

# The Danger of Dumbing Down

By Gary Beck

In a world grown progressively smaller due to faster air transportation and more rapid electronic transmission of information, there are increasing threats to American security from a spectrum of enemies. One of the most dangerous domestic problems is the growing intellectual incapacity of our youth. The multiplicity of challenges facing our nation, possibly reminiscent of the decline of the Roman Empire when it could no longer muster resources to meet all exigencies, mandates an urgent assessment of priorities to insure our survival and well-being. In the past, when wars occurred, often the combatants fought on after the governments made peace. Sometimes hostilities took years for resolution. Today the capacity and means for destruction is growing so sophisticated that soon a devastating war could be over before a nation could respond. In the event of cyberwar, a nation might conceivably not even know it was attacked.

There appear to be several distinctly different types of warfare that America will face in the future; protracted insurgency, terrorist delivery of weapons of mass destruction, limited pre-emption or intervention, or escalation into total war, a prospect horrible to imagine, but which must be considered. It is becoming evident that we lack the wherewithal to deal with all possible scenarios simultaneously, yet the possibility exists that multiple confrontations could present a calamitous reality. With insufficient means to deal with all problems, a triage procedure must be invoked to prioritize the appropriate responses to the most urgent problems. We must also better prepare our capacity for planning for future exigencies

The current world situation and the complexity of national issues requires a leadership that is wise, just, firm, expedient, as well as a host of other abilities vital to the decision making process. We sometimes get leaders who possess some of the necessary qualities for governance, but never enough to resolve long term crises. Wisdom seems to have abandoned us completely, perhaps eradicated among other causes by the numbing early exposure in our youth to the artificial values and deceptive nature of television. The constant flow of visual imagery that stipulates passive spectation, stifles the creative energies characteristic of developing youth and insures the channeling of their potential into limited directions.

A nation of video game players may be preferable to a nation of sheep, but they will be incapable of addressing the vast scope of the problems of tomorrow. The educational system

ignores the extreme capacity for learning inherent in youth. Instead of motivating the youngest attendees to expand their scope, followed by increased demands to absorb more and more, they are fed pabulum, or left behind. The future of our society is being entrusted to students of the arts, rather than students of math and the sciences. Yet those who cannot meet the highest standards must nevertheless be respected and taught to appreciate their gifts, but only after sufficient effort to educate them. The only hope for the survival of the frayed American dream is to prepare our youth for the inevitable struggles to come.

If we allow the majority of our youngsters to dwindle in their ability to participate actively in the tending of our society, we permit the privileged few to dominate the affairs of state. Just because they lead by virtue of their material circumstances, does not mean they are suitable for the positions they achieve through self-serving networks. Those who achieve on their own merits often succumb to the corrupters, who take advantage of the ambitious. The nation is more important than it's constituent parts and requires service from its citizens. The dumbing down of our people, with sensory overload being a major factor, imperils our future. Greed is emerging as a prime mover in every strata of our society, eclipsing the virtues of public service. Intelligence is required to resist material temptations that are a subornation of honorable purpose.

In order for our nation to endure and flourish we need a new call to duty at every level. The best examples of service are dedicated elements of the military, committed members of the uniformed services, bus drivers, concerned physicians and many others frequently unrecognized and unappreciated in the day to day swirl of events. But they are only a small portion of a population suffering growing detachment from day to day responsibility for the condition of our nation. If there is still a best and brightest residing in our borders, they must be convoked to prepare a plan to fulfill the pledge of the Declaration of Independence, the constitution, and the promise of America for all its people, before it is too late. We may no longer be able to marshal resources, physical and mental, that compare with World War II, but we must identify and develop an elite, based on merit, to guide us through tomorrow.

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