

Where is the Outrage?  
July 2005\*

Sandra Day O'Connor's announcement of her retirement came as a shock to me, as it did to many Americans. Chief Justice Rehnquist has thyroid cancer and was widely expected to retire; but, late last week, the Nixon appointee revealed in a statement that he plans to stay on the bench. Because the Supreme Court's decisions impact our lives in monumental ways, the nature of the wisdom and experience of the next Supreme Court justice should be of monumental importance to all of us. The stakes could not be higher for conservatives, liberals, *and* independents: abortion, separation of church and state, affirmative action, gay rights, the death penalty, mandatory sentences, states' rights, and end-of-life issues are all on the line. Unfortunately, no matter how the confirmation of President Bush's nominee to the Supreme Court bench turns out, we will not know if that decision is correct for another two to five years, that is, until the new Supreme Court justice proves him- or herself. O'Connor, for example, a Reagan appointee, turned out to be far more of a pragmatist than a conservative.

The President has nominated John Roberts to replace Justice O'Connor. Who? He was the fellow at the bottom of everyone's list. If you look at *The New York Times'*, *Washington Post's*, or CNN's lists of potential nominees, John Roberts was ninth or tenth. He is one of those powerful inside lawyers who stay out of the spotlight. We do know *some* things about him: he is a highly qualified trial lawyer; he is a Washington insider; he is admired by both Democrats and Republicans. However, because Roberts has only been on the District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals for the last two years, he simply does not have enough decisions under his belt

for anyone to know much about him. Yet, in all likelihood, he will be confirmed as the next Supreme Court Justice.

The Bush administration misread what the 2004 election *should* have told them about the President's holdings in the area of political capital; as a result, they made some mistakes earlier in the year. They started a major push on Social Security reform, for example, but the American people were not interested (though they *should* have been). The nomination of Judge John Roberts might turn out to be the first "perfect" step of Bush's second term. Because of Roberts' short record, few of those who can influence his nomination know enough about him to make an informed decision. His stand on the hot button issues--abortion, affirmative action, and school prayer--are not clear. This much we know: he loves the Constitution and the legal process. Will he turn out to be a conservative, such as Justice Rehnquist, or a moderate, such as Justice Souter, who was appointed by President Bush's father in 1990? Only time will tell.

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*Al Qaeda.* It appears that once again Al Qaeda has raised its ugly head. Four separate bombs went off in London earlier this month while the G-8 summit was underway in Scotland. The reaction from the leaders at the summit was measured and predictable. Prime Minister Tony Blair – “barbaric.” German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder – “cowardly terrorist attacks.” French President Jacques Chirac – “cowards.” President George Bush – “And the contrast couldn't be clearer between the intentions and the hearts of those of us who care deeply about human rights and human liberty, and those who kill, those who've got such evil in their heart that they will take the lives of innocent folks.”<sup>1</sup>

Now we learn that four more bombs were set to go off in London last week but failed.

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The four terrorists involved in the first attack were suicide bombers and died in that debacle, along with close to fifty innocent souls. The men responsible for the second series of bombs have just been arrested; their political affiliations are being investigated. Although the British government has not formally accused Al Qaeda of this latest *almost-attack*, evidence strongly points to them or some type of copy-cat. The evidence also tells us that over the last three years Al Qaeda has transformed itself from a centralized terrorist organization with a few satellites into a decentralized organization with both active and sleeper cells in almost every continent.

