

# US Politics Gives Saudis an Edge

If President Obama were speaking solely for U.S. national interests, he would offer a stern rebuke, not gentle reassurance, to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States during a Camp David summit, but domestic politics and Israeli pressure will constrain any frankness, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

As crown princes and other leaders of Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf meet this week with President Barack Obama, the first thing to keep in mind as background to this encounter is a truth that the President spoke last month in [an interview with Tom Friedman](#) of the *New York Times*.

The President observed that the biggest threats those Arab countries face “may not be coming from Iran invading. It’s going to be from dissatisfaction inside their own countries” based on “populations that, in some cases, are alienated, youth that are underemployed, an ideology that is destructive and nihilistic, and in some cases, just a belief that there are no legitimate political outlets for grievances.”

Of course that’s not an observation that the rulers of those countries want to hear, and the President acknowledged that talking about such things is “a tough conversation to have” with those regimes, “but it’s one that we have to have.” Sound foreign policy for our own country requires dealing in truths, even ones that make our interlocutors uncomfortable.

The President would have been on sound ground to make his point even more forcefully than he did. There will be no Iranian flotilla carrying an invasion force against the gulf. Anything remotely resembling such a fanciful scenario would be obvious folly for Iran and, even if were to occur, would be met with a forceful U.S.-led response with or without any explicit security guarantees from Washington.

Nor does it require any instigation from the outside for the danger of internal unrest and instability to arise from the anachronistic, undemocratic political systems, coupled with narrowly based economies and sometimes sectarian-riven social structures, that prevail in these countries. The most serious instability that has occurred in the last few years in the immediate neighborhood of the Gulf Arab countries, in Bahrain and Yemen, was internally initiated and not instigated by any outside power, be it Iran or anyone else.

The next thing to ask about the gathering at Camp David is what these Arab regimes would, or even could, do if they return home displeased. The answer is:

not much at all. Those regimes need the United States more than the United States needs them. They are highly reliant on U.S. help just to enable their military forces to operate their advanced weapons. They are even more reliant on the tacit blessing that the world's most powerful democracy confers on them every day by *not* making much of an issue of their undemocratic nature, notwithstanding how much talk one has heard in Washington, especially under the previous administration, about spreading democratic values in the Middle East.

Moreover, the Gulf states are not in position today to express any displeasure by trying to wield oil as a weapon, 1970s style; Saudi Arabia has its own reasons right now not only to keep oil flowing but to keep prices low.

Administration policymakers surely are smart enough to realize all this, but they feel obligated to play a political game that involves catering to the Gulf Arabs' expressed anxieties, no matter how opportunistic those expressions may be, hence this week's meeting.

The game is played mostly within Washington; it is a matter of the administration having to keep the Gulf Arabs from complaining too loudly about reaching an agreement to restrict Iran's nuclear program, lest the administration's domestic opponents amplify their accusations that the administration is selling "allies" down the river (or down the gulf) by making a deal with Tehran.

The nuclear agreement actually does no such thing. The Gulf Arabs have reached their own rapprochements with Iran in the past, and they are smart enough to realize that an agreement that restricts the Iranian program and precludes an Iranian nuclear weapon is better for their own security than the alternative of no agreement and no restrictions.

Although some coddling of the Gulf Arabs may be worth it if this helps reduce the chance that the Iran agreement will be killed in the U.S. Congress, it would be a mistake to extend new security guarantees or similar commitments that would risk entangling the United States more deeply in the Arabs' own peculiar quarrels. Those quarrels involve religion, ethnicity, and intra-regional rivalries where the United States does not have an interest in taking sides, and that give rise to fights in which the United States does not have a dog.

The United States unfortunately has already gotten itself involved in a very local, very messy, and very multi-dimensional fight in Yemen, involvement that would be incomprehensible except as a kind of compensatory stroking of Saudi Arabia. If one looked for a more direct U.S. interest in the Yemeni fight it would involve long-distance terrorist threats from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, but AQAP is on the *opposite* side of the Yemeni fight from the people

the U.S.-backed Saudi military intervention is going after.

There are good reasons for the United States to maintain cordial and even close relations with the Gulf Arab countries, notwithstanding their political systems and values that are so antithetical to our own. But such relations should be part of an independent and flexible U.S. policy in the Middle East that does not involve getting dragged into other people's pet quarrels and does not involve getting held hostage to the Gulf Arabs' own expressions of displeasure or discomfort.

An additional complication in trying to please such "allies" is that pleasing one can annoy another. More arms sales to the Gulf Arabs has gotten talked about, but that quickly runs into the assumption that whatever any Arab state gets in the way of armaments must be kept inferior to whatever Israel gets.

Israel illustrates better than any other case the futility of trying to buy cooperation from a complaining "ally" with not just arms aid but other supportive measures. The extraordinary largesse, political and material, that the United States bestows on Israel does not buy such cooperation, certainly not regarding the nuclear agreement on Iran, where the Israeli government vigorously opposes U.S. foreign policy and attempts to sabotage it at every turn.

The Gulf Arabs are too polite to imitate Israel in blatantly poking sticks in their benefactor's eyes. But expect from them a more restrained "what have you done for me lately" posture.

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## Obama Panders to Gulf State Sheiks

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States have given crucial support to Al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists, but President Obama will pander to them anyway at a Camp David summit, a sign of a muddled foreign policy, say Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett.

By Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett

Defying escalating rhetoric that Iran is "gobbling up the Middle East," President Barack Obama told the *New York Times* recently that "the biggest

threat” to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states may not come from Iran, but “from dissatisfaction inside their own countries.”

Yet, displaying how deeply mired in Washington hype his administration remains, Obama has called on GCC leaders to parade with him at Camp David this week as if Iran *is* their biggest threat.

Saudi King Salman has refused to join in this spectacle, underscoring that, in foreign policy, friendship and interest should not be conflated. Obama, by contrast, studiously overlooks this reality that, today, U.S. and Saudi interests on a number of key issues not only diverge, but conflict.

By refusing to deal with GCC states on the basis of interest, rather than friendship, Obama actually helps some of them continue pursuing policies deeply damaging to U.S. interests.

However much GCC elites evoke specters of Iranian “aggressiveness”, framed either in essentialist caricatures of “Persian expansionism” or depictions of the Islamic Republic’s allegedly radical Shi’a sectarianism, Iran is not the source of their insecurity. In reality, GCC leaders have felt existentially threatened since the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq upended a regional order based on Sunni Arab autocracies linked, in various ways, to Washington.

With U.S. encouragement, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states had supported Iraq’s Saddam Hussein financially in the 1980s, as he pursued aggressive war (including extensive chemical weapons use) against Iran. While Saddam eventually threatened GCC states, his overthrow in 2003 created major challenges for some of them, especially Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh could not endorse a more representative post-Saddam Iraqi polity that would, by definition, empower Shi’a, make Sunnis a permanent minority, and boost Iran’s influence. So, the Saudis urged militant Sunni *jihadis*, of a sort they had long supported, some of whom had created and remained involved with *al-Qa’ida* , to go to Iraq and help Sunni tribal militias and remnants of Saddam’s army destabilize the new Iraqi state, including by attacking U.S. occupation forces.

This trifecta of former members of Saddam’s military, Iraqi Sunni fighters, and foreign *jihadis* would eventually give rise to the political/military/religious phenomenon now known as the Islamic State.

In the meantime, GCC anxiety over the erosion of a regional order based on pro-U.S. Sunni autocracies grew more acute as, from 2011, demands mounted in overwhelmingly Sunni Arab societies for expanded political participation and protection from, not collusion with, a U.S. “war on terror” that has killed

hundreds of thousands of Sunni Muslims.

In this context, the “threat” to the GCC from today’s Iran is not that it is “Persian” or Shi’a, but that it is simultaneously Islamic and republican, that it seeks to integrate principles and institutions of Islamic governance with participatory politics and elections while maintaining a strong commitment to foreign policy independence.

### **Paving the Way for Jihadis**

GCC leaders are relatively unconcerned about reform calls from secular liberals, judging (rightly) that this agenda elicits limited support in Arab societies. But they worry deeply about Sunni movements, like the Muslim Brotherhood, willing to compete for power in elections.

For GCC rulers, these groups are profoundly threatening, for if Muslim-majority Arab publics can elect Islamic governments, the historically most potent argument for monarchy in Arabia, that it is essential to propagating true Islam, goes out the window.

To forestall this, Riyadh and its partners have declared the Brothers “terrorists” in GCC jurisdictions, and have worked to quash them around the region, as with Saudi and Emirati backing for the July 2013 coup against Egypt’s elected Brotherhood government.

By undermining the Brothers as a vehicle for expanding Sunni political engagement, Saudi Arabia and its allies leave *jihadi* groups like *al-Qa’ida* and the Islamic State as the only options for Sunni Arabs dissatisfied with the *status quo*. They make things worse by building up violent *jihadis* as alternatives to the Brothers, in Libya, Syria, and, now, Yemen, with Washington’s collaboration, and with disastrous humanitarian and political consequences.

What has unfolded in Libya since 2011, the state’s destruction, civil war, a U.S. ambassador’s murder, and incubation of a major *jihadi* hub that had not existed before, is hardly due to Iranian perfidy. It is the result of a military campaign, led by America and Saudi Arabia, to bring down the Gaddafi government, and, in the process, show that it wasn’t only pro-Western autocrats who were vulnerable to overthrow.

Many of this campaign’s devastating effects flow from Riyadh’s use of the Libya war to revive *jihadi* cadres worn down by years of fighting U.S. forces in Iraq, cadres the Saudis then deployed in Syria.

