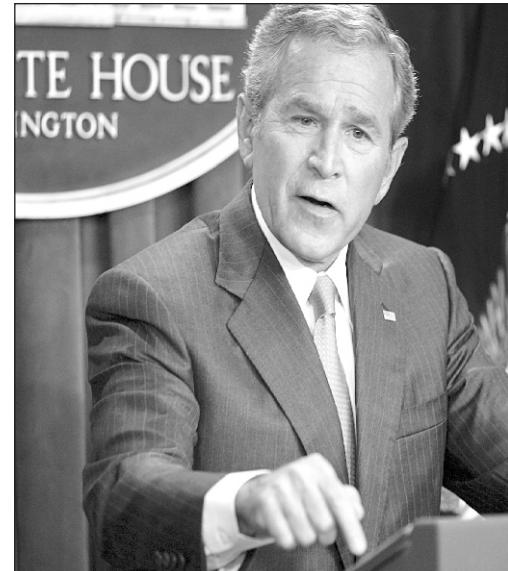


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Bush and Napoleon



Juan Cole (who is a professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian history at

University of Michigan) and also the author of the book "Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East", recently, wrote a wonderful article comparing the present US invasion of Iraq to France's conquest of Egypt in 1798. This article was later published in one of our dailies. The author basically points out the striking similarities between the mindsets of President Bush and Napoleon Bonaparte as their speeches conveyed the same message of liberating their conquerors from their tyrant rulers. According to Cole, both these leaders, in the name of establishing ideologies such as democracy, liberty and security, tried to prove that their invasions were justified. But their policy to forcefully impose their own set of rules on another country proved to be futile as their plans backfired (it is apparent that the Iraq plan has backfired). They both targeted Arab-speaking Muslim countries and harbored dreams of a "Greater Middle East." Like Napoleon, Bush also followed the same strategy of ruling by terror and initially undertaking draconian measures to resist any form of threat or counterattack imposed by certain sections of his conquered lands. In other words, Napoleon while facing resistance from the Bedouin of the western Dirm tribe, had ordered his army to burn that village so that it sends a signal of caution to the protesters and make others aware of the consequences of opposing the French Army. Similarly, the devastating US air-raids and artillery attacks damaged two-thirds of Baghdad's buildings and the Americans did so as they initially faced resistance. However, the trick which both Napoleon and Bush missed according to Cole is that both their armies had certain weaknesses which



made them vulnerable to the opposing forces; for instance the high-tech US military is still vulnerable to guerrilla tactics as was the case with the French army having to fight against an ally of the Egyptians—the British Navy. Ultimately, the gist of his article is that like Napoleon, Bush is also trying to unleash terror against the Iraqis in the name of liberating their motherland from the clutches of militants to restore peace and calm. But as long as a stubborn Bush continues with his mission (which is basically to have greater control over certain Middle-East countries), the Iraqis will suffer (as there have already been countless civilian casualties) because unless the US troops leave, the violence in Iraq will continue to escalate and the situation will further deteriorate. Napoleon eventually had to surrender and may be Bush might eventually have to withdraw his determined plan to keep on deploying more troops and put an end to this war.

Whether President Bush realises his mistake and finally decides to withdraw the troops is something I am eagerly waiting to see.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Balanced migration



DRISHITIPAT.ORG

The most recent policy announcement of the government is to compel the diversification of labour migration flows. This is to be achieved by requiring that the selection of migrant workers reflect a greater geographical diversity in the sourcing of the workers. Areas that do not have a history of labour export or that are especially disadvantaged by poverty such as the north-west are to be privileged in the selection of workers for export. BMET is to be the lead agency in implementing this policy and the policy has been welcomed by local experts on labour migration. However, this quota system is to be achieved by disrupting the established migration chain and social

networks. Therefore any gains that might be made in achieving greater diversification will be made by weakening the support structures of the existing labour migration flow. The importance of social networks in supporting migration and establishing strong cumulative causation is recognised as one of the principle means by which sustainable migration flows can be ensured. The new policy will therefore work against one of the few support structures that Bangladeshi labour migrants have in the destination countries which is their expanding social network. By compelling diversification at the expense of this support structure the government of

Bangladesh only creates another obstacle to the existing flow of migration. It can then be expected that the existing migration network will resort to irregular channels if necessary to enable their friends and relatives to overcome this new barrier to their migration.

In fact, the government of Bangladesh seeks to punish the success of a source community in establishing a migration network by deliberately dismantling what should actually be supported and encouraged.

Dr. John Davies
SMNP Team Leader
Netherlands Recreation Centre, Dhaka

Dhaka

Russian nuclear reactor

Construction of the Chernobyl power station began in the 1970s. The first of the four reactors was commissioned in 1977. Reactor No. 4 began producing power in 1983 and it exploded on Saturday, April 26, 1986, at 1:23:58am local time. This plant was built by Russia. The Chernobyl accident cost the former Soviet Union billions of dollars, and some observers believe it may have hastened the collapse of the Soviet government. Massive amounts of radioactive materials were released into the environment, resulting in a radioactive cloud that spread over much of Europe. The greatest contamination occurred around the reactor in areas that are now part of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. After the accident, the Soviet authorities resettled more than 350,000 people outside the worst affected areas, including all 50,000 people from nearby Pripyat, but millions of people continue to live in contaminated areas.

