

Citing 'Terrorism' to Justify Terror

Despite U.S. and European appeals for restraint, the Egyptian military slaughtered supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsi, an atrocity rationalized by claims of combating Islamic "terrorism." But the bloody crackdown is likely to make terrorism a self-fulfilling prophecy, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

It hasn't taken long since Wednesday's bloodletting in Cairo for the regime there to make clear that it will rely heavily, as a rationale for its actions, on the idea that it is holding a line against international terrorism.

"Egypt is facing terrorist acts aimed at government institutions and vital installations," declared the military's hand-picked interim president in a statement that responded to President Barack Obama's comments about Egypt.

Actually, except for the semi-lawless Sinai, there hasn't been much terrorism in Egypt since the Mubarak regime crushed the violent campaigns in the 1990s of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Gama'a al-Islamiyya. After those campaigns failed, the EIJ's Ayman al-Zawahiri went off to South Asia to throw in his lot with Osama bin Laden, and what was left of the Gama'a announced that it was renouncing violence.

The actions of the current Egyptian regime are likely to hasten a resurgence of true terrorism in Egypt, however; the official line has just gotten a little ahead of the reality that the regime's actions will help to bring about.

Playing the terrorist card as a justification for actions that on their own terms would appropriately be seen as harsh, intolerant and even brutal is hardly unique to Egypt. Over the past decade we have seen numerous instances of it, from Russians dealing with Chechens to Chinese suppressing Uighurs.

In the Middle East, it is certainly not limited to Egypt and Israel. Take Iraq, where there is plenty of real terrorism these days and where the political system can be described as a U.S. product since we bought it with an investment of trillions of dollars and many thousands of our own casualties.

The increasingly authoritarian prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, whom Sami Moubayed of the Carnegie Middle East Center describes as a "lighter version of Saddam Hussein," hardly seems like an asset to the United States as he cozies up to Iran and is not very forthcoming about policy toward Syria. But the terrorism issue is his trump card.

Moubayed observes that although Maliki “has clearly positioned himself in the Syrian-Iranian orbit,” he “might still win the blessing of the U.S., marketing himself, yet again, as the man combating al-Qaeda in Iraq.”

Of course, many dictators and crackdown artists would shout the T-word as a justification for their actions regardless of what the United States does or says. “Terrorist” is an all-purpose pejorative. But the fact that the United States has made the subject such a preoccupation following one event 12 years ago has unquestionably increased the value of this particular card.

Anything that is an obvious preoccupation of the superpower lends credibility to others claiming the same priorities. Invoking the issue also can serve as an appeal for support or at least tolerance from the superpower itself.

The playing of the terrorism card in this manner is in turn but one of the many ways in which the drastic swing of the pendulum of American political priorities in September 2001 still confounds much else the United States is doing, or trying to do, both foreign and domestic.

Domestically, we are seeing this in the hullabaloo, which is generating more heat than light, caused by the post-9/11 demand for aggressive counterterrorist intelligence collection, followed by a tacit decline in this demand as time has gone by without a major anti-U.S. terrorist attack, followed by consternation as the public is confronted with the fact that the aggressive collection is still taking place.

This kind of domestic political dislocation in turn can affect foreign affairs. A leaker of information about the collection programs defects to Russia, which tips the balance in favor of canceling a U.S.-Russian summit meeting. That can mean a slowing, although it had slowed a lot already anyway, of work on issues such as possible further reduction in the U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals.

This process may make it *seem* as if terrorism is a more important topic than Cold War-style arms control or anything else on the U.S.-Russian agenda. The driver here, however, is not terrorism but instead our *reaction* to it.

Strip away the reaction, and terrorism itself is not really the global game-changer it came to be perceived as. It is not really so much more important than a still nuclear-armed Russia, and it does not affect global affairs and U.S. interests as profoundly as a powerful China does in so many ways, beyond what it does to the Uighurs.

But when we give dictators a card to play, we should not be surprised when they play it.

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The Day When War Was Outlawed

When George W. Bush launched an aggressive war on Iraq in 2003, he was violating a host of treaties and international laws, though he would face no accountability. One violated law was a U.S.-sponsored treaty, signed in 1928, that renounced war as an instrument of foreign policy, as Steve McKeown recalls.

