

Waving The White Flag

Who Really Won the War on Terror

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On Tuesday morning September 11, 2001, 20 years ago today, our world changed. We are all too familiar with the horrific narrative describing the multiple attacks and the horrific loss of life. And regardless of the unanswered questions that have fueled some of the grandest conspiracy theories of all time, the fact remains that this was the first real attack upon sovereign U. S. Soil by a foreign entity—ever. And with that, America changed. Sure, the entire world was transformed that day, but today I want to focus on the United States of America.

Richard Ritenbaugh, in his introduction to his Feast of Trumpets sermon ["Zephaniah (Part One)"], asserted that we have entered into an axial period, a time of great global change where the established powers and their cultural values are challenged and even replaced, and I agree with him. While the events of 9/11 aren't the only factors that lead to the beginning of this axial period, they are certainly major contributors.

Consider the following. At 8:45 a.m. (EST) on September 11, 2001, about a decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union, America was not only the most powerful and prosperous nation on earth, but she had no realistic competition for that position. She was the world's lone superpower. Although there were always threats being hurled at America and she has a long history of overseas conflicts, no nation had ever dared mount an attack against her homeland—from sea to shining sea.

But at 8:46 AM, when that first plane slammed into the World Trade Center's North Tower, that was no longer the case. It's not my intention today to rehash the details of that day, but what's especially notable—beyond the tragic loss of nearly 3,000 souls—was our reaction to the hit America took to its icons of economic and military might in the two cities we could easily describe as our crown jewels, the political, economic and cultural centers of our American way of life, New York City And Washington, D.C.

We were shocked, confused, maddened and saddened. But along with those emotions, all detected a touch of despair in our voices and in our hearts. For the first time, most Americans, the wealthy along with the less than fortunate, tucked their children and themselves into bed that night with a measurable degree of uneasiness and anxiety. And though we would work hard to try to regain our collective swagger, the United States had taken on a noticeable limp.

So we did what any wounded, self-respecting lone superpower would do: We sought vengeance and we launched a war, the Global War on Terror. We committed untold trillions to hunt down and eliminate Islamic terrorists and those who would harbor them, starting in Afghanistan and moving on to Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, and wherever our military intelligence could smell a rat—even within our own borders.

It's been 20 long years, and even though we have declared victory several times in our global war, how did we really do?

We just stumbled and bumbled out of Afghanistan, tragically losing 13 of our soldiers by the hands of those we claim to have defeated while frustrating, confusing, and exposing our allies and ignoring their requests. We're down to 2,500 troops in Iraq where we are surrounded by Iranian-funded Shiite militia. Syria, where we still have 900 troops, is a shameful human rights disaster, with neighboring Lebanon (home of the terror group Hezbollah) approaching "failed state" status. Libya is a dangerous and confusing battleground between the Turks, the Russians, and the Egyptians. Doesn't sound an awful lot like victory so far, does it?

As we began the war with Afghanistan that soon moved into Iraq and beyond, the Bush administration presented us with the notorious Patriot Act. So we gave up a few liberties to ensure our security. It would be temporary, right? But that was only the beginning. Since then, we've eroded or nearly destroyed so many of our precious freedoms enumerated or implied in the U. S. Constitution, including *habeas corpus*, due process, equal protection, unreasonable search and seizure, warrantless surveillance, freedom of information, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, just to name a few.

Of course, we expanded the size and scope of our government, adding a few more taxes here and there, and adding the "see something, say something" Homeland Security Department and its ever-popular TSA, making air travel a delightful nightmare where American travelers are presumed guilty instead of innocent. You have to wonder how often Osama bin Laden, while gathered with his evil captains of terror, laughed at the news of these fundamental changes to American society and values. It was, after all, his goal to destroy the great Satan—to wipe out America and all that she stood for around the globe. By neglecting our constitution, we seem to be doing that ourselves.

Now, we are also sounding the retreat from our former obligations towards global peace and order. In addition to our embarrassing departure from Afghanistan, we've been seeking ways to back away from some of our critical commitments to our allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO is an American invention that has served American interests above all others, especially against Russian and Chinese adventurism, as well as radical Islam. And that is why America has been the largest financial supporter—far and away—funding over 20% of its financial needs without blinking an eye until recently.

Were the US to withdraw from NATO, the financial and intelligence losses would be devastating to the current world order. No other treaty has done more for establishing and maintaining what we might call the modern “Israelitish” world order since America’s rise to power following WWII. For the first time since its signing in 1949, the other nations that comprise the treaty are now discussing the possibility of a future alliance without the US.

By walking away in such a careless fashion from Afghanistan and bungling things elsewhere in the Middle East over the past 20 years, America has likely facilitated the reintroduction of radical Islam back into the daily headlines. Look how quickly the Taliban re-conquered Afghanistan, seemingly overnight.

And it was ISIS that murdered our 13 soldiers during the embarrassingly chaotic evacuation a couple of weeks ago. And since we left behind a new and improved Afghanistan, with new airports and highways, military bases,

and hospitals, and a state of the art, country-wide digital communications network that would be the envy of many modern nations, the Taliban and their radical allies are giddy with delight. We also left them hundreds of billions of dollars of military weaponry and gear to use, share, or sell on eBay if they want to, as an additional going away present. Quite simply, the Taliban and their ragtag army ran us out before we were ready, imposing their own deadline and conditions for our departure while the world looked on with astonishment.

Moreover, our intelligence indicates an explosion of growth worldwide, since 2001, both in the number of radical Islamic organizations and in their numbers of personnel—dedicated, willing, zealous personnel, ready to wage jihad against a weakened America and the West. Without the boots-on-the-ground intelligence that the decision-makers have grown accustomed to during the Afghanistan occupation, these groups will be far more difficult to battle. With all the incompetence, apathy, and weakness America has recently displayed, the sharks are circling. Muslim culture respects power and attacks weakness. They can smell the blood in the water.

God once blessed America with a special unity among its citizenry and the ability to establish justice and maintain peace and prosperity within its own borders. With this blessing came the capacity, as well as the responsibility, to look after its allies across the Atlantic and around the globe. As a result, the nations of the UK, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa also enjoyed the benefits of having a powerful brother as the world's policeman. In fact, the whole world was better for it.

However, over time, a familiar story line began to take shape as America grew fat and self-indulgent. It began to take God and His blessings for granted. As it strayed further and further away from Him, it inevitably strayed from the unifying principles and values that provided for American hegemony. Without God's blessings, American values that once defined and policed the world order have eroded into nothing more than political rhetoric and empty words, like cheap, hollow trinkets—made in China, of course.

By rejecting God, the United States also rejected the unifying principles of the Judeo-Christian ethic. So Americans are no longer united over concepts of freedom, liberty, justice, and the common welfare, no longer united or

concerned about their obligation to establish and maintain any semblance of order and stability at home or abroad.

They've been confronted and seriously wounded by radical Islam, an enemy without a real state that possesses little or no conventional power, but is driven by great religious zeal—equaled only by the religious zeal that most Americans once had in an earlier day, but have long since forgotten.

By most measures, we really aren't the *United* States anymore, but merely an enormous collection of fragmented factions. America has abandoned its history, lost its swagger, and it's rapidly losing the respect of the global community. Osama bin Laden would be so proud.

So, who's winning the war on terror?

Well, take a look around. To my thinking, it looks like America's the one waving the white flag.