

EUROPE'S ANTI-AMERICAN OBSESSION

BY JEAN-FRANCOIS REVEL

What picture of American society is likely to be imprinted on the consciousness of average Europeans? Given what they read or hear every day from intellectuals and politicians, they can hardly have any choice in the unpleasant particulars, especially if they happen to be French. The picture repeatedly sketched for them is as follows:

American society is entirely ruled by money. No other value, whether familial, moral, religious, civic, cultural, professional, or ethical has any potency in itself. Everything in America is a commodity, regarded and used exclusively for its material value. A person is judged solely by the worth of his bank account. Every U.S. President has been in the pockets of the oil companies, the military-industrial complex, the agricultural lobby, or the financial manipulators of Wall Street. America is the "jungle" par excellence of out-of-control, "savage" capitalism, where the rich are always becoming richer and fewer, while the poor are becoming poorer and more numerous. Poverty is the dominant social reality in America. Hordes of famished indigents are everywhere, while luxurious chauffeured limousines with darkened windows glide through the urban wilderness.

Poverty and inequality like this should cause Europeans to cringe in horror, especially since (we have it on good authority) there is no safety net in America, no unemployment benefits, no retirement, no assistance for the destitute--not the slightest bit of social solidarity. In the U.S. "only the most fortunate have the right to medical care and to grow old with dignity," as one writer recently put it in *Libération*. University courses are reserved only for those who can pay, which partly explains the "low level of education" in the benighted USA. Europeans firmly believe these sorts of caricatures--because they are repeated every day by the elites.

Another distinctive feature of the United States: the pandemic violence. Everywhere you go, violence reigns, with uniquely high levels of delinquency and criminality and a feverish state of near-open revolt in the ghettos. This last is the inevitable result of the

deep-rooted racism of American society, which sets ethnic "communities" against one another, and ethnic minorities as a whole against the oppressive white majority. And the unpardonable cowardice and venality that has prevented American leaders from banning the sale of firearms results in regular bloodbaths in which teenagers mercilessly gun down their teachers and fellow students in the classroom. Criticisms of the U.S. system of law bounce back and forth between the idea that it is paralyzed by legalism and the claim that the nation is a lawless jungle.

Yet another universally held conviction is that these social ills are unlikely to ever be cured since Americans make it a point of honor to elect only mental defectives as Presidents. From the Missouri tie salesman Harry Truman to the Texas cretin George W. Bush, not to mention the peanut farmer Jimmy Carter and the B-movie actor Ronald Reagan, the White House offers us a gallery of nincompoops. Only John F. Kennedy, in the eyes of the French, rose a little above this undistinguished bunch, probably because he had the merit of having married someone of French extraction; naturally, this union could not fail to raise President Kennedy's intelligence to at least average level--but doubtless still too high for his fellow citizens, who never forgave him and ended up assassinating him.

In any case, everyone knows that the USA is a democracy only in appearance: In the 1950s, the real face of the American political system was revealed during the McCarthy episode, which remains the truest revelation of the inner essence of the regime created by the Constitution of the United States. It is forgotten that the House Committee on Un-American Activities was originally created in 1937 to combat the Ku Klux Klan, which was considered an anti-American organization because it rejected the Constitutional contract that lies at the heart of the American system.

In 2002, France experienced the humiliation of seeing a demagogic populist of the extreme right take second place behind Jacques Chirac, thus going on to a runoff. What was the reaction from E.U. deputy and professor

Olivier Duhamel, one of France's leading commentators? "Now we are catching up with the degenerate democracies of the type of the United States." Strangely, it is always America that is described as degenerate and "fascist," while it is solely in Europe that actual dictatorships and totalitarian regimes spring up.

The verdict delivered in Europe against U.S. foreign policy (particularly by France, which wields the loudest bullhorn on this subject) is a curious one. It alternates between criticizing the Americans for being too aggressive ("unilateralism") and being too withdrawn ("isolationism"). When former French foreign minister Hubert Védrine deplors America's "unilateralism" for causing the U.S.--how dreadful!--to "base her decisions on her own worldview and on the defense of her own interests," we should note that this is an excellent definition of the "independent" foreign policy so forcefully espoused by General de Gaulle, and adhered to by his French successors since then. Meanwhile, all across Europe, foreign policy intellectuals make ritual denunciations of American "arrogance." The very wealth of the U.S., they insist, disqualifies her from speaking in the name of human rights.

