

CHAPTER 1

Asleep at the Wheel

An Historic Opportunity Squandered

Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we.

—George W. Bush, Washington, D.C., Aug. 5, 2004

On the morning of 9/11 (September 11, 2001), George W. Bush was reading a children’s book with a group of preschoolers at Emma E. Booker Elementary School in Sarasota, Florida. Well, he wasn’t actually reading it—he was holding it. Bush’s thoughts were understandably elsewhere, as he was basking in the glow of the upcoming release of *My Pet Goat*—written by Dick Cheney in 2001—a thrilling biography of America’s 43rd president that focused on 43’s many heroic accomplishments during his upcoming administration.

The official story of Bush’s meeting with the preschoolers was that he quickly left the room when informed of the 9/11 attacks and acted decisively throughout in fighting the war against terror, which was natural behavior for such a great leader of the free world.

The official story changed later. Before entering the school Bush had been informed of a plane hitting the World Trade Center (WTC). He decided nevertheless to go ahead with the photo opportunity. Later informed of a second plane hitting the WTC, Bush incredibly sat bewildered with the children for another seven minutes, until someone suggested he leave.

The press chose not to cover this incident—or, more accurately, they chose to cover it up. In the days and months ahead they were going to get countless opportunities to practice such cowardly, docile behavior. After all, America was “at war,” and it would be unpatriotic for journalists to think critically and independently, to ask the obvious tough questions that had to be asked, and to tell the truth. The *Bush Family Pass* system was operating efficiently at top speed. America’s rightwing corporate media, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, were competing for the coveted *Pravda Prize*.

On the other hand, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, released in 2004 and strongly pointed, allowed viewers to see video of the incident and draw their own conclusions. “The

look on Bush's face as he reads the book, knowing what he knows, is disquieting," reported Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*, in a review of the movie.

In June 2004—almost three years after the 9/11 attacks—a partial report of the 9/11 Commission provided some additional information (but certainly not the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.) Bush told the commission in closed-door testimony that he sat there in the school because “he should project strength and calm until he could better understand what was happening.” What a peculiar statement.

The most disturbing aspect is not really what Bush did or didn't do in the first minutes. After all, most of the world knows Bush is an incompetent leader who is managed by a small circle of handlers who shield him from reality and critical thinking. No, what is most disturbing is the fawning willingness of America's Big Media to filter and censor the news, bending over backwards and doing mental gymnastics—as good cheerleaders—to show Bush in a positive light, accepting uncritically whatever information the Bush administration shovels out of the corral, thereby abrogating the media's essential independent role in America's democracy.

An Historic Opportunity Squandered

Virtually the entire world was horrified by the slaughter on September 11, 2001. The world was with us and behind us, ready to follow American's lead in making the world a better and safer place for all the peoples of the world.

Unfortunately, George W. Bush was at the helm, more or less, and he and his neocon team squandered this unprecedented historic opportunity. Theirs is the greatest blunder in the history of American foreign policy.

SIDEBAR: Bush's Crusade

In the days after 9/11, millions of people were astounded to hear the Bush administration describe its planned war against terrorism as a “crusade.” Also astounded, your author thought: “This is incredible. They've decided to make it a religious war against Islam. This is outrageously stupid, dangerous, and very much against American moral values and strategic interests. They must know something I don't.”

But the problem was that the Bush team knew and understood *less*. It never occurred to your author that the administration's use of the word “crusade” was other than premeditated and intentional. Even later, with the benefit of hindsight, your author wanted to believe the administration spoke intentionally, because to believe otherwise would be to admit that the Bush team was far more ignorant about the world than generally thought.

In a flip-flop, better known in Great Britain as a *U-turn*, the Bush administration correctly backed away from the “crusade” characterization.

But significant damage had already been done. The blunder added to Bush's growing reputation in the world as a not-too-bright cowboy crusader against Islam, a reputation especially prevalent among the more than one billion Muslims in the world. In contrast, any British schoolchild would have known that Bush talking "crusade" after 9/11 was definitely stupid.

Bush supporters argued that the use of the word "crusade" was merely a slip of the tongue, an innocent mistake that anyone could make.

Unfortunately, the word "crusade" was used repeatedly, thus demonstrating an incredible lack of understanding by the Bush neocons as to the Islamic world and the tangled history of Christianity and Islam. It was one of countless gaffes that showcased the narrow *groupthink* of the Bush team.

Yes, everyone makes slips of the tongue and minor mistakes. But suppose your auto mechanic tells you that your spare tire should be mounted on the steering wheel, or that transmission fluid goes in the radiator. These basic mistakes would not just be innocent slips of the tongue, but instead—like the "crusade mistake"—evidence of utter ignorance and gross incompetence.

Other observers thought Bush was just throwing some raw red meat to millions of his supporters on the Religious Right who believe that a reduction in tension in the Holy Land—worst case, God forbid, that peace break out between Israel and the Palestinians—would interfere with God's Plan for the end of the world by delaying the rapture, the Battle of Armageddon and the rest of their fantastic End Times schedule of biblical prophecy.

In any case, from the first day, Bush got off on the wrong foot, and his false steps only worsened as time marched on, eventually causing much of the Muslim world to conclude that his regime in fact was engaged in a crusade against Islam.

It did not have to be that way. On 9/11 virtually the entire world united behind America not only in sympathy but also in a sincere desire to find and punish the responsible criminals.

The September 13, 2001, headline in France's *Le Monde* read: "Nous sommes tous Américains" ("We are all Americans"). We had the sympathy and support of virtually every country, and poll after poll showed extremely positive attitudes towards the United States and Americans.

Muslims throughout the world were appalled that members of the Islamic faith were the criminals behind 9/11. Bush had a golden opportunity to help end the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, improve relations with Arab and Islamic nations throughout the world, and help spread democracy and social justice. He didn't even try.

NATO immediately met and on September 12, 2001, invoked Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, calling on all NATO nations to treat the 9/11 attacks as attacks on each and every NATO nation. The United Nations quickly voted to support military action by the United States against al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

There was deep worldwide support for the use of overwhelming military force against al Qaeda and its ally, the Taliban, in Afghanistan, notwithstanding doubts about Bush's appreciation of the critical strategic issues involved, as well as doubts

about his willingness to walk the entire difficult road ahead and make the major-league commitment necessary to help build a new Afghanistan.

History would show that the doubts about Bush were well placed. During the 2000 presidential campaign Bush indicated no appetite for *nation building*, and the years following 9/11—years of lost opportunity—demonstrated that he had neither the appetite nor the ability to nation build, whether in Afghanistan, in Iraq, or in America.

The years of Bush’s presidency will be known as “the years that the locust hath eaten.” (Joel 2:25)

SIDEBAR: President Nixon and New York City

Additional secret Watergate tapes from the administration of GOP President Richard Nixon were made available to the public in December 2003. Nixon’s hateful statements in 1972 about New York City were among the most gut wrenching of the new revelations.

