

Fascists Under the Bed

“President Likens Dewey to Hitler as Fascist Tool.” So ran the *New York Times* headline, Oct. 26, 1948, after what Dewey biographer Richard Norton Smith

called a “particularly vitriolic attack in Chicago” by Harry Truman.

What brings this to mind is President Bush’s assertion that we are “at war with Islamic fascism” and “Islamofascism.”

After the transatlantic bomb plot was smashed, Bush said the plotters “try to spread their jihadist message—a message I call, it’s totalitarian in nature—Islamic radicalism, Islamic fascism, they try to spread it as well by taking the attack to those of us who love freedom.”

What is wrong with the term Islamofascism?

First, there is no consensus as to what “fascism” even means. Orwell said when someone calls Smith a fascist, what he means is, “I hate Smith.” By calling Smith a fascist, you force Smith to deny he’s a sympathizer of Hitler and Mussolini.

As a concept, writes Arnold Beichman of the Hoover Institution, “fascism ... has no intellectual basis; its founders did not even pretend to have any. Hitler’s ravings in *Mein Kampf* ... Mussolini’s boastful balcony speeches, all can be described, in the words of Roger Scruton, as ‘an amalgam of disparate conceptions.’”

Richard Pipes considers Stalinism and Hitlerism to be siblings of the same birth mother: “Bolshevism and fascism were heresies of socialism.”

Since the 1930s, “fascist” has been a term of hate and abuse used by the Left against the Right, as in the Harry Truman campaign. In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. claimed to see in the Goldwater campaign “dangerous signs of Hitlerism.” Twin the words, “Reagan, fascism” in Google and 1,800,000 references pop up.

Unsurprisingly, it is neoconservatives, whose roots are in the Trotskyist-Social Democratic Left, who are promoting use of the term. Their goal is to have Bush stuff al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran into an “Islamofascist” kill box, then let SAC do the rest.

The term represents the same lazy, shallow thinking that got us into Iraq, where Americans were persuaded that by dumping over Saddam, we were avenging 9/11.

But Saddam was about as devout a practitioner of Islam as his idol Stalin was of the Russian Orthodox faith. Saddam was into booze, mistresses, movies, monuments, palaces, and dynasty. Bin Laden loathed him and volunteered to fight him in 1991, if Saudi Arabia would only not bring the Americans in to do the fighting. Islamic warriors ought to be doing themselves.

And whatever “Islamofascism” means, Syria surely is not it. It is a secular dictatorship Bush I bribed into becoming an ally in the Gulf War. The Muslim Brotherhood is outlawed in Syria. In 1982, Hafez al-Assad perpetrated a massacre of the Brotherhood in the city of Hama that was awesome in its magnitude and horror.

As with Khaddafi, whom Bush let out of the penalty box after he agreed to pay \$10 million to the family of each victim of Pan Am 103 and give up his nuclear program, America can deal with Syria, as Israel did after the Yom Kippur War—for an armistice on the Golan has stuck, as both sides have kept the deal.

America faces a variety of adversaries, enemies, and evils. But the Bombs-Away

Caucus, as Iraq and Lebanon reveal, does not always have the right formula. Al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran all present separate challenges calling forth different responses.

Al-Qaeda appears to exist for one purpose: plot and perpetrate mass murder to terrorize Americans and Europeans into getting out of the Islamic world. Contrary to what Bush believes, the 9/11 killers and London and Madrid bombers were not out to repeal the Bill of Rights, if any ever read it. They are out to kill us and we have to get them first.

Hamas and Hezbollah have used terrorism, but like Begin’s Irgun and Mandela’s ANC, they have social and political agendas that require state power to implement. And once a guerrilla/terrorist movement takes over a state, it acquires state assets and interests that are then vulnerable to the U.S. military and economic power.

Why did the Ayatollah let the American hostages go, as Reagan raised his right hand to take the oath? Why has Syria not come to the rescue of Hezbollah? Why has Ahmadinejad not rocketed Tel Aviv in solidarity with his embattled allies in Lebanon? *Res ipsa loquitur*. The thing speaks for itself. They don’t want war with Israel; they don’t want war with the United States.

