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## The Democrats Are The Party Of Retreat And Defeat

June 28, 2006

[Vox Populi](#)

By Timothy D. Naegele

*Are They Afraid President Bush's Historical Legacy Will Be Similar To That Of Abraham Lincoln And Ronald Reagan?*

With the Senate having soundly rejected plans offered by the Democrats, calling for the U. S. to begin withdrawing most of its forces from Iraq, one might have thought there would be a momentary lull in the party's attacks on President Bush and his policies in Iraq. However, Howard Dean quickly dispelled that illusion. In the party's weekly radio address, Mr. Dean said: "We don't want another wall with 55,000 names of courageous Americans who were let down by their Government." Perhaps Mr. Dean's memory needs to be refreshed concerning who died and why, and who was responsible for the deaths.

The attacks by Dean and his fellow Democrats bring to mind similar assaults on Abraham Lincoln prior to the 1864 presidential election, and are reminiscent of the vicious attacks on Ronald Reagan. Like Reagan, I began my political life as a Democrat, in no small part because I am an idealist who believed in John F. Kennedy. Later, I discovered that he was a





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mere mortal and had feet of clay, and he had placed the United States on its path in Vietnam, which ultimately claimed the lives of more than 58,000 brave Americans whose names appear on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

Mr. Dean went on to say: “The parallels between the mistakes being made today in Iraq and the behavior of our government a generation ago are striking. Troops are sent to fight by an administration that refuses to listen to the advice of military leaders. The Administration decides it’s ok to conceal information from the Congress and the American people. Promises like ‘stay the course,’ ‘Peace is at Hand’ or ‘the insurgency is in its last throes’ are made by an increasingly desperate Administration.” Dean just described why I am no longer a Democrat.

Robert McNamara, who was Kennedy’s and Lyndon Johnson’s Secretary of Defense, steered both presidents and this great nation down the primrose path; and of course, Johnson’s penchant for micro-managing that war contributed mightily to the end results. It was a tragedy of monumental and historical proportions, especially for those American families who lost their loved ones, and for America itself—which lost its innocence, honor and confidence in the jungles of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

We were not defeated militarily in Southeast Asia. We lost the political will to fight and win, which sowed the seeds of our ignominious defeat. Now the Democrats are doing it again. As Senator Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) has said: “It is time to tell the Iraqis that we have done what we can do militarily.” Those and other words such as “redeployment” are simply code words for getting out now, win or lose, surrendering, and running with our tail between our legs. It appears that Feingold and his Democrat brethren have inherited the mantle of those who sold our Vietnamese allies and us down the Mekong River.

For their own perceived political gains, the Democrats seem bent on turning the Iraq War into another Vietnam War—which they got this country into, and then cut and ran from, leaving in its wake innocent Vietnamese who were tortured and murdered, and whose only crime was believing in United States of America and all the good that it stands for. Congressman John Murtha (D-Pa.) is reported to have told an audience in Miami that the American presence in Iraq is more dangerous to world peace than nuclear threats from North Korea or Iran.

Perhaps Senator George Allen (R-Va.) put the issue in its starkest and most accurate terms, saying that the Democrats offer “a vacillating strategic plan for retreat” while the Republicans support “a steady strategic plan for success.” This is an election year, and control of the Senate and House is at stake, as well as the ability of Democrats to dictate

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the agenda between now and the presidential election of 2008, and to seek George W. Bush's impeachment by then. In terms of American politics, the stakes could not be higher—and they are reminiscent of what Abraham Lincoln faced before the presidential election of 1864, although President Bush will not be running for reelection either this fall or in 2008.

Democrats are intent on making both elections a referendum on the president's handling of the war in Iraq, at the least, and snatching defeat from the jaws of victory to humiliate him. Politics in the United States today, certainly on the national level, is vicious and poisonous; and it is surprising why any American would run for elective office. Capitol Hill is polarized politically, and any notion of true bipartisan civility went out the window years ago. Replacing it is open political warfare that puts individual political ambitions above this nation's long-term best interests, and augurs for return to the Vietnam War era, with its divisiveness and tragic legacy for this country. The old saws about patriotism, and politics stopping at the water's edge, seem to be missing in action.

Lincoln faced similar times and adversaries when he ran for reelection, yet he held firm to his beliefs and prevailed, and it changed the course of American history. While historians will ultimately write about Bush's life and place in history, it is not too early to compare him favorably with both Lincoln and Reagan. Surely, any Democrat who reads this article will take umbrage at such a suggestion; however, Lincoln was one of the founders of the Republican Party, and he preserved this nation's unity in the face of a political and military centrifuge that was pulling it apart. Reagan restored American confidence after the Vietnam War and Jimmy Carter years, and he went on to win the Cold War and defeat the Soviet Union.

