

# How Israel's Gaza Blockade Backfires

Israel's crushing blockade and periodic assaults against the 1.8 million people jammed into Gaza have led to the emergence of an Islamic State affiliate that is now challenging Hamas, an example of how extreme repression breeds ever greater extremism, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

The histories of many lands have repeatedly demonstrated two patterns in the relationship of extremism to political and economic conditions. One is that the combination of miserable economic circumstances and a lack of peaceful political channels for pursuing grievances tends to gravitate people toward extremist groups and ideologies.

The second is that the resulting extremism is on a sliding scale. What may have been seen at one time as an extreme response to circumstances may, as misery continues and possibly worsens, come to be seen as part of an inadequate status quo and is eclipsed by something even more extreme.

Such a process is taking place today in the Gaza Strip, the open air prison in which 1.8 million people endure what for some time have been genuinely miserable circumstances. Blockade by Israel, aided to varying degrees by Egypt and punctuated by repeated Israeli military assaults, has destroyed much of the Gazan economy and kept residents in squalor.

The estimated unemployment rate is around 44 percent, and the Strip is still strewn with rubble from the most recent Israeli assault last year, with lack of materials and other impediments permitting only minimal reconstruction so far.

An unsurprising result is growth in the number and activity of Gaza-based extremists, specifically and most recently ones claiming allegiance to the so-called Islamic State or ISIS. Their numbers have increased, according to an estimate by Nathan Thrall of the International Crisis Group, from several hundred a few years ago to a few thousand today. They act in opposition not only to Israel but also to Hamas, the group that tries to function as a governing authority in Gaza and is to the extremists a part of a despised status quo.

"We will stay like a thorn in the throat of Hamas, and a thorn in the throat of Israel," says a spokesman for groups that identify with ISIS.

The ill consequences of this rise of extremists in the Gaza Strip go beyond the undesirability of any expansion of the ISIS brand and ISIS influence. The extremists from time to time fire rockets into Israel despite the efforts of

Hamas to stop such firings. The rockets endanger innocent citizens of Israel and also, given the Israeli government's pattern of blaming Hamas for anything that goes on in the Strip and striking back with force, carries the risk of precipitating the next Gaza war.

The Gaza extremists, especially if they link up in any way with their ideological soulmates in the Sinai, also may stop a modest thawing in relations between Hamas and Egypt, which recently has slightly relaxed closure of its part of Gaza's borders. (Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's Egypt, by the way, is another prime exhibit of how repression and denial of political rights foster the growth of extremism and terrorist violence.)

Israel's suffocating blockade is very hard to explain, much less justify, even if one gets beyond the huge moral issue raised by inflicting such deprivation on 1.8 million people and uses as a frame of reference the narrow objectives of the right-wing Israeli government.

The situation does help make possible the propaganda point, often invoked by that government and its supporters as an excuse for continuing to occupy the West Bank, that when Israel "withdrew" from the Gaza Strip the response supposedly was rocket fire and the Palestinians making a hash of things. No mention is made, of course, of how Israel has done everything it can to make the Gaza Strip ungovernable.

And by branding Hamas as an irredeemable extremist group, there is a further propaganda point that the Palestinian Authority is getting in bed with "terrorists" any time it tries to achieve reconciliation with Hamas in the interests of Palestinian unity. No mention is made of how Hamas, which won the last free all-Palestinian election, has made it clear that if a Palestinian state is created it is prepared to observe an indefinite long-term cease-fire with Israel.

Destruction of Hamas seems to be a purpose of the blockade and military assaults, with the idea being that if ordinary Gazans suffer enough they will blame Hamas and withdraw support from it. But if that is the purpose, the policy has been a failure.

The longer the policy goes on the more it starts to look like the failed half-century effort by the United States to use an embargo of Cuba to try to get rid of the Castro regime, with the difference that Israel has a much greater stranglehold on the Gaza Strip, and the suffering it has exacted on the targeted population has been much more severe.

Even if Israel could somehow kill off Hamas with this strategy, the increase of

the ISIS-types in Gaza points to the last flaw in the strategy. If Hamas were to go, the replacement probably would be something that everyone ought to consider much worse.

It is a further question whether the Israeli government recognizes this, and whether even if it does, it would nevertheless continue its self-destructive policies in its single-minded determination to destroy a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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## Info-War in the Iran-Nuke Talks

Information warfare – or “info-war” – is all the rage inside the Obama administration, which delights in distorting or misrepresenting facts as a “soft power” weapon to advance its international goals. Those games have reached into the Iran nuclear negotiations, reports Gareth Porter.

By Gareth Porter

A public diplomacy campaign by the Obama administration to convince world opinion that Iran was reneging on the Lausanne framework agreement in April has seriously misrepresented the actual diplomacy of the Iran nuclear talks, as my interviews with Iranian officials in Vienna make clear.

President Barack Obama's threat on Tuesday to walk out of the nuclear talks if Iranian negotiators didn't return to the Lausanne framework especially on the issue of the International Atomic Energy Agency's access to Iranian sites – was the climax of that campaign.

But what has really been happening in nuclear talks is not that Iran has backed away from that agreement but that the United States and Iran have been carrying out tough negotiations especially in the days before the Vienna round of talks began on the details of how the basic framework agreement will be implemented.

The U.S. campaign began immediately upon the agreement in Lausanne on April 2. The Obama administration said in its fact sheet that Iran “would be required” to grant IAEA inspectors access to “suspicious sites.” Then Deputy Security Adviser Ben Rhodes declared that if the United States wanted access to an

Iranian military base that the U.S. considered “suspicious,” it could “go to the IAEA and get that inspection” because of the Additional Protocol and other “inspection measures that are in the deal.”

That statement touched a raw nerve in Iranian politics. A few days later Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei insisted that Iran would not allow visits to its military bases as a signal that Iran would withdraw concessions it made in Lausanne. That reaction was portrayed in the Western media as evidence that Iranian negotiators were being forced to retreat from the Lausanne agreement.

In fact it was nothing of the sort. The idea that IAEA inspectors could go into Iranian military facilities at will, as Rhodes had suggested, was a crude oversimplification that was bound to upset Iranians. The reason was more political than strategic. “It is a matter of national dignity,” one Iranian official in Vienna explained to me.

The Iranian negotiators were still pushing back publicly against Rhodes’s rhetoric as the Vienna round began. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi appeared to threaten a reopening of the provisions of the Lausanne framework relating to the access issue in an interview with AFP last Sunday. “[N]ow some of the solutions found in Lausanne no longer work,” Araghchi said, “because after Lausanne certain countries within the P5+1 made declarations.”

But despite Araghchi’s tough talk, Iran has not reversed course on the compromise reached in Lausanne on the access issue, and what was involved was a dispute resolution process on the issue of IAEA requests for inspections. In interviews with me, two Iranian officials acknowledged that the final agreement will include a procedure that could override an Iranian rejection of an IAEA request to visit a site.

The procedure would allow the Joint Commission, which was first mentioned in the Joint Plan of Action of November 2013, to review a decision by Iran to reject an IAEA request for an inspection visit. The Joint Commission is made up of Iran, the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany) and the European Union.

If this Joint Commission were to decide against an Iranian rejection, the IAEA could claim the right to access even to a military site, despite Iran’s opposition.

Such a procedure represents a major concession by Iran, which had assumed that the Additional Protocol to Iran’s “Safeguards” agreement with the IAEA would have governed IAEA access to sites in Iran. Contrary to most media descriptions, that agreement limits IAEA inspection visits to undeclared sites to carrying out

“location-specific environmental sampling.” It also allows Iran to deny the request for access to the site, provided it makes “every effort to satisfy Agency requests without delay at adjacent locations or through other means.”

The dispute resolution process obviously goes well beyond the Additional Protocol. But the Obama administration’s statements suggesting that the IAEA will have authority to visit any site they consider “suspect” is a politically convenient oversimplification.

Under the technical annex to the Lausanne agreement that is now under negotiation, Iran would have the right to receive the evidence on which the IAEA is basing its request, according to Iranian officials. And since Iran has no intention of doing anything to give the IAEA valid reason to claim suspicious activities, Iranian officials believe they will be able to make a strong argument that the evidence in question is not credible.

Iran has proposed that that the period between the original IAEA request and any inspection resulting from a Joint Committee decision should be 24 days. But that number incensed critics of the Iran nuclear deal. Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tennessee, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who is unhappy with the whole idea of turning the decisions on inspections over to a multilateral group that includes adversaries of the United States, has criticized the idea of allocating 24 days to the process of dispute resolution.

Under pressure from Corker and Senate Republican opponents of the nuclear deal, the U.S. negotiating team has been demanding a shorter period, Iranian officials say.

The determining factor in how the verification system being negotiated would actually work, however, will be the political-diplomatic interests of the states and the EU who would be voting on the requests. Those interests are the wild card in the negotiations, because it is well known among the negotiators here that there are deep divisions within the P5+1 group of states on the access issue.

There are divisions within the P5+1, especially over aspects of what the Security Council should be doing, on how sanctions would be lifted and on access [verification regime]. “We can say with authority that they have to spend more time negotiating among themselves than negotiating with us,” one Iranian official said.

Even as Obama was publicly accusing Iran of seeking to revise the basic Lausanne framework itself, U.S. negotiators were apparently trying to revise that very same framework agreement itself. A U.S. official “declined to say if the United

States might agree to adjust some elements of the Lausanne framework in return for new Iranian concessions,” according to a New York Times report.

The Americans may have been doing precisely what they were accusing the Iranians of doing.

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## Not Learning from Mideast Mistakes

**Exclusive:** The neocon strategy of “regime change” has proved financially costly and strategically disastrous setting almost the entire Middle East on fire but almost no lessons have been learned, no accountability assessed, and no relevant questions asked, writes ex-U.S. diplomat William R. Polk.

By William R. Polk

Apparently, the United States, perhaps Great Britain and almost certainly Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are on the brink of a major escalation of war in what we now can call “the former Iraq and Syria.” But is this rational? Are we drawing lessons from our interventions in the past? Is there a realistic post-intervention plan? How much will intervention cost? And, finally, will it accomplish the presumed objective of making the situation better with more security for them and for us?

These are questions we should be asking *now* not after the fact. Perhaps somewhere deep in government council rooms these questions are being asked. If so, those asking them are certainly not sharing their answers, if they have any, with us. And since we will be paying the bills for whatever decisions are adopted, we have what in government usage is called a “Need to Know.”

I have no access to the thinking of the inner circles of any of the relevant governments, and from the sketchy and undemanding accounts in the media, it does not appear that anyone else has better access than I do. What I do have is 69 years of observation and study of the Middle East of which four were spent as the Member of the U.S. State Department’s Policy Planning Council responsible for the Middle East.

This does not give me an up-to-the-minute “take” on events several journalists provide that much better than I could but perhaps my years of experience give me a framework in which to place current events. So let me sketch answers to the questions citizens should ask:

First, are we thinking rationally and not emotionally? As an old policy planner, that means to me, “are we weighing all the questions *before* jumping?” Unfortunately, the record demonstrates that we leap before we look.

In Libya, we didn’t like Muammar Gaddafi, who was not a very likeable fellow but did raise the living standards of his people dramatically and he mostly kept various tribes and political rivals from killing one another. After the U.S.-backed “regime change” in 2011, Gaddafi was killed but so too were the positive results of his rule. What replaced it? Chaos and more killing.

As the Prime Minister of Italy, whose government is now nearly overwhelmed by the flood of refugees, remarked, we should have thought about the consequences before we destroyed Libya’s government.

