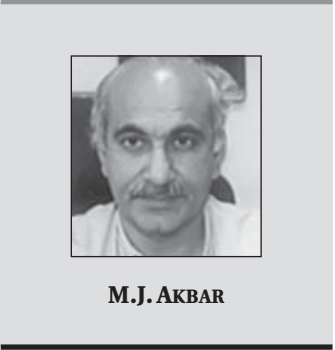


Two Gods and one candidate



I'm John Kerry. And I'm reporting," he said with a smart salute and perhaps a click of the heels, "for duty." As opening lines go, this one had class even in the full stops.

The stage was set, literally. The Democrats had gathered in Boston to nominate John Kerry as their candidate to challenge George Bush for the most powerful job in the world. No Democrat could have united the party as closely as Bush has managed to, and the delegates were tense with both the excitement of hope and the dread of an anti-climax. But those nine opening words pulled the ultimate trick in political rhetoric. They defined both the proponent and the opponent. Here was Kerry, the war hero, reporting for duty that could lead to death despite a privileged background, and there was Bush, the war coward, who used his wealth to stick out the Vietnam days in the comfort of his friends and family. The evasion of war did not make much difference in 2000 when Bush won, because he was seeking an office that had been occupied by another man

who did the same, Bill Clinton. But when you have sent some two hundred thousand Americans to a punishing battlefield increasingly reminiscent of Vietnam, when nearly a thousand Americans have died and some 6,000 wounded, then the mother who has lost a 20-year-old in Fallujah has a right to know what you did when your country called you at the age of 20.

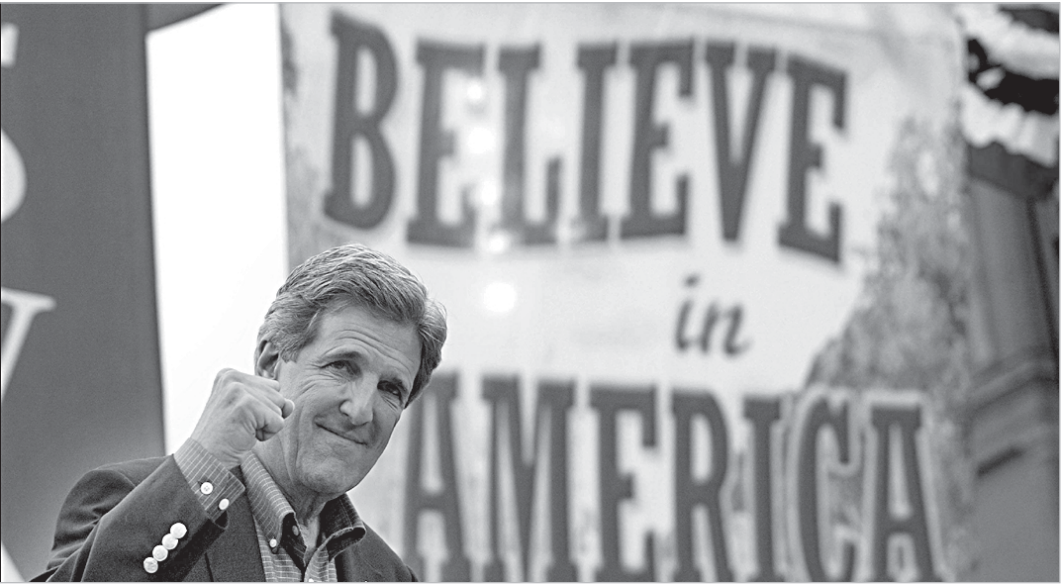
A combat veteran had in two sentences and a gesture made Bush look merely combative. And he did it without mentioning George Bush's name. That was the class part of the act.

A speech is not the best way to discover a politician. Political speeches come and go, and in worst-case situations they go on forever. They are intrinsically self-serving. They have to be. It is a poor speechwriter who cannot serve sufficient nourishment to feed the master's needs as well as ego. There is safety in intellectual boredom. It is too risky to suggest an unusual idea that might become counterproductive. The argument, if any, must suggest competence, not imagination. A politician's arithmetic is unambiguous. Long before you can add any vote, you must take care to ensure that you have not subtracted any. Flourish and drama, modulation and inflexion -- arts that an elocution teacher or an acting guru would applaud -- are confined to reinforcing known positions. A new thought that might illuminate minds? Leave for after the elections.

