

Ducking And Weaving

A soldier is running towards an enemy position that he must capture or the battle is lost.

He is fired on: he zigs to the left. He is fired on again: he zags to the right. He is about to fire when some unarmed children run out and attack him. He holds his fire and runs round them. He reaches the enemy position and captures it.

'Criminal incompetence – give that soldier a dishonourable discharge', cries **Andrew Sullivan**. 'Look at all those zig zags: they prove he never had a plan!'

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zig zags

Tend to support the theory that there is a plan. Teamed with events that correlate with the zag or zig tends to support the theory that the plan was modified by the actor. People zig zag when they are on purpose. To state that they never waver or change their mind about the rightness of a particular tac-tic, or never admit to the wrong zag or corrective zig would be at odds with the evidence.

by a reader on Fri, 10/29/2004 - 14:21 | [reply](#)

Thank you!

I've had it about up to here with this infantile talk about "Plans". Apparently in the eyes of some of these armchair generals the way you fight a war is you literally plot out all events beforehand based on research and data. The "Plan", I can only surmise, is like a PhD thesis or something, only bigger. (May explain why left/academe/ivory tower types think this is how it should be done; to them this is how *everything* is done.)

You're also supposed to foresee everything that the enemy does and third parties do and "Plan" those contingents in advance. Flexibility is bad, calling audibles is bad, (ironically) adapting to events is... *bad*. (This is ironic because an alleged failure/unwillingness to adapt to events is another favorite Bush criticism.)

Meanwhile if one thing goes wrong that proves you "didn't have a

Plan". Now, you might think that in all human endeavors something is bound to go wrong. NOT SO. If you "Plan" correctly you can solve for the Right Answer to all war questions and construct the PERFECT "Plan" such that NOTHING will go wrong. So, if a few things *do* go wrong, you can cherry-pick that data, ignore everything that goes right, and conclude that they "didn't have a Plan" or had "horrible Planning".

Now I may not be the world's biggest expert on wars but I do know one thing, people who speak that way don't know what the f*** they're talking about.

--Blix

by a reader on Fri, 10/29/2004 - 15:07 | [reply](#)

yay

v nice post.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Fri, 10/29/2004 - 15:14 | [reply](#)

The only thing is, Bush hasn'

The only thing is, Bush hasn't captured the enemy position yet. But I don't know how to go about making the case that Bush is incompetent. How do you judge the competence of someone who is battling the unknown? Debaathification, sovereignty, and democracy are fine from the standpoint of principle. If they fail, the tactics have to be changed. But if they had never been tried, that would be a point of criticism, not on the basis of tactics, but on the basis of good will and principle. If they had not been tried, we would never know the truth.

<http://www.legendablogspot.com>

by a reader on Sat, 10/30/2004 - 03:53 | [reply](#)

Re: The only thing is, Bush hasn't...

First, our criticism of those who take Sullivan's view would hold just as well if the soldier in the story was still only halfway there.

Second, Bush (or his Administration) *has* captured many enemy positions, both literally and in the figurative sense of having succeeded at tasks that many naysayers said were impossible.

As for your other comments – agreed.

by [Editor](#) on Sat, 10/30/2004 - 04:12 | [reply](#)
