

A Family Business of Perpetual War

Exclusive: Victoria Nuland and Robert Kagan have a great mom-and-pop business going. From the State Department, she generates wars and from op-ed pages he demands Congress buy more weapons. There's a pay-off, too, as grateful military contractors kick in money to think tanks where other Kagans work, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Neoconservative pundit Robert Kagan and his wife, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, run a remarkable family business: she has sparked a hot war in Ukraine and helped launch Cold War II with Russia and he steps in to demand that Congress jack up military spending so America can meet these new security threats.

This extraordinary husband-and-wife duo makes quite a one-two punch for the Military-Industrial Complex, an inside-outside team that creates the need for more military spending, applies political pressure to ensure higher appropriations, and watches as thankful weapons manufacturers lavish grants on like-minded hawkish Washington think tanks.

Not only does the broader community of neoconservatives stand to benefit but so do other members of the Kagan clan, including Robert's brother Frederick at the American Enterprise Institute and his wife Kimberly, who runs her own shop called the Institute for the Study of War.

Robert Kagan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution (which doesn't disclose details on its funders), used his prized perch on the Washington Post's op-ed page on Friday to bait Republicans into abandoning the sequester caps limiting the Pentagon's budget, which he calculated at about \$523 billion (apparently not counting extra war spending). Kagan called on the GOP legislators to add at least \$38 billion and preferably more like \$54 billion to \$117 billion:

"The fact that [advocates for more spending] face a steep uphill battle to get even that lower number passed by a Republican-controlled Congress says a lot, about Republican hypocrisy. Republicans may be full-throated in denouncing [President Barack] Obama for weakening the nation's security, yet when it comes to paying for the foreign policy that all their tough rhetoric implies, too many of them are nowhere to be found.

"The editorial writers and columnists who have been beating up Obama and cheering the Republicans need to tell those Republicans, and their own readers,

that national security costs money and that letters and speeches are worse than meaningless without it.

“It will annoy the part of the Republican base that wants to see the government shrink, loves the sequester and doesn’t care what it does to defense. But leadership occasionally means telling people what they don’t want to hear. Those who propose to lead the United States in the coming years, Republicans and Democrats, need to show what kind of political courage they have, right now, when the crucial budget decisions are being made.”

So, the way to show “courage” in Kagan’s view is to ladle ever more billions into the Military-Industrial Complex, thus putting money where the Republican mouths are regarding the need to “defend Ukraine” and resist “a bad nuclear deal with Iran.”

Yet, if it weren’t for Nuland’s efforts as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, the Ukraine crisis might not exist. A neocon holdover who advised Vice President Dick Cheney, Nuland gained promotions under former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and received backing, too, from current Secretary of State John Kerry.

Confirmed to her present job in September 2013, Nuland soon undertook an extraordinary effort to promote “regime change” in Ukraine. She personally urged on business leaders and political activists to challenge elected President Viktor Yanukovych. She reminded corporate executives that the United States had invested \$5 billion in their “European aspirations,” and she literally passed out cookies to anti-government protesters in Kiev’s Maidan square.

Working with other key neocons, including National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman and Sen. John McCain, Nuland made clear that the United States would back a “regime change” against Yanukovych, which grew more likely as neo-Nazi and other right-wing militias poured into Kiev from western Ukraine.

In early February 2014, Nuland discussed U.S.-desired changes with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt (himself a veteran of a “regime change” operation at the International Atomic Energy Agency, helping to install U.S. yes man Yukiya Amano as the director-general in 2009).

Nuland treated her proposed new line-up of Ukrainian officials as if she were trading baseball cards, casting aside some while valuing others. “Yats is the guy,” she said of her favorite Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

Disparaging the less aggressive European Union, she uttered “Fuck the EU” and brainstormed how she would “glue this thing” as Pyatt pondered how to “mid-wife this thing.” Their unsecure phone call was intercepted and leaked.

Ukraine's 'Regime Change'

The coup against Yanukovich played out on Feb. 22, 2014, as the neo-Nazi militias and other violent extremists overran government buildings forcing the president and other officials to flee for their lives. Nuland's State Department quickly declared the new regime "legitimate" and Yatsenyuk took over as prime minister.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had been presiding over the Winter Olympics at Sochi, was caught off-guard by the coup next door and held a crisis session to determine how to protect ethnic Russians and a Russian naval base in Crimea, leading to Crimea's secession from Ukraine and annexation by Russia a year ago.

Though there was no evidence that Putin had instigated the Ukraine crisis and indeed all the evidence indicated the opposite the State Department peddled a propaganda theme to the credulous mainstream U.S. news media about Putin having somehow orchestrated the situation in Ukraine so he could begin invading Europe. Former Secretary of State Clinton compared Putin to Adolf Hitler.

As the new Kiev government launched a brutal "anti-terrorism operation" to subdue an uprising among the large ethnic Russian populations of eastern and southern Ukraine, Nuland and other American neocons pushed for economic sanctions against Russia and demanded arms for the coup regime. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis.](#)"]

Amid the barrage of "information warfare" aimed at both the U.S. and world publics, a new Cold War took shape. Prominent neocons, including Nuland's husband Robert Kagan, a co-founder of the Project for the New American Century which masterminded the Iraq War, hammered home the domestic theme that Obama had shown himself to be "weak," thus inviting Putin's "aggression."

In May 2014, Kagan published a lengthy essay in *The New Republic* entitled "[Superpowers Don't Get to Retire,](#)" in which Kagan castigated Obama for failing to sustain American dominance in the world and demanding a more muscular U.S. posture toward adversaries.

According to a New York Times [article](#) about how the essay took shape and its aftermath, writer Jason Horowitz reported that Kagan and Nuland shared a common world view as well as professional ambitions, with Nuland editing Kagan's articles, including the one tearing down her ostensible boss.

Though Nuland wouldn't comment specifically on her husband's attack on Obama, she indicated that she held similar views. "But suffice to say," Nuland said, "that nothing goes out of the house that I don't think is worthy of his talents."

Let's put it that way."

