Incendiary Ignorance
Washington Is Aflame With Gas-Price Idiocy

First came the Democrats. For more than a decade their leading lights have extolled higher gas taxes, and hence higher gas prices, to pay for everything from school roofs to the development of alternative energy sources that would usher in the economic Shangri-La of "energy independence"—whatever that is. "Look how enlightened Europe is! Gas prices there are two or three times ours," they'd holler. In 1993, when the Democrats controlled Congress and the White House, and the economy was believed to be in much worse shape, Bill Clinton, Al Gore and the rest of the Democratic leadership pushed gas taxes as the solution to our woes. Now even Sen. Chuck Schumer—who voted for gas-tax hikes in 1982, 1990, and 1993—believes that "high gas prices are going to be the final nail in the GOP's coffin this year." So the Democrats want to repeal federal gas taxes in order to bring the price down at the pump. They say the repeal would only be temporary. No kidding!

Instead of forming a bucket brigade to put out this bonfire of buffoonery—as is their historical obligation and divine writ—Republican leaders threw their own rhetorical gasoline. The GOP leadership called for the 12th investigation since 1979 into allegations of "price fixing" and "collusion" by American oil companies. These investigations —occurring on average once every three years—have all concluded much the same thing: Market forces determine the price, not some cabal of tuxedo-wearing fat cats.

At a time when a) the second-largest oil producer in the world—Iran—is engulfed in nuclear messianic nationalism; b) Iraq is, shall we say, a somewhat unstable oil producer; c) we have few oil refineries, and many of them are undergoing maintenance that was postponed because of Hurricane Katrina; and d) China's economy grew at an oil-sucking 10 percent in the first quarter while our own grew at an astounding 4.8 percent, the brain trust in Washington is stunned—stunned!—that gas prices are going up. It must be a conspiracy!

No doubt we can soon expect a major investigation into the disturbing reports that bears are using our woodlands as a toilet.

All of this brings to mind T.S. Eliot's observation that no causes are ever truly lost because no causes are ever truly won. Although poverty is the natural human condition whose only proven remedy is the market, whenever enough voters get mad at the market, politicians can be counted on to play up
popular paranoia about powerful "unseen forces" exploiting ordinary folk.

Why, this week, Rep. Nancy Pelosi even conjured the specter of those old devils, the "robber barons." "Sadly," she declared with barely suppressed glee, "we are now living in a new era of robber barons." Pelosi, who is more of a student of polls and left-wing blogs than history, probably doesn't much care that the modern stereotype of the robber baron as rapacious economic predator is more a product of the collectivist spirit of the New Deal than of the 19th century. "The Robber Barons," an error-filled 1934 tract written by a socialist named Matthew Josephson, was intended to pump up Depression-plagued readers with bile about "economic royalists" blocking social progress. Josephson was inspired by Honore de Balzac's witticism that "behind every great fortune lies a great crime." The statist playbook, it seems, is never out of print.

But we should not blame Democrats too much for their opportunism, cynicism and populism. As the party out of power, they are expected to seize on GOP weaknesses like jackals upon a wounded fawn. And their party is dedicated to the proposition that the state should always meddle when it feels it can do "good," regardless of what it did last year or even yesterday.

It is the congressional GOP that should be booed and shamed from the public square for the harlot it has become. Before the pyre of pandering even ended, the Republicans launched their fire sale, offering to sell off their remaining principles at bargain-basement prices. It was almost like they were paying voters to take their intellectual integrity off their hands. ("We're practically giving it away!")

They even tried to proposition voters with a $100 bribe to stop whining about "obscene" gas prices, rather than point out the real obscenity: overregulation that has kept American oil in the ground and prevented any new refineries or nuclear power plants from being built in 30 years. The $100 gimmick died from terminal bone-headedness, and even the House majority leader conceded, in an all-too-brief flash of sanity, that it was "stupid" and "insulting" to voters.

If this is what we can expect from congressional Republicans during a booming economy, heaven help us when the next recession comes.
Dental Socialism In Britain

When you think about the sufferings of the precapitalistic age, it helps to have a vivid example in mind. Think of teeth.

In ancient Egypt, dentists drilled holes through the bone to drain abscessed teeth. No anesthesia. Later, people learned that pulling teeth was the best way to deal with this and other problems. No anesthesia. Dental drills were an advance, but you had to keep the hole filled to keep the air out.

Those who had the tools did the work. For centuries in Europe, the same guy who cut your hair also extracted your teeth. In the US, it was the blacksmiths who would make the kitchen knives, saw off limbs, and drill and pull teeth.

By the mid-19th century, the biggest advance ever came along: laughing gas to take away the pain, which is unthinkably horrible in all ages and all places.

Well, if you live in Britain, you are likely to experience a blast from the past.

The system is socialized. Shortages and bad service are as universal under socialism as tooth pain was before the advent of anesthesia. But many in Britain no longer have any choice: they have to pull out their own teeth.

Only 49 percent of adults and 63 percent of children are registered with a dentist in England and Wales, according to the New York Times. You have to be registered to get service, but there is still no guarantee. You wait months, even years, if you get in at all.

To make an appointment, you have to call at 8am. The logs are full by 8:10am. This is what accounts for the burgeoning market in over-the-counter replacement fillings that you stuff in yourself. Most people just avail themselves of their tool boxes, and give the problem tooth a good yank. It heals in time.

This experiment in British socialism was concocted by a class of intellectuals who imagined that their scheme would provide equal access to all of life’s wonderful things. The result has been a tragedy. And this tragedy has, in many ways, ended in a terrible farce: people yanking out their own teeth in the land that gave us the most conspicuous example of the industrial revolution.

There is more than a lesson concerning socialism here. The experience provides a warning against all forms of "scientific social planning." The intellectuals hatch their plans to save humanity but, in some strange way, they forget that they are not playing games in a laboratory. They are dealing with real human lives. And these lives are not large amalgamations of classes or races but individuals. We experience pain and suffering, joys and triumphs, as individuals.

Tooth pain has a way of focusing the point on what really matters. Someone may claim that he has an idea for providing universal access to dentistry, if only you give him the power to do what he wants.

But there are a number of questions you should ask. Will he or you be the one to suffer if something goes wrong? Who is going to be held to account if the plan results in deprivation rather than plenty? What is the exit strategy for abolishing the system if it doesn't work? Where is the guarantee that this exit plan will be followed?

If someone can't give compelling answers to these questions, you are best to take the safe route and do nothing. No one in all of history has been able to improve on the workings of society via the power of the state. No matter how well constructed the plan appears to be, it always seems to make things worse than better.

Free enterprise can't make the reality of tooth pain disappear. It can’t alter the makeup of the universe. It can't change human nature. It can't abolish mortality. It can't take away the need for parents to train their children on the difference between right and wrong. It must accept the structure of reality as a given.

Neither, however, can the state do these things. What free enterprise does is provide the best possible system for dealing with reality. It provides a rational way of dealing with the scarcity of time and resources.

If you try to improve on freedom by means of the state, you not only create a worse situation but you end up slowing the pace of progress and actually bring about retrogression in advances made through the capitalistic era.

The socialization of dentistry has plunged Britain back more than a century in tooth care. Abolish capitalism altogether and you can find yourself back in the Stone Age. Even the metal drill will seem like a welcome tool.
Joel Mowbray--
Saddam's Terrorist Blueprints

Ask even news-savvy Americans what they know about Saddam’s plans to deploy suicide bombers against the West, and the most common response will be blank stares. Ditto for asking about how Saddam’s thugs trained thousands of terrorists from around the Arab world, right up through 2002.

Both stunning revelations surfaced recently, one in Congressional testimony last month and the other in the current issue of Foreign Affairs magazine. The Pentagon has known about these items on Saddam’s terrorist agenda since the end of 2003, which is when it received the after-action analysis report it had commissioned. (It served as the basis for the testimony and the magazine article.)

Now declassified, the book-length report analyzed thousands of Iraqi documents and interviews with over 100 officials of Saddam’s regime to piece together what was going on in the tyranny’s final days. Much of it is darkly humorous, such as the lengths to which minions would go to deceive Saddam or how the despot actually appeared to believe the ridiculous propaganda spewed by Baghdad Bob.

To the extent the report or its summaries were covered by the mainstream media, attention mostly was focused on the finding that Saddam apparently behaved himself in late 2002 and early 2003 in a vain attempt to stave off the invasion. Yet entirely ignored by the supposedly objective news outlets were the rather newsworthy items indicating that, in fact, Saddam was interested in exporting terror.

According to a Nexis search, only four news outlets have even mentioned “Blessed July,” which was, in the words of the Foreign Affairs article, “a regime-directed wave of ‘martyrdom’ operations against targets in the West.” All nine articles were editorials or opinion pieces. The New York Times essentially avoided covering the report or the magazine summary of it, as the paper instead excerpted a book co-authored by one of its reporters that relied heavily on the report. Even the Associated Press declined to print a quick mention that preparations for “Blessed July,” again quoting from the magazine article, “were well under way at the time of the coalition invasion.”

The Washington Post, however, did cover the release of the Foreign Affairs article, but with this headline: “U.S. Said To Misread Hussein On Arms.” The not-so-subtle implication of the rather brief story was that Saddam didn’t pose as big a threat as we thought. In the weeks following the Post article, the full report was released and its authors appeared before Congress. Neither event triggered additional coverage.

Even if Post reporters missed the section in the 230-page report on terror training camps operated by the Fedayeen Saddam, the militia of soldiers most loyal to the ruthless ruler, that issue was raised again in Congressional hearings last month. The camps, which were started in 1994, trained some 7,200 Iraqis in the art of terrorism in the first year alone. “Beginning in 1998,” according to the full report, “these camps began hosting ‘Arab volunteers from Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, ‘the Gulf,’ and Syria.’”

So in the late 1990’s and beyond, during which time conventional wisdom tells us that Saddam was “contained,” Iraq was training thousands of terrorists from across the Arab world. Saddam was not slowing down. “The training activity of the groups were increasing both internal and apparently external. It was increasing over time,” testified Lt. Col. Kevin Woods (retired), the report’s chief author.

Many Democrats, leading leftists, and even ostensibly objective members of the Fourth Estate scoff at Bush’s contention that the war in Iraq was a necessary component of the war on terror. Yet when fairly compelling proof emerges that Saddam was actively involved in both training terrorists and planning attacks, the collective response was silence.

Most baffling, though, is that the White House has been equally silent.
Had President Bush made even one mention of “Blessed July,” Saddam’s plans for a “wave of ‘martyrdom’ operations” would have dominated cable newscasts and newspaper headlines for at least a day. Maybe not dominated, but it would have garnered at least some attention.

Had the White House press office decided that the mainstream media couldn’t be trusted to disseminate the information accurately, it could have at least highlighted Saddam’s terror training camps for friendly columnists, talk hosts, and bloggers. It didn’t.

The White House doesn’t believe in re-fighting the decision to go to war, which is painfully logical. But politics isn’t logical. Neither are Bush’s political enemies. If the President wants people to trust that he made the right call by toppling Saddam, he needs to reiterate everyday what we know: Saddam was a threat who could no longer be tolerated. “Blessed July” and Saddam’s terror training camps would be as good a place as any to start.

Adam White & Daveed Gartenstein-Ross--

FDR's Domestic Surveillance

In a bold and controversial decision, the president authorized a program for the surveillance of communications within the United States, seeking to prevent acts of domestic sabotage and espionage. In so doing, he ignored a statute that possibly forbade such activity, even though high-profile federal judges had affirmed the statute's validity. The president sought statutory amendments allowing this surveillance but, when no such legislation was forthcoming, he continued the program nonetheless. And when Congress demanded that he disclose details of the surveillance program, the attorney general said, in no uncertain terms, that it would get nothing of the sort.

In short, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt charted a bold course in defending the nation's security in 1940, when he did all of these things.

It is worth remembering FDR's example as the debate over the NSA's warrantless surveillance continues to heat up. After a few months' lull, it seems that the issue is again creeping into the headlines. On April 27, for example, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter convened a press conference demanding that President Bush disclose the details of the NSA's surveillance program, and threatening to suspend the program's funding.

As with so many issues central to the global war on terror in which the need for security must be balanced against individual liberties, there is no fool-proof answer to the questions raised by the NSA's surveillance program. Yet broad sections of the left have personalized this debate around President Bush. Their hatred and distrust of Bush drives them to see the administration's actions in the worst light possible. To that extent, it's important to understand how President Roosevelt -- a paragon of the left -- dealt with similar problems.

President Bush faces challenges on two fronts. First, it's been argued that there is no authority for the NSA surveillance, either statutory or constitutional. Second, congressional critics demand that the administration disclose the details of the surveillance program. The Roosevelt administration faced similar challenges in the days leading up to World War II. Documents that we obtained from Justice Robert Jackson's archives at the Library of Congress, some of which have never before been discussed in the press, show that President Roosevelt did not doubt his authority to conduct such surveillance in the interest of national security.

In 1937 and 1939, the Supreme Court handed down a pair of decisions in the matter of Nardone v. United States. The Court held that the Communications Act of 1934 barred federal surveillance of telephone lines, and that evidence obtained from such surveillance couldn't be introduced at trial.

In response, Attorney General (and future Supreme Court justice) Robert Jackson ended the FBI's longstanding surveillance of suspected saboteurs and spies. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover protested this decision. In an April 13, 1940 memorandum to Jackson, Hoover outlined a number of pending investigations that were hampered by Jackson's decision. Hoover concluded, "Frankly, the Bureau cannot cope with this problem without the use of wire taps and I feel obligated to bring this situation to your attention at the present time rather than to wait until a national catastrophe focuses the spotlight of public indignation upon the Department because of its failure to prevent a serious occurrence."

President Roosevelt sided with Hoover, not Jackson. In a signed May 21, 1940 memorandum to his attorney general, FDR wrote:

I have agreed with the broad purpose of the Supreme Court decision relating to wire-tapping in investigations. The Court is undoubtedly sound both in

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regard to the use of evidence secured over tapped wires in the prosecution of citizens in criminal cases; and is also right in its opinion that under ordinary circumstances wire-tapping by Government agents should not be carried on for the excellent reason that it is almost bound to lead to abuse of civil rights.

However, I am convinced that the Supreme Court never intended any dictum in the particular case which it decided to apply to grave matters involving the defense of the nation.

It is, of course, well known that certain other nations have been engaged in the organization of propaganda of so-called "fifth columns" in other countries and in preparation for sabotage, as well as in actual sabotage.

It is too late to do anything about it after sabotage, assassinations and "fifth column" activities are completed.