Many Europeans sneer that America, a society still in a primitive state, ruled by violence and criminality, couldn't possibly have a mature culture. American literature and cinema is said to be an arid desert, devoid of original talent or great creators. They apparently never heard of Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, Henry James, Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, or Scott Fitzgerald. Piercing analysts like Theodore

Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Frank Norris, John Steinbeck, John

Dos Passos, and Tom Wolfe are conveniently ignored. And never mind that American film and television are far more willing to confront sensitive social or political issues than are European productions.

On the whole, American society is sweepingly condemned as practically the worst association of human beings in history. Fresh evidence can do nothing to dispel such views, which, filled with distortion as they are, reflect little on the true strengths and failures of American society. But they

tell us a great deal about the psychological problems of those Europeans who proffer the criticisms.

I watched the United States from France and Italy during the 1950s and '60s, and formed my opinion about it through the filter of the European press--which means my opinion was unfavorable. Europeans at this time saw America as the land of McCarthyism and the execution of the Rosenbergs (who we then believed innocent), of racism and the Korean War, and a stranglehold on Europe itself. Then Vietnam became the principal reason to hate America. Even during this period when Europeans completely relied on the United States to protect them against Soviet imperialism, anti-Americanism was almost as virulent as it is today.

For European leftists and the majority of intellectuals--who were likely to adhere to communist ideas--anti-Americanism was rational. This crowd identified America with capitalism, and capitalism with evil. What was less rational was their wholesale swallowing of the most flagrant and stupid lies about American society and foreign policy, with a concomitant flight from accurate knowledge of the political systems that the U.S. was battling.

A third of a century later, we witnessed something similar. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the vast majority of French people expressed sympathy with the U.S. But there were plenty who didn't. On September 16, delegates from the Confédération Générale du Travail, the communist trade union, booed a speaker who called for three minutes of silence in memory of the murdered Americans. Followers of Jean-Marie Le Pen on Europe's extreme right celebrated with champagne in offices of the National Front as they watched televised images of the Twin Towers collapsing. So gathered together under the banner of anti-Americanism were all manner of ideological partisans.

A nadir of intellectual incoherence was achieved. After the first gushings of emotion and crocodile condolences, the murderous assaults were depicted as a justified retaliation for evil done by the United States. It's not so surprising that this was a reaction in many Third World countries. Here we see the habitual escape hatch of societies suffering from chronic failure, societies that have completely messed up their evolution toward democracy and economic

growth: Instead of looking to their own incompetence and corruption as the cause, they finger the West in general and the United States in particular. And, after a discreet pause of a few days, claims of American culpability also surfaced in Europe in the press, among intellectuals, and among politicians of the Left and the Right--in France above all.

Declarations multiplied demanding that the U.S. not launch a war against terrorism. A gang of suicidal fanatics, indoctrinated, trained, and financed by a powerful and rich multinational terrorist organization, had murdered more than 3,000 Americans, yet it was the victim who was almost immediately called the aggressor. Shouldn't we ask about the "root causes" that had pushed the terrorists toward their destructive acts? Wasn't the United States in part responsible for what had happened?

Obsessed by their hatred, and floundering in illogicality, Europe's anti-American dupes completely forget that when the U.S. acts against terrorists in her own self-interest, she is also acting in the interest of Europeans, and in the interest of many other countries threatened, or already subverted, by terrorism.

Today's anti-American disinformation is not the result of pardonable, correctable mistakes, but of a profound psychological need to make the U.S. the villain responsible for others' failures.

Take crime, a subject Europeans love to whip the United States over, while closing their eyes to their own rapidly rising crime levels. The fact is that during the final 15 years of the twentieth century, crime diminished dramatically in the United States. In New York City, Rudolph Giuliani cut crime by half in five years. In Europe, disorder has skyrocketed. In France, crime and delinquency doubled between 1985 and 1998, and has galloped ahead even faster since then.