By Steve McKeown

A favorite song among peace activists is one written by Ed McCurdy in 1950. It goes like this: "Last night I had the strangest dream I'd ever dreamed before. I dreamed the world had all agreed to put an end to war. I dreamed I saw a mighty room, and the room was filled with men. And the paper they were signing said they'd never fight again."

In his well-researched book *When the World Outlawed War*, David Swanson has written, "That scene had already happened in reality on August 27, 1928, in Paris, France." That was the day the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed, named after U.S. Secretary of State Frank Kellogg and French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, both of whom drew up the pact. Kellogg was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize of 1929 for this. Officially the pact was called the General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy.

Initially, 15 countries signed the pact and many more signed shortly thereafter. Within the U.S., the Senate ratified it in an 85 to 1 vote. President Coolidge then signed it, and it was recognized as a binding agreement as of July 24, 1929. It remains on the books to this day as part of what Article VI of the U.S. Constitution calls the "supreme law of the land." Eighty-four countries are signatories.

But today most people even in Minnesota, the state that Secretary of State Frank Kellogg was from, believe that Kellogg Boulevard, a prominent St. Paul street, was named after Kellogg breakfast cereal. Many students and teachers of international law and congressional representatives don't know anything about the pact, with the exception of those who have been exposed to it through recent efforts to revive awareness.

Yet Frank Kellogg, after whom Kellogg Boulevard is named, is the only Minnesotan ever to have won the Nobel Peace Prize. Hardly known for efforts in peacemaking as a U.S. senator, he surprised everyone when, as secretary of state, he promoted a law universally against war and convinced French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand of its necessity. (Briand had been pushing for a treaty that would ban war only between France and the U.S.)

Much more went into the treaty to ban war, of course, than the actions of the two leaders for whom it is named. Our culture is so militarized now that it's necessary to understand how different the environment in the world and in the U.S. was in 1928 and 1929.

The movement to outlaw war arose as a result of the horrific World War I experience with poison gas, constant shelling, corpses, rats, mud and blood in trenches separated by barbed wire, sometimes not even miles apart; some battles resulted in rivers running with blood.

Nearly ten million were killed and 20 million wounded in what was supposed to be "the war to end all war." A staggering 100 million people also died due to influenza that is, of little doubt, attributable to the war, as the contagion spread among troops and civilians. By and large, people were totally sick of war.

As the war was supposedly fought on the premise of being "the war to end all war," many were angry in its aftermath that they had been deluded into believing that the end could justify the means and they called for accountability; the expectation was that, in the future, countries signing the pact would be accountable to each other. Another very important factor conducive to the forming of the pact was that our military industrial complex was much smaller at that time.

The political environment was also much more receptive, as David Swanson describes in his book: "The peace movement growing in the 1920s developed in a nation different from the United States of the twenty-first century in many ways. One of them was the state of political parties. The Republicans and Democrats were not the only game in town. They were pushed in the direction of peace and social justice by Socialist and Progressive Parties."

Beyond political parties, he explains the enormous grassroots groundswell that was necessary to pressure those in power to ban war through the pact: "Senators who denounced it on the floor during the ratification debate voted for it out of fear of their constituents. Activists organized a flood of petitions and letters and press and meetings and lobbying."

Grassroots movements in the Midwest, where the progressive populist movement was very strong, played a prominent role in the move to outlaw war. Salmon Oliver Levinson of Chicago led what was called "the Outlawry movement," launching a national campaign organized to ban all wars.

Women who had organized through the suffragette movement became an active force in the peace movement. In 1925, Carrie Chapman Catt of Iowa, who had established the Women's Peace Party, created the Committee on the Cause and Cure of War, which gathered five million members and became a force in lobbying for the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Twelve million women planned 48 state conferences to pressure the Senate to ratify the treaty.

