

November 23rd, 2005

THE AMERICAN THINKER

 ABOUT  CONTACT  MERCHANDISE  DONATIONS  LINKS  CONTRIBUTORS  HOME

ARTICLES...

A Second Letter to Opponents of the War in Iraq

November 23rd, 2005

When I first [wrote to you](#), last January, the level of opposition to the war in Iraq was too low to affect the war's outcome. President Bush had just been re-elected, and he had the public support he needed to stay the course. But for a combination of reasons – including the continuing violence in Iraq itself, the ever-growing number of American casualties, and the Administration's appalling inability to explain and defend its policy against the Democrats' increasingly ferocious attacks on it – opposition to the war has grown steadily during the last few months.

Today opposition to the war is so widespread among Americans that it may force the President to bring our troops home from Iraq sooner than he plans, or believes is prudent. And if that happens, Iraq will explode into civil war and we will have lost the war. In this sense, Iraq could turn out to be a replay of Vietnam. After all, we didn't lose the Vietnam war in Vietnam; we lost it in Washington.

So I'm taking the liberty of writing a second time, both to reiterate the point I made in my first letter and – more importantly – to reach all those of you who have only recently joined the opposition.

A Question of Attitude

I'm not writing to argue with your judgment about the war in Iraq. Rather, I am writing to protest your attitude toward the war. And the point I want to make is this: sometimes, you have to choose between proving yourself to have been right, or helping make a project succeed despite your opposition to it.

Since all our tempers are boiling over, it might be best to try and cool things down by using a

non-political example to illustrate my point: Imagine that a husband and wife are planning their vacation. One wants to spend it on the beach at Puerto Vallarta, and the other wants to go traipsing around Europe's battlefields. They cannot do both, and it makes no sense to try and split the difference geographically by spending two weeks in, say, Baltimore. So one spouse wins, and the other loses. If you are the winner, it's a good idea to avoid gloating. But if you are the loser, you have a difficult choice to make. You can prove yourself to have been right by making the vacation as miserable as possible – by whining about the food, the weather, the lack of a DSL line in your hotel room, and by generally being a pill. Or, you can recognize that the vacation isn't nearly as important as the marriage itself – in which case you swallow your defeat gracefully, look cheerful even if you aren't, and do whatever you can to make the vacation a success. If it's a disaster anyway – well, next time your spouse may take your advice. But if you give it your best shot despite your misgivings, you will at least preserve the marriage. And – I speak from experience – it's even possible the vacation itself will turn out better than you had expected.

It's the same in politics. When a policy is adopted that you don't like, sometimes – not always, but sometimes—you must choose between fighting it in hopes of proving you were right, or pitching in to make it work, despite your misgivings, for the good of the country.

Now, let's turn to the war in Iraq.

Simply put, Iraq has become the focal point of the entire war on terrorism. That's because President Bush's strategy for winning the war, in addition to fighting al Qaeda terrorists wherever we can find them, is to spread democracy itself throughout the Mideast. More precisely, his strategy is to create conditions in that part of the world that will trigger an Islamic revolution whose objective is to jolt Islam itself from the seventh century into the twenty-first century. In other words, we want Islam to do what Judaism and Christianity did centuries ago; namely, to reconcile with the modern world. If this actually happens in Iraq, the President believes, it will crack political ice throughout the region and trigger a chain reaction that will spread to other countries. And as the President sees it, only if democracy takes root in the Mideast will the threat of terrorism subside and will it be possible to finally end the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Now, you may be among those who believe that the President's strategy is absurd – that there isn't the slightest possibility of Islam reconciling with the modern world and of democracy taking root in the Mideast. Or, you may believe that the strategy is plausible, but that the President has made an historic mistake by choosing Iraq as first Mideast country in which to make it work. Or, you may believe that it can be done in Iraq, but that we have gone about it badly, for instance by not putting enough troops on the ground in that country to overcome the Baathists and the non-Iraqi terrorists who are fighting now to prevent the upcoming elections from succeeding.

In the end, history will prove you right – or wrong. But as of today, we simply don't know how things will turn out in Iraq. Read the last sentence again, slowly, because it really is the heart of the issue. We are in the middle of a war and no one – absolutely no one – knows whether we

will win or lose it.

What we do know for sure is this: our chances for success in Iraq will be greater if we all pull together to make it work. But if we fail in Iraq, the catastrophe of our defeat will spread beyond the Mideast and around the world. It will be taken as a huge victory for al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah and all those who support them, including Iran, Syria and North Korea, and the result will be a barrage of terrorist acts the likes of which the world has never seen, and which will place us all in mortal danger.

The Last Freedom

And this means you must choose. Is it more important to you that you be proven to have been right, or that our country survives? And yes, the choice really is this simple. The fact is, we have gone to war in Iraq and the President who set this course will remain in office for another three years. That's why it isn't your judgment now that matters – history will settle that in its own time – but your attitude. And I mean this in the deepest, most personal sense. In his great memoir of survival in a Nazi concentration camp, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl wrote that

“everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

To put it bluntly, your attitude stinks. You are so determined to be proven right that you are unhelpful at best, and at worst you are actively working to insure our defeat.

I am not suggesting that all politics be stopped, or that our democracy be suspended for the duration. Rather, I am suggesting that you recognize how much we are all at risk, and that right now you focus your energy, your experience, and your expertise on helping us to win. So, if you are a member of Congress, instead of cruising the talk-show circuit to say “Bush lied” as often as you can, get in touch with Sunni leaders in Iraq and urge them to stop fighting with the new government there and start working with it. Or pass word to Syria and Iran that while you disagree with the President's policies, you will support his efforts to stop these countries from infiltrating terrorists over the border into Iraq. And instead of whining that the new Iraqi constitution is imperfect – which is obvious, for crying out loud – provide whatever expertise you have to those brave Iraqi politicians who are literally risking their lives to make the new constitution work. And if you are just an ordinary American who believes the President has made a terrible mistake, keep in mind that while you have every right to demonstrate against the war these demonstrations play directly into our enemies' hands.

Demoralizing Our Enemies

Your help, or your behavior, could make all the difference, not just in terms of practical assistance but in broader terms of showing our adversaries around the world that right now, despite our different judgments, Americans are united. This by itself would almost do as much to demoralize our enemies as the accomplishments of our wonderful Soldiers and Marines in the

back alleys of Mosul or Falluja.

Don't tell me that you cannot change your attitude, or that it's your right and solemn duty as the loyal opposition to oppose the President however you can. The War on Terrorism isn't just another Bush Administration initiative, like the No Child Left Behind program or his proposal to reform the structure of Social Security. In this war, our very existence hangs in the balance, and national unity is more important than political advantage—or personal ambition. We are all in this together, as Americans, and we must all do whatever we can to help make the President's policy work, whether we like that policy or not.

And if you think that asking you to change your attitude is asking too much, give a moment's thought to what we are asking of the Iraqi people. After all, the President's entire policy rests on a change of attitude within the world of Islam itself. We are asking the Iraqis, and others in the Mideast, to abandon their tribal, if-you-win-then-I-must-lose way of thinking; to shift from oppressing other ethnic groups to co-operating with them; to move from totalitarianism to democracy. In short, we are asking them to make a mental leap from the Middle Ages to the modern world – fast.

That's a huge change in attitude to ask for, and the very least that you can do would be to set a good example.

Sincerely,

Herbert E. Meyer

Herbert E. Meyer served during the Reagan Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence and Vice Chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council. His DVD on [The Siege of Western Civilization](#) has become an international best-seller.

Herbert E. Meyer