“Goddamn New York,” he complains, noting that New York is filled with “Jews and Catholics and blacks and Puerto Ricans.” In chilling words, Nixon then says there is “a law of the jungle where some things don’t survive. Maybe New York shouldn’t survive. Maybe it should go through a cycle of destruction.”

Among modern American leaders, Nixon and his vice president, Spiro Agnew, were the most divisive, corrupt and mean-spirited, that is, until Bush and Cheney galloped in from Texas. To Nixon’s credit, he inherited—versus created, although he greatly worsened—a war and divisive times, but poke-em-in-the-eye Bush intentionally created division at a time—following 9/11—when there was tremendous national and international unity, and, more important, a compelling need for cooperative action.

Nixon’s lies and misdeeds leading to his threatened impeachment and resignation are miniscule compared to those of Bush. As for the large cash bribes taken by Agnew—which led to his resignation in disgrace—they are small beans compared to the “perfectly legal” loot gathered in by Cheney and his Halliburton cronies.

Although Nixon’s Vietnam War policies ultimately failed, he does deserve credit for visiting and improving relations with the People’s Republic of China. In that effort, he was a *statesman*, something absent from Bush’s DNA.

Before we take a closer look at how Bush and the GOP botched things so horribly first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq, let’s pause briefly to reflect upon the Bush administration’s actions and inactions before 9/11 and its posture regarding truth and open government in the days following 9/11.

Asleep at the Wheel

Several months before 9/11, at a terror conference in late February 2001, Ambassador Paul Bremer noted: “The new administration seems to be paying no attention to

the problem of terrorism. What they will do is stagger along until there's a major incident, and then suddenly say, 'Oh, my God, shouldn't we be organized to deal with this?'"

These are not the words of a Bush hater. To the contrary, Bremer was later sent to Iraq by Bush, in May 2003, as Bush's U.S. Presidential Envoy to Iraq, and one month later Bush appointed him to lead (as the Director of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that ran Iraq.

The general threat of terrorism simply wasn't on Bush's agenda. Nor were specific threats from bin Laden and al Qaeda. The Clinton team, including its transition team, tried to get Bush to focus on bin Laden and other terrorist threats, but it was like talking to a man asleep at the wheel.

In the eight months from Bush's inauguration to 9/11, the Bush White House received dozens of warnings about bin Laden and al Qaeda, but the White House continued to snooze in its self-imposed "bubble."

On July 10, 2001, Condoleezza Rice received an urgent visit from then CIA chief George Tenet and his counterterrorism coordinator, J. Cofer Black, who called the extraordinary "out of cycle" meeting to warn that a major terrorist attack was impending. (See Bob Woodward's 2006 No. 1 best-selling book, *State of Denial*.) Recent mounting intelligence about an al Qaeda attack greatly worried Tenet. "It's my sixth sense, but I feel it coming. This is going to be the big one." Woodward reports that Rice gave them "the brush-off." He quotes Black: "The only thing we didn't do was pull the trigger to the gun we were holding to her head."

Tenet gives a similar account of the extraordinary meeting in his 2007 book, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. The former CIA chief writes that he had received intelligence that very day (July 10, two months before 9/11) about al Qaeda that "literally made my hair stand on end," and that, after calling Rice's office to demand an immediate meeting, he rushed to the White House with Black and a third person (an agent he did not identify.) Rice was advised that Bush should give the CIA new action authorities to go after bin Laden and al Qaeda. She was told there would be "a significant terrorist attack in the coming weeks or months," that it would be "spectacular," and that, "[t]his country needs to go on a war footing now."

Even the alarming Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) of August 26, 2001, was ignored. Entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US," this daily summary given to the president, only 16 days before 9/11, specifically focused on the threat of al Qaeda hijacking airplanes and attacking the United States.

More details about the handoff from Clinton to Bush came to light in July 2004. Clinton told the 9/11 Commission that he warned Bush, during a two-hour meeting before Bush took office, "by far your biggest threat is bin Laden and the al Qaeda." Bush told the Commission he couldn't recall this warning but that Clinton had emphasized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and North Korea.

Let's take a big leap of faith here and assume for the sake of argument that Bush, contrary to his character, was telling the truth—that he was warned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Korea, but perhaps not about bin Laden and al Qaeda. The sad truth is that Bush demonstrated incompetence in handling *all* of these foreign policy problems.

As for the various feeble and incomplete 9/11 investigations, let's return for a moment to Bob Woodward, who writes in *State of Denial*:

The July 10 meeting between Tenet, Black and Rice went unmentioned in the various reports of investigations into the Sept. 11 attacks, but it stood out in the minds of Tenet and Black as the starkest warning they had given the White House on bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Though the investigators had access to all the paperwork on the meeting, Black felt there were things the commissions wanted to know about and things they didn't want to know about.

Following 9/11 the Bush administration adopted a "Don't Ask—Don't Tell" defense regarding all 9/11 truth inquiries. It firmly opposed *all* proposed investigations into intelligence and policy failures that led up to 9/11, asserting that such investigations would be a distraction in the war on terrorism, and the GOP-controlled Congress actively conspired in the ongoing cover-up to keep the truth from the American people.

As the various feeble investigations nevertheless went ahead, the Bush administration obstructed and stonewalled. Cheney and Bush refused to testify because they were "too busy," but they flip-flopped later and agreed to appear provided they could do their Edgar Bergen and Charley McCarthy act, which they did. In another flip-flop motivated by public indignation, the Bush administration finally agreed—after much stonewalling—that Condoleezza Rice would testify before the 9/11 Commission.

One of the low points of Rice's career was her testifying—in response to questions about specific threats from bin Laden and al Qaeda (including the "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US" PDB warning just two weeks before 9/11)—that if someone had told her what to do, she would have done it! What a nice ducking of responsibility by the president's National Security Advisor, whose role was to help set security policy and take action, not to be a grunt waiting passively for orders to follow.

One rule in the Bush White House is that truth tellers get fired, while liars and sycophants get promoted. Accordingly, Bush promoted Rice to Secretary of State in 2005, a good example of the Peter Principle at work.

SIDEBAR: 9/11—the Luckiest Day in Bush's Life?

Before September 11 most of the world viewed Bush as a not-so-bright, lazy Texas cowboy wannabe who hopefully would not cause too much damage. In his own faux words, he was "misunderestimated."

The enormous tide of sympathy and goodwill towards the United States caused by 9/11 handed Bush the opportunity to transform himself and his administration and lead the United States and the world in a sane, safer direction. September 11 became his defining moment and opportunity.

It could prove to be the luckiest day in his life: (1) *if* he could receive one more *Bush Family Pass*, one that would allow him to avoid personal responsibility for failing to recognize and address the al Qaeda threat and possibly prevent September 11; and (2) *if* he could somehow courageously and effectively lead the world in battling terrorism and building a safer world for all.