Giuliani was mocked in certain French newspapers as "Giussolini." But after having refused for decades to even recognize the existence of a crime problem in their country, French Leftists have finally confessed their "naïve optimism" and leniency toward antisocial behavior. To finally acknowledge 20 years of error is impressive. Yet the minister of justice, Marylise Lebranchu, insisted on doing so

with the haughty proclamation that, nonetheless, "The government has no desire to copy the American model." One has one's pride and one's scruples, after all. Overwhelmed by their failure to combat the steadily climbing disorder, and unable to hide from the obvious forever, French authorities in 2001 were forced to sheepishly adopt many American methods of crime fighting. Here and elsewhere, anti-Americanism simply served to cover government incompetence, ideological backwardness, and social disorder.

For skeptics of democratic capitalism, the United States is, quite simply, the enemy. For many years, and still today, a principal function of anti-Americanism has been to discredit the nation that stands as the supreme alternative to socialism. More recently, Islamists, anti-modern Greens, and others have taken to pillorying the U.S. for the same reason. To travesty the United States as a repressive, unjust, racist society is a way of proclaiming: Look what happens when modern democratic capitalism is implemented!

This is the message of critics not only in Europe, but also in the United States itself, where anti-Americanism continues to prosper among university, journalistic, and literary elites. But in Europe, these ideological reasons for blaming America first are multiplied by simple jealousy of American power. The current American "hyperpower" is the direct consequence of European powerlessness, both past and present. The United States fills a void caused by our inadequacies in capability, thinking, and will to act.

Americans might ask themselves what interest the United States could have in plunging into the bloody quagmire of the Balkans, that centuries-old masterpiece of Europe's matchless ingenuity. But Europe found herself incapable of bringing order by herself to this murderous chaos of her own making. So it devolved upon the United States to take charge of operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. The Europeans thanked the Americans afterwards by calling them imperialists--although they quake with fright and accuse the Americans of being cowardly isolationists the moment they make the slightest mention of bringing their soldiers home.

Certainly America, like all societies, has many defects and deserves criticism. But the intentional ignoring of facts begins with sociological preconceptions of the U.S.--the alleged absence of social protection, the

notorious "poverty line," the supposed unemployment level. The fact that unemployment in the U.S. fell to below 5 percent in the 1990s, whereas in France it shot up to 12 percent, implied nothing good about America according to our commentators, who reassured us with the myth of America's omnipresent minimum-wage jobs!

At the advent of America's 2001 economic slowdown, French newspapers ran gleeful headlines announcing "The End of Full Employment in the USA." At the same time, the French government was frenetically heaping praise on itself for reducing unemployment levels to 8.7 percent--almost twice the American level (not counting the tens of thousands of the effectively unemployed who in France are artificially excluded from the statistics). By September 2001, unemployment in France had already climbed back to over 9 percent.

"The End of the American Economic Dream" was *Le Monde's* headline when there was a pause of the practically uninterrupted 17-year period of U.S. economic growth from 1983 to 2000. In truth, the U.S. has led a technological revolution without precedent, creating tens of millions of jobs while absorbing a tremendous population increase (from 248 million in 1990 to 281 million in 2000). All this was but a "dream"? Americans are regularly reproached for wanting to "impose their economic and social model" on others. But whenever there is an economic slowdown, other countries anxiously await an American-led "recovery."

While the U.S. is vilified and blamed, its financial and military aid is universally desired. America is the sole power at once capable of saving Mexico from economic collapse (in 1995), dissuading communist China from attacking Taiwan (repeatedly), mediating between India and Pakistan in the matter of Kashmir, and working with some chance of success toward the reunification of the two Koreas under a democratic regime. When the European Union sent a delegation, headed by the Swedish prime minister, to Pyongyang in May 2001, the delegation could find nothing better to do than grovel before Kim Jong Il, the criminal chief of one of the last totalitarian jails on the planet.

The fundamental role of anti-Americanism in Europe in general, and particularly among those on

the Left, is to absolve themselves of their own moral failings and intellectual errors by heaping them onto the monster scapegoat, the United States of America. For stupidity and bloodshed to vanish from Europe, the U.S. must be identified as the singular threat to democracy (contrary to every lesson of actual history). Thus, during the Cold War, it was dogma among Europeans from Sweden to Sicily, from Athens to Paris, that the "imperialistic" power was America, even though it was the USSR that annexed Eastern Europe, made satellites out of several African countries, and invaded Afghanistan, even though it was the People's Republic of China that marched into Tibet, attacked South Korea, and subjugated three Indochinese countries. A similar dynamic applies today in the war on terror.

One example of how little credit the U.S. is allowed by the rest of the world is the way the belief spread, and was quickly accepted as fact, that the United States was bent on imposing censorship after September 11.