If George W. Bush is successful, he will have changed the face of the Middle East, and given Freedom a real chance in that region of the world; he will have dealt perhaps a fatal blow to the forces of radical Islam and al Qaeda; he will have fostered the continued growth and integration into the West of Eastern Europe's Freedom-loving democracies; he will have kept the truly evil forces in Iran and Kim Jong Il's North Korea in check; he will have moved China and Russia farther into the world community, and away from military adventurism; and he will have given the American people a greater sense of pride and purpose than either materialism or secularism can offer.

In the interim, President Bush must continue to deal with our traditional adversaries, China and Russia, as well as global terrorists who are bent on destroying the United States and Western civilization. Just as the Soviet Union might have launched its missiles against North America during the Cold War, or China might do so in the future over the issue of Taiwan, or North Korea's deranged Kim Jong Il might do so on a whim, the president must also deal with terrorists around the globe, who have been usurping one of the world's great religions to sow the seeds of prejudice, hatred and destruction.

I became a Democrat because I believed in the party, despite the fact that I had come from a family of devout Republicans. I believed then and I believe now in this great country and its people, but I also believe that little in this world is sacrosanct or above scrutiny and constructive criticism. I supported the war in Vietnam until I realized that McNamara, Johnson and other politicians in Washington had hamstrung our military's efforts to win, resulting in the senseless deaths of countless Americans—including dear friends of mine—who became cannon fodder. Also, American Infantry officers were fragged because some soldiers were on drugs or truly hated the war, or hated being in Vietnam; and that war poisoned the American spirit and it still does.

Fast-forward to today, and our actions abroad are being questioned again, by the heirs of those who gave us the Vietnam War as well as the carnage, retreat and defeat that it



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spawned. Yet, in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have some of the finest members of the American military who have served anywhere in the world at any time, and they believe that we will win. Since 9/11, they have ousted the Taliban from control of Afghanistan and liberated that nation and given its women freedoms that were unknown to them before the United States and its allies arrived. In Iraq, Saddam's reign of terror came to an end, and the gallows await him; and a new day of freedom beckons those brave Iraqis who are standing up to home-grown insurgents as well as terrorists from other parts of the world who are bent on destroying what Americans and our equally-brave allies have been accomplishing.

There is one immutable fact that the doves in Congress cannot understand, or choose to ignore amidst their ever-rising choruses of retreat and defeat: 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq are free today because of what President Bush and America have done. Standing on the charred debris of the World Trade Center's twin towers, the president took a bullhorn and announced to the world that such a heinous crime would not stand, and it has not. Like Lincoln and Reagan before him, he has been delivering on his promises to rid the world of those who would do harm to the United States and its allies; and he has given hope to those who believe Freedom's march is unstoppable—which is evident for all to see today in the countries of Eastern Europe.

The price of failure in Iraq is enormous and the ramifications are mind-boggling, as discussed in the Wall Street Journal's March 22 editorial, "What if We Lose?" The possible consequences include chaos in that country; a loss of all American credibility on weapons proliferation; broader instability in the Middle East; a loss of all credibility with Muslim reformers; the perception of American weakness that would invite more terrorist attacks on U.S. soil; the fall of Afghanistan; the loss of American credibility and leadership around the world, and the emboldening of our enemies; the reemergence of American isolationism; the loss of American confidence; the impeachment of President Bush; the destruction of Israel; and other consequences that are far worse than Pearl Harbor and 9/11.

For example, having cut and run from Iraq, it might be simply a matter of time before Afghanistan falls too. Many in the American media and political classes seem preoccupied if not obsessed with proving that we are losing in Iraq and savaging the Bush Administration's handling of the war; and there is little doubt that Afghanistan would be their next focus of attention—or events on the ground there might doom that valiant effort too.

It is clear that if we had not gone into Afghanistan and Iraq, the region would be far different today. If the Bush Doctrine of preemptive strikes had not been pursued, Libya would not have sought peace with the West; Syria would not have withdrawn from Lebanon; free elections would not have occurred in both Afghanistan and Iraq; and women in both countries would not be enjoying the freedoms that they are exercising now. Yet, all of these enormously positive developments might be undone in short order if we withdraw from Iraq precipitously, or any time soon.

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Similarly, with the fall of Iraq and Afghanistan, our relationships with Pakistan and the former Soviet-bloc countries that have been aiding us might be jeopardized beyond repair. In all likelihood, Russia would seek to draw countries back into its sphere of influence that have been tasting freedoms and democracy for the first time in generations. Any notion of American leadership would be scoffed at around the world, certainly by al Qaeda; and it might crumble before our very eyes.

