

U.S. Institutions, Press Ask: Is President Bush Nuts?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

An Establishment consensus is rapidly emerging over the ever-more obvious lunacy of President George W. Bush, and the strategic implications of allowing a man with long-term and severe psychiatric disorders to remain in the Presidency during a period of systemic financial disintegration, which is driving some leading synarchist bankers to push for World War III—using mad George as their patsy. Indicative of the emerging Anglo-American consensus that Bush is too far gone to serve much longer, is British Prime Minister Tony Blair's own "Damascus Road" break with G.W., since his last visit to Washington in the late Spring.

While vacationing in the Caribbean in early August, Blair, according to British sources, allowed Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott to tell a group of Labour MPs that Bush's handling of the Middle East crisis was "crap." Prescott's comment was quickly leaked to all of the leading British dailies, triggering a public debate, and reports that Blair had encouraged his deputy to signal London's break with George Bush's and Dick Cheney's Washington.

Is Bush an 'Idiot'?

In a series of high-visibility television news broadcasts and opinion pieces appearing in the U.S. over the past two weeks (see *Documentation*), a clear message has been conveyed: The President is mentally incompetent to serve out the remaining months of his term of office, and the sociopathic Vice President Cheney is going to have to go, as part of a clean sweep of the White House.

Precisely how this clean-out is going to occur is by no means settled. But the verdict has been delivered, loud and clear, and a lively public debate has been stoked, through the medium of some popular news/entertainment programs, including MSNBC's "Scarborough Country," Comedy Cen-

tral's "The Daily Show"—and even the formerly slavishly pro-Bush *Washington Post*.

The most dramatic sign of the Establishment's conclusion that Bush is too lunatic to continue in office came on Aug. 15, when former Republican Congressman-turned-right-wing-TV news analyst Joe Scarborough aired a ten-minute segment of his "Scarborough Country," posing the question: "Is Bush an Idiot?" Throughout the segment, the words "Is Bush an Idiot?" ran across the bottom of the screen. The segment provoked a firestorm of media commentaries, including two subsequent "Scarborough Country" segments, an equal number of satirical assaults on President Bush's mental midgentry by



It doesn't take a genius to answer the question posed by former Republican Congressman Scarborough.

Comedy Central's Jon Stewart, and a detailed news account in the Aug. 20 Sunday *Washington Post* of the conservative revolt against the Idiot-in-Chief. Equally distressing for the White House is a series of op-ed pieces by previously loyal conservative pundits, including George Will and *National Review* editor Rich Lowry, all declaring that Bush's Iraq misadventure has been a dismal failure.

A senior U.S. intelligence figure described the situation in Washington as "chaos—the worst chaos I have ever seen." He confirmed earlier reports that former President George H.W. Bush is apoplectic over his son's descent into messianic madness, and that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is so isolated from the White House, that she is not even consulting with the President as she attempts to find a replacement Deputy Secretary of State, to fill the vacancy left by Robert Zoellick's sudden departure in June. When Rice attempted to appoint top aide Nick Burns as Zoellick's replacement, she was blocked by Vice President Cheney, and George W. Bush did not weigh in to support her.

It is no secret that Cheney, the leading synarchist bankers' asset in the Administration, is pressing for a resumption of Israel's military actions against Lebanon, and an expansion of the Israeli aggression into Syria—this, despite the fact that Israel's mid-July invasion of Lebanon failed to destroy or even militarily weaken Hezbollah. The renewed Israeli military operations would be, for Cheney, a prelude to a full-scale U.S. bombing campaign against Iran, perhaps before the November U.S. mid-term elections. Sources have confirmed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have unanimously informed the President that, under no circumstances would they support military action against Iran. "There is no military option against Iran," the Chiefs informed the President, according to several well-placed military and intelligence sources, who spoke to *EIR* on condition of anonymity.