In Iraq, we didn’t like Saddam Hussein. He, too, was not a likeable fellow, but under his rule Iraq became one of the most advanced societies in Asia. Its citizens benefitted from free education, free health facilities and a high standard of living. Then, in 2003, the United States got rid of him, doing a very good job of destroying “his” Iraq but there has been nothing good to say about the leaders and institutions that took Saddam’s place.

And, in Afghanistan, President George W. Bush was angry because the Taliban refused to turn over Osama bin Laden as demanded, with no thought as to why they wouldn’t. The record shows that the Bush administration was hardly aware that Afghans had a cultural tradition with rules of their own regarding such matters.

Instead, the United States rushed in, took over Afghanistan and installed a group of people as rulers who *said* they were our kind of folks. We were delighted and never stopped to compare what they said with what they were doing. The policy? It was to throw money at the country, though little of it has stuck, except inside the pockets of corrupt officials.

Even the Afghan leader we installed as president, no piker himself when it came to making off with our money, complained that most of what the United States gave the country ended up in foreign bank accounts.

So, despite – or because of – whatever good the U.S. thought it was doing, Afghanistan fell apart; drug lords brutally oppressed the people in the countryside where opium cultivation and heroin production skyrocketed; even in downtown Kabul there was no law. There is not a single “secure” place in the

country.

The human and financial costs of these interventions have been staggering. Hundreds of thousands dead with many more maimed; whole cities that took generations to build wrecked; perhaps \$5 trillion of U.S. taxpayers' money spent; and the whole area turned into a no man's land. Aren't those consequences something we should learn from?

Yet, I see no signs that any lessons have been learned. Far from the "best and the brightest" who made their own grievous mistakes in the Vietnam War America's current leaders appear to be the "most determined and closed minded." When one prescribed tactic fails, they loudly and repeatedly urge that it be implemented again in the next crisis.

In trying to find something positive to say about these adventures, all I can come up with is that there were moments of tactical success amidst the absence of strategy. We know how to destroy buildings, to find and kill insurgents, and to dole out vast sums of money. We just don't know whether we should be doing any of these things or not.

We do them because we know how to and have the means to do so. But the outcomes are never as predicted. When the existing institutions are perverted or destroyed, insurgencies follow; all law and order breaks down; populations flee; and "collaterally" drug production and other criminal activities multiply.

U.S. taxpayers' money is wasted on a colossal scale while those locals who are supposedly helping us either sit on their hands or make the problem worse. But Americans apparently don't like to hear about failures and no one is held accountable for the staggering waste.

On July 1, the congressionally mandated Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) issued another one of his astonishing reports on incompetence, waste and corruption, this one dealing with the disappearance of a relatively small amount, only \$210 million, spent on facilities whose locations were described by bogus coordinates.

As the reporting officer said, "to prove meaningful oversight of these facilities, [we] need to know where they are." But "Thirteen coordinates were not located in Afghanistan, with one located in the Mediterranean Sea. Coordinates for 30 facilities were located in a province different from the one USAID reported. In 13 cases, USAID reported two different funded facilities at the same coordinates. 189 showed no physical structure within 400 feet of the reported coordinates, and a subset of 81, or just under half of these locations, showed no physical structure within a half mile of the reported coordinates. 154



coordinates did not clearly identify a specific building.”

The U.S. military command tried to shut down SIGAR’s disclosures by classifying the findings, so Americans would be kept from knowing what every peddler in the Kabul bazaar already knows, that U.S. aid is being plundered.

The hard truth is that U.S. officials had no feasible post-intervention plan in Afghanistan, Iraq or Libya and the costs for those interventions now include unending warfare measured in the trillions of dollars. And, rather than making the American people safer, the “collateral” damages, I predict, will include attacks on America, Europe and Western assets abroad. Derivatives of these events will include the growth of fear, the decline of trust in one another, and the eroding of our civic culture.

Who could put a cost figure on all that? Yet, when the next foreign policy crisis arises, U.S. officials do the same destructive things all over again. In short, it would have been difficult to design policies more calculated to destroy our sense of well-being. After all, Americans got together as a nation-state in the late Eighteenth Century to, among other things, “secure The Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”

As the first U.S. President, George Washington, warned us, “The peace often, sometimes perhaps the Liberty, of Nations has been the victim” of imprudent action. We should put his advice into a modern context and heed it.

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## Offending Iran’s Dignity

America’s neocons are back at work demeaning an agreement to constrain Iran’s nuclear program to keep alive the neocon dream of bomb-bomb-bombing Iran. And the insults are having an effect by offending Iran’s dignity and creating friction among the negotiators, writes Trita Parsi.

By Trita Parsi

There are few concepts as important yet as misunderstood and unaccounted for in explaining international affairs as dignity. Explaining what is happening in Vienna right now in the nuclear talks between Iran and the permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany is virtually impossible unless this critical variable is taken into account.

On the American side, the limitations of the negotiators are oftentimes explained in terms of domestic political constraints. Those constraints, in turn, are mostly rooted in the contradictory interests of various groupings and factions within the American political system. While the term dignity appears foreign to the American narrative, it does nevertheless exist in concept, though not in name.

There is resistance, for instance, towards accepting that the negotiations with Iran and the United States and its partners are on an equal basis. The language of the United States deliberately seeks to reflect that it is the superpower in the equation, that it is in control, and that Iran is a lower power forced into submission.

“The Iranians know what they have to do,” is a phrase often used by Western officials. The narrative suggests that the West decides what Iran will be “permitted” to do and not do, and what it will be “allowed” to keep in terms of nuclear infrastructure.

This Western sensitivity is particularly visible when there is a perception of equivalence between Iran and the United States. When an American official suggested that it would be unrealistic to expect Iran to give unlimited access to its military sites, since no country would do so including the United States, critics immediately jumped on the suggestion that the United States could be put in the same category as Iran.

For the Iranians, the opposite is paramount. Any suggestion that it is unequal to the other parties in the negotiations risks collapsing the diplomacy altogether. The Iranian foreign minister oftentimes refers to the other countries in the negotiations as his partners, reflecting equality. No U.S. diplomat would use that language for the very same reason.

But the necessity to uphold dignity is at the very center of both the problems and the solutions in the ongoing nuclear negotiations.

The matter of inspections of Iranian military sites is a case in point. From the very outset, the Iranians made clear that they knew their implementation of the Additional Protocol and intrusive inspections was a key element of a final deal. Similarly, in his interview with Thomas Friedman in the days after the framework

agreement was reached in Switzerland, President Barack Obama described exactly how access to military sites will take place.

The process is that of managed access as provided by the Additional Protocol, with some additional configurations. There was never any hint of the completely unrealistic “anytime anywhere” concept.

Shortly thereafter, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz stated in interviews that the access would be “anytime, anywhere.” Critics of an agreement with Iran immediately jump on the opportunity of making this a new American red line.

Once the administration started to clarify the access would be managed, opponents of the deal accused the Obama administration of caving in to Iranian demands. Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Bob Corker now calls it a “deal breaker.”

A narrative thus emerged that Iran is walking back from its commitments to allow inspections of military sites. What had actually already been agreed upon is now presented as a Western dictate to Iran.

Immediately, Iranian sensitivity about dignity kicked in. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told military commanders in a speech that Iran will resist excessive demands and affronts to its dignity. Access to military site and interviews with Iran’s nuclear scientist would be rejected, he conveyed.

In reality, however, Iran has in the past given inspectors access to Iran’s military sites on numerous occasions, both on the nuclear front and, even more frequently, as part of Iran’s obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty. Giving access to military sites per se is not a problem for the Iranians.

However, doing so if the request is presented as a demand is taboo because it violates Iran’s dignity. Similarly, International Atomic Energy Agency interviews with Iranian scientists could be possible, but not if they are presented or conducted as interrogations. Iran’s sense of dignity would not allow Iran’s negotiators to agree to that.

The question of the timing of sanctions relief is also affected by dignity. It is important for the Iranians sense of dignity and equality that the West initiates sanctions relief simultaneously with any measures Iran takes to cut back its nuclear program. The compromise that was struck entails the Iranians beginning to implement their commitments under the final deal at the same time as the United States initiates the process of sanctions relief, even though the initial American step is to provide guarantees that sanctions will be waved on a

specific future date.

That both of these actions take place simultaneously, however, is an important principle for the Iranians to uphold both their dignity and sense of equality.

No one knows if the parties will manage to reach a final deal. There is a sense of inevitability in the air here in Vienna, however. In the minds of most, it is not a question of whether there will be a deal, but when. One reason for this optimism is that the complexity and difficulty of any of the known remaining issues are far less than the difficulty of the issues that already have been resolved. The two sides have gone more than half the distance.

But there are also reasons to believe that there are other issues that divide two sides that have been kept secret. And those issues probably have strong political dimensions. If so, the two sides have a strong common interest to keep those issues out of public sight precisely because the dignity factor will make them all the more difficult to resolve if they are discussed openly.

***Trita Parsi is the author of [A Single Roll of the Dice – Obama’s Diplomacy with Iran](#) (Yale University Press, 2012) . He tweets at @tparsi. [This article first appear at [NationalInterest.org](#).]***

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## How Zionism Corrupts Judaism

Judaism is a religion based on humanistic principles offering powerful arguments for social justice, but it has been hijacked by Zionists who have twisted it into an excuse for ethnic cleansing and mass murder, as Professor of Moral Theology Daniel C. Maguire describes.

By Daniel C. Maguire

Like the Palestinian people, Judaism is also suffering from siege and occupation. Zionism, a Nineteenth Century hallucinatory piece of fictive theology and a vicious ideology, has gotten a demonic grip on much of modern Jewish consciousness and has taken possession of U.S. policies in the Middle East.

Zionism is not Judaism; Judaism is 3,000 years old. Zionism is a heretical upstart based upon preposterous assumptions. In terms of theistic Judaism, Zionism teaches that God, the creator of everything in the universe from fruit flies to quasars, is also into real-estate distribution and has assigned Palestine to Jews or those who tenuously claim to be Jews ... from dark-skinned

Ethiopians to blue-eyed Russians.

This God wants all non-Jewish Palestinians (some of whose ancestral roots in Palestine go back for millennia) to be removed or brutally occupied and periodically bombed and starved into submission. That is Zionist theocratic policy and it has been a raging success.

Thanks to Zionist power and American complicit and compliant support, Jewish Israelis control 100 percent of Palestine and Syria's Golan Heights. Non-Jewish Palestinians are either occupied or living under dehumanizing siege.

To forestall any charge of caricature, let the Zionists speak for themselves. Joseph Weitz, an administrator responsible for planning the takeover of Palestine, minced no words: "Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both people together in this country. ... The only solution is a Palestine ... without Arabs. And there is no other way than to transfer Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer all of them, not one village, not one tribe, should be left."

David Ben-Gurion, a man of no known theological expertise, saw the invasion and occupation as an exercise in theology: "God promised it to us," he said. Yitzhak Baer joined the pious Zionist chorus writing in 1947: "God gave to every nation its place and to the Jews he gave Palestine."

One could be tempted to think that God would have preferred pre-Zionist Palestine. In the Nineteenth Century, Jews were four percent of the population, Christians, ten percent, and the rest were Muslims and all lived together in harmony and peace.

The Zionist success is brittle and becoming more so. Fifty years ago, a professor at Hebrew University wrote presciently: "Israel may be able to win and win and go on winning till its last breath, win itself to death. ... After every victory, we face more difficult, more complicated problems. ... The abyss if mutual hatred will deepen and the desires for vengeance will mount."