China might view the United States as little more than a paper tiger that would do nothing if it sought to regain Taiwan militarily. Also, China might be emboldened to flex its military and economic muscles elsewhere in Asia. North Korea would not feel restrained militarily, while our South Korean and Japanese allies might seek to distance themselves

from the U.S., and seek deals with China and North Korea that otherwise would have been unthinkable. Chavez in Venezuela might act too, with respect to oil and related matters; and other nations that supply us with oil might be affected as well. Indeed, only the truly naïve believe that our enemies around the world are not gloating at the political divisiveness in our country today, and licking their chops for the battles ahead.

Also, a shattering of the American spirit might take place and eclipse the aftermath of Vietnam. The recriminations across the political spectrum might be staggering. Indeed, the ugly head of our defeat in Vietnam is emerging once again, despite the fact that it took years to bury its ghosts. Many Americans might conclude that it is an enormous waste of human and other resources to ever again become the world's policeman or the defender of liberty and freedoms elsewhere in the world. Whether articulated or not, there might be a real sense of withdrawal to "Fortress America," which would affect our trade policies and vast sectors of our economic and social endeavors.

In the age of 24/7 news cycles, it is not surprising that 9/11 and the attacks in London and Madrid have receded from the attention of most Americans—and certainly from that of the media—and have become yesterday's news. Americans are only human, and other pressing matters like work and the family impact their everyday lives much more than speculation about what might happen to the U.S. and our way of life, as frightening as that might be. If we were to withdraw from Iraq, a sense of focusing within and avoidance of issues affecting the world might prevail, which would be understandable albeit potentially disastrous.

Next, if the Democrats regain the Senate, House or both in the fall elections, one can expect that impeachment and related hearings will take place and set the stage for the 2008 elections, and that efforts to remove the president from office will begin in earnest. A hatred of George W. Bush by some Americans will have morphed into an effort to tear down his Administration and its efforts around the world, substituting defeat for the victories that we have been achieving as the forces of freedom and democracy have been given new impetus since 9/11.

Also, with America having effectively withdrawn from the Middle East, Israel's future might be bleak as it faces Iran, Syria, the most vicious elements among the Palestinians, al Qaeda, and a new Iraq—whatever that turns out to be. As a prominent American (who is a Jew and a strong supporter of Israel) told me almost nine years ago: "I have long thought that Israel will not make it, if only because of what are cavalierly called WMD and its very tight geographical compression. All else is immaterial, including the Palestinians, or us, or the nature of Israel's [government]."

The attacks of 9/11 were a clarion call to arms, but members of the media and political classes portray America's responses in terms of defeat instead of victory, and as misguided at best. Thank God that 9/11 was a wake-up call rather than a nation-threatening event like Pearl Harbor. If the Japanese had launched preemptive, deadly strikes—using nuclear weaponry or the like—against American cities, or if they had the wherewithal to project their military beyond Pearl Harbor and invade the American mainland, the course of history might have been changed forever.

Today, the attacks of 9/11 and in London and Madrid—and yes, at Pearl Harbor too—stand as a sacred reminder of what can happen when Americans naively stick our heads in the sand and say (and believe) that it can never happen here again. It can, and according to the 9/11 commission and other similar groups, it is only a matter of time before it does. For example, in an August 12, 2004 editorial entitled the "Mother of All Blackouts," the Wall Street Journal spoke solemnly and eloquently about the findings of the Commission to Assess the Threat to the U.S. from Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) Attack.

As the Journal's editors wrote, "An EMP attack occurs when an enemy sets off a nuclear explosion high in the Earth's atmosphere. The electromagnetic pulse generated by the blast destroys the electronics and satellites in its field of vision. For a detonation above the Midwest, that could mean the entire continental U.S." They continued: "The pulse would wipe out most electronics and telecommunications, including the power grid. Millions could die for want of modern medical care or even of starvation since farmers wouldn't be able to harvest crops and distributors wouldn't be able to get food to supermarkets. Commissioner Lowell Wood calls EMP attack a 'giant continental time machine' that would move us back more than a century in technology to the late 1800s."

The editorial continued: "The Commission notes that little in the private sector is hardened to withstand EMP attack and that the military has only limited protection. After an EMP assault, the nation would be highly vulnerable to secondary attack by conventional forces or a biological weapon." The editors added: "China and Russia have the capability to launch an EMP weapon—and have let us know it. . . . But it's a relatively unsophisticated EMP weapon in the hands of terrorists that really scares the Commission. All it would take is one nuclear warhead attached to a Scud missile launched from a barge off the U.S. coast to shut down much of the country."

Whether it is an EMP or biological attack or some other heinous crime against this country and mankind, it is time for the American people—who are certainly wiser than many elected officials and members of the media—to wake up and spurn those who would preach defeat and negativism. Lots of us had serious reservations about invading Iraq for a variety of reasons, including the risk that WMDs might be used against our military forces. Such weapons have been found, as the recent declassification of a national intelligence report confirms; and that issue is discussed in the Wall Street Journal's June 26 article, "Saddam's WMD," by Peter Hoekstra and Rick Santorum.