Yet, a number of senior policy analysts freely admitted that they could not say with any degree of certainty that the unanimous view of the JCS will carry any weight at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Between Cheney's commitment to regime change in Tehran before January 2009, and Bush's psychotic refusal to entertain any "bad news" assessments, the U.S. could race, flight-forward, into a preemptive war against Iran, in much the same way that Israel raced blindly into its greatest military fiasco ever, in Lebanon. Sane voices in the Israeli military had warned, repeatedly, that a military strike against Hezbollah's asymmetric war-fighting capability would end in dismal failure. Those voices were ignored—largely due to pressure on the Olmert government from the Cheney circles in Washington.

World War III

It is this prospect, of a mad-hatter President and his Vice Presidential accomplice bringing the United States to the brink of self-destruction, that has triggered the institutional revolt. The Scarborough, Stewart, and related assaults on the

President's lunacy are merely manifestations of a much deeper, behind-the-scenes process of debate, among senior Establishment figures, over how to deal with a dysfunctional White House, during a period of the greatest combined political and financial crisis in the nation's history. While sense perception might suggest that the television assaults on the President's mental state have triggered the institutional debate, the exact opposite is true. The American public, already sickened by the Administration's bungling, treachery, tyranny, and worse, is being brought into the top-down deliberations. The simple fact is: Nothing short of a top-to-bottom house cleaning in the Executive branch, starting with Cheney and Bush, is going to save the nation and the world from a New Dark Age of global asymmetric warfare, financial disintegration, and the collapse of the sovereign nation-state system itself.

If Bush and Cheney do launch a war against Iran, the outcome will be even more disastrous for the United States than the recent Israeli misadventure in Lebanon was for the Jewish state. If George W. Bush were looking for a shortcut to infamy, he could not choose a faster route than a bombing campaign against Iran. Perhaps the President will find a few strands of sanity, tied to his deep fear of failure, and will pull back from the brink. For the U.S. institutions to risk the fate of the nation on such a slender reed would be madness in its own right.

Documentation

President Bush, in his press conference Aug. 14, shocked the world by declaring that Israel had won the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon. The character of his remarks are reflected in the following excerpt:

(After 9-11) "We launched a forward strategy of freedom in the broader Middle East. And the strategy has helped bring hope to millions and fostered the birth of young democracies from Baghdad to Beirut.

"... [F]reedom will prevail. But it's incredibly hard work. . . . And you asked about Iran. What did you say about them? My answer was too long to remember the third part of your multi-part question."

Q: "Mr President, the UN resolution says that Israel must stop all offensive action. What do you view as defensive action? . . ."

A: "Somebody shoots at an Israeli soldier."

Q: "They can respond?"

A: "Absolutely."

Q: "... Giant loopholes in homeland security? . . ."

A: "... I don't know the loophole question. Maybe you can give me some specific loopholes. . . ."

"First part of the question? That's what happens when you get 60. . . ."

U.S. Media

"Is Bush an Idiot?" aired on "Scarborough Country," Aug. 15. The full show is available on "Scarborough Country's" website. Excerpts from the ten-minute clip follow:

"... Ronstadt said this earlier: 'The Dixie Chicks said they were embarrassed he was from Texas. I'm embarrassed George Bush is from the United States [The President] is an idiot. He's enormously incompetent, on both the domestic and international scenes.'

"That is, no doubt, a sentiment that is shared in some of the capitals of our friends and foes alike. Maybe because the President has such a long history of public gaffs, but is that evidence that George W. Bush is stupid or just inarticulate.

"Take a look, and decide for yourself.

Begin video clip montage

George W. Bush, President of the United States: "I think tide turning as I remember it, I was raised in the desert, but tides—it is easy to see a tide turn. Did I say those words? ...

"Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we. They never stop thinking of new ways to harm our country and our people. And neither do we; we must never stop thinking about how best to defend our country. ...

"You are working hard to put food on family.

"I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully.