Saudi intervention ensured that *jihadis*, many non-Syrian, would dominate Syrian

opposition ranks, undercutting any potential role for the Brotherhood in leading anti-Assad forces. It also turned what began in Syria as indigenously generated protests over particular grievances into a heavily militarized (and illegal) campaign against the recognized government of a UN member state, but with a popular base too small either to bring down that government or to negotiate a settlement with it.

It is Saudi policy, not Iran's support for Syria's government against an externally-fueled insurgency that, as Syrian oppositionists themselves admit, couldn't defeat him at the ballot box, that is responsible for Syria's agony.

### **Cost of Reckless Strategy**

The most glaringly negative consequence of Riyadh's posture toward both post-Saddam Iraq and the Arab Awakening has been the Islamic State's explosive ascendance, marked by impressive territorial gains in both Iraq and Syria. The Islamic State's proclamation of a religiously legitimate caliphate represents a much bigger problem for Saudi Arabia than for the United States.

Yet, while Riyadh has ostensibly joined Washington's anti-Islamic State "coalition," it is doubling down on its *jihadi* proxy strategy. After using the *al-Qa'ida*-affiliated *Jabhat an-Nusra* to destroy non-*jihadi* opposition forces in Syria, Riyadh has persuaded Qatar and Turkey, previously the Syrian Brotherhood's biggest backers, to help it promote a new, *Jabhat an-Nusra*-led *jihadi* alliance that recently captured a major Syrian city.

In Yemen, Saudi airstrikes have helped *al-Qa'ida* make territorial gains, and to eclipse even further the Brotherhood's Yemeni affiliates.

Saudi Arabia pursues these policies, however risky (even reckless) they seem to outsiders, because decision-makers in Riyadh judge that they maximize the ruling family's chances of holding onto power.

The United States, for its part, should continue cooperating with Saudi Arabia where U.S. and Saudi interests overlap. But U.S. interests also require that Washington undertake strategically-grounded diplomacy with all major regional players, including, above all, a rising Iran.

And Washington certainly should be able to confront the Saudis and others in the GCC when they pursue policies contrary to U.S. interests. Like too many of his predecessors, Obama has yet to learn how to do this.

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## Saddam's Green Light

**From the Archive:** An article from the first investigative series published at Consortiumnews in early 1996 revealed top-secret "[talking points](#)" used by Secretary of State Haig in 1981 to brief President Reagan about the Middle East, including an alleged U.S. "green light" for Iraq to invade Iran. Journalist Robert Parry found the document in old congressional files.

By Robert Parry

In summer 1980, Iraq's wily president Saddam Hussein saw opportunities in the chaos sweeping the Persian Gulf. Iran's Islamic revolution had terrified the Saudi princes and other Arab royalty who feared uprisings against their own corrupt life styles. Saddam's help was sought, too, by CIA-backed Iranian exiles who wanted a base to challenge the fundamentalist regime of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. And as always, the Western powers were worried about the Middle East oil fields.

So because of geography and his formidable Soviet-supplied army, Saddam was suddenly a popular fellow.

On Aug. 5, 1980, the Saudi rulers welcomed Saddam to Riyadh for his first state visit to Saudi Arabia, the first for any Iraqi president. The Saudis, of course, wanted something. At those fateful meetings, amid the luxury of the ornate palaces, the Saudis would encourage Saddam to invade Iran. The Saudis also would claim to pass on a secret message about President Jimmy Carter's geo-political desires.

During that summer of 1980, President Carter was facing his own crisis. His failure to free 52 American hostages held in Iran was threatening his political survival. As he wrote in his memoirs, *Keeping Faith*, "The election might also be riding on their freedom." Equally alarming, President Carter had begun receiving reports that the Republicans were making back-channel contacts with Iran about the hostage crisis, as he would state in a letter to a journalist nearly a decade later.

Though it was unclear then, this multi-sided political intrigue would shape the history from 1980 to the present day. Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980 would deteriorate into eight years of bloody trench warfare that did little more than kill and maim an estimated one million people. What little more the war did was to generate billions of dollars in profits for well-connected arms merchants – and spawn a series of national security scandals.

In 1986-87, the Iran-Contra Affair peeled back some of the layers of secrecy, but bipartisan investigations dumped the blame mostly on White House aide Oliver North and a few low-level “men of zeal.” Later inquiries into Iraqgate allegations of secret U.S. military support for Saddam Hussein also ended inconclusively. The missing billions from the sleazy Bank of Credit and Commerce International disappeared into the mist of complex charge and counter-charge, too. So did evidence implicating the CIA and Nicaraguan Contra rebels in cocaine trafficking.

A similar fate befell the October Surprise story and President Carter's old suspicion of Republican interference in the 1980 hostage crisis. A special House task force concluded in 1993 that it could find “no credible evidence” to support the October Surprise charges.

### **Haig's Talking Points**

Still, I gained access to documents from that investigation, including papers marked “secret” and “top secret” which apparently had been left behind by accident in a remote Capitol Hill storage room. Those papers filled in a number of the era's missing pieces and established that there was more to the reports that President Carter heard in 1980 than the task force publicly acknowledged.

But besides undermining the task force's October Surprise debunking, the papers clarified President Reagan's early strategy for a clandestine foreign policy hidden from Congress and the American people. One such document was a two-page “Talking Points” prepared by Secretary of State Alexander Haig for a briefing of President Reagan. Marked “top secret/sensitive,” the paper recounted Haig's first trip to the Middle East in April 1981.

In the report, Haig wrote that he was impressed with “bits of useful intelligence” that he had learned. “Both [Egypt's Anwar] Sadat and [Saudi Prince] Fahd [explained that] Iran is receiving military spares for U.S. equipment from Israel.” This fact might have been less surprising to President Reagan, whose intermediaries allegedly collaborated with Israeli officials in 1980 to smuggle weapons to Iran behind President Carter's back.

But Haig followed that comment with another stunning assertion: “It was also



interesting to confirm that President Carter gave the Iraqis a green light to launch the war against Iran through Fahd." In other words, according to Haig's information, Saudi Prince Fahd (later King Fahd) claimed that President Carter, apparently hoping to strengthen the U.S. hand in the Middle East and desperate to pressure Iran over the stalled hostage talks, gave clearance to Saddam's invasion of Iran. If true, Jimmy Carter, the peacemaker, had encouraged a war.

Haig's written report contained no other details about the "green light," and Haig declined my request for an interview about the Talking Points. But the paper represented the first documented corroboration of Iran's long-held belief that the United States backed Iraq's 1980 invasion.

In 1980, President Carter termed Iranian charges of U.S. complicity "patently false." He mentioned Iraq's invasion only briefly in his memoirs, in the context of an unexpected mid-September hostage initiative from a Khomeini in-law, Sadeq Tabatabai.

"Exploratory conversations [in Germany] were quite encouraging," President Carter wrote about that approach, but he added: "As fate would have it, the Iraqis chose the day of [Tabatabai's] scheduled arrival in Iran, September 22, to invade Iran and to bomb the Tehran airport. Typically, the Iranians accused me of planning and supporting the invasion."

The Iraqi invasion did make Iran more desperate to get U.S. spare parts for its air and ground forces. Yet the Carter administration continued to demand that the American hostages be freed before military shipments could resume. But according to House task force documents that I found in the storage room, the Republicans were more accommodating.

Secret FBI wiretaps revealed that an Iranian banker, the late Cyrus Hashemi, who supposedly was helping President Carter on the hostage talks, was assisting Republicans with arms shipments to Iran and peculiar money transfers in fall 1980. Hashemi's older brother, Jamshid, testified that the Iran arms shipments, via Israel, resulted from secret meetings in Madrid between the GOP campaign director, William J. Casey, and a radical Islamic mullah named Mehdi Karrubi.

For whatever reasons, on Election Day 1980, President Carter still had failed to free the hostages and Ronald Reagan won in a landslide.

### **A 'Private Channel'**

Within minutes of President Reagan's Inauguration on Jan. 20, 1981, the hostages finally were freed. In the following weeks, the new administration put in place discreet channels to Middle East powers, as Haig flew to the region for a round of high-level consultations.

The trim silver-haired former four-star general met with Iraq's chief allies, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and with Israel, which was continuing to support Iran as a counter-weight to Iraq and the Arab states.

On April 8, 1981, Haig ended his first round of meetings in Riyadh and issued a diplomatic statement lauding Saudi Arabia's "dedication to building a better world and the wisdom of your leaders." More to the point, he announced that "the foundation has been laid during this trip for the strengthening of U.S.-Saudi relations."

After Haig's return to Washington, his top secret Talking Points fleshed out for President Reagan the actual agreements that were reached at the private sessions in Saudi Arabia, as well as at other meetings in Egypt and Israel.

"As we discussed before my Middle East trip," Haig explained to President Reagan, "I proposed to President Sadat, [Israel's] Prime Minister [Menachem] Begin and Crown Prince Fahd that we establish a private channel for the consideration of particularly sensitive matters of concern to you. Each of the three picked up on the proposal and asked for early meetings."

Haig wrote that on his return, he immediately dispatched his counselor, Robert "Bud" McFarlane, to Cairo and Riyadh to formalize those channels. "He held extremely useful meetings with both Sadat and Fahd," Haig boasted. "In fact, Sadat kept Ed Muskie [President Carter's secretary of state] waiting for an hour and a half while he [Sadat] extended the meeting."

These early contacts with Fahd, Sadat and Begin solidified their three countries as the cornerstones of the administration's clandestine foreign policy of the 1980s: the Saudis as the moneymen, the Israelis as the middlemen, and the Egyptians as a ready source for Soviet-made equipment.

Although President Carter had brokered a historic peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, Sadat, Begin and Fahd had all been alarmed at signs of U.S. weakness, especially Washington's inability to protect the Shah of Iran from ouster in 1979. Haig's Talking Points captured that relief at President Carter's removal from office.

