despite this heavy-handed despotism, it appears never to have occurred to the likes of Bloomberg that the visceral reaction to the mosque might have more to do with them than with Islam. Americans, as a general rule, take rather unkindly to those who presume to tell them what to do. Particularly when what they are told to do is to shut the hell up.

This isn't a case of average Americans expressing discomfort with the idea of Islam invading New York. This is a case of average Americans expressing discomfort with being told what to do and what to think by a genuinely creepy little billionaire bully in New York and then being told by the rest of the political class that they are trash if they refuse to submit. This is a case of the political class vs. the country class, writ large. It is the people pushing back against the powerful and little more.

To this end, it is worth noting, we believe, who the developers of the Cordoba House mosque are and what they do. Imam Faisal Rauf and his wife Daisy Khan are “activists” and community organizers. They are “bridge-builders” aiming to do . . . well . . . something.

Perhaps the most important yet most overlooked bit of information in the discussion of the Cordoba House mosque and its backers is the fact that both Rauf and his wife, Khan, are quite wealthy, have profited handsomely from their outreach in the wake on 9/11, and –this is the kicker – are U.S. State Department contractors. In a *Forbes* column, Claudia Rosset explains:

It's not just Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf who is visiting the Middle East this summer at U.S. taxpayer expense. The State Department is also about to send Rauf's wife and Cordoba Initiative fellow director, Daisy Khan, on her own taxpayer-funded “public diplomacy” trip to the United Arab Emirates. Khan is scheduled to visit the UAE from Aug. 29 to Sept. 2, overlapping there with Rauf, for whom it will be the final leg of a three-country trip including Bahrain and Qatar.

The U.S. Embassy in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi has posted on its website an announcement of the impending visit by this husband-wife team. Rauf and Khan will be there, the announcement says, “to engage foreign audiences and build people-to-people ties” and to “discuss their experiences as Muslims living and working in the United States.” . . .

In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 attacks, far from being shunned as Muslims, Rauf and Khan have enjoyed a boom business in “outreach.” Their lifestyle includes at least two homes in the U.S. and one in Malaysia, fancy cars and pricey clothes.

Last October, in an article headlined “High Five With Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf,” *Forbes* chronicled the imam’s pleasure in driving a Lexus GS400. Rauf also detailed how he enjoys Armani and Brioni suits, his wife likes her cashmere scarves, and he mentioned his fondness for handcrafted Persian rugs, especially those woven of silk. He added that he owns about 15 carpets dispersed between his homes in New Jersey and New York, and another 15 carpets “at my home in Malaysia.”

Khan, you may recall, was last seen on national television complaining that the common folk of this nation are engaged in something that is “beyond Islamophobia” and is, indeed, “hate of Muslims.” She said this, naturally, just before setting off on her taxpayer-funded trip, which Rosset says is estimated to cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$12,000 – and that’s in addition to Rauf’s roughly \$16,000 trip, both of which include \$496 per diems.

What we have here, then, are taxpayer-supported community organizers who have grown quite wealthy in the wake of 9/11, who have profited from their association with the federal government, and who are, presumably, telling the foreigners that they meet on the junkets the same things that they are telling Americans to their faces, namely that this country is “beyond Islamophobia.”

And yet we’re left to wonder why this might make average Americans unhappy? And we’re told to believe that this unhappiness is the fault of our own personal failings? And, worse yet, we’re expected to believe these two people are somehow the *victims* in all of this?

If forced to choose between the two adjectives, we’re not sure if we could tell you whether this is more “absurd” or “obscene.”

But whatever the case, it’s telling.

Iman Faisal Rauf and his wife Daisy Khan, despite the protestations of victimhood and in addition to all other claims of intemperance, are part and parcel of America’s ruling class. They are not “the people.” They are the people’s self-proclaimed betters. And the idea that they or Michael Bloomberg or Barack Obama or anyone else would try to cast them as the moral superiors of the American public at large and casualties of that public’s intolerance is as offensive as it is myopic.

Truth be told, only a handful of people in this country care whether Rauf is a Sufi or a Salafi. Few care whether he is building a community center or a mosque. Few care much about the specifics of his beliefs or his religion at all. This isn’t about beliefs or religion.

It is about the ruling class and its steadfast, adamant, and ongoing insistence that the country class has no say and deserves no say in the affairs of the country, from the types of symbols it employs to how it spends taxpayers’ money.