You are, therefore, authorized and directed in such cases as you may approve, after investigation of the need in each case, to authorize the necessary investigating agents that they are at liberty to secure information by listening devices direct to the conversation or other communications of persons suspected of subversive activities against the Government of the United States, including suspected spies. You are requested furthermore to limit these investigations so conducted to a minimum and to limit them insofar as possible to aliens.

FDR's assertion that the Supreme Court didn't read the Communications Act to bar surveillance for national defense wasn't based on the statute's text. The Communications Act provided that "no person not being authorized by the sender shall intercept any communication and divulge or publish the existence, contents, substance, purport, effect, or meaning of such intercepted communication to any person." The only source for FDR's national-security exception was the same as the one now presented as a defense of the NSA surveillance program: the president's inherent constitutional authority, as commander in chief of the armed forces, to conduct surveillance as an incident to the military's defense of our nation.

Despite FDR's readiness to use his inherent authority, he and Jackson pushed Congress to give the administration statutory authority. As Jackson recounted in his memoir, the administration sought authorization for surveillance for not only "espionage [and] sabotage," but also "extortion and kidnapping cases." The House was willing only to authorize FBI wiretapping "in the interest of national defense." As today, any such legislation was opposed by the ACLU, as well as (in Jackson's words) "others of liberal persuasion."

FDR and Jackson also opposed those who sought to require that surveillance be approved not only by the attorney general but also by the courts, through warrant requirements. As Jackson wrote in a March 19, 1941 letter to Rep. Hatton Summers, "I do not favor the search warrant procedure... Such procedure means loss of precious time, probably publicity, and filing of charges against persons as a basis for wire tapping before investigation is complete which might easily result in great injury to such persons."

In the end, FDR and the Congress weren't able to agree on a legislative compromise. Nonetheless, President Roosevelt continued to authorize national-security surveillance. All of this predated America's entry into the Second World War.

After choosing to authorize surveillance, President Roosevelt faced angry legislators (similar to Senator Specter and others today) who called for disclosure of the surveillance program's details in order to inform the legislative debate. FDR decided that Congress was not entitled to, and could not be trusted with, such information. He thus refused to comply.

Attorney General Jackson spelled this out in an April 30, 1941 letter to Rep. Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs. Jackson reviewed the history of presidential refusals to disclose national security information, beginning with President Washington's 1796 refusal to disclose the details of treaty negotiations. Jackson warned that to provide such information to Congress would enable congressional personnel to leak details to the public, thereby tipping off targets and embarrassing informants. He said that disclosure would "prejudice the national defense and be of aid and comfort to the very subversive elements against which you wish to protect the country." And despite the fact that Congress was attempting to pass legislation pertaining to that very program, Jackson concluded that information regarding the surveillance "can be of little, if any, value in connection with the framing of legislation or the performance of any other constitutional duty of the Congress."

Jackson recognized that the president and Congress face different responsibilities, making agreement between the two branches difficult on such weighty, heated, time-sensitive issues. The Constitution gives the president the responsibility to act quickly and decisively to defend the national security. Congress, freed from such responsibility, could indulge other preoccupations. At one point, Jackson wrote Rep. John Coffee that "I am confident that if you and any of the other liberals in Congress sat in my seat and were held to some degree of responsibility for the perpetration of acts of sabotage and espionage in this country you would feel differently about the wire tapping bill."

And so it goes today. In the coming weeks, Senator Specter and others may threaten to withhold funds from the NSA or block nominations (such as General Hayden's nomination to head the CIA). The prerogatives of spending cuts and nominations blocks are within the power of the Congress, just as defense of the national security is committed to the president. President Bush can only hope that cooler heads prevail among House and Senate majorities. But in pursuing his own course of action, President Bush should keep in mind -- and cite as justification -- the example of the opposition party's greatest hero, President Roosevelt.

Adam White's review of Justice Robert Jackson's draft opinions in the famous Korean War-era Steel Seizure Cases will appear in the Albany Law Review later this year; his defense of the Senate's power to filibuster judicial nominations appeared last year in the Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is an attorney and counterterrorism consultant. His first book, My Year Inside Radical Islam, will be published in winter 2007 by Tarcher/Penguin.

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On Race: A Tentative Discussion

This entry addresses the troubling question of race. I choose to do so because several visitors to our SANE Works for US website have commented on the dangerous line they suggest we tread here. What they mean by this in the main, if I may read a bit between the lines, is that a discussion of Islam as an evil religion, or of blacks as the most murderous of peoples (at least in New York City), or of illegal immigrants as deserving of no rights, is, if not racist, so close to being so as to be alienating.

My response is twofold. First, I ask for the specific statements that are racist. Now I admit to being a bit disingenuous here. The reason for my admission is that most folks use that word, now one of the most pejorative and destructive of labels in this country, rather loosely. By “racism,” we can mean by formal definition two things. One is a belief that race accounts for innate differences in character or ability and that as a result a given race is superior to another. Another is to treat people differently, typically in an unfair or disparaging way, because of race. By common usage, the charge of racism is almost always used to suggest that someone has made a distinction between people based upon their race, even though the distinction being made was not necessarily meant to denote superiority in moral or human status.

Given the gravity of a charge of racism, it pays to examine it more carefully. And that is precisely what I do when addressing the charge of racism once I hear the specific statements that brand one a racist or as one espousing racist views. The reason of course is that once I hear the specific charges, it usually boils down to one of two types. One type is where the statement is made that a given people hold a view of the world that is evil and therefore they are more dangerous than another people. That would be Islam and Muslims (or now in a seemingly bygone era, Communism and communists). While such is not technically racism, any charge of discrimination in today’s parlance has the meaning of racism in result, although tempered somewhat. A second type is a statement that suggests that biological differences in races (or in the case of a charge of “sexism”, sexes) manifest in actual behavior that affects society. For purposes of this essay, we will use the later type.

That race involves inherent differences between peoples is understood. Most of the fundamental differences between the races are genetic. Thus, the starting point for recognizing any one of the different races is by recognizing certain shared characteristics (skin color, facial features, hair, body structure and height). There are other factors that distinguish some races that are not genetic, such as language, culture, and what anthropologists call “mental” or “social constructs.” These less biological characteristics might be more useful for more difficult or even controversial classifications at the margins (mixed races), but in the matters of race that are important, we tend to rely on inherent and obvious factors.

(There are of course the silly social scientists who claim that all race-based classifications are “mental” or “social constructs,” meaning by this that all race-based distinctions are bad (i.e., invalid) and “racist” because they are not real, meaning scientific. So when you walk down the street and you see a black man, a white man, and an Asian walking side by side, tell yourself the differences you note between them and the tentative yet stereotypical conclusions you draw about their origins and culture, are not real, and in fact are the product of evil “social constructs” and false stereotypes and you automatically deserve a B.S. in anthropology.)

These important and obvious characteristics and factors of race abound, even though today we speak of them in a way to disguise and dissimulate. For example, we know that blacks are more likely to suffer from sickle cell anemia than whites; Ashkenazi Jews more likely to suffer from Tay-Sachs than non-Jews or even Sephardic Jews. That blacks have a superior biological and inherent superiority in certain sports is, based upon the science liberals typically embrace without a second thought, now well enough established. To the now trite question of why African Americans dominate American sports, the answer certainly includes some combination of biological, cultural, and social factors, but to deny that blacks are in the main better at certain sports is to be blind to the reality of common experience, common sense, and the most beloved of all, science. (Would one contend that pygmies are not genetically inferior basketball players?)

Now, if skin color, disease, body shape and size, athleticism all have a biological basis, why is it that intelligence or predilection to violence might not also have genetic bases. In fact, there is enormous evidence to the contrary. For example, at the extremes, we know that mentally retarded people and geniuses were “born” that way. Whether they utilize whatever potential they do have at either extreme has much to do with their environment and their personal choices, but that nature gave them what they have in the way of brain power, be it more or less, is a given. Further, it would be beyond dispute that men...
generally are more prone to violence than women. The reason for this sexist remark is, beyond the Biblical one, that men are hormonally different than women and hormones can have a dramatic affect on one’s behavior. This is basic. That of course does not mean that a man with a predilection to violence due to an overabundance of testosterone ought not to be morally culpable if he fails to overcome the urge to beat me on the subway because I took the seat he wished to occupy. What it does mean is that men are more suited for certain activities than women. And vice versa. (And to the feminists who rise up to strike me down, I stand assuredly on the point that no father writ gender large, meaning as a male prototype, can nurture a baby the way a mother, similarly writ gender large, when she speaks lovingly to her baby while he or she suckles contentedly. A man might think he can replace this with a warm bottle smuggled close, but I can know there is a difference. The physical, biologically determined mother-act is simply unbeatable by even today’s most sensitive, gender-neutered male.)

Now, it is equally true that a firestorm of protests erupts the moment you say such things. Racism, chauvinism and the rest of the long list of name calling inevitably flows from such discussion. But if standardized testing suggests a racial component to IQ, if the New York City and national murder statistics suggest there is a racial component to murder, why is that necessarily a bad racism? With all of the liberal talk of evolution and biology, why do people find it so difficult to confront the facts that some races perform better in sports, some better in mathematical problem solving, some better in language, some better in Western societies and some better in tribal ones? For what the moderns believe were now thousands of years, the races lived separated by environments wholly different one from the other. If evolution and the biologists who espouse the theory are correct, then the idea that racial differences included innate differences in character and intelligence would it seem be more likely than not. In other words, why would the evolutionary and genetic processes have stopped at those traits we consider off-limits due to political correctness? Is nature and biology somehow so perfectly tied into our social milieu of today that it refused to make the distinctions we consider politically and socially repugnant?

If all of these traits are very likely predicated upon genes and nature’s evolutionary tolls, although the behavior of the man with those traits is not ultimately determined by them (because certainly ‘nurture’ – the environment – and free will combine with nature in almost every aspect of man’s behavior), why do we run from the discussion? Is there nothing to be gained from a considered discourse on the subject?

Why are we not prepared to discuss race and the differences between races in a serious way? Why does science avoid these distinctions like the plague? The hard sciences like biology steer clear of these investigations, and when they run into them head-on they erupt into polemics of race-baiting. The soft sciences like sociology and anthropology work so hard to deny the differences that position statements on race sound like more like a political campaign platform than anything else. And here of course is where we hit on the answer. Go back and read the link provided immediately above (reproduced here). This is the American Association of Physical Anthropologists’ “Statement on Biological Aspects of Race.” In a word it says, buried deep within its political message, that there are biological differences but they don’t have to remain that way and they have been diluted over the years by intercontinental migration, intercultural interaction, and intermarriage between races. Given time, all race-based distinctions will disappear, they predict. Penetrated for meaning, the AAPA Statement really wants you to believe that all biological differences between the races are only skin deep. They of course ignore the medical research of significant racial distinctions in incidences of disease and reaction to medications and the research arising from sports medicine suggesting Africans have a significant advantage over whites in certain motor skills and that there is even a distinction between West Africans and East Africans relative to sprinting and long-distance running. But let’s not let a little science blur the social message.

So other than the explanation that most scientists, and certainly most social scientists, have been spoon-fed the “secular-human-race-no-national-boundaries-no-race-distinctions” platform since infancy, what else might explain the phenomenon that we are simply to ignore the evidence the natural world and common sense present to our eyes that in fact there are biological distinctions between the races or there would be no races?

The answer is buried deep in what we at SANE refer to as the obversion between science on the one side and democracy or the open society on the other. The West today, consisting of modern liberal democracies, takes the position that science, and
more properly speaking, the method of science that utilizes mathematical physics, is the one certainty we can all agree upon. If science and its method provide certain knowledge, then necessarily anything not within the purview of that method provides only uncertainty. Why must that be so? Because the method of science is predicated upon the principle that anything not subject to the process of mathematical calculation, ratiocination as it has been termed, cannot be tested by science and if it cannot be tested it cannot be known. Even when science says, through the mouth of quantum physics, that there is no absolute knowledge but only probable knowledge, that absolute statement about the probability of knowledge is certain and itself absolute having been derived from mathematical physics, which per science can never be uncertain. (As an aside, that is why biologists and their Elite vanguard use the constitution to keep the Bible out of a science class so it should not come to challenge the very basis upon which science declares itself absolute.)

Now if everything but science is absolutely uncertain, we now understand the importance, politically speaking, of radical democracy and the Open Society. Keep in mind that our founding fathers feared democracy as much as or more than they feared the tyranny of the Crown. Thus they fashioned a very careful constitutional republic that guarded the vote, and then removed the Senate and the presidency from direct election for extra measure. But the caution of our founders has been overrun by the ideology of science. At this country’s founding and for more than a century and a half thereafter, the mention of G-d, faith, and national greatness, meaning virtue, were ubiquitous among our political and civic leaders and statesmen.

But we have since lost our moral compass. Virtue and goodness are no longer part of the political lexicon. Now, such statements are rendered mere opinions, offered to pacify or placate some faction but bearing upon no real knowledge because they don’t fall within the purview of the certainty of science. Since today nothing but science can claim the mantle of truth, the only way to measure the endless opinions occupying the place of competing uncertainties, is by vote. Now if your vote is just as uncertain as my vote, because it is just your opinion versus mine, this translates into the position that your vote is just as meaningless or meaningful as my vote. (The distinction of meaningful and meaningless, of course, is now meaningless.) This is why an adult retarded man’s vote equals a very intelligent man’s vote; and it is why there is a push to have convicts and felons granted the right to vote. It is also why the courts, the great arbiters of method writ Due Process, are so willing to enter the post-election fray and extend the purely political into the legal. (Social scientists will of course rationalize radical democracy based upon mathematical-statistical regression theories that work to eliminate the odd-ball responses and in this way establish with mathematical certainty that democracy works to choose between two uncertainties.)

We are left with a society that can no longer say its national existence is any better than another’s because there is now no substance to the national existence of that society. It is now just about method. Due Process. Elections of course are not about what is best, or more virtuous, or the highest good, but about method. Was the election fairly run? Was the process transparent? The substance of the vote, as we see with the Hamas victory, is only important in post facto political relationships between nations. But no one can or does suggest that, in the case of Hamas, the Palestinians acted badly, meaning in a morally repugnant way by choosing known terrorists as their elected representatives. Rather, the discussion is that their choice, having been made through a transparent and good democratic process, was politically imprudent.

