

**THE ONE PERCENT DOCTRINE by Ron Suskind**

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p. 3 *Where* was clear, as was *when* and *how*—visible to anyone with a television.—if it was, indeed, the Islamic extremists they suspected—was the unanswered question since the World Trade Center bombing in 1993. The steady growth of jihadist terror had produced a rising hum inside the CIA and, eventually, in other parts of the government. Yet the causes, a clear strategic understanding of what drove the enemy and what they wanted, remained cloudy.

p. 5 In an age when assertion tends to overwhelm evidence, when claim so easily trumps fact, they know precisely where the breakpoints lie. That makes them valuable and dangerous; that makes their silence a priority to those who must answer to the *vox populi*, or, eventually, to posterity.

p. 5 For the sleep-starved professionals just beneath the line of sight—as invisible, in many ways, as their murderous opponents—the basic emotion is suppressed panic; and a willed conviction, despite contrary evidence, that every problem has a solution.

p. 6 And then, it's time for the next briefing, the next conference table and spiderweb chart filled with hard-to-parse Arab names and gossamer connections. In a quieter time, Bill

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Clinton could grouse to Alan Greenspan that his presidential fortunes—and those of the country's economy—would be determined by judgments from the bond market. Now, they may be determined by whether some mall security guard in Palo Alto notices that the guy in Neiman Marcus is wearing an overcoat in the summer and smells like gardenias and is carrying a funny suitcase; and it will be further determined—the nation's fate, that is—by whether that guard calls the FBI, and whether someone answers, and whether the call is transferred to somebody else who knows what all that means, *in time*.

p. 8 And you look for handles, a framework from the familiar, to make sense of the solemn insanity of this life, deep inside the so-called “war on terror,” and you realize you're neck-deep in a global game of Marco Polo, in an ocean-size pool—but all of it deadly serious, winner take all. It's terrible in that pool. Especially when it's deathly quiet—the way it is in the months after 9/11—and no one is answering when you yell “Marco,” and you only feel the occasional *whoosh* as your opponent silently passes, and you snap around while images of burning buildings and exploding planes dance behind your closed eyelids.

p. 10 The vast federal government, under stress, does not work quite so efficiently as a single mind. It has protective urges, competing agendas, rules for who does what and who represents actions to the citizenry, the sovereign, the bosses; it accomplishes a great deal,

yes, but is defined often by its dysfunctions. And that means it lies and dissembles, hides what it can, and sometimes acts out of self-preservation, because without your trust it is nothing but office space.

p. 12 Western Union.

The old telegraph company was the engine of a technological revolution many generations removed from the present. Its heyday was in the 1850s, when it began stringing wire cables across the Northeast, then the first transcontinental cable in 1861. Five years later, those cables carried trading on the New York Stock Exchange to cities up and down the East Coast on “tickers.” It was hailed as a miracle.

The world moved on. But many of the twenty-two nations in the Arab world still have a foot planted in this past. Western Union, with nearly \$2.7 billion in revenue, remains a destination for a wide slice of the Arab world’s 300 million residents. In some less favored parts of the globe, the only way to wire funds is the old-fashioned way. You bring your money to the Western Union office. You hand it over. They count it. And soon, transmission is made to another of the company’s offices, a hot flash of cold cash.

p. 22 This was a particularly bitter pill for the civilian leadership of the Pentagon: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary for Policy Douglas Feith, and their senior nonstaff adviser, Richard Perle—an assistant secretary of defense under Ronald Reagan and now chairman of the President’s Defense Advisory Board. All had been pressing through the Clinton years and the first nine months of this administration for two things: transformation of the military into a leaner, high-tech, twenty-first-century fighting force; and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

p. 24 As to their skills at planning and execution, an instructive moment occurs in 1975, when Rumsfeld was Gerald Ford’s chief of staff and Cheney his deputy, with a charge to oversee intelligence matters.

p. 345 A delusion of fierce partisanship is the view that political opponents are so utterly bankrupt of good sense, of basic human feeling, that for one to be defeated will not only mean diminution for oneself, but disaster for an unwitting country.

The strident posture of self-defense that stems from this kill-or-be-killed idea flows directly into an infallibility trap. Mistakes can’t be publicly acknowledged; *certainty*, even

in the face of countermanding evidence, becomes a surrogate for courage; *will* stands in for earned—and regularly tested—conviction.

p. 346 The torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay; the construction of the great terrorist-catching machine, with its communications head and financial body; the self-interested use of classified materials to carry forward political ends; the very concealment of the true nature of what's been happening since 9/11 in favor of a sanitized, "need to know" version—are all means that, whatever their advertised value, strike at the nation's character.

p. 347 At a distant pole stands that singular twentieth-century thinker and practitioner of geopolitical pragmatism, George Kennan, tackling the very same conundrum. As Kennan gazed, in 1947, across a devastated Hamburg—where, during World War II, 40,000 civilians had been killed by Allied bombers—the young man wrote in his diary that

*if the Western world really was going to make a valid pretense of a higher moral departure point—of greater sympathy and understanding for the human being as God made him, as expressed not only in himself but in the things he had wrought and cared about—then it had to learn to fight its wars morally as well as militarily, or not fight them at all; for moral principles were a part of its*

*strength. Shorn of this strength, it was no longer itself; its victories were not real victories. . . . The military would view this as naïve; they would say that war is war, that when you're in it, you fight with everything you have or go down to defeat. But if that is the case, then there rests upon Western civilization, bitter as this may be, the obligation to be militarily stronger than its adversaries by a margin sufficient to enable it to dispense with those means which can stave off defeat only at the cost of undermining victory.*

p. 348 Nowadays, in an era when so many America and across the globe are suffused with religious certainty—exhausted, as many are, with the pace of change and the challenge of mastering Kennan-like empiricism—I offer a very old text that underlies both Christianity and Islam.

Deuteronomy 16:20 reads: "Justice, Justice, This you must pursue." Justice—an overused word these days—is not mentioned twice, however, for added emphasis. Here Hebrew scholars agree—and they don't agree on much—that it's once for the ends, and once for the means.

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p. 349 In October 2005, I tumbled, like a falling leaf, into a Vermont living room with William Sloane Coffin. The firebrand reverend, once of Manhattan's Riverside Church and Yale University, was in fine fettle at eighty-one, having just given a speech in a church near his hometown of Strafford and now settled into a roomful of warm tea, finger food, and admirers. I had never met him—heard about him, of course, and his particularly vociferous view of responsible public morality—and we talked, along with various New England college professors and former *New York Times* reporter Tom Wicker, about these interesting times. Sloane Coffin held forth about “power’s prerogatives” and how “effectively fear has been employed to manage the political ideal.” He knew what I’d been up to, grilled my on a few particulars, and then looked at me quizzically. “I never thought I’d live to see the day when old-fashioned journalism would be a form of civil disobedience.”