The Qatar-based television network Al-Jazeera, and subsequently CNN, had aired a statement by Osama bin Laden in which he gloated over the thousands killed and called for further massacres. According to both American and French terror experts, the tirade may have contained coded messages to "sleepers" in the United States or in Europe relating to projected terrorist attacks. It seemed prudent for the U.S. administration and Congress to appeal to television and radio managers not to broadcast such communiqués.

Such steps ought to have been understood as legitimate cautionary measures. Instead, a chorus of imprecations was raised around the world. America had imposed censorship, suppressed freedom of the press, violated the First Amendment. The feverish *Le Monde* headline "Propaganda Rages in the American Media" (October 3, 2001) was typical.

The legions of Muslims living in countries that have never known democracy or the slightest whiff of media freedom apparently felt well qualified to defend these liberties against the only country on the planet where they have never been suppressed. As for the French, they have evidently already forgotten how radio and television were subject to vigilant censorship by the state during the Algerian War, and that scarcely a week went by without a police raid on

some newspaper office or other to seize printed material that might "undermine the army's morale."

Other measures adopted after September 11 to thwart terrorist attacks (similar to those taken in Europe, by the way) raised protests on both sides of the Atlantic. Surveillance of suspects, access to e-mail and bank accounts, giving police the right to open car trunks--were denounced as "totalitarian" by the French League of Human Rights, as well as American civil liberties organizations. Of course, the measures were designed precisely to protect democracy from its totalitarian enemies.

After the 1998 terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa, Congress set up a National Commission on Terrorism (NCT) to redefine anti-terrorist policy. The commission's report emphasized that "the threat of attacks causing massive loss of human life within our borders continues to grow." On the report's cover was a photo of the Twin Towers, as if by premonition. Predictably, a swarm of leagues, associations, and organizations leapt to block any countermeasures on the grounds that they would "mortally endanger" civil liberties. A group representing Arab-Americans bewailed a "return to the darkest days of McCarthyism." The civil rights chief in the Clinton administration deplored that Americans of Arab origin were unjustly fingered by the commission--though there is not a single mention of Arab-Americans in the NCT report. The resistance was so noisy that the bill which would have mandated certain security measures was effectively buried, never to become law--with results we all know.

The fact that defenders of human rights and liberty wouldn't take into account the right to national defense meant that sensible, foresighted warnings were dismissed as the racist ravings of hawkish fanatics. How did this ingenious propensity for suicide entitle Europeans to brandish slogans denouncing a supposed evaporation of American liberties? Why is the USA casually accused of "fascism," when it is a land that has never known a dictator over the course of two centuries, while Europe has been busy making troops of them?

The American military operation in Afghanistan, the first major response to September 11, was derided as a specimen of aggressive unilateralism by global

elites, as if no prior event could explain this "imperialistic" reflex. Europeans--governments and the public--had generally showed unqualified solidarity with the United States right after September 11. But important minorities--in the parties of the Left, the Greens in particular, the enemies of globalization, and a near majority among European intellectuals--were quick to exhibit their old fixations. Hostilities really began, they say, only with the American retaliation. The initial aggression was simply dismissed by large numbers of people.

A group of 113 French intellectuals launched an appeal against the "imperial crusade" in Afghanistan: "In the name of the law and morality of the jungle" (not because 3,000 people had been murdered), "the Western armada administers its divine justice." Of course, if any parties in this entire affair believed themselves to be divine, it was the Islamists--the kind that murders thousands of innocent civilians in the name of Allah, or the kind that, in Nigeria and Sudan, massacres Christians for being unwilling to submit to sharia. In two months alone, several hundred Nigerian Christians were exterminated by Muslims. Our 113 intellectuals had nothing to say about it.

In the best cases, the Ameriphobes put the jihadists and those who would resist them on an equal plane, not pronouncing in favor of either. Hundreds of thousands of pacifists demonstrated on October 14, 2001 brandishing banners: "No to Terrorism. No to War." Which is about as intelligent as: "No to Illness. No to Medicine." We have seen this before. In 1939, when the Nazi armies were only months from occupying Paris, French communists, fixated on the alleged evils of capitalism, exhorted armaments workers to sabotage their factories and soldiers to desert their regiments.