Late in the year 2001, after the September 11 attacks, the United States determined that the Taliban of Afghanistan were providing cover for the Al Qaeda masterminds of our New York City disaster. Hence, the invasion of Afghanistan. Our war in that far off country was not the all-out war that was waged there two decades earlier by the Soviets. Instead, we used local tribal leaders and the Northern Alliance, the resistance movement that believed in a milder form of Islam previously ousted by the Taliban, to do the heavy fighting for us. We sent in advisers and a small group of Special Forces to support the Northern Alliance. We gave the Northern Alliance money and weapons. We supported them with our mighty air power. The plan worked slowly at first, but soon gained momentum. The Taliban were pushed back into the capital city of Kabul. With Kabul partially surrounded, the leadership of the Taliban and Al Qaeda were trapped. Pausing to regroup after their victory, The Northern Alliance inadvertently gave Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, the time they needed to escape east into the Tora Bora Mountains. The Tora Bora Mountains should have rung a bell in the American generals' ears. Several years earlier, the intelligence community had pinpointed Tora Bora as an excellent place for Al Qaeda to hide weapons and materials. It is likely that the

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terrorists' arrival in that region after Kabul was less of a retreat and more of a homecoming. Rumors abound about how, exactly, the United States and the Northern Alliance let bin Laden and the Taliban leader slip through our hands. But finger-pointing about the past is pointless. The battle for Kabul appears to have been a hollow victory, for Bin Laden and his gang of terrorists not only found a back door out of the Tora Bora Mountains—Pakistan—but have gone deeper underground and used the time since 9/11 to re-organize, regroup, and multiply their numbers and plans. When we lost bin Laden to the Tora Bora, the West missed its first—and perhaps its only—opportunity to crush Al Qaeda with relative ease.

Since the Battle of Kabul, bin Laden and his lieutenants have released several videotapes stating in a nutshell, that he is not dead and urging sympathizers to go out and do the things that bin Laden taught them. In September 2004, Bin Laden lieutenant Zawahiri released a tape threatening countries who had contributed troops to the war in Iraq. On the tape, he encouraged Al Qaeda followers around the world to start an offensive and fomented support for the movement by suggesting that the American, English, French, Jewish, Hungarian, Polish, and South Korean forces at war in Iraq would soon invade Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen, and Algeria.

According to the State Department 655 terrorist attacks occurred worldwide last year (Susan B. Glasser, *Washington Post*, April 27, 2005). This is a fivefold increase from the year 2003. Some have suggested that we have awakened a sleeping giant—Muslim hatred of what they perceive as an arrogant and serious threat to their existence--and that is the reason for the spike in terrorist attacks. Others say that we simply haven't been aggressive enough against an inevitable terrorist insurgency. All I know is that I do not feel safe when trains are blowing up in

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Madrid and London.

We are all familiar with the President's rationale for the Iraq war: by taking the battle against terrorism to the East, we are keeping it out of the West. The numbers reported above pretty well trump Bush's "we're safer" argument. True, there have been no terrorist attacks on US soil in almost four years. But there were *no* terrorist attacks on the US from 1992 until 2001. Does this data mean that Bill Clinton had terrorists in a headlock? I doubt it.

Thankfully, some things are going better in the war on terrorism. The Muslim community in the US has reached out to the government as patriots. They have stood up and said that violence against civilians is wrong. An ex-CIA officer, Marc Sageman explained on a recent PBS *Frontline* program that "The neglected part of [the story of the US war on terrorism] since 9/11 is the almost heroic conduct of the American Muslim community," (*Frontline*, "Al Qaeda's New Front") Sageman contends that despite the fact that American Muslims have been unfairly discriminated against since 9/11, they have never stopped being patriotic Americans. He argues that the reason we haven't had any successful terrorist attacks in the US in the past few years is because peace-loving Muslims have been very cooperative with the FBI and law enforcement "to try to root out this virulent distortion of Islam which is propagated by Salafi [an extreme Islamic sect (for more information -

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/special/sala.html>)] terrorists."

