

## On Loyalty – Part 3: The Individual and the Nation

Controversies about war tend to be especially divisive, because what is at stake is the legitimacy of violence. In the present crisis, anti-war demonstrators denounced the liberators of Iraq as **war criminals** – and that is among the more conciliatory of their statements. One protest banner in San Francisco read "**we support our troops – when they shoot their officers**". A **professor at Columbia University** called for "a million Mogadishus" (referring to the ambush in Somalia in 1993 in which 18 American soldiers were killed). The British MP George Galloway incited "the Arabs" to "**rise up**" against the invasion of Iraq.

A great deal has been written about where the line should be drawn between legitimate dissent and treason or sedition. Such people as Galloway have been widely denounced as traitors. Morally, we agree with this judgement. But what hangs on this?

First of all, what is so bad about treason, in itself – i.e. considered independently of what is being betrayed? Surely 'my country, right or wrong' cannot be the stance of any rational person: if an army is in the wrong, it can make no difference, morally, that you have previously sworn to serve it or that you were born in a particular country. So when soldiers and civilians commit treason against an evil regime, we approve. It's not that their treason is a character flaw, excused because it happens to serve a good cause: on the contrary, their impulse to betray *their* state in wartime is a positive virtue which we rightly **honour**. Conversely, even protests which do fall well within the category of 'legitimate dissent' under any reasonable interpretation, and are therefore entitled to protection, are not thereby rendered innocuous. As **The Dissident Frogman** pointed out, their peace **has a price**, and as **this soldier** says in a letter quoted by **Jawsblog**:

Even if not intended, the by-product of the protests can't help but add significantly to the totals of killed, maimed, and missing and puts US servicemen at greater risk.

Dissent is the bedrock of a free society, but protesters can't have it both ways. Catchy slogans and trendy chants can't change the fact that public protests provide support to Saddam.

We have **said** that the real alliances are not between nations but

between political traditions; well, for the same reason, the real war is between political traditions too. One of the bitter facts that many of us woke up to after September 11, 2001 was that our own society is profoundly split. It's not just a matter of a few spies labouring bright-eyed over a radio transmitter and a copy of *Das Kapital*; not just a few sleeper cells of fanatics awaiting the order to detonate themselves among the infidel, nor just a few potty academics and entertainers whose mouths are not connected to their brains, but entire sections of Western society. Some substantial proportion of your ordinary neighbours who watch **The Simpsons** and worry about bullying in their children's school are effectively – in their analysis of events, in many of their aspirations, in their words and in their votes – allies of those who are trying to extinguish our society in a cruel and vicious war. At the height of the liberation of Iraq, an opinion poll in **Le Monde** showed **one third of French people hoping the Coalition would lose**. In the Anglosphere, the proportion is lower, but it is by no means negligible: **Matthew Parris** is not alone in his views. In **this** opinion poll, 45% of British people considered President Bush a greater threat than Saddam.

So, if Galloway is a traitor and those Californian demonstrators are seditious, how many other citizens are guilty of the same crimes of disloyalty? Millions? Tens of millions? In any other society this would mean there was a danger of civil war unless the dissenting political traditions were slapped down hard. In any other society the courts and the gallows (or just the death squads) would now be working overtime making examples.

But the West does not work like that. The miraculous internal peacefulness of our billion-strong society, at once the most diverse and the most stable that has ever existed, is one of the most neglected arguments for why Western standards must prevail *everywhere* if the world is to avoid the hell of asymmetrical warfare fought with weapons of mass destruction. We are at war; and, ironically, in our case, this argues *against* adopting a strict interpretation of treason and sedition. It argues for bending over backwards to protect the enemy in our midst. In peacetime one might be inclined to be a stickler for the rule of law. But in wartime, victory takes precedence over procedure. Those who demand the prosecution of every air-headed demonstrator or celebrity who is technically a traitor are being just as silly as those who demand a fair trial for every enemy soldier before our soldiers are allowed to pull the trigger in battle. The Rule of Law, like the US Constitution, **is not a suicide pact**: *we have to win*. And winning involves strategy and tactics as well as soldiers and weapons. It involves struggling to ensure that the war is fought on our terms and not the enemy's.

And that means that it must, among other things, be fought out in the arena of ideas. Glenn Reynolds **says**:

The best way to stop terrorism is to kill terrorists, and stop the states that support them

Yes, but we also need to destroy the factions within our society that

sympathise with those terrorists and those states and therefore seek to paralyse our self-defence. And to do that, we need to avoid at almost any cost changing our way of life, the basic patterns of interaction in our society – not because the bastards deserve leniency, but because we need it that way. We need to take that battle to the ground on which we are the strongest and fight it on our terms. By argument. That is why **Setting the World to Rights** exists.