In the age of suitcase-size atomic weapons and micro-biological weapons and pinpoint accurate drones, a reality-check should tell Zionists that it is past time to take paths to peace that are open to them right now. United Nations resolutions and Arab offers are on the table based on returning to the pre-1967 borders.

Peace is there for the asking once Zionist stop the land-theft (euphemized as "settlements") and comply with international law. Israel can choose peace or expansion; Zionist Israel is choosing expansion and continued ethnic cleansing.

## Equating Zionism and Judaism

But here is the piercing point of Zionism: Zionism would not settle for the land of Palestine. It demanded that Zionism be identified with and conflated with Judaism. This perverse effort has worked well so that now any criticism of Zionist imperialism is called "antisemitic." "Antisemitic," of course, is a misnomer since the occupied and besieged Palestinians are Semites, too.

What is meant is that any criticism of *Zionist* policies is *anti-Jewish*. Wrong! Even Adolf Hitler knew that Zionism is not Judaism: he despised Judaism, but in his *Mein Kampf*, he had praise for Zionism. Hitler admired racist oppression wherever he found it. Indeed, Zionism's fatal fault is that it is not Jewish.

In my judgment, as a scholar in the field of religion, Judaism is the most profound, inspiring and practicable moral vision to be found in any world religion. Christianity and Islam are blessed to be among its heirs. In the years 1250 to 1050 B.C.E., the early Hebrews pressed history to turn a corner in such a wise direction that modern democratic theory owes deep debts to their achievement.

The Exodus/Sinai story in novels, films and homilies suffered shrinkage. It got reduced to historical facticity, i.e., stuff that happened and got recorded by ancient scribes trying to get their facts straight. The Exodus-Sinai epic is not history; it is metaphor.

As Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman put it: "There was no mass Exodus from Egypt." Moses may not have been a single person but a composite of many figures assembled with literary freedom over centuries.

But that doesn't mean nothing happened back there. Poetry happened. Revolutionary social experimentation happened. Forget the frogs and the parted seas engulfing the bad guys. What really happened was a social-political-economic revolution presented in epic form.

As Norman Gottwald shows in his monumental study *The Tribes of Yahweh*, those Hebrews (from *apiru* meaning outlaw) challenged the monarchical paradigm of one percent rule exemplified by Egypt. These poets were saying we need not live in the Egyptian model. The Sinaitic alternative beckons.

This Exodus-to-Sinai story is an epic poem in the genre of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, but outstripping both Homer and Virgil in power and far-reaching effects. As Walter Brueggemann says it is as insightful and relevant as if it had been written yesterday. It has perpetual contemporaneity, the mark of a true classic.

## People-Power

This epic poem was about people-power, about the 99 percent taking on the one percent. The story says you cannot trust the greed-driven one-percent. They are, as Micah said, "rich men who are full of violence, the city's upper classes speak falsehood and their tongues frame deceit." (6:12)

And he said that millennia before sub-prime mortgages and derivatives were cooked up like a witch's brew. *The exodus was a moral exodus from the one-percent rule in Egypt with all power moving to the top, to the Sinai model where "there shall be no poor among you" (Deut. 15:4).*

In the Sinai model compassion was woven into the political economy. As Walter Brueggemann says, the Hebrew revolution which is the root of Judaism became "the first move toward a social safety net in the history of the world."

Jan Dus says that what is contained in Exodus chapters 1 to 24 is the first ideologically-based socio-political revolution in the history of the world. The Judaism of Sinai and the prophets deserve two Nobel prizes, one in Peace and one in Economics. That is the stirring moral core of Judaism, the polar opposite of Zionism. It is this that should swell Jewish hearts with pride, not Zionism.

The poets of Israel warned that doom awaits societies that "grind the faces of the poor." (Isa. 3:15) Security comes from planting a poverty-banishing justice (Isa. 32:17) not from kill-power. You cannot build "Zion in bloodshed." (Micah 3:10) That's a message the Zionists will not abide.

"Neither by force of arms nor by brute strength" will the people be saved. (Zech. 4:6) The "song of the military" will be silenced (Isa. 25:5, 2) Prophetic Judaism scorns an over-reliance on violence. With the over-used sword beaten into a plowshares the earth could turn green with hope and not red with the mayhem we call war. (Isa.22:4; Mic. 4:24) That's the dream that the poets of Israel dreamed and bequeathed to all humankind.

## Suppose Israel Were Jewish

Israel and the United States both started out with ethnic cleansing. Is the superpower United States going to repent and hand the country over to the Native Americans? Is Israel the fourth strongest military power and the sixth strongest nuclear power about to dissolve itself? The answer is No to both those naive questions.

What Israel can do is accept the peace offered to it by its Arab neighbors and prescribed by the United Nations. In March 2002, 22 members of the Arab League offered to recognize Israel's right to exist and have normal relations with

Israel, no small concession that.

This offer has been repeatedly reconfirmed. In April 2002, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which includes 57 nations, concurred with the Arab League offer, and the Iranian delegation expressed its full approval.

The condition was Israel's compliance with the United Nations Resolutions 194, 242, 338 and the return to the pre-1967 borders. Hamas has said it will acknowledge Israel's right to live in peace within its pre-1967 borders. Israel can have peace or continued ethnic cleansing. It is currently choosing continued ethnic cleansing.

A morally Jewish Israel, embodied in growing groups like *Jewish Voice for Peace*, would make peace and in so doing transform the roiled politics of the entire Middle East. No one expects Zionist Israel to do that. Hence the growing BDS (boycott, divestment, sanction) movement.

The reigning assumption today is that it is pressure, not conscience, that will move Zionist Israel to choose peace.

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## How to Eradicate Racism

The massacre of nine black churchgoers in Charleston and a rash of arson at other black churches across the South show that despite conservative self-serving claims and liberal wishful thinking about racism becoming a thing of the past, much more work needs to be done, says Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

On the evening of June 17, a 21-year-old white man by the name of Dylann Roof walked into an old and famous black church, the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in Charleston, South Carolina, where a Bible study group was underway. Roof sat in on the class for an hour before allegedly pulling out a .45 caliber handgun, announcing that black people were "taking over our country. And, you have to go," and shooting 10 of the 12 people in the study group, nine of whom died.



It should be pointed out that at 21 years of age Roof presumably doesn't have a fully developed pre-frontal cortex (which, in part, means his risk-aversion impulse is not fully developed) – a fact that is likely to do as little good in court for him as it did Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (also 21) in his Boston Marathon bombing trial.

It did not take long for the authorities to identify and apprehend Roof. It turned out that he is a thoroughgoing racist with delusions of starting a second Civil War. He also had a thing for flags. Among the Facebook-posted pictures of Roof that soon surfaced were ones showing him with the flag of apartheid South Africa and the flag of white-ruled Rhodesia. Both of these are reported to be used as symbols of white supremacy in the U.S. And, there is the picture of him, with his handgun displayed, with the Confederate battle flag – the same flag that flies on the grounds of the South Carolina statehouse.

By the day after the shooting the issue for the media was no longer Dylann Roof (who had confessed to the murders, according to police). The issue was whether or not the Confederate battle flag on the statehouse grounds should be removed. For much of the country, the flag was a symbol of the racism that had moved Roof to commit the massacre.

As Nikki Haley, South Carolina's Republican governor, stated, the flag is a "deeply resented symbol of a brutally offensive past," and literally overnight, the AME massacre galvanized most of the country to show support for the victims by demanding the flag's removal.

But it wasn't going to be that easy. It turns out that many white citizens of South Carolina and beyond don't see the flag as a symbol of a "brutal past," much less the symbol of the nine dead people shot down inside the Emanuel AME Church. No. They claim that flying the battle flag simply honors their ancestors who fought in the Civil War for the cause of "states' rights." Based on this interpretation, Dylann Roof got it wrong when he sported that handgun along with the battle flag.

Well, most of the African-American population, along with many American whites, think this ancestor story is a rather poor ploy. Honoring one's ancestors who fought in a lost cause to sustain the institution of slavery (which is why states' rights were important to the Confederate South) is a bit weird in today's cultural environment, but one can show such respect in the privacy of one's own home or even at a veterans center.

However, making it an obligation of the state (in this case South Carolina) is downright dangerous because what you have is half the population commanding the government to pay homage to those who fought to maintain the enslavement of the

other half. From a socio-political standpoint, that homage validates the historic actions of those ancestors i.e., fighting to maintain a slave society thus possibly encouraging their descendants (like Mr. Roof) to mimic them. This is just asking for trouble, and on the evening of June 17, South Carolina and the rest of us experienced a horrific example of that trouble.

### **Why Do Dylann Roof's Exist?**

The Civil War ended over 150 years ago. So one can reasonably ask why Americans are still dealing with this issue of racism? Why is it that, as President Barack Obama said, shortly after the murders, that "slavery still casts a long shadow" on American life? There is no shortage of those who recognize that racism is still deeply ingrained in U.S. culture, but there are few suggestions as to why that is and what can be done about it.

That being the case, I thought I might revive my thoughts on these questions ones originally posted in March 2013 in an analysis entitled "Civil Rights Takes a Hit." It was written on the occasion of the Supreme Court's consideration of an Alabama suit to rescind Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which allowed the Justice Department to review any changes in voting procedures in areas of the country traditionally tainted by racism.

Here are some of the points I made in that essay:

,Cultures can evolve over centuries, yet once their major parameters are set, they have remarkable staying power. The notion that such parameters can be reversed in, say, 48 years (counting from the 1965 Voting Rights Act) is naive at best.

,Why would that be the case? A good part of the answer is that a culture of racism shaped the way of life, particularly in the southern United States, for hundreds of years. This culture was only briefly interrupted by the Civil War. After that war, there followed a period known as Reconstruction, when the U.S. Army's occupation of the South interfered with ingrained racist practices. But Reconstruction lasted only a brief 12 years, until 1877.

Thereafter the South reverted to racist ways under a "legal" regime commonly known as "Jim Crow." That lasted until the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Subsequent Republican administrations have been chipping away at civil rights laws and regulations ever since. Because, over hundreds of years, the interruptions in Southern racial practice were relatively brief, racism has persisted in that region of the country to a relatively greater degree than in other areas.

,This pervasive and long-lasting culture was reflected in local and regional

laws. Laws, in turn, are to be understood as educational tools that tell citizens what society deems to be right and wrong behavior. If laws are consistently enforced over a long period of time, most citizens will internalize these messages and they will become part of their moral code. Except for the 12 years of Reconstruction, the South had known nothing but legally sanctioned racist rules of behavior right up to the middle of the Twentieth Century. And so it was racist rules that were thoroughly internalized.

,What the Civil Rights laws of the 1960s did was to suddenly, and partially, reverse the behavioral messages based on the older racist laws. They did so only partially because these new laws concentrated on making discrimination illegal within the public sphere. You could no longer segregate public schools, hotels, restaurants and the like, as well as government offices.

Today, African-Americans in the South check into a hotel, eat at a restaurant, shop where they want to without much trouble. However, if they do happen to have trouble, there is recourse under the law to deal with the problem. That has now been the case for 48 years. *Yet this is not nearly enough time to have the message that racial discrimination is wrong penetrate deeply into the private sphere* of a region where the opposite attitude has long been the default position.

My guess is that among some Southern citizens, the new egalitarian way of thinking is superficially there, and among others it is not there at all.

Communities with historically ingrained patterns of thinking and behaving may be bludgeoned, say, by violent revolution, into changing their ways. However, if you are to change them in a non-violent fashion you must bring to bear all of society's traditional rule-making devices. These are primarily the law and the schools.