We strongly suspect that this is by no means the last battle in the war between the classes that will spill over into the broader national consciousness. Just as we strongly suspect that this is by no means the last time that the ruling class will misread the nature of the battle and declare itself to be the moral victor before even understanding the terms of engagement.

There is trouble brewing in this country. And the ruling class does itself no favors by insisting that the only real concern is the rest of the country’s inability to submit gracefully.

END NOTES

Scott Rasmussen and the New Political

Paradigm. Roughly six weeks ago, we began putting some new meat on the old bones of the “new political paradigm” that we have been anticipating for more than a decade. Specifically, we wrote:

[The GOP] is the party of power, the party of big business, the party of government-business collusion, the party of rent extraction, the party of the bureaucracy, which knows best how your life should be led and that you are ill-equipped to come to the proper conclusions if left to your own devices. It may be mildly less enthusiastic about all of these things than is the Democratic Party. But these differences are, in the grand scheme of things, by and large, inconsequential.

When the history of this era is written, it is, in our opinion, a virtual certainty that the popular revulsion at the current state of political discourse will, in retrospect, appear not merely perfectly obvious, but deep-seated and broadly felt as well. This, despite the fact that those who demonstrate and articulate this revulsion are treated by the education-media-political establishment as fringe elements, merely lashing out at those whom they don't like, don't understand, and desperately fear

What [Angelo] Codevilla is describing here, and what we have been trying, less eloquently and less successfully, to describe over the last several months is the emergence of our long-awaited "new political paradigm," replacing the old, Cold War era paradigm with a new one, essentially the clash between what Codevilla calls the "ruling class" and the "country class." Long-time readers know that we predicted this new paradigm well over a decade ago and have been trying ever since to make out and explain its dimensions. The ongoing extension of the administrative state and the irremediable slide toward bureaucratic statism have always been vital components of our analysis, and

now, along with Codevilla, we are seeing far more unmistakably the outlines of the battlefield on which the future social, political, and cultural conflicts will be fought.

Anyone paying attention knows that in the weeks since, we have done our bit to establish the dimensions of this paradigm in more specific terms, detailing the political battles of the day and the manner in which they fit into and clarify the new paradigm, which centers on the fight for control of the nation between the "ruling class" and the "country class."

Given this, we were more than a little interested in *The Wall Street Journal's* "Weekend Interview," published not this past Saturday, but the Saturday before, which featured pollster Scott Rasmussen, as described by our good friend John Fund. Fund wrote as follows:

Early this year, Mr. Rasmussen delivered the first early-warning sign that Scott Brown would change the direction of American politics. A Rasmussen poll showing Mr. Brown surging and only nine points down with two weeks left to go before January's special Senate election in Massachusetts attracted the instant attention of White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. "How had this happened? What the bleep was going on?" is how the *New York Times* characterized his reaction. A *Boston Globe* poll taken about the same time showed Democrat Martha Coakley with a safe 15-point lead.

Mr. Rasmussen has a partial answer for Mr. Emanuel's question, and it lies in a significant division among the American public that he has tracked for the past few years – a division between what he calls the Mainstream Public and the Political Class

Before the financial crisis of late 2008, about a tenth of Americans fell into the political class, while some 53% were classified as in the mainstream public. The rest fell somewhere in the middle. Now the percentage of people identifying with the political class has clearly declined into single digits, while those in the mainstream public have grown slightly. A majority of Democrats, Republicans and independents all agree with the mainstream view on Mr. Rasmussen's three questions. "The major division in this country is no longer between parties but between political elites and the people," Mr. Rasmussen says.

His recent polls show huge gaps between the two groups. While 67% of the political class believes the U.S. is moving in the right direction, a full 84% of mainstream voters believe the nation is moving in the wrong one. The political class overwhelmingly supported the bailouts of the financial and auto industries, the health-care bill, and the Justice Department's decision to sue Arizona over its new immigration law. Those in the mainstream public just as intensely opposed those moves.

It is both fascinating and gratifying to know that there are others who agree with us about the emerging paradigm and, more importantly perhaps, who have empirical data to substantiate our impressions.

Obviously, this "clash of classes" is the emerging theme of the current election cycle. And we believe it will remain the dominant political paradigm for the foreseeable future – until the "country/mainstream" class either wrestles control back from the ruling class or surrenders from exhaustion.

Stay tuned, as they say.