So, if you are confronted with two societies with equal democracy and due process, one can never be morally superior to another, just different and politically more adept at making alliances, but you will never hear The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, or former President Carter place moral blame on the people who make bad choices. The implication for America’s moral high ground is clear. Abraham Lincoln, Ronald Reagan and all the founders were wrong. America is not better, more virtuous, just different. Manifest Destiny was a lie and politically imprudent, was economically more successful than other countries and have achieved a level of political stability envied by others, but none of these successes or any other measured by the political scientist will result in an academic paper suggesting that America has achieved moral greatness, only Process greatness.
Now we return to race. If science were to trump the Open Society/Uncertainty card and begin to theorize, investigate and establish as empirical fact that the differences between races are more than skin deep and that these differences seem to affect behavior and the culture that develops out of behavior in ways that make a society more or less safe, or more or less productive, or more or less aggressive, and if we couldn't blame this on slavery, oppression, or poverty simply, the very idea of democracy and the Open Society would be at risk. If you don't see why immediately, you might ponder the following.

There is a reason the founding fathers did not give women or black slaves the right to vote. You might not agree or like the idea but this country’s founders, otherwise held in the highest esteem for their understanding of human nature and its affect on political society, certainly took it seriously. Why is that? Were they so flawed in their political reckonings that they manhandled the most important aspect of a free society – the vote? If the vote counts for so much in a free and liberal democracy as we “know” it today, why did they limit the vote so dramatically?

Indeed, the transformation from what this country was and what it is today has been wholesale. The highest good is now not political virtue, personal responsibility, and national existence but RIGHTS. Rights are of the highest order of political value precisely because they are about Method or Process. The extrapolation of this trend is now clear for even those who refuse to look beyond the day’s headlines in a vain effort to avoid the political horizon. The fact that a retarded person can vote [i.e., literacy tests have been outlawed] but a child cannot is not sustainable and eventually the ACLU will successfully challenge this baseless age discrimination. Just like the laws against “consensual” sex with minors, or animals, or polygamy will eventually be challenged and held to be unconstitutional in the same way sodomy has been transformed into a “right,” when it once was an absolute abomination to the vast, vast majority of Americans. But it was (and is) an abomination not because of the “vast, vast majority of Americans” who held it to be, it was so because Americans knew it to be morally repugnant. When Process and Rights replace the moral compass supplied by this country’s Judeo-Christian foundings, nothing, absolutely nothing can be morally repugnant anymore, at least not in the eyes of the law. (See especially Justice Scalia’s dissent in Lawrence v. Texas.)

If democracy and the Open Society were seriously challenged by science itself, that is, if science were to dare to undermine the notion that there can be no distinctions worth measuring between peoples, races or sexes, this could very well lead to the untenable position that there is something wrong with the idea that science stands alone to know truth and certainty. For having established, precisely because of the certainty of science that democracy and the Open Society are the only forums for the measure of the conflicting opinions of uncertainty, the Open Society, and indeed science itself, would not and could not tolerate such a rebellion within the ranks.

Such a challenge might in fact lead people to begin to ask in a serious way a whole host of questions that would undermine the entire modern enterprise. Might a thing called a man’s soul actually have value for the investigation of certainty? Might the core beliefs of a People rise to the level of foundational truth for that People? Is law and legal analysis something that can be separated from moral judgment and the core beliefs of a People? Can American law and politics be separated from its Judeo-Christian foundations? It might also lead to the conclusion that a jury that could not decide to execute a terrorist who conspired to kill 3000 innocent men, women, and children was in fact no jury at all but a washed out reflection of the wrongheaded view that all human opinion is wholly uncertain. (Indeed the jury reports that the mitigating factors that received the most support to prevent the death sentence were those arising from the poor man’s childhood social milieu. How could we dare punish him to the full extent of the law when we ourselves can’t really know if he was fully culpable? Indeed, if science and its method are certain, can there be anything called moral culpability?)

And, having gone this far, we might just come to recognize just how dangerous the whole scientific edifice becomes. Might we realize that science and its method operate on the principle that no thing, and that includes all animals, which of course includes man, has the free will to remove himself from the determinism of mathematical physics? Even the modern philosophic scientists/mathmeticians who speak of a
quantum free will consisting of probabilities, simply replace the old scientific fixed determinism with a statistical one that still must maintain that humans like electrons or quarks are without any moral choice only a kind of randomness fitted within the probabilities of outcomes. If the old school or the new school certainty of science is true, what does that mean for any kind of national existence? Of resistance to a culture of death, abortion, and euthanasia? Would it all not be an irrational “mental” or “social construct” separating people and nations? If, on the other hand, science, meaning liberal scientists with the Elites’ agenda firmly in hand, don’t allow for an inquiry into the differences between peoples, races and sexes, and scientists carefully guard the boundaries that keep science in control, democracy and the Open Society, multiculturalism and the remainder of the trend-setters on the way to an amorphous World State, remain unchallenged. Unchallenged that is, except by another world state viewpoint that is prepared to challenge the West and its freedoms with existential threats from within and without. But that is another discussion; or is it?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essentialist</td>
<td>Hooton (1926)</td>
<td>&quot;A great division of mankind, characterized as a group by the sharing of a certain combination of features, which have been derived from their common descent, and constitute a vague physical background, usually more or less obscured by individual variations, and realized best in a composite picture.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxonomic</td>
<td>Mayr (1969)</td>
<td>&quot;An aggregate of phenotypically similar populations of a species, inhabiting a geographic subdivision of the range of a species, and differing taxonomically from other populations of the species.&quot;</td>
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<td>Population</td>
<td>Dobzhansky (1970)</td>
<td>&quot;Races are genetically distinct Mendelian populations. They are neither individuals nor particular genotypes, they consist of individuals who differ genetically among themselves.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lineage</td>
<td>Templeton (1998)</td>
<td>&quot;A subspecies (race) is a distinct evolutionary lineage within a species. This definition requires that a subspecies be genetically differentiated due to barriers to genetic exchange that have persisted for long periods of time; that is, the subspecies must have historical continuity in addition to current genetic differentiation.&quot;</td>
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Patrick Kennedy  
A Man For Rhode Island

Patrick Kennedy came to Rhode Island to go to Providence College. For whatever reasons, he chose PC, a very excellent Catholic liberal arts college, rather than the Ivy League bastions of his uncles John and Robert, father, Ted, and at least, one cousin, JFK, Jr.

Providence College holds the distinction of being the only Dominican institution of higher learning in North America. A perennial basketball power, it produced Kevin Stacom, Ernie DiGregorio and Marvin Barnes and that was on just one team. Former coaching staffers include Rick Pitino and Billy Donovan, who just led The University of Florida to the state’s very first NCAA basketball championship. Like so many Catholic colleges and universities, it successfully combines sports with strong academics.

It’s also a key to Rhode Island’s Old Boy network. It’s said that you could hold a quorum of The Rhode Island Bar Association, The Rhode Island Medical Society and the state legislature from its graduates.

Other places complain of ‘no work’ government jobs. In Rhode Island there are ‘no show’ government jobs and double credit jobs. One labor leader/government figure/employee retired with 53 years of service credit for a government pension at age 51.

Everything is for sale in Rhode Island. I lived there for thirty years. In that period, three former mayors including one former governor went to prison on corruption charges and two Supreme Court Chief Justices had to resign because of connections to organized crime. One, the Mayor of Pawtucket, was led away from City Hall in handcuffs by the FBI.

To get certain jobs, you have to join the ‘$10,000 Club’. I knew one fellow who told me he had wanted to switch to a higher level state job and was told that by his lawyer, who was politically connected. He said he might be able to get it done for just $7,500. He was to go to certain functions with money in envelopes. When he asked how he’d know who to give the money to, the lawyer told him, "You’ll know."

So Kennedy jumped into it and once again, the Kennedys did it in overkill style, trotting out all of the old Camelot relics. He’s been reelected five times by lopsided margins but Kennedys take no chances often using their old show business connections, going so far as to have Tony Bennett appear for one of Patrick’s fund raisers.

Patrick, for his part, has voted the good old liberal, Democratic Party line, differing with his father Ted on some significant votes. He has none of the oratorical presence of his father and uncles. He reminds me of the panicked, ‘what do I do now?’ characters that Judge Reinhold played in ‘Fast Times at Ridgmont High’ and the ‘Beverly Hills Cop’ movies. He’s had a lot of bumps along the way, including admissions of cocaine use, a shoving incident with a security guard at an airport and a dispute with the owner of a yacht that he rented, who claimed he caused more than $28,000 of damages. He’s been a big fund raiser for the party.

With this most recent episode, most likely, he’ll weather the storm. The reactions are splitting along party lines. There are very few Republicans with the name recognition he has who
could challenge him and most of the state’s Republicans are rhinos anyway. Voters expect warmed over John Chafees.

As far as the justice system is concerned, if it had happened in Rhode Island or Massachusetts, the Kennedy machine would have been able to do more to make it go away like they did with Chappaquiddick and all the other Kennedy excesses. In Washington, they may no longer have the necessary muscle.

But Patrick will enter rehab and come out in a few months. Supporters will commend his courage in confronting his demons and Republicans will field a shell candidate who will get shellacked in November.

It may not be a case of ‘only in Rhode Island’, I think it takes a lot to unseat any Washington politician, but Rhode Island accepts politicians’ misbehavior to an extraordinary degree. It didn’t get the nickname Rogues Island for nothing.

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### Jonah Goldberg--

**Pick Up Your Own Crap**

**The Crazy Denunciations And Demands Of Populist Forces Must Be Put Down By Conservatives**

Politics has a math of its own. Whereas a scientifically minded person might see things this way: One person who says 2+2=5 is an idiot; two people who think 2+2=5 are two idiots; and a million people who think 2+2=5 are a whole lot of idiots—political math works differently. Let’s work backwards: if a million people think 2+2=5, then they are not a million idiots, but a “constituency.” If they are growing in number, they are also a “movement.” And, if you were not only the first person to proclaim 2+2=5, but you were the first to persuade others, then you, my friend, are not an idiot, but a visionary.

Of course, idiocy and its distribution in the population isn’t the point. You can build a movement out of true observations—i.e. 2+2=4—as well. The point is that political power flows from numbers and, more importantly, that such power becomes self-justifying for those who enjoy its effects. Passion becomes more “legitimate” as more people share it, no matter what the content or object of that passion is. Any unified field theory of politics would have to include this basic law of the political universe. It is true in democracies and dictatorships alike. Like the laws of gravity or thermodynamics, it can be exploited or minimized. But it cannot be repealed. It is a constant of the human condition.

**A Qualified Good**

I bring this up so you know where I’m coming from on the issue of populism. All political programs and movements derive some of their legitimacy from the fact that some number of people are behind them. Even kings depended on popular support to some extent. But only populism in its purist form derives its entire agenda from “people power.” Indeed, the word basically means “people-ism.” It does not pretend to privilege objective truth or the best arguments or even justice—if by justice you mean an objective system of judgment which might rule against “the people.” For populists, “justice” is defined by the giant baby getting its bottle.

It is for this reason that populism is inherently anti-intellectual. William Jennings Bryan, that towering figure of American history beloved by the American Left right up to the point where he argued against evolution in the Scopes Trial, was a man with little tolerance for arguments. A champion of free silver, he unapologetically admitted that he didn’t know much about economics. “The people of Nebraska are for free silver and I am for free silver,” he proclaimed. “I will look up the arguments later.”

This is not say that Populists can’t be smart or have good arguments on their side. But Bryan’s formulation has the causation exactly right. What “the people” want comes first, period.

Well, as small d-democrats in good standing, you might ask, “What’s wrong with that? Does not the Constitution begin with ‘We the People…”?”

Well, sure, but don’t fall for word game three card monte. If “democracy” meant “populism” and vice versa we wouldn’t have different encyclopedia entries for the two words.
As I’ve written many times, in its purest form democracy allows for 51 percent of the people to pee in the cornflakes of 49 percent of the people whenever they so choose. The American constitutional order, on the other hand, recognizes democracy as a qualified good, necessarily tempered by republican and constitutional safeguards. As the heirs to classical liberalism, American conservatives in particular have long emphasized the importance of individual rights even when they come at the expense of what “the people” want.

Historically, populism greets such arguments, and those who make them, and smashes both with a rock, sometimes rhetorically, sometimes quite literally. Most populist movements have contempt for mechanisms which dilute or delay people power. Perhaps the most benign populist “reform” in American history was their successful campaign to amend the constitution in favor of the direct election of senators. And even there, we have some good reasons to grumble.

It should be no surprise by now that populism has always been a fundamentally left-wing phenomena. Indeed, just looking around the world to see which countries call themselves “people’s republics” should be evidence enough of that. Throughout history, populist movements, no matter what their ideological origins, ineluctably devolve into socialist enterprises—and most of them start out that way. Right now, we’re witnessing the growth of classically populist movements across Latin America. The president of Bolivia just last week essentially appropriated the nation’s oil and gas reserves. Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez has been posing as the voice-of-the-people-made-flesh for years now as he systematically dismantles the market economy in explicit homage to Fidel Castro. In America, Populists have invariably championed socialistic policies. The Populist Party—also called the People’s Party—pushed for the nationalization of railroads and other industries, and demanded “popular” control over natural resources. (You can peruse the U.S. Populist Party’s 1892 platform here. Note its call for mandatory unionization, the seizure of lands from corporations and “aliens,” and the nationalization of the telephone companies.) Father Charles Coughlin and Huey Long were explicitly socialist (though they didn’t always use the word) in their economic policies. Patrick Buchanan’s move toward populism coincided with—indeed, required—a steady rejection of free market principles (see Ramesh’s “A Conservative No More”).

From the mobs storming Versailles to the Banana Republic dictators seizing the oil fields, populist programs have been based as much upon grasping envy and narcissistic resentment of those who “think they’re better than us” as on any sort of principle. It’s not just that populist arguments are most often arguments in name only. They are sharp rhetorical sticks poked in the eye of those with little to lose and much to gain by overturning the board when the rules work against them. Individual responsibility gets lost in a swamp of whininess about what others “owe” the people. When Homer Simpson ran for sanitation commissioner, he captured the populist pose perfectly: “Animals are crapping in our houses and we’re picking it up! Did we lose a war? That’s not America! That’s not even Mexico!”

In the last decade or so, leading intellectuals within the Democratic party have been desperate to revive “economic populism” in order to get “the people” back on their side (see, for example, “Why Democrats Must Be Populists: And what populist-phobes don’t understand about America”). Bill Clinton’s manifesto “Putting People First” was just one small example of this ongoing project. Al Gore’s attempt to frame the 2000 campaign as the “people versus the powerful” was another. John Edwards’ podium thumping about “two Americas” was relentlessly cheered by self-described progressives as the best articulation of their cause in 2004.

