bastards, that's for Bill Weber,' and 'Cry, you dirty gook bastards, cry like you made us cry.'"

In my view, what was "ridiculous," was the presence of armed American soldiers on the soil of a foreign country, where they didn't belong. I have no problem with understanding the feelings and reactions of these soldiers. However, I find it hard to be sympathetic toward the soldiers who are first shocked and then enraged that the enemy – those who are natives to the land they are invading and whose countrymen and family members have been killed or wounded by the soldiers – should have the audacity to fight back and do harm to their beloved buddies. To be angered that it is "guerrilla" rather than "conventional" military tactics being used by the enemy strikes me as a strange. For the Viet Cong to use "conventional" tactics against American troops with their massively superior land and air firepower would have been suicidally stupid. For American soldiers to expect the enemy to fight in a "conventional" manner which is to the advantage of the Americans and then to be outraged when this doesn't happen seems bizarrely narcissistic.

On reading this paper I was strongly reminded of Chaim Shatan's paper "Bogus Manhood, Bogus Honor: Surrender and Transfiguration in the United States Marine Corps." In this classic 1977 paper, Shatan (1924-2001), a longtime member of the Psychohistory Forum, describes the quite deliberately designed training procedures used by the United States Marines to create both the comradely bonding and the sanction to commit atrocities that are among the crucial antecedents to creating an atrocity-producing situation.

Also, I am very much in agreement with Professor Fuchsman's opening statement that "The problem of wartime atrocity goes beyond the rage-filled actions of soldiers in the field. More civilian casualties are produced by policies originating with presidents and generals than by outbursts of privates and lieutenants." Consequently, I am very much looking forward to his second paper in which he says he will explore the psychohistory of leaders who are responsible for policies that target civilians.

I agree that if one is addressing the issue of atrocities during wartime the subject of leaders, politicians and generals and the structures that support, encourage, and enable them needs to be explored. As Dr. Fuchsman says, decisions made by our "leaders" have been responsible for many more atrocities than the transgressions of individuals or small groups. The danger of focusing on the actions of individuals or small groups is that it can easily lead to the labeling of those involved as pathological deviants who are different from us, thereby avoiding examining the responsibility for the events in question on the part of those in positions of leadership. When we take into consideration that these leaders have been given power by us and are acting as delegates for our wishes, we cannot escape from sharing in the blame for the atrocities they have perpetrated.

Putting it another way, Henry Kissinger, Curtis LeMay, Harry Truman, or even FDR (if we take Richard Stennett and George Victor seriously regarding Roosevelt's responsibility for Pearl Harbor), are far bigger war criminals than Captain Medina, Lieutenant Calley, the Marines who raped and murdered at Haditha, or the interrogators who torture at Abu Grahib.

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The Psychological Roots of Bush's Iraq War Obstinacy

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President Bush's behavior regarding his war in Iraq has become a prime source of psychological speculation. A large number of authors and military experts have focused on his purportedly continuous denial of the importance of significant negative events. We believe that the denial in this instance might be properly seen as an effect rather than a cause, and as not following the usual assumptions regarding its use as a defense mechanism.

This analysis requires us to examine two psychological processes: groupthink and cognitive dissonance. Many writers have argued that the origins of the Iraqi conflict could be assigned to a small coterie of individuals within the administration, including Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and some lower level neo-conservative officials. This created a powerfully placed group of individuals with established and collectively fixed objectives. New and critical information, which was inconsistent with the earlier rationale, might require a shift in thinking but not policy. But this was done without acknowledging that the later objectives might be inconsistent with earlier pronouncements. Hence the initial cause for the invasion of Iraq moved from the danger of an impending threat from Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), to overthrowing Hussein, to a war on terrorism, to establishing democracy in Iraq, to an obligation to the Iraqi people, to achieving stability, and to combinations thereof. What is important is that while the stated objectives could be changed, the basic premises underlying the invasion were not challenged. This group could still believe they have not erred. "Staying the course" took on the role of a mantra.

This phenomenon is called *groupthink*. Basically the members of a group assume that their thinking and decisions cannot be wrong, and information to the contrary can be ignored (Robert A. Baron and Don Byrne, *Social Psychology*, 9th ed., 2000, pp. 516-517). Under the spell of groupthink the atmosphere of incontrovertibility may lead not only to ignoring those who disagree, but even savagely castigating those critics who have dared challenge their assumptions. Thus in the Bush administration's defense of the Iraq war, "cut and run" became almost an epithet.

This is not to argue that the underlying reasons for each of the individuals are identical. For example, arguments have been made that Bush's underlying motive reflected an oedipal conflict. That is, he was going to finish what his father should have done. Others have suggested his braggadocio ("bring 'em on") reflected an attempt to prove his machismo after he avoided serving in Vietnam. The net effect of all this was that in concert with others, the decision to invade was inevitable.

The development of a second critical psychological process concerns the issue of denial. Although used by writers in a myriad ways, the major theme has been that Bush was not facing reality. Our argument will be that Bush never lost sight of reality, but was very selective in determining the contributions of specific events to his fixed belief system.