On the first point, America's media and most Americans gave the president the Bush Family Pass that he desired and had received so many times during his profligate life. Let bygones be bygones. Why look backward and learn lessons for the future? Why assess responsibility? Rather, let's all be fearful together, forget the past, and go fight "evil."

The stonewalling and prevarication campaign of the Bush White House and the Republican-led Congress, coupled with America's docile corporate media, buried the truth and bought Bush time to dodge responsibility.

By comparison, it took the Bush administration only a few *hours* after 9/11 to: (1) conclude that bin Laden's Saudi relatives then living in the United States had *no* information that might be helpful in identifying and finding the murderers of more than 3,000 people; and (2) whisk them out of the country and thus outside the reach of an American investigation.

Regarding the second point—that Bush would courageously and effectively lead the world—Bush unfortunately earned only *failing* and *incomplete* grades. He massively bungled the job, squandered a unique historic opportunity to lead a sympathetic world on the high road, and instead left America and the world exposed to greater dangers and much more divided.

Ironically, if the Bush administration had done a competent job before 9/11 focusing on bin Laden and al Qaeda and had actually prevented 9/11, then the principal excuse for the Iraq invasion would not have existed. More broadly stated, the incompetence of the Bush team in not adequately addressing the terrorist threats before 9/11 enabled them to show even greater incompetence in the war in Afghanistan, in the war on Iraq, and in the broader so-called war on terrorism.

The Neocons

Let's take a closer look at "the bad and the ugly." We refer here of course to the *neocons*—the never-served-in-the-military, rightwing swashbucklers who, long before 9/11, dreamed up detailed plans to invade and occupy Iraq, with the broader goal of making the United States the dominant power in the region. Spreading *freedom* had nothing to do with it, at least not freedom for the Iraqi people. Of course, there would be *freedom* for an imperial America to control Iraq's oil resources and run Iraq through a client government, and *freedom* of the Super Rich and crony capitalists to make a killing.

The neocons, also called the Vulcans, believe that power is meant to be used. If you have power, you use it to grab whatever you want for yourself and your cronies, not to arrive at the greatest good for America or for the greatest number of people, not to protect individual rights and freedoms from the tyranny of the majority or a

powerful and privileged minority. Saddam was a charter member of this school of thought and could have co-authored the bloody neocon cookbook. The neocons should dedicate the new edition to him.

Compromise is not on the agenda. Open honest debate of diverse perspectives is not permitted. Nor is the use of facts and expertise to arrive at the best decisions. The neocons' ideology and *groupthink* is all that is needed. It is certain, and it sustains them, much like the prospect of enjoying unlimited sex with 72 virgins in Heaven sustains some extremist Islamic martyrs.

Although the focus of this chapter is international, we note here that the Cheney-directed Bush administration also applied the same arrogant style domestically as it did internationally, by eschewing broad policy debates and compromise, by dividing to gain more power, by engaging in class warfare, and by transforming America to benefit the Super Rich.

The following was written in the DNA of the neocons and the new GOP: "We control the White House, the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Supreme Court. Therefore, we will take what we want. It is our due."

This Machiavellian style, because it has so little outside influence to check it, gives heightened meaning to the axiom that, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It is arrogance rooted in ungrateful entitlement, and it ignores individual guarantees reflected in America's Bill of Rights. Bush's background—an aristocratic arrogant life of entitlement, devoid of responsibility and consequences—was a match made in Heaven for Cheney and the neocons.

The Shiites in Iraq—with about 60% of the population—are natural supporters of this neocon philosophy of abusing power and taking "their due." Civil war anyone?

On the international side, the neocons themselves have openly used various revealing terms to refer to the worldwide American empire they want to create. One favorite is "Pax Americana," which derives from "Pax Romana," which refers to the Roman peace that was imposed on all the subjects and states in the Roman Empire. "Pax Britannia" is used in a similar fashion to describe the British colonial empire during its heyday. "Beneficent hegemony" and "benign dictatorship" are also close to the mark in describing the neocons' lunatic vision. So is "Pox Americana." So is the "Bush League of Nations."

At the core of the neocons' imperial agenda is the rejection of cornerstone alliances and policies that had been supported for more than 65 years by all American presidents since the end of World War II: Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush's father, and Clinton—but not Bush the Son. These alliances and policies, based on shared values and shared decision-making, ultimately prevailed over the Soviet Union, which finally collapsed of its own weight and decay, greatly helped by courageous Russian patriots like Mikhail Gorbachev, who charted a new direction for his country, and courageous liberal patriots like the Polish dockworkers. It didn't hurt that Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," which it was.

Forget NATO, even though the United States is its most important pillar and wields the most influence. Forget the United Nations, even though the United States has much more influence over it than any other nation, in addition to its veto power as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Act unilaterally and insult important allies and friends such as France and Germany. Behave like a spoiled bully and politicize everything. Lie, cheat, commit treason and other high crimes and misdemeanors. Claim to be Christian but act in a most unchristian manner whenever convenient. Know that might makes right. Know that the rules that apply to the rest of the world do not apply to the United States.

At the center of neocon history is *The Project for the New American Century* (PNAC), a rightwing, nonprofit, “think” tank that was formally created in 1997 when about 30 influential rightwing individuals signed its mission statement. It has operated as a magnet and garbage can for incestuous, wild-eyed influential individuals specializing in extreme rightwing political and military *groupthink*. Their greatest success was seizing control of the Bush White House.

It was PNAC neocons who long before 9/11 wrote the delusional playbook for the invasion of Iraq. One would have little objection to any of these men or their fine fraternal order if they were engaged merely in Fantasy Baseball or drunken private parties that didn’t hurt anyone other than themselves. The problem is that they run the United States government and have been busy screwing America and the world. Their power was guaranteed when Dick Cheney—who in 2000 was tasked by Bush to choose Bush’s vice presidential running mate—picked himself to be the power behind the throne. The fox was in charge of the henhouse. Bush’s puppeteer had arrived.

The name itself—The Project for the New *American Century*—says a mouthful and hints at its imperial nature. Is it possible that other nations and other peoples of the world might be a tad skeptical about this organization?

Upon assuming the presidency in 2001, Bush quickly appointed more than a dozen PNAC members to key senior positions in his administration. This ensured a quixotic rightwing echo chamber in the White House, and, as they say, the rest is history.

In addition to Cheney—a PNAC founder—the senior appointees from PNAC included Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense), Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense), Elliott Abrams (National Security Council), Peter Rodman (Assistant Secretary of Defense), Zalmay Khalilzad (a special envoy for Afghanistan, and later U.S. Ambassador to Iraq), Richard Armitage (Deputy Secretary of State, who was one of several Bush underlings who leaked Valerie Plame’s CIA identity in the Plamegate scandal), John Bolton (U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations), I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby (Cheney’s Chief of Staff, who resigned in October 2005 after being indicted by a grand jury, and who was convicted on March 6, 2007, on four of five counts—two counts for perjury, one of obstruction of justice, and one of making false statements to federal investigators), and Robert Zoellick (Deputy Secretary of State.)