### Getting The Bogeymen

Inherent to all of these visions, extreme and moderate alike, is that politics is a good-versus-evil war between haves and have-nots. But even more significantly, the populist vision is inherently conspiratorial. Because politics is irredicably about class interests, populists and populist sympathizers see evil motives behind “the other.” The 1892 Populist Party platform proclaimed “A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and it is rapidly taking over the world.” The enemies were “the gold bugs,” financiers, and all the usual villains depicted in Thomas Nast cartoons as pigs dressed like the Monopoly guy. These secretive forces were arrayed against the exploited “little guy” and “the people.”

Big Oil, Big Tobacco, and Big Pharma are merely new labels for the same old bogeyman behind the curtain. In the past, the bogeyman was Wall Street, or “international capital,” or the plain old “ruling classes.” It should be no surprise that populism is a conducive medium for anti-Semitism. America’s 19th-century populists were always quick to blame “the Jews” for their troubles. Ignatius Donnelly, a founding father of American populism (who still gets good press from liberal historians), was a nutty anti-Semite with batty theories about just about everything, including the role of the Jews as the ultimate string-pullers. He shared with many populist spokesmen a heartfelt belief that “the Jews”—AKA “the shylocks”—were aligned with the British in a secret conspiracy to control America through the manipulation of gold. A typical cartoon in a Populist publication
depicted the world grasped in the tentacles of an octopus sitting atop the British Isles. The octopus was labeled “Rothschild.” An Associated Press reporter noted of the 1896 Populist convention “the extraordinary hatred of the Jewish race” on display.

This Manichean view of the world divided between controlling all-powerful and scary forces aligned against the people can be traced back to the French Revolution (cruel cat shriek). With the Revolution, the old sentiment of “long live the King” was replaced with “long live the nation”—with “the nation” and “the people” being synonymous. This is not to say that overthrowing monarchies is necessarily bad. But what the French Revolutionaries did not—or would not—recognize is that there must be limits on the will of the people. The reason they didn’t recognize this is that the leaders of the revolution got drunk on the power conferred on them by “the people.” Quickly, these leaders became more savage and cruel than the king they replaced. Robespierre summed up the totalitarian logic underneath this worldview when he proclaimed: “There are only two parties in France: the people and its enemies. We must exterminate those miserable villains who are eternally conspiring against the rights of man. . . . [W]e must exterminate all our enemies.”

It was against this backdrop that modern conservatism was born. Burke and others shared the enlightenment’s skepticism toward the arbitrary authority of the throne. They, too, believed that the people deserved a say in how their lives were run. Where they differed was that where the continental radicals saw “the people” as the irreducible force in politics, the conservatives (then called liberals) saw the individual as the irreducible moral agent. John Locke speaks of how we are captains of ourselves. The revolutionaries worshipped at the altar of the General Will. Conservatives respected the mystic chords of the nation too, but they understood that man is not the source of meaning or morality. The Jacobins rejected this division between the transcendent and earthly. Man is the source of all meaning, and men in large numbers defined the legitimacy of all political power.

Beware The Populist Temptation

So why am I bringing any of this up in the first place? Well, a couple weeks ago I spoke skeptically about conservative populism amidst the furor over immigration and, before that, during the brouhaha over the Dubai ports deal. Things got a little testy in the Corner and amongst some readers, so I said that I would explain my seemingly mystifying skepticism toward populism in a G-File. I finally got around to writing it and—assuming you made it this far—you’re reading it.

I’d like to note a few things rapidly, since time and space are in short supply (though some physicists would disagree). First, I find it interesting that I’ve been disparaging or criticizing populism for several years now here and elsewhere and rarely have I heard a peep of disagreement from conservative readers in response (though my opposition to Gray Davis’s recall generated a lot of anger from California). It was only when my skepticism ran afoul of the hot tempers stoked by the immigration and ports controversies that many normally simpatico readers wheeled on me in high dudgeon. All of a sudden, the accusations of pointy-headed elitism (I don’t mind the elitism charge too much, but my enormous gourd is anything but pointy) to outright un-Americanness tumbled into my mail box.

I think this is a useful illustration of the problem with populism. Being on the wrong side of “the people” is automatically seen as betrayal, rather than mere disagreement. I’d been bee-bopping and scatting against liberal populism and no one cared; when I was skeptical about an issue conservative populists treasure, I was inundated with pronouncements about the glories of people power.

Second, I’m not trying to say that conservatives who resort to populist arguments are crypto-left-wingers or anything like that. But I do believe that the logic of populism can be corrosive if not held in check. One need only look at Pat Buchanan to see how completely it can eat away classically liberal views.

That said, I think populist rhetoric and passion can be healthy in small doses. After all, sometimes elites and their institutions are arrayed against the people; 2+2=4 when people say it does and when people say it doesn’t, and it isn’t any less true when it’s being frantically chanted by a mass of people. I understand that political protagonists must sometimes show they have an authentic connection with the people they represent; I have an abiding faith in the goodness of the American people, and I think William F. Buckley’s populist flirtation, encapsulated in his observation that he’d rather be governed by the first 2,000 names in the Boston phonebook than by the faculty of Harvard University, was absolutely right and proper. But you will note that he believed in the concept of governing per se; he implicitly (and explicitly elsewhere) accepted the Burkean view that our representatives owe us their judgment, even at the occasional expense of popular will and, often, in defiance of popular passion.

And it is in this gray area where I think conservatives should maintain a healthy, rather than absolute, skepticism toward populism. It is the first duty of conservatives to say “that’s not a good idea” and “calmly say—no matter how unpopular or “unenlightened” it may be—no, 2+2=4, now and forever, and pick up your own damn crap.
Lee Harris--

Why Isn't Socialism Dead?

The President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, celebrated May Day by ordering soldiers to occupy his country's natural gas fields. The purpose of this exercise was not military, but economic: Morales has demanded that all foreign companies currently operating these fields must sign a contract with Bolivia that would allow them to retain only 18% of the production, while the remainder would go to Bolivia's state-owned oil company. The 18% concession to the foreign companies was not an act of generosity on the part of Morales, but simply of expediency: Bolivia needs these companies to tap its natural gas resources, because it is unable, at least at present, to operate the natural gas fields on its own.

Morales, a fiery populist who was elected in a landslide, is clearly seen as following in the footsteps of Venezuela's own firebrand populist President Hugo Chavez. Furthermore, only last week, Morales and Chavez met with Fidel Castro, enacting a kind of socialist love-fest that issued in a partnership agreement aimed at creating a web of economic alliances in South America that would resist the insidious lure of American-style free trade -- its ultimate aim would be economic autarky for the region, free from foreign control.

In addition to sending in the troops, Morales is also sending forth a good bit of inflammatory rhetoric. He refers to the foreign companies operating Bolivia's natural resources as having "looted" them, and his decision to send in troops on the traditional socialist holiday, May the First, was clearly not a coincidence. In a similar vein, Morales' mentor, Hugo Chavez, has also been preaching that to be rich is to be wicked, while to be poor is to be virtuous -- and though he may be quoting scripture to support his arguments, there can be no serious question that Chavez-style populism is simply socialism with a South American accent.

And this leads to the question I want to address, namely, Why isn't socialism dead?

The Peruvian economist, Hernando de Soto, has argued in his book, The Mystery of Capital, that the failure of the various socialist experiments of the twentieth century has left mankind with only one rational choice about which economic system to go with, namely, capitalism. Socialism, he maintained, has been so discredited that any further attempt to revive it would be sheer irrationality. But if this is the case, which I personally think it is, then why are we witnessing what certainly appears to be a revival of socialist rhetoric and even socialist pseudo-solutions, such as the nationalization of foreign companies?

It should be stressed that de Soto is not arguing that, after the many socialist failures of the twentieth century, capitalism has become historically inevitable and that its expansion would occur according to some imaginary iron clad laws without any need for active intervention. On the contrary, de Soto is fully aware of the enormous obstacles to the expansion of capitalism, especially in regions like South America, and his book is full of dismal statistics that demonstrate the uphill battle against bureaucratic red-tape that is involved in getting a business license or even buying a house in many third world countries. But, here again, the question arises, If capitalism is mankind's only rational alternative, why do so many of the governments of third world nations make it so extraordinarily difficult for ordinary people to take the first small steps on the path of free enterprise?

For de Soto, the solution lies in democratizing capital. Minimize state interference. Cut the red-tape. Make it simple to start up a business. Devise ways for the poor to capitalize on their modest assets. If a person in the USA can get a loan based on the value of his $200,000 home, why shouldn't a much poorer fellow get a loan based on the value of his $2,000 shack?

These are all sensible ideas; they are all based on de Soto's belief that the only way to help the poor in the third world is to get the bloated bureaucratic state off their backs, and permit them to use their own creative initiative to do what so many poor immigrants to the USA were able to do in our past -- to start out as micro-entrepreneurs, and to work their way up to wealth and often fabulous riches. But again, we come back to the same question, only in a different form, Why are the people in Bolivia and Venezuela responding so enthusiastically to the socialist siren-song of Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez, instead of heeding
the eminently rational counsel of Hernando de Soto? Why are they clamoring to give even more power and control to the state, instead of seeking to free themselves from the very obstacle that stands in the way of any genuine economic progress?

When Hernando de Soto asserts that capitalism is the only rational alternative left to mankind, he is maintaining that capitalism is the alternative that human beings ought to take because it is the rational thing to do. But what human beings ought to do and what they actually do are often two quite different things. For human beings frequently act quite irrationally, and without the least consideration of what economist called their "enlightened self-interest." And it is in this light that we must approach the problem, Why isn't socialism dead?

The Role Of Myth

To try to answer this question, I want to return again to Georges Sorel.

National Review's Jonah Goldberg, in his response to my earlier piece on Sorel, made the excellent point that I had left out of my discussion what is unquestionably the heart of Sorel's thinking, namely, his concept of myth, and, in particular, his notion of the revolutionary myth. Furthermore, Jonah pointed out that Sorel's myth was a repudiation of what Marx has called "scientific socialism."

For Marx, scientific socialism had nothing to do with what Marx called utopian socialism; indeed, it was Marx's boast that he was the first socialist thinker to escape from the lure of fantasy thinking that had previously passed for socialist thought. Utopian socialists love to dream up ideal schemes for organizing human life; they engage in wishful politics, and design all sorts of utterly impractical but theoretically perfect social systems, none of which has the slightest chance of ever being actualized in concrete reality. For Marx, on the other hand, socialism had to be taken down from the clouds, and set firmly on the ground. Thus Marx, instead of spending his time writing about imaginary utopias, dedicated his life in trying to prove -- scientifically no less -- that socialism was not merely desirable, but historically inevitable. Capitalism, he argued, had been a good thing; a necessary step that mankind had to take to advance forward; but, according to Marx, capitalism would eventually suffer from an internal breakdown. It would simply stop producing the goods. Like feudalism before it, capitalism was inevitably bound to pass away as a viable system of social organization, and then, and only then, would socialism triumph.

But in this case, what was the role of the revolutionary? For Marx, it made no sense for revolutionaries to overthrow capitalism before it had fulfilled its historical destiny; on the contrary, to overthrow capitalism before it collapsed internally would be counter-productive: the precondition of viable socialism was, after all, a fully matured capitalist system that had already revolutionized the world through its amazing ability to organize labor, to make the best use of natural resources, to internationalize commerce and industry, and to create enormous wealth. Therefore, for Marx, there was no point in revolution for the sake of revolution. Instead, the would-be revolutionary had to learn to be patient; he had to wait until the capitalist system had failed on its own account, and only then would he be able to play out his historical role.

Yet even here the role of the revolutionary would be severely limited; there would only be a need for revolutionary violence if the dwindling class of capitalists were themselves prepared to use violence to defend their own political supremacy. This explains why Marx, toward the end of his life, argued that in the United States, which he regarded as the most progressive nation in the world, the transition from capitalism to socialism could in fact take place without any need for violent revolution at all -- the whole process, he said, could be brought about democratically and without bloodshed.

The school of Marxism represented by Emil Bernstein adapted this approach in regard to all the advanced capitalist nations of Europe, especially Germany. Known as "revisionism," this form of Marxism came to dominate the socialist parties of Europe before the First World War, and, in particular, the German Social Democrats who demonstrated their repudiation of revolutionary violence by taking part in the German Parliament, of which they made up an enormous bloc. For them, there was a peaceful and democratic path to socialism. Not only would socialism itself be rational; it would also emerge rationally, and without any need for anyone to man the barricades or to seize by violence the state apparatus.

It was this approach that Sorel entirely rejected. As Jonah Goldberg writes: "Sorel had contempt for socialists who wanted to make their case with facts and reason. Sorel called the prominent Italian socialist Enrico Ferri, one of those 'retarded people who believe in the sovereign power of science' and who believed that socialism could be demonstrated 'as one demonstrates the laws of the equilibrium of fluids.' True revolutionaries needed to abandon 'rationalistic prejudices' in favor of the power of Myth."
But why did Sorel, trained as an engineer and knowledgeable about science, reject scientific socialism? The answer, I think, is that Sorel suspected that socialism, in practice, simply might not ever really work. Jonah Goldberg points out Sorel "remained at best agnostic" about whether the General Strike would usher in socialism; but I would go further: Sorel himself was skeptical not only about the efficacy of the General Strike, but about the possibility of socialism as a viable economic system.

For example, in the introduction to Reflections on Violence, Sorel says that the French thinker Renan "was very surprised to discover that Socialists are beyond discouragement." He then quotes Renan's comment about the indefatigable perseverance of socialists: "After each abortive experiment they recommence their work: the solution is not yet found, but it will be. The idea that no solution exists never occurs to them, and in this lies their strength." (Italics mine.)

Sorel's response to Renan's comment is not to say, "Renan is wrong; there is a socialist solution, and one day we will find it." Instead, he focuses on the fact that socialists gain their strength precisely from their refusal to recognize that no socialist solution exists. "No failure proves anything against Socialism since the latter has become a work of preparation (for revolution); if they are checked, it merely proves that their apprenticeship has been insufficient; they must set to work again with more courage, persistence, and confidence than before..." But what is the point for Sorel of this refusal to accept the repeated historical failure of socialism? Here again, Sorel refuses to embrace the orthodox position of socialist optimism; he does not say, "Try, try, try again, for one day socialism will succeed." Instead, he argues that it is only by refusing to accept the failure of socialism that one can become a "true revolutionary." Indeed, for Sorel, the whole point of the myth of the socialist revolution is not that the human societies will be transformed in the distant future, but that the individuals who dedicate their lives to this myth will be transformed into comrades and revolutionaries in the present. In short, revolution is not a means to achieve socialism; rather, the myth of socialism is a useful illusion that turns ordinary men into comrades and revolutionaries united in a common struggle -- a band of brothers, so to speak.