Women from many countries organized. Jane Addams of Chicago, renowned in the U.S. as a prominent reformer and advocate for women's and children's issues, was active in women's international peace efforts uniting women at a conference in The Hague, Netherlands, in the wake of World War I. She became the first international president of the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, which was a strong supporter of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in the U.S. and Europe. Addams led a delegation delivering 30,000 signatures to the White House and also sent it to Briand in Paris.

These groups and individuals and many more saw in the Kellogg-Briand Pact a worldwide organizational effort to control aggression between nations in a way other than militarily in the hope of having nations work together instead of against each other.

The Kellogg-Briand Pact has never been revoked by either the U.S. or the UN despite the UN's increasing role in fighting wars. As to outlawing war, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was more direct and stronger than the United Nations Charter, which came into being in 1945 after World War II, and its predecessor, the League of Nations. This is because it outlawed all war, not just aggressive war, which could be rationalized in all kinds of imaginable ways.

There are no loopholes in the Kellogg-Briand Pact. While it does not rule out self-defense, it does not claim self-defense as a justification for going to war. That's because countries will always claim self-defense as a way to justify going to war. (When the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty, it did add that it must not infringe on the U.S.'s right to defend itself. The U.S. Senate also added, on ratifying it, that it was not obliged to take action against those who violated the treaty.)

If there is a weakness in it, it is that the arms merchants undermined it before the ink was dry, something that the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was quick to point out.

Aside from being vulnerable to the predatory plans of arms merchants, one criticism leveled against the Kellogg-Briand Pact is that there are no means of enforcement. Its effectiveness has always been a matter of signatories choosing to honor it.

Even though the vast majority of people are unaware of the pact today, many of those in powerful positions must have some idea of its implications. This is because the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which calls war, itself, a “crime against the peace” later served as the legal basis for prosecuting the Nazis at Nuremberg.

Leaders don’t want to be in the position of being prosecuted for waging war. That’s one reason we now have undeclared wars which are called “conflicts,” “police actions,” “humanitarian interventions,” “enforcing sanctions,” and “operations” such as Operation Just Cause and Operation Desert Storm, instead of wars. In addition, the public is not told about some wars at all, as they are conducted covertly.

Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, has been active in acquiring signatures calling for a national holiday to be observed each Aug. 27 on the anniversary of the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in the hopes that this can begin to change our ideas about war.

By reviving the history of the life and legacy of the man whom one of St. Paul’s most well-traveled streets was named after, we want to get people to think about the reason he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace and thus open up the very real possibility of further discussion about how this law came into being, why it did, and why it is important today.

We cannot match, on a case by case basis, all the scenarios that the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., all its lobbyists, and all the war planners in the world conjure up. As peace advocates, our strength lies in maintaining the belief that it is possible to abolish war once and for all. We may find that outlawing war is in our deeper human nature more than any imagined determination that war is inevitable.

Steve McKeown, a founding member of Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27, is a longtime Twin Cities peace activist and, in addition to other antiwar work, has been working for the proclamation and national holiday to honor the anniversary of the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. [This article was originally published by Women Against Military Madness at [wammtoday](http://wammtoday.com).]

Reagan's Road to Climate Perdition

From the Archive: More than a quarter century after President Reagan ordered President Carter's solar panels removed from the White House roof, new ones are being installed, a belated nod to the foresight of one president and a rebuke to the blindness of another, as Sam Parry explained in 2012.

By Sam Parry (Originally published January 29, 2012; with some data updated.)

The documentary "A Road Not Taken" chronicles the story of the 32 solar panels that President Jimmy Carter installed on the roof of the White House in 1979, the same solar panels President Ronald Reagan unceremoniously removed.

After being taken down in 1986, the solar panels were stored away in a government warehouse, like that scene at the end of "Raiders of the Lost Ark." They were mostly forgotten until 1991, when Unity College, a small private school in central Maine that promotes sustainability, acquired them and put them to use on the roof of the school's cafeteria.

Later, one of the panels was donated to the American History Museum in Washington, DC, and another found its way back to Jimmy Carter, given to the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia, where it was made a permanent exhibit in 2007, recalling Carter's early commitment to renewable energy.

Yet, besides following the fate of these particular solar panels, the 2010 documentary reflects on the lost opportunity for the United States and the world in the change of direction that the solar panels represented, the fateful turn on energy issues from Carter's presidency to Reagan's.

