

a lethal brew. The pattern was similar in Italy where, again, a thug—Mussolini—used a simplistic ideology and violent lower-class followers to gain control of a basically peaceful country. Japan followed a similar route. There, a group of younger army officers, crazed by a primitive nationalistic ideology, turned to extreme violence, pushing a liberal society into a militaristic dictatorship.

In all three countries, all that was needed to have a democracy was the removal of the violent leadership cadre and discrediting of its violent ideology. The drafting of a constitution and implementing of reforms—though they may have been beneficial in themselves—were not necessary to allow a peaceful, democratic politics to re-emerge. The populace was already relatively peaceful.

These observations suggest that if one is going to invade a country and overthrow a dictatorship in the hope of seeing democracy there in short order, one should be sure it is not a high-violence society. One needs to gauge the extent to which participants outside the dictatorship group are peaceful. If democracy already was to some extent functioning prior to the dictatorship—as seen by competitive elections and relative freedom of expression—that is a sign that most participants in the country are rather peaceful and that democracy can succeed once the dictator is removed.

On the other hand, if the country has nothing but violent traditions—dictatorship, repression, political murder, and revolt—then it is naïve to expect that democracy could be quickly established.

In these high-violence societies, an occupying country may pay lip service to the goal of establishing democracy, but that is, in the short term, a hopeless goal. In practice it will end up pursuing a policy of stability, which involves these elements: 1) violent repression of the most visible violent opposition forces; 2) truces with gangs and warlords willing to

keep a lower profile; and 3) the creation of a puppet government that eventually becomes, or gives way to, a dictatorship. After many decades of autocratic rule, the society may achieve the transition away from violence, thus making it possible for a democracy to emerge.

A good example of this pattern is the Philippines, which the United States occupied following the 1898 Spanish-American War. For the first 14 years, the U.S. administration was busy suppressing revolts (in which reportedly 200,000 locals were slain). Following independence in 1946, democratic politics was emerging with competitive elections and some freedom of expression. But violence was not far away, first in the form of the Hukbalahap Rebellion, defeated in 1953, and later in riots and revolts that led to the autocracy of the Marcos

regime. This relatively mild dictatorship was chased from office by public demonstrations in 1986. That date may perhaps be said to mark the country's coming of age as a full democracy.

It would not be correct to say, then, that a high-violence society like Iraq cannot become a democracy. It probably will become one in the long run. One doubts, however, that those who urged the invasion of Iraq in order to establish democracy there had any inkling that the process is likely to take the better part of a century. ■

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# Walking Wounded

Old soldiers don't fade away

By Fred Reed

THE OBSERVANT WILL have noticed that we hear little from the troops in Iraq and see almost nothing of the wounded. Why, one might wonder, does not CNN put an enlisted Marine before a camera and, for 15 minutes without editing, let him say what he thinks? Is he not an adult and a citizen? Is he not engaged in important events on our behalf?

Sound political reasons exist. Soldiers are a risk PR-wise, the wounded a liability. No one can tell what they might say, and conspicuous dismemberment is bad for recruiting. An enlisted man in front of a camera is dangerous. He could wreck the governmental spin apparatus in five minutes. It is better to keep soldiers discreetly out of sight.

So we do not see much of the casualties, ours or theirs. Yet they are there, somewhere, with missing legs, blind, becoming accustomed to groping at things in their new darkness, learning to use the wheelchairs that will be theirs for 50 years. Some face worse fates than others. Quadriplegics will be warehoused in VA hospitals where nurses will turn them at intervals, like hamburgers, to prevent bedsores. Friends and relatives will soon forget them. Suicide will be a frequent thought. The less damaged will get around.

For a brief moment perhaps the casualties will believe, then try desperately to keep believing, that they did something brave and worthy and terribly important

for that abstraction, country. Some will expect thanks. But there will be no thanks, or few, and those quickly forgotten. It will be worse. People will ask how they lost the leg. In Iraq, they will say, hoping for sympathy, or respect, or understanding. The response, often unvoiced but unmistakable, will be, "What did you do *that* for?" The wounded will realize that they are not only crippled, but freaks.

The years will go by. Iraq will fade into the mist. Wars always do. A generation will rise for whom it will be just history. The dismembered veterans will find first that almost nobody appreciates what they did, then that few even remember it. If—when, many would say—the United States is driven out of Iraq, the soldiers will look back and realize that the whole affair was a fraud. Wars are just wars. They seem important at the time. At any rate, we are told that they are important.

Yet the wounds will remain. Arms do not grow back. For the paralyzed there will never be girlfriends, dancing, rolling in the grass with children. The blind will adapt as best they can. Those with merely a missing leg will count themselves lucky. They will hobble about, managing to lead semi-normal lives, and people will say, "How well he handles it." An admirable freak. For others it will be less good. A colostomy bag is a sorry companion on a wedding night.

These men will come to hate. It will not be the Iraqis they hate. This we do not talk about.

It is hard to admit that one has been used. Some of the crippled will forever insist that the war was needed, that they were protecting their sisters from an Islamic invasion, or Vietnamese, or Chinese. Others will keep quiet and drink too much. Still others will read, grow older and wiser—and bitter. They will remember that their vice president, a man named Cheney, said that during his war, the one in Asia, he "had other priorities." The veterans will remember this

when everyone else has long since forgotten Cheney.

I once watched the first meeting between a young Marine from the South, blind, much of his face shot away, and his high-school sweetheart, who had come from Tennessee to Bethesda Naval Hospital to see him.