Sorel, for whom religion was important, drew a comparison between the Christian and the socialist revolutionary. The Christian's life is transformed because he accepts the myth that Christ will one day return and usher in the end of time; the revolutionary socialist's life is transformed because he accepts the myth that one day socialism will triumph, and justice for all will prevail. What mattered for Sorel, in both cases, is not the scientific truth or falsity of the myth believed in, but what believing in the myth does to the lives of those who have accepted it, and who refuse to be daunted by the repeated failure of their apocalyptic expectations. How many times have Christians in the last two thousand years been convinced that the Second Coming was at hand, only to be bitterly disappointed -- yet none of these disappointments was ever enough to keep them from holding on to their great myth. So, too, Sorel argued, the myth of socialism will continue to have power, despite the various failures of socialist experiments, so long as there are revolutionaries who are unwilling to relinquish their great myth. That is why he rejected scientific socialism -- if it was merely science, it lacked the power of a religion to change individual's lives. Thus for Sorel there was "an...analogy between religion and the revolutionary Socialism which aims at the apprenticeship, preparation, and even the reconstruction of the individual -- a gigantic task."

It should be emphasized here that when Renan spoke about the repeated failure of socialist experiments, he was referring to the rather modest and small-scaled experiments undertaken by various utopian socialists of the nineteenth century. In 1906, neither he nor Sorel knew that in the dawning century there would be socialist experiments far beyond the scope and scale of Brook Farm or the Owenite communes. They could hardly envision entire nations falling into the hands of men who thought of themselves as dedicated revolutionaries -- avowed communists like Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, and Ho Chi Min, but also avowed fascists, like Mussolini and Hitler. The Nazis regarded themselves as genuine revolutionaries, and they call themselves revolutionaries, just as they always referred to their take-over of the German state as their revolution: for the Nazi, their revolution, and not the Bolshevik revolution, represented true socialism -- national socialism.

Can Socialism Die?

In light of the horrors brought about in the twentieth century by the revolutionary myth of socialism, it is easy to sympathize with those who believe mankind could not possibly be tempted to try the socialist experiment again. If the liberal rationalist Renan was surprised that "Socialists were beyond discouragement" at the beginning of the twentieth century, how much more surprised must his contemporary counterparts be to discover that socialism is also beyond discouragement at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Yet this is a lesson that Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez, under the guidance of their mentor, Fidel Castro, seem determined to impress upon us.

It may well be that socialism isn't dead because socialism cannot die. As Sorel argued, the revolutionary myth may, like religion, continue to thrive in "the profounder regions of our mental life," in those realms unreachable by mere reason and argument, where even a hundred proofs of failure are insufficient to wean us from those primordial illusions that we so badly wish to be true. Who doesn't want to see the wicked and the arrogant put in their place? Who among the downtrodden and the dispossessed can fail to be stirred by the promise of a world in which all men are equal, and each has what he needs?

Here we have the problem facing those who, like Hernando de Soto, believe that capitalism is the only rational alternative left after the disastrous collapse of so many socialist experiments. Yes, capitalism is the only rational method of proceeding; but is the mere appeal to reason sufficient to make the mass of men and women, especially among the poor and the
rejected, shut their ears to those who promise them the socialist apocalypse, especially when the men who are making these promises possess charisma and glamour, and are willing to stand up, in revolutionary defiance, to their oppressors?

The shrewd and realistic Florentine statesman and thinker, Guicciardini, once advised: "Never fight against religion...this concept has too much empire over the minds of men." And to the extent that socialism is a religion, then those who wish to fight it with mere reason and argument may well be in for a losing battle. Furthermore, as populism spreads, it is inevitable that the myth of socialism will gain in strength among the people who have the least cause to be happy with their place in the capitalist world-order, and who will naturally be overjoyed to put their faith in those who promise them a quick fix to their poverty and an end to their suffering.

Thus, in the coming century, those who are advocates of capitalism may well find themselves confronted with "a myth gap." Those who, like Chavez, Morales, and Castro, are preaching the old time religion of socialism may well be able to tap into something deeper and more primordial than mere reason and argument, while those who advocate the more rational path of capitalism may find that they have few listeners among those they most need to reach -- namely, the People. Worse, in a populist democracy, the People have historically demonstrated a knack of picking as their leaders those know the best and most efficient way to by-pass their reason -- demagogues who can reach deep down to their primordial and, alas, often utterly irrational instincts. This, after all, has been the genius of every great populist leader of the past, as it is proving to be the genius of those populist leaders who are now springing up around the world, from Bolivia to Iran.

This is why socialism isn't dead, and why in our own century it may well spring back into life with a force and vigor shocking to those who have, with good reason, declared socialism to be no longer viable. It is also why Georges Sorel is perhaps even more relevant today than he was a hundred years ago. He knew that it was hopeless to guide men by reason and argument alone. Men need myths -- and until capitalism can come up with a transformative myth of its own, it may well be that many men will prefer to find their myths in the same place they found them in the first part of the twentieth century -- the myth of revolutionary socialism.

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Lee Harris is author of Civilization and Its Enemies.
False Rape Accusations
May Be More Common Than Thought

Is it the new 1-in-4 statistic?
I don't mean the widely-circulated '1-in-4 women will be raped in their lifetime' but a statistic that suggests '1-in-4 accusations of rape are false.'

For a long time, I have been bothered by the elusiveness of figures on the prevalence of false accusations of sexual assault. The crime of 'bearing false witness' is rarely tracked or punished, and the context in which it is usually raised is highly politicized.

Politically correct feminists claim false rape accusations are rare and account for only 2 percent of all reports. Men's rights sites point to research that places the rate as high as 41 percent. These are wildly disparate figures that cannot be reconciled.

This week I stumbled over a passage in a 1996 study published by the U.S. Department of Justice: *Convicted by Juries, Exonerated by Science: Case Studies in the Use of DNA Evidence to Establish Innocence After Trial.*

The study documents 28 cases which, "with the exception of one young man of limited mental capacity who pleaded guilty," consist of individuals who were convicted by juries and, then, later exonerated by DNA tests.

At the time of release, they had each served an average of 7 years in prison.

The passage that riveted my attention was a quote from Peter Neufeld and Barry C. Scheck, prominent criminal attorneys and co-founders of the Innocence Project that seeks to release those falsely imprisoned.

They stated, "Every year since 1989, in about 25 percent of the sexual assault cases referred to the FBI where results could be obtained, the primary suspect has been excluded by forensic DNA testing. Specifically, FBI officials report that out of roughly 10,000 sexual assault cases since 1989, about 2,000 tests have been inconclusive, about 2,000 tests have excluded the primary suspect, and about 6,000 have 'matched' or included the primary suspect."

The authors continued, "these percentages have remained constant for 7 years, and the National Institute of Justice's informal survey of private laboratories reveals a strikingly similar 26 percent exclusion rate."

If the foregoing results can be extrapolated, then the rate of false reports is roughly between 20 (if DNA excludes an accused) to 40 percent (if inconclusive DNA is added). The relatively low estimate of 25 to 26 percent is probably accurate, especially since it is supported by other sources.

Before analyzing the competing figures, however, caveats about the one just mentioned are necessary.

First, the category of 'false accusations' does not distinguish between accusers who lie and those who are honestly mistaken. Nor does it indicate that a rape did not occur, merely that the specific accused is innocent.

Thus, there is a drive by voices for reform, like the Innocence Institute, to improve eyewitness identification techniques within police departments.

For example, the Innocence Institute suggests "Police should use a 'double-blind' photo identification procedure where someone other than the investigator -- who does not know who the suspect is -- constructs photo arrays with non-suspects as fillers to reduce suggestiveness."

Second, even if false accusations are as common as 1-in-4, that means 75 percent of reports are probably accurate and, so, all accusations deserve a thorough and professional investigation.

Third, the 1-in-4 figure has 'fuzzy' aspects that could influence the results. For example, Neufeld and Scheck mention only sexual assault cases that were "referred to the FBI where results could be obtained."

It is not clear what percentage of all reported assaults are represented by those cases. As well, the terms 'rape' and 'sexual assault' are often used interchangeably, especially when comparing studies, and it is not clear that they are always synonyms for each other.

Nevertheless, the FBI data on excluded DNA is as close to hard statistics that I've found on the rate of false accusations of sexual assault.

Where do the other figures come from and why is there reason to doubt them? Let me consider the two statistics that I have encountered most often.

"Two Percent Of All Reports Are False."

Several years ago, I tried to track down the origin of this much-cited stat. The first instance I found of the figure was in Susan Brownmiller's book on sexual assault entitled "Against Our Will" (1975). Brownmiller claimed that false accusations in New York City had dropped to 2 percent after police departments began using policewomen to interview alleged victims.

Elsewhere, the two percent figure appears without citation or with only a vague attribution to "FBI" sources.
Although the figure shows up in legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act, legal scholar Michelle Anderson of Villanova University Law School reported in 2004, "no study has ever been published which sets forth an evidentiary basis for the two percent false rape complaint thesis."

In short, there is no reason to credit that figure.

"Forty-One Percent Of All Reports Are False."

This claim comes from a study conducted by Eugene J. Kanin of Purdue University. Kanin examined 109 rape complaints registered in a Midwestern city from 1978 to 1987.

Of these, 45 were ultimately classified by the police as "false." Also based on police records, Kanin determined that 50 percent of the rapes reported at two major universities were "false."

Although Kanin offers solid research, I would need to see more studies with different populations before accepting the figure of 50 percent as prevalent; to me, the figure seems high.

But even a skeptic like me must credit a DNA exclusion rate of 20 percent that remained constant over several years when conducted by FBI labs. This is especially true when 20 percent more were found to be questionable.

False accusations are not rare. They are common.

Thomas Sowell--

Is Thinking Obsolete?

Amid all the hysteria among politicians and in the media over rising gasoline prices, and all the outraged indignation about oil company profits and their executives' high pay and lavish perks, has anybody bothered to even estimate how much effect any of this actually has on the price we pay at the pump?

If the profit per gallon of gas were reduced to zero, would that be enough to reduce the price by even a dime? If the oil company executives were to work free of charge, would that be enough to reduce the price of gasoline by even a penny a gallon?

Surely media loudmouths making millions of dollars a year and the multibillion dollar TV networks they work for can afford to get some statistics and buy a pocket calculator to do the arithmetic before spouting off nationwide.

But this is the age of emotion, not analysis.

Politicians are even more hypocritical. The government collects far more in taxes on every gallon of gasoline than the oil companies collect in profits. If oil company profits are "obscene," as some politicians claim, are the government's taxes PG-13?

The very politicians who have piled tax after tax on gasoline over the years, and voted to prohibit oil drilling offshore or in Alaska, and who have made it impossible to build a single oil refinery in decades, are all over the television screens denouncing the oil companies. In other words, those who supply oil are being denounced and demonized by those who have been blocking the supply of oil.

Given the vast amounts of gasoline sold across the length and breadth of this nation, and given the mega-billion dollars involved, whether or not some corporate executive has an inflated pay scale is unlikely to explain the price of gasoline.

It may allow some people in the media to vent their emotions and some politicians to create a bogeyman, since they can't play St. George without a dragon. But cheap demagoguery cannot explain expensive gas.

When the two most heavily populated nations on earth - China and India -- have rapidly growing economies and rapidly escalating importations of oil, how could that not affect the world price of oil? After all, the price of oil is determined in the international markets, contrary to conspiracy theories that keep turning up whenever gas prices rise.

Those conspiracy theories have been investigated time and again, without uncovering anything. But it is still a clever political ploy to ask for more investigations when gas prices rise.

If nothing else, it distracts attention from those who have been blocking all attempts to enable us to use our own oil.

Nothing is easier, or more emotionally satisfying, than blaming high prices on those who charge them, rather than on those who cause them. The same thing happens when stores in high-crime neighborhoods charge higher prices than stores in safer neighborhoods.

Both crime and precautions against crime add to the cost of doing business and this adds to the prices. But seldom, if ever, do those who decry the high prices blame those prices on the crime, vandalism, and violence committed by local inhabitants.

Where the stores are owned by a different ethnic group, such as Asians in black ghettos, it is virtually guaranteed that the store owners will be denounced for "gouging," "discrimination" and whatever other political rhetoric will rouse the emotions.

People with no experience in business, no knowledge of history, and utterly ignorant of economics do not hesitate to leap from high prices to greedy profit-makers. Many of these ignorant people are on nationwide television and some are in Congress.

Many, if not most, of the great American fortunes -- Rockefeller, Carnegie, Ford -- have been made by finding ways to charge lower prices, not higher.

In the early 20th century, the A & P grocery chain became renowned for both its low prices and its high quality. Its profit rate never fell below 20 percent during the decade of the 1920s. That's a higher rate of profit than the oil companies make.

The relationship between prices and profit rates is not as simple as media hype or political demagoguery claims.

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To Connect The Dots, You Have To See The Dots

Here are two news stories from the end of last week. The first one you may have heard about. As "The Today Show's" Matt Lauer put it:

"Does the government have your number? This morning a shocking new report that the National Security Agency has been secretly collecting the phone records of tens of millions of Americans."

The second story comes from the United Kingdom and what with Lauer's hyperventilating you may have missed it. It was the official report into the July 7 bus and Tube bombings. As The Times of London summarized the conclusions:

"Mohammad Sidique Khan, the leader of the bomb cell, had come to the attention of MI5 [Britain's domestic intelligence agency] on five occasions but had never been pursued as a serious suspect . . .

"A lack of communication between police Special Branch units, MI5 and other agencies had hampered the intelligence-gathering operation;

"There was a lack of co-operation with foreign intelligence services and inadequate intelligence coverage in . . ."

Etc., etc., ad nauseam.

So there are now two basic templates in terrorism media coverage:

Template A (note to editors: to be used after every terrorist atrocity): "Angry family members, experts and opposition politicians demand to know why complacent government didn't connect the dots."

Template B (note to editors: to be used in the run-up to the next terrorist atrocity): "Shocking new report leaked to New York Times for Pulitzer Prize Of The Year Award nomination reveals that paranoid government officials are trying to connect the dots! See pages 3,4,6,7,8, 13-37."

How do you connect the dots? To take one example of what we're up against, two days before 9/11, a very brave man, the anti-Taliban resistance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, was assassinated in Afghanistan by killers posing as journalists. His murderers were Algerians traveling on Belgian passports who'd arrived in that part of the world on visas issued by the Pakistani High Commission in the United Kingdom. That's three more countries than many Americans have visited. The jihadists are not "primitives". They're part of a sophisticated network: They travel the world, see interesting places, meet interesting people — and kill them. They're as globalized as McDonald's — but, on the whole, they fill in less paperwork. They're very good at compartmentalizing operations: They don't leave footprints, just a toeprint in Country A in Time Zone B and another toe in Country E in Time Zone K. You have to sift through millions of dots to discern two that might be worth connecting.