"It is clear that your policies of firmness toward the Soviets has restored Saudi and Egyptian confidence in the leadership of the U.S.," Haig wrote for the presentation to his boss. "Both [Fahd and Sadat] went much further than ever before in offering to be supportive."

Haig said "Sadat offered to host a forward headquarters for the Rapid Deployment Force, including a full-time presence of U.S military personnel." Sadat also outlined his strategy for invading Libya to disrupt Moammar Khadafy's

intervention in Chad. "Frankly," observed Haig, "I believe he [Sadat] could easily get overextended in such an undertaking and [I] will try to moderate his ambitions on this score."

### **'Special Status,' Money and Guns**

Haig reported that Prince Fahd was "also very enthusiastic" about President Reagan's foreign policy. Fahd had agreed "in principle to fund arms sales to the Pakistanis and other states in the region," Haig wrote. The Saudi leader was promising, too, to help the U.S. economy by committing his oil-rich nation to a position of "no drop in production" of petroleum.

"These channels promise to be extremely useful in forging compatible policies with the Saudis and Egyptians," Haig continued. "Both men value the 'special status' you have conferred on them and both value confidentiality. I will follow up with [Defense Secretary] Caspary and [CIA Director] Bill Casey. ...The larger message emerging from these exchanges, however, is that your policies are correct and are already eliciting the enthusiastic support of important leaders abroad."

In the following years, the Reagan administration would exploit the "special status" with all three countries to skirt Constitutional restrictions on Executive war-making powers. Secretly, the administration would tilt back and forth in the Iran-Iraq war, between aiding the Iranians with missiles and spare parts and helping the Iraqis with intelligence and indirect military shipments.

When the Soviets shot down an Israeli-leased Argentine plane carrying U.S. military supplies to Iran on July 18, 1981, the State Department showed it, too, valued confidentiality. At the time, State denied U.S. knowledge. But in a later interview, Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas Veliotis said "it was clear to me after my conversations with people on high that indeed we had agreed that the Israelis could transship to Iran some American-origin military equipment."

According to a sworn affidavit by former Reagan national security staffer Howard Teicher, the administration enlisted the Egyptians in a secret "Bear Spares" program that gave the United States access to Soviet-designed military equipment. Teicher asserted that the Reagan administration funneled some of those weapons to Iraq and also arranged other shipments of devastating cluster bombs that Saddam's air force dropped on Iranian troops.

In 1984, facing congressional rejection of continued CIA funding of the Nicaraguan Contra rebels, President Reagan exploited the "special status" again. He tapped into the Saudi slush funds for money to support the Nicaraguan Contra rebels in their war in Central America. The President also authorized secret

weapons shipments to Iran in another arms-for-hostages scheme, with the profits going to “off-the-shelf” intelligence operations. That gambit, like the others, was protected by walls of “deniability” and outright lies.

Some of those lies collapsed in the Iran-Contra scandal, but the administration quickly constructed new stonewalls that were never breached. Republicans fiercely defended the secrets and Democrats lacked the nerve to fight for the truth. The Washington media also lost interest because the scandals were complex and official sources steered the press in other directions.

### **‘Read Machiavelli’**

When I interviewed Haig several years ago, I asked him if he was troubled by the pattern of deceit that had become the norm among international players in the 1980s. “Oh, no, no, no, no,” he boomed, shaking his head. “On that kind of thing? No. Come on. Jesus! God! You know, you’d better get out and read Machiavelli or somebody else because I think you’re living in a dream world! People do what their national interest tells them to do and if it means lying to a friendly nation, they’re going to lie through their teeth.”

But sometimes the game-playing did have unintended consequences. In 1990, a decade after Iraq’s messy invasion of Iran, an embittered Saddam Hussein was looking for pay-back from the sheikhdoms that he felt had egged him into war. Saddam was especially furious with Kuwait for slant drilling into Iraq’s oil fields and refusing to extend more credit. Again, Saddam was looking for a signal from the U.S. president, this time George H.W. Bush.

When Saddam explained his confrontation with Kuwait to U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie, he received an ambiguous reply, a reaction he apparently perceived as another “green light.” Eight days later, Saddam unleashed his army into Kuwait, an invasion that required 500,000 U.S. troops and thousands more dead to reverse.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

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# Two Approaches toward Nationalism

Despite a difficult history, Scotland and England have approached their modern differences within the democratic process with Scottish nationalists sweeping recent parliamentary elections but Israel has chosen cruel repression toward the Palestinians leading to a very different result, says ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Two national elections during the past two months embody two different approaches to handling nationalist aspirations of subject populations, with two very different results.

One of the biggest story lines of this week's election result in the United Kingdom was the success of the Scottish National Party, which greatly increased its representation at Westminster by winning 56 of the 59 parliamentary seats in Scotland. Had the Labour Party won a plurality, the SNP very likely would have been a critical part of Labour's support, whether inside or outside a governing coalition. As it is, the SNP will occupy a major share of the opposition benches, a position it will use to press issues of special interest to Scotland.

The SNP's electoral success this week represents a continuation of a peaceful process of expressing Scottish nationalism and using political power to press the nationalist cause. Another major event in that process came last September with a referendum on Scottish independence. Enough Scots decided they would be better off remaining in the union for the "no" side to win that vote. But the referendum was the product of a negotiated agreement with the government in London, and there is every reason to believe that the government would be honoring the result if the outcome of the referendum had been different.

In short, Scottish nationalism, as well as the principle of self-determination, has been treated with respect by the English who hold most of the political power in Britain, notwithstanding how much most English may believe that sundering the United Kingdom would be a big mistake for everyone, or how much they may be annoyed by Scottish demands. And it is no accident that today the English do not live in fear of some Scottish terrorist group wreaking violence in the name of Scottish independence.

The British have had substantial experience with nationalist violence in lands under their control. Irish nationalism was a prominent example, first about a century ago involving the entire island of Ireland, and later in the form of terrorism by the Provisional Irish Republican Army centered on Ulster.

The first wave of violence ended with the negotiated establishment of an independent Irish Free State. The second wave ended with another negotiated accord, known as the Good Friday Agreement, that provided for power-sharing in Northern Ireland and is generally considered a success.

Between those two waves of Irish violence, Britain was beset by violence in Palestine, perpetrated most notably by Menachem Begin's Irgun and an offshoot group, the Stern Gang, both of which conducted terrorist attacks in the name of establishing a Jewish state. Another future Israeli prime minister and one of the leaders of the Stern Gang, Yitzhak Shamir, modeled his efforts on the Irish resistance and adopted the *nom de guerre* "Michael" after the Irish nationalist Michael Collins.

Britain did not seek to cling to Palestine indefinitely and, especially after the exhaustion of World War II, was only too happy to dump the problem into the lap of the United Nations. But Britain was still the power that, as a legacy of a League of Nations mandate, controlled Palestine, and Begin's and Shamir's terrorists pressed their violent campaign against British targets notwithstanding Britain's fight against Nazi Germany.

The Stern Gang was created by Irgun members who wanted to continue anti-British attacks even during the war, and Irgun itself resumed its attacks well before the end of the war.

There is a direct organizational line from Irgun to what became the Herut party and later evolved into Likud, the party that won the largest share of seats in the election two months ago in Israel, the only one of the two states, one Jewish and one Arab, provided for in the UN partition plan for Palestine that ever came into existence.

This week the Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, finished assembling a new government just before his deadline for doing so. The government is if anything even more hard-line right-wing than Netanyahu's previous government. That means continuation of the policy of rejecting Palestinian nationalism and trying to suppress it forcefully. And that means no prospect for ending the tragic story of Israeli-Palestinian violence and all the disruptive oscillations it spreads throughout the Middle East and beyond.

Likely to be particularly influential in keeping Israel on this violent course is the far-right Jewish Home party, which takes second place to no one in its determination to keep the occupied West Bank under Israeli control forever. Because Jewish Home was able to drive a hard bargain while Netanyahu was trying to stitch together enough of a coalition to get a bare majority in the Knesset, it got key ministries that will help it to prevent any deviation from its

preferred policies regarding the territories.

One of those ministries is agriculture, which controls funding for settlements and will be headed by one of the most fervent Israeli proponents of expanding settlements in the West Bank. Jewish Home also is furnishing the justice minister, a notorious figure whose hateful anti-Palestinian statements have bordered on calling for genocide.

This is a very different approach to handling the nationalist aspirations of a subject population than we have seen with the English and Scots, and the results have been very different. Close off peaceful channels for pursuing and realizing such aspirations, and violent channels are the only ones left.

The difference in the two cases is not due to something in the nature or habits of the subject population. Scots showed plenty of feistiness and antagonism in violent confrontations with the English dating back to the days of William Wallace (played on film by Mel Gibson) and Robert the Bruce. The difference has been in the policies of those with the power.

One can imagine an alternative history in which English rulers endeavored to the present day to subjugate the Scots, to deny them political rights, and to seize and settle on their land. Scottish terrorist groups would be an inevitable part of such a history.

Also likely to be part of it would be a rebuilding and reinforcement of Hadrian's Wall in an effort to defend against such terrorism, and the persistence of a miserable and costly military occupation in Scotland. All of Great Britain would be a far less congenial and civilized place than the sceptred isle we know today.

Policy choices on such matters can be made, and the choices that are made have major consequences.