The documentary depicts the 1979 installation of the solar panels to heat water for the staff cafeteria at the White House as one of the most visible symbols of the energy policies of the Carter administration, which did more than any other before or since to promote the goals of alternative energy and conservation.

And, for Carter, the dual causes of renewable energy and energy independence were always high on his agenda. In early February 1977, just two weeks into his presidency, Carter gave a national televised fireside chat, wearing a yellow wool sweater and promoting a national energy policy as a top priority for his administration.

Over the next four years, Carter turned this commitment into a multitude of programs and initiatives. Carter created the Department of Energy, taxed oil company profits, improved automobile fuel efficiency, invested heavily in the Solar Energy Research Institute (the precursor to the National Renewable Energy

Laboratory), cut America's oil imports in half, and increased U.S. use of renewable energy like solar power with a goal of generating 20 percent of all energy consumed in America from renewable sources by 2000.

Carter laid out a route for America's energy future that, while still needing traditional fossil fuels, promoted cleaner alternatives and conservation. In his last State of the Union address, given just days before President Reagan's inauguration, President Carter reflected on what he hoped his legacy would be on this crucial issue of energy:

"The Administration's 1977 National Energy Plan marked an historic departure from the policies of previous Administrations. The plan stressed the importance of both energy production and conservation to achieving our ultimate national goal of relying primarily on secure sources of energy. In 1978, I initiated the Administration's Solar Domestic Policy Review. This represented the first step towards widespread introduction of renewable energy sources into the Nation's economy.

"As a result of the Review, I issued the 1979 Solar Message to Congress, the first such message in the Nation's history. The Message outlined the Administration's solar program and established an ambitious national goal for the year 2000 of obtaining 20 percent of this Nation's energy from solar and renewable sources.

"The thrust of the federal solar program is to help industry develop solar energy sources by emphasizing basic research and development of solar technologies which are not currently economic, such as photovoltaics, which generate energy directly from the sun.

"At the same time, through tax incentives, education, and the Solar Energy and Energy Conservation Bank, the solar program seeks to encourage state and local governments, industry, and our citizens to expand their use of solar and renewable resource technologies currently available.

"As a result of these policies and programs, the energy efficiency of the American economy has improved markedly and investments in renewable energy sources have grown significantly. It now takes 3 1/2 percent less energy to produce a constant dollar of GNP than it did in January 1977. This increase in efficiency represents a savings of over 1.3 million barrels per day of oil equivalent, about the level of total oil production now occurring in Alaska."

However, after Carter was out of the White House, President Reagan not only removed the solar panels from the roof, he systematically dismantled Carter's alternative energy and conservation initiatives. Reagan became the anti-Carter

in almost every way on energy policy.

Reagan slashed the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's budget by 90 percent, halved the Energy Department's conservation and alternative fuels budget, eliminated the wind investment tax credit, reduced spending on solar photovoltaic research by two-thirds, slashed energy tax credits for homeowners, and reduced fuel-efficiency standards for cars.

Due largely to Reagan's policy reversals on alternative energy, the United States fell far short of Carter's goal of getting 20 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2000, achieving about only one-quarter of that target, even less than what Carter's policies had achieved by the early 1980s. In retrospect, it is clear that Reagan made reckless policy choices that had grave consequences for American energy security, for the environment and for the future survivability of life on planet Earth.

Indeed, for those who understand the dire threat of catastrophic climate change and the curse of America's continued addiction to fossil fuels, "A Road Not Taken" can be a painful documentary to watch. It may be even more painful for our kids and grandkids to watch this film in a world that already is on its way to 11 degrees F warming (or more) by the end of the century. Scratch that. It won't be painful to watch a movie. It will be painful to live in such a world.

But first, some good news. America is currently in the midst of a mini-boom for renewable energy, the likes of which we haven't seen since, well, the Carter administration. In 2011, 9.38 percent of all energy consumed in America came from renewable energy, i.e. not fossil fuels and not nuclear. That's up from 5.37 percent in 2001.. [See U.S. Energy Information Administration.]