“Islamofascism” should be jettisoned from Bush’s vocabulary. It yokes the faith of a billion people with an odious ideology. Imagine how Christians would have reacted had FDR taken to declaring Franco’s Spain and Mussolini’s Italy “Christo-fascist.”

If Mr. Bush does not want a war of civilizations, he will drop these propaganda terms that are designed to inflame passions rather than inform the public of the nature of the war we are in. ■

The Islamic Way of War

Muslims have stopped fighting on Western terms—and have started winning.

By Andrew J. Bacevich

IN IRAQ, the world's only superpower finds itself mired in a conflict that it cannot win. History's mightiest military has been unable to defeat an enemy force of perhaps 20,000 to 30,000 insurgents equipped with post-World War II vintage assault rifles and anti-tank weapons.

In Gaza and southern Lebanon, the Middle East's mightiest military also finds itself locked in combat with adversaries that it cannot defeat. Despite weeks of bitter fighting, the IDF's Merkava tanks, F16 fighter-bombers, and missile-launching unmanned aerial vehicles failed to suppress, much less eliminate, the armed resistance of Hamas and Hezbollah.

What are we to make of this? How is it that the seemingly weak and primitive are able to frustrate modern armies only recently viewed as all but invincible? What do the parallel tribulations—and embarrassments—of the United States and Israel have to tell us about war and politics in the 21st century? In short, what's going on here?

The answer to that question is disarmingly simple: the sun has set on the age of unquestioned Western military dominance. Bluntly, the East has solved the riddle of the Western Way of War. In Baghdad and in Anbar Province at various points on Israel's troubled perimeter, the message is clear: methods that once could be counted on to deliver swift decision no longer work.

For centuries, Western military might underpinned Western political dominion everywhere from Asia to Africa to the

New World. It was not virtue that created the overseas empires of Great Britain, France, Spain, and the other European colonizers; it was firepower, technology, and discipline.

Through much of the last century, nowhere was this Western military preeminence more in evidence than in the Middle East. During World War I, superior power enabled the British and French to topple the Ottomans, carve up the region to suit their own interests, and then rule it like a fiefdom. Until 1945, European machine guns kept restive Arabs under control in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine.

The end of World War II found the Europeans without the will to operate the machine guns and short on the money to pay for them. In the Middle East, Arabs no longer willing to follow instructions issued by London or Paris demanded independence. Eager to claim prestige and respect, these nationalists, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser foremost among them, saw in the creation of large machine-age armies a shortcut to achieving their goals.

Placing an order for Soviet-bloc armaments in 1955, Nasser began an ill-fated Arab flirtation with Western-style military technique that did not fully end until Saddam Hussein's army collapsed on the outskirts of Baghdad nearly a half-century later. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Arab leaders invested in fleets of tanks, field artillery, and other heavy armaments, which they organized into massive formations supported by costly air forces equipped with supersonic jets.

On the ground, bigger meant better; in the air, speed was thought to signify superiority.

All of these pricy exertions yielded only humiliation and indignity. Israel—a Western implant in the Muslim world—also adopted Western-style military methods but with far greater success, subjecting the Arabs to repeated drubbings. Designed on the Soviet model, the new Arab armies turned out to be ponderous and predictable but with little of the Red Army's capacity to absorb punishment and keep fighting. Taking the best of the German military tradition, the Israel Defense Forces placed a premium on daring, dash, and decentralization as they demonstrated to great effect in 1956, 1967, and 1973.

What was it that made the IDF in its heyday look so good? According to the punch line of an old joke: because they always fought Arabs. In 1991, the Americans finally had their own chance to fight Arabs, and they too looked good, making mincemeat of Saddam Hussein's legions in Operation Desert Storm. In the spring of 2003, the Americans looked good once again, dispatching the remnant of Saddam's army in a short and seemingly decisive campaign. In Washington many concluded that an unstoppable U.S. military machine could provide the leverage necessary to transform the entire region.

The truth is that U.S. forces and the IDF looked good fighting Arabs only as long as Arab political leaders insisted on fighting on Western terms. As long as they persisted in pitting tank against