

# New York Times laments demise of post-9/11 “national unity”

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The anniversary of 9/11 has been the occasion for a number of editorials and opinion columns lamenting the loss of national unity and international support that were the supposed positive byproducts of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington five years ago.

Nowhere has this theme—a perverse nostalgia for September 12—been promoted more insistently than in the pages of the *New York Times*.

On the day of the anniversary itself, the *Times* carried a lead editorial entitled simply “9/11/06,” which declared: “The time when we felt drawn together, changed by the shock of what had occurred, lasted long beyond the funerals, ceremonies and promises never to forget. It was a time when the nation was waiting to find out what it was supposed to do, to be called to the task that would give special lasting meaning to the tragedy that it had endured.”

The problem, the *Times* asserts, is that “the call never came.” No one—at least among the circles frequented by the newspaper’s editorial writers—was asked to sacrifice anything. Instead, the result was “tax cuts we didn’t need and an invasion that never would have occurred if every voter’s sons and daughters were eligible for the draft.”

The editorial continues: “With no call to work together on some effort greater than ourselves, we were free to relapse into a self-centeredness that became a second national tragedy. We have spent the last few years fighting each other with more avidity than we fight the enemy.”

To put it bluntly, this entire line of argumentation is a load of self-serving rubbish that only exposes how far to the right this erstwhile voice of the American establishment’s liberal wing has swung.

It is now abundantly clear that the September 11 attacks were seized upon as the pretext for implementing policies that had been planned long before. The orgy of flag-waving patriotism encouraged by the government and the media in the aftermath of the attacks—described by the *Times* editorial as a “sense of community and purpose”—was designed to prepare public opinion for wars aimed not at defending the American people from terrorism, but militarily conquering oil-rich and geo-strategically important sections of the globe.

It also served to distract attention from the fact that in the

wake of the most catastrophic intelligence and security failure in US history, not a single government official suffered so much as a demotion.

The media, with the *Times* leading the pack, worked deliberately to suppress any critical analysis of the 9/11 attacks, promote militarism, and portray George W. Bush—whose own actions on September 11 did not bear close scrutiny—as a determined and masterful leader.

The shameless brown-nosing of the *Times* editorialists—who spinelessly acquiesced to the frontal assault on democratic rights and the assumption of unprecedented powers by the White House—is almost embarrassing to recall.

On October 12, 2001, for example, a *Times* editorial headline called the newspaper’s readers’ attention to “Mr. Bush’s New Gravitas,” hailing the semi-literate president as “confident, determined, sure of his purpose and in full command of the complex array of political and military challenges that he faces.” On the basis of his stumbling through disjointed replies to a series of timid questions from the poodles of the White House press corps, it proclaimed him as both “firm in his resolve to protect the nation and fatherly in his calm advice to get on with the life of the country.”

This was only one of the many myths spun by the media, using half-truths and outright lies, during those days of “community and purpose.” Among them was the supposedly “decisive leadership” of “America’s mayor,” Rudolph Giuliani, who walked around lower Manhattan in a series of photo-ops that tragic day, while disorganization and chaos reigned all around him.

Firefighters never heard the call to evacuate the buildings that buried them because decisions of the Giuliani administration—bound up with a suspect contract—had left them without functioning radios. The city’s emergency command center had to be evacuated because Giuliani had placed it—against the advice of many—on the 23rd floor of a building next to the Twin Towers. It also collapsed, apparently because an emergency fuel system that the city had illegally run up its side ignited.

Among those who had suffered the most grievous losses on 9/11, hostility toward the supposedly sainted mayor had by November erupted into mass protests and physical

confrontations at “Ground Zero” itself, after Giuliani ordered firefighters to halt their search for human remains, a callous decision driven by the demands of business interests to speed up the revival of the city’s financial district and by the city’s own concerns about overtime costs.

The barrage of patriotic propaganda could not paper over for long the immense social fissures that divide the interests of Wall Street from those of America’s working class majority.

Bigger and more sinister myths were to follow, all of them assiduously promoted by the *Times*, which uncritically parroted the administration’s claims to be waging a “war on terrorism” even as it abandoned the hunt for Osama bin Laden and began transferring military resources from Afghanistan to the Persian Gulf in preparation for the long-planned war to conquer Iraq and its oilfields.

It was the *Times* that led the way in promoting the lie that Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction” posed some imminent threat to US security, the principal justification given by the Bush administration for launching its war of aggression. The newspaper’s senior foreign correspondent, Judith Miller, manufactured the most important “revelations” about these non-existent weapons, using the exiled Iraqi political operator and convicted embezzler Ahmed Chalabi as her confidential source.

What the *Times* laments is the fact that ever-growing sections of the American public began seeing through these lies and myths, turning against the war in Iraq and questioning the official version of 9/11 itself.

This is the meaning of the newspaper’s disapproving assertion, “We have spent the last few years fighting each other with more avidity than we fight the enemy.” Millions of Americans have concluded that their government is run by a gang of criminals who launched an illegal war based upon lies, not to fight some ubiquitous terrorist “enemy” but to pursue profit interests. They have turned against the war, demanding that it end, and sensing that the most dangerous enemies they face are in the White House.

The thrust of the *Times* argument seems to be: the Bush administration should have made better use of the mass confusion created after 9/11 to pursue the aggressive aims of US imperialism shared by the ruling elite as a whole and by the Democratic and Republican parties alike. Instead, it has botched the job and fueled mass social and political dissension.

The newspaper holds out the prospect of a new “coming together” based upon “equality of sacrifice,” including, by implication, a revival of the draft—something that will become an immediate necessity if US imperialism expands its militarist campaign in the Middle East to include a war against Iran. That the generally pro-Democratic *Times* is broaching a renewal of the draft underscores the fact that such a move will become, if anything, more likely should the Democrats regain control of Congress in the coming elections.

Five years on, the myths of September 11 have become ever more threadbare. Defying the torrent of government and media

propaganda, as well as the official cover-ups and whitewashes, a growing section of the public has come to question the improbable official story that 19 hijackers—many of them known to US intelligence—managed to organize their attack without America’s vast security apparatus having any foreknowledge, and without the benefit of any form of protection or assistance from within the US government itself.

According to a CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll released Monday, nearly half of the American public blame the Bush administration for September 11. Another opinion survey, carried out by the Zogby polling firm in May, indicated that 42 percent of the population believe there has been a cover-up of the 9/11 events (with another 10 percent saying they are unsure), while 45 percent believe there should be a new investigation into all the issues surrounding the attacks, “including whether any US government officials consciously allowed or helped facilitate their success.”

A separate Scripps-Howard/Ohio University poll taken recently found that 36 percent believe it is “very likely” or “somewhat likely” that federal officials either participated in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, or allowed them to take place, “because they wanted the US to go to war in the Middle East.”

Lamenting again the politically polarized state of American society, the *Times* editorial asserts that “The country still hungers for something better, for evidence that our leaders also believe in ideas larger than their own political advancement.”

This may be what the *Times* would like to think the mood of most Americans is, but it is but another example of the newspaper’s combination of self-delusion and self-serving myth-making.

What the people “hunger for” is the truth, for a genuine and independent investigation into the role played by government officials in the events of 9/11—leading to those responsible being held accountable, both politically and criminally.



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