In the case of the United States, laws that enforce civil rights must be strengthened and steadily applied for multiple generations (at least four or five) until obeying these laws is habitual. That should permanently reform the public sphere.

Yet if Dylann Roof's actions teach us anything, the rules regulating the private sphere must also be addressed. The teaching of the essential correctness of civil rights and the essential wrongness for racist attitudes must be put into the curriculum and taught in all the schools, public and private, from K to 12, and probably in undergraduate college as well. This too must be universal (whether parents like it or not), consistent and multigenerational.

None of this is really impossible. It can be done. We know enough about

psychology to recognize that such an effort is not a waste of time. All it takes is the political and institutional will to do these things with patient persistence. Not until there are clear signs that racism has been erased from both the public and private spheres should anyone breathe a sigh of relief.

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## The Right's Made-up 'Constitution'

**From the Archive:** Many Americans, especially Tea Partiers and Neo-Confederates, either haven't read the U.S. Constitution or insist on distorting its plain language which established federal supremacy over the states and empowered the central government to "provide for the general Welfare," as Jada Thacker noted in 2013.

By Jada Thacker (Originally published on July 6, 2013)

The Cato Institute's *Handbook for Policy Makers* says, "The American system was established to provide limited government." The American Enterprise Institute states its purpose to "defend the principles" of "limited government." The Heritage Foundation claims its mission is to promote "principles of limited government." A multitude of Tea Party associations follow suit.

At first glance the concept of "limited government" seems like a no-brainer. Everybody believes the power of government should be limited somehow. All those who think totalitarianism is a good idea raise your hand. But there is one problem with the ultra-conservatives' "limited government" program: it is wrong. It is not just a little bit wrong, but demonstrably false.

The Constitution was never intended to "provide limited government," and furthermore it did not do so. The U.S. government possessed the same constitutional power at the moment of its inception as it did yesterday afternoon. This is not a matter of opinion, but of literacy. If we want to discover the truth about the scope of power granted to federal government by the Constitution, all we have to do is read what it says.

The Constitution's grant of essentially unlimited power springs forth in its opening phrases: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the

common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

As might be expected in a preamble to a founding document, especially one written under supervision of arch-aristocrat Gouverneur Morris, the terms are sweeping and rather grandiose. But the point is crystal clear: “to form a more perfect Union.” If the object of the Constitution were to establish “limited government,” its own Preamble must be considered a misstatement.

### **Enumerated Powers**

Article I establishes Congress, and Section 8 enumerates its powers. The first clause of Article I, Section 8 repeats the sweeping rhetoric of the Preamble verbatim. While it provides for a measure of uniformity, it does not so much as hint at a limit on the federal government’s power to legislate as it sees fit:

“The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States”

No attempt is made here, or at any other place in the Constitution, to define “general Welfare.” This oversight (if that is what it was) is crucial. The ambiguous nature of the phrase “provide for the general Welfare” leaves it open to widely divergent interpretations.

Making matters worse for federal government power-deniers is the wording of the last clause of Article I, the so-called “Elastic Clause”: Congress shall have power “To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.”

Thus the type, breadth and scope of federal legislation became unchained. When viewed in light of the ambiguous authorization of the Article’s first clause, the importance of the “necessary and proper” clause truly is astonishing. Taken together, these clauses restated in the vernacular flatly announce that “Congress can make any law it feels is necessary to provide for whatever it considers the general welfare of the country.”

Lately there has been an embarrassingly naive call from the Tea Party to require Congress to specify in each of its bills the Constitutional authority upon which the bill is grounded. Nothing could be easier: the first and last clauses of Article I, Section 8 gives Congress black-and-white authority to make any law it

so desires. Nor was this authority lost on the Founders.

“Limited government” advocates are fond of cherry-picking quotes from *The Federalist Papers* to lend their argument credibility, but an adverse collection of essays called the *Anti-federalist Papers* unsurprisingly never gets a glance. Here is a sample from New Yorker Robert Yates, a would-be founder who walked out of the Philadelphia convention in protest, written a month after the Constitution had been completed:

“This government is to possess absolute and uncontrollable power, legislative, executive and judicial, with respect to every object to which it extends. The government then, so far as it extends, is a complete one. It has the authority to make laws which will affect the lives, the liberty, and the property of every man in the United States; nor can the constitution or the laws of any state, in any way prevent or impede the full and complete execution of every power given.”

Yates, it must be emphasized, took pains to identify the “necessary and proper” clause as the root of the “absolute power” inherent in the Constitution well over a year before ratification.

### **The Tenth Amendment**

A particular darling of secession-prone, far-Right Texas Gov. Rick Perry, the Tenth Amendment is often claimed as the silver-bullet antidote for the powers unleashed by the “general welfare” and “elastic clauses.” Here is the text of the Amendment in its entirety: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Superficially, the Tenth seems to mean “since certain powers are not delegated to the federal government, then those powers are reserved to the states or the people.” This would seem to be good news for champions of limited government. But this is not the case.

The Tenth does *not* say that important powers remain to be delegated to the United States. It merely says that powers “not [yet] delegated” are “reserved” to the states or the people. This sounds like a terrific idea until we realize, of course, that all the important powers had *already* been delegated in 1787, four years before the Tenth Amendment was ratified.

As we have seen, the first and last clauses of Article I, Section 8 made the Tenth Amendment a lame-duck measure even as James Madison composed its words in 1791 and so it remains today. The sweeping powers “to make all laws necessary and proper” in order to “provide for the general welfare,” had already been bestowed upon Congress. The Johnny-come-lately Tenth Amendment closed the

constitutional pasture gate after the horses had been let out.

This apparently has never occurred to the likes of Gov. Rick Perry and his far-Right cohorts who believe a state may reclaim power by withdrawing its consent, in effect repossessing their previously delegated power through state legislation. Superficially, the logic of this position seems sound: if the states had the legal authority to delegate power, then they may use the same authority to “un-delegate” it by law.

But a close re-reading of the Tenth’s wording nixes such reasoning. Oddly, the Tenth Amendment does not say the *states* delegated their powers to the federal government although it may be argued that it probably ought to have said so. It says “The powers not delegated to the United States *by the Constitution* are reserved to the States. ”

Thus, according to the Tenth Amendment, the Constitution *itself* delegated the power to the federal government. States, in other words, now have no standing to “reserve-back” what they had never “delegated-away” in the first place.

Had it been possible to “un-delegate” the powers of the United States by invoking the Tenth, the Old South would have simply done so and spared itself the bother of secession not to mention the bother of being annihilated by a series of subsequent Northern invasions. The fact that the South did not even attempt such a strategy attests to the toothlessness of the Tenth Amendment.

No other instance in law would be a better example that we should choose our votes carefully. For in ratifying the Bill of Rights, which included the Tenth Amendment, the American people endorsed the legal fiction that the Constitution not the original 13 states, or “We the People” authorized the power of the United States *because the Constitution itself said so*. If the Constitution has an Orwellian twist, this is it no matter which side of the aisle you’re on.

The states and the people may amend the Constitution. But they may not do so by nullification (according to the logic inherent in the wording of the Tenth Amendment), or by the judgment of state courts (according to the “supremacy clause” of Article VI), nor may any Amendment be made without the participation of the federal government, itself (according to Article V.) If the Founders had meant to ensure “limited government,” there is no trace of such intent here.

### **Paucity of Rights**

If the Constitution were intended to provide “limited government,” we might expect it to be chock full of guarantees of individual rights. This is what Tea Partiers may fantasize but this is not really true. In fact, the Constitution is amazingly stingy in reference to “rights.”

The word "right" is mentioned *only once* in the Constitution as ratified. (Art. I, Sec. 8 allows Congress to award copyrights/patents to ensure their holders "Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.")

The word "right" somewhat counter-intuitively appears only six times in the ten Amendments called the "Bill of Rights."

Almost a century later, the first of seven other rights were added under pressure from Progressive activists almost all of which were intended to create and extend democratic participation in self-government.

Amendment XIV (sanctions against states denying suffrage); XV (universal male suffrage); XIX (women's suffrage); XXIV (denial of poll tax); and XXVI (18 year-old suffrage); and twice in Amendment XX, which gives Congress the "right of choice" in presidential succession.

In grand total, the word "right" appears only 14 times in the entire Constitution, as it exists today (including the two rights conferred to *government*).

Did we all notice that the "Constitution of the Founders" did not include the "right" for anybody at all to vote? Notable, too, is the absence of language implying that any "rights" are "unalienable" or "natural" or "endowed by their Creator." All such phraseology belongs to the Declaration of Independence, which apparently unbeknownst to Tea Partiers everywhere bears no force of law.

The word "power," by the way, occurs 43 times in the Constitution, each time referring exclusively to the prerogative of government, not right-wingers. Since "individual" rights are mentioned only 12 times, this yields a ratio of about 4:1 in favor of government power over individual rights. Without the efforts of those pesky, democracy-mongering Progressives, who fought for universal voting rights, the ratio would be more than 6:1 today or 50 percent higher.

This statistical factoid is not as trivial as it may appear. Expressed in practical terms, Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin or Clarence Thomas would almost certainly never have achieved public office had they lived under the "limited government" designed by the Founders they so revere.

### **The Bill of Rights**

So what exactly are our non-patent/copyright "rights," under so-called "limited government?"

Amendment I the right of people "peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances"



Amendment II the right “to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed”

Amendment IV the right “to be secure against unreasonable searches or seizures”

Amendment VI the right “to a speedy and public trial”

Amendment VII the right “of a trial by jury”

Amendment IX enumeration “of certain rights” shall not deny “others retained by the people”

That’s it. What happened to the famous rights of free speech, religion or press? The way the First Amendment is worded does not enumerate these as positive rights that people possess, but rather as activities the government may not infringe upon. If Bill of Rights author James Madison had meant to stipulate them as positive “rights” all he had to do was write it that way, but he did not.

Bear in mind Madison (then a federalist) wrote the Bill of Rights under political duress. Since anti-federalists (recall the skepticism of Robert Yates) flatly refused to ratify the Constitution unless it guaranteed *something*, Madison had to write *something*. In effect, the amendments were the pig the anti-federalists had bought in the poke, three years after ratification had paid for it.

Madison, at the time of writing, had little incentive to take pains with what he wrote because federalists did not believe a Bill of Rights was necessary, or even good idea (with Alexander Hamilton arguing a Bill of Rights would be “dangerous.”) This may account for the fact that some of what Madison wrote seems vague, or even ambiguous, as in the case of Amendment II.

Amendment IX, for example, actually makes little sense, which may account for the fact nobody ever seems to mention it: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

This sounds “righteous” enough, until we recall the Constitution to which this Amendment pertains had “enumerated” only a single right in the first place! Even if Amendment IX applies to the Bill of Rights (to include itself), then all it says is “the people may have more rights than the half dozen mentioned so far, but we’re not going to tell you what they are.” (So if Amendment X is Orwellian, Amendment IX verges on Catch-22.)

Of course the idea was to calm suspicions that people would possess only the half-dozen rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights (plus patents!) and no

others. Even so, Amendment IX did not guarantee any un-enumerated rights; it just did not peremptorily “deny or disparage” any.

And what sense should we make of the crucial Amendment V one of the four Bills of Rights not actually containing the word “right” at all?

**“No person shall be** held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be **deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law**; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.” [Emphasis supplied]

Thus, life, liberty and property are *not* expressly granted status as fundamental “rights,” but only as personal possessions that may be deprived or taken according to “due process.” The crucial implication is that Amendment V exists *in order to stipulate how the government may deny* an individual claim to life, liberty or property. *With* due process, you life, liberty and property may be toast. That is what it plainly says.

