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## The George W. Bush Legacy - Deeper in Debt to Dubai

Three characteristics became apparent in January that may define the way History remembers President George W. Bush. The first, sadly, is avoidance of responsibility and deflection of blame. In the Democratic Candidate Debate before the New Hampshire Primary, the question was posed to four candidates, "If a terrorist nuclear device were exploded within the US, what would you do as President and what should you have done before it happened?" Beginning with Senator Obama, each of the candidates tried to out-Bush the others by describing how he or she would find someone upon whom to take revenge, Senator Clinton intimated finding a terrorist-harboring state to punish. Even Governor Richardson, whom I personally had hoped would have a productive answer from his position as executive in charge of a State government, talked about making clear the consequences in advance so as to discourage any facilitating of such an act. None of the Democrats said a word about containing the damage, rescuing the endangered citizens, decontaminating the affected area, supplying food, shelter, sanitation and power to the population displaced by radiation, or about having any training or stockpiles in advance to enable a rescue. So the first element of the Bush Legacy is a disregard by the entire spectrum of national politicians of any rehabilitative function for the Department of Homeland Security and a sure knowledge that the public responds better to bombing a scapegoat than to rebuilding a damaged city.

The second and third characteristics arise from President Bush's leadership in beginning to bring manufacturing jobs back to the US, and in reducing US emissions of greenhouse gases. It is indisputable that if the cost of production in one place is significantly less than the cost of production in another place, production facilities will be built in the place with the lower cost. It is likewise clear that American workers will not easily agree to decrease the number of dollars we will accept as wages, so as to make American production cost compete with production cost in India. The President has brilliantly concluded that the solution is to make the US dollar worth fewer rupees. One dollar US bought 45 rupees a year ago. It buys 39 rupees today. If a dollar costs 30 rupees a year from now when President Bush leaves office, Tata Motors may decide to build a factory at the Ravenna Arsenal and employ four or five thousand Ohioans at bargain wages.

The decreased value of the dollar reduces US emissions of greenhouse gases. In January 2002, one hundred US dollars bought 113 Euros or two barrels of crude oil. Today, one hundred US dollars buys 68 Euros or one barrel of crude oil. So the price of a barrel of crude oil has remained constant in Euros while it has doubled in US dollars. President Bush brilliantly reasoned that Americans would continue to burn gasoline if we could afford to buy it, so to reduce the amount of gasoline burned, the price would have to go up. If the government

increased the gasoline tax, the public would think badly of the President. But if the dollar lost value while other currencies held value, oil producers would sell to other buyers with stable currencies unless Americans paid more dollars for their oil. The price of oil in dollar terms went up, Americans bought less gasoline, the death of the planet is put off a few more years. A tax-and-spend Democrat who didn't mind being a one-term President might have decreased US gasoline consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by imposing a three-dollar-a-gallon gasoline tax, and thereby balanced the federal budget and kept the dollar stable. President Bush's Legacy will include saving the planet by going Deeper in Debt to Dubai.

- Christopher J. Mallin, Old Country Lawyer