Mexico Redux, Redux. Nearly 18 months ago, we first discussed the state of affairs in Mexico and the possibility of complete political collapse on the southern border of the United States. We put it this way:

For those of you who have been living in a cave, it turns out that one of the two closest neighbors and trading partners of the United States is, in fact, a failed state, a nation in name only, now governed, if that is the right word, by a handful of brutal drug cartels. The "official" position of the Obama administration is that Mexico is not a failed state and is not in danger of becoming one. Yet both the conditions on the ground and the federal government's own behavior tend to belie that assessment.

On February 20th [2009], the State Department issued a travel warning for Americans visiting Mexico, noting that the level of violence has increased considerably. Shortly thereafter, State coordinated efforts with universities to warn spring breaking college students about the risks of traveling south of the border. And then, just last week, First Observer, "a trucking security program funded by a Department of Homeland Security grant," issued an alert for truckers operating in the United States, but near the Mexican border, warning that "violence amongst Mexican drug cartels in the border states, on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border, has exponentially increased in the past year." According to the *Washington Times*, "Sterline Payne, a spokeswoman for the Transportation Security Administration, said that the agency agreed with [First Observer's] assessment."

In April of this year, we followed up on that piece, noting that, if possible, things had actually grown worse in Mexico, writing that "the Mexican

government no longer has control of the country,” and that “the ‘nation’ of Mexico no longer exists in anything but name.”

The headlines, of late do little to reassure us.

Here’s one from the *McAllen (Texas) Monitor*: “Police: San Juan teen randomly kidnapped, found in Reynosa,” which describes the kidnapping of an American girl on the American side of the border.

Here’s one from the *Agence France Presse*: “17 gunned down in Mexico fiesta slaughter.”

Here’s one from *Time* magazine: “Mexican Police Help Murder Their Own Mayor.”

And then here’s the kicker, from *The Wall Street Journal*: “Mexican Military Finds 72 Bodies Near Border.” This piece, sadly, is worth quoting at length:

Gunmen from a drug cartel appear to have massacred 72 migrants from Central and South America who were on their way to the U.S., a grisly event that marks the single biggest killing in Mexico’s war on organized crime.

Mexican marines discovered the 72 bodies – 58 men and 14 women – on Tuesday after the lone survivor of the massacre, a wounded migrant from Ecuador, stumbled into a Navy checkpoint the previous day and told of being shot on Monday at a nearby ranch, Mexican officials said on Wednesday.

When the marines went to investigate, they were met with a hail of gunfire from cartel gunmen holed up at the ranch, which sits 90 miles from the U.S. border. One marine and three alleged gunmen died during a two-hour battle, which ended when the gunmen fled in a fleet of SUVs, leaving behind a cache of weapons.

The Ecuadorean migrant told investigators that his captors identified themselves as members of the Zetas drug gang, said Vice Adm. Jose Luis Vergara, a spokesman for the Mexican navy

Some 28,000 people have died in Mexico’s war on organized crime since President Felipe Calderón took power in December 2006 and declared an all-out battle against powerful drug-trafficking gangs that were gaining immense power and challenging the Mexican state.

The death toll is rising fast, including more frequent discoveries of mass graves. In May, authorities discovered 55 bodies in an abandoned mine near Taxco, a colonial-era city south of Mexico City known for its silver. Last month, another 51 bodies were found near a trash dump outside the northern city of Monterrey.

Both of those mass graves were sites where drug gangs disposed of rivals killed during a period of weeks or months. This latest incident could be the single biggest instance of bloodshed from a Mexican cartel to date, experts said.

Meanwhile, President Obama is not only still suing the state of Arizona for attempting to keep this mess from its citizens, but his State Department (under the direction of Hillary Clinton) recently submitted its self-evaluation to the United Nations’ Human Rights Commissioner, citing Arizona and its desire to enforce federal law as one of this country’s most significant violations of human rights. The President is also, as best we can tell, though he doesn’t talk about it much, still very much interested in tackling “comprehensive immigration reform” as a political issue.

Good luck to him.

But more to the point, good luck to the people of Arizona. And Texas. And New Mexico. And, frankly, old Mexico.

While the politicians in Washington debate the niceties of “reform” and label all naysayers “racists,” Mexico is burning. Or bleeding. Or something. And eventually this is going to become an American problem as well. Not that anyone can say they weren’t warned.

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