It is interesting, too, that the Bill of Rights does not speak to the origin of rights, but only to their existence. Moreover, the Constitution never speaks of granting rights, but only protecting them. There is a good reason for this: excepting the Progressive suffrage Amendments, none of the guaranteed rights were American inventions, but had for centuries been considered the rights of the English nobility.

For those who want to believe in “American Exceptionalism” as the basis of “limited government,” this is not encouraging news. Moreover, the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, hardly includes any “right” that had not already been recognized at one time or another by medieval English monarchs or in ancient Rome and Greece.

### **Property Rights and ‘Republic’**

The strict libertarians among us claim the sole legitimate power of government is that which is necessary to protect private property rights. On this score, however, the “limited government” of the Founders is practically mute. Except for the aforementioned Article I, Section 8 provision for patents and copyrights, private “property” is only mentioned twice in the Constitution, both times in a single sentence of the “right”-less Amendment V quoted above:

“No person shall be deprived of life, liberty or **property** *without due process of*

law; nor shall private **property** be taken for public use, *without just compensation.*" [Emphasis supplied]

Once again, Amendment V fails to guarantee personal immunity from the power of the state, but rather details the way state power may be used to dispossess individuals of their property. And we must bear in mind these words were not penned by Marxists, socialists, or Progressives.

Whether by design or happenstance, the original "Constitution of the Founders," or the Bill of Rights, or even the Constitution with all its Amendments does not grant any irrevocable "right of possession" to property. Even the Second Amendment's "right to keep" arms, is subject to the terms by which property may be taken under terms of Amendment V, and it always has been.

Tellingly, the word "democracy" does not appear in the Constitution. This intentional oversight is often smugly celebrated by anti-democrats among us, who insist that the United States of America was founded as a "republic." No doubt this is true, given that the Constitution was written by an exclusive, hand-picked cadre of oligarchs, whose number did not include a single woman, person of color, or wage-earner.

Unfortunately for the pro-republic "limited government" crowd, the Constitution does not contain the word "republic" either. The word does appear as an adjective, but only once, (Article IV, Section 4): "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them from Invasion"

Typically for the Constitution, which defines few of its terms, the word "Republican" also remains unexplained. The ambiguity of the term turned out to be handy, however, as Radical Republicans continuously and egregiously violated Article IV, Sec. 4 from 1865-1877 as they enforced blatantly unconstitutional military occupation of former Confederate states during the gross misnomer of "Reconstruction."

It should be obvious that the "Constitution of our Founders," including the Bill of Rights, may not protect as many rights as many wish to believe. Moreover, we have already noted the Constitution dropped all revolutionary talk of "unalienable" rights and "Creator endowed" liberty. This was not an oversight.

The revolutionary bit about "consent of the governed" posed an especially delicate problem for the Founders. Almost all owned slaves or were masters of property-less tenants or domestic servants, including their wives none of whom could offer their legal consent even if they wished to do so. Thus the Founders shrewdly considered it unnecessary to include any voting rights in the new

republic they planned to rule, uncontested by the disenfranchised lower castes.

Did this result in the land of the free, with liberty and justice for all? Let's see.

Under the U.S. Constitution, Americans were sentenced to death for protesting unfair taxes; journalists and citizens imprisoned for criticizing government officials; citizens' property seized illegally; workers murdered by government agents; thousands jailed without the "privilege" of *habeas corpus*; entire states deprived of civilian courts; untold numbers of American Indians defrauded of liberty and property; debt-peonage and debtors' prisons flourished, as did slavery and child labor; and the majority of the public was denied the vote.

All this was considered constitutional by the Founders. None of these outrages, please note, was the result of "progressivism," which had yet to be articulated, and all were common prior to the New Deal and the advent of so-called Big Government. Was this the face of "limited government?"

No, it was not. The concept of a democratically "limited government" was not for a moment entertained by our Founders, nor is it by those who idolize them today. With few exceptions, the Founders were Eighteenth Century patricians who took a revolutionary gamble meant chiefly to perpetuate their privileges, free from English colonial overlordship. It should come as no surprise these elitists drafted a Constitution that posed no threat to aristocracy.

### **'Limited Government' as Act of Faith**

The original Constitution of the United States of America was just so much ink on paper. The Constitution, as it stands today, is just a lot more ink on paper.

But the Constitution's ink is important and deserves respect because it represents nothing less than the collective civic conscience of the American people. A great many Americans have dedicated their lives in trust to that conscience on battlefields, in classrooms, in everyday civic life, and even a few in the halls of power.

It is evident that most of the Amendments to the original Constitution as well as the Supreme Court's decisions interpreting its scope and purpose were made because the document had over the course of time been found wanting by the American people, whose common interests it was not originally intended to serve. As the collective civic conscience of the people changed, so too did their interpretation of self-government.

But the entire concept of social evolution (much less biological evolution) is something the ultra-Conservative rank-and-file likely does not comprehend and it

is not something their leaders encourage them to consider. The reason for this may have less to do with politics than with fundamentalist faith.

An anecdote in point: the editor-in-chief at Random House once asked the extremist libertarian Ayn Rand if she would consider revising a passage in one of her manuscripts. She reportedly replied, "Would you consider revising the Bible?"

Ergo, that which is sacrosanct neither requires nor will tolerate change to include the fantasized "limited government" of the immortalized "Founding Fathers." The fact that Rand was a noted atheist only underscores the point that fundamentalist faith is not restricted to any particular brand of fanaticism.

Yet the Constitution's conception was anything but immaculate. It was not carted down from the Mount in tablets of stone, nor is it the product of some mysterious Natural Law interpretable only by libertarian gurus. And whether its meaning is best exemplified by the Tea Party flag depicting a talking snake ("Don't Tread on Me"), perhaps only Eve could judge with authority.

The Constitution is not a holy book, and there is no good reason for anybody to treat it like one. The men who wrote it were not prophets, nor were they particularly virtuous, though some could turn a pretty phrase. In fact, the Constitution's most unholy-book characteristic is its most welcomed attribute: its readers are not required to believe in its infallibility in order for it to make sense to them.

But we are required to read the Constitution if we want to know what it says. The ultra-conservatives' obsession with a constitutionally "limited government," which has never actually existed, suggests they do not understand the Constitution as much as they merely idolize it.

These constitutional "fundamentalists" along with the American public in general would do better to pick the document up and read it sometime, not fall on bended knee before it and expect the rest of us to follow their example.

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# Toward a Rational US Strategy (Part 2)

**Special Report:** The ultimate madness of today's U.S. foreign policy is Official Washington's eager embrace of a new Cold War against Russia with the potential for nuclear annihilation. A rational strategy would seek alternatives to this return to big-power confrontation, writes ex-U.S. diplomat William R. Polk.

By William R. Polk

In [Part One](#), I dealt at length with America's relationship with "Lesser" or "Third World" powers because that is where we have been most active since the Second World War. I now turn to America's postwar rivalry with the other "Great" power, the Soviet Union, and offer some thoughts on our growing relationship with China.

For more than half a century, we and the Soviet Union were locked in the Cold War. During that time we were often on the brink of Hot War. We organized ourselves to fight it if necessary but we also created political alliances, economies and politico-military structures with the announced aim of avoiding war.

Thus we built such organizations as NATO, CENTO and SEATO, stationed much of our army abroad and manned thousands of bases around the world. We also recast much of our economy into the "military-industrial complex" to supply our overseas ventures.

Inevitably our efforts in foreign affairs upset traditional balances within our society. It is beyond my purpose here to describe the growth of "the National Security State" since the 1947 acts that established the governmental organs and profoundly altered universities, businesses and civic groups. Here I focus on the strategy that grew out of the Cold War and which is now returning to dominate our thought and action on China and shaping our action on the emerging alliance of China and Russia.

With shows of military force adjacent to major Russian bases, we have returned to the confrontation that marked the most dangerous Cold War episodes. [See *The New York Times*, Eric Schmitt & Steven Myers, "[U.S. Is Poised to Put Heavy Weaponry in Eastern Europe](#)," and *The Guardian*, Ewen MacAskill, "[Nato shows its teeth to Russia with elaborate Baltic training exercise](#)."].

The Cold War divided as much of the world as either the U.S. or USSR could control into what Nineteenth Century statesmen called "spheres of influence." Both great powers used their military, financial, commercial, diplomatic and

ideological power to dominate their “blocs.” Since neither side could establish precise and stable frontiers, each power built real or notional “walls” around its sphere, each probed into the sphere of the other and both competed for the favor of the uncommitted.

Spheres of influence, as earlier statesmen had discovered, require careful maintenance, are unstable and do not preclude hostilities. They are not a substitute for peace or security, but sometimes they have seemed to statesmen the most advantageous ways to manage foreign relations. It was the attempt to make the Soviet-American “frontier” more stable and lessen the chance of war that was the contribution of the pre-eminent American strategist, George Kennan.

### **Hedgehog vs. Fox**

George Kennan personified the hedgehog in an ancient Greek poem on the difference between the wise hedgehog and the cunning fox. Like the hedgehog, Kennan had one big idea “containment,” the strategy of the Cold War while all around him the “foxes” were chasing and arguing over tactics.

Kennan’s idea was that the Soviet drive for aggrandizement could be *contained* long enough that the state could evolve. Most of the foxes thought that the USSR should be “rolled back” and devised military means to do it. Some of them were prepared to go to nuclear war to accomplish that objective.

These were obviously major differences, but what is less obvious is that both Kennan and his critics thought of what they were doing as war: Kennan wanted it to be “colder” than the foxes, but he was prepared to engage in (and indeed personally designed and helped to implement) a variety of espionage “dirty tricks” that pushed relations between the U.S. and USSR close to “hot” war. Both he and the foxes aimed at American dominance.

When Kennan elaborated his ideas on containment rather than military conflict first in his 1946 Secret “Long Telegram” from Moscow and then anonymously in “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, they were considered heresy. The then “dean” of Washington columnists, Walter Lippmann, wrote a series of articles attacking them. [Originally in *New York Herald Tribune*, his articles then appeared in book form as *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (1947).]

Lippmann and the growing number of “big bomb” enthusiasts in government-funded “think tanks,” thought Kennan failed to understand the fundamental evil of the Soviet system and so was gambling with American security. The only answer, they felt, was military superiority.

Military superiority was the central idea in what became a long series of U.S.

national policy statements. (The latest being the February 2015 "National Security Strategy" of President Obama.) The first, and most influential, statement of it was "NSC 68" which was written by Kennan's successor as director of the Policy Planning Staff (as it was then known), Paul Nitze, and adopted by President Harry Truman as official policy. It called for a massive build-up of both conventional and nuclear arms.

Nitze castigated Kennan, writing, "Without superior aggregate military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of 'containment' which is in effect a policy of calculated and gradual coercion is no more than a policy of bluff."

McGeorge Bundy later commented in *Danger and Survival*, "NSC 68 took the gloomiest possible view of the prospect of any agreed and verifiable bilateral limitation" on weapons. It also "explicitly considered and rejected the proposal that George Kennan had put forward for a policy [of] no first use of nuclear weapons." [On Kennan's and Nitze's complex relationship reminiscent of that of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton – see Nicholas Thompson's *The Hawk and the Dove* (2009).]

NSC 68 provoked a massive Soviet nuclear weapons development. It also set off a limited (but then muted) debate within the American government. Willard Thorp, a noted government economist who had helped draft the Marshall Plan, pointed out that as measured by such criteria as the production of steel the total strength of the U.S. was about four times that of the USSR and that the current "gap is widening in our favor." In effect, he was saying the Cold War was mostly hype. [Willard Thorp. Memorandum to the Secretary of State: "Draft Report to the President," April 5, 1950].