If Bush had appointed a team of Iranian ayatollahs to his administration, rather than these PNAC ayatollahs, he would have inflicted much less damage on America.

Several other influential rightwing politicians, editors and so-called defense experts also signed the PNAC’s mission statement, including Jeb Bush (later Governor of Florida), Steve Forbes (*Forbes* magazine), and William Kristol (editor of the extreme right propaganda magazine *The Weekly Standard* and regular political contributor to Fox News Channel.)

George W. Bush himself was not a member of the PNAC, nor was he a good candidate for membership, since he had no knowledge, interest or aptitude regarding defense matters or world affairs. However, when he later staggered into the presidency, his fine resume, including 25 years of *college living*, did make him clueless and malleable, the perfect soft clay for the “neo-con job.”

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the United States was in the unique position of being the only superpower. The neocons saw this as a “unipolar” moment in history, i.e., the best and perhaps only chance for America to achieve *permanent* domination of the world through a Pax Americana, an analogue to the GOP’s domestic strategy of achieving permanent GOP control of America’s government. Paul Wolfowitz, who was then serving in the Defense Department in the administration of Bush’s father, wrote “Defense Planning Guidance,” a classified 1992 Pentagon document that was leaked to newspapers early that year. At its core, the paper outlined the opportunity and need for a new world order, something that could be realized through military force. Perhaps you are thinking this is a nightmare. Yes, it is, but you are not dreaming.

The Propaganda War

Both before and after 9/11, the neocons running the Bush White House had three primary audiences to consider in their stubborn campaign to craft a case for an invasion and occupation of Iraq:

- President Bush himself
- The U.S. Congress and the American people
- The rest of the world, including the United Nations and NATO

The neocons had an incredibly easy job selling an Iraq war to Bush, due to his predisposition to this war and his many personal shortcomings, a few of which are discussed later in this book. Bush was, and remains, a weak pushover—a blank slate who became president without an independent foreign policy framework regarding Iraq, the Middle East, or the rest of the world—and his intellect and personality matched well those of the gullible, lazy, all-trusting puppet desired by his neocon handlers.

All accounts indicate that Bush eagerly drank the neocon Kool-Aid. The years-old plan to invade Iraq was much more grandiose than merely catching bin Laden, and it thus appealed to Bush’s dormant megalomania tendencies. Bush willingly entered the *groupthink* echo chamber—a rehabilitation center of sorts—where dissenting views and critical thinking are not allowed.

As for the second audience to be swayed, it was harder, but still not very difficult, for the neocons to sell their bogus bill of goods to Congress and the American people. Lies and distortion, not facts and debate, were the weapons of choice in this campaign, coupled with the careful cultivation of fear following 9/11. America’s obsequious press, both wittingly and unwittingly, played an important supporting role by fanning the winds of war, not asking the hard questions, and acting as stenographers as they simply passed along to the world whatever propaganda the Bush administration was shoveling out of the corral. *The New York Times* is the most prominent member of America’s media that later apologized for their journalistic shortcomings. A cheerleading attitude ran through the rubber-stamping Congress, both

branches of which were controlled by the partisan, do-nothing-good, ask-no-questions, criminal-infested Republican Party (GOP).

As for selling the Iraq war to the third audience, the rest of the world, the neocons had an impossible job, or, more accurately, they *would have had* an impossible job if they had really wanted to try, but they didn't. As unilateralists, the neocons did not care what the rest of the world thought, and they relished letting the world know this. The neocons alone knew what was best, and by acting unilaterally the United States would reap for itself all the easy glory and the lion's share of the oily spoils.

Eventually, the neocon fantasy predictably collided with reality. By late 2004, after eighteen months of war in Iraq, the neocons were reeling from the mess they had created and were busy trying to figure out how to duck responsibility for the cleanup while somehow still grabbing the imperial benefits that drove them to Iraq in the first place. It was another "mission unaccomplished," but the neocons—ideologues to the core—never admit to mistakes in policy or execution. Rather than apologizing for mistakes made and insults given, the Bush administration demanded that the United Nations and NATO clean up the Bush League mess in Iraq, asserting it was "their responsibility."

Thanks to unprecedented arrogance and incompetence, the vast majority of the world now despises Bush and his policies. Thanks to Bush, respect for America and trust in America are at all-time lows. The impeachment and removal of Bush and Cheney from office is the single most important action Congress can take in the war on terrorism and in restoring America's influence, credibility, power and values in the world. Likewise, voting out of office the senators and representatives who shielded Bush and Cheney is the single most important direct action American voters can take—second only to demanding the impeachment of America's worst president and worst vice president ever.

In the several months from Bush's inauguration to 9/11 the Cheney-led neocons were busy stoking the fires for a war on Iraq. Iraq was their principal obsession, and it remains an open unanswerable question whether they could have successfully sold their Iraq war if the attacks of 9/11 had not occurred. But the question is moot, because 9/11 gave the giddy neocons just enough to hang their lies and deceit upon.

To be clear, the enormous crimes committed on 9/11 did not diminish America's strategic position one iota or alter in the slightest any balance of power in the world. To the contrary, 9/11 gave America the opportunity to enhance its position, reputation and influence in the world and emerge enormously stronger. America's strategic position following 9/11 could only have been weakened by America's missteps, and that's where Bush came in.

Bush ultimately has no one but himself to blame for the disasters during his watch. Yes, Bush received huge assists from the neocons and the GOP-controlled Congress, but even with only a rudimentary grounding in foreign affairs, he might have been able to understand some of the implications of the advice he was getting, to ask a few of the right questions, and to seek expert advice from others. He might have been able to hold his ground if he had had some firm ground to stand upon. But he didn't. He simply did not know enough to be an effective leader, and he had no interest in learning. The world has known this cold reality for some time, but it has

been a longer painful journey for a majority of Americans to finally arrive at the same obvious conclusion.

If Bush had served even a couple of years in some worthwhile public or private building effort overseas, he would have been much better prepared to do his job as president. But he chose to know virtually nothing about other nations and world affairs. He learned virtually nothing about the diverse, wonderful world outside America's front door because during his spoiled indulgent life he simply had *zero interest* in going through that door and seeing the world for himself. Clueless as to the rich but challenging multi-dimensional reality of the world's nations and peoples, he still believes the world is black and white—and flat. Yes, “W” also stands for “witless.”

Bush thus brought to the White House a virtually blank foreign policy slate—a slate on which someone was going to write. Unfortunately, the neocons did the writing, notwithstanding the feeble efforts of a minority in Bush's inner circle, principally Colin Powell, to stop them.

SIDEBAR: Bush the *Decider*

Bush prides himself on not reading newspapers. He summed it up nicely on September 21, 2003: “I glance at the headlines just to kind of get a flavor for what's moving. I rarely read the stories, and get briefed by people who are probably read the news themselves.”

