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Black America More Pro-War Than Ever

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9/18/2013



During President Obama’s run-up to war with Syria, “African Americans were, for the first time in polling history, the most bellicose major ethnicity in the United States.” How could such a political role-reversal come to pass? “The progressive, peace-seeking African American worldview is out of sync with the deep imperative to support the First Black President.”

“Have Black Americans undergone some accelerated ideological mutation?”

Barack Obama has proven to be a warmongering thug for global capital, many times over. The question is: Have African Americans, his most loyal supporters, joined the bi-partisan War Party, rejecting the historical Black consensus on social justice and peace (or, at least, the “peace” part)?

Ever since national pollsters began tracking African American public opinion, surveys have shown Blacks to be consistently clustered at the left side of the national political spectrum. More than any other ethnicity, African Americans have opposed U.S. military adventures abroad, by wide margins. Indeed, the sheer size of the “blood lust” gap between the races indicates that the Black international worldview differs quite radically from white Americans and, to a lesser but marked degree, from Hispanics.

That is, until the advent of Obama.

A Washington Post/ABC poll conducted between August 28 and September 1 showed 40 percent of African Americans supported President Obama’s threats of airstrikes against Syria – two points more than whites and nine percent more than Hispanics. Majorities of all three groups opposed bombing Syria – 56 percent of Blacks, 58 percent of whites and 63 percent of Hispanics – but African Americans were, for the first time in polling history, the most bellicose major ethnicity in the United States.

A Pew Research poll from the same period showed Blacks somewhat less supportive of airstrikes, with only 22 percent of African Americans and 29 percent of whites in favor. Fifty-three percent of Blacks and 47 percent of whites were opposed (Hispanic data were not made available.) However, about one-quarter of both Blacks and whites were allowed to choose “undecided” in the Pew survey, without which option the results would likely have been more in line with the Washington Post/ABC poll, with large numbers of Blacks aligning themselves with Obama.

There is no doubt that this apparent decline in Black aversion to U.S. foreign aggressions has everything to do with the color (and party) of the commander-in-chief. For all the right historical reasons, African Americans have always been highly skeptical of U.S. motives abroad. With Obama nominally in charge, such righteous Black skepticism of “American” (meaning, white) motives is less operative.

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Only ten years ago, a Zogby poll revealed the vast chasm that existed between Blacks and the two other major ethnic groups on issues of war and peace. The Black Commentator for February 13, 2003, reported:

“An Atlanta Journal-Constitution/Zogby America poll released this past weekend shows that less than a quarter of Blacks (23 percent) support Bush's war against Iraq, versus 62 percent of the white public. 64 percent of Blacks surveyed ‘somewhat or strongly oppose’ the planned attack, while 13 percent ‘aren't sure’ what to think.

“The bloodthirstiness of white American males is astounding: 68 percent of men surveyed are gung ho, indicating that the white male pro-war cohort soars somewhere in the high seventies. Less than half of all women favor war.

“Hispanics polled nearly as warlike as whites. When asked the general question on war, 60 percent support it.

“The lack of empathy with Iraqis as human beings marks white American males as a collective danger to the species. Zogby pollsters asked: Would you support or oppose a war against Iraq if it meant thousands of Iraqi civilian casualties? A solid majority of white men answered in the affirmative, as did more than a third of white women. Only seven percent of African Americans favored a war that would kill thousands.

“Hispanics lost some of their bloodlust when confronted with the prospect of mass Iraqi civilian casualties; only 16 percent are willing to support such an outcome.”

The fact that only a marginal proportion of Blacks (7 percent) favored an invasion in which thousands of Iraqi civilians would die – less than half the proportion of Hispanics and a small fraction of white belligerents of both sexes – speaks to African Americans’ relatively deep empathy for other peoples as well as their disdain for U.S. militarism. It is central to the African American political-cultural legacy.

In the decade since the Iraq invasion, the general American populace has grown more wary of Washington’s wars in the Mideast. Why, then, would the least militaristic ethnic group suddenly become relatively more warlike than whites? Have Black Americans undergone some accelerated ideological mutation in the intervening years?

Of course not, but Blacks have for almost six years been in the grip of a fundamentally unsettling experience for which African American history provides no defenses: the presence of a Black man at the helm of the Empire. The progressive, peace-seeking African American worldview is out of sync with the deep imperative to support the First Black President. Black skepticism of

U.S. government motives is short-circuited by the fervent desire for Obama to succeed – since his success or failure is seen as Black America’s collective legacy. Black politics crumbles under the weight of this massive contradiction – which is why Black America is in its deepest political crisis since Emancipation, unable to defend Black domestic interests or to be a force for peace in the world.

“Why would the least militaristic ethnic group suddenly become relatively more warlike than whites?”

Black elected officials, overwhelmingly Democrats, act as role models of impotence, eunuchs in Obama’s harem and, when required, cheerleaders in his wars. Had Obama not “postponed” his attack on Syria, there is every reason to believe that he would have gotten the support of about half the Congressional Black Caucus – just as when his war against Libya was challenged, in June of 2011. Even after Obama is gone, the great task of Black progressives will be to sever the chains that bind Blacks to the Wall Street-run Democratic Party, the incubator of future Obamas and, therefore, unending Black political crises.

It is true that Black folks have lost their political bearings, if not their minds, in the Age of Obama, but that doesn’t mean they can’t recover their sanity and humanity, once the maddening presence in the White House is gone. Mental breakdowns are not irreversible; otherwise, all the world’s peoples would be permanently brain-damaged.

Perhaps the most curious and, in a sense, encouraging aspect of Obama-whipped Black political behavior is that most of those afflicted pay little attention to the First Black President’s actual policies. The topic of Black conversation is usually not “*What* is Obama doing,” but, rather, “*How* is Obama doing?” His fans aren’t concerned about his legislative agenda, and are often shocked when informed that their icon engineered preventive detention laws and wants to cut Social Security. You are liable to be called a lying bastard, or even attacked, simply for citing his political record in Black settings where, typically, it is never debated or scrutinized. Instead, the subject of constant discussion is: *Who* is making trouble for Obama? What are *they* doing now to smear the man? In short, Black people aren’t expressing their political convictions when giving tacit or active support to Obama, on the foreign or domestic fronts. They are, in fact, ignoring their own convictions in favor of upholding the icon.

As a result, what Cornel West calls the “Black prophetic tradition” slips into a coma. We know it will awake, but not without damage.