### **Threatening War**

More wide-ranging was the critique of William Schaub, a senior official in the Bureau of the Budget. In a memorandum to the NSC, dated May 8, 1950, he pointed out that the almost exclusive military emphasis of NSC 68 would "be tantamount to notifying Russia that we intended to press war in the near future."

Moreover, he wrote, the policy "vastly underplays the role of economic and social change as a factor in the 'the underlying conflict.'" And, as a result of our focus on the Soviet threat, "We are being increasingly forced into associations [with Third World regimes] which are exceedingly strange for a people of our heritage and ideals."

So it was that Kennan, Lippmann, Nitze, Thorp and Schaub opened the door on the issue that would engage policymakers for the next half century. And dozens of would-be strategists rushed to enter.



But, before NSC 68 could be seriously discussed, on June 25, 1950, North Korean military forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and invaded South Korea. As Secretary of State Dean Acheson later remarked, Korea pre-empted discussion on American strategy. The argument over containment and superiority never ceased.

Discussion on American strategy, actually, had already been pre-empted. America had the bomb and most of the "Wise Men" (a term coined by McGeorge Bundy for the Cold War foreign policy "Establishment") in the upper reaches of government thought that threat of its use was the bedrock of American security because, as the American army faded away in 1945, it was evident that the Russians had overwhelming power in conventional forces. In military terms, the Cold War was already staked out.

The Cold War created a "need" for intelligence. From 1946, the U.S. Air Force was monitoring the borders of the USSR and its satellites. At first the Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed mounting probes, and the Soviet Union protested them. A compromise was reached with an implicit U.S.-USSR "gentleman's agreement" that restricted flights to no closer than 40 miles from borders.

Then in 1949 the Soviet Union exploded its first nuclear device and in November 1950 Chinese forces entered Korea. On Dec. 16, 1950, President Truman declared a state of National Emergency. Suddenly, gathering intelligence on Soviet capabilities, particularly on the presumed ability of the Soviet air force to attack the United States across Alaska, became insistent.

Truman immediately approved aerial penetrations of Siberia. The US had just acquired a new relatively fast, high-flying bomber, the B-47, that could be modified for the task. That was the first step in a lengthy game in which both Russian and American fighter planes intercepted, followed, photographed but usually did not attempt to shoot down each other's reconnaissance aircraft.

Usually, but not always. The first armed clash came, apparently, in 1949. In the following 11 years a dozen or more U.S. aircraft were shot down or crashed in or near the USSR. Neither side admitted their existence. Keen on "deniability," and so to avoid serious conflict, President Eisenhower asked the British to perform the mission.

But finally, the CIA ordered a new aircraft, the Lockheed jet-powered glider, the U-2, and had it flown by CIA pilots. It was the CIA contract pilot Gary Powers who flew the U-2 that was brought down over the USSR on May 1, 1960.

It was because of the U-2 and related communications intelligence that the United States developed its close relationships with Turkey and Pakistan. The relationship with Pakistan set the conditions for American aid and incidentally

determined the relationship with India. Without Congressional authorization, the CIA had entered into a deal with the government of Pakistan to create a base for the U-2 to overfly the USSR. [The National Security Archive, August 15, 2013, Jeffrey T. Richelson (ed.), "The Secret History of the U-2 and Area 51."]

### **Each Side's Fears**

At the time, Cold War strategy came into focus at the junction of Russian mass and American technology. Each side feared what the other side had and sought to counter it: the Russians pushed their powerful land forces up to the line in Europe while the Americans built sophisticated weapons like the ICBM and multiple warheads.

Few then believed that a balance could be reached short of the capacity to obliterate the world. All eyes were on military issues. And, at least on the American side, the aim was to achieve security by military superiority. That was the strategic advice of such cold warriors" as Thomas Schelling, Henry Kissinger, Albert Wohlstetter and Herman Kahn. [For their writings at the center of the Cold War period, see Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960), Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (1960), Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1969), Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 37, January 1959].

It took the Cuban Missile Crisis and the analyses of it that followed within the U.S. government to challenge the strategy of the Cold War. The crisis made clear that the quest for military superiority had reached a dead end. Pressing ahead with actions to overawe the Soviet Union were likely to destroy the entire world.

I have spelled out elsewhere the consequences of conflict, but since this is so important in any attempt to understand a conceivable American strategy and is, I fear, receding in memory, I will just mention here the key points:

Even the great advocate of thermonuclear weapons, Edward Teller, admitted that their use would "endanger the survival of man[kind]." The Russian nuclear scientist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Andrei Sakharov, laid out a view of the consequences in the Summer 1983 issue of *Foreign Affairs* as "a calamity of indescribable proportions."

More detail was assembled by a scientific study group convened by Carl Sagan and reviewed by 100 scientists. A graphic summary of their findings was published in the Winter 1983 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Sagan pointed out that since both major nuclear powers had targeted cities, casualties could reasonably be estimated at between "several hundred million to 1.1 billion people" with an

additional 1.1 billion people seriously injured.

Those figures related to the 1980s. Today, the cities have grown so the numbers would be far larger. Massive fires set off by the bombs would carry soot into the atmosphere, causing temperatures to fall to a level that would freeze ground to a depth of about 3 feet. Planting crops would be impossible and such food as was stored would probably be contaminated so the few survivors would starve.

The hundreds of millions of bodies of the dead could not be buried and would spread contagion. As the soot settled and the sun again became again visible, the destruction of the ozone layer would remove the protection from ultraviolet rays and so promote the mutation of pyrotoxins.

Diseases against which there were no immunities would spread. These would overwhelm not only the human survivors but, in the opinion of the expert panel of 40 distinguished biologists, would cause "species extinction" among both plants and animals. Indeed, there was a distinct possibility that "there might be no humansurvivors in the Northern Hemisphere ... and the possibility of the extinction of *Homo sapiens*..."

The Missile Crisis solidified my disagreements on strategy with both Kennan and Nitze. From my participation in the crisis as one of the three members of the Crisis Management Committee, I became convinced that the "option" of military confrontation in the age of nuclear weapons and ICBMs was not realistic. Armed confrontation was suicide. And, the "strategy of conflict," as laid out by Schelling, Kissinger, Wohlstetter and Kahn, was likely to cause it. That was the first conclusion.

My second conclusion was that both the "hedgehog" and the "foxes" that is both Kennan and the military-oriented strategists led by Nitze had misunderstood what *caused* war to actually break out. Because this may be absolutely crucial to avoiding stumbling into war, let me explain.

Basic to the American Cold War strategy was the belief that, regardless of the intelligence, politics or desire of whatever government it then had, in armed conflict America would be forced to fire its nuclear weapons because it did not have conventional forces adequate to stop an invading Russian army.

Knowing this, sensible Soviet leaders would "back off" from determined American challenges because they would realize that, as Schelling put it, "the option of nonfulfillment no longer exists." Moreover, Schelling and the Cold Warriors believed that because the Russians knew that even a limited retaliation would lead to their destruction, America could engage in "limited" nuclear strikes. In the war game Schelling designed, this was the assumption.

## All-Out Nuclear War

In Schelling's war game (to test what he had written in *The Strategy of Conflict* on limited war and reprisal) that was played out with access to all information the U.S. government had and involved only senior American officers, I was the political member of "Red Team." The game was played in the Pentagon and was classified Top Secret. It was taken very seriously, as it should have been, by our senior officials.

In Schelling's scenario, in a hypothesized crisis (following a coup in Iran) "Blue Team" obliterated Baku, killing about 200,000 people. How would Red Team respond? The chairman of our team, the then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Anderson, playing Chairman Khrushchev, asked me to recommend our response.

I replied that I saw three options: first, play tit-for-tat, destroying, say, Dallas. Limited nuclear war enthusiasts would presumably then expect the American president to go on television and say, "Fellow Americans, I am sorry to have to report to you that if you had relatives in Dallas ... they are gone. The Russians retaliated because we incinerated one of their cities. So now we're even. Now we'll just go back to the normal Cold War.'"

The team agreed that this was ridiculous. America would "re-retaliate"; the USSR would re-re-retaliate also and war would quickly become general. There was no stopping in a "limited war."

The second option was to do nothing. Was this feasible? We agreed that it would certainly have led to a military coup d'État in which the Soviet leadership would have been shot as traitors. Knowing this, they would have been unlikely to adopt that move. Even if they did, and were overthrown, that would not stop retaliation: the coup leaders would strike back.

So there remained only one option: general war. And only one feasible move: striking first with everything we had in the hope that we could disable our opponent. We signaled that we "fired" as many of Red Team's notional 27,000 nuclear weapons as we could deliver.

Schelling was shocked. He stopped the game and scheduled a post-mortem to discuss how we had "misplayed." The issue was serious, he said: if we were correct, he would have to give up the theory of deterrence, the very bedrock of the strategy of the Cold War. Why had we made such a foolish move?

In our meeting, I repeated our team's analysis: I emphasized that the fault in his (and America's) limited war strategy was that it failed to differentiate "interest of state" from "interest of government." Schelling and American military planners assumed that they were the same. They were not.

It was obviously better for the Soviet Union not to engage in a nuclear exchange, but to appear to knuckle under to an American threat would be suicide for the leaders. Nikita Khrushchev's backing down in the Missile Crisis was a rare and nearly fatal act of statesmanship. He could afford it for two key reasons: first, no missiles or other air strikes happened so that no Russians had to be avenged and, second, the Soviet civilian and military leaders all agreed (as they later confirmed to me when I lectured at the Institute of World Economy and International Affairs of the Soviet Academy) that they accepted the geostrategic reality: Cuba was in the American "zone." They had gone too far.

Still they did not forgive. His body was not buried in the Kremlin Wall as was done for other leaders. The reverse would also be true for our leaders.

My conclusion was that the idea of limited nuclear war was a recipe for general war; that the quest for supremacy was likely to lead to war; and, therefore, that the policy underlying the Cold War was unrealistic.

Obviously, those in a position to make the decisions did not agree. While limited and sporadic moves were made to ameliorate the U.S.-USSR relationship, particularly in the area of nuclear weapons, we continued to seek weapons superiority and political dominance.

### **Reagan's Escalation**

President Ronald Reagan escalated American weapons production with the aim of bankrupting the Soviet Union. Initially, the policy seemed to work. When the Soviet Union "imploded," Reagan was given the credit. His policy seemed to vindicate the hard-line policy proposed 40 years earlier by Paul Nitze in NSC 68.

We now know that the Soviet collapse was caused mainly by its "Vietnam," its disastrous nine-year war in Afghanistan that coincided with the Reagan administration. [This was the conclusion of British Ambassador to Russia Sir Rodric Braithwaite in *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-1989* (2010).] That cause was largely overlooked.

So the wrong lesson was taken into the administration of Reagan's successor, President George H.W. Bush. His advisers concluded that since the quest for military superiority worked, an even greater emphasis on it could be expected to work even better.

That assumption led to a far more radical approach to American foreign policy than had ever been contemplated. It was the program set out under the auspices of Under Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. (While it became known as the "Wolfowitz Doctrine," the "Defense Planning Guidance of 1992" was written by

Wolfowitz's fellow neoconservative, the Afghan-American Zalmay Khalilzad, with the help of neoconservatives Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Richard Perle and Albert Wohlstetter.)

The "Wolfowitz Doctrine," slightly toned down by Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell, set the tone for American policy for the next 20 years.

Taking advantage of Soviet weakness, the Wolfowitz Doctrine sought "to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival" and "to preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests" and to "discourage them [our European allies] from challenging our leadership."