Ironically, Kerry entered the 2004 race with the same advantage that Bush had in 2000: he was underesti-

BYLINE

"I don't wear my faith on my sleeve. But faith has given me values of hope to live by, from Vietnam to this day, from Sunday to Sunday. I don't want to claim that God is on our side. As Abraham Lincoln told us, I want to pray humbly that we are on God's side."



mated. Bush was dismissed as mentally challenged in 2000. To be fair, he provided some evidence for the accusation. His principal enemy during that campaign seemed to be the English language, with which he conducted a running battle. Remember all those laughs we had as he hatcheted a verb and eloped with a noun?

And remember who had the last laugh of the 2000 US elections? We've been crying for four years because we had the first laugh and Bush had the last one.

Kerry came to Boston either unknown to most Americans or, worse,

case when he dismissed Bush as either ludicrously naive or mendacious.

Kerry was trapped in his record over two decades as a senator. A practical politician in the loose, often bipartisan American system of voting has no option except to nuance a complication or finesse a complexity. Kerry had to look at every side to survive. Bush, in contrast, is a simplifier, a black-and-white-man who can insist that black is white because black is also the absence of colour. Such simplicity appeals to Mr Average Joe, who thinks it must be right precisely because it is simple. However, it would be an error to call Bush the Simplifier Bush the Simpleton. Bush is too crafty to be a simpleton.

I suspect that most of Kerry's supporters would forgive him every mistake, including a prevarication or two, if he could defeat Bush. Leading the country by misleading the voter is hardly unknown. Bush campaigned in 2000 as the "compassionate conservative." He then turned out to be the most right-wing President in memory. Where did the compassion go after he was elected? To Halliburton, of course. And the two per cent at the top who got tax cuts. The rest of America was given

The trial of radical lawyer Lynne Stewart

RON CHEPESIUKE

The trial of Lynne Stewart, a defence attorney that the Bush administration has charged with providing aid and material support to a terrorist group, began June 22 in New York City. Stewart and her supporters say her trial is an attack on the First Amendment, the right of a defendant to effective counsel, and the principle of attorney-client privilege.

First indicted in April 2002, the aid and support allegedly happened when Stewart assisted her client, Islamic Group spiritual leader Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, in passing messages to the group in defiance of prison regulations imposed on the Sheikh and in violation of her own promises to abide by those restrictions. Sheikh Rahman was convicted for his involvement in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

The 64-year old Stewart, who has defended members of the Black Panthers and other radical groups, has taken the position that the best legal defence in her case is to mount an aggressive offence. She has energetically promoted her cause through interviews with the media, public speaking appearances and personal reports on her Internet trial weblog.

The first entry in Stewart's weblog refers to the paring down of the 500 potential jurors to 78. "That jury will decide my future and perhaps that of the first, fourth, fifth, and sixth amend-

ments," Stewart wrote. "I'll be there for 4 to 6 months. Bring a cushion and bring hope, encouragement, and righteousness."

"I need to have a big mouth for this trial," Stewart explained in an interview from her home. "It's important that the public learn what's going on in

sations condemned the action. For instance, In a press release, Bruce Nestor, President of the National Lawyers Guild, said the federal indictment of New York attorney Lynne Stewart would have a chilling effect on attorney-client privilege that it will have. "Stewart is a veteran criminal

University and in the Middle Eastern Studies Department at the City University of New York (CUNY). Stewart's other co-defendant, Ahmed Abdel Sattar, a Staten Island postal worker, is accused of coordinating efforts to keep Rahman in touch with his followers and co-conspirators. Being on trial

telephone and visitors and prohibiting him from speaking with the media. The government feared that Rahman would use his counsel to communicate to others instructions for carrying out violent acts.

Stewart signed an attorney affirmations in 2000 and 2001 in which she promised to abide by the SAMs.