In addition to inventing facts, Bush also invents words, such as *decider*. On April 18, 2006, while Bush was defending embattled Rumsfeld against the growing number of calls by retired American generals for Rumsfeld's resignation, Bush was able to squeeze multiple Bushisms into two short sentences when he told reporters, “I hear the voices, and I read the front page, and I know the speculation. But I'm the decider, and I decide what is best.” Truly weird.

But wait a second. According to Wikipedia, there is *one* obscure definition of “decider,” as follows: “In computability theory, a machine that always halts—also called a decider (Sipser, 1996)—is any abstract machine or model of computation that, contrary to the most general Turing machines, is guaranteed to halt for any particular description and input (see halting problem).”

Perhaps Bush intended to extend this “machine” definition of *decider* to himself, thus creating a *second* definition for *decider*, namely: “a dimwitted political leader who always halts and stops thinking when reaching a point where serious analysis is required.”

The Bush clan long realized Bush was a cipher when it came to basic geography, let alone international relations and diplomacy. Therefore, in the late 1990s Condoleezza Rice visited Kennebunkport to tutor Bush in subjects best described as “Geography 101 For Dummies” and “Foreign Affairs 101 For Dummies.” By the way, if you aspire to be president of the United States, but don't know or care much about

the world and foreign affairs, just email Condoleezza Rice and ask her to stay at your home and “school” you.

An increasing number of Bush’s own supporters in Congress criticize him and his Iraq policies. These include Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE), a critic of Bush’s Iraq war, who said in May 2004 that Bush “must reach out. He must understand a bigger view, wider-lens view of the world. To essentially hold himself hostage to two or three key advisers and never reach beyond that is very dangerous for a president.”

Hagel accused Bush of developing and running Iraq policy “in a vacuum.” It’s unclear whether Hagel was referring to that space in Bush’s cranium between his ears, but “vacuum” is certainly an apt metaphor. That would sum it up “in a nutshell.”

Reagan and Clinton Rejected the Neocons—Bush Follows Them

Bush neocons liked to draw flattering comparisons between themselves and President Reagan. They hoped that some of Reagan’s undeserved luster would rub off on Bush, cover Bush’s numerous defects, and turn him into something he is not. However, the comparisons miss the mark by a mile. The battered and rusted Bush jalopy has flat tires and is off the road skidding wildly in the wrong direction. Bush is more or less “at the wheel,” but he ignores the GPS navigation system because he doesn’t understand it, and he is instead fearfully driving by the faith-based seat of his pants, which he has badly soiled. Both car and driver are last in the world NASCAR standings. Regrettably, none of America’s long-term friends are willing to jump on board and try to help—at least not while Bush is in the driver’s seat.

Several of the Bush neocons—including Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz—also served under Reagan. Fortunately, Reagan had enough personal strength and common sense to ultimately reject their advice, and to set his own reality-based course for America. In sharp contrast, Bush after 9/11 docilely acquiesced to his neocons, rarely asking tough questions and never seeking expert opinion. Yes, God works in mysterious ways. But so does the Devil.

The Bush neocons mucked and stirred the “war-is-best” pot during the entire period from Reagan’s presidency through that of Clinton and into that of Bush. The neocons desperately wanted a hot war in Iraq and were fearful that a peaceful solution might emerge before they—or more accurately, America’s soldiers—started shooting. Power comes out of the barrel of a gun, and it would be a sin not to use it, especially if the fools and cowards calling the shots are not in harm’s way.

Reagan wisely believed in hard power—and certainly a key goal of any American president is to ensure that U.S. military power remains head and shoulders above that of any potential adversary—but Reagan used it very infrequently and *never* once in a major way. Notwithstanding his image, Reagan’s actions were grounded in Harry Truman’s wisdom, “walk softly, but carry a big stick.” Reagan believed in diplomacy.

Reagan learned through experience that one of the easiest ways for a nation to reduce its power is to use it unnecessarily, unwisely or ineffectively. The Big Stick that is used rarely or not at all, but is visible to all and within easy reach, can project an enormous amount of power—typically more power than it exerts through actual use—but its power dissipates when it is used drunkenly. Unfortunately, Bush has

used America's military power unnecessarily, unwisely and ineffectively—and drunkenly—especially in Iraq, and the world now looks at America's Big Stick with much less awe and respect than it did following 9/11.

America's enemies, including terrorists and potential terrorists, now see inherent limitations and weaknesses in how America uses its Big Stick and have developed coping strategies, such as suicide bombings, roadside bombs, and guerilla warfare. They are rapidly evolving and improving their skills in the crucible known as Bush's Iraq Civil War. This is bad enough in itself, of course, but things are much worse than that. Of much greater damage to America is the fact that Bush's blunders effectively transferred much of the moral high ground from America to Islamic extremists and terrorists. Bush himself is the main character in their "See, we told you so!" propaganda campaign portraying America as the evil Satan. Thanks to Bush, countless tens of millions of peaceful Muslims who respected and liked America both before and after 9/11 have learned to hate America.

SIDEBAR: October 23, 1983—Ronald Reagan's 9/11

From a marketing perspective, bin Laden and other Islamic terrorists viewed Sunday, October 23, 1983, as the most significant date in their campaign against Western powers—that is, until the 9/11 attacks. October 23, 1983, was the day a Mercedes truck packed with high explosives drove into the four-story U.S. marine barracks in the marines' compound at Beirut International airport and exploded, killing 220 marines and 21 other service personnel.

For years terrorists hailed that attack as the best example of what could be accomplished against the world's number one military power. That October 23 during Reagan's watch was the deadliest day for the Marine Corps since the battle of Iwo Jima in February 1945.

The U.S. marines were in Beirut in 1983 with good intentions as part of an international peacekeeping force, albeit without a clear mission, rules of engagement, or exit strategy. In another suicide truck bombing on the same date, approximately 60 French soldiers died when a 9-story building housing their paratroopers was destroyed. By the way, Lebanon is just one of many examples of France and America working together for peace. So don't believe all the spiteful rightwing lies you hear about France. *Vive la France!*

About six months earlier, on April 18, 1983, another attack by a suicide bomber in a van destroyed a portion of the American embassy in Beirut, killing more than 60 people, including 17 Americans.

The disaster of October 23, 1983, taught Reagan a hard lesson about the haphazard use of military force, and it was one of the lowest points of his administration. Although he vowed that the terrible attack on the marine barracks "would not stand," his main worry was to control the political fallout in his upcoming reelection campaign.

Accordingly, Reagan ordered a U.S. battleship to shell some random hills near Beirut, which was totally ineffective from a military perspective, although the U.S. media lapped it up, which really was the objective. A few months later, Reagan quietly ordered the marines to pull out of Lebanon, and thus the attacks on America's marines in fact "did stand." Reagan "cut and ran."

The timing of the U.S. invasion of hapless and defenseless Grenada on October 25, 1983—only *two days* after the killing of the 241 marines in Beirut—was, of course, merely a serendipitous coincidence that distracted attention from the Beirut disaster and demonstrated "Reagan's strength."