Horowitz reported that Obama was so concerned about Kagan's assault that the President revised his commencement speech at West Point to deflect some of the criticism and invited Kagan to lunch at the White House, where one source told me that it was like "a meeting of equals." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Obama's True Foreign Policy 'Weakness.'](#)"]

Sinking a Peace Deal

And, whenever peace threatens to break out in Ukraine, Nuland jumps in to make sure that the interests of war are protected. Last month, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande hammered out a plan for a cease-fire and a political settlement, known as Minsk-2, prompting Nuland to engage in more behind-the-scenes maneuvering to sabotage the deal.

In another overheard conversation – in Munich, Germany – Nuland mocked the peace agreement as "Merkel's Moscow thing," according to the German newspaper *Bild*, citing unnamed sources, likely from the German government which may have bugged the conference room in the luxurious Bayerischer Hof hotel and then leaked the details.

Picking up on Nuland's contempt for Merkel, another U.S. official called the Minsk-2 deal the Europeans' "Moscow bullshit."

Nuland suggested that Merkel and Hollande cared only about the practical impact of the Ukraine war on Europe: "They're afraid of damage to their economy, counter-sanctions from Russia." According to the *Bild* story, Nuland also laid out a strategy for countering Merkel's diplomacy by using strident language to frame the Ukraine crisis.

"We can fight against the Europeans, we can fight with rhetoric against them," Nuland reportedly said.

NATO Commander Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove was quoted as saying that sending more weapons to the Ukrainian government would "raise the battlefield cost for Putin." Nuland interjected to the U.S. politicians present that "I'd strongly urge you to use the phrase 'defensive systems' that we would deliver to oppose Putin's 'offensive systems.'"

Nuland sounded determined to sink the Merkel-Hollande peace initiative even though it was arranged by two major U.S. allies and was blessed by President Obama. And, this week, the deal seems indeed to have been blown apart by Nuland's hand-picked Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, who inserted a poison pill into the legislation to implement the Minsk-2 political settlement.

The Ukrainian parliament in Kiev added a clause that, in effect, requires the rebels to first surrender and let the Ukrainian government organize elections before a federalized structure is determined. Minsk-2 had called for dialogue with the representatives of these rebellious eastern territories en route to elections and establishment of broad autonomy for the region.

Instead, reflecting Nuland's hard-line position, Kiev refused to talks with rebel leaders and insisted on establishing control over these territories before the process can move forward. If the legislation stands, the result will almost surely be a resumption of war between military forces backed by nuclear-armed Russia and the United States, a very dangerous development for the world. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Ukraine's Poison Pill for Peace Talks.](#)"]

Not only will the Ukrainian civil war resume but so will the Cold War between Washington and Moscow with lots of money to be made by the Military-Industrial Complex. On Friday, Nuland's husband, Robert Kagan, drove home that latter point in the neocon Washington Post.

The Payoff

But don't think that this unlocking of the U.S. taxpayers' wallets is just about this one couple. There will be plenty of money to be made by other neocon think-tankers all around Washington, including Frederick Kagan, who works for the right-wing American Enterprise Institute, and his wife, Kimberly, who runs her own think tank, the Institute for the Study of War [ISW].

According to ISW's annual reports, its original supporters were mostly right-wing foundations, such as the Smith-Richardson Foundation and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, but it was later backed by a host of national security contractors, including major ones like General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman and CACI, as well as lesser-known firms such as DynCorp International, which provided training for Afghan police, and Palantir, a technology company founded with the backing of the CIA's venture-capital arm, In-Q-Tel. Palantir supplied software to U.S. military intelligence in Afghanistan.

Since its founding in 2007, ISW has focused mostly on wars in the Middle East, especially Iraq and Afghanistan, including closely cooperating with Gen. David Petraeus when he commanded U.S. forces in those countries. However, more recently, ISW has begun reporting extensively on the civil war in Ukraine. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Neocons Guided Petraeus on Afghan War.](#)"]

In other words, the Family Kagan has almost a self-perpetuating, circular business model working the inside-corridors of government power to stimulate wars while simultaneously influencing the public debate through think-

tank reports and op-ed columns in favor of more military spending and then collecting grants and other funding from thankful military contractors.

To be fair, the Nuland-Kagan mom-and-pop shop is really only a microcosm of how the Military-Industrial Complex has worked for decades: think-tank analysts generate the reasons for military spending, the government bureaucrats implement the necessary war policies, and the military contractors make lots of money before kicking back some to the think tanks – so the bloody but profitable cycle can spin again.

The only thing that makes the Nuland-Kagan operation special perhaps is that the whole process is all in the family.

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

Neocons Guided Petraeus on Afghan War

From the Archive: Before Gen. David Petraeus was caught giving secrets to his biographer-mistress, he was giving special favors and access to influential neocons, one reason why Official Washington was so happy that he received only a hand-slap for his crime, ties that Robert Parry examined in 2012.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Dec. 19, 2012)

Even after the Iraq War disaster and Barack Obama's election in 2008, neoconservatives retained their influence over U.S. war policies in Afghanistan through their close ties to George W. Bush's national security holdovers, such as Gen. David Petraeus who partnered with neocon war hawks in escalating the Afghan War.

How tight Petraeus's relationship was with two neocons in particular, Frederick and Kimberly Kagan, was explored in [a Washington Post article](#) by war correspondent Rajiv Chandrasekaran who described how Petraeus installed the husband-and-wife team in U.S. offices in Kabul, granted them top-secret clearances and let them berate military officers about war strategy.

Though the Kagans received no pay from the U.S. government, they drew salaries from their respective think tanks which are supported by large corporations, including military contractors with interests in extending the Afghan War. Frederick Kagan works for the American Enterprise Institute, and Kimberly Kagan founded the Institute for the Study of War [ISW] in 2007 and is its current president.

According to ISW's 2011 annual report, its original supporters were mostly right-wing foundations, such as the Smith-Richardson Foundation and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, but it was later backed by national security contractors, including major ones like General Dynamics, Northrop Grumman and CACI, as well as lesser-known firms such as DynCorp International, which provides training for Afghan police, and Palantir, a technology company founded with the backing of the CIA's venture-capital arm, In-Q-Tel. Palantir supplies software to U.S. military intelligence in Afghanistan.