I'm a strong believer in privacy rights. I don't see why Americans are obligated to give the government their bank account details and the holdings therein. Other revenue agencies in other free societies don't require that level of disclosure. But, given that the people of the United States are apparently entirely cool with that, it's hard to see why lists of phone numbers (i.e., your monthly statement) with no identifying information attached to them is of such a vastly different order of magnitude. By definition, "connecting the dots" involves getting to see the dots in the first place.

Sen. Pat Leahy (D-Vt.) feels differently. "Look at this headline," huffed the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee. "The secret collection of phone call records of tens of millions of Americans. Now, are you telling me that tens of millions of Americans are involved with al-Qaida?"

No. But next time he's flying from D.C. to Burlington, Vt., on a Friday afternoon he might look at the security line: Tens of millions of Americans are having to take their coats and shoes off! Are you telling me that tens of millions of ordinary shoe-wearing Americans are involved with al-Qaida?

Of course not. Fifteen out of 19 of the 9/11 killers were citizens of Saudi Arabia. So let's scrap the tens of millions of law-abiding phone records, and say we only want to examine the long-distance phone bills of, say, young men of Saudi origin living in the United States. Can you imagine what Leahy and Lauer would say to that? Oh, no! Racial profiling! The government's snooping on people whose only crime is "dialing while Arab." In a country whose Transportation Security Administration personnel recently pulled Daniel Brown off the plane as a security threat because he had traces of gunpowder on his boots — he was a uniformed U.S. Marine on his way home from Iraq — in such a culture any security measure will involve "tens of millions of Americans": again by definition, if one can't profile on the basis of religion or national origin or any other identifying mark with identity-group grievance potential, every program will have to be at least nominally universal.
Information Please

Only A Paranoid Solipsist Could Feel Threatened By The Calling Analysis Program

Oh, sorry, it's not 1942. It's 2006, and these three phone giants are about to be excoriated for cooperating with the war on terror. Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Arlen Specter has demanded that ATT, Verizon, and BellSouth testify under oath about their assistance to the National Security Agency's counterterrorism programs; 50 House Democrats are demanding a criminal investigation by special counsel.

Here we go again: another specious privacy scandal. The disclosure by USA Today that these three telecom companies have given the government access to trillions of anonymized domestic calling records has sent Bush administration critics, privacy advocates, and the press into an ecstatic frenzy of denunciation and fear-mongering. This newly energized coalition charges that the White House is trampling citizens' constitutional rights and creating a surveillance state. And the Bush administration has only itself to blame.

Ever since allowing the Pentagon's Total Information Awareness project to go down the tubes in 2003, the administration has failed to explain the potential of data mining, even as it secretly continues to use this vital technology. Thus, at every revelation of a government data mining program, privacy extremists enjoy unchallenged supremacy in characterizing the technology as a massive threat to life as we know it.

Only a paranoid solipsist could feel threatened by the recently revealed calling analysis program. Since late 2001, Verizon, BellSouth, and ATT have connected nearly two trillion calls, according to the Washington Post. The companies gave NSA the incoming and outgoing numbers of those calls, stripped of all identifying information such as name or address. No conversational content was included. The NSA then put its supercharged computers to work analyzing patterns among the four trillion numbers involved in the two trillion calls, to look for clusters that might suggest terrorist connections. Though the details are unknown, they might search for calls to known terrorists, or, more speculatively, try to elicit templates of terror calling behavior from the data.

As a practical matter, no one's privacy is violated by such analysis. Memo to privacy nuts: The computer does not have a clue that you exist; it does not know what it is churning through; your phone number is meaningless to it. The press loves to stress the astounding volume of data that data mining can consume—the Washington Post's lead on May 12 warned that the administration had been "secretly . . . assembling gargantuan databases." But it is precisely the size of that data store that renders the image of individualized snooping so absurd.

True, the government can de-anonymize the data if connections to terror suspects emerge, and it is not known what

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threshold of proof the government uses to put a name to critical phone numbers. But until that point is reached, your privacy is at greater risk from the Goodyear blimp at a Stones concert than from the NSA's supercomputers churning through trillions of zeros and ones representing disembodied phone numbers.

And even after that point is reached, the notion that 280 million Americans who have not been communicating with al Qaeda are at risk from this quadrillion-bit program is absurd. What exactly are the privacy advocates worried about? That an NSA agent will search the phone records of his ex-wife or of themselves? This quaint scenario completely misunderstands the scale of, and bureaucratic checks on, such data analysis programs.

As a constitutional matter, no one's privacy is violated by such automated analysis of business records.

Senator Dianne Feinstein needs to brush up on her legal doctrine when she decries the program as a "major constitutional confrontation on Fourth Amendment guarantees of unreasonable search and seizure." There is no Fourth Amendment protection for information that you have conveyed to a third party.

Your phone company at the very least—if not a score of marketers—knows your calling history; that history is no longer private, therefore, and the government can obtain your phone records without a judicial warrant. Congress has provided statutory protections for certain kinds of telecommunications information, but those statutes allow telephone companies to share their data with the government for emergencies. After 9/11, a phone executive who didn't believe that the country was in danger of another catastrophic attack was seriously out of touch with reality. And the volume of data requested almost by definition protects the privacy of any individual customer.

The Washington Post calls this numbers analysis the "most extensive . . . domestic surveillance [program] yet known involving ordinary citizens and residents." Bunk. The NSA's data mining program is not surveillance; no one is being listened to or observed.

Data mining looks for mathematical patterns in computerized information; it is not a real-time spying operation. The government didn't need to go to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court for a wiretap or pen register order (which governs the collection of phone numbers in real time from a single phone) because it is not listening to or recording any individual's calls. FISA is built around the notion of an individualized investigation of specific spies or terrorists; it is seriously outdated for the application of American computer know-how to ferret out terror plots before they happen and before the government has individual suspects in mind.

But it may be too late to convey these truths. The time to explain how data mining protects privacy while providing a crucial tool against unknown mass-murderers was while the Pentagon's Total Information Awareness program was under attack. That program, which hoped to uncover patterns of terrorist activity in publicly available commercial data, was merely in its preliminary research stages, but the Senate killed it in a demagogic display of privacy hysteria.

Having lost that battle without fighting, the administration has gone silent on the value of data mining, presumably terrified of another privacy fiasco. After the revelation last December of another large-scale NSA program analyzing international calls to terror suspects, the administration denied that data mining was involved. It also implied that domestic phone traffic was off-limits. And now, President Bush defends this latest program in the most anodyne of terms, asserting baldly that the "privacy of ordinary Americans is fiercely protected in all our activities." His credibility, after the previous denials of data mining and failure to clarify its character, is, to say the least, weak.

Cooperation between the private sector and intelligence agencies is crucial for uncovering terrorist plots. After 9/11, JetBlue Airways and Northwest Airlines offered privacy-protected passenger records to NASA and the Pentagon for research to see if data-mining could aid in identifying terrorist flight behavior. No passenger's privacy was violated, yet these two companies now face hundreds of billions of dollars in privacy lawsuits. The class action bar is undoubtedly gearing up for a similar assault on ATT, Verizon, and BellSouth, an abuse of tort law that will further discourage patriotic corporate behavior.

The American public is adult enough, one hopes, to cope with the idea of a government computer analyzing commercial and communications data as a protection against terrorism. If only someone would trust them with the facts.
Christopher Hitchens--

Wowie Zahawie

Sorry Everyone, But Iraq Did Go Uranium Shopping In Niger

In the late 1980s, the Iraqi representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency—Iraq's senior public envoy for nuclear matters, in effect—was a man named Wissam al-Zahawie. After the Kuwait war in 1991, when Rolf Ekeus arrived in Baghdad to begin the inspection and disarmament work of UNSCOM, he was greeted by Zahawie, who told him in a bitter manner that "now that you have come to take away our assets," the two men could no longer be friends. (They had known each other in earlier incarnations at the United Nations in New York.)

At a later 1995 U.N. special session on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Zahawie was the Iraqi delegate and spoke heatedly about the urgent need to counterbalance Israel's nuclear capacity. At the time, most democratic countries did not have full diplomatic relations with Saddam's regime, and there were few fully accredited Iraqi ambassadors overseas, Iraq's interests often being represented by the genocidal Islamist government of Sudan (incidentally, yet another example of collusion between "secular" Baathists and the fundamentalists who were sheltering Osama Bin Laden). There was one exception—an Iraqi "window" into the world of open diplomacy—namely the mutual recognition between the Baathist regime and the Vatican. To this very important and sensitive post in Rome, Zahawie was appointed in 1997, holding the job of Saddam's ambassador to the Holy See until 2000. Those who knew him at that time remember a man much given to anti-Jewish tirades, with a standing ticket for Wagner performances at Bayreuth. (Actually, as a fan of Das Rheingold and Götterdammerung in particular, I find I can live with this. Hitler secretly preferred sickly kitsch like Franz Lehar.)

In February 1999, Zahawie left his Vatican office for a few days and paid an official visit to Niger, a country known for absolutely nothing except its vast deposits of uranium ore. It was from Niger that Iraq had originally acquired uranium in 1981, as confirmed in the Duelfer Report. In order to take the Joseph Wilson view of this Baathist ambassadorial initiative, you have to be able to believe that Saddam Hussein's long-term main man on nuclear issues was in Niger to talk about something other than the obvious. Italian intelligence (which first noticed the Zahawie trip from Rome) found it difficult to take this view and alerted French intelligence (which has better contacts in West Africa and a stronger interest in nuclear questions). In due time, the French tipped off the British, who in their cousinly way conveyed the suggestive information to Washington. As everyone now knows, the disclosure appeared in watered-down and secondhand form in the president's State of the Union address in January 2003.

If the above was all that was known, it would surely be universally agreed that no responsible American administration could have overlooked such an amazingly sinister pattern. Given the past Iraqi record of surreptitious dealing, cheating of inspectors, concealment of sites and caches, and declared ambition to equip the technicians referred to openly in the Baathist press as "nuclear mujahideen," one could scarcely operate on the presumption of innocence.

However, the waters have since become muddied, to say the least. For a start, someone produced a fake document, dated July 6, 2000, which purports to show Zahawie's signature and diplomatic seal on an actual agreement for an Iraqi uranium transaction with Niger. Almost everything was wrong with this crude forgery—it had important dates scrambled, and it misstated the offices of Niger politicians. In consequence, IAEA Chairman Mohammed ElBaradei later reported to the U.N. Security Council that the papers alleging an Iraq-Niger uranium connection had been demonstrated to be fraudulent.

But this doesn't alter the plain set of established facts in my first three paragraphs above. The European intelligence services, and the Bush administration, only ever asserted that the Iraqi regime had apparently tried to open (or rather, re-open) a yellowcake trade "in Africa." It has never been claimed that an agreement was actually reached. What motive could there be for a forgery that could be instantly detected upon cursory examination?
There seem to be only three possibilities here. Either a) American intelligence concocted the note; b) someone in Italy did so in the hope of gain; or c) it was the product of disinformation, intended to protect Niger and discredit any attention paid to the actual, real-time Zahawie visit. The CIA is certainly incompetent enough to have fouled up this badly. (I like Edward Luttwak's formulation in the March 22 Times Literary Supplement, where he writes that "there have been only two kinds of CIA secret operations: the ones that are widely known to have failed—usually because of almost unbelievably crude errors—and the ones that are not yet widely known to have failed.") Still, it almost passes belief that any American agency would fake a document that purportedly proved far more than the administration had asked and then get every important name and date wrapped round the axe. Forgery for gain is easy to understand, especially when it is borne in mind that nobody wastes time counterfeiting a bankrupt currency. Forgery for disillusion, if that is what it was, appears at least to have worked. Almost everybody in the world now affects to believe that Saddam Hussein was framed on the Niger rap.

According to the London Sunday Times of April 9, the truth appears to be some combination of b) and c). A NATO investigation has identified two named employees of the Niger Embassy in Rome who, having sold a genuine document about Zahawie to Italian and French intelligence agents, then added a forged paper in the hope of turning a further profit. The real stuff went by one route to Washington, and the fakery, via an Italian journalist and the U.S. Embassy in Rome, by another. The upshot was—follow me closely here—that a phony paper alleging a deal was used to shoot down a genuine document suggesting a connection.

Zahawie's name and IAEA connection were never mentioned by ElBaradei in his report to the United Nations, and his past career has never surfaced in print. Looking up the press of the time causes one's jaw to slump in sheer astonishment. Here, typically, is a Time magazine "exclusive" about Zahawie, written by Hassan Fattah on Oct. 1, 2003:

The veteran diplomat who has spent the eight months since President Bush's speech trying to set the record straight and clear his name. In a rare interview with Time, al-Zahawie outlined how forgery and circumstantial evidence was used to talk up Iraq's nuclear weapons threat, and leave him holding the smoking gun.

A few paragraphs later appear, the wonderful and unchallenged words from Zahawie: "Frankly, I didn't know that Niger produced uranium at all." Well, sorry for the inconvenience of the questions, then, my old IAEA and NPT "veteran" (whose nuclear qualifications go unmentioned in the Time article). Instead, we are told that Zahawie visited Niger and other West African countries to encourage them to break the embargo on flights to Baghdad, as they had broken the sanctions on Qaddafi's Libya. A bit of a lowly mission, one might think, for one of the Iraqi regime's most senior and specialized envoys.

The Duelfer Report also cites "a second contact between Iraq and Niger," which occurred in 2001, when a Niger minister visited Baghdad "to request assistance in obtaining petroleum products to alleviate Niger's economic problems." According to the deposition of Ja'far Diya' Ja'far (the head of Iraq's pre-1991 nuclear weapons program), these negotiations involved no offer of uranium ore but only "cash in exchange for petroleum." West Africa is awash in petroleum, and Niger is poor in cash. Iraq in 2001 was cash-rich through the oil-for-food racket, but you may if you wish choose to believe that a near-bankrupt African delegation from a uranium-based country traveled across a continent and a half with nothing on its mind but shopping for oil.

Interagency feuding has ruined the Bush administration's capacity to make its case in public, and a high-level preference for deniable leaking has further compounded the problem. But please read my first three paragraphs again and tell me if the original story still seems innocuous to you.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair. His most recent book is Thomas Jefferson: Author of America. His most recent collection of essays is titled Love, Poverty, and War.
and congressional leaders from both parties — including my friend and colleague Rep. Jane Harman, D-CA — have been regularly briefed. Democratic leaders in the House and Senate have been aware of this program for several years yet never expressed any concerns until it was illegally leaked.