At the beginning of his presidency in 1981, Reagan initially took a hard line with the Soviet Union. He accurately called it an "evil empire," increased U.S. military spending, and temporarily broke off arms control talks with the Soviets. But it was Reagan's use of soft power, not hard power, that reaped the biggest rewards.

Later, near the end of his first term, Reagan, with urging from Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and other trusted *non-neocon* confidants, reopened arms control negotiations with the Soviet leaders and began building a relationship based on trust. In short, Reagan adopted a *realist* position, assuring Soviet leaders that the United States had no intention of starting a war with the Soviet Union and proposing that the two nations work together to reduce their nuclear arsenals and the risk of war. Reagan even proposed to Gorbachev in 1986 that all offensive nuclear ballistic missiles be eliminated within a decade—a proposal that drove the neocons "ballistic." Reagan empowered realists like George Shultz to promote America's interests through peace initiatives.

Contrary to rightwing folklore, Reagan was not an aggressive "shoot-first" warrior when it came to dealing with the Soviet Union. Although he believed in a strong military, *not one* American soldier lost his or her life in combat with the Soviet Union during Reagan's eight years as president. Not one. This greatly offended the warmongering neocons, dozens of whom later wedged their way into the Bush regime.

Reagan—like Bush, Cheney and the neocons—never served in the active military. However—in sharp contrast to that neocon gang of artful dodgers—Reagan was not a warrior wannabe with a deep demented need to use America's soldiers as pawns in a devil's game of unjust illegal war.

Reagan pursued peace through strength. Bush and the neo-GOP pursue weakness through war.⁷

Reagan helped nudge Gorbachev and the Soviet Union in the right direction—away from a rightwing totalitarian empire and toward an open, capitalistic, democratic state. He did this not by military action, but by speaking clearly and building personal rapport with his Soviet counterparts, and by pursuing a trust-based policy of

⁷ Yes, "W" also stands for "Weakness through War."

rapprochement. Reagan the realist triumphed over the neocons who tried to pull his strings and wage war.

The neocons in the Reagan administration—the same dangerous and incompetent fools who later manipulated Bush to create the mess in Iraq—opposed Reagan’s efforts to build trust and dialogue with the Soviet Union. Several of these neocons had served on the so-called “Team B” that, prior to Reagan’s presidency, had been appointed by Bush’s father when he was CIA director to assess and prepare a strategy different from that of the CIA. Team B opposed Reagan’s rapprochement policies and drew very black, erroneous conclusions about the Soviet Union and its intentions. Team B wrongly believed that the totalitarian Soviet regime would not change, that it was pursuing world domination through a massive military buildup, and that it was preparing to engage in a preemptive nuclear war against the West.

The CIA later concluded that almost all of Team B’s assessments were wrong. Although Team B didn’t get what it wanted, it did get valuable practice in cooking the books and manufacturing faulty intelligence—skills that proved invaluable years later, during the run-up to Bush’s catastrophic invasion of Iraq, when neocon Paul Wolfowitz set up the novel Office of Special Plans in the Pentagon to cherry pick and brew faux intelligence.

Over time Reagan distanced himself from the neocons. He grew to distrust their advice and doomsday jargon about nuclear warheads and kill ratios. Reagan understood that war was not just a game of Bush League baseball. In pursuing peace, Reagan knew he had to win the confidence of the Soviet leaders, and he thus rejected the neocons and their dangerous nonsense.

The neocons were wrong then—thank God Reagan knew it—and they were wrong again later when they manipulated Bush to order the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Even many years later, the neocons remained upset that there had been a cold end to the Cold War, and specifically that the United States and its allies had won it without firing a single shot or losing a single soldier in direct combat with the Soviet Union. The strong alliance led by the United States did this by continuing the containment policies followed by all American presidents since Harry Truman, waiting until the Soviet Union collapsed due to its internal weaknesses and rot. Fortunately, neither Reagan nor any other American president approved the neocons’ favored strategy of using military force to “roll back” the Soviet Union.

The neocons continued to criticize Reagan after he left office, unhappy that the communist system was still in place. They preferred a hot war. Dick “Shooter” Cheney, who served as Secretary of Defense to Bush’ father, erroneously believed that Gorbachev would be replaced with a militaristic leader, leading to a resumption of the Cold War, and that Gorbachev’s liberal policy of glasnost (“an opening”) was just a trick. History repeated itself years later when Vice President Dick Shooter took command of the Bush White House and once again made wrong strategic judgments, spawned faulty intelligence, and cast his warmongering spell over the White House and the spineless GOP-controlled Congress.

In addition to conning the American public, the Bush neocons also conned themselves. They began to believe their own propaganda that the Iraqi invasion and aftermath would be a cakewalk. A swift and decisive military victory, coupled with

cheering friendly crowds throughout Iraq, would cause the American public to forgive all the lies and crimes on the road to war. Bewildered and dazed by reality, however, the Bush neocons staggered and flip-flopped as they desperately tried to undo the horrendous damage they spawned in Iraq.

Bush is no Reagan. He is no Truman, no Kennedy, and no Clinton. When Bush tries to play the Reagan part, he comes across as a bumbling inarticulate pretender, a caricature, an inept actor. Bush's phrase "axis of evil" was intended to hark back to Reagan's "evil empire," but it was a silly nonsensical attempt to make Bush sound like Reagan. Imagine that—a foreign policy plan based on trying to make Bush sound like a Hollywood actor.

Regarding Iraq, the neocons' shoot-first DNA—coupled with their ideologically-driven *groupthink*—prevented them from drawing any useful lessons from either America's defeat in the hot war in Vietnam or America's victory in the Cold War. Unfortunately, clueless blank-slate Bush sat in the White House, and the Cheney-led neocons held all the chalk and were writing all the plans, in a bubble, without analysis or direction from America's commander in chief or anyone else.

The world hoped Bush would be equal to the challenges and opportunities presented by 9/11. He was not. Neither was the GOP that controlled all branches of the U.S. government. The world hoped Bush would discard his growing reputation as a not-too-bright, disengaged oilman and pretend-cowboy from Texas. He could not. The world hoped Bush would decisively take the high road and—based on a foundation of shared values and mutual respect—lead the world to a place of greater security, peace and prosperity. He did not.

Instead Bush chose a low imperial road leading to the mirage of The Project for the New American Century, in which America would impose its will and have its way. Well, that was the general idea, but things didn't quite work out right.

The Bush neocons are sometimes called hawks or super-hawks, but many commentators prefer *chickenhawks*, which is more accurate. It is easy for a weakling⁸ to be a bully when the armed forces of the United States stand behind him or, well, in front of him. America needs a leader with backbone and values equal to that of its soldiers, but Bush falls miles short of that mark. The vast majority of America's soldiers are patriotic working-class men and women. They are not of America's favored Super Rich class, for whom Bush has them working.