In her official bio at the ISW's Web site, Kimberly Kagan touts her work "in Kabul for fifteen months in 2010 and 2011 as a 'directed telescope' to General David H. Petraeus and subsequently General John Allen, working on special projects for these commanders of the International Security Assistance Force."

In the ISW's 2011 annual report, Petraeus praises Kagan as "a barracuda at some times," hails her leadership and poses with her for several photographs, including one in his dress uniform with the U.S. Capitol in the background.

The Post article noted that "For Kim Kagan, spending so many months away from research and advocacy work in Washington could have annoyed many donors to the Institute for the Study of War. But her major backers appear to have been pleased that she cultivated such close ties with Petraeus, who went from Kabul to head the CIA before resigning this fall over his affair with [biographer Paula] Broadwell.

"On Aug. 8, 2011, a month after he relinquished command in Afghanistan to take over at the CIA, Petraeus spoke at the institute's first 'President's Circle' dinner, where he accepted an award from Kim Kagan. 'What the Kagans do is they grade my work on a daily basis,' Petraeus said, prompting chortles from the audience. 'There's some suspicion that there's a hand up my back, and it makes my lips talk, and it's operated by one of the Doctors Kagan.'

"At the August 2011 dinner honoring Petraeus, Kagan thanked executives from two defense contractors who sit on her institute's corporate council, DynCorp International and CACI International. The event was sponsored by General Dynamics. All three firms have business interests in the Afghan war.

“Kagan told the audience that their funding allowed her to assist Petraeus. ‘The ability to have a 15-month deployment essentially in the service of those who needed some help, and the ability to go at a moment’s notice, that’s something you all have sponsored,’ she said.”

Earlier Warning Signs

Though the Post article provides new details about Petraeus’s coziness to Washington’s neocons, there have been warning signs about this relationship for several years. In 2010, I wrote articles describing how Petraeus and other holdovers from George W. Bush’s administration, such as Defense Secretary Robert Gates, had trapped the inexperienced Obama into expanding the Afghan War.

On Sept. 27, 2010, I noted that “after his solid victory in November 2008, Obama rebuffed recommendations from some national security experts that he clean house by installing a team more in line with his campaign pledge of ‘change you can believe in.’ He accepted instead the counsel of Establishment Democrats who warned against any disruption to the war-fighting hierarchy and who were especially supportive of keeping Gates.

“Before Obama’s decision to dispatch [an additional] 30,000 troops [in an Afghan War ‘surge’ in 2009], the Bush holdovers sought to hem in the President’s choices by working with allies in the Washington news media and in think tanks.

“For instance, early in 2009, Petraeus personally arranged for Max Boot [a neocon on the Council on Foreign Relations], Frederick Kagan and Kimberly Kagan to get extraordinary access during a trip to Afghanistan. Their access paid dividends for Petraeus when they penned a glowing report in the Weekly Standard about the prospects for success in Afghanistan if only President Obama sent more troops and committed the United States to stay in the war for the long haul.

“‘Fears of impending disaster are hard to sustain, if you actually spend some time in Afghanistan, as we did recently at the invitation of General David Petraeus, chief of U.S. Central Command,’ they wrote upon their return.

“‘Using helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and bone-jarring armored vehicles, we spent eight days traveling from the snow-capped peaks of Kunar province near the border with Pakistan in the east to the wind-blown deserts of Farah province in the west near the border with Iran. Along the way we talked with countless coalition soldiers, ranging from privates to a four-star general,’ the trio said.”

(Frederick Kagan is the brother of Robert Kagan, a co-founder of the neoconservative Project for the New American Century, which began the drive in 1998 for invading Iraq. Robert Kagan, now with the Brookings Institution and a

columnist for the Washington Post, is married to Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, who oversaw last year's coup in Ukraine. For more on the outsized influence of the Kagans, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Obama's True Foreign Policy 'Weakness.'](#)")

Trapping the President

How Obama was manipulated by Bush's holdovers with the help of the neocons was chronicled, too, in Bob Woodward's 2010 [book](#), *Obama's Wars*, which revealed that Bush's old team made sure Obama was given no option other than to escalate troop levels in Afghanistan. The Bush holdovers also lobbied for the troop increase behind Obama's back.

Woodward's book notes that "in September 2009, Petraeus called a Washington Post columnist to say that the war would be unsuccessful if the president held back on troops. Later that month, [Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Adm. Mike] Mullen repeated much the same sentiment in Senate testimony, and in October, [Gen. Stanley] McChrystal asserted in a speech in London that a scaled-back effort against Afghan terrorists would not work."

This back-door campaign infuriated Obama's aides, including White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, Woodward reported. "Filling his rant with expletives, Emanuel said, 'Between the chairman [Mullen] and Petraeus, everyone's come out and publicly endorsed the notion of more troops. The president hasn't even had a chance!'" Woodward reported.

According to Woodward's book, Gates, Petraeus and Mullen refused to even prepare an early-exit option that Obama had requested. Instead, they offered up only plans for their desired escalation of about 40,000 troops.

Woodward wrote: "For two exhausting months, [Obama] had been asking military advisers to give him a range of options for the war in Afghanistan. Instead, he felt that they were steering him toward one outcome and thwarting his search for an exit plan. He would later tell his White House aides that military leaders were 'really cooking this thing in the direction they wanted.'"

Woodward identified Gates, Petraeus and Mullen as "unrelenting advocates for 40,000 more troops and an expanded mission that seemed to have no clear end."

The Bush holdovers even resisted passing along a "hybrid" plan that came from outside their group, from Vice President Joe Biden who had worked with JCS vice chairman, Gen. James Cartwright. The plan envisioned a 20,000 troop increase and a more limited mission of hunting Taliban insurgents and training Afghan government forces.

Woodward reported, "When Mullen learned of the hybrid option, he didn't want to take it to Obama. 'We're not providing that,' he told Cartwright, a Marine known around the White House as Obama's favorite general. Cartwright objected. 'I'm just not in the business of withholding options,' he told Mullen. 'I have an oath, and when asked for advice I'm going to provide it.'"