Sat, 04/12/2003 - 09:15 | [permalink](#)

## Reality: The final argument

"We need to take that battle to the ground on which we are the strongest and fight it on our terms. By argument."

When profound moral progress occurred in the past, it was never the result of argument. Authoritarianism, fascism, communism all died because they simply couldn't face up to reality. Reality bit them and they were forced to grudgingly accept better alternatives. Similarly, these vast anti-Western segments of society won't change through argument, at least not verbal argument with other, more enlightened, human beings. Anyone who has tried to argue with an idiotarian won't dispute this. Rather, they will eventually change by realizing that they cannot find fulfillment with their current outlook. They will realize that their whole life plan is full of goals that will not be realized and fantasies that will not provide solace, just like fascist and communist states ultimately did. Embracing terrorism is indicative of a moral nihilism that can only bring anger, envy, despair and most of all, hatred. When the poverty of this existence becomes manifest i.e. when moral reality "kicks back", they will discover the West.

by [Daniel Strimpel](#) on Sat, 04/12/2003 - 16:41 | [reply](#)

## Selling The World

\*Taking\* the battle onto the strongest ground seems ostensibly to be about \*selling\* places like the rational blogosphere: the problem of getting idiotarian antiwar lefties to argue in the first place, in fact. Mostly I find they just switch off or get confused or angry when their ideas are questioned.

Maybe if there was some way their ideas could just die out, that would be better? Perhaps we could round them up, and encourage them to go and live in Glastonbury, and help them make wickerware until they become extinct? I suppose they might notice the barbed wire fences after a while, though...

Read my blog:

[http://libertarian\\_parent\\_in\\_the\\_countryside.blogspot.com/](http://libertarian_parent_in_the_countryside.blogspot.com/)

by [Alice](#) on Sat, 04/12/2003 - 21:23 | [reply](#)

**the premise**

Lumping. Black & White. The premise is not sound. America was founded on dissent. If you look closely at protests, and who protests, you will find that it is not made up of one bloc. Nor of one opinion. People and ideas are not that simple. In a free society, as the Secretary of Defense just said, things sometimes get a little messy. Sure there are idiots. Sure there are people who benefit by American and British, and Western values, who would hope that they would fail and crumble. Don't count every person who protests with that group. Idiots and Traitors. Free People with ideas. Some flawed, some whole. Convince them if your ideas are right. Write columns which are based on the right to dissent. You do that of course. Do not forget that because some one walks in the street and says something which you might disagree with they are no worse than someone who writes their protest. Consider what they say. Draw your own opinion. However, always look at your premise. If your premise is flawed, your argument, your fine case may be flawed too.

by a reader on Sun, 04/13/2003 - 02:38 | [reply](#)

## Reality?

*When the poverty of this existence becomes manifest i.e. when moral reality "kicks back", they will discover the West.*

So why are the former Soviet republics embracing EU socialism?

by a reader on Sun, 04/13/2003 - 05:11 | [reply](#)

## Reality??

So why is Poland embracing capitalism and Americanness?

by a reader on Sun, 04/13/2003 - 13:03 | [reply](#)

## Reality

So why are the former Soviet republics embracing EU socialism?

So why is Poland embracing capitalism and Americanness?

Because it's not really countries that do these things, but **political traditions**. In all these countries, pro- and anti-capitalist strands are struggling for the souls of their countries.

by **David Deutsch** on Sun, 04/13/2003 - 13:42 | [reply](#)

## Reality

I've been trying this and running into brick walls.

Example 1: I tried posting facts to a left fest web site, and even

though I was polite in every post, they could not stand my very presence. My IP is now blocked from posting on the site any longer. In their mind their blog is by a liberal and for liberals, and other views are not welcome. Can you believe it?

Example 2: I have a nephew that I care about a lot. In our conversations in the last week I have discovered that he immediately discounts anything I say as coming from a right wing source, (in this case I sent him an article from the UK Telegraph). He also was unwilling to listen to facts about the proven falsifications in a "documentary", because said "documentary" happened to endorse his cynical "the west is evil" viewpoint.

Sigh. I'm really not a raving lunatic and I'm discouraged that so many are willing to disregard facts in order to justify their condemnation of western society. (Frankly I know not where the author of this blog is from. I am from USA. Led here from the dissidentfrogman. Nice to meet you.)

So, I'm coming to the conclusion that the battle of ideas is one best taken to our youth. From what I know of curriculum these days, the truth of the founding of our nation is not being taught in schools. We need to reach the next generation.

Comments?

by a reader on Tue, 04/15/2003 - 00:30 | [reply](#)

## TCS Shall Save The World

Youth are a good thing to be worried about, but the way to help youth is not with better schools, but rather with better parenting. see [www.tcs.ac](http://www.tcs.ac)

-- Elliot Temple  
<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Mon, 04/21/2003 - 19:37 | [reply](#)