
To the Editor

YOUR SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICAN FOREIGN policy (Summer 2003) prompts me to share some insights I gained in August 1998, when I was in Nairobi a week after the bombing of the U.S. embassy. It became evident that America does things through carelessness and misunderstanding that motivate radicals to attack us. It's in our interest to understand and avoid provoking attacks where we can.

The bomb killed 230 Kenyans and wounded 4,000. Thousands of victims and their children still suffer from the consequences. Here is some of what angered Kenyans:

- America had located the embassy in one of the busiest areas in the city with virtually no security perimeter. The embassy was built to withstand a blast with no apparent regard for the safety of the people outside.
- U.S. troops guarding the perimeter held rescue workers at gunpoint, preventing them from moving heavy equipment onto embassy property. People buried in the debris of a neighboring building died needlessly.
- U.S. officials and rescue workers concentrated only on rescuing Americans and embassy workers providing little or no help to far greater numbers of desperately injured Kenyans.
- U.S. rescuers commandeered a South African rescue flight—even leaving empty space that could have been used for dying Kenyans.
- In an effort to generate favorable publicity, U. S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Kenyan victims in the main Nairobi hospital.

Her security force closed the hospital to the public. A woman gave birth outside when she couldn't get into the hospital.

A firestorm followed in the Kenyan press. Detailed accounts of U.S. conduct presented America as self-serving and heedless of the devastating effects it had had on Kenyans. Strong hostilities emerged as America tried to contain the bad publicity. America's only hope of redeeming its reputation would have been to acknowledge its errors, and take care of suffering Kenyans. Instead, America acknowledged its errors in a detailed report admitting responsibility for failed security standards but then did almost nothing to care for the Kenyan victims. Meanwhile, Kenya has become one of the countries where American interests are most threatened by terrorism.

The U.S. view of Kenyan complaints is evident from Admiral William J. Crowe's official report. In the cover letter accompanying his report, Crowe wrote, "We viewed as our primary and overriding responsibility the submission of recommendations that will save lives of *personnel serving at U.S. missions* abroad in the future. We ask that you review the recommendations with that objective in mind." (Emphasis added). The report says much about managing U.S. public relations and the safety of U.S. personnel, but little about the protection of people who live near U.S. embassies. To an already hostile radical, this adds insult to injury.

While America is well regarded by most people around the world, it is hated by too many people in developing countries. Whatever we may think of these enemies is useless in our self-defense. It's what they think—however wrong or insane it may be—that we must contend with since that's what motivates them to want to kill us. Many radicals around the world think that America is an imperialist aggressor

who must be destroyed and many are ready to underwrite their cause with their own blood. In a world where something that fits into a small truck or plane can kill tens of thousands of us, we provoke them at great peril to ourselves and our children.

We delude ourselves if we believe that our enemies never have any legitimate complaint against us. We are a huge country, the world's only superpower, and inadvertence or oversight can produce devastating consequences to thousands of people in poor countries. Almost no American actually wishes bad things upon the poor and powerless and some of us dedicate much time and money to improve conditions in the world's poorer countries. Paying enough attention to respect other peoples and provide compassionate aid costs America almost nothing compared to the cost of conflict. It's a price well worth paying.

When Lincoln called America "the last best hope of earth," he meant its mission includes lighting the way to freedom and justice for the rest of the world. A "muscular" foreign policy backed by strong military resolve in the hands of a just nation is the world's best hope in this time when suicidal killers armed with weapons of mass destruction are bent on destroying freedom and justice on earth. But a just nation must examine its actions to see whether they are just. And, when it discovers they are not, a just nation accepts responsibility and does its best to be just in an imperfect world.

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I'M WRITING TO EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION for Katherine Kersten's article, "What Your Professors Won't Tell You: Why Diversity Stops at the Classroom Door," which is the best account I've ever read on the character of the typical university faculty member. Her description of what motivates intellectuals, their fondness for an adver-

sary culture, their embrace of quasi-religious notions without making any sacrifices, her characterization of radical feminists and perhaps above all, her belief that many of today's professors are really just warmed-over, aging disciples of politically correct orthodoxy—all of that contains great wisdom and truth.

I was a university president from 1969 to 1976 and Ms. Kersten's speech at St. Olaf describes almost perfectly my feelings about those times. Florida State University was the most "active" university in the Southeast and I became the president when my predecessor quit one day in the face of a threatened SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) takeover. Just like that, he resigned. I had been appointed a couple of weeks earlier to become the university's first executive vice president, to take office on July 1. The president left in February when I was still education dean—and suddenly I was in charge of a campus where the president was run off by radicals who liked the taste of blood and figured their next move would be to run off the new guy.

Suffice it to say that we were witness to one of the great socio-cultural changes in at least the last century. As for me, I'm glad I was there and I wouldn't have wanted to miss a day of the revolution.

I remember thinking then that these kids would probably someday be in charge and then what? I don't have the answer, but we can hope that we may live to see at least the beginning of a return to real diversity—intellectual diversity, to use Ms. Kersten's very apt term. But maybe not, as she said, until her generation fades away.

Thanks for the wonderful essay. I'm going to recommend it to others who will understand and appreciate the message.

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