Today's unilateralist pacifists condemned the American counterattack against the Taliban in Afghanistan precisely because it was a counterattack. The United States, they said, had given in to base desires for revenge and launched an air assault that would lead inevitably to the deaths of Afghan civilians. What they should have done was negotiate a political solution. Well, of course! Democracies always refuse to negotiate; only sanguinary fanatics are eager to compromise.

The pacifists deliberately ignored that the purpose of the American reaction was not revenge but defense--the squelching of future terrorism. Was it the fault of the United States if Afghanistan was where the jihadists' mastermind was hiding? The intervention in Afghanistan, despite all the precautions taken, could not be without danger to civilians; but when the conflict had first begun on 9/11, it was in New York, not Kabul, that thousands of civilian lives were lost. It seems that for some humanitarians, civilian casualties are indeed acceptable--if they are American.

To avoid being transformed into "aggressors," the Americans would have had to abstain from any retaliation whatsoever against the international terror networks. It wasn't the Afghan people who were targeted, but the Taliban's military installations. Yet after a few days, all we heard was incessant talk of U.S. air attacks and Afghan civilian casualties. The statistics so loudly trumpeted by Europeans were provided by--the Taliban themselves.

And why wasn't it made clear that the United States had been, from 1980 to 2001, the principal supplier of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and that 80 percent of the aid distributed by private charities within the framework of the World Food Program was paid for by Americans? Because to concede as much would have called for a modicum of intellectual integrity.

The real cause of September 11 unquestionably lies in the resentment against the United States, which grew apace after the collapse of the USSR, and America's emergence as the "sole global superpower." This resentment is particularly marked in the Islamic lands, where the existence of Israel, which is blamed on America, is an important motivator. But the resentment is also more quietly present over the entire planet. In some European capitals, the sense of grievance has been raised to the status of an *idée fixe*, virtually the guiding principle of foreign policy. Thus the

U.S. is charged with all the evils, real or imagined, that afflict humanity, from the falling price of beef in France to AIDS in Africa and global warming everywhere. The result is a widespread refusal to accept responsibility for one's own actions.

As for the American "hyperpower" that causes Europeans so many sleepless nights, they should look to their own history and ask how far they themselves are responsible for that predominance. For it was they who made the twentieth century into the grimmest in history. It was they who brought about the two apocalypses of the World Wars and invented the two most absurd and criminal political regimes ever inflicted on the human race. If Western Europe in 1945 and Eastern Europe in 1990 were ruined, whose fault was it? American "unilateralism" is the consequence--not the cause--of the diminished power of the other nations. Yet it has become habitual to turn the situation around and constantly indict the United States. Is it surprising when such an atmosphere of accumulated hate ends in pushing fanatics to compensate for their failures by engaging in carnage?

The refrain of German Greens, French organizations like ATTAC, magazines like *Politis*, Latin American intellectuals, and African editorial writers is that anti-American terrorism can be explained--indeed justified--on the grounds of the "growing poverty" caused by global capitalism, whose forces are orchestrated by the United States. The radical Left in the United States has also made this its rallying cry. The Italian Nobel laureate and novelist Dario Fo, a literary non-entity, put it bluntly: "What are 20,000 deaths [sic] in New York compared with the millions caused every year by the big speculators?"

Of course, the Muslim world includes countries that are among the wealthiest on the planet (especially Saudi Arabia, which finances al-Qaeda and other Islamist organizations). Islamic terrorism is the offspring of religious fanaticism; it has nothing to do with poverty; and it cannot possibly lead to any improvement in the lot of backward societies. Islamists utterly reject all measures that might contribute to improvement: democracy, pluralism, intellectual freedom and critical thought, equality for women, and openness to other cultures.

In the two months after 9/11, the phobias and fallacies of traditional anti-Americanism massively intensified. The clumsiest of them was an attempt to justify Islamist terrorism by claiming that America has long been hostile to Islam. The United States' actions historically have been far less damaging to Muslims

than those of Britain, France, or Russia. These European powers have conquered Muslim countries, occupied and indeed oppressed them over decades and even centuries. Americans have never colonized a Muslim nation. Americans evince no hostility toward Islam as such today; on the contrary, their interventions in Somalia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, as well as the pressure exerted on the Macedonian government, were designed to defend Muslim minorities. And the U.S.-led coalition that removed the Iraqi army from Kuwait during the first Gulf War acted to defend a small Muslim country against a secular dictator who had used chemical weapons against Muslim Shiites in the south and Muslim Kurds in the north.