If any of these challenges arose, the United States would preempt the challenge. It would intervene whenever and wherever it thought necessary. It particularly threatened the Russian government if it attempted to reintegrate such newly independent republics as Ukraine.

The Wolfowitz Doctrine, repackaged as the "National Security Strategy of the United States" was published on Sept. 20, 2002. It justified President George W. Bush's invasions of Afghanistan (for harboring Osama bin Laden) and Iraq (for allegedly building nuclear weapons). And, although it was not, of course, cited by the Obama administration, it laid the foundation for its policy toward Russia in Ukraine and explains some of the emerging policy of the American government toward China.

The attempt to use China against Russia, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's ploy, seemed to work, for a while, but has faded because both Russia and China realized that their immediate challenge came not from one another but from America.

Despite accommodations (as in Hong Kong), China is determined to realize at sea (in the southwest Pacific) and in international finance (with its establishment of a rival to the America-dominated World Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), its historic self-image as a major or even *the central* (Mandarin: *Zhongguo*) world power.

The Chinese policy confronts America with two choices: recognize and gradually accommodate the Chinese thrust into what it regards as its sphere of influence or try to thwart it. Early moves suggest that America will try, even militarily, to continue its established policy of blocking Chinese outward moves.

In short, it seems that we are at the beginning of a replay of the Soviet-American Cold War. But since history never exactly repeats, I will briefly consider the changes that are taking us into this new world.

## The Arena of World Affairs

The modern and future arena of international affairs is the whole world; so the template of international affairs is and will be composed of and interplay of geography, climate, resources, technology and population. Changes in each are unprecedented. Today, we are at the onset of a new revolution. The revolution is already creating a new world in which older concepts of strategy are becoming irrelevant.

While we are still powered by coal and oil, we are in a race to make the transition to wind and solar power before we do irreparable damage to the planet. Lester R. Brown et al, point out in *The Great Transition* (2015) that solar and wind power costs are falling rapidly so that they are becoming competitive with coal and that, among other costs of fossil fuels, the rise of sea levels already has dramatic effects on agriculture in Asia. Many scientists believe we may be too late and that we will suffer catastrophic changes in our climate.

Avoiding that fate has not yet led to effective international cooperation, but as rising seas and deteriorating climate become increasingly severe, and prevent us from producing food as readily and economically, states will be forced to cooperate. Population is also being altered in size and in kind.

People today are more politicized than ever before but are also more susceptible to manipulation by the increasingly controlled and concentrated media (in America, not only is the media increasingly concentrated under a few major corporations whose profits depend on advertising with the exception of National Public Radio but there is increasing evidence of self- and outside censorship. For one instance, see *The Nation*, James Carden, "[The crusade to ban Russia policy critics.](#)").

Populations of the advanced industrial states are aging while those of poorer areas are multiplying. Migrations of people from poorer areas are inevitable but are increasingly bitterly opposed in America and elsewhere.

Spread of disease by movement of peoples has been predicted to lead to pandemics. So far, advances in medicine and availability health care facilities have avoided the worst, but several diseases, including malaria, are still major killers in poorer areas and, in mutated form, could spread to even the rich North.

Our most critical resource, fresh water, is increasingly deficient. Drought already affects America, and attempts to overcome water shortage are flash points in relationships among countries in Africa and Asia.

Damming rivers in Central Asia as China is doing and in Kashmir as India is doing could be flashpoints for international conflict, while buying relatively well-watered lands in Africa, often corruptly, and evicting the inhabitants, as China and other countries are doing are likely to lead to popular resistance or guerrilla warfare.

What television began a generation ago has been multiplied by new forms of distribution of information. Even relatively poor people in remote areas have access beyond the imagination of even the rich and powerful a generation ago. Retrieval of information also allows far greater intrusion into the privacy of citizens and potentially control of them by governments. Cyberwar, a concept that hardly existed a few years ago, is a new arena of conflict among nations.

Projection of power is taking new forms. Armies are changing shape: large formations are passing and are being replaced by elite squads or special forces. Indeed, soldiers are being replaced by robots.

### **Spreading Nukes**

Nuclear weapons, once an American monopoly, seem likely to spread in the coming decade beyond the nine states known to have them, nations to the "nth country." As the war game I described above showed, any temptation to use them in "limited war" would be devastating for the whole world.

Particularly between Pakistan and India this is a clear and present danger. Elsewhere, especially in eastern Europe, the chances of accidents or "miscalculations" are ever present and perhaps rising. [See *The Guardian*, Ewen MacAskill, "[Nato to review nuclear weapon policy as attitude to Russia hardens.](#)"]

International trade will continue to grow but is likely to be increasingly controlled by governments; particularly in food grains, which are becoming harder to grow, governments cannot afford to allow market forces to control their ability to feed their citizens.

Monetary policy appears to be moving in the opposite direction. As the American economy is increasingly removed from supervision, concentration of wealth will continue and both the middle class and the poor will suffer. Cutbacks in social services and public works will increase the danger of a major turndown or even a depression. This could also affect foreign policy: it was, after all, the shift to a war economy that ended the Great Depression.

Under these pressures and trends, it seems to me likely that the need for more intelligent formulation of policy and more modest relations among peoples will become more urgent. The world of the future will arrive faster than we expect.



Change is inevitable but a wise policy will seek to make it as smooth as possible.

So, in this perhaps not so brave new world, what do we really want?

### **Fundamental Objectives of U.S. Foreign Policy**

The fundamental objective of American policy was clearly set out in the Foreword to the Constitution: "Establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure The Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

Put in less elegant terms, I suggest that the foreign affairs component of this fundamental objective is to achieve *affordable world security* in which we can pursue the good life and the "Blessings of Liberty."

When our Founding Fathers gathered in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, they were motivated and guided by fears of anarchy and tyranny. They sought a path between them in the Constitution they wrote: the Federal Government was to be strong enough to hold the Union together, but not so strong as to tyrannize the states that composed it. They regarded the United States as an experiment to find whether or not we could remain free and responsible participants in the management of our lives.

Since they assumed and hoped that we would live in a republic where the opinion of citizens has some ability to control government decision making, they believed, that to have a chance to combine liberty and responsibility, citizens needed to be educated. Enhancing the intellectual quality of our citizenry thus became essential in securing of "The Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

(By way of contrast, in Britain, the ignorance of the public made little difference since the aristocracy and the monarch made the decisions; in dictatorships like the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, the public had even less influence. The danger in a democracy is manipulation of the public through control of the media, unlimited financial intervention in politics and the belief that it has lost control. Despite bouts of public "activism," this sense is growing.)

Impressively well read in history, the authors of the Constitution saw militarism as the mother of tyranny. Their discussions make clear their fear of the ambition of leaders and manipulation of public sentiment. They wanted, above all, to prevent American government from copying European despots in the game of war. Thus, they specified that only in an actual attack on the United States was the president allowed to act independently. Otherwise, the legislature, speaking

with multiple voices and representing diverse local issues, had to be convinced of the need for military action.

The delegates recognized that foreign military adventures were the biggest threats to the republic they were founding. This was because war would create such insecurity at home as to undermine our way of life, diminish our sense of trust in one another, denigrate our civil liberties, undercut our respect for our social contract, the Constitution, and divert the fruit of our labor from "the general Welfare."

### **Operational Steps Toward Achieving Objectives**

Experience has shown that the Founding Fathers were right: it is in our foreign relations where the greatest danger to our overall objectives lies. So it is in foreign affairs where the need for a well-informed citizenry is greatest. But experience also shows that the public is subject to surges of emotion or "war fever" in which reason is overwhelmed. *Faulty perception* of danger has triggered moves that have threatened our "Domestic Tranquility."

So, a fundamental challenge is posed for us: how can we, the citizens, acquire sufficient reliable information, trustworthy analysis and objective opinion on which to form our judgment of government decisions.

Citizens need help in addressing such fundamental questions as 1) is there a sufficiently serious threat to American security that requires American response? 2) what are the kinds of response (diplomatic, military, legal, economic) that could be implemented? 3) how likely to be effective are the various possible responses? 4) how costly would each of those responses be? 5) are there alternative, non-American, means of solving the problem we identify? 6) does whatever seems to be the correct answer move toward a more secure, peaceful and productive world environment in which America participates?

For most citizens such questions are inscrutable. Not only do they lack knowledge and experience but they are not able to devote sufficient time to finding answers. Consequently, they are apt to answer with incomplete or biased information or by emotion.

In his farewell address, George Washington pointed to this danger. As he wrote, by allowing passion rather than knowledge or logic to set policy, "The peace often, sometimes perhaps the Liberty, of Nations has been the victim."

But, we have both personal and political experience in finding sensible answers. Whenever we face difficult problems, most of us seek advice. In matters of health and finance, for example, we seek the opinions of specialists who have the training and experience, and we try to guard against their having conflicts

of interest.

## **Concrete Proposals**

Here I suggest a way to apply our daily experience to public policy. It is to create a sort of foreign affairs ombudsman a council to provide information and advice for the public. There is precedent for this suggestion. Much of what I propose already exists:

Existing governmental information and analytical resources in foreign affairs are extensive. For over a century (since 1914), the American Congress has been advised by the Congressional Research Service. The CRS is an independent organization situated in the Library of Congress and is staffed by approximately 600 scholars who are recognized as expert in their various fields.

The President is advised on economic matters by the Council of Economic Advisers and on sundry other matters by the Office of Management and Budget whose predecessor organization was formed in 1921. It has a staff today of about 550.

The Secretary of State is advised by the Department's small but highly regarded Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Finally, the director of Central Intelligence is provided with an analysis of the "product" or "take" of the 17 American intelligence agencies by the National Intelligence Council which grew out of the Office of National Estimates that was founded in 1950.

What I propose is the creation of an independent institution, a National Commission, composed of a council of perhaps a dozen senior officers and a staff of perhaps 50 men and women who are expert in the various fields related to foreign affairs. Both groups would be chosen by carefully crafted criteria after a "peer review" and on the basis of their credentials.

They would be obligated by contract not to go to or return to business, law or professions related to foreign affairs but would be given some form of tenure and generous retirement and other benefits. The aim would be to assure their lack of any conflict of interest.

Their task would be to study and report in the public domain upon the fundamental questions on which citizens should be informed. So they would be empowered to demand information without delay or hindrance from all government sources, authorized to hold symposia, conferences and seminars and to commission outside studies and reports. They would also be afforded adequate means of reaching the public through, for example, National Public Radio, press releases, magazine articles, pamphlets and books.

Of course, it is probable that much of the public will not read these materials.

That is the worst case; the more likely result would be that they would set a standard which the Executive Branch, the Congress and the media would feel obliged to emulate; and the best case would be that the public education program would raise the level of citizen participation in matters of national importance.

Such an institution is not likely to be warmly welcomed by government officers, some of whom will see it as an intrusion on their "turf." Congressmen, however, will at least verbally approve it since many of their constituents will welcome its reports. And the media or at least working journalists will find it a source to be tapped and so a welcome aid to their work.

The experience of the Congressional Research Service and the Bureau of Management and Budget suggest that in proper political circumstances creation of such an organization is not impossible.

In addition to the National Commission, we should resurrect a modern version of the educational programs that were begun just after the Second World War. Undertaking them was spurred by a recognition that we needed both to know more about the world outside our frontiers and before our lifetimes.

Programs in General Education were organized at Harvard (under James Conant) and Chicago (under Robert Hutchins), gave birth to publications (inspired by Sumner Wells) and funded by the major foundations. They were partly followed by subsidies given to universities for teaching exotic languages. Some of these efforts need to be revived and better focused on national needs.

