

# Your View: Legacy of 9/11 distorted by the Right

By DAVID EHRENS

David Ehrens lives in Dartmouth.

September 14, 2011 8:30 AM

Tuesday's opinion page was a smorgasbord of conservative thought on lessons to be drawn from 9/11. I don't know whether it's News Corp. finally exerting its right-wing politics on the paper, a new editorial policy or what, but we seem to be treated to an increasing dose of reprints of editorials from the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Washington Post and the Weekly Standard.

None of the articles on 9/11 were particularly illuminating, but they sure did manage to defend the militaristic and Constitution-hostile world created by the former president and continued by the current one. Even Mr. Obama's appeal to unity the previous day only papered over the reasons we now find ourselves in never-ending war.

Rather than cloaking ourselves in martyrdom, we should be asking ourselves, honestly, why so much of the world hates us. And, no, it's not because they hate us for what we have. A lot of the world hates us for what we are doing.

The first essay by Omar Ashmawy ("National View: 10 years later, still in the dark"), a military prosecutor who did not have enough misgivings about the dubious enterprise at Guantanamo to prevent his working there himself, regrets that the U.S. military and law enforcement officers are so ignorant of Muslims and Arab culture. There is nothing wrong with this at all, but Ashmawy makes no mention of our distorted foreign policy in the Middle East as the obvious source of hatred of the United States.

It serves little purpose for the FBI and Homeland Security to stop reading Islamophobes and start studying real Middle Eastern scholars when most of the Republican presidential candidates have signed on to Muslim-bashing legislation, U.S. Rep. Peter King is conducting antisemitic (in the broadest sense of the word) witch hunts, when we have covert drone wars going on in Arab countries in addition to our public ones, we support an indefensible occupation in Palestine, while half our freshmen congressmen spent their summer recess in Israel, and we honor the Arab Spring by defending despots in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. We're either ignorant, stupid, arrogant, simply don't care or some mixture of all of the above. But it's a recipe for people hating us.

Similarly, the Washington Post's article ("Guest View: A lost decade?") is another salute to the conventional wisdom and learning nothing from the preceding decade. There is no mention of the shredding of civil liberties — except where the Patriot Act is defended as "modest" and prudent. No mention of the loss of habeus corpus, widespread wiretaps, email snooping, monitoring of social networking and the loss of many of our core civil liberties.

The article echoes the Heritage Foundation's distortion that military expenditures over GDP are smaller today than during the Cold War — which is true, except that both military expenditures per capita and as a percentage of our national budget have risen sharply since the Cold War. And much of the divisor, the gross domestic product, is offshore nowadays, in contrast to the Cold War, when we still had a domestic manufacturing base. Today, more of our tax money goes to killing people in other countries than ever before. The Washington Post's article warns of "prematurely" getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan — despite the fact that these are already the longest wars in American history. In short, the Washington Post advocates

permanent war.

Finally we are treated to a defense of Dick Cheney by neoconservative Weekly Standard writer Stephen Hayes ("National View: Five myths about Dick Cheney"). Cheney is on a tour promoting his new book, "In My Time," and apparently Hayes, who has a book of his own on the former vice president, is simultaneously trying to sell it and rehabilitate a man whose book, if I had my way, would be titled "Doing My Time."

Cheney most certainly is a neoconservative, helped kick off the neocon think tank project for the New American Century, is married to a neocon, most certainly did attempt to expand the powers of the executive branch, and most assuredly does not lose one second of sleep over his involvement in the most disastrous American war since the Civil War.

Why, on an anniversary of 9/11, is The Standard-Times interested in repairing Cheney's image with bald lies? A better editorial might have examined how a relatively small group of neoconservatives managed to steer the nation onto the rocks.