Denial, as a defense mechanism, traditionally substitutes wish fulfillment for reality (Leland E. Hinsie and Robert J. Campbell, *Psychiatric Dictionary*, 1960, p. 197). Instead we propose that Bush's behavior is better explained by Festinger's work on cognitive dissonance (Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, 1959). Dissonance, or a state of tension, exists when an individual perceives there is an underlying conflict among beliefs relating to one's self, behavior, or environment (Festinger, p. 3). Individuals strive for consistency, and these tensions must be reduced.

A simple example might be when you purchase a car you cannot afford. Somehow you have to convince yourself that the money you spent was worth it. A common recourse might be to read in *Consumer Reports* how the car you purchased is much better than the car you could afford. Another approach might be to tell yourself that the car you purchased will last so much longer, and if you amortize the extra money over the life of the car, it is not that much more expensive.

The tipping point for Bush may well have been that not long after the "Mission Accomplished" banner was hung on the carrier, things started to fall apart. From his perspective the U.S. had won fair and square and it was time to celebrate. Although no Weapons of Mass Destruction had been found, Hussein was on the run. However, as conditions in Iraq began to really deteriorate, he could not completely ignore or distort the reality of the situation.

As the magnitude of the downward spiral in Iraq grew, so did dissonance within his thinking. It became imperative to find elements in the situation, which supported the initial decision (Festinger, pp. 18-20). Hence, there were arguments for the media to find and extol positive elements such as reconstruction efforts and the capture of Hussein. In fact, a company was employed to embed such positive elements in news reports. To Bush these events served to maintain his purpose; other bad reports, while part of the deteriorating situation, did not justify a change of course. They were really not equal: elections su-

perseded suicide bombings; signs of reconstruction were better to his way of thinking than the carping of critics. Thus in the example of the car purchase, one may well avoid ads extolling the virtues of cars considered but not purchased (Festinger, p. 154). Above all else, the inner group provided a mutually self-supporting society (Festinger, p. 191). That is undoubtedly one reason Bush kept Rumsfeld on in spite of mounting criticism and allowed Cheney free rein in denouncing those questioning the administration's position.

Bush believed (and appears to still believe) that he had no reason to change his core beliefs. He was the president, the Republicans controlled the Congress, and for quite a while the active military did not want to risk facing the same fate as General Shinseki, who was forced to end his active military career in 2003 when as Army Chief of Staff he suggested more troops were needed to pacify Iraq. The 2006 midterm elections, which undermined much of the President's congressional support as well as the obvious spiraling into civil war (what the Administration called "sectarian strife"), did force some changes, at least in his verbal behavior. Prior to the election, the President began to allude to difficult times. Things were not going well, but his initial decision was still the right one. The bad news was dealt with by a "this too shall pass" attitude. He was assisted in changes in tone, but not the policy, by the "staying the course" comments of some retired commanders. Still, he faced the ever increasing concerns of the active commanders about the course of events in Iraq. The day after the elections he dismissed Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. While pundit incline to view this as an admission of defeat for his policies, the President's Press Secretary suggested it was an indication of his being open-minded. However, this may not be the case since Rumsfeld was talking about significant strategy changes: thus the Defense Secretary had committed the cardinal sin of questioning the groupthink coterie.

Given the fact that the Democrats now controlled Congress, Bush knew he had to make at least some changes, although they could not imperil his original decision. Paradoxically, however, in spite of increased opposition, it did not necessarily mean he had to change his core beliefs or strategy. In fact, with the increased pressure upon him, he began digging in his heels. What he was doing was changing the magnitude of the conflict between him and others, without surrendering his basic beliefs. Festinger argued that the more pressure placed on the individual, the less likely they would be to give up their central beliefs (Festinger, pp. 189-192). This meant that Bush has to convince himself that any appearances of changes in strategy still reflect his basic premise of victory in Iraq. If Congress openly rebels in the fall, he can always console himself with the belief, he did not jump: he was pushed. But forcing Bush to succumb to pressure to truly change his policy will not be an easy task.

After the Democrats won control of Congress in November of last year and the Iraq Study Group Report was made public in the following month, Bush resisted suggestions calling for withdrawal as measured by specific benchmarks. Instead, he ordered an increase in troop strength – the "surge." He could not afford to recognize that, after all these years and casualties, it had been a mistake. He may yet wind up endorsing some kind of slow withdrawal, which he could then interpret as still maintaining the needed, open-ended American presence in Iraq. In this case he might argue that victory meant achieving stability, without yielding to the demands for a set of specific timetables to accomplish this, or, for that matter, even defining stability. He has begun the process of accepting Iraq's meeting with its neighbors Iran and Syria, thereby avoiding further criticism for his oft-stated refusal for the U.S. to meet with their leaders. But under no circumstances will he give up the core belief that he was right all along. In fact, in the end he may well accomplish staying true to his belief in his struggle to avoid cognitive dissonance: even if the result is his political martyrdom.

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