Another myth strenuously maintained since 9/11 is that of a moderate and tolerant Islam. The dominant idea in the Muslims' worldview, in truth, is that all humanity must obey the rules of their religion, whereas they owe no respect to the religions of others. Indeed, showing such respect would make them apostates meriting instant execution. Anxious to show tolerance, the Pope encouraged the erection of a mosque in Rome, the city where Saint Peter is buried. No Christian church could be built in Mecca, or anywhere in Saudi Arabia, for that would profane the land of Mohammed. There is no ambiguity about al-Qaeda-style intentions: It is quite simply to convert the whole of humanity to Islam by force. Murder and mayhem is justified in the eyes of the terrorists because it strikes at the infidels who refuse to embrace Islam. We deceive ourselves if we think we can negotiate with the al-Qaeda fanatics and their ilk.

The day after 9/11, *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui* published an account of the jubilant atmosphere the previous evening in the eighteenth arrondissement of Paris, home to a large Muslim community. "Bin Laden will nail all of you!" was among the more moderate remarks hurled at passersby who didn't appear to be North African. Or: "I'm going to celebrate big time tonight! Those guys were real heroes. That'll teach those American bastards--and all you French are next!" Snippets of this sort were ignored by almost all media.

A spokesman for British Muslims named al-Misri likewise called the attacks on the World Trade

Center acts of "legitimate self-defense." Another spiritual authority, Omar Bakri Mohammed, launched a fatwa commanding the assassination of the president of Pakistan because the latter had sided with President Bush against bin Laden. "Islam will Dominate the World" was the slogan on signs held aloft by Islamist demonstrators of British nationality as they marched in October 2001 north of London. Meanwhile, there was not the slightest whisper of protest from all those "moderate" Muslims in Britain or France supposedly opposed to this sort of extremism. The notion that the "immense majority" of Muslims settled in Europe are peacefully inclined must be viewed for what it is: a mirage.

Western Europe's antagonism was hardly limited to its Muslim communities. Stunned by the magnitude of the 9/11 crimes and reduced to silence by the wave of solidarity with the U.S., even most long-time America-haters were quiet for a few days. But for a few days only.

The day after 9/11, the editor of *Le Monde*, Jean-Marie Colombani, ran the famous "We Are All Americans" editorial. Hostile reactions to the piece and the headline were numerous and immediate, both among readers of *Le Monde* and on the editorial board. This stemmed from the Left's disinclination, even right after the massacres in New York and Washington, to renounce its demonized image of the United States, an image that it needs all the more since socialism has ended in shipwreck.

Shortly after 9/11 a French spokesman for the activist group ATTAC quoted the adage: "He who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind." French prime minister Lionel Jospin seemed to be pointing in this direction when he asked, "What lesson are the Americans going to draw from what has happened?" The lesson, Jospin indicated, should be for the U.S. to moderate her unilateralism. For Cardinal Karl Lehmann, president of the German Bishops' Conference, the lesson to be drawn from terrorism was that "the West must not seek to dominate the rest of the world."

Soon, many European elites insinuated that the jihadist attacks had some moral justification. These anti-American views began to circulate well before the campaign to dislodge the Taliban kicked off on October 7. The bombing which became the most

frequently invoked reason to take sides against the U.S. had not yet even begun.

One of the most dishonest objections raised against the campaign in Afghanistan was that Americans had made use of mujahedin during the Afghans' war of resistance against the USSR. What was so reprehensible about Ronald Reagan accepting the services of all those willing to oppose the Soviet Union? Was it necessary to wait until all Afghans and Saudis had read Montesquieu and converted to Christianity? Imagine what it would have meant for India, Pakistan, and the Gulf countries--for all of us--if the Soviets had been able to achieve a permanent takeover of Afghanistan. There would have been no Gorbachev, no glasnost, and no perestroika. Coming from the Europeans, who at the time of the Soviet Afghan invasion quivered with cowardice and debated only if they should or shouldn't participate in the Moscow Olympics, this critique has something, one might say, backward about it.