Rigged War Game

Later, Obama told Gates and Mullen to present the hybrid option as one possibility, but instead the Bush holdovers sabotaged the idea by organizing a classified war game, code-named Poignant Vision, that some military insiders felt was rigged to discredit the hybrid option, Woodward reported.

According to Woodward's book, Petraeus cited the results of the war game to Obama at the Nov. 11, 2009, meeting as proof the hybrid option would fail, prompting a plaintive question from a disappointed President, "so, 20,000 is not really a viable option?" Without telling Obama about the limits of the war game, Mullen, Petraeus, Gates and then-field commander McChrystal asserted that the hybrid option would lead to mission failure.

"Okay," Obama said, "if you tell me that we can't do that, and you war-gamed it, I'll accept that," according to Woodward's book.

Faced with this resistance from the Bush holdovers and unaware that their war game may have been fixed Obama finally devised his own option that gave Gates, Petraeus and Mullen most of what they wanted 30,000 additional troops on top of the 21,000 that Obama had dispatched shortly after taking office.

Obama did try to bind the Pentagon to a more limited commitment to Afghanistan, including setting a date of July 2011 for the beginning of a U.S. drawdown. Though Obama required all the key participants to sign off on his compromise, it soon became clear that the Bush holdovers had no intention to comply, Woodward reported.

Backstabbing

The incoming Obama administration was warned of this possibility of backstabbing by Gates, Petraeus and other Bush appointees when it was lining up personnel for national security jobs.

As I wrote in November 2008, "if Obama does keep Gates on, the new President will be employing someone who embodies many of the worst elements of U.S. national security policy over the past three decades, including responsibility for what Obama himself has fingered as a chief concern, 'politicized intelligence.' It was Gates as a senior CIA official in the 1980s who broke the

back of the CIA analytical division's commitment to objective intelligence."

More than any CIA official, Gates was responsible for the agency's failure to detect the collapse of the Soviet Union, in large part because Gates had ridden roughshod over the CIA analysts on behalf of the Reagan administration's desire to justify a massive military buildup by stressing Soviet ascendance and ignoring evidence of its disintegration.

As chief of the CIA's analytical division and then deputy CIA director, Gates promoted pliable CIA careerists to top positions, while analysts with an independent streak were sidelined or pushed out of the agency.

"In the mid-1980s, the three senior [Soviet division] office managers who actually anticipated the decline of the Soviet Union and Moscow's interest in closer relations with the United States were demoted," wrote longtime CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman in his book, *Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA.*

Instead of heeding these warnings, Obama's team listened to Establishment Democrats like former Rep. Lee Hamilton and former Sen. David Boren, who were big fans of Gates. [For more on Gates's role, see Robert Parry's *America's Stolen Narrative.*]

Petraeus was much the same story. A favorite of Official Washington and especially the influential neocons, he was credited with supposedly winning the war in Iraq by implementing the "surge" in 2007, which was advocated strongly by Frederick Kagan and other key neocons.

However, in reality, all Petraeus did was extend that misguided war for another few years at the cost of nearly 1,000 more U.S. dead and countless more dead Iraqis thus giving President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney time to get out of Washington before the ultimate failure of the mission became obvious. The last U.S. troops were forced to leave Iraq at the end of 2011.

Begging Boot

Petraeus had such close ties to the neocons that he relied on them to pull him out of difficult political spots. In one embarrassing example in 2010, e-mails surfaced showing the four-star general groveling before Max Boot, seeking the neocon pundit's help heading off a controversy over Petraeus's prepared testimony to Congress which contained a mild criticism of Israel.

The e-mails from Petraeus to Boot revealed Petraeus renouncing his own congressional testimony in March 2010 because it included the observation that "the enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present

distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests” in the Middle East.

Petraeus’s testimony continued, “Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support.”

Though the testimony was obviously true, many neocons regard any suggestion that Israeli intransigence on Palestinian peace talks contributed to the dangers faced by American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan or by the U.S. public from acts of terrorism at home as a “blood libel” against Israel.

So, when Petraeus’s testimony began getting traction on the Internet, the general turned to Boot at the high-powered Council on Foreign Relations, and began backtracking on the testimony. “As you know, I didn’t say that,” Petraeus said, according to one e-mail to Boot timed off at 2:27 p.m., March 18. “It’s in a written submission for the record.”

In other words, Petraeus was saying the comments were only in his formal testimony submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee and were not repeated by him in his brief oral opening statement. However, written testimony is treated as part of the official record at congressional hearings with no meaningful distinction from oral testimony.

In another e-mail, as Petraeus solicited Boot’s help in tamping down any controversy over the Israeli remarks, the general ended the message with a military “Roger” and a sideways happy face, made from a colon, a dash and a closed parenthesis, “:-)”).

The e-mails were made public by James Morris, who runs a Web site called “[Neocon Zionist Threat to America](#).” He said he apparently got them by accident when he sent a March 19 e-mail congratulating Petraeus for his testimony and Petraeus responded by forwarding one of Boot’s blog posts that knocked down the story of the general’s implicit criticism of Israel.

Petraeus forwarded Boot’s blog item, entitled “A Lie: David Petraeus, Anti-Israel,” which had been posted at the Commentary magazine site at 3:11 p.m. on March 18. However, Petraeus apparently forgot to delete some of the other exchanges between him and Boot at the bottom of the e-mail.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush

Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

Gen. Petraeus: Too Big to Jail

Exclusive: While lesser Americans face years in jail for leaking secrets even to inform fellow citizens of government abuses retired Gen. David Petraeus gets a misdemeanor wrist-slap for exposing covert officers and lying about it, says ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern, who was jailed just [for trying to ask Petraeus a question](#).

By Ray McGovern

The leniency shown former CIA Director (and retired General) David Petraeus by the Justice Department in sparing him prison time for the serious crimes that he has committed puts him in the same preferential, immune-from-incarceration category as those running the financial institutions of Wall Street, where, incidentally, Petraeus now makes millions. By contrast, “lesser” folks and particularly the brave men and women who disclose government crimes get to serve time, even decades, in jail.