Yet, before we start patting ourselves on the back, it should be noted that President Carter's energy policies (along with the oil crises of the 1970s) helped get the United States to 8.9 percent renewable in 1983. And all the way back in 1949, renewables accounted for 9.3 percent of our total energy consumption.

So, the United States is roughly where it was in 1983 and 1949, but at least the nation finally is turning back onto the right road. The only question is, after such a long delay, is there any chance of getting to a carbon-free world, or even a low-carbon world, in time to avert the devastating threat of runaway global warming?

The hard truth is the answer is probably not. It's hard to write those words. I have kids. I'd like to have a greater sense of hope. But I've read the science. Runaway global warming means the destruction of life as we have known it,

probably not the destruction of all life on Earth, but the words “global catastrophe” is a soft way of putting it.

Human civilization’s inability to seriously confront this crisis is akin to knowing that a giant meteor is on a collision course with Earth in 50 to 100 years and doing nothing about it, besides questioning the mathematics that charts the trajectory of the meteor.

Without doubt, the reality of climate change is difficult for people to accept. Numerous studies have examined the human mind to try to understand why we don’t take seriously the demise of our entire way of life. These studies have achieved some interesting, though ultimately not very helpful, insights.

Harvard Psychology Professor Daniel Gilbert has noted that global warming is not intentional, immoral, imminent or instantaneous, but that only makes it more insidious. “Global warming is a deadly threat precisely because it sneaks in under the radar that we’ve evolved,” Gilbert said.

At least that helps explain why, as Elizabeth Kolbert, journalist for The New Yorker and author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, puts it, “a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself.” But analysis is not action. And we need all-out action now.

If you want to get a sense of what a planet that is 11° F warmer will look like, consider this: The planet has already warmed about 1.4° F since the Industrial Revolution. This level of warming has done this to the world’s glaciers:



And it’s done this to Arctic sea ice:

Melting Ice

And it’s helped cause our seas to rise this much:



This is what the warming looks like:

Warming Trends

But that’s nothing compared to what’s in store.

At 11° F warming, the climate of New Hampshire looks something like the climate of the Carolinas. At 11° F warming, we’ll be measuring sea level rise in feet and meters, not inches and centimeters. At 11° F warming, you can no longer

grow corn in Iowa and the number of people around the world dying from starvation every year will increase from millions to hundreds of millions, possibly billions.

The crisis won't be something that can be addressed through benefit concerts or even government aid programs. We will be facing a permanent dust bowl across most of the western half the U.S., from Kansas to California. A third of Florida will be under water. We're talking about hundreds of millions of people around the world becoming environmental refugees. We're talking about Mad Max doomsday time.

Why will this happen? Well, the physics are actually pretty straight-forward. Carbon dioxide is a heat trapping gas. We're emitting around 33.5 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. Carbon dioxide lingers in the atmosphere for decades.

The concentration of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere has increased from pre-industrial levels of around 280 parts per million (ppm) to about 392 ppm today. We're adding roughly 2 ppm per year to that total. And, in spite of the mountain of scientific warnings over the last 30 years, instead of reducing our CO2 emissions, we're increasing them.

On our current path, the planet will get warmer and warmer and warmer and warmer with virtually no end in sight. It couldn't be more straight-forward. There are no real questions about the physics. But national and global policies are not made in the realm of physics or science. They are made in the realm of politics.

And when it comes to politics, especially modern U.S. politics, it is infinitely easier to do nothing than to take even the smallest steps toward doing the right thing, especially when billions of dollars in profits from fossil fuel corporate behemoths are at stake.

Especially when to this day you can go on Fox News and Rush Limbaugh's radio show, or even some of the so-called left-wing chat shows, and demonstrate how witty you are as you chuckle at Jimmy Carter's yellow wool cardigan sweater and his roof-top solar panels.

As a nation, the United States may finally be turning back onto Jimmy Carter's road to renewables, but the painful reality is it may be too late. The three-decade detour begun by Ronald Reagan, and the continued slow pace of action even today, may guarantee that the road the United States remains on is the road to climate perdition.

Sam Parry is co-author of *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush.*