"Tribal sovereignty means that, its sovereign. If you a—you're a—you have been given sovereignty, and you are viewed as—a sovereign entity. And, therefore, the relationship between the federal government and tribes is one between sovereign entities. ..."

Scarborough: "Sounds like me.

"So, is the President intelligent? Do we need a brilliant president or just somebody who surrounds himself with the right people? Here to help us answer that question, Lawrence O'Donnell, a political analyst; also John Fund, from Opinion Journal.com.

"Now, John, this isn't just about Linda Ronstadt, I've heard Republicans, and Democrats start saying this privately. Liberals and conservatives, heck, Frenchmen and friends alike, talk privately about George W. Bush, and they are saying what these music stars and rock stars are saying, that George Bush's lack of gravitas is hurting America at home and embarrassing us abroad. ..."

Jon Stewart, the "Daily Show," as shown on "Scarborough Country," Aug. 15:

"President Bush was overseas, in Germany; as events unfolded, here is his press conference with Chancellor Angela Merkel, in Germany, where he wasted no time addressing the many troubling developments."

Bush: "I'm looking forward to the feast you're going to have tonight. I understand I may have the honor of slicing the pig."

Stewart: "I am just going to assume that is some kind of

euphemism for solving the Middle East crisis."

Bush: "And I guess that is about all—we have discussed a lot of things in other words. And thank you for having me, looking forward to that pig tonight."

Unidentified male: "Does it concern you that the Beirut airport has been bombed? And do you see a risk of truly a wider war? And on Iran, they have so far refused to respond. Is it now past the deadline? Do they still have more time to respond?"

Bush: "I thought you were going to ask about the pig."

End Video Clip

"The Triumph of Unrealism" by George Will, published Aug. 15:

Will took aim at the Administration's statements that the Lebanese war was won by Israel. After quoting an Administration spokesman who attacked the Democrats' approach to fighting terrorism, Will wrote:

"This farrago of caricature and non sequitur makes the Administration seem eager to repel all but the delusional. But perhaps such rhetoric reflects the intellectual contortions required to sustain the illusion that the war in Iraq is central to the war on terrorism, and that the war, unlike 'the law enforcement approach,' does 'work.'

"The official [Bush spokesman] is correct that it is wrong 'to think that somehow we are responsible—that the actions of the jihadists are justified by U.S. policies.' But few outside the fog of paranoia that is the blogosphere think like that. It is more dismaying that someone at the center of government considers it clever to talk like that. It is the language of foreign policy—and domestic politics—unrealism.

"Foreign policy 'realists' considered Middle East stability the goal. The realists' critics, who regard realism as reprehensibly unambitious, considered stability the problem. That problem has been solved."

"Bush's Vietnam? Not yet—but does Bush realize how close it is?" Aug. 15 by Rich Lowry, editor of the *National Review*:

"... The Republicans have to fight in prospect [sic], avoiding the losing debate over the past while convincing people they have a plausible strategy for success, and the Democrats have none.

"But what is that strategy? President Bush sometimes seems not to realize that having a fierce determination to see things through is only the precondition for a winning strategy. For too long, his Administration has seemed content to do the bare minimum in Iraq, hoping to hold things together just enough to allow troop drawdowns that justify the Administration's assurances of progress. This hasn't worked, since the violence in Iraq has belied the rhetoric of progress and prevented any reduction in troops. Bush would be much better served by forthrightly acknowledging Iraq's distressing circumstances and backing an all-out push to secure Baghdad



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Why do squirrels love George W. Bush? As this media review demonstrates, because he's nuts.

even if it takes thousands more American troops in the country. . . .”

“Pundits Renounce The President Among Conservative Voices, Discord” by Peter Baker, *Washington Post*, Aug. 20:

“For 10 minutes, the talk show host grilled his guests about whether “George Bush’s mental weakness is damaging America’s credibility at home and abroad.” For 10 minutes, the caption across the bottom of the television screen read, ‘Is Bush an “Idiot”?’