However, the decision to invade Iraq is behind us now, and we are at war on a global scale, and this great nation's very survival is at stake. We have been changing the face of the Middle East, and we have been moving to achieve a brighter future for all who revere democracy and freedoms everywhere. Yet, we cannot forget the lessons of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 because such attacks can happen again on American soil or that of our allies. The next time may have much more far-reaching consequences for this country and the course of history.

Americans are correct that at times things might have been handled better in Iraq. And more than 2,500 Americans have died there, and each one was and is important to this country and precious to his or her loved ones, in ways that most of us will never know. Yet, by definition, war is hell and Vietnam was an example of that; and put into perspective, brave Iraqis and those from other nations are serving with us, and dying as well. In our own Civil War, it was not uncommon for even more staggering casualties to occur in a single battle or on a single day, such as at Gettysburg where American casualties exceeded 50,000 in three days, and at Antietam where the number of casualties exceeded 25,000 in one day of fighting.

Regrettably, many in the American media and political classes seem to be hoping that we fail in both Iraq and Afghanistan, which would be a catastrophe for this country—eclipsing what happened in Vietnam. Our repute as the world's only superpower would fade, and our enemies would be emboldened to attack us at home and abroad, and it would be open season on Americans wherever we are. Tragically, the hatred of George W. Bush by some Americans seems to know no bounds, which has been blinding them from understanding the consequences of their rhetoric and actions.

Like Abraham Lincoln before him, Ronald Reagan often adopted controversial positions

that were unpopular domestically; and support for both war presidents—during the Civil War and the Cold War—ebbed and flowed dramatically. Yet, because of Lincoln, our nation held together and succeeded beyond the wildest expectations; and because of Reagan, the Berlin Wall fell and the Evil Empire of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain are gone, and the peoples of Eastern Europe are free—miracles that Reagan’s critics denounced as fantasies before they became reality. Greatness is often evident in times of war and controversy; and as with Lincoln and Reagan, George W. Bush’s greatness may not be recognized fully until long after his second term ends.

We have made enormous progress in Iraq, but wars are seldom won in a single day or month or year; and some “simmer” long after the major battles have been fought and won, which is true on the Korean peninsula today. Also, insurgent groups existed in Germany after Berlin fell in 1945. And it is unlikely that Dwight Eisenhower and America’s allies would have succeeded on D-Day and in the other crucial military campaigns of World War II if today’s media scrutiny and second-guessing had occurred. Surely some network news department or Internet site would have compromised the secrecy that was so vital to the success of those operations. And Freedom’s victories in Eastern Europe did not happen overnight.

In the final analysis, Americans of all political persuasions need to reflect on what is truly at stake, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in the broader War on Terror. A failure to do so will alter the course of history, certainly for America. We will fail if we lose our resolve and allow our enemies to defeat us—which this time might mean that the ravages of Vietnam come to our shores, more brutally than 9/11 and the attacks at Pearl Harbor and in London and Madrid combined.

Ultimately, historians will define George W. Bush’s place in history, and they will write the history of our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well. America is a beacon of Freedom today, but it would not have been so if Lincoln had faltered or the naysayers had defeated him, or if Reagan had not delivered on his words about tearing down the Berlin Wall and destroying the Evil Empire. President Bush is delivering, just as Lincoln and Reagan did, and that is probably what drives the Democrats mad more than anything.

Only by tearing down America, and scuttling our valiant efforts in Iraq, and by besmirching or destroying Bush’s reputation, do the Democrats have any chance of winning the elections of 2006 and 2008. Regrettably, they stand today in the shoes of those who sought to defeat Lincoln in 1864, and to tear down Ronald Reagan viciously, and as impediments to the progress that we have been making in the War on Terror. I am an Independent, although I would like to vote for Democrats again. However, I will never do so until the party stands for the best that is America, and does not try to tear it down.

It is for historians to write in the future about whether George W. Bush measures up to Lincoln and Reagan, in terms of greatness; however, my guess is that history will be very kind to this president. He may be viewed as the right man for the times, and as a leader who stood fast despite the changing tides of public opinion and the fact he was maligned at home and abroad. After all, those are the qualities that have been attributed to Lincoln and Reagan, so President Bush stands in very good company.

Regrettably, beginning with the Vietnam War and the Jimmy Carter years, the Democrats have been the party of gloom and doom, and of retreat and defeat, and I wish it wasn’t so. The idea that a fine senator like Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) would be at risk of losing his party’s primary election, because of his strong support for the Iraq War and President Bush’s policies, speaks volumes about where the Democrats are today.

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