

# GRAND TOUR

## *Bully Pulpit*

By Bruce W. Cook



George W. Bush is attempting to exercise his formidable weight as an international statesman. Perhaps it is simply too little, too late because the political machine will not permit him to lead.

The recent furor over the President's endorsement of a company based in the United Arab Emirates and their role in managing selected U.S. ports, is a case in point. Bush supported the Arab-owned company taking

over following a buyout of a British owned business entity that previously managed the U.S. ports in question. His agenda was clear. The UAE is an ally of the United States.

The company in question has an international track record of skillful management of port facilities. Overall, trade between nations, even in a hostile world environment, is the ultimate link to world cooperation. Despite what seems obvious in the Middle Eastern conflict, that is a violent clash of cultures, religious beliefs, and human values, the core reason for this war of nations, and all wars, is economics. In other words, it is war for power, for control of the national vault.

Despite some positive signs of progress, and amid both overly optimistic as well as exaggeratedly pessimistic reports on the state of potential civil war in Iraq, the bottom line remains, can an effective coalition of divergent Arab citizens, bound by their own particular religious and social beliefs, come together to govern and share in the oil rich bounty of their land? In the end, it's more about economics and politics, not religion. Religion may be the lightning rod, but money and power are the lightning strikes.

George W. Bush launched a plan to build a bridge between two very opposite worlds, using the UAE/Dubai ports deal as an avenue to trade and cooperation. He was crucified by the conservative element of his own party. Further, the proposal was an opportunity for celebration by opposing Democrats who rallied around the political campfire proclaiming "You've got to be kidding." The President, who has based his entire term in office, especially including his reelection to a second term, on the premise that America is not safe from Arab-based terrorism, could not possibly be serious about wanting an Arab owned company to control some of the most vulnerable points of potential entry for terrorists in the USA, our ports?

Rhetorical indeed, yet what better partner could the USA have than an Arab owned and operated concern in this situation. Amid all the hysteria and hyperbole, rational minds were not allowed to prevail. Trade is the best avenue to solidifying friendship among nations. Does the expression, "make your enemy your closest confidant" ring true?

The political grandstanding killed the deal. While the Bush plan was one of high road international diplomacy, he must also take credit for its failure. His communications skills remain elusive, often

arrogant. His failure to build bi-partisan coalitions on any number of issues haunt his legacy. Make no mistake, however, this President believes in the American mission in the Middle East, and further believes that America is far from out of danger from terrorist attacks.

In a recent national address, Bush made it clear that his reasons for remaining in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere where terrorism is fostered and deployed are simple. To paraphrase the President, he said we must do everything in our power to stop terrorists before they have an opportunity to attack innocent life, meaning of course, American citizens. The tragedy of 9-11 must not be forgotten. It could happen again in our open and free society.

In spite of this very passionate stand, a position which has angered millions on both sides of the political fence, Bush has also come forward supporting a moderate and humane program dealing with illegal immigration. More in line with the McCain-Kennedy proposals of immigration amnesty and worker permits than the Bill Frist stance, which calls for closing the borders with fencing and penalizing those who employ illegals, the President has chosen to follow a higher road, once again a road of diplomacy more in keeping with the spirit of enlightened international leadership. Again, not unlike the Dubai ports fiasco, the President is being drowned out by extreme voices from both the right and left. Americans simply will not trust Bush to do the right thing, to follow a righteous path, to make a real difference, a positive difference in the lives of millions of Americans and millions more world citizens. It is because Bush is a president at war. Thus, his task is to end the war and to bring home American men and women as soon as possible. Then and only then, if time and term permit, will he likely be able to lead the nation and the world to peaceful, positive ends.

Albert Einstein is credited with many far reaching observations. He said, "Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of truth and knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods." Another chilling Einstein quote follows, "I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

And one final Einstein message that bears reflection, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." This saying, my dear readers, was written on a sign that hung in Einstein's office at Princeton University. It surely applies to our world today just as it did in Einstein's era, and perhaps for all time.

We must find the path to reason and we must give our leaders the support they require to take us there. We must favor common sense and human decency over greed and extremism of all variety. We must do this for the sake of our children, if not ourselves. **GT**

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