



Bush, Dido and Denial

The piece on the following page was published February 7, 2005 in *The Examiner/Washington*. It needs to be updated slightly. At that time, a thousand young American lives had been lost to the neo-conservatives' unrequited love for their elective war. The number is now approaching three thousand. How many more "will go down with this ship"?

-- Terry Michael, June 25, 2006

Dido's "White Flag"

I know you think that I shouldn't still love you,
or tell you that.

But if I didn't say it, well I'd still have felt it.
Where's the sense in that?

I promise I'm not trying to make your life harder,
or return to where we were.

*I will go down with this ship.
And I won't put my hands up and surrender.
There will be no white flag above my door.
I'm in love, and always will be.*

I know I left too much mess and
destruction to come back again,
and I caused nothing but trouble.
I understand if you can't talk to me again.
And if you live by the rules of "it's over,"
then I'm sure that that makes sense.

*I will go down with this ship.
And I won't put my hands up and surrender.
There will be no white flag above my door.
I'm in love, and always will be.*

And when we meet, which I'm sure we will,
all that was there will be there still.
I'll let it pass, and hold my tongue,
and you will think that I've moved on....

*I will go down with this ship.
And I won't put my hands up and surrender.
There will be no white flag above my door.
I'm in love, and always will be.*

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Opinion

'White Flag' beats false hope

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Terry Michael

His foreign policy may resemble fellow Texan Lyndon Johnson's, who was willing to burn distant villages to save them. But George Bush has decided he's not just William McKinley, bearing the white man's burden in Iraq; he's now Woodrow Wilson, ready to make the whole world safe for what America, with all its awesome military power, can't dictate: pluralistic democracy with individual liberty.

How he came to that conclusion of grandeur can be found in an unlikely place; the lyrics of popular singer Dido. In the hauntingly beautiful "White Flag," a losing lover indulges herself in this bittersweet bravado: "I will go down with this ship. I won't put my hands up and surrender. There will be no white flag above my door. I'm in love and always will be."

Failing at love, and leadership, you have a choice. You can enter the world of reality, say you're wrong and take the difficult but sensible course. (Vermont Sen. George Aiken comes to mind with his practical prescription in 1966 for the catastrophe in Southeast Asia: "Declare victory, and withdraw.")

Or you can build a comforting, delusional wall of surreality, higher and higher -- sheltering yourself from all those painful facts.

It's understandable human behavior, when you're in unrequited love or when your policies have been responsible for ending over a thousand, mostly young, American lives and the deaths of thousands of Iraqis, many of them children. You can spend a lifetime in denial, as do many who still believe the only problem with Vietnam was that we didn't play to win.

The grand policy-informing delusion that (mis)-informed policy in the 1960s was that all those little domino nations would topple if Vietnam did. And now, in the creative neoconservative imagination, we have the reverse domino effect: Prop up one democratic domino, and it will push up more.

Otherwise smart people can talk themselves into just about anything when the subject is love or an appealing, but preposterous, theory. And, like Dido's determined lover, they "will go down with this ship." And take thousands more with them.

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Do you have something to say about this? Send us a letter!