“But the host was no liberal media elitist. It was Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman turned MSNBC political pundit. And his answer to the captioned question was hardly ‘no.’ While other Presidents have been called stupid, Scarborough said: “I think George Bush is in a league by himself. I don’t think he has the intellectual depth as these other people.

“These have been tough days politically for President Bush, what with his popularity numbers mired in the 30s, and Republican candidates distancing themselves as elections near. He can no longer even rely as much on once-friendly voices in the conservative media to stand by his side, as some columnists and television commentators lose faith in his leadership and lose heart in the war in Iraq. . . .”

Baker then cites comments by Lowry, Quin Hillyer, executive editor of the *American Spectator*, George Will, and even William F. Buckley, on how the Administration should admit it’s on a losing track in Iraq.

“Scarborough Country,” Aug. 20:

Under the title “Let Bush Be Bush,” Scarborough said:

“Asking whether our President is mentally engaged in his job is an important question to ask, right? With al-Qaeda back in the headlines, Iraq deteriorating, Hezbollah in rapid ascent,

Iran defying the world, Israel in turmoil, Afghanistan in crisis mode, and North Korea behaving more recklessly every day, President Bush needs to assure America and the world that he is intellectually engaged.

“Still I am uncomfortable asking these questions of any president, especially this one.

“I voted for George Bush twice and would do it again if Al Gore and John Kerry were once again the alternatives given. I spent a few hours alone with President Bush on Air Force One. He was likable and sharp. I have met more than a few world leaders, and I can tell you our President seemed as mentally equipped as most leaders I have met.

“But the George Bush of 2006 seems to be a far cry from the man I spoke with in 2001, or the back-slapping governor who charmed the hell out of me when I visited him in the Texas governor’s mansion in 1999.

“These days the President seems distracted, disjointed and dumbed-down in press conferences. His jokes fall flat and are often inappropriate. And like Reagan, George W. Bush seems to be getting worse with age instead of better. . . .

“Has anyone told him that making jokes about pig roasts after being asked about the bombing of Beirut Airport is not how a Commander in Chief acts in front of the international press corps? . . .

“Right now, this President cannot afford to bumble his way across the world stage. He needs to be seen as a strong, confident leader capable of managing the greatest foreign policy crisis since the Cold War.”

On “Scarborough Country,” Aug. 21, Scarborough said:

“Is George Bush an idiot? That’s the subject of tonight’s “Real Deal.” Now, new and old media alike are buzzing about last week’s ‘Scarborough Country’ segment on the President’s mental prowess. In Sunday’s *Washington Post*, Peter Baker wrote this. Quote, ‘Bush advisers said that the President’s political weakness has encouraged soft supporters and quiet skeptics to speak out. Few have struck a nerve more than Scarborough.’

“ ‘Struck a nerve’ is an understatement. I’ve been blasted by Republican loyalists for asking whether Linda Ronstadt’s description of the President as an “idiot” was out of line. That question was important not because another Hollywood liberal was blasting Bush, but because conservatives have been doing the same thing privately since the Harriet Miers and Katrina debacles of last fall. Well, and because of the steady roar of Bushisms like these seen daily on late night TV. . . .

“Look it up! Now, I know the President. He’s no idiot. But history has also proven that he doesn’t like listening to dissent. He lacks intellectual curiosity, and he inspires fear among allies every time he gets behind a microphone doing a press conference. Now, with Iraq in flames, Iran on the rise, Afghanistan in crisis mode, Hezbollah on his scent, Israel in disarray, and North Korea testing missiles, we’ve got to have

a President who projects confidence. Right now, this President is not. . . .”

