

Why Do They Hate Us?

For about three days after September 11, 2001 the American people became introspective and asked themselves “Why do they hate us so much?” Then President George W. Bush deflected their attention, first by telling them to go shopping, and then by invading Iraq to overthrow a dictator who had our prior support when it served our advantage. The question so briefly reflected upon is actually not that difficult to answer. Consider how we would react if Xi’s China or Putin’s Russia had a military garrison in every Canadian and Mexican province on our borders and in Cuba. Remember 1962? But the fact that we have military bases spread throughout the world is the least of the reasons for why they hate us.

Consider Iran where we overthrew a democratically elected government and installed the most hated shah. Is it any wonder that Iranians now chant “Death to America”? Or Chile where we overthrew the democratically elected Allende government and installed the Pinochet dictatorship. The list of similar interventions and regime changes is long. But when you add our rhetoric about democracy and freedom to our actual actions on the ground, such as special rendition, Abu Ghraib, and the prison in Guantanamo which violates our constitutional principles, is it any wonder why they hate us? Rather than propping up a barbaric government in Saudi Arabia to obtain access to their oil, we would have been much better off if we just sent in our military and taken it. At least then we would have been honest about what we were doing.

Consider our use of drones piloted from an air base in Nevada to target terrorists in the Middle East but which most of the time wreck havoc upon the civilian population. Collateral damage is not the way to win friends and influence people. Or consider our decades long war on drugs which has done nothing but create violent criminal gangs at home and abroad which make high profits tax free as a result of an artificially created scarcity and our insatiable demand for their products. This is a perfect example of how a mistaken policy creates an ecology of entrenched special interests ranging from various enforcement agencies to the drug cartels that make their living off the policy. Our addiction to permanent war is another obvious example.

Cloaking our military and “intelligence” operations in such euphemisms as the “defense” of democracy and the necessity to spread “democracy” and “freedom” around the world do nothing but alienate hearts and minds. Such blatant hypocrisy generates much understandable hatred. The Second World War was a war of necessity, but unfortunately we won the war and lost the peace. The mobilization for the war effort created the industrial-military complex that Eisenhower warned us about and validated Marx’s assertion that capitalism cannot survive without war. We were dishonest with ourselves and the rest of the world in renaming the war department the defense department.

We are witnessing the transformation of political satire into serious policy proposals during the current presidential campaign. This degenerate adolescence not only appeals to a generalized hatred toward those outside our borders, but it also exacerbates the prevalent racial and religious animosity within our country which prove, in the immortal words of Pogo, that “We have met

the enemy and he is us". Until we can honestly address the question "Why do they hate us?" we shall continue to be at perpetual war not only with enemies without, but with ourselves.