It is encouraging that there is a growing list of extremely wealthy people who not only oppose the Bush administration's economic policies that favor the Super Rich, but also are extremely upset with its unilateral militaristic policies. One of the more prominent opponents is billionaire George Soros, author of *The Bubble of American Supremacy*, who writes:

We have been deceived. When he stood for election in 2000, President Bush promised a humble foreign policy. I contend that the Bush administration has deliberately exploited September 11 to pursue policies that the American public would not have otherwise tolerated. The US can lose its dominance only as a result of its own mistakes. At present the country is in the process of committing such mistakes because

⁸ Yes, "W" also stands for "weakling."

it is in the hands of a group of extremists whose strong sense of mission is matched only by their false sense of certitude.

This distorted view postulates that because we are stronger than others, we must know better and we must have right on our side. That is where religious fundamentalism comes together with market fundamentalism to form the ideology of American supremacy.

The neocons' efforts to make America the one imperial superpower are not only doomed to failure, they also are making the world more unstable. We see this playing out in every nation in the Middle East, and the biggest loser—except for America and Iraq—is Israel.

At the core of the imperial agenda is the belief that the United States may—and should—use its unrivaled military power in any way it unilaterally chooses to pursue American interests. America has the military power, and therefore the right, to create a world that is more exploitable by huge corporations and the Super Rich.

Is it possible that other peoples and nations of the world might look at this differently? Is it possible they might have a large measure of distrust and fear? Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States—generally for the common good but sometimes not—made the biggest footprints in the world regarding so many aspects of human life: technology, language, business, environment, use of limited natural resources, culture, products, religion, military, geopolitics, science, travel, trade, education, medicine, human rights, and the list goes on.

Given this American influence and domination, which is felt in virtually every part of every nation, it is remarkable that so many Americans are rabidly critical and fearful of foreigners and any real or imagined foreign influence in the United States. These fearful complainers—America's *bedwetting conservatives*—consist by and large of the cocooned and fearful of America's political extreme right. They want the world to be a one-way street on which only Americans can drive. Perhaps you've even heard some of them gripe about the way foreigners talk. "Why can't they speak English like Jesus did?"

The War on Terrorism—the Slogan that Means Nothing and Justifies Anything

The Bush neocons use the "war on terrorism" slogan to gain several advantages, all politically motivated.

- First, by calling it a *war*, the Bush neocons spread fear and receive a freer hand in using military force, their tool of first choice for any real or imagined international problem.
- Second, the "fact" that we're at war is used to stifle dissent, whether from the media, American citizens, or America's elected representatives. Dissenters, even war heroes, are venomously labeled unpatriotic. Striving to avoid debate of its unilateralist policies, the Bush administration and its lackeys attack those who exercise their first amendment rights. The principal victim of Bush's war on terrorism is America's democracy.
- Third, rightwing Orwellian propagandists use the "at war" label to repaint Bush as a *strong leader*, a real *commander in chief*.

- Fourth—and most important—the war on terrorism provides both distraction and cover for the Bush regime as it pursues its domestic agenda of doing everything possible for the Super Rich and favored corporate interests.

In addition to increasing the likelihood of actual war by promoting a war climate, the term itself—war on terrorism—undoubtedly further biases the Bush neocons *themselves* in the wrong direction with respect to the policies they set and the decisions they make. Already harboring a misguided bloodlust for military action, they hardly need further encouragement.

Since terror is simply a tactic, not an enemy or foe, numerous military experts have pointed out the inherent absurdity of the “war on terrorism” slogan. Declaring war on terrorism is like declaring war on bombs or boomerangs.

Jon Stewart summed it up nicely in his 2004 commencement address at The College of William and Mary: “We declared war on terror—it’s not even a noun, so, good luck. After we defeat it, I’m sure we’ll take on that bastard *ennui*.” (OK, so “terror” is in fact a noun, but nevertheless we understand exactly what *Comedy News Central*’s Resident Expert on Grammar meant.)

The slogan “war on terrorism” (sometimes expanded to the “global war on terrorism”) is not a policy, but rather a misleading substitute for thinking and hard work. It is a fear-evoking bromide by cocooned warmongers who declare that the outside world is evil, dangerous and dark, when in fact it is their own behavior that causes the world to see *them* that way. Never looking in the mirror, and misguided by their own ignorance and incompetence, the Bush neocons turned America’s foreign policy into a splattering of deadly unguided missiles that promote the evil world of their fantasies. In short, they create evil self-fulfilling prophecies because they don’t know Shiite from shinola.

The world is appalled at Bush’s simplistic binary “us vs. them” and “good vs. evil” formulations that do not address underlying complexities and always make things worse. Consider the perspective of Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN envoy to Iraq, who criticized the Bush administration for its militaristic policies in Iraq and diplomatically referred to Bremer as “the dictator of Iraq.” In June 2004, Brahimi said: “I think it’s a little bit too easy to call everybody a terrorist. And I think if you find out that there are people who are not terrorists who are respectable, genuine Iraqi patriots, you must find a way of talking to them.”

Bombs alone, or bombs as a first choice, will not win the so-called war on terrorism. In sharp contrast to the Bush neocons, the nations of the world understand that the war on terrorism is really much different from a “war” and that there must be a dedicated long-term multilateral strategy focused on underlying problems and solutions. However, the Bush regime prefers bombing to building. After all, bombing is easy, whereas helping to build human lives and nations is difficult, in addition to being incompatible with neocon DNA.

America cannot on its own win the so-called war on terrorism. Bush League efforts will not win it. America needs the cooperation of the world, which takes moral leadership. A central problem is that Bush and his GOP policies are highly radioactive, especially in the Islamic world and among our allies. As the least respected and most hated leader in the world, Bush would handily win the “Biggest Liar” and “Most Dangerous World Leader” awards in virtually every nation in our small world.

SIDEBAR: A National Day of Mourning for Bush League Incompetence

May 19, 2005, was a milestone in Bush League incompetence, but no one noticed.

Three years, 8 months and 8 days: This is the time span from December 7, 1941—the date of Japan’s attack at Pearl Harbor, marking America’s entrance into World War II—to August 15, 1945, which was Victory over Japan Day, or V-J Day, marking the end of WWII.⁹

From 9/11 to May 19, 2005, is the same length of time—3 years, 8 months, and 8 days.

The contrast between the America led by President Roosevelt in World War II against the world-class military powers of Germany and Japan, and the America misled by President Bush after 9/11 is astonishing. America and its many allies had much to celebrate on August 15, 1945. As for May 19, 2005, it passed silently without commemoration or note—other than the death of three more American soldiers in Iraq, which is roughly the daily average during Bush’s and the GOP’s war on Iraq.

May 19 deserves to be a National Day of Mourning for America, a sad day of commemoration marking opportunities lost, an America gone astray.

Let’s be clear. In working to promote peace and eliminate terrorism in the world, the United States and its allies from time to time may be *required* to declare and fight conventional wars against specific nations or other foes, or to intervene in particular countries or regions of the world.