“President on Another Planet,” by Eugene Robinson, in the *Washington Post*, Aug. 22:

Robinson references the Scarborough show about whether Bush is an idiot or not, and then proceeds to dissect his press conference:

“According to the Iraqi government, 3,438 civilians were killed in July, making it the bloodiest month since the invasion. The President was asked yesterday whether the failure of the U.S.-backed ‘unity’ government to stem the orgy of sectarian carnage disappoints him, and he said that no, it didn’t. How, I wonder, is that possible? Does he believe it would be a sign of weakness to admit that the flowering of democracy in Iraq isn’t going exactly as planned? Does he believe saying everything’s just fine will make it so? Is he in denial? Or do 3,438 deaths really just roll off his back after he’s had his workout and a nice bike ride?

“‘I hear a lot of talk about civil war’ in Iraq, he allowed—much of it apparently from his own generals, who have been increasingly bold in using the once-forbidden phrase—but all that talk doesn’t seem to penetrate very far. To the President, is all the bad news from Iraq just “talk” without objective reality?

America’s Untold Story

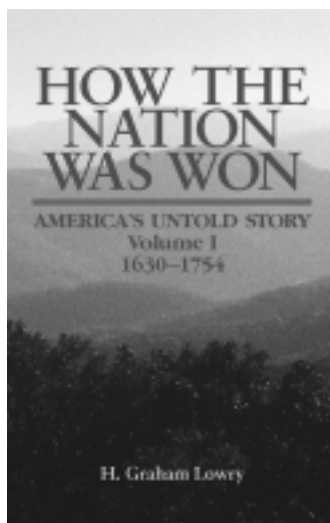
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“Here’s another line from the President’s news conference: ‘What’s very interesting about the violence in Lebanon and the violence in Iraq and the violence in Gaza is this: These are all groups of terrorists who are trying to stop the advance of democracy.’

“Now, whatever you think about George Bush’s intellect, he knows full well that the Hamas government in Gaza was democratically elected. He also knows full well that Hezbollah participates in the democratically elected government of Lebanon, or what’s left of Lebanon. And so he has to know full well that U.S.-backed Israeli assaults on Gaza and Lebanon—even if you believe they were justified—had the impact of crippling, if not crushing, two nascent democracies of the kind the Bush Administration wants to cultivate throughout the Middle East.

“He also knows that the Iraqi government has real sovereignty over only the Green Zone in Baghdad—a fortress made secure by the presence of U.S. troops—and assorted other enclaves where American and British troops enforce the peace. He has heard the leader of that nominal government praise Hezbollah and denounce Israel.

“So when the President lauds democracy as the magic elixir that will cure the scourge of terrorism, is he really putting faith in his favorite mantra rather than his lying eyes? Is his view of the world so unchangeable that he dismisses actual events the way he dismisses mere ‘talk’?

“Or is he just trying to hold on until January 2009, when all this will become somebody else’s problem?”

British Media

London Guardian, Aug. 18, “Labour MPs rally to Prescott’s defence over criticism of Bush”:

“Labour backbenchers defended John Prescott yesterday as the deputy prime minister found himself at the centre of more political turmoil after it emerged he had described George Bush’s handling of the Middle East peace process as ‘crap.’

“Leading the support was Harry Cohen, MP for Leyton and Wanstead, who had embarrassed Mr. Prescott by revealing the remarks, made in a private meeting on Tuesday.

“Mr Cohen reported that Mr. Prescott had described the Bush Administration as ‘crap’ in its handling of the ‘road map’ negotiations to reach a settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis, and referred to the U.S. President as ‘a cowboy with his stetson on.’ . . .

“Downing Street brushed off the comments and the White House press secretary, Tony Snow, said Mr. Bush had ‘been called a lot worse.’ . . .

“‘I’m full of praise for John Prescott. . . . He was being frank. . . . He might not have liked the language coming out in this way but the point he was making was a serious one.’

“The view Mr. Prescott expressed was held by a lot of the parliamentary Labour party ‘and I suspect at high levels of government as well.’ . . .”