I would request our CTG to consider all these facts and safety measures before they consider buying a nuclear reactor from Russia. To solve the electricity problem in Bangladesh, building a nuclear reactor is the only answer. For the development of Bangladesh we have to have it and there is no other way. But for the safety first it is better and wise to spend more money to buy the latest and safest plant. Technologically Russia is not in a position to supply that. It would be appreciated if our govt. could consider Japan, Germany, Sweden, and Finland who have the latest technology regarding reactor safety. It would also help to get more cooperation and investment from western countries in Bangladesh. Our govt. should include the clause that the builder must take all responsibilities and bear all the costs in case of an accident. When Sheikh Hasina was the prime minister of Bangladesh, I requested her to build a nuclear reactor to produce electricity, instead of buying MiG-29 fighters (a letter in this respect was published in The Daily Star).

Dr. Majumder

Germany

Abortion policy

I wish to commend the Vatican, and more recently Catholic Bishop Michael Evans of East Anglia for condoning a massive pro-abortion policy. Amnesty has fallen victim to a distorted rationale that tends to place a higher priority on human suffering than on life itself. Contrary to Amnesty's new position, human welfare depends upon a shared responsibility that involves moral limits. There are no "small" murders. The respect for every human life is an essential condition if a societal life worthy of the name is to be possible. When man's conscience loses respect for life as something sacred, he inevitably ends by losing his own identity.

While the term "choice" may sound democratic the person who opts for abortion is neglecting to consider the fundamental right to life of the mother's unborn fetus. We must help those who are suffering, but we may not use a good end to justify an evil means. Human beings are not raw materials to be exploited or commodities that can be bought and sold. To suggest otherwise is to endorse a macabre interpretation of progress. To claim the right to abortion and to recognize that right in law, means to attribute to human freedom a perverse and evil significance: that of an absolute power over others and against others.

This is the death of true freedom.

Paul Kokoski
Columbia Drive
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Muslims in West Bengal

A recent study by BBC Bengali Service revealed the sorry state of affairs of Muslims in the left-led West Bengal. With 26% population, Muslims are employed in 2.1% government services and 1.98% private services. Their representation in business and other gainful employment is even more negligible. Interesting to note that these ratios were slightly better during the Congress rule. Their fate took a continuous downward trend during the so-called progressive rule of the CPM-led left coalition for whom Muslims voted en masse.

We the people of East Bengal (then East Pakistan) felt neglected as our share in jobs and businesses were disproportionate to our percentage of population in Pakistan.

Now we find that the Muslims in India are in an even worse situation. Political thinkers, sociologists and demographers may enlighten us in these matters.

M. Sanail Huq

Uttara, Dhaka

Father of the Nation

Ask any Indian, who is your Father of the Nation? They will say Mahatma Gandhi. Ask any Pakistani the same question and the answer will be Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Ask Bangladeshis about their Father of the Nation, the answer to the question will be not that clear. Many of us will hesitate to answer, some are confused, some

will say Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and so on. It is tragic and unfortunate that we educated Bangladeshis are confused and misguided.

It does not matter to Bangabandhu whether he is recognised as the Father of the Nation or not. But why is this meanness of not accepting him as the Father of Bangladesh?

Our forefathers fought under his leadership and Bangabandhu will remain alive as long as Bangladesh exists.

Mamun Ahmed

Las Vegas, NV, USA

Neglected Niketon

The housing area called Niketon has developed fast with high-rise buildings and a habitation of more than a 100,000 citizens. There are decent houses with most inhabitants being service holders having their offices in the vicinity.

Most of the inhabitants have cars. But the roads of Niketon are absolutely unworthy of driving with ditches filled with thick slimy mud that can ruin the cars. Alternately, if you prefer to take a rickshaw ride, to save your transport than you are bound to damage your spinal cord or hip-joint by jerks. Ironically, this happens to be Gulshan!

Navera Sayeed

Niketon, Dhaka

Repair the road

It's quiz time—which important road of Dhaka city has no footpath & road divider? The answer is Jatrabari-Jurain road. It's the entry point to

Dhaka from the south & south-east region of the country.

The department concerned doesn't look after the road properly. We need an immediate response from the department & urge the City Corporation to look into the matter.

Solaiman Palas

East Jurain, Dhaka

Diplomats and people

I am at a loss to understand if the foreign diplomats are here to represent their respective countries or just to issue certificate as to which action(s) taken by our government is right and which is not. The other day The British High Commissioner even went deep into the recent DU crisis and opined that "money was involved in all those incidents". It is not denying that BTV speaks more for the incumbent government than the mass people.

What is more surprising is that our Foreign Affairs Adviser, after a recent meeting with foreign diplomats, very confidently said, "The government received full support of the envoys, at least no one disagreed."

One may now very reasonably ask as to which is more important -- the support of the foreign envoys or that of our own people? Would the foreign office please clarify?

Hafeejul Alam

A former civil servant

Arrested teachers

The other day I was watching a documentary on the role of US media leading up to the invasion of Iraq by the US. The documentary, Buying the War, was a brainchild of Mr. Bill Moyers, a famous US journalist.

The main thrust of it was how the media moguls and individual journalists who are known in the US for their professional integrity failed to stand against the wind of emotive national sentiment to avenge on anyone perceived to be related with the 9/11 attack.

This is the death of true freedom.

Paul Kokoski

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