Tens of millions of immigrants have streamed into the United States. If the picture of America drawn by the European press is accurate, then those immigrants from all parts of the world were deluded fools. Why choose the American capitalist jungle with all its evils, rather than the lands of peace, plenty, and liberty they came from? Why didn't they write their families and friends basking in the paradises of Ukraine, Calabria, and Greece warning them of the perils of poverty, precariousness, and oppression in America?

The success and originality of American integration stem precisely from the fact that immigrants' descendants can perpetuate their ancestral cultures while thinking of themselves as Americans in the fullest sense, sharing basic ideals across racial and ethnic barriers. In France, the characteristic attitude of newcomers from North Africa, Turkey, and sub-Saharan Africa is predominantly one of alienation, confrontation, rejection, and hatred.

As immigration trends suggest, anti-Americanism is not deeply rooted as a popular prejudice. In Europe, anti-Americanism is much more a hobgoblin of the political, cultural, and religious elites. According to a SOFRES survey of May 2000, only 10 percent of French feel dislike for the U.S. After September 11, according to another poll, 52 percent of French

people interviewed said they had always felt warmly toward the U.S., against 32 percent who said the opposite. Historian Michel Winock concludes that "anti-Americanism is not an attitude of the average French person; it is typical of a certain segment of the elites."

The great irony of this anti-American obsession is that it aggravates the evil that it aims to extirpate, namely the go it-alone impulse famously ascribed to the U.S. By criticizing the Americans whatever they do, on every occasion--even when they are completely right--Europeans (we are not alone in this, but we lead the dance) compel Americans to disregard our objections--even when we are right. The American reflex, conditioned by the constant avalanche of anathemas coming at them, causes them to keep thinking: "They're always blaming us, so why consult them at all? We already know they'll vilify us."

And so America's enemies and allies alike, valuing animosity toward the U.S. over influence on her, condemn themselves to impotence. In the process they strengthen the American superpower.

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THE FALSENESS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM

BY FOUAD AJAMI

"America is everywhere," Italian novelist Ignazio Silone once observed. An idea of it, a fantasy of it, hovers over distant lands and peoples. And everywhere there is also an obligatory anti-Americanism. Witness the duality of the United States as Satan and redeemer. The same embassies targeted by the masters of terror are besieged by visa-seekers dreaming of the golden country. It is of green cards and houses with lawns, far away from the mullahs, that the crowd in Tehran chanting "marg bar amrika" ("death to America") really dreams.

The world rails against the United States, yet embraces its protection, its hipness, the American ways and techniques. In Doha, Qatar, Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi,

arguably Sunni Islam's most influential cleric, delivers sermons on the arrogance of the United States. Egyptian-born, political to his fingertips, and in full mastery of his craft and of the sensibility of his followers, he thunders that the United States has appointed itself judge and jury in Iraq.

But a great deal of the United States had gone into the preacher's art: Consider his Web site, Qaradawi.net, where the faithful can click on his religious edicts in Arabic and HTML. Or what about his way with television? He is a star of the medium, and Al-Jazeera carried an immensely popular program of his. That art form surely owes a debt to the American "televangelists," as nothing in the sheik's traditional Cairo education prepared him for this wired, portable religion.

And then there are the preacher's children: One of his daughters had made her way to the University of Texas where she received a master's degree in biology, a son earned a Ph.D. from the University of Central Florida, and yet another son embarked on that quintessential American degree, an MBA, at the American University in Cairo. Al-Qaradawi embodies anti-Americanism as the flip side of Americanization.

To come bearing modernism to those who want it but who rail against it at the same time, to represent and embody so much of what the world yearns for and fears--that is the American burden. To the Europeans, and to the French in particular, who are enamored of their *laïcisme* (secularism), the United States is unduly religious, its culture suffused with sacred symbolism. In the Islamic world, the burden is precisely the opposite: The United States scandalizes the devout and is an affront to the pious. According to a June BBC survey, 78 percent of French polled identified the United States as a "religious" country, while only 10 percent of Jordanians endowed it with that label. Religious to the secularists, faithless to the devout--such is the way the United States is seen.

Many populations have the United States under their skin. Their rage is oddly derived from their attraction. Consider Saudi Arabia, a place where anti-Americanism is fierce. The United States helped pull the desert enclave out of its insularity and ushered it into the twentieth century. Today, Saudi

cities mimic U.S. suburbs, and their ruling elites are formed and educated at Harvard, Princeton, and Stanford.