Hatred comes easily. There are wounds and there are wounds. A friend of mine spent two tours in Asia in that war now little remembered. He killed many people, not all of them soldiers. It is what happens in wars. The memory haunts him. Jack is a hard man from a tough neighborhood, quick with his fists, intelligent but uneducated—not a liberal flower vain over his sensitivity. He lives in Mexican bars few would enter and has no politics beyond an anger toward government. He was not a joyous killer. He remembers what he did, knows now that he was had. It gnaws at him. One is wise to stay away from him when he is drinking.

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People say that this war isn't like Vietnam. They are correct. Washington fights its war in Iraq with no better understanding of Iraq than it had of Vietnam, but with much better understanding of the United States. The Pentagon learned from Asia. This time around it has controlled the press well. Here is the great lesson of Southeast Asia: the press is dangerous, not because it is inaccurate, which it often is, but because it often isn't. So we don't much see the caskets—for reasons of privacy, you understand.

The war in Iraq is fought by volunteers, which means people that no one in power cares about. No one in the mysteriously named "elite" gives a damn about some kid from a town in Tennessee that

has one gas station and a beer hall with a stuffed buck's head. Such a kid is a red-neck at best, pretty much from another planet, and certainly not someone you would let your daughter date. If conscription came back, and college students with rich parents learned to live in fear of The Envelope, riots would blossom as before. Now Yale can rest easy. Thank God for throwaway people.

The nearly perfect separation between the military and the rest of the country, or at least the influential in the country, is wonderful for the war effort. It prevents concern. How many people with a college degree even know a soldier? Yes, some, and I will get e-mail from them, but they are a minority. How many Americans have been on a military base? Or, to be truly absurd, how many men in combat arms went to, say, Harvard? Ah, but they have other priorities.

In 15 years in Washington, I knew many, many reporters and intellectuals and educated people. Almost none had

worn boots. So it is. Those who count do not have to go, and do not know anyone who has gone, and don't interest themselves. There is a price for this, though not one Washington cares about. Across America, in places where you might not expect it—in Legion halls and VFW posts, among those who carry membership cards from the Disabled American Veterans—there are men who hate. They don't hate America. They hate those who sent them. Talk to the wounded from Iraq in five years. ■

*Fred Reed's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Harper's, and National Review, among other places.*

# Old Europe's New Right

Muslim immigration galvanizes the continent's nationalist parties.

By Paul Gottfried

ON NOV. 9, the Belgian high court, alarmed by growing dissatisfaction with Islamic immigration, disbanded the Vlaams Blok, the largest party in Flanders and the second largest in Belgium. In April, a Belgian appellate court in Ghent had extended its condemnation of a "crime of opinion" by party members to the entire party after Vlaams Blok officials played up the higher crime rates among Muslim immigrants than among the Christian population in Flemish cities. Though their statistics were not contested, under EU and European national laws dealing with "incitement" against religious, ethnic, and lifestyle minorities, truth is not an excuse. What matters is not allowing the majority population to ruffle the feelings of immigrants. When the Flemish anti-immigrationists violated this propriety, criminal prosecution followed.

The Vlaams Blok is not the only right-wing populist party in western and central Europe to achieve prominence by expressing concern about Muslim immigration. Others include the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs in Austria, the Lega Nord in northern Italy, the Republikaner and the NDP in Germany, the National Fronts in France and England, Alsace d'Abord in Strasbourg, and the sundry People's Parties in Scandinavia.

Such parties champion the historic identity of their peoples and complain loudly about political globalization. But an anti-immigration stance provides the *leitmotiv*. It is the catalyst for electoral organization, a vehicle for other grievances, and by now the presupposition

for a right-wing European movement. Parties that have built on this theme are enjoying increasing prominence in European politics.

Since 2003, chemical industrialist Christoph Blocher, head of the anti-immigration Democratic Union of the Center, has been president of the Swiss Federal Council, which functions as the Swiss executive. Blocher in his inaugural address stressed the perils of "bureaucratic government insulated against everyday reality" and particularly highlighted widespread concern about the destruction of Swiss identity. His fellow anti-immigration populist Karen Jespersen became Danish minister of the interior in 2000, while in the same year the FPÖ in Austria entered the federal cabinet, despite protests from European left-of-center governments and warnings from then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. While Jespersen came out of the Socialist Party, which she once led, and still advocates an extensive welfare state, other populist leaders in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland favor free-market economies. Yet the immigration issue seems to override these differences.

France affords an instructive, if perhaps not representative, example of anti-immigrationist politics. Within a radius of about 50 miles of Marseilles, which has been overwhelmed by North African immigrants, voters from all social classes have helped to elect Front National candidates to municipal councils and in some small towns to mayoralties. Unlike

the communist mayors who took over cities in northern Italy's Red Belt in the '60s and '70s and went out of their way not to make waves, Front National officials often work to dramatize their differences with the political class. Catherine Mégret, the wife of Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen's former lieutenant Bruno Mégret, was dragged into court on human-rights charges after she offered to subsidize the birth of children belonging to French couples but not to North African Muslims.

These developments, however, must be understood in context. The immigration rate in most European countries is far below that of the United States. In Italy, foreign-born residents are still under 3 percent, as compared to almost 7 percent in France and 10 percent in the U.S. Only Belgium, Germany, and Austria approach the American rate. Yet anti-immigrationism is gathering strength as an electoral issue, and one evident reason is the growing preponderance of Muslims—who bring with them an alien culture and social problems—among the recent immigrants. The question that must be asked is whether this anti-immigration movement would have gained traction if successive waves of Muslim immigration had not occurred.

There is reason to doubt that it would have, since the movement of European populations did not pose the same cultural and social challenges as the settlement of Muslims. Although parties like Italy's Lega Nord and its predecessor the Lega Lombarda sprang up partly as a reaction against migrating Sicilians, who