Petraeus is now a partner at KKR, a firm specializing in large leveraged buyouts, and his hand-slap guilty plea to a misdemeanor for mishandling government secrets should not interfere with his continued service at the firm. KKR's founders originally worked at Bear Stearns, the institution that failed in early 2008 at the beginning of the meltdown of the investment banking industry later that year.

Despite manifestly corrupt practices like those of subprime mortgage lenders, none of those responsible went to jail after the 2008-09 financial collapse which cost millions of Americans their jobs and homes. The bailed-out banks were judged “too big to fail” and the bankers “too big to jail.”

Two years ago, in a highly revealing slip of the tongue, Attorney General Eric Holder explained to Congress that it can “become difficult” to prosecute major financial institutions because they are so large that a criminal charge could pose a threat to the economy or perhaps what he meant was an even bigger threat to the economy.

Holder tried to walk back his unintended slip into honesty a year later, claiming, “There is no such thing as ‘too big to jail.’” And this bromide was

dutifully echoed by Holder's likely successor, Loretta Lynch, at her confirmation hearing in late January.

Words, though, are cheap. The proof is in the pudding. It remains true that not one of the crooked bankers or investment advisers who inflicted untold misery on ordinary people, gambling away much of their life savings, has been jailed. Not one.

And now Petraeus, who gave his biographer/mistress access to some of the nation's most sensitive secrets and then lied about it to the FBI, has also been shown to be too big to jail. Perhaps Holder decided it would be a gentlemanly thing to do on his way out of office to take this awkward issue off Lynch's initial to-do list and spare her the embarrassment of demonstrating once again that equality under the law has become a mirage; that not only big banks, but also big shots like Petraeus who was Official Washington's most beloved general before becoming CIA director are, in fact, too big to jail.

It strikes me, in a way, as fitting that even on his way out the door, Eric Holder would not miss the opportunity to demonstrate his propensity for giving hypocrisy a bad name.

A Slap on Wrist for Serious Crimes

The Justice Department let David Petraeus cop a plea after requiring him to admit that he had shared with his biographer/mistress eight black notebooks containing highly classified information and then lied about it to FBI investigators. Serious crimes? The following quotes are excerpted from "U.S. v. David Howell Petraeus: Factual Basis in support of the Plea Agreement" offered by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Charlotte Division:

"17. During his tenure as Commander of ISAF in Afghanistan, defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS maintained bound, five-by-eight-inch notebooks that contained his daily schedule and classified and unclassified notes he took during official meetings, conferences, and briefings. ... A total of eight such books (hereinafter the "Black Books") encompassed the period of defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS'S ISAF [Afghanistan] command and collectively contained classified information regarding **the identities of covert officers**, war strategy, intelligence capabilities and mechanisms, diplomatic discussions, quotes and deliberative discussions from high-level National Security Council meetings, and defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS's discussions with the President of the United States of America. [emphasis added]

"18. The Black Books contained national defense information, including Top

Secret//SCI and code word information.”

Despite the sensitivity of the notebooks and existing law and regulations, Petraeus did not surrender them to proper custody when he returned to the U.S. after being nominated to become the Director of the CIA. According to the Court’s “Factual Basis,” Petraeus’s biographer/mistress recorded a conversation of Aug. 4, 2011, in which she asks about the “Black Books.” The Court statement continues:

“ [Petraeus] ‘Umm, well, they’re really I mean they are highly classified, some of them. ... I mean there’s code word stuff in there.’ ... On or about August 27, 2011, defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS sent an email to his biographer in which he agreed to provide the Black Books to his biographer. ... **On or about August 28, 2011, defendant DAVID HOWEL PETRAEUS delivered the Black Books to a private residence in Washington, D.C. where his biographer was staying. ... On or about September 1, 2011, defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS retrieved the Black Books from the D.C. private residence and returned them to his own Arlington, Virginia home.**” [emphasis added]

I would think it a safe guess that Petraeus’s timing can be attributed to his awareness that his privacy and freedom of movement was about to be greatly diminished, once his CIA personal security detail started keeping close track of him from his first day on the job as CIA Director, Sept. 6, 2011.

“32. On or about October 26, 2012, defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS was interviewed by two FBI special agents. ... [He] was advised that the special agents were conducting a criminal investigation. ... PETRAEUS stated that (a) he had never provided any classified information to his biographer, and (b) he had never facilitated the provision of classified information to his biographer. **These statements were false.** Defendant DAVID HOWELL PETRAEUS then and there knew that he previously shared the Black Books with his biographer.” [emphasis added]

Lying to the FBI? No problem. As “Expose Facts” blogger Marcy Wheeler immediately commented: “For lying to the FBI a crime that others go to prison for for months and years Petraeus will just get a two point enhancement on his sentencing guidelines. **The Department of Justice basically completely wiped out the crime of covering up his crime of leaking some of the country’s most sensitive secrets to his mistress.**” [emphasis added]

Talk about “prosecutorial discretion” or, in this case, indiscretion giving Petraeus a fine and probation but no felony conviction or prison time for what he did! Lesser lights are not so fortunate. Just ask Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning who is serving a 35-year prison sentence for disclosing information to

the public about U.S. war crimes and other abuses. Or Edward Snowden, who is stuck in Russia facing a U.S. indictment on espionage charges for informing the people about pervasive and unconstitutional U.S. government surveillance of common citizens.

Or former CIA officer John Kiriakou who was sent to prison for inadvertently revealing the name of one Agency official cognizant of CIA torture. Here's what Neil MacBride, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, said then: "The government has a vital interest in protecting the identities of those involved in covert operations. Leaks of highly sensitive, closely held and classified information compromise national security and can put individual lives in danger."

When, on Oct. 23, 2012, Kiriakou acquiesced to a plea deal requiring two-and-a-half years in federal prison, then CIA Director Petraeus sent a sanctimonious Memorandum to Agency employees applauding Kiriakou's conviction and noting, "It marks an important victory for our agency ... **there are indeed consequences for those who believe they are above the laws that protect our fellow officers and enable American intelligence agencies to operate with the requisite degree of secrecy.**" [emphasis added]

Consequences for Kiriakou but not, as we now know, for Petraeus.