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## Enforcing the Ukraine 'Group Think'

**Exclusive:** U.S.-taxpayer-funded Radio Liberty has a checkered history that includes hiring Nazi sympathizers as Cold War commentators. Now, one of its

current writers has used the platform to bash an American scholar who won't join Official Washington's "group think" on Ukraine, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

It may be fitting that the U.S.-funded Radio Liberty would be the latest media outlet to join in the bashing of an American academic who dares to disagree with U.S. policies on Ukraine, which have included supporting a 2014 coup that ousted the elected president and installing a new regime in which neo-Nazis play a prominent role. After all, Radio Liberty has a history of cuddling up to Nazis.

On May 6, a Radio Liberty pundit named Carl Schreck joined the Official Washington herd in demeaning Russian scholar Stephen Cohen as "a Putin apologist" who, Schreck said, was once "widely seen as one of the preeminent scholars in the generation of Sovietologists who rose to prominence in the 1970s, [but] Cohen these days is routinely derided as Putin's 'toady' and 'useful idiot.'"

While hurling insults, Schreck did little to evaluate the merits of Cohen's arguments, beyond consulting with neoconservatives and anti-Moscow activists. Cohen's daring to dissent from Official Washington's conventional wisdom was treated as proof of his erroneous ways.

In that sense, Schreck's reliance on vitriol rather than reason was typical of the "group think" prevalent across the U.S. mainstream media. But Radio Liberty does have a special history regarding Ukraine, including the use of Nazi sympathizers during the ramping up of the Cold War propaganda by Ronald Reagan's administration in the 1980s.

In early 2014, when I was reviewing files at the Reagan presidential library in Simi Valley, California, I stumbled onto an internal controversy over Radio Liberty's broadcasts of commentaries into Ukraine from right-wing exiles. Some of those commentaries praised Ukrainian nationalists who sided with the Nazis in World War II as the SS pursued its "final solution" against European Jews, including the infamous Babi Yar massacre in a ravine outside Kiev.

These RL propaganda broadcasts provoked outrage from some Jewish organizations, such as B'nai B'rith, and individuals including conservative academic Richard Pipes, prompting an internal review. According to a memo dated May 4, 1984, and written by James Critchlow, a research officer at the Board of International Broadcasting, which managed Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, one RL broadcast in particular was viewed as "defending Ukrainians who fought in the ranks of the SS."

Critchlow wrote, "An RL Ukrainian broadcast of Feb. 12, 1984 contains references



to the Nazi-oriented Ukrainian-manned SS 'Galicia' Division of World War II which may have damaged RL's reputation with Soviet listeners. The memoirs of a German diplomat are quoted in a way that seems to constitute endorsement by RL of praise for Ukrainian volunteers in the SS division, which during its existence fought side by side with the Germans against the Red Army."

Harvard Professor Pipes, who was an adviser to the Reagan administration, also inveighed against the RL broadcasts, writing on Dec. 3, 1984 "the Russian and Ukrainian services of RL have been transmitting this year blatantly anti-Semitic material to the Soviet Union which may cause the whole enterprise irreparable harm."

Though the Reagan administration publicly defended RL against criticism, privately some senior officials agreed with the critics, according to the documents. For instance, in a Jan. 4, 1985, memo, Walter Raymond Jr., a top official on the National Security Council, told his boss, National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, that "I would believe much of what Dick [Pipes] says is right."

That three-decade-old dispute over U.S.-sponsored radio broadcasts underscored the troubling political reality of Ukraine, which straddles a dividing line between people with cultural ties oriented toward the West and those with a cultural heritage more attuned to Russia. Since the Feb. 22, 2014 coup that ousted President Viktor Yanukovich, some of the old Nazi sympathies have resurfaced.

For instance, on May 2, 2014, when right-wing hooligans chased ethnic Russian protesters into the Trade Union Building in Odessa and then set it on fire killing scores of people inside, the burnt-out building was then defaced with pro-Nazi graffiti hailing "the Galician SS" spray-painted onto the charred walls.

Later, some of Ukraine's right-wing "volunteer" battalions sent to eastern Ukraine to crush the ethnic Russian resistance sported neo-Nazi and Nazi emblems, including Swastikas and SS markings on their helmets. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Seeing No Neo-Nazi Militias in Ukraine.](#)"]

### **Targeting Cohen**

But anyone who detects this reality can expect to confront insults from the mainstream U.S. media and U.S. government propagandists. Professor Cohen, 76, has borne the brunt of these ad hominem attacks.

One of the ugliest episodes came when the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies joined the bash-Cohen mob. The academic group spurned a

fellowship program, which it had solicited from Cohen's wife, The Nation's editor Katrina vanden Heuvel, because the program's title included Cohen's name.

"It's no secret that there were swirling controversies surrounding Professor Cohen," Stephen Hanson, the group's president, told the New York Times.

In a protest letter to the group, Cohen called this action "a political decision that creates serious doubts about the organization's commitment to First Amendment rights and academic freedom." He also noted that young scholars in the field have expressed fear for their professional futures if they break from the herd. Cohen mentioned the story of one young woman scholar who dropped off a panel to avoid risking her career in case she said something that could be deemed sympathetic to Russia.

Cohen noted, too, that even established foreign policy figures, ex-National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, have been accused in the Washington Post of "advocating that the West appease Russia," with the notion of "appeasement" meant "to be disqualifying, chilling, censorious." (Kissinger had objected to the comparison of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Adolf Hitler as unfounded.)

So, as the United States rushes into a new Cold War with Russia, we are seeing the makings of a new McCarthyism, challenging the patriotism of anyone who doesn't get in line. But this conformity presents a serious threat to U.S. national security and even the future of the planet. We saw a similar pattern with the rush to war in Iraq, but a military clash with nuclear-armed Russia is a crisis of a much greater magnitude.

One of Professor Cohen's key points has been that Official Washington's "group think" about post-Soviet Russia has been misguided from the start, laying the groundwork for today's confrontation. In Cohen's view, to understand why Russians are so alarmed by U.S. and NATO meddling in Ukraine, you have to go back to those days after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. Instead of working with the Russians to transition carefully from a communist system to a pluralistic, capitalist one, the U.S. prescription was "shock therapy."

As American "free market" experts descended on Moscow during the pliant regime of Boris Yeltsin, well-connected Russian thieves and their U.S. compatriots plundered the country's wealth, creating a handful of billionaire "oligarchs" and leaving millions upon millions of Russians in a state of near starvation, with a collapse in life expectancy rarely seen in a country not at war.

Yet, despite the desperation of the masses, American journalists and pundits

hailed the “democratic reform” underway in Russia with glowing accounts of how glittering life could be in the shiny new hotels, restaurants and bars of Moscow. Complaints about the suffering of average Russians were dismissed as the grumblings of losers who failed to appreciate the economic wonders that lay ahead.

As recounted in his 2001 book, *Failed Crusade*, Cohen correctly describes this fantastical reporting as journalistic “malpractice” that left the American people misinformed about the on-the-ground reality in Russia. The widespread suffering led Putin, who succeeded Yeltsin, to pull back on the wholesale privatization, to punish some oligarchs and to restore some of the social safety net.

Though the U.S. mainstream media portrays Putin as essentially a tyrant, his elections and approval numbers indicate that he commands broad popular support, in part, because he stood up to some oligarchs (though he still worked with others). Yet, Official Washington continues to portray oligarchs whom Putin jailed as innocent victims of a tyrant’s revenge.

After Putin pardoned jailed oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the neocon Freedom House sponsored a Washington dinner in Khordorkovsky’s honor, hailing him as one of Russia’s political heroes. “I have to say I’m impressed by him,” declared Freedom House President David Kramer. “But he’s still figuring out how he can make a difference.”

New York Times writer Peter Baker fairly swooned at Khodorkovsky’s presence. “If anything, he seemed stronger and deeper than before” prison, Baker wrote. “The notion of prison as cleansing the soul and ennobling the spirit is a powerful motif in Russian literature.”

Yet, even Khodorkovsky, who is now in his early 50s, acknowledged that he “grew up in Russia’s emerging Wild West capitalism to take advantage of what he now says was a corrupt privatization system,” Baker reported. In other words, Khodorkovsky was admitting that he obtained his vast wealth through a corrupt process, though by referring to it as the “Wild West” Baker made the adventure seem quite dashing and even admirable when, in reality, Khodorkovsky was a key figure in the plunder of Russia that impoverished millions of his countrymen and sent many to early graves.

In the 1990s, Professor Cohen was one of the few scholars with the courage to challenge the prevailing boosterism for Russia’s “shock therapy.” He noted even then the danger of mistaken “conventional wisdom” and how it strangles original thought and necessary skepticism.

“Much as Russia scholars prefer consensus, even orthodoxy, to dissent, most journalists, one of them tells us, are ‘devoted to group-think’ and ‘see the world through a set of standard templates,’” wrote Cohen. “For them to break with ‘standard templates’ requires not only introspection but retrospection, which also is not a characteristic of either profession.”

Nor is it characteristic of U.S.-taxpayer-funded Radio Liberty, which has gone from promoting the views of Nazi sympathizers in the 1980s to pushing the propaganda of a new Ukrainian government that cozies up to modern-day neo-Nazis.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

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## The Reasons for Urban Rioting

Urban rioting has a long history in the United States, often with one ethnic group turning on another. But modern history is more about oppressed racial communities lashing out at police brutality and government injustice, a phenomenon that requires a new national effort to resolve, writes Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

If one goes to Wikipedia under [the subject](#) of “mass racial violence in the United States,” one will find a “timeline of events” running from 1829 to 2015. There are so many race-related riots listed for these 186 years that, from a historical point of view, rioting appears almost normal.

Prior to World War II, these outbreaks mostly involved ethnic, racial or religious groups going after each other: Germans, Italians, Poles, Jews, Hispanics, African-Americans, Chinese, Catholics, Protestants were all involved in these set-tos. Often the causes were economic with a territorial overtone – one group moving into the neighborhood of another group and/or taking their jobs. When the violence came, it was group against group.

