

Bush and Blair: On the wrong course

According to a recent survey, half of the Americans polled believe their President, is a liar

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The administration knows how guilty it is. That's why it has so quickly trashed any insider who contradicts its storyline of how we got to Iraq..." Frank Rich, *New York Times*.

There is mounting evidence that the lies perpetrated by the Bush administration are beginning to be perceived for what they were — and are: political and ideological fabrications cut from whole cloth to mask the real reasons President Bush led his nation into the swamp of Iraq, where it now thrashes about mindlessly like an old Holstein cow trying to extricate itself from the sticky slime of a mudhole.

According to a recent [survey](#), half of the Americans polled — 50 per cent — now believe their President, their Commander-in-Chief, to be a liar.

Being President of the United States is a tough job in these fractious times. Trying to run the most powerful country in the world when half the population believes every word you utter is a blatant untruth, is pretty high impossible.

Almost every day, President Bush or some satrap in the White House, tells the American people that things are getting better in Iraq. Every night on network television, the same American people watch the carnage as it continues to contradict the official line.

Almost every day some General on the payroll backs up his Commander-in-Chief. And almost every day a retired military man offers a scathing critique of "Mr. Bush's war" as one former military man called it in my presence.

And every day, we hear more of the same inane mouthings about fighting terrorism and confronting "evil" in Iraq and Afghanistan, as though some military Armageddon in those two miserable countries would settle matters once and for all.

Mr. Bush even goes so far as to present his war as a simplistic choice of fighting the "terrorists" there or fighting them on the American homeland. He does not point out, of course, that until the Americans occupied Iraq — there were no terrorists there; that until the Americans began killing Iraqis — there was no international cause to which young Muslim men and women could rally and commit themselves to being voluntarily blown to bits and pieces.

And now the British presence in Iraq alongside the Americans has brought the war to the heart of Great Britain. The Brits are now fighting the war against terror on their own soil.

At first, there was an assumption that the four young men who blew up the underground and a bus must be fellows from away. It was unthinkable that Muslims born and brought up in the cradle of western democracy could be seduced into the fatalistic embrace of fanatical Muslim fundamentalism.

Wrong! And that circumstance presents us with an even scarier scenario for the future — a very real and present threat to the survival of the values of tolerance and acceptance at the core of the liberal democracies developed as the foundation of western civilization.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair now proposes [new legislation](#) that would severely curb even private discourse and difference of opinion on the subject of terrorists and terrorism, let alone published or broadcast comments. What is even more frightening is that the first public opinion polls on the subject in America and the British Isles indicate that most of the public is prepared to accept such curbs in the interests of their own safety. That would mean we are faced with the prospect of destroying the society we have created, in order to preserve some semblance of a society. And that is a nightmarish prospect with ramifications horrible to contemplate.

Some British commentators are already publicly questioning and even blaming the idea of a multi-cultural society where cultures are encouraged to co-exist, rather than integrate. They observe that a society which allows segments of itself to adhere to other values than that of the main society eventually devours itself because there are no common threads to bind the different elements together.

The phrase “acceptance of difference” used to be trotted out to define how people of diverse cultures and faiths should live together in a liberal democracy. The phrase implies respect for, if not acceptance of, differing cultural and religious values.

But somehow, those words and the thought behind them, don’t seem to cut it anymore, certainly not with many young Muslims born of emigrant parents and now caught in a schizoid existence between the strictures of their faith and the materialistic world they envy but eventually despise.

In the ’60s, the simple-minded values of cults held sway to capture the loyalties of many North American youngsters drifting between the world of their parents and what seemed to be their own realities. In the confusing clash of values extant today in global society, the same sort of simplistic black and white strictures of religious fundamentalism, be it Muslim or Christian, present the same sort of authoritarian path to follow for the young and confused in search of a cause.

But now they come bearing bombs, and the promise of a better world for their spirits and their souls if they will but commit their temporal bodies to destruction for the heavenly cause.

Mr. Bush is wrong of course. He and Tony Blair will not defeat terrorism in the dust of Afghanistan and Iraq, no matter how many they send to die in that fruitless cause. They will only cause chaos in their own and other countries and the deaths of thousands more, as well as the destruction of their own societies with values of freedom, tolerance and acceptance their own and other countries hold dear.

The real battle is within the spirit and soul of individual Muslims and Christians and what is

at stake is our own individual understanding of our own humanity as human beings upon this earth. Without that, we cannot live at peace with ourselves — or each other — no matter what our ideology or religious conviction.

Jack MacAndrew writes from Prince Edward Island.

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