The indictment alleges that "over the past several years, Stewart has facilitated and communicated messages between her client and Islamic Group (IG) leaders around the world in violation of the SAMs." For instance, the indictment charges that Stewart allowed Yousry, who acted as the Arabic interpreter between Rahman and his attorneys, to "read letters from defendant Sattar and others regarding IG matters and to discuss with her client whether IG should continue to comply with a cease-fire that had been supported by factions within IG since 1998." Yousry then allegedly passed the message between Rahman and IG representatives regarding IG activities. Stewart is also accused of talking gibberish to distract the prison guards so they couldn't hear the conversations between Rahman and Yousry. "We have the right to distract the guards if they are eavesdropping on a conversation between a prisoner and his lawyer," Stewart said. "There is such a thing in America as attorney-client privilege." She added, "We really didn't know the government was taping our conversations."

country into lurching to the right," Tygers said.

Stewart agrees. "I haven't met a criminal lawyer today who doesn't admit that they have altered their practice in some way because of the War on Terrorism," she said. "How can

defendants get adequate counsel if their lawyer fears that the government is listening in on their conversations? How can defendants get proper counsel if the government tries to make their counsel its lawyer? My trial is really not about Sheikh Rahman and

terrorism. It's about the future of America."

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INSIDE AMERICA

"How can defendants get adequate counsel if their lawyer fears that the government is listening in on their conversations? How can defendants get proper counsel if the government tries to make their counsel its lawyer? My trial is really not about Sheikh Rahman and terrorism. It's about the future of America."

the trial from me and not through the prosecutors' statements in the press, which portray me as a messenger of terrorism." Stewart faces a maximum of forty years in jail.

The FBI made Stewart's arrest on April 12, 2002, a high profile event. Agents invaded her office and searched it for 12 hours. The media was filled with images of agents carrying off boxes of records.

Then Attorney General John Ashcroft flew to New York City to announce Stewart's indictment in a well-publicised news conference. Later, Ashcroft appeared on *Late Night with David Letterman* to discuss the case. Several prominent legal organi-

defence attorney who often represents both controversial causes and unpopular clients," Nestor explained. "The government seems to be singling her out as poster child for its campaign to justify the unconstitutional monitoring of conversations between lawyers and inmates. This is clearly designed to have a chilling effect on lawyers zealously representing their clients."

The trial's anonymous jury consists of eight women and four men. Asked whether she believed her trial would be fair, Stewart answered: "I can't quite bring to my lips the word 'fair' because the government is introducing evidence that's calculated to scare people. You can't show a portrait of Osama bin Laden to a courtroom and not have people get emotional. The [US] government also searched [co-defendant] Mohammed Yousry's house and found a lot of old newspapers from the early 1990s relating to alleged radical activities. The judge is allowing the clippings to be introduced into evidence. You think the first Amendment would hit in. I might have a copy of *Mein Kampf* that I bought in my early years because I was curious. But possessing that book doesn't reflect my outlook on life."

Mohammed Yousry is an Arabic translator who has taught at New York

with her co-defendants doesn't complicate her defence, Stewart said. "Our defence is the same," she explained. "We were working as part of a legal team that did what it thought would be best for its client."

Stewart and her co-defendants are charged with conspiracy to help the imprisoned Sheikh Rahman pass messages to his followers in violation of extraordinary restrictions called Special Administrative Measures or SAMs, which the court imposed on the Sheikh in 1997. According to the superseding indictment of November 19, 2003, Stewart is charged with conspiring to defraud the United States and with providing and concealing material support on behalf of terrorist activity. She also faces two counts of making false statements.

Stewart emphatically denied the charges and said, "Everything I did was done in the context of being [Sheikh Rahman's] lawyer. Nothing I did was by way of being part of a criminal enterprise. Everybody in the US deserves a fair trial."

At the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons imposed the SAMs against Rahman. The restrictions included denying the prisoner access to mail,

Stewart and her numerous supporters believe that the outcome of her trial will have momentous consequences for civil liberties in the US. Michael Tyger, Lynne Stewart's attorney, assessed the case's significance. His assessment reflects the viewpoint of the legions of Americans who oppose President Bush's strategy in the war on terrorism. "For me, this case represents an opportunity to confront the Bush/Cheney/Ashcroft effort to destroy human rights and scare the