Arguably, the war in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and the Taliban was one such justified case, although the bomb-and-go Bush administration waged it with disheartening incompetence and lack of sustained will. This war should be renamed *Osama bin Forgotten*.

America would be better served if the “war” label were reserved for real wars—military campaigns waged against specific nations for justifiable reasons—that follow a declaration of war, have the advice and consent of Congress, and are supported by a clear majority of the American people.

One obvious problem with the so-called war on terrorism is its perpetual nature. Given the domestic political advantages of being at war, do the Bush neocons really want it to end? Perhaps they have grown too fond of the mistaken notion that they can keep the domestic fear index higher if bin Laden remains on the loose.

On March 13, 2002, at a rare press conference, Bush admitted, “I don’t know where he is. You know, I just don’t spend that much time on him ... I truly am not that concerned about him.” With such a weak warrior in charge, it has taken the Bush regime much longer to find bin Laden than it did for America to win World War II.

One day your grandchildren may ask how such an incompetent fool managed to become America’s president, and why Americans kept him in office so long. What-

⁹ Three months earlier, on May 7, 1945—Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day—Germany capitulated to the Allied powers, marking the end of WWII in Europe.

ever your answer, may it include the fact that you tried your best to support Bush's impeachment and removal from office.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a leader. George W. Bush is a fool, a disgrace to America and the men and women who wear its uniform.

A conventional war—at least one with a likelihood of being followed by true peace—has a clear end-date milestone, which typically consists of the surrender by one side and the signing of a peace treaty by both sides. In any case, there's a clear end date. On the other hand, Bush's war on terrorism, in addition to suffering from the fundamental flaw that it has never been defined, will never end because there will always be criminals and terrorists in the world, whether or not we have leaders like Bush creating and inspiring so many of them.

It is noteworthy that America's enemy in Afghanistan did not surrender or sign a peace treaty, which is a huge red flag indicating that lots of unfinished work remained. Bush, however, foolishly claimed victory and moved on Iraq. Likewise, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq did not surrender or sign a peace treaty, an obvious but overlooked fact that underlies Bush's foolish "Mission Accomplished" declaration.

The Bush neocons have never leveled with the American people regarding how long they think their so-called war on terrorism will last. The Bush neocons—living in their *groupthink* echo chambers—refuse to be candid. Why bother? The tough "war on terrorism" slogan helps enable their militant antidemocratic policies, both abroad and at home.

Even regarding specific shooting wars claimed to be within the scope of their so-called war on terrorism—Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran next, and counting—the Bush administration never levels with the American people, or themselves, as to how long they believe each war will last.

The term "war on terrorism" is reminiscent of many other open-ended "wars" that aren't wars: the "War on Drugs," the "War on Poverty," and so forth. However, everyone understands in these other cases that the word "war" does not refer to actual military warfare.

In sharp contrast, the Bush neocons use their so-called war on terrorism as a broad, all encompassing, ill-defined umbrella that empowers them to wage actual warfare whenever and wherever they choose, while psychologically conditioning the American populace to be fearful and compliant.

The so-called war on terrorism is simply not a war in any traditional or correct sense of the word. It is not a World War I, or a World War II, or a Vietnam War, or any other war. As misused by the Bush neocons it is pure propaganda and thus should be dropped.

That won't happen. The "war on terrorism" slogan is tailor-made doublespeak for Fox News and other rightwing propaganda pushers, who work diligently to promote Bush and the GOP's extreme rightwing agenda. America's corporate media love the slogan.

We note in passing that, in marketing its war agenda, the Bush regime and its propaganda pushers in America's media tried other variations of the "war on terrorism" slogan, including "The Long War" and even "World War IV," but these adventuresome slogans attained little traction.

SIDEBAR: America the Weakened

There are three principal sources of America's strength and positive influence in the world: (1) progressive moral values, (2) economic strength, and (3) military strength. Bush severely damaged all three during his GOP reign of error.

1) Progressive Moral Values. Thanks to Bush and the GOP, America is no longer the world's bright beacon of hope, freedom and peace. They replaced the torch on the Statue of Liberty with a huge middle finger. Distrust of America has never been higher. Foreigners, both friend and foe, increasingly question America's morals and motivations. They see the rotten fruit resulting from America's turn to the Dark Right: the massive corruption and cronyism within the Bush administration and the GOP; the spiteful divisiveness; the attack on Americans' constitutional rights and liberties while corporate power is expanded; the crusade that favors one Right Religion while attacking religious freedom and the separation of church and state; the rightwing warmongering in violation of just war principles; the squandering of the universal support for America following 9/11; the growing chasm in America between the Super Rich and the poor; the culture of lies and deceit; and the unwillingness to address America's own moral problems of poverty and discrimination. Bush and his Confederate Party no longer represent—and cannot be trusted to protect—America's true moral values.

2) Economic strength. By every significant financial measure, Bush and the GOP have put America on the Road to Economic Armageddon. Unless there is a huge change of course, the coming GOP Great Depression II will make the GOP Great Depression of the 1930s look like a Sunday picnic. Bush's and the GOP's financial "accomplishments" are truly staggering: record federal spending; record reduction in federal income; record tax cuts for the Super Rich; record federal budget deficits; record loss of manufacturing jobs for middle-class Americans; record increases in illegal aliens; record trade deficits; record national debt; record interest payments on the national debt; record borrowing from foreign powers; record number of Americans who lost health insurance coverage; record number of children living in poverty; record deficit in the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation; record corporate welfare; record corruption and cronyism in government; and the list goes on. Bin Laden in the White House instead of Bush—and the Taliban running Congress in place of the GOP—could not have inflicted more economic damage on America. Bush and his Confederate Party are incompetent to run the U.S. government and cannot be trusted with America's economic future.

3) Military strength. By immorally invading Iraq and incompetently waging that war, Bush foolishly exposed inherent weaknesses and limitations regarding America's military strength, in addition to absolutely weakening it. He failed to adequately equip and support America's troops. He also greatly diminished the *perception* of America's military strength. His failures emboldened and united America's enemies, and discouraged and divided America's allies. Bush is the world's number one breeder of terrorists. He favored guns to the exclusion of diplomacy. He replaced the strength of alliances with the weakness of unilateralism. Like the Vietnam Syndrome, the Iraq Syndrome will have an enduring negative impact on America's military and foreign policy. An America with only one-fifth of its current military strength under an American president with just average morals and competency would be much stronger than the current "full-strength" America under Bush. He and his Confederate Party cannot be trusted with America's security. They are a disgrace to America's finest.

In pursuing its imperial agenda in Iraq, the Bush regime gave no meaningful consideration to the fundamental concept of a *just war*, and it had no desire to build a *strong coalition* before pushing forward. America and the world will pay dearly for decades for this catastrophic failure of leadership. Blithely ignoring history and the best military and diplomatic advice, the Bush neocons maliciously and foolishly did what they had wanted to do for many years. In the next chapter we will do what the Bush neocons never did, which is to pay some attention to the important related concepts of a *just war* and a *strong coalition*.