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## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

### On Crusading

Kudos to Dr. Srdja Trifkovic, whose "New Grand Strategy" (*American Interest*, December) tells us what sensibly ought to be. The stooges inhabiting Foggy Bottom will never look up from their feed troughs to show half the intelligence of your master diplomat. I wish him Godspeed on his new ventures, and wish that Obama had the sense and courage to defy his masters and adopt that column's strategy—and the strategist—as his own.

Fr. Hugh Barbour's inquiry into the "theological case for the Crusades" (*"Sola Scriptura," Views*), with its anchor on indulgences, has some merit, but there was much more to the initial impetus to the crusading movement than that. Indeed, as the theological essence became more dominant in the later "Crusades," they became more like religious "statements" and increasingly less successful militarily.

The only Crusade that was in any true measure a success was the first, while the rhetoric of Urban II was more a trigger setting in motion a militant wave that had been building for generations. As Father Hugh noted, the Norman conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily, and the burgeoning Reconquista, preceded the crusading effort directed into the Middle East.

Just one factor illustrating that the Crusades had less a theological than a political and economic basis is the role played by the Normans of Italy. The Normans and Urban II were political antagonists throughout the latter's pontificate. They sought lands and power, often at the expense of the papacy. For the First Crusade, the core of the army was provided by Normans, who sought and took major holdings associated with the Christian kingdom that the Crusade established. Major contingents were organized and led by Bohemond and Tancred, both of whom were members of the De Hauteville clan that had conquered the Italian South and humbled the armies of the Pope. Bohemond established him-

self as prince of Antioch. Tancred became lord of a major segment of the new kingdom ruled from Jerusalem. For them and others who grabbed parcels of the conquest for themselves, the theology of it all was an excuse rather than a reason for venturing into the ripe plum that was the Middle East.

Today, Europe is the plum. The militant wave is from the East. The rationale of the Crusades, led by the likes of Normans bent on conquest, is dead. The Muslims are on the march. Europe is weak theologically and spiritually, and is militarily spineless. The so-called War on Terror is gutted by multiculturalism, secularism, and globalist fantasies that take the heart out of any meaningful, lasting response. Finally, the idea of a bunch of freebooters (such as the Crusaders who responded to Urban) setting off to conquer and establish, on their own, a nation of sorts hacked out of the Middle East would be opposed by the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States with no less dedication than that of the Muslims. Those who must be obeyed would have it so.

—William J. Bonville  
Grants Pass, OR

### Father Hugh Replies:

It is always important to consider the title of a piece of writing, which, in *Chronicles* at least, determines the most general light by which the article under it should be interpreted. My article, as the title indicates, was precisely on the theological case for the Crusades and was intended to shed light on the contrast between contemporary theological styles and those of the Middle Ages and to suggest in the title and at the very end of the article the contrast between both of these and the Reformation tradition. It may well be that the Reformation tradition provides the link to explain best how we arrived at our present inability to offer a coherent response to the religiously motivated enemies of our civ-

ilization. Here is where I might have expected the attentive reader to be moved to write a letter! That there were other factors at work in the Crusades common to all political and military movements of any time and place cannot be doubted. My purpose was to discuss what was most specific to the Crusades—that is, their specifically Catholic and medieval theological motivation—not to assert that this motivation was the exclusive or even the predominant motivation of the crusaders themselves. One thing a Catholic assessment of history never assumes is universally pure motives from members of a fallen race!

## On Darwinian Chaos

Fr. Michael P. Orsi's review of John G. West's *Darwin Day in America* ("Man on Holiday," *Reviews*, December) is compelling, as far as it goes. However, neither he nor apparently West refers to a powerful theoretical argument against Darwinian evolution:

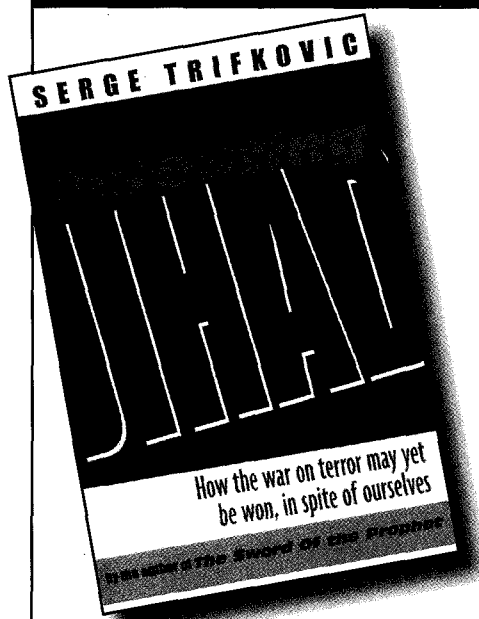
the Second Law of Thermodynamics. In very simplified language, this law states that it is impossible for practical purposes to produce order/organization by means of random processes (Darwin's natural selection). A much better but perhaps still not sufficient approach is through chaotic processes. Chaos is not equivalent to randomness. Indeed, chaotic processes also embody high degrees of "spontaneous ordering" through "feedback"—or, to use the technical term, "non-linearity." It is my strong belief that chaos plays a major role in evolution, but by its very nature the evolutionary history is impossible to unravel. Hence we will never have a satisfactory theory of the "descent of Man." Very small instabilities, as microscopic as the quantum level, lead to enormous changes in the evolving system. Such instabilities in the atmosphere prevent reliable weather prediction for more than a few days. This, in my view, is the manner in which "Intelligent Design" plays out.