If you feel no discomfort at this selective application of the law, you might wish to scroll or page back to the "Factual Basis" for Petraeus's Plea Agreement and be reminded that it was just three days after his lecture to CIA employees about the sanctity of protecting the identity of covert agents that Petraeus lied to FBI investigators on Oct. 26, 2012 about his sharing such details with his mistress.

Why Did Petraeus Do It?

Old soldiers like Petraeus (indeed, most aging but still ambitious men) have been known to end up doing self-destructive things by letting themselves be flattered by the attentions of younger women. This may offer a partial explanation human weakness even in a self-styled larger-than-life super-Mensch. But I see the motivation as mostly vainglory. (The two are not mutually exclusive, of course.)

Looking back at Petraeus's record of overweening ambition, it seems likely he was motivated first and foremost by a desire to ensure that his biographer would be able to extract from the notebooks some juicy morsels he may not have remembered to tell her about. This might enhance his profile as Warrior-Scholar-"King David," the image that he has assiduously cultivated and promoted, with

the help of an adulating neocon-dominated media.

Petraeus's presidential ambitions have been an open secret. And with his copping a plea to a misdemeanor, his "rehabilitation" seems to have already begun. He has told friends that he would like to serve again in government and they immediately relayed that bright hope to the media.

Sen. John McCain was quick to call the whole matter "closed." A strong supporter of Petraeus, McCain added this fulsome praise: "At a time of grave security challenges around the world, I hope that General Petraeus will continue to provide his outstanding service and leadership to our nation, as he has throughout his distinguished career."

And Michael O'Hanlon, Brookings' neocon military specialist who rarely gets anything right, spoke true to form to the New York Times: "The broader nation needs his advice, and I think it's been evident that people still want to hear from him. ... People are forgiving and I know he made a mistake. But he's also a national hero and a national treasure."

The "mainstream media" is trapped in its undeserved adulation for Petraeus's "heroism." It is virtually impossible, for example, for them to acknowledge that his ballyhooed, official-handout-based "success" in training and equipping tens of thousands of crack Iraqi troops was given the lie when those same troops ran away (the officers took helicopters) and left their weapons behind at the first sight of ISIL fighters a year ago.

Equally sham were media claims of the "success" for the "surges" of 30,000 troops sent into Iraq (2007) and 33,000 into Afghanistan (2009). Each "surge" squandered the lives of about 1,000 U.S. troops for nothing yes, nothing except in the case of Iraq buying time for President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney to get out of town without a clear-cut defeat hanging around their necks.

Many of the supposed successes of Petraeus's Iraqi "surge" also predated the "surge," including a high-tech program for killing top militants such as Al-Qaeda-in-Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the formation of the so-called Sunni Awakening, both occurring in 2006 under the previous field commanders. And, Bush's principal goal of the "surge" to create political space for a fuller Sunni-Shiite reconciliation was never accomplished. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["The Surge Myth's Deadly Result."](#)]

And last, it is important to note that David Petraeus does not have a corner on the above-the-law attitudes and behavior of previous directors of the CIA. The kid-gloves treatment he has been accorded, however, will increase chances that

future directors will feel they can misbehave seriously and suffer no serious personal consequence.

The virtual immunity enjoyed by the well connected even when they lie to the FBI or tell whoppers in sworn testimony to Congress (as Director of National Intelligence James Clapper has done) feeds the propensity to prioritize one's own personal ambition and to delegate a back seat to legitimate national security concerns even basic things like giving required protection to properly classified information, including the identity of covert officers.

One might call this all-too-common syndrome Self-Aggrandizing Dismissiveness (SAD). Sadly, Petraeus is merely the latest exemplar of the SAD syndrome. The unbridled ambitions of some of his predecessors at CIA the arrogant John Deutch, for example have been equally noxious and destructive. But we'll leave that for the next chapter.

Full Disclosure: Petraeus has not yet answered McGovern's letter of Feb. 3 regarding why McGovern was barred from a public speaking event by Petraeus in New York City on Oct. 30, 2014, and then was roughly arrested by police and jailed for the night. McGovern wonders if Petraeus failed to respond because he was pre-occupied working out his Plea Agreement.

Ray McGovern worked for a total of 27 years in all four of CIA's main directorates. He served under seven Presidents and nine CIA Directors, and is co-founder of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPs). He now works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington.

Americans Catching a New War Fever

The U.S. media/political elites are again riling up the American people about threats abroad, whether it's the hysterical reporting about Russia or the sensationalistic coverage of Islamic State atrocities. The results are showing with more Americans favoring more war, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

The current U.S. administration has wrapped up U.S. involvement in a mistaken war in Iraq (albeit on a schedule set by the previous administration, and with subsequent reintroduction of some U.S. military personnel into Iraq), has wound down U.S. involvement in a war in Afghanistan that had metamorphosed from a

counterterrorist operation into a nation-building attempt (albeit only after an Obama-era “surge” and now with apparent second thoughts about how much longer the 13-year-old U.S. military involvement will continue), and has resisted pressure to throw U.S. troops into the civil war in Syria (albeit while employing other forms of U.S. military involvement, including airstrikes).

The general direction of the administration’s policies (though not some of the exceptions and detours) has been sound in terms of both the proper criteria for expending American blood and treasure and the effectiveness, or limitations thereof, of applying U.S. military force in internal conflicts such as the ones in those lands.

Some observers would say that this overall direction also has been good politics given the lack of enthusiasm of the American public, still feeling some effects of an Iraq War syndrome, for getting involved any time soon in anything that could be described as, in the legally fuzzy but politically relevant term in the administration’s draft authorization for use of military force against ISIS, “enduring offensive ground combat operations.”