And third, persons entrusted with extremely sensitive information about this program have taken it upon themselves to jeopardize it by leaking to the news media. This is a breach of trust with the American public, and I am concerned that my Democratic colleagues are turning a blind eye to this illegal activity. As Americans, we should all be ashamed that al-Qaeda can learn about our efforts to defend our nation just by picking up the morning paper.

The problem for responsible members of the administration, and the intelligence committees in Congress, is that we are not allowed to discuss intelligence leaks. We cannot tell the public details of the damage that has been done to our ability to stay a step ahead of al-Qaeda because to do so would confirm that damage — and that would help the enemy just as much as a leak.

We cannot tell the public whether American intelligence officers have died since 9/11 protecting the secrets that are being cavalierly leaked. We cannot discuss the financial losses incurred when top-secret technologies developed at huge cost to taxpayers are revealed on Page 1, rendering them useless against our foes. What I can assure you is that leaks are costly in every sense of the word. They endanger all Americans.

I regret that I see little sign of intolerance for unauthorized disclosures of intelligence to the media from some of my Democratic colleagues today. If an individual with knowledge of the Terrorist Surveillance Program thought it was wrong or illegal, he or she could have gone to the intelligence oversight committees under the procedures established by law. By going to the media, the leaker broke the law and the oath he or she swore to protect the nation’s legitimate secrets.

This was a grave crime that helped al-Qaeda and its allies in the information war by providing an understanding of our defenses and vulnerabilities against terrorist attacks.

We are a nation at war. Unauthorized disclosures of classified information only help terrorists and our enemies — and put American lives at risk.
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Dennis Prager--

The War We Are Fighting Needs A More Accurate Name

To understand what Americans are fighting, it is necessary to first understand that we are not fighting a "War on Terror." We are no more fighting a "War on Terror" than we fought a "War on Kamikazes" in World War II. Of course we had to stop Kamikaze attacks, the suicide crashing by Japanese pilots of airplanes into American war ships. But we were fighting Japanese fascism and imperialism.

The same holds true today. We are fighting Islamic fascism and imperialism (though surely not all Muslims).

The parallels are almost as extensive as any historic parallels of two different phenomena can be. The fascist Japanese regime aimed to subjugate much of the world, Asia in particular, and it used whatever violence it could think of without any moral constraints. The fascist element within Islam wishes to subjugate the entire world using whatever violence it can think of without any moral constraints.

Of course, there are differences: Imperial Japan was preoccupied with dominating Asia, while imperialist Islam aims to dominate the whole world. And imperial Japan did so as an outgrowth of nationalism, while imperialist Islam does so from an outgrowth of a trans-national religious ideology.

Islamic terror is a tactic of an ideology. That ideology can be called "radical Islam," "militant Islam" or "Islamist," but it is rooted in Islamic imperialism.

With a background in religious studies and having studied Arabic and Islam, many listeners have called my radio show asking me if I consider Islam to be inherently violent or even evil. From 9-11 to now, I have responded that I do not assess religions; I assess the practitioners of religions. Why? Because it is almost impossible to assess any religion since its own adherents so often differ as to what it is. For example, is Christianity the Christianity of most evangelicals or that of the National Council of Churches? On virtually every important moral issue, they differ. The same holds true for right- and left-wing groups within Judaism.

Nevertheless, one can say that from its inception, Islam has been imperialist. My working definition of imperialism is that of University of London professor Efraim Karsh, whose recent book, "Islamic Imperialism," is one of the few indispensable books on Islam.

Karsh defines imperialism as "conquering foreign lands and subjugating their populations." Whenever possible, Muslims from the time of Muhammad have done that. Now, the Church also subjugated peoples to Christianity, and Europe suffered from prolonged religious wars. But as Karsh notes, from its inception, Christianity acknowledged a separation of the religious and the political, rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

No such division was allowed for in Islam. That is why the nation-state developed in the Christian world but not in the Muslim world. The Muslim states of the Middle East, for example, are creations of Western (secular) imperialism or pre-date Islam (Egypt, for example); and they are foreign concepts to most Middle Eastern Muslims, who recognize themselves much more as part of the ummah, the Muslim community, than as Iraqis, Jordanians, Syrians, etc.

Nor is Islamic imperialism only a function of Muslim behavior rather than Muslim theology. Karsh opens his book citing the statements of four Muslim figures.

The Prophet Muhammad in his farewell address: "I was ordered to fight all men until they say, 'There is no god but Allah.'"
Saladin (great 12th-century founder of the Ayyubid dynasty that included Ayyubid Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and much of present-day Saudi Arabia): "I shall cross this sea to their islands to pursue them until there remains no one on the face of the earth who does not acknowledge Allah."

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (father of the Islamic revolution in Iran): "We will export our revolution throughout the world . . . until the calls 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah' are echoed all over the world."

Osama bin Laden in November 2001: "I was ordered to fight the people until they say 'there is no god but Allah, and his prophet Muhammad.'"

No one should have a problem with Muslims wanting the whole world Muslim. After all, Christians would like the whole world to come to Christ. What should matter to all people is the answer to one question: What are you prepared to do to bring the world to your religion? For virtually every living Christian, the answer is through modeling and verbal persuasion (and Jews never believed the world needs to be Jewish).

But by the most conservative estimates, 10 percent of Muslims are in sympathy with the bin Laden way. That means at least 100 million people are prepared to murder (and apparently torture) in Allah's name. And given the history of Islamic imperialism and its roots in Muslim theology, hundreds of millions more are probably fellow travelers. Hence the almost unanimous Muslim governments' support for the genocidal Islamic regime in Sudan.

We pray that there arises a strong Muslim group that is guided by the Quranic verse, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith."

But until such time, we had better understand that we are not merely fighting a war on terror, but a war against an ideology that wishes us to convert, be subject to Islamic law, or die.

http://www.JewishWorldReview.com

The McGovern Syndrome: A Surrender Is Not A Peace

On Christmas Day former Senator and former presidential candidate George McGovern wrote a letter to the editor of the Los Angeles Times (and probably many other papers) calling for an American surrender in Iraq. George McGovern has not been in the headlines for three decades and his name consequently may be unfamiliar to many. But no one has had a greater or more baleful impact on the Democratic Party and its electoral fortunes than this progressive product of the South Dakota plains.

The leftward slide of the Democratic Party, which has made it an uncertain trumpet in matters of war and peace, may be said to have begun with the McGovern presidential campaign of 1972, whose slogan was "American come home," as though America was the problem and not the aggression of the Communist bloc. The McGovern campaign drew in the rank and file of the anti-Vietnam left much as the anti-Cold War Henry Wallace Progressive Party campaign of 1948 and the Howard Dean anti-Iraq campaign of 2004. McGovern himself was a veteran of the Wallace campaign and, virtually all the leaders of the anti-Iraq movement, including most of the Democratic Party leaders who supported it are veterans of the anti-Vietnam campaign.

I have lived this history as both spectator and actor. My parents were Communists, and my first political march was a Communist Party May Day parade in 1948 supporting the presidential campaign of Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party against the Cold War, which meant against America's effort to contain Communism and prevent the Stalin regime from expanding its empire into Western Europe. Our change was this: "One, two, three, four, we don't want another war/Five, six, seven, eight, win with Wallace in '48."

This campaign was the seed of the anti-war movement of Vietnam, and thus of the political left's influence over the post-Vietnam foreign policy of the Democratic Party. The Wallace campaign marked an exodus of the anti-American left from the Democratic Party; the movement that opposed America's war in Vietnam marked its return.

As a post-graduate student at Berkeley in the early Sixties, I was one of the organizers of the first demonstration against the war in Vietnam. It was 1962 the organizers of this demonstration as of all the major anti-Vietnam demonstrations (and those against the Iraq war as well) was a Marxist and a leftist. The organizers of the movement against the war in Vietnam were activists who thought the Communists were liberating Vietnam in the same way Michael Moore thinks Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is liberating Iraq.

In 1968, Tom Hayden and the anti-war left incited a riot at the Democratic Party convention which effectively ended...
the presidential hopes of the Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey. Humphrey, who was Lyndon Johnson's Vice President was a supporter of the war. This paved the way for George McGovern's failed presidential run against the war in 1972.

The following year, President Nixon signed a truce in Vietnam and withdrew American troops. His goal was "peace with honor," which meant denying a Communist victory in South Vietnam. The truce was an uneasy one depending on a credible American threat to resume hostilities if the Communists violated the truce.

Three years earlier, Nixon had signaled an end to the draft and the massive national anti-war demonstrations had drawn to a halt. But a vanguard of activists continued the war against America's support for the anti-Communist war effort in Vietnam. Among them were John Kerry and Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden. They held a war crimes tribunal, condemning America's role in Vietnam and conducted a campaign to persuade the Democrats in Congress to cut all aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia, thus opening the door for a Communist conquest. When Nixon was forced to resign after Watergate, the Democratic congress cut the aid as their first legislative act. They did this in January 1975. In April, the Cambodian and South Vietnamese regimes fell.

The events that followed this retreat in Indo-China have been all but forgotten by the left, which has never learned the lessons of Vietnam, but instead has invoked the retreat itself an inspiration and guide for its political opposition to the war in Iraq. Along with leading Democrats like party chairman Terry McAuliffe, George McGovern called for an American retreat from Iraq even before a government could be established to deny the country to the Saddamist remnants and Islamic terrorists: "I did not want any Americans to risk their lives in Iraq. We should bring home those who are there." Explained McGovern: "Once we left Vietnam and quit bombing its people they became friends and trading partners." (Los Angeles Times, December 25, 2004)

Actually that is not what happened. Four months after the Democrats cut off aid to Cambodia and Vietnam in January 1975, both regimes fell to the Communist armies. Within three years the Communist victors had slaughtered two and a half million peasants in the Indo-Chinese peninsula, paving the way for their socialist paradise. The blood of those victims is on the hands of the Americans who forced this withdrawal -- John Kerry, Ted Kennedy, Howard Dean and George McGovern, and anti-war activists like myself.

It is true that Vietnam eventually became a trading partner ("friend" is another matter). But this was not "once we left and quit bombing its people." Before that took place, a Republican President confronted the Soviet Union in Europe and Afghanistan and forced the collapse of the Soviet empire. It was only then, after the Cold War enemy and support of the Vietnamese Communists had been defeated that they accommodated themselves to co-existence with the United States.

The "blame America first" mentality so manifest in this McGovern statement is endemic to the appeasement mentality that the progressive Senator so typifies: "Iraq has been nestled along the Tigris and Euphrates for 6,000 years. It will be there 6,000 more whether we stay or leave, as earlier conquerors learned." In McGovern's Alice-in-Wonderland universe, Iraq did not invade two countries, use chemical weapons on its Kurdish population, attempt to assassinate a U.S. president, spend tens of billions of dollars on banned weapons programs, aid and abet Islamic terrorists bent on destroying the West, and defy 17 UN resolutions to disarm itself, open its borders to UN inspectors, and adhere to the terms of the UN truce it had signed when its aggression in Kuwait was thwarted.

During the battle over Vietnam policy, thirty years ago, Nixon and supporters of the war effort had warned the anti-war left of the consequences that would follow if their campaign was successful. If the United States were to leave the field of battle and retreat, the Communists would engineer a "bloodbath" of revenge and to complete their revolutionary design. When confronted by these warnings, George McGovern, John Kerry and other anti-Vietnam activists dismissed them out of hand. This was just an attempt to justify an imperialist aggression. Time proved the anti-war activists to be tragically, catastrophically wrong, although they have never had the decency to admit it.

If the United States were to leave the battlefield in Iraq now, before the peace is secured (and thus repeat the earlier retreat), there would be a bloodbath along the Tigris and Euphrates as well. The jihadists will slaughter our friends, our allies, and all of the Iraqis who are struggling for their freedom. Given the nature of the terrorist war we are in, this bloodbath would also flow into the streets of Washington and New York and potentially every American city. The jihadists have sworn to kill us all. People who think America is invulnerable, that America can just leave the field of this battle and there will be peace, do not begin to understand the world we confront. George McGovern, John Kerry and other anti-Vietnam activists dismissed these fears at the time. They were tragically, catastrophically wrong, although they have never had the decency to admit this fact. If the United States were to leave the battlefield in Iraq before the peace is secured (and thus repeat the earlier retreat), there would be a bloodbath along the Tigris and Euphrates as well. The jihadists will slaughter our friends, our allies, and all of the Iraqis who are struggling for their freedom. Given the nature of the terrorist war we are in, this time the bloodbath will also flow into the streets of Washington and New York and potentially every American city. The jihadists have sworn to kill us all. People who think America is invulnerable, that America can just leave the field of this battle, do not begin to understand the world we confront.

Or if they understand it, they have tilted their allegiance to the other side. McGovern's phrase "as earlier conquerors learned," speaks volumes about the perverse moral calculus of the progressive left. To McGovern we are conquerors, which makes the Zarqawi terrorists "liberators," or as Michael Moore would prefer, "patriots." The left that wants America to throw in the towel in Iraq is hyper-sensitive to questions about its loyalties but at the same time can casually refer to our presence in Iraq as an "invasion and occupation." It wants to use the language of morality but it only wants the standard to apply in one direction. There is no one-dimensional such standard, and a politics of surrender is not a politics of peace.

http://www.NewsAndOpinion.com

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Caring vs. Uncaring

George Orwell admonished, "Sometimes the first duty of intelligent men is the restatement of the obvious." That's what I want to do — talk about the obvious, starting with the question: What human motivation leads to the most wonderful things getting done?

How about the charity and selflessness we've seen from people like Mother Teresa? What about the ceaseless and laudable work of organizations like the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity and Salvation Army? What about the charitable donations of rich Americans, to use the silly phrase, who've given something back?

While the actions of these people and their organizations are laudable, results motivated by charity and selflessness pale in comparison to other motives behind getting good things done. Let's look at it.

In December 1999, Stephen Moore and Julian L. Simon wrote an article titled "The Greatest Century That Ever Was," published by the Washington, D.C.-based Cato Institute. In it they report: Over the course of the 20th century, life expectancy increased by 30 years; annual deaths from major killer diseases such as tuberculosis, polio, typhoid, whooping cough and pneumonia fell from 700 to fewer than 50 per 100,000 of the population; agricultural workers fell from 41 to 2.5 percent of the workforce; household auto ownership rose from one to 91 percent; household electrification rose from 8 to 99 percent; controlling for inflation, household assets rose from $6 trillion to $41 trillion between 1945 and 1998. These are but a few of the wonderful things that have occurred during the 20th century.