Although retired from NASA, I still

work part time on planetary research for the SETI Institute in Mountain View, California. At a meeting of the employees a couple of years ago, I overheard another researcher praise the decision against Intelligent Design by a federal judge in Delaware. When I asked him how one gets order from random processes, he stormed out, refusing to discuss the matter further. On another occasion I exchanged e-mail about Darwinian evolution with a professor at an Eastern university. I raised the Second Law problem, with a possible partial solution lying in chaos theory. His reply was, in effect, that my argument about randomness and chaos was a "distinction without a difference." Of course, as I explained previously, they are not even remotely similar.

The Darwinists' main objective seems to be the destruction of traditional religion. While they have not accomplished that, they have succeeded in creating their own false god.

—Robert C. Whitten  
Cupertino, CA

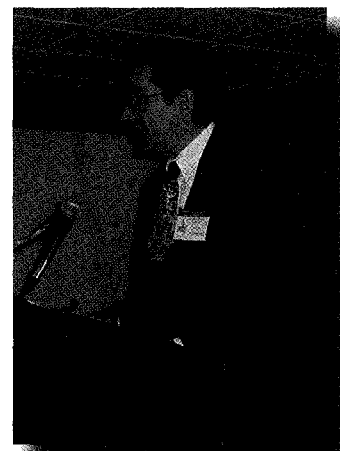


From the author of *The Sword of the Prophet*

*"The victory will come not by conquering Mecca for America but by disengaging America from Mecca and by excluding Mecca from America. Eliminating the risk is impossible. Managing it wisely, resolutely, and permanently is something attainable."*

# Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic



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## Whither Obama's Foreign Policy?

According to the *Washington Post*, a senior diplomat from a major European country, a Middle Eastern ambassador, and an Asian ambassador—all of whom represent “major, big-league countries”—have been getting lots of messages from their home offices wondering how exactly President Obama will exert his influence over the contracting American Empire.

Apparently “Barack Obama’s folks aren’t talking” to these and other diplomats who, like the rest of the “insiders” in Washington, have been unable to figure out Obama’s foreign-policy direction. This suggests to some that Obama has a coherent foreign-policy vision as well as a strategy to implement it; he’s just doing a great job at keeping all of that top secret—certainly a valuable skill for those who want to win victories in the games that nations play.

But perhaps this interpretation gives too much credit to the President’s diplomatic skills. Is it possible that he actually does not have any grand diplomatic strategy in mind and that the code of silence that Obama and his aides have maintained stems from the fact that they have nothing to hide—or say?

In a way, this Obama Enigma explains why those of us who are trying to solve the mystery and come up with some predictions about Obama’s diplomacy end up projecting our own hopes—or fears—on the situation. Hence, many opponents of the neo-conservative agenda, including some who would describe themselves as conservative or libertarian, announced their support for the Obama candidacy based largely on his earlier opposition to the war in Iraq, his willingness to open a diplomatic dialogue with Iran and Syria (as opposed to invading them), and his criticism of the Bush administration’s messianic foreign policy. From this perspective, when you compared him with the ideologues and fanatics who have

been in charge of our diplomacy during the last eight years, Obama sounded almost . . . conservative.

Indeed, Obama reiterated several times during the campaign that he had a lot of respect for the *Realpolitik* types who were responsible for the more traditional diplomacy of the first President Bush. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that Obama consulted one of those realist luminaries, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, about his choices for foreign-policy positions in the Obama administration. And the fact that two Republicans who adhere to the realist school of thought and have been critical of the Bush administration’s Iraq adventure—former Nebraska Sen. Chuck Hagel and former Secretary of State Colin Powell—endorsed Obama seems to have burnished Obama’s credentials as the anti-neocon candidate both in the Democratic primaries against Hillary Clinton, who had voted in favor of the congressional resolution authorizing Bush to attack Iraq, and in the general election, as Obama ran against *The Weekly Standard*’s presidential candidate.

While the members of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party have never been fans of the Kissingerian wing of the Republican Party, they seemed to share Scowcroft’s loathing of the neocons and regarded Obama as the only serious challenger to Senator Clinton. The former First Lady was perceived to be more hawkish than Obama, especially in light of her close ties to the pro-Israel community and her suggestion that the United States may need to use military power against Iran to prevent the mullahs from acquiring nuclear bombs. The biography of a mixed-race/African-American public figure, who had spent some of his school years in Indonesia and was the son of a Kenyan man, clearly helped to turn Obama into the multicultural darling of the

Democratic Party’s cosmopolitan intelligentsia, whose members hoped that Obama would be able not only to reverse Bush’s neoconservative policies but to win the hearts and minds of Muslims everywhere.

It is too early to say that these expectations have not been fulfilled. But one could feel the pain of some of the readers of *The Nation* and *Mother Jones*, the regular viewers of Keith Olbermann’s *Countdown*, and perhaps even some readers of *Chronicles* and *The American Conservative*, after Obama announced that he was retaining Robert Gates as secretary of defense and nominating Hillary Clinton as secretary of state and retired Gen. James Jones as his national-security advisor. The noninterventionists’ mood was probably not improved after reading that Obama was also asking current undersecretary Bill Burns to stay on and was planning to select former U.N. Amb. Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and former Middle East advisor Dennis Ross as special envoy to the Middle East. Indeed, those of us who were hoping and praying for a new paradigm under which the President would start removing the foundations of the American Empire—U.S. disengagement from the Middle East; an end to the special relationship with Israel; U.S. withdrawal from NATO; termination of the U.S. military pacts with Japan and South Korea; a less belligerent approach toward Russia—were bound to be disappointed by Obama’s foreign-policy team, whose members remain committed to a hegemonic project in the Middle East and elsewhere and whose political survival depends very much on satisfying the needs of both local and foreign interests, the Beltway Bandits, Big Business, and the rest of the rent seekers whose wealth and power derive from the earnings generated by the American Empire.

But then, Obama never said that he