### **Do and Don't**

I turn now briefly to a few major points on what we should not do: We should not attempt to force other societies or nations to transform themselves into our image of ourselves; we should not impose upon other nations puppet regimes.

While we have a legitimate need for intelligence, we should ban espionage which has proven to be so detrimental to our national image and purpose. That is, we should not engage in "regime change" or "nation building" as is currently practiced.

And, we should not sell arms abroad. While we cannot suddenly abolish the military industrial complex, we can and should redirect the activities of our industry toward such domestic activities as fixing the thousands of dangerous and dilapidated bridges spanning our rivers, cleaning up our cities, engaging in massive reforestation, repairing or building schools, hospitals and other public facilities, repairing our roads and recreating a national high-speed rail network.

There is much to be done and we have the skills required to do it.

Lastly, I suggest a few points on what we should do: It is both in our long-term interests and in accord with our heritage to join and support the international legal system; we should financially support but generally not engage our troops in peace-seeking operations; we should continue our efforts to cut back, bilaterally, with Russia, nuclear weapons development and deployment and encourage other nations to move toward denuclearization; and we should support both American private and UN aid programs in the Third World.

In conclusion, we must come to terms with the reality that we live in a multicultural, multinational world. Our assertion of uniqueness, of unipower domination and of military power has been enormously expensive and has created a world reaction against us; in the period ahead it will become unsustainable and is likely to lead precisely to what we should not want to happen armed conflict.

Moderation, peace-seeking and open-mindedness need to become our national mottos.

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## Game of Chicken with Iran

In lock-step with Israeli hardliners, U.S. neocons continue their campaign to block a nuclear deal with Iran even if the tight restrictions would serve broad American interests and avert another Mideast war. That has left Secretary of State Kerry in a dangerous game of chicken, writes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

With the negotiations on Iran's nuclear program in its final days (and seven days of overtime having just been announced), a broken leg is not the most serious impairment to Secretary of State John Kerry's ability to conclude an agreement that will ensure Iran remains a non-nuclear-weapons state and advances U.S. interests in other respects.

The most serious impairment is the incessant urging by domestic critics that the U.S. administration should not show any of the flexibility that may be necessary to close the last few inches of the remaining gap between the parties and to avoid having the whole negotiating enterprise suffer a crashing failure.

The negotiations taking place in Vienna right now may be viewed as what game theorists call a game of chicken, named originally after the street competition in which daredevil hot-rodders speed toward each other to see who would swerve first.

The logical structure of the game theorists' chicken game is one in which a player who does not cooperate scores some sort of points over a player who does (i.e., who swerves, or concedes), but in which non-cooperation by both players results in the worst possible outcome for both (a crash, or a lack of agreement).

The vast majority of the distance that needed to be traveled to reach an agreement ensuring that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon has already been traveled. Most of that distance had been traveled by November 2013 with completion of the preliminary agreement known as the Joint Plan of Action, in which the United States and its negotiating partners attained the most important restrictions on, and monitoring of, the Iranian program. Most of the remaining distance was traveled by this April with the Lausanne framework agreement. What remains to be traveled is a very small part of the trip.

But what has already been accomplished will be lost if that last small gap is not closed. Indefinitely extending the Joint Plan of Action would be dandy for our side, but there is no reason to expect the Iranians to go along with that idea, given that they received only minimal sanctions relief in the JPOA in return for giving up most of what there was to give up regarding their nuclear program.

The JPOA has value to them as a way station toward a comprehensive agreement. And what was agreed to at Lausanne is formally only an outline that has no force until and unless the rest of the words get filled in.

The decision analysis that should be applied to the current negotiations involves weighing whatever advantage is to be had from getting our preference rather than the Iranians' preference on the remaining few points where brackets have to be removed and words still have to be written, against the risk of losing the whole arrangement, which would mean no enhanced inspections even of Iran's declared nuclear sites, no restrictions on the amount or level of uranium enrichment, no restrictions on plutonium-producing reactors, and all the rest.

Given what has already been accomplished in the negotiations, the possible reward from inflexibility is small, and the risk quite large. If a game theorist were to draw the customary matrix, with numbers representing the utility functions of each player, to describe today's bargaining situation, the box that represents "no agreement" would have large negative numbers while the numbers in the other boxes would show relatively little difference from one another.

And don't believe that failure to conclude the current negotiations would leave us some way of getting out of the "no agreement" box. The notion of being able to get a "better deal" by ripping up what already has been negotiated is just as much of a fantasy as it always has been, all the more so given that the Iranian foreign minister has his own recalcitrants and red-line-drawers to deal with.

Those urging the Obama administration to be inflexible continue their urging notwithstanding these realities. For example, Gary Samore, president of the anti-agreement pressure group United Against a Nuclear Iran, says "Don't make any more concessions to get a deal in early July. They need a deal more than we do."

That advice approaches the U.S. diplomatic task as if we were in some kind of contest to see who blinks first, rather than formulating a negotiating position based on a prudent weighing of risks and rewards.

And Senator Bob Corker tells the President he should consider "walking away" from a deal, as if such a decision would be as innocuous as a walk. Instead it would be a costly crash, as with the reckless street-racers playing chicken.

Because many of those who have talked loudest about not making more concessions really don't want *any* agreement with Iran, their personal utility functions look a lot different. For them, the "no agreement" box has positive rather than negative numbers.

But we should not let their agendas distort the nature of the risks and rewards at stake for the United States and for the cause of nuclear nonproliferation. We should hope they do not succeed in pressuring the administration into making the United States and nonproliferation big losers in the final stages of the game being played out in Vienna.

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# Gay Marriage and Western Muslims

The evolution of thought on gay marriage shows how religions can adapt to humanistic trends of society, but religious fundamentalists refuse to budge from ancient prejudices, a challenge confronting not only Judaism and Christianity but Islam, as ex-CIA officer Graham E. Fuller describes.

By Graham E. Fuller

Human sexuality has always been a deeply controversial social issue in all societies. So is religion. Put them together and you have a powerful emotional brew.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling last week legalizing gay marriage poses a new challenge to Islamic communities in the U.S. The same goes for Christian and Jewish communities as well, at least to their most conservative elements.

Religions throughout human history are the historical source of most morality and ethics, not easily overturned. Hostility to homosexuality, for example, is embedded in the Old Testament, was inherited into Christianity, and later into Islam by much the same process; all three essentially viewed it as an “abomination,” even though the practice is as old as mankind. In reality of course there is little that is “unnatural” in almost any aspect of human behavior, even when it is not mainstream.

With human evolution, however, humans have slowly come to perceive religion and the nature of the sacred in an evolving light; this is brilliantly discussed in Karen Armstrong’s study, *A History of God*, how thinking about the very nature of God has slowly changed.

And so religions over time have split on questions of the meaning of religion in society and the range of what should be prohibited. Such debates are still underway (even if often in secular guise) on issues of the degree of sanctity of marriage, divorce, abortion, minimal age of sexual permission, alcohol, drugs, incest and “out-of-wedlock” children. Every religion has both conservative and liberal wings interpreting these issues.

The public sphere and the private sphere can differ. Publicly, religion establishes norms (evolving later into more “secular” laws) that it imposes upon societies. Privately, there can be latitude for what one does behind closed doors. Homosexuality in private is thus usually ignored in reality, even when “illegal.”

Even a decade ago the U.S. military followed a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.



But the issue could not be any further ignored when gay couples sought, justifiably in my view, the right to marry. Yet that call moved the issue of homosexuality out of the private and into the public and legal sphere. Not surprisingly this raised serious concerns in many conservative circles.

The evolution of public opinion in North America on gay marriage has moved rapidly over the past few decades. (Canada legalized it ten years ago, in 2005. So did Spain.) It would seem that such change in thinking came about not so much from theological and moral debate, but much more from a human source: people's growing exposure to gay people, as friends, co-workers, and indeed, their own children. Acknowledgment of the existence of homosexuality is, of course, one thing an element of human sexuality since time immemorial; but acceptance of gay marriage a legal step is another.

But what brings about a shift on the *theological* level, where many religious communities have come to concur? A shift towards more liberal *theological* interpretations of homosexuality within Christian or Jewish communities over the past few decades has usually emerged from some kind of process of prioritizing "higher values" within the faith that transcend earlier prohibitions, often perceived as historically based.

In simplest form, in open multicultural societies liberal religious thinkers have come to lay greater emphasis on tolerance within society, the need to love, honor, respect and embrace all members of society rather than to seek out, condemn, reject or even punish minoritarian beliefs and practices.

The ultimate moment of truth comes of course when one's own children declare themselves gay. (Note even arch-conservative Dick Cheney's change when his daughter declared herself lesbian.) It is extremely difficult for most of us to accept our children in any way as "evil" (although there are many heartbreaking tales of some parents actually making that call.)

And so we come to perceive sexual orientation as the product of biological and psychological forces, not willful moral choices of non-standard behavior. Society then begins to realize that the gay portion of the human sexual spectrum is broader than it had earlier believed and must be addressed. And it becomes ever harder to judge the private behavior of consenting adults around us if it does no harm to others.

Nor does homophobia derive strictly from religious grounds. There are many quite unreligious homophobes who, in their social and psychological insecurity, fear, condemn and harass all differences in color, race and life-style while aggressively asserting their own macho "values."

Hollywood too, of course, has played a significant role in bringing awareness of gay life into the mainstream, hastening public acceptance of the phenomenon. The passage of time is also a factor in this evolution. Thus the Supreme Court decision this week might not have been thinkable in the U.S. ten years ago (although it obviously was in Canada.)

What about Muslims in the West? As in other areas of life, Muslims may find it a slower process in squaring acceptance of gay-life style and, even more, same-sex marriage with their own religious tradition. The situation is not dissimilar for Orthodox Jews, for whom the Torah explicitly condemns homosexuality (and Jewish law technically requires the death penalty for its practice.)

Nonetheless, *liberal* Judaism has risen above these theological strictures and reinterpreted them in new contexts of higher human values.

Western Jews have immensely influenced that evolution of thinking in Judaism overall. I suspect this will be the case with western Muslims as well. But Muslims have a vastly shorter history of life in the West where they struggle for acceptance on many levels. As in the history of most minorities experiencing some discrimination in the West, it's not just about religion: Muslims naturally strive to preserve some *socio-cultural solidarity* to preserve and protect the community.

Islam is not just a religion, but an identity. Starting to think critically about their own religion, a controversial act in any religion, is not an easy task for Muslims under these circumstances; critical questioning impacts on that solidarity.

But Muslims living and socialized in the West are inevitably pushed to accept the reality of gay life around them, among their co-workers, communities, and even where their children may eventually come out. Predictably most of their religious leaders, however, will largely uphold traditional Islamic theology on these issues, at least for a time, until the socialization process catches up, and we see more native-born American imams.

So just as the liberalization process has worked its way through liberal elements of both Christian and Jewish religious communities with time, so that moment will come among western Muslims as well.

As in many other ways as well, western Muslims are at the forefront of social, intellectual and even moral thinking within the Muslim world. This is the product of relative freedom of thought and life in the West. It is also the product of life in stable societies, not possible today in war-torn chaotic Middle Eastern countries clashing over questions of identity and authenticity.

Graham E. Fuller is a former senior CIA official, author of numerous books on the Muslim World; his latest book is *Breaking Faith: A novel of espionage and an American's crisis of conscience in Pakistan.* (Amazon, Kindle). [This article originally appeared at [grahamefuller.com](http://grahamefuller.com)]

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