In the post-World War II era, the nature of the still numerous instances of rioting changed. The group-versus-group scenario gave way to group-versus-state.

Most of the categories listed above had successfully assimilated under the heading "Caucasian," and religious affiliations no longer seemed worth bloody murder. The arrival of new immigrants could/can still instill anger in citizens who mistake foreigners for the cause of problems they themselves have caused, but the result of late has rarely been rioting.

Actually, in the present era, the cause of rioting has mostly been black resentment over prevailing inequality: why the distribution of wealth seems never to work to satisfy the needs of African-American poor. Thus, all too many African-Americans, particularly men, have little opportunity for a decent life, while simultaneously having every opportunity to end up in confrontations with the police and then land in prison.

It is these ubiquitous confrontations with agents of the state that are now the standard trigger to the phenomenon of modern American rioting.

### **Inadequacies of the Civil Rights Acts**

The ongoing phenomenon of urban riots involving African-Americans suggests that the civil rights acts that followed the widespread unrest of the mid-1960s have proved inadequate. In part this is so because their enforcement, such as it has been, was restricted to the public realm. That is, the effort to do away with discrimination went no further than preventing such acts within institutions serving the public: public schools and housing, restaurants, hotels, theaters and the like.

There were other aspects to the civil rights acts – grants to minority businesses, for instance – but they all just scratched the surface. As a result, the number of African-Americans made upwardly mobile by this legislation was less than optimal. A black middle class did emerge, but it was small relative to the numbers who needed help.

To say that the civil rights acts proved inadequate in the fight against nationwide discrimination is to say that they proved unable to reorient America's discriminatory cultural mindset. That mindset was the product of, among other things, nearly 300 years of institutional racism.

To change things was going to take the consistent reinforcement of the idea of racial equality over at least three or four generations. This would have to be done mainly through the educational system, yet no specific efforts were made to this end. Indeed, even attempting to integrate the public school systems could provoke their own riots, as the "Boston busing crisis" of 1974 proved.

Another sign of this problematic cultural mindset is that, as far as I know, there is nowhere in the U.S. where one can find serious empathy for the fate of the inner cities amongst the vast, mostly white, population of the suburbs.

For instance, in the wake of the recent riots in Baltimore, the mayor of Philadelphia, Michael Nutter, commented, “local government cannot itself fix problems of violence and unemployment.”

This is absolutely true, but Nutter has looked in vain for any meaningful help from a state legislature controlled by a hinterland of conservative whites who may not feel they belong to the same species, much less the same broader community, as those in the inner cities. The suggestion that they should send their tax money to help the residents of Philadelphia appears to be beyond their understanding. I doubt very much if it is different elsewhere in the country.

### **The Police**

The police, of course, cannot stand outside the general discriminatory orientation of the culture. So the limited impact of the civil rights acts meant that the police were not reeducated to the new standards of public behavior now sanctioned by law.

To do so would have required more than simply increasing the number of black officers to at least match the racial demographics of American cities. It would have required extensive retraining and testing of those who sought to be part of law enforcement.

There is an entire industry out there to train and test people to safely drive cars. I know of nothing beyond piecemeal efforts to train police to act in an equitable and lawful manner toward all the different sorts of people they come into contact with (plus to handle other problems that seem to affect the police as a group, such as stress and anger management).

Nor are standardized ways of testing candidates applied so as to make sure that only the trustworthy in this regard are on the street. Because we do not do this, we risk having police who themselves may act in a criminal manner toward economically disadvantaged classes, thus expressing discrimination in a way that is violent enough to trigger mass unrest.

Indeed, as of now the preferred personality type for the position of police officer seems to be the same as that for professional soldier, which may be why it has been so easy to “militarize” American police forces. This effort, along with the “home security” business, has become a multibillion-dollar industry (major players in which are Israel companies, which now train an increasing number of U.S. police departments in techniques developed while enforcing the

occupation of Palestine).

Police departments and their suppliers have teamed up to lobby cash-poor municipalities for all manner of lethal gewgaws ranging from automatic weapons to armored cars. Military-grade riot-control equipment is now de rigueur for most large police departments. So great is the demand for these deadly toys that the Defense Department now has a committee appointed by the president to look into what constitutes appropriate equipment to hand out to the cop on the beat.

### **What Can Be Done?**

What this sad story tells us is that the United States has a very big problem of discrimination and exploitation of the urban poor that goes beyond the ideologically induced greed of a capitalist class. That is not to say that the capitalist structure of the American economy hasn't played havoc with the aspirations of poor blacks to get out of poverty. There is a very good essay by Richard Rothstein of the Economic Policy Institute that provides insight into the government's role in this aspect of the problem.

However, it is wrong to believe that after 300 years of racist acculturation the problem of endemic discrimination would disappear if, however unlikely, the nation was to move in another economic direction. Americans would still have to retrain themselves in order to overcome the racist cultural addictions acquired over their history.

It is relatively easy to write down some of the things that would have to be done to break these addictions. For instance:

– Tolerance and an attitude of community inclusiveness have to be taught to American children and done so consistently for multiple generations. This has to be done with consistency and not interpreted by the political efforts of those who believe teaching kids tolerance of other racial, ethnic and religious groups is doing the work of the Devil.

– The educational opportunities (including affirmative action programs), job training and meaningful low-cost housing programs that have been implemented piecemeal for the last 50 years have to be seriously revived, and seriously funded by taxing the wealthy upper 20 percent of the population. Alternatively, the money can be taken from the bloated defense budget.

– No one should become a police officer (and while we are at it, a prison guard) without undergoing rigorous screening. And that screening should look to eliminate all those who have authoritarian personalities underlain with problems of impulsive anger. This is such a no-brainer that one wonders why it is not already being done. Perhaps part of the problem is that, in most cases, the

police set their own criteria for admission into what has become a trade organization with the characteristics of a college fraternity.

Cultures can be both wonderful and horrible things. They tell us who we are and how we should act. To exercise some control over cultural evolution to accentuate commonsense beneficial ends such as tolerance and community inclusiveness is a worthwhile undertaking. But isn't it a restraint on individual freedom to insist that people not behave in racist and intolerant ways?

Sorry, that sort of "freedom" has already been made illegal at the institutional level within the public sphere. But it is not enough. We must insist that the effort go further until the culture is wholly transformed.

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## America as Dangerous Flailing Beast

Despite pretty talk about "democracy" and "human rights," U.S. leaders have become the world's chief purveyors of chaos and death from Vietnam through Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and many other unfortunate nations, a dangerous dilemma addressed by John Chuckman.

By John Chuckman

When I think of America's place in the world today, the image that comes to mind is of a very large animal, perhaps a huge bull elephant or even prehistoric mammoth, which long roamed as the unchallenged king of its domain but has become trapped by its own missteps, as caught in a tar pit or some quicksand, and it is violently flailing about, making a terrifying noises in its effort to free itself and re-establish its authority.

Any observer immediately knows the animal ultimately cannot succeed but certainly is frightened by the noise and crashing that it can sustain for a considerable time.

I think that is the pretty accurate metaphor for the situation of the United States today, still a terribly large and powerful society but one finding itself trapped after a long series of its own blunders and errors, a society certain



ultimately to become diminished in its prestige and relative power with all the difficulties which that will entail for an arrogant people having a blind faith in their own rightness.

America simply cannot accept its mistakes or that it was ever wrong, for Americanism much resembles a fundamentalist religion whose members are incapable of recognizing or admitting they ever followed anything but the divine plan.

America has made a costly series of errors over the last half century, demonstrating to others that the America they may have been in awe of in, say, 1950, and may have considered almost godlike and incapable of mistakes, has now proved itself indisputably, in field after field, as often not even capable of governing itself. The irony of a people who are seen as often unable to govern themselves advising others how to govern themselves brings a distinct note of absurdity to American foreign policy.

America's establishment, feeling its old easy superiority in the world beginning to slip away in a hundred different ways, seems determined to show everyone it still has what it takes, determined to make others feel its strength, determined to weaken others abroad who do not accept its natural superiority, determined to seize by brute force and dirty tricks advantages which no longer come to it by simply superior performance.

Rather than learn from its errors and adjust its delusional assumptions, America is determined to push and bend people all over the world to its will and acceptance of its leadership. But you cannot reclaim genuine leadership once you have been exposed enough times in your bad judgment, and it is clear you are on the decline, just as you cannot once others realize that they can do many things as well or better than you.

In the end, policies which do not recognize scientific facts are doomed. Policies based on wishes and ideology do not succeed over the long run, unless, of course, you are willing to suppress everyone who disagrees with you and demand their compliance under threat. The requirement for an imperial state in such a situation is international behavior which resembles the internal behavior of an autocratic leader such as Stalin, and right now that is precisely where the United States is headed.

Stalin's personality had a fair degree of paranoia and no patience for the views of others. He felt constantly threatened by potential competitors and he used systematic terror to keep everyone intimidated and unified under him.

Stalin's sincere belief in a faulty economic system that was doomed from its birth put him in a position similar to that of America's oligarchs today. They

have a world imperial system that is coming under increasing strain and challenge because others are growing and have their own needs and America simply does not have the flexibility to accommodate them.

America's oligarchs are not used to listening to the views of others. Stalin's belief in a system that was more an ideology than a coherent economic model is paralleled by the quasi-religious tenets of Americanism, a set of beliefs which holds that America is especially blessed by the Creator and all things good and great are simply its due.

### **Dominion over the Earth?**

Americanism blurrily assumes that God's promise in the Old Testament that man should have dominion over the earth's creatures applies now uniquely to Americans. Such thinking arose during many years of easy superiority, a superiority that was less owing to intrinsic merits of American society than to a set of fortuitous circumstances, many of which are now gone.