That last element may be changing. A just-released poll of American opinion by the Pew Research Center shows a significant shift in the last few months in favor of more extensive use of military force against ISIS. A question asked in October 2014 about possible use of ground forces against the group showed 39 percent in favor and 55 percent opposed. The same question in February 2015 showed an almost even split: 47 percent in favor and 49 percent opposed.

There have been comparable shifts over the past year in responses to questions about support for the overall campaign against ISIS and about the best approach to “defeating global terrorism.” On that last question, those saying “using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism” rose from 37 percent in March 2014 to 47 percent in February 2015. Those saying that “relying too much on military force to defeat terrorism creates hatred and more terrorism” decreased from 57 percent to 46 percent.

Several patterns in American public attitudes toward, and hence also in the political handling of, use of military force are at work in the views recorded by such polls, and have been displayed repeatedly in the past. One is that sentiments, either for or against use of military force, fade over time as whatever gave rise to the sentiment recedes farther into the past. There is regression toward the mean. This is true of militancy-stoking events, but it also is true of war-avoiding syndromes following failed wars.

Also at work is a heavy dose of emotion, usually embracing anger as well as fear, associated with the militancy-stoking events but also resting on beliefs

that such events signify some broader threat. Probably the most glaring example is the American public response to the 9/11 terrorist attack, which involved an abrupt upward surge in militancy and in the willingness of the American public to use military force.

The emotion concentrated on that one event was associated in the public mind with a broader perceived terrorist threat against the United States. The slide of the United States into the Vietnam War featured specific emotion-arousing incidents such as attacks (or supposed attacks) against U.S. warships in the Gulf of Tonkin, seen as manifestations of a larger Communist threat against U.S. interests.

Today ISIS arouses emotions especially with its grisly killings of captives, including Americans and other Westerners. There is again a popular perception of a connection with broader and more direct threats against the West and the United States.

The significant shift over the past four months in sentiment about use of force against ISIS is probably connected to high-profile attacks in Western cities that, even though there may be little or no organizational connection to the ISIS that is waging war in Iraq and Syria, have been seen in the American public mind as all part of the same threat, and a threat to which the United States is vulnerable. Polling five months ago was already showing a large majority of Americans believing that ISIS had resources in place to conduct attacks within the United States.

Another mechanism in play is a classic form of the slippery slope, in which even a small degree of commitment to some objective overseas leads incrementally to larger commitments of resources on behalf of the same objective. The main decisions of the Johnson administration in the mid-1960s to escalate in a big way in Vietnam were based directly on the positing of the objective during the Kennedy administration of keeping South Vietnam non-Communist.

The makers of the Iraq War in the George W. Bush administration were able to point to legislation signed by President Clinton that declared regime change in Iraq to be a U.S. policy objective, and to ask whether the United States was going to act to realize that objective. Besides the sheer slipperiness of such slopes, there also is commonly invoked the argument, however invalid, that U.S. credibility would suffer if the United States were to back away from any such objectives or perceived objectives.

Finally, not least important, partisanship and fears of domestic political losses often are a major factor. When Lyndon Johnson was deciding how to respond to the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 he was running for his own presidential

term against Barry Goldwater, who was beating the drums about Vietnam, criticizing the President (in Goldwater's acceptance speech at the Republican convention) for not clearly indicating "whether or not the objective over there is victory," and saying, "I needn't remind you, but I will, it has been during Democratic years that a billion persons were cast into Communist captivity and their fates cynically sealed."

And now, Republican presidential contenders see a push for more extensive U.S. military involvement against ISIS as an opportune, or maybe even a necessary, campaign strategy.

As Jonathan Martin and Jeremy Peters write in the *New York Times*, this tack "is a tacit acknowledgment by Republicans that, with the economy improving, they need another issue to distinguish themselves from Democrats. And it offers them a way to link former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to President Obama on an issue where the president's approval ratings are weakening."

Note that none of these factors shaping popular sentiment, and its reflection in what the political class says, are ingredients in sound foreign policy. They are instead a matter of popular inattention, public emotion, the hazards of incremental decision-making, and partisan politicking. Such things have led the United States in the past into bad, costly policies overseas, and they could do so again.

Note also that the American public doesn't seek long, costly wars. Americans just think, mistakenly as it has sometimes turned out, that uses of military force they do favor will be short and not all that costly. The pollster John Zogby notes that although public support for use of military force against terrorists was quite high in the wake of 9/11, the degree of support went down precipitously if the question projected a duration of the use of military force extending beyond a couple of years.

A lesson is to be very careful in the early stages of an overseas commitment, keeping in mind that it could be the first part of a slippery slope even if it is not immediately recognizable as such, and to eschew objectives the pursuit of which could become much costlier in the future than they are so far.

Some past disasters might have been averted near the beginning of the slide if this sort of thinking had prevailed. This would have meant avoiding, two or three years before Johnson escalated the country into what we know as the Vietnam War, any declaration that Communist unification of Vietnam was a major U.S. objective. It also would have meant not enshrining as the law of the land in the 1990s an objective of regime change in Iraq.

The poll results about growing public support for use of ground troops against ISIS are an indication that we may again be on the first part of a slide into a larger war. We might not go far down the slide during the remainder of Barack Obama's term, but that guarantees nothing about what will subsequently happen regarding U.S. involvement in Iraq and Syria.

Although it is possible that ISIS will flame out by then, that isn't guaranteed either. The civil war in Syria in particular seems likely to be long-lasting. And even if ISIS isn't generating as much fear a couple of years ago as it is now, we no doubt will hear reminders about how removal of the Assad regime was supposedly a U.S. objective too.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

A Pointed Letter to Gen. Petraeus

Exclusive: As retired Gen. and ex-CIA Director David Petraeus was about to speak in New York City last Oct. 30, someone decided to spare the "great man" from impertinent questions, so ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern was barred, arrested and brought to trial, prompting McGovern to ask some questions now in an open letter.

Dear Gen. David Petraeus,

As I prepare to appear in New York City Criminal Court on Wednesday facing charges of "criminal trespass" and "resisting arrest," it struck me that we have something in common besides being former Army officers and the fact that the charges against me resulted from my trying to attend a speech that you were giving, from which I was barred. As I understand it, you, too, may have to defend yourself in Court someday in the future.