Finally, I do not think that it is enough for us to say that Al Qaeda hates freedom and that is why they have made war upon the West. Al Qaeda is—among other things-- a gang such as the Crips or the Bloods. We can learn from this comparison. In the late 1980s and early 1990s gang violence ripped through our cities. Gangs such as the Crips and the Bloods were filled with

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disaffected youth who had nothing to lose and were going nowhere. As the U.S. economy improved, however, gang violence decreased. Gang membership fell as opportunities increased. Think about this: Al Qaeda is a gang with a religious twist. Young Muslims who live in ghettos are shown videos on how decadent and rich America and Europe are. They are told that six hundred years ago the Muslim caliphate ruled the world. They controlled southern Europe, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. Muslims brought written language and culture to Europe. Disaffected Muslim youth are told they can bring about Islamic greatness again by being more religious and more intolerant. Al Qaeda extremists then emphasize to those they would like to impress into service that tolerance has brought them to the ghettos. Tolerance has made it possible for Jews to live on Muslim land in Palestine. Impressionable young Al Qaeda gang converts are told they need not work for the rewards of today—to get a life, a job, a family--but to aspire for the rewards of tomorrow—in Paradise for them with many virgins—and on earth with a return of the Caliphate. They are told they must re-claim their Muslim heritage and fight Jews and Christians. They must reject the words of the great Satan -- the United States.

The arguments are part of the classic us-versus-them mentality. *Al Qaeda 2.0*. There is no central command. The objective is to bring the Western world to its knees. To re-create the caliphate of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The marching orders have been given.

In my view, it is not enough for the West to hunt terrorists down and kill them. That is important, but it can only be half of the battle. We have to combat the ideology. Ideas cannot be conquered by bullets. Arresting radical clerics only stirs the pot of hatred. We must give young Muslims an opportunity to share in the benefits of Western Society.

Many of the young European Muslims who are becoming terrorists today come from the

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terrible conditions of Northern Africa. Their families migrated into Spain and Italy, or they settled in major cities such as Madrid, London, and Hamburg. This migration is similar in many ways to how Blacks in the U.S. migrated out of the South to northern cities like Detroit, Cleveland, and Chicago in the first portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Muslims migrants settle in low income housing. They live in isolated communities. They do not speak the language of their new place of residence. They have no-wage or low-wage jobs. They have come for a piece of the pie of Western success, but they find their plates perennially empty. This is not what they dreamed of when they moved. Their living conditions are not much better than the conditions they left in Africa. The seeds of hate are sowed in these ghettos, and they take root.

No man wants to feel that he cannot provide for his family. Most men want to feel that they belong, that they contribute to society. Whether it is Al Qaeda or the Crips or the Bloods, the problem is the same. These immigrant communities must be incorporated into mainstream society. They need to be trained in the language and the culture of the lands in which they now reside. They must have educational opportunities. They must be included in the prosperity and in the social groups of the West. Above all, they need *good jobs*. By facilitating advances and improvements such as these in the lives of these displaced Muslim we are more likely to win supporters away from Al Qaeda than we are by fighting them with guns and bombs.

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**Recent news:**

- The President's brain, Karl Rove, seems to be in a bit of trouble. It appears that he has spoken to Robert Novak about a CIA agent. It also appears that he told FBI agents that he knew nothing about the White House leak. The first issue may

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or may not be a crime. Lying to law enforcement *is* a crime. No question. I am sure that this story has many more twists and turns. The question that I have is this: will President Bush stick to his original bold statement about firing anyone who was involved in outing Valerie Plame?

- 3400?!?!? According to the FAA, that is how many intrusions there have been into restricted air space, since 9/11. Let's suppose that only one out of every hundred flights were al Qaeda testing our defenses. . . . Let's not. The thought is way too scary. It appears that the FAA has a lot of work to do making sure that restricted airspace is exactly that--restricted.
- The family of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts held a press conference. They stated that the press was inundating their homes with requests for interviews. So, they held a press conference to state that Judge John Roberts was the story and that they were very proud of him. Period. To the press, I say stick to the story. To the Roberts family I say good for you. Hopefully, we will not be seeing them on some sort of celebrity reality show.

1. "World leaders condemn attacks, offer support," CNN.com accessed on July 31, 2005

\* with writing and editing assistance by **Catherine Ross, PhD.**