In Vietnam, America squandered countless resources chasing after a chimera its ideologues insisted was deadly important, never once acknowledging the fatal weaknesses built right into communism from its birth. Communism was certain eventually to fail because of economic falsehoods which were part of its conception, much as a child born with certain genetic flaws is destined for eventual death.

America's mad rush to fight communism on all fronts was in keeping with the zealotry of America's Civic Religion, but it was a huge and foolish practical judgment which wasted colossal resources.

In Vietnam, America ended in something close to total shame literally defeated on the battlefield by what seemed an inconsequential opponent, having also cast aside traditional ethical values in murdering great masses of people who never threatened the United States, murder on a scale (3 million) comparable to the Holocaust.

The United States used weapons and techniques of a savage character: napalm, cluster bombs, and secret mass terror programs. The savagery ripped into the fabric of America's own society, dividing the nation almost as badly as its Civil War once had. America ended reduced and depleted in many respects and paid its huge bills with devalued currency.

Following Vietnam, it has just been one calamity after another revealing the same destructive inability to govern, the same thought governed by zealotry, right down to the 2008 financial collapse which was caused by ignoring sound financial management and basically instituting a system of unlimited greed. The

entire world was jolted and hurt by this stupidity whose full consequences are not nearly played out.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were completely unnecessary, cost vast sums, caused immense misery, and achieved nothing worth achieving. We now know what was kept hidden, that more than one million Iraqis died in an invasion based entirely on lies. These wars also set in motion changes whose long-term effects have yet to be felt. Iraq, for example, has just about had its Kurdish, oil-producing region hived off as a separate state.

### **Mishandling Russia**

America's primitive approach to the Soviet Union's collapse, its sheer triumphalism and failure to regard Russia as important enough to help or with which to cooperate, ignored America's own long-term interests. After all, the Russians are a great people with many gifts, and it was inevitable that they would come back from a post-collapse depression to claim their place in the world.

So how do the people running the United States now deal with a prosperous and growing Russia, a Russia which reaches out in the soundest traditional economic fashion for cooperation and partnership in trade and projects? Russia has embraced free trade, a concept Americans trumpeted for years whenever it was to their advantage, but now for Russia is treated as dark and sinister.

Here America fights the inevitable power of economic forces, something akin to fighting the tide or the wind, and only for the sake of its continued dominance of another continent. Americans desperately try to stop what can only be called natural economic arrangements between Russia and Europe, natural because both sides have many services, goods, and commodities to trade for the benefit of all. America's establishment wants to cut off healthy new growth and permanently to establish its primacy in Europe even though it has nothing new to offer.

America's deliberately dishonest interpretation of Russia's measured response to an induced coup in Ukraine is used to generate an artificial sense of crisis, but despite the pressures that America is capable of exerting on Europe, we sense Europe only goes along to avoid a public squabble and only for so long as the costs are not too high.

The most intelligent leaders in Europe recognize what the United States is doing but do not want to clash openly, although the creation of the Minsk Agreement came pretty close to a polite rejection of America's demand for hardline tactics.

The coup in Ukraine was intended to put a hostile government in control of a

long stretch of Russian border, a government which might cooperate in American military matters and which would serve as an irritant to Russia. But you don't get good results with malicious policy.

So far the coup has served only to hurt Ukraine's economy, security and long-term interests. It has a government which is seen widely as incompetent, a government which fomented unnecessary civil war, a government which may have shot down a civilian airliner, and a government in which no one, including in the West, has much faith.

Its finances are in turmoil, many important former economic connections are severed, and there is no great willingness by Europe, especially an economically-troubled Europe, to assist it. It is not an advanced or stable enough place to join the EU because that would just mean gigantic subsidies being directed to it from an already troubled Europe.

And the idea of its joining NATO is absolutely a non-starter both because it can't carry its own weight in such an organization and because that act would cross a dangerous red line for Russia.

Kiev is having immense problems even holding the country together as it fights autonomous right-wing outfits like the Azov Battalion in the southeast who threaten the Minsk Agreement, as the regime tries to implement military recruiting in western Ukraine with more people running away than joining up, as it finds it must protect its own President with a Praetorian Guard of Americans from some serious threats by right-wing militias unhappy with Kiev's failures, as it must reckon with the de facto secession of Donetsk and the permanent loss of Crimea all this as it struggles with huge debts and an economy in a nosedive.

America is in no position to give serious assistance to Ukraine, just plenty of shop-worn slogans about freedom and democracy. These events provide a perfect example of the damage America inflicts on a people with malicious policy intended only to use them to hurt others.

There is such a record of this kind of thing by America that I am always surprised when there are any takers out there for the newest scheme. One remembers Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975 encouraging the Iraqi Kurds to revolt against Saddam Hussein and then leaving them in the lurch when the dictator launched a merciless suppression.

I also think of the scenes at the end of the Vietnam War as American helicopters took off in cowardly fashion from the roof of the embassy leaving their Vietnamese co-workers, tears streaming down their faces, vainly grasping for the undercarriages of helicopters, a fitting and shameful end to a truly brainless

crusade.

### **Messing up Ukraine**

I don't know but I very much doubt that the present government of Ukraine can endure, and it is always possible that it will slip into an even more serious civil war with factions fighting on all sides, something resembling the murderous mess America created in Libya. Of course, such a war on Russia's borders would come with tremendous risks.

The American aristocracy doesn't become concerned about disasters into which they themselves are not thrust, but a war in Ukraine could easily do just that. In ironic fashion, heightened conflict could mark the beginning of the end of the era of European subservience to America. Chaos in Ukraine could provide exactly the shock Europe needs to stop supporting American schemes before the entire continent or even the world is threatened.

I remind readers that while Russia's economy is not as large as America's, it is a country with a strong history in engineering and science, and no one on the planet shares its terrifying experiences with foreign invasion. So it has developed and maintains a number of weapons systems that are second to none. Each one of its new class of ballistic missile submarines, and Russia is building a number of them, is capable of hitting 96 separate targets with thermo-nuclear warheads, and that capability is apart from rail-mounted ICBMs, hard-site ICBMs, truck-mounted missiles, air-launched cruise missiles, sea-launched cruise missiles, and a variety of other fearsome weapons.

Modern Russia does not make threats with this awesome power, and you might say Putin follows the advice of Theodore Roosevelt as he walks softly but carries a big stick, but I do think it wise for all of us to keep these things in mind as America taunts Russia and literally play a game of chicken with Armageddon.

I don't believe America has a legitimate mandate from anyone to behave in this dangerous way. Europe's smartest leaders, having lived at the very center of the Cold War and survived two world wars, do understand this and are trying very carefully not to allow things to go too far, but America has some highly irresponsible and dangerous people working hard on the Ukraine file, and accidents do happen when you push things too hard.

### **The Israel Obsession**

In another sphere of now constant engagement, instead of sponsoring and promoting fair arrangements in the Middle East, America has carried on a bizarre relationship with Israel, a relationship which is certainly against the America's own long term interests, although individual American politicians

benefit with streams of special interests payments – America’s self-imposed, utterly corrupt campaign financing system being ultimately responsible – in exchange for blindly insisting Israel is always right, which it most certainly is not.

An important segment of Israel’s population is American, and they just carried over to Israel the same short-sightedness, arrogance and belligerence which characterize America, so much so, Israel may legitimately be viewed as an American colony in the Middle East rather than a genuinely independent state.

Its lack of genuine independence is reflected also in its constant dependence on huge subsidies, on its need for heavily-biased American diplomacy to protect it in many forums including the United Nations, and on its dependence upon American arm-twisting and bribes in any number of places, Egypt’s generous annual American pension requiring certain behaviors being one of the largest examples.

Here, too, inevitability has been foolishly ignored. The Palestinians are not going anywhere, and they have demonstrated the most remarkable endurance, yet almost every act of Israel since its inception, each supported by America, has been an effort to make them go away through extreme hardship and abuse and violence, looking towards the creation of Greater Israel, a dangerous fantasy idea which cannot succeed but it will fail only after it has taken an immense toll.

Despite America’s constant diplomatic and financial pressure on other states to support its one-sided policy here, there are finally a number of signs that views are turning away from the preposterous notion that Israel is always right and that it can continue indefinitely with its savage behavior.

Recently, we have had a great last effort by America and covert partners to secure Israel’s absolute pre-eminence in the Middle East through a whole series of destructive intrusions in the region the “Arab Spring,” the reverse-revolution in Egypt, the smashing and now dismemberment of Iraq, the smashing and effective dismemberment of Libya, and the horrible, artificially-induced civil war in Syria which employs some of the most violent and lunatic people on earth from outside and gives them weapons, money and refuge in an effort to destroy a stable and relatively peaceful state.

I could go on, but I think the picture is clear: in almost every sphere of American governance, internally and abroad, America’s poor political institutions have yielded the poorest decisions. America has over-extended itself on every front, has served myths rather than facts, has let greed run its governing of almost everything, and has squandered resources on achieving nothing of worth.

I view America's present posture in the world supporting dirty wars and coups in many places at the same time and treating others as game pieces to be moved rather than partners as a desperate attempt to shake the world to gain advantages it couldn't secure through accepted means of governance and policy.

America is that great beast, bellowing and shaking the ground, and for that reason, it is extremely dangerous.

**John Chuckman is former chief economist for a large Canadian oil company.**

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## Obama's Petulant WWII Snub of Russia

**Exclusive:** Russia will celebrate the Allied victory over Nazism on Saturday without U.S. President Obama and other Western leaders present, as they demean the extraordinary sacrifice of the Russian people in winning World War II a gesture intended to humiliate President Putin, writes ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

President Barack Obama's decision to join other Western leaders in snubbing Russia's weekend celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe looks more like pouting than statesmanship, especially in the context of the U.S. mainstream media's recent anti-historical effort to downplay Russia's crucial role in defeating Nazism.