Returning to my initial question: What human motivation accounts for the accomplishment of these and many other wonderful things? The answer should be obvious. It was not accomplished by people's concern for others but by people's concern for themselves. In other words, it's people seeking more for themselves that has produced a better life for all Americans.

Take a minor example. I think it's wonderful that Idaho potato farmers get up early in the morning to toil in the fields, which results in Walter Williams in Pennsylvania enjoying potatoes. Does anyone think they make that sacrifice because they care about me? They might hate me, but they make sure that I enjoy potatoes because they care about and want more things for themselves.

What about all those people who've invented and marketed machines that do everything from diagnosing illnesses to controlling air flight? Were they basically motivated by a concern for others, or were they mostly concerned with their own well-being?

One of the wonderful things about free markets is that the path to greater wealth comes not from looting, plundering and enslaving one's fellow man, as it has throughout most of human history, but by serving and pleasing him. Many of the wonderful achievements of the 20th century were the result of the pursuit of profits. Unfortunately, demagoguery has led to profits becoming a dirty word. Nonprofit is seen as more righteous, particularly when people pompously stand before us and declare, "We're a nonprofit organization."

Profit is cast in a poor light because people don't understand the role of profits. Profit is a payment to entrepreneurs just as wages are payments to labor, interest to capital and rent to land. In order to earn profits in free markets, entrepreneurs must identify and satisfy human wants in a way that economizes on society's scarce resources.

Here's a little test. Which entities produce greater consumer satisfaction: for-profit enterprises such as supermarkets, computer makers and clothing stores, or nonprofit entities such as public schools, post offices and motor vehicle departments? I'm guessing you'll answer the former. Their survival depends on pleasing ordinary people, as opposed to the latter, whose survival is not so strictly tied to pleasing people.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not arguing that self-interest and the free market system produce perfect outcomes, but they're the closest we'll come to perfection here on Earth.
Police Drive Kennedy Get-Away Car

Warrants for two members of the Capitol Hill Police force have been issued in connection with Congressman Patrick Kennedy's auto accident. Two ranking patrolmen are being sought for driving the Kennedy get-away car. Sergeants Shultz and Bilko failed to report to work today amid allegations that they drove Kennedy home after letting him buy them a night cap at the 'Hawk and Dove' watering hole. When contacted by telephone Sgt. Shultz said, "I know nothing!!" Sgt. Bilko was rumored to be meeting with his lawyers over a possible book deal.

Meanwhile, Patrick Kennedy, who initially blamed his accident on medication, said he was now blaming heredity for his accident. "Give me a break", said the son of Ted Kennedy. "If it had been my dad I'd be soaking wet and there would be a body somewhere." Police have yet to open the trunk of Kennedy's Ford Mustang. The elder Kennedy was said to be rushing to the aid of his son with a copy of the Kennedy scandal playbook and $35M.

The head of the elite Capitol Hill police force, or more appropriate, head of the Capitol Hill police force for the elite, Chief Clyde Barrow said "We give legislators this kind of service everyday", referring to driving the younger Kennedy home. "We fix their tickets, we run interference for them with other police departments, hell we even exchange Christmas gifts with them. I just wish we could have been there for ol' Teddy. Come to think of it I think we handled that one pretty well too. Those Chappaquiddick yokels were a hoot."

Congressional leaders Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid said this incident might throw a wrench into the works for getting Patrick Kennedy appointed to the ethics committee. Nancy Pelosi said, "I just see this as a temporary setback. After all it was that demon George Bush who drove him to drink. Patrick was just on his way to TP the White House when he inadvertently ran into a concrete barrier. Big deal. Do you have any idea how hard it is to see those huge things at 2:30 a.m. with your headlights turned off?"

Guest Editorial -

Mary Jo Kopechne To Patrick Kennedy: "You Sir, Are No Ted Kennedy."

I have been hearing quite a lot of talk over the last twelve hours about the striking similarities between Representative Patrick Kennedy and his more famous father, Senator Ted Kennedy.

For anyone who has not heard, Patrick, who is just a bit older than my child would have been, was involved in what looks to be an alcohol-related crash and cover-up. That's it. No passengers. No injuries. No bodies that have been turned up. Yet. Just a simple drunk driving accident.

Let me set the record straight for Patrick and everyone else. I partied with Ted Kennedy. I was driven off a bridge by Ted Kennedy. I was left to die by Ted Kennedy. You sir, are no Ted Kennedy. Fucking rookie.
High Court May Replace Miranda With Kennedy Rights

The 1966 Supreme Court Miranda ruling could face its toughest challenge to date during the fall court session when Justices will consider revising the famous “you have the right to remain silent” litany with a new set of statements known as the “Kennedy Warnings.”

The case springs from an incident this week in which Capitol Hill police allegedly were prevented by their superiors from administering a field sobriety test to Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-RI, son of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-MA, when the younger Kennedy staggered from his car after narrowly avoiding collision with a police cruiser and crashing into a barricade.

Rep. Kennedy said he had not been drinking alcohol, but was impaired by prescription medications which made him think he had to rush to Congress for a 2:45 a.m. vote.

Police did not run a breathalyzer test, did not arrest the Congressman, and simply gave him a ride home.

An attorney for the American Drunkards Association (ADA) hailed the case as “great leap forward in providing real justice to a people who have faced years of discrimination at the hands of police just because of who they are.”

When the Supreme Court convenes in October, it will consider rewriting the Miranda Warnings to conform to the more progressive treatment Rep. Kennedy received.

The following is a draft excerpt of the new Kennedy Rights:

1. You have the right to remain silent and refuse to answer questions. Do you understand? If so, stagger randomly.
2. Anything you do say will be ignored and quickly forgotten, because you're not yourself right now. Do you understand? If so, let your chin drop suddenly to your chest?
3. You have the right to consult a public relations firm before speaking to the police, and to have your PR spokesman present during questioning now or in the future. Do you understand? If so, say: 'My umbersmand.'
4. If you cannot afford a public relations firm, one will be appointed for you before any questioning if you wish. Do you understand? If so, allow your eyeballs to roll back in their sockets.
5. Knowing and understanding your rights as I have explained them to you, are you willing to answer my questions without a public relations expert present? If you say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, or make any sound at all, or say nothing, we will respect your right to remain silent and we’ll give you a ride home.

Lawyer Buyout Program Proposed

TUCSON: The Baja Arizona Bar Association (BABA) has proposed an innovative solution to the spiraling cost of litigation, rising insurance premiums, and exploding medical costs.

"It is obvious that there are too many hungry lawyers in our country," said Phil Brick, head of BABA. "The result is lawsuits are filed over every trivial matter in the hope that the defendant is insured."

Insurance companies have tried for years to curtail the rise in litigation, and one of the major costs of health care is malpractice insurance. "The solution," Brick said, "is a Lawyer Buy Out program."

Brick explained that America had pioneered the concept of getting paid for not doing something in its farm program, which paid farmers not to plant cotton or wheat.

"If anyone ran the numbers, it would be obvious that it would be cheaper to the society as a whole to pay lawyers not to practice law, than to leave these hungry wolves to try and support themselves," Brick noted.

The Lawyer Buy Out program would be funded by America's insurance companies, Brick suggested. "Instead of paying out outrageous judgments and settlements, the companies would fund a trust fund which would pay lawyers to take early retirement from their practices, and do something useful with their lives," Brick said.

Young lawyers just starting their practices would be paid $75,000 a year not to practice law, and older lawyers (who are more dangerous since they are experienced) would be paid $150,000 a year to quit. It would be assumed that lawyers would work until they are at least 70.

"A companion measure would be to force lawyers who score million dollar verdicts to retire," Brick added. "Their licenses to practice law would be automatically suspended."
Pope Benedict Beatifies
George Clooney In Answer To Da Vinci Code!

(Vatican City--Rome) First, it was St. George of England, who slew a
dragon. Now, will it be St. George of Hollywood who slays the Da Vinci Code?
Yes, if Pope Benedict XVI has his way. The Vatican announced today that actor
George Clooney will be beatified for "his work Ocean's 11, Syriana and Darfur."
Congratulations and confusion began almost immediately.

From Tom Cruise, through his publicist, Arnold Robinson, "Tom feels
that George is a great actor. But a saint? That's a bit Oprah the top. Get it?"
Robinson went on to say that "if we're talking miracles, anyone who could go
through what Tom has in the last eight months and still have M-I III sink
Poseidon, just bring on the water, and he'll do some walking." Robinson
concluded by saying that Cruise would not actually walk on water because it
goes against the teachings of the Church of Scientology, of which the actor is a
member and "just knowing he can do it is enough."

Professor Lotta Miles, of Harvard Divinity School, was
surprised and perplexed by the Vatican move. "You could have
knocked me over with a communion host. I thought Pope
Benedict would be a conservative. And usually, you have to be
dead for at least five years to be considered for sainthood. I
haven't gone to the movies that much lately, but I don't think Mr.
Clooney is dead. I don't think he's even had any flops. Second,
the process of sainthood generally starts with being declared
venerable. This Pope is a wild man!"

However, it seems that the Vatican already has foreseen
these objections and, not wildly but logically, answered them on
their web site. "The Holy Father, being God's publicist on earth
and infallible, has decided that the steps of being declared
venerable and beatified be rolled into one. And as far as being
still alive and having not performed miracles of note, The Holy
Father points to the original TV series ER, from whose tomb no
star again rose, not even Elliott Gould, and the NBC incarnation
of ER, from which the venerably beatified George Clooney rose
to become a star." The statement also squashed any doubt about
impending sainthood being a reaction to the release of Ron
Howard's DaVinci Code with "is the Pope Catholic?"

In a phone interview, Clooney's agent, Johnny Planco,
would not discuss his client's reaction to possible sainthood nor
answer if the rumors of Clooney licensing out his name for the
purposes of holy relics were true. Planco did say that he and the
Vatican were in "deep discussion" about a movie called "Saint
Hood", in which a "tough as nails thug with a heart of gold does
out Death Wish justice and a side order of brimstone to an author
who writes a book of lies about Jesus, then repents, spending the
rest of his days as a Christian gangsta rap producer." A
production date has of this writing not been announced.

Employee-Slapping Widespread, Effective
Major Corporations Turning Into 'Swat Shops'

NEW YORK, N.Y. (SatireWire.com) — Frustrated by a tight labor market that has forced them to make
unprecedented concessions to employees, several dozen American companies have instituted "employee-
slapping" policies, allowing managers to slap workers pretty much whenever they damn well please.

Widely hailed by supervisors as a great equalizer, the random slapping of employees has, not
surprisingly, come under fire from many lower-level workers. But even some senior-level managers have
voiced complaints.

"I, for one, don't like it a bit," said Marcia
Pepperstein, vice president of sales at Motorola. "I'm a vice
president, and I get slapped. I think there should be a
ceiling somewhere, just below me, so that I don't get
slapped, but I still get to slap. That, to me, would be an
acceptable system."

While employee-slapping programs are relatively new,
their genesis can be found in the mid 1990s, when Internet
companies raised the ante for hiring by offering stock options
and unusual perks. As a result, employees gained more freedom
and power, and despite recent woes among Internet companies,
have been able to make ever greater demands on employers.

Employee-slapping, proponents argue, makes up for the
lost sense of balance, with several managers reporting they can
"feel the tension fly right off their fingertips." Some also contend
the policy has reinvigorated a sense of ambition in the workforce,
as climbing the corporate ladder to attain more money or power
has been supplanted by a more intense, visceral desire.
"It's simple math," explained Jeffrey Baines, a senior marketing manager at United Parcel Service. "Right now, in my department, I've got six people under me. That's only six people I can slap. My boss, he has 96 people under him. I want his job."

There are, however, limits to ambition, warns Cisco Systems CEO John Chambers. "I've got 26,000 employees, and theoretically, I could slap every one of them, but whose got the time?" he said. "What I've learned, and this is a good lesson for prospective managers out there: delegate."

Most employee-slapping policies prohibit the slapping of anyone not full-time, although Goldman Sachs has reportedly violated this recently by allowing managers to slap temporary workers until they confess.

One violation companies have been cracking down on is what's known as the "slunch," or slap-punch. "My boss punched me once," recalled Baines. "She said it was a slap, but I felt knuckle. I couldn't shave for a week."

Baines filed a complaint with Human Resources department at UPS, and after getting slapped around a bit -- "on the organizational chart, they were two levels above me" -- his grievance was declared valid. Now his boss can only slap him in the presence of her superiors.

With the rapid pace of its adoption, employee-slapping is expected to quickly extend beyond the business world and reach into government. Already, federal officials and political party operatives are preparing.

"We've bought all our candidates mouthpieces," said Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg. "And we've also told them to stop saying 'I work for the American people.'"

Prosecutors to Moussaoui: "Don't Let It Happen Again"

The sentencing hearing for would-be 9/11 hijacker Zacharias Moussaoui is nearing an end. Given the weight of the evidence, District Judge Leonie Brinkema says she had no choice but to dismiss the seven remaining witnesses and issue the harshest ruling the law will allow: time served and 50 hours of community service. Not only that, the hard-nosed jurist also handed down a stern admonition to "not let it happen again."

Some feel the prosecutors in this case were too hard on the former Al Qaeda operative. Incensed by what they see as a politically-motivated sentence, Moussaoui's lawyers have already filed an appeal in hopes of a reversal.

In retrospect his treatment does seem less than fair. Compared to the other 9/11 conspirators, Moussaoui has certainly gotten the raw end of the deal. Osama Bin Laden, for example, has admitted to masterminding the attacks and yet has served not a single day in jail. All 19 hijackers have been identified by experts, and yet not a single one of them has been brought to trial or even indicted.

Today Moussaoui is a free man, free to go where he pleases and perhaps destroy a major public building or two, but as Attorney General Alberto Gonzales pointed out on Wednesday, America is safer for the months Moussaoui spent behind bars. Any plans he may have had to blow things up or kill large numbers of people have been delayed or at least significantly hampered by the tireless efforts of federal law enforcement officials.

Besides, all that community service is going to be pretty embarrassing for the French-born terrorist, picking up litter and helping old people go to the bathroom. One thing is for sure: he will certainly think twice about participating in a large scale terror plot next time around.

"Seriously, that's it?" asked Moussaoui after hearing Judge Brinkema read the ruling. "You're just going to let me go?"

"No, first we're going to tell you how deeply disappointed we are in you," replied Brinkema. "Then we'll let you go."