

# True Believers

Presidents Obama and Bush 43 have one striking similarity: self-assurance. After speaking with both men recently, I am firmly convinced that they are convinced their policies are/were right for the nation.

Let's take Mr. Bush first. The Iraq war has cost America more than \$750 billion dollars since it began in March 2003. So far, more than 4,400 Americans have been killed in that country, in addition to about 32,000 who were wounded. Many of those wounds were life-altering. Yet President Bush thinks the great sacrifice was worth it because Saddam Hussein is dead and Iraq is on the road to democracy. There is not an argument in the world that can dissuade Mr. Bush from this belief.

It is likewise with Mr. Obama. He sincerely believes that the country was on the verge of another Great Depression when he took office and that the massive federal spending he has championed prevented economic catastrophe. Again, there is no way anyone is going to persuade the president otherwise.

Strong leadership requires a sense of surety. In order to motivate folks to support your vision, you must demonstrate bold conviction. General George Patton, for example, convinced his troops that they were better than the German "Huns." His confidence was contagious and victories emerged.

But what happens when a person's conviction is wrong? There is no question that Saddam Hussein could have been destroyed by other means. Surely the world is a better place without him, but would most Americans support the Iraq invasion if we could do it all over? I don't think so. In hindsight, the Iraq situation should have been handled by the Air Force and Navy. Saddam's regime could have been strangled without so much American blood.

Things are a bit murkier on the economic front. Since the

Obama administration has been in power, the feds have spent an astounding seven trillion dollars. This has left the United States vulnerable in the world marketplace because we need to borrow so much money from nations like China. The massive \$14 trillion debt has now become as big a threat as the economic meltdown of three years ago. No matter how you frame the issue, federal spending must be cut back, and Mr. Obama has to know this. But, like Mr. Bush, the president does not regret his controversial policies.

Presidents Obama and Bush are true believers. Mr. Bush says that he did his best, and that's the end of the story. Because Mr. Obama's story continues to unfold, he must continue to sell his policies as wise and effective. The problem is problems. Sometimes they are so overwhelming that people, even presidents, simply cannot solve them.

Even if they believe they can.