Though designed to isolate Russia because it had the audacity to object to the Western-engineered coup d'État in Ukraine on Feb. 22, 2014, this snub of Russia's President Vladimir Putin like the economic sanctions against Russia is likely to backfire on the U.S. and its European allies by strengthening ties between Russia and the emerging Asian giants of China and India.

Notably, the dignitaries who will show up at this important commemoration include the presidents of China and India, representing a huge chunk of humanity, who came to show respect for the time seven decades ago when the inhumanity of the Nazi regime was defeated largely by Russia's stanching the advance of Hitler's armies, at a cost of 20 to 30 million lives.

Obama's boycott is part of a crass attempt to belittle Russia and to cram history itself into an anti-Putin, anti-Russian alternative narrative. It is difficult to see how Obama and his friends could have come up with a pettier and more gratuitous insult to the Russian people.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel caught between Washington's demand to "isolate" Russia over the Ukraine crisis and her country's historic guilt in the slaughter of so many Russians plans to show up a day late to place a wreath at a memorial for the war dead.

But Obama, in his childish display of temper, will look rather small to those who know the history of the Allied victory in World War II. If it were not for the Red Army's costly victories against the German invaders, particularly the tide-turning battle at Stalingrad in 1943-1944, the prospects for the later D-Day victory in Normandy in June 1944 and the subsequent defeat of Adolf Hitler would have been much more difficult if not impossible.

Yet, the current Russia-bashing in Washington and the mainstream U.S. media overrides these historical truths. For instance, a New York Times article by Neil MacFarquhar on Friday begins: "The Russian version of Hitler's defeat emphasizes the enormous, unrivaled sacrifices made by the Soviet people to end World War II ..." But that's not the "Russian version"; that's the history.

For its part, the Washington Post chose to run an Associated Press story out of Moscow reporting: "A state-of-the-art Russian tank ... on Thursday ground to a halt during the final Victory Day rehearsal. ... After an attempt to tow it failed, the T-14 rolled away under its own steam 15 minutes later." (Subtext: Ha, ha! Russia's newest tank gets stuck on Red Square! Ha, ha!).

This juvenile approach to pretty much everything that's important – not just U.S.-Russia relations – has now become the rule. From the U.S. government to the major U.S. media, it's as if the "cool kids" line up in matching fashions creating a gauntlet to demean and ridicule whoever the outcast of the day is. And anyone who doesn't go along becomes an additional target of abuse.

That has been the storyline for the Ukraine crisis throughout 2014 and into 2015. Everyone must agree that Putin provoked all the trouble as part of some Hitler-like ambition to conquer much of eastern Europe and rebuild a Russian empire. If you don't make the obligatory denunciations of "Russian aggression," you are called a "Putin apologist" or "Putin bootlicker."

### **Distorting the History**

So, the evidence-based history of the Western-sponsored coup in Kiev on Feb. 22, 2014, must be forgotten or covered up. Indeed, about a year after the events, the New York Times published a major "investigative" article that ignored all the facts of a U.S.-backed coup in declaring there was no coup.

The Times didn't even mention the notorious, intercepted phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine



Geoffrey Pyatt in early February 2014 in which Nuland was handpicking the future leaders, including her remark "Yats is the guy," a reference to Arseniy Yatsenyuk who after the coup quickly became prime minister. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[NYT Still Pretends No Coup in Ukraine.](#)"]

Even George Friedman, the president of the Washington-Establishment-friendly think-tank STRATFOR, has said publicly in late 2014: "Russia calls the events that took place at the beginning of this year a coup d'État organized by the United States. And it truly was the most blatant coup in history."

Beyond simply ignoring facts, the U.S. mainstream media has juggled the time line to make Putin's reaction to the coup and the threat it posed to the Russian naval base in Crimea appear to be, instead, evidence of his instigation of the already unfolding conflict.

For example, in a "we-told-you-so" headline on March 9, the Washington Post declared: "Putin had early plan to annex Crimea." Then, quoting AP, the Post reported that Putin himself had just disclosed "a secret meeting with officials in February 2014 ... Putin said that after the meeting he told the security chiefs that they would be 'obliged to start working to return Crimea to Russia.' He said the meeting was held Feb. 23, 2014, almost a month before a referendum in Crimea that Moscow has said was the basis for annexing the region."

So there! Gotcha! Russian aggression! But what the Post neglected to remind readers was that the U.S.-backed coup had occurred on Feb. 22 and that Putin has consistently said that a key factor in his actions toward Crimea came from Russian fears that NATO would claim the historic naval base at Sevastopol in Crimea, representing a strategic threat to his country.

Putin also knew from opinion polls that most of the people of Crimea favored reunification with Russia, a reality that was underscored by the March referendum in which some 96 percent voted to leave Ukraine and rejoin Russia.

But there was not one scintilla of reliable evidence that Putin intended to annex Crimea before he felt his hand forced by the putsch in Kiev. The political reality was that no Russian leader could afford to take the risk that Russia's only warm-water naval base might switch to new NATO management. If top U.S. officials did not realize that when they were pushing the coup in early 2014, they know little about Russian strategic concerns or simply didn't care.

Last fall, John Mearsheimer, a pre-eminent political science professor at the University of Chicago, stunned those who had been misled by the anti-Russian propaganda when he placed an article in the Very-Establishment journal Foreign Affairs entitled "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault."

You did not know that such an article was published? Chalk that up to the fact that the mainstream media pretty much ignored it. Mearsheimer said this was the first time he encountered such widespread media silence on an article of such importance.

### **The Sole Indispensable Country**

Much of this American tendency to disdain other nations' concerns, fears and points of pride go back to the Washington Establishment's dogma that special rules or (perhaps more accurately) no rules govern U.S. behavior abroad American exceptionalism. This arrogant concept, which puts the United States above all other nations like some Olympian god looking down on mere mortals, is often invoked by Obama and other leading U.S. politicians.

That off-putting point has not been missed by Putin even as he has sought to cooperate with Obama and the United States. On Sept. 11, 2013, a week after Putin bailed Obama out, enabling him to avoid a new war on Syria by persuading Syria to surrender its chemical weapons, Putin wrote in an op-ed published by the New York Times that he appreciated the fact that "My working and personal relationship with President Obama is marked by growing trust."

Putin added, though, "I would rather disagree with a case he made on American exceptionalism," adding: "It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. ... We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal."

More recently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov drove home this point in the context of World War II. This week, addressing a meeting to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Victory in Europe, Lavrov included a pointed warning: "Today as never before it is important not to forget the lessons of that catastrophe and the terrible consequences that spring from faith in one's own exceptionalism."

The irony is that as the cameras pan the various world leaders in the Red Square reviewing stand on Saturday, Obama's absence will send a message that the United States has little appreciation for the sacrifice of the Russian people in bearing the brunt and breaking the back of Hitler's conquering armies. It is as if Obama is saying that the "exceptional" United States didn't need anyone's help to win World War II.

President Franklin Roosevelt was much wiser, understanding that it took extraordinary teamwork to defeat Nazism in the 1940s, which is why he considered the Soviet Union a most important military ally. President Obama is sending a

very different message, a haughty disdain for the kind of global cooperation which succeeded in ridding the world of Adolf Hitler.

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## The Danger of Resurgent Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism ranks as one of the vilest of bigotries, especially considering the West's disgraceful history of persecuting and killing Jews. Any resurgence deserves full-throated condemnation. But the current danger is that Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians is fueling an ugly comeback, warns Alon Ben-Meir.

By Alon Ben-Meir

Horrific outbursts against the Jews are on the rise all over Europe exclamations like "gas the Jews" and "Jews burn best" are being heard at soccer games and similar social gatherings. While there is nothing to excuse or justify such hateful speech, some effort still needs to be made to understand why this is taking place now, and to such a degree that has not been seen for decades.

That means coming to grips with the ways in which Israeli leaders have directly, and Jews in general inadvertently, contributed to this alarming development.

Although the term anti-Semitism did not become commonly used until the end of the 19th century when Germany popularized it as a scientific-sounding name for *Judenhass* (Jew-hatred) in a sense, Jews have been experiencing it at least as early as the 3rd century BC. The current rise of anti-Semitism across much of Western Europe, and to a lesser extent in the Americas, cannot be explained, however, by merely referencing its historical persistence.

It is tempting to revert to ready and familiar explanations for anti-Semitism. One such hypothesis which astonishingly is still entertained is the "scapegoat theory," according to which the Jews have always been a convenient group to blame for the intractable social/political conflicts of the time.

In her seminal study *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt points out the obvious problem with this view namely, that it "implies that the scapegoat

might have been anyone else as well” and as soon as we begin to “explain why a specific scapegoat was so well suited to his role,” we have to put the theory aside and get “involved in the usual historical research where nothing is ever discovered except that history is made by many groups and that for certain reasons one group was singled out.”

The opposite, but no less popular, theory is the doctrine of “eternal antisemitism,” where “Jew-hatred is a normal and natural reaction to which history gives only more or less opportunity.” That is, the surge of anti-Semitism is not instigated by a special occurrence or event because it is a natural outcome of an undying phenomenon.

What is surprising is that even Jews themselves share this notion; just as the anti-Semite does not want to take responsibility for his actions, many Jews understandably do not want to consider or “discuss their share of responsibility.”

What has added potency to the substantial rise in anti-Semitism in recent years is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel’s defiance of international norms of conduct, its leaders’ sense of righteousness and arrogance, and the image they project to the outside world.