A culture that casts so long a shadow is fated to be emulated and resented at the same time. The United States is destined to be fixed in the politics--and imaginations--of strangers even when the country accurately believes it is not implicated in the affairs of other lands. People cannot be talked out of this kind of anti-Americanism. Though Jordan is the recipient of a U.S. free-trade agreement, a privilege the United States shares only with a handful of nations, 71 percent of Jordanians believe the United States is more dangerous to the world than al-Qaeda. A sense of disinheritance has always hung over Jordan, and anti-Americanism emanates from it.

In Greece, hatred of the United States is now a defining feature of political life. The United States offended Greece by rescuing Bosnians and Kosovars. The same Greeks who hailed the Serbian conquest of Srebrenica in 1995 and the mass slaughter of the Muslims there were quick to summon up outrage over the U.S. military campaign in Iraq. Greece is part of NATO and of the European Union, but the ethno-nationalism of Greece spins a narrative of Hellenic persecution at the hands of the United States.

The aggrieved glide over the role the U.S. played in the defense and rehabilitation of Greece after World War II. They overlook the lifeline that migration to the U.S. offered untold numbers of Greeks, where they now prosper. The malady here is a Greek variant of what plays out in the world of Islam: a belligerent political culture that, in an abdication of political responsibility for one's own world, searches for foreign "devils."

It is regularly argued today that the United States, in its post- 9/11 hubris, summoned up today's anti-Americanism. But these sentiments have long prevailed in Jordan, Egypt, and France. It was during the 1990s that the Islamist children of Egypt set off for Hamburg and Kandahar to hatch a horrific conspiracy against the United States. And it was in the 1990s, during the fabled stock market run, when the prophets of globalization preached the triumph of the U.S. economic model over the protected versions of the market in places such as France, when anti-Americanism became the uncontested ideology of

French public life. Americans were barbarous, a threat to French cuisine and their beloved language. Wall Street speculators were raiding their savings.

Much has been made of the sympathy that the French expressed for the United States immediately after the September 11 attacks, as embodied by the famous editorial of *Le Monde's* Jean-Marie Colombani, "We are all Americans." But Colombani was soon back with a tone of belligerent judgment and disapproval in his book *All Americans? The World After September 11, 2001*. There was nothing to admire in Colombani's United States, which he described as a fundamentalist Christian enterprise, its magistrates too deeply attached to the death penalty, its police cruel to its black population. The United States had not squandered Colombani's sympathy; he never held that sympathy in the first place.

Colombani was hardly alone in the French intellectual class: On November 3, 2001, French writer and pundit Jean Baudrillard sketched the perpetrators of September 11 as acting out his own dreams and the dreams of others like him. "All the world without exception dreamt of this event, for no one can avoid dreaming of the destruction of a power that has become hegemonic.... It is they who acted, but we who wanted the deed."

It is not "mostly Bush" that turned France against the United States. Envy of U.S. power, and of the United States' universalism, is the ruling passion of French intellectual life. Foreign minister Dominique de Villepin appeared evasive at one point on whether he wished to see a U.S. or an Iraqi victory in the standoff between Saddam Hussein's regime and the United States. Anti-Americanism of this sort indulges France's fantasy of past greatness and splendor, and gives France's unwanted Muslim children a claim on the political life of a country that knows not what to do with them.

That sensitive French interpreter of his country, Dominique Moisi, recently told of a simple fellow countryman who, when Saddam Hussein's statue fell on April 9 in Baghdad's Firdos Square, expressed a sense of diminishment that his country had sat out this stirring story of political liberation. A society like France with a revolutionary history should have had a hand in toppling the tyranny in Baghdad.

Instead, a cable attached to a U.S. tank had pulled down the statue, to the delirium of the crowd. It was soldiers from Burlington, Vermont, and Linden, New Jersey, and Bon Aqua, Tennessee who raced through the desert making this new history and paying for it.

The United States need not worry about hearts and minds in foreign lands. If Germans wish to use anti-Americanism to absolve themselves and their parents of the great crimes of World War II, they will do it regardless of what the United States says and does. If Muslims truly believe that their long winter of decline is the fault of the United States, no campaign of public diplomacy shall deliver them from that incoherence. In the age of Pax Americana, it is written, fated, or maktoob (as the Arabs would say) that the plotters and preachers shall rail against the United States. And they will do so in whole sentences of good American slang.

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