The philosopher Slavoj Žižek has observed how, in order to justify its expansionist policies, Israel has been playing a dangerous game with potentially catastrophic consequences. Radical Zionists claim that a multi-culturalist Israel cannot survive that apartheid, or something like it, is the only viable alternative essentially acknowledging the argument which was used in earlier European history against the Jews themselves.

It suggests that Israeli extremists on the Right are ready to ignore Western European intolerance towards the influx of other cultures, such as Islam, if their prerogative not to tolerate Palestinians is accepted. We might add that Israeli discrimination is not confined to the Palestinians, but extends even to Middle Eastern and Ethiopian Jews as well.

Žižek is right to point out that Israel is making a tragic miscalculation in deciding “to downplay the so-called ‘old’ (traditional European) anti-Semitism when the old anti-Semitism is returning all around Europe.”

It is in this light that we can also understand the strange alliance between the radical Israeli Right and U.S. Christian fundamentalists, who are historically anti-Semitic but passionately support Israel’s expansionistic politics: “Jewish critics of the State of Israel are regularly dismissed as self-hating Jews; however, the true self-hating Jews, those who secretly hate the true greatness

of the Jewish nation [are] precisely the Zionists making a pact with [Western conservative] anti-Semites.”

Many Jews still believe that they are the “chosen people,” chosen to be in a covenant with God. But what does “chosenness” signify?

The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas described it most aptly: “The chosenness of the Jewish people is always considered as a surplus of responsibility very often it takes on an attitude of excellence, a pretension to aristocracy in the bad sense of the term, the right to privileges. In authentic thinking, however, it means a surplus of obligations.”

This idea that one is chosen places an extraordinary moral responsibility on the individual. Israel failed miserably as it did not attempt to reconcile between its moral obligation toward the Palestinians and the Jews’ presumed sense of “chosenness.”

Israel’s political leadership has managed to feed the flames of anti-Semitism through obnoxious and irresponsible statements, race-baiting, etc. Such leadership provokes more hatred; Israeli leaders continue to use clichés and stale talking points that their enemies reject and their friends no longer respect.

Using national security to justify its racist policies, including the mistreatment of the Palestinians and the expansion of settlements, became the mantra of Israel’s domestic policy and provided anti-Semites with a daily dose of venom against Israel and its people.

One would think that those who suffered persecution as much as the Jews would treat others with care and sensitivity. That the victim can become a victimizer is painful to face, but it is a reality nonetheless. It is as if having suffered so much gives one the license to do things he would not have done otherwise.

I maintain that the continuing occupation remains the single most potent cause behind the rise of anti-Semitism. There is a common failing shared between anti-Semites, Islamic militants, and radical Zionists; namely, an epistemic failure a belief in their own moral infallibility, which leads to arrogance, indifference, complacency, and a sense that one does not need to provide a justification for one’s words and deeds. It also can lead to ruthless acts of violence.

H. L. Mencken wisely stated that “Moral certainty is always a sign of cultural inferiority All human progress, even in morals, has been the work of men who have doubted the current moral values, not of men who have whooped them up and tried to enforce them.”

It is unlikely that anti-Semitism will be eradicated someday, as there will always be bigots who derive perverse satisfaction in divesting themselves of moral responsibility, for whom hatred of the Jews has an almost intoxicating, delirious effect. However, the current rise of anti-Semitism can be curbed.

Israeli leaders and the public must return and recommit themselves to the moral principles that gave birth to the state of Israel. They must begin by engaging in an honest public narrative based on the reality of coexistence with the Palestinians in which Israel finds itself, and not a fictional, self-indulgent narrative that distorts the truth about the rights of the Palestinians which even a fool can discern.

Israel's poor public relations projects the country as conceited, and the old and tired talking points are dismissed as empty, self-convincing gospel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that he represents world Jewry is a false claim and only implicates the Jews as partners to the repugnant occupation and the ill treatment of the Palestinians.

Israel's provocative actions need to be curtailed first and foremost by ending the expansion of settlements and halting the annexation of yet more land. Israel's conduct in the territories does nothing but add fuel to the expanding fire of anti-Semitism.

Israel is the only country that has maintained a military occupation for nearly 50 years, in defiance of the international community. The Holocaust, incomparable to any catastrophic event in human history, must not be used to justify oppression of the Palestinians.

The Israelis' complacency about the occupation damns Jews all over the world and as long as the occupation lingers, anti-Semitism will continue to rise. Israeli leaders and the public in particular must look inward. The Zionist dream of creating a vibrant, just, moral, and caring Jewish state is quickly fading.

Today's Israel is consumed by corruption at the top; the poor are becoming poorer and the country's wealth is concentrated in the hands of a handful of families. Hundreds of millions of dollars are siphoned off to spend on illegal settlements, while impoverished towns with mostly Middle Eastern Jews are left to rot.

The discrimination against Sephardic Jews is still present four generations after the establishment of the State of Israel. The recent violent clashes with Jews of Ethiopian origin only reveal the depth of Israel's social dislocation.

Israel's President could not have put it more succinctly and painfully than when he stated that "Protesters in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv revealed an open and bloody

wound in the heart of Israeli society. This is a wound of a community sounding the alarm at what they feel is discrimination, racism and disregard of their needs. We must take a good hard look at this wound.”

The same can be said about the racist policies directed against Israeli Arabs, whose loyalty to the state is ironically questioned, when in fact the government’s policy of deliberate discrimination only galvanizes anti-Jewish sentiments among Israeli Arabs, who constitute 20 percent of the population. Israel has no friends left and it can no longer rely even on the U.S. to provide it with the political cover it has been accustomed to.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise not only in Europe but in the U.S. as well, which provides the last bastion of public support for Israel. Israel must not conveniently dismiss anti-Semitism simply as an incurable disease when in reality it is practicing “anti-Semitism” against a large segment of its own population.

The responsibility of diminishing anti-Semitism falls squarely on the shoulders of the Israeli political leaders and the public. Israel must embrace the moral values on which it was founded; its future, if not its very survival, may well depend on it.

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## Entangled in Sunni-Shiite Wars

Early U.S. presidents warned against “entangling” foreign alliances, but they never suspected America might be drawn into squabbles between Sunnis and Shiites dating back to the Seventh Century succession of Prophet Muhammad. But that now seems to be the case, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar describes.

By Paul R. Pillar

Sometimes it seems that a major part of the U.S. role in the world is to assuage the anxieties, fears, and hurt feelings of other nations. Parents do this with children, and clinical psychologists do this with patients; should the world’s superpower be expected to do this with foreign states? Evidently it is.

This month, for example, there will be a summit meeting at Camp David with Gulf

Arab states, and the purpose is summed up in the headline of a newspaper article about preparations for the meeting: the gathering is intended to “ease fears” of Arabs in connection with the agreement on limiting Iran’s nuclear program. Such U.S. hand-holding with putative allies in the Middle East is not limited to matters related to the Iranian nuclear deal, and such salving of feelings is not limited to the Middle East.

The question arises: why should we care about someone else’s apparent angst? And why should the United States devote any resources, including the scarce resource of its leaders’ time and attention, to doing something about it?

There are a couple of legitimate reasons it might make sense for the United States to be responsive to such foreign anxiety. One is that, if the foreign emotions are being expressed in the context of interests shared with the United States, such expression might be a useful indicator that something about the course of U.S. policy warrants rethinking.

Such rethinking is certainly better than the sort of dismissive unilateralism that has helped to get the United States in trouble in the past. But shared interest is not the context for much of the angst being expressed toward the United States, including the current feelings of the Gulf Arabs related to Iran. Those “fears”, as well as similar expressions from Israel, have to do mainly with intra-regional contests for influence, often with a sectarian or ethnic coloration, that do not involve interests the United States shares.

Another possible reason to be responsive is that unassuaged anxiety might lead the anxious foreign state to do something damaging to our own interests. A classic worry of this type is that an ally of ours might become so disaffected that it decides to become an ally of someone else instead. This type of worrying is not necessarily good for international peace and stability, as some pre-World War I history demonstrated.

Anyway, that’s not the kind of situation we have in the Middle East today. Those who say they are fearful of Iran are not going to become allies of Iran (although if they move toward tension-reducing rapprochement with Tehran, so much the better for peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region)

Or maybe a fear-ridden state might lash out, like a threatened animal, and do something more damaging and destructive than merely switching alliances. Amid those fears being voiced in the Middle East today, probably the most destructive such reaction one can think of would be Israel starting a war with Iran.

But the prospective nuclear agreement that supposedly is the basis of the fears would make such an attack less, not more, likely, because the attack would be



all the more blatantly a destructive and unnecessary action.

Expressions of fear and anxiety will continue, and so will the presumed need for the United States to respond to them, for two basic reasons. One is that ostensibly fearful states have every reason to milk those emotions for all the arms sales, security guarantees, economic aid, and superpower attention they can get. Why wouldn't they, regardless of how sincere or insincere the emotions may be?

The other reason is that displeased allies constitute a convenient theme that domestic opponents can use to criticize foreign policy. Never mind that such criticism may be inconsistent, with some of the same folks wringing hands over professed nervousness among Gulf Arabs or Israel apparently not caring about what America's major European allies, who actually have been party to the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear agreement, feel about it. (Some of the same people dismissed the views of Old Europe at the time the Iraq War was launched.)

Foreign nations often have genuine and well-founded fears, and it behooves us to try hard to understand those fears. Such understanding does not come easily to Americans, whose situation of power and geographic separation is quite different from the more vulnerable circumstances that most nations have faced. But understanding of this type is much different from catering to whatever anxieties someone claims to have, and makes a claim on the United States to relieve.

Sometimes the best U.S. response would be a diplomatic version of, "Tough. Not our problem."

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