You might call me a dreamer, but I'm not the only one who believes there may be some substance to reports last month that Justice Department prosecutors are pressing to indict you for mishandling classified information by giving it to Paula Broadwell, your mistress/biographer.

No doubt, whatever indiscretions were involved there seemed minor at the time, but unauthorized leaks of this sort – to casual acquaintances – were strongly

discouraged in the Army in which I served five decades ago. Remember the old saying: "Loose lips sink ships." There were also rules in the Universal Code of Military Justice for punishing a married soldier who took up with a mistress, an offense for which many a trooper spent time in the brig.

Yet, I don't imagine there is much sweat on your brow regarding legal consequences for either offense. And you may be correct in assuming that, just as the Army looked the other way about the mistress indiscretion, our timorous Attorney General Eric Holder or his successor will likely do the same on any disclosure of classified information. Some influential members of Congress and various Washington talking heads have already opined that you have suffered enough.

Still, I find myself wondering if it does not bother you to be assigned to the comfortable, "don't-look-back" compartment for excusing one class of violators, including CIA torturers and reckless investment bankers who were "too big (or well-connected) to jail." I still want to hold out hope for even-handed, blind justice rather than give up completely on the system of justice in our country.

You may not be surprised to know that, try as I might to feel some empathy for you, Schadenfreude at your misfortune is winning out, since I am convinced that you had a lot to do with other far-more-serious offenses, including aiding and abetting illegal "aggressive war." And, I suspect you also many have aided and abetted the circumstances that gave rise to the bizarre charges against me.

I refer, of course, to my violent arrest, causing pain of my fractured shoulder, and my jailing in The Tombs, simply because I wanted to hear you speak last fall at New York's 92nd Street Y and possibly pose a question from the audience.

Why the Police Alert?

No doubt, your acolytes/adjutants have told you how, despite my ticket for admittance, I was denied entry, brutally arrested by the NYPD, handcuffed behind my back, jailed overnight and arraigned the following day. I'm still trying to figure it all out including the enigma as to how it became known that I was coming.

"You're not welcome here, Ray," was the greeting I got from Y security as I came in the outer door. The NYPD was prepositioned and ready to pounce.

Were you, your entourage and the Y authorities afraid that during the Q & A I might ask an "impertinent" question of the kind I posed to your patron, promoter and protector, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, during a Q & A after he spoke in Atlanta six-plus years ago?

Speaking of Rumsfeld, you and I know him as your partner in some very serious crimes, relating to the illegal invasion of Iraq and the horrific violence that followed as well as the slaughter of so many innocent people in Afghanistan. For over a decade, I have closely observed your behavior and consider it nothing short of a media miracle that most Americans believe your worst sin to be that of adultery.

Since denial can be a very strong motivation, let me refresh your memory and remind you of the bad companions you fell in with. I am reminded of the egregious ways in which you did Rumsfeld's bidding winning promotions and richly undeserved fame by condoning the unspeakable torture, for example.

Your third star came when you were dispatched to Iraq in June 2004, committed to carrying out Rumsfeld's instructions to encourage Shia-on-Sunni torture and other human rights crimes. The all-too-predictable chickens are now coming home to roost from that unconscionably stupid attempt to defeat Sunni opponents of the U.S. occupation through such ignoble means those chickens being what we now call ISIL or ISIS or simply the Islamic State.

What amazes me is that the Teflon is still clinging to you and Rumsfeld, given the bedlam in that entire area today. You're not even held to account for the performance of the tens of thousands of the Iraqi troops that you crowed about having trained and equipped so well. They dropped their weapons and ran away early last year when the ragtag militants of ISIL attacked.

Back in April 2004 when the graphic photos of torture at Abu Ghraib in Iraq were revealed, Rumsfeld claimed he was shocked, even though the International Red Cross had been complaining about abuses there for more than a year before the revelations.

The Senate Armed Services Committee eventually concluded without dissent, in a major investigative report on Dec. 11, 2008, that Rumsfeld bore direct responsibility for the abuses committed by interrogators at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and other military prisons.

The Committee added that the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib "was not simply the result of a few soldiers acting on their own" but grew out of interrogation policies approved by Mr. Rumsfeld and other top officials, who "conveyed the message that physical pressures and degradation were appropriate treatment for detainees."

Four years before the Senate report, in May 2004, Gen. Antonio Taguba came close to revealing precisely that, when he led the Pentagon's first (and only honest) investigation of the abuses at Abu Ghraib. Rumsfeld promptly fired him. Yet,

throughout all this scandal and mayhem, you were maneuvering your way up the high-command ladder without any indication that you were objecting to any of this.

Dangerous Orders

Mid-2004 was a significant watershed for torture in another way. Official messages given to WikiLeaks by Pvt. Chelsea (Bradley) Manning show that FRAGO (Fragmentary Order) 242 of June 2004 went into effect the month you arrived in Iraq to oversee its implementation.

The WikiLeaks documents indicate that you followed Rumsfeld's order to encourage Shiite and Kurdish commandos to torture suspected Sunni militants. Examining those documents as well as your actions at the time, investigative reporter Gareth Porter saw that as the deeper significance of FRAGO 242 significance somehow missed by your ardent admirers in the "mainstream media."

Porter, too, believes it was part of the larger Rumsfeld/Petraeus strategy to exploit Shia sectarian hatred of Sunnis in order to suppress the Sunni attacks on U.S. forces. But that strategy had some very negative long-term consequences that we are still encountering.

It inflamed Sunni opposition to the U.S. and its puppet government in Baghdad, and gave rise to the massive sectarian warfare of 2006 in which tens of thousands of civilians mainly Sunnis but many Shiites as well were killed. The violence was so widespread that U.S. field generals, such as Generals John Abizaid and George Casey, and sensible experts on the region, such as former Secretary of State James Baker, urged a new strategy late that year, essentially minimizing the American footprint in Iraq.

Instead, President George W. Bush enlisted your help in doubling down on the U.S. military presence in 2007 with the so-called "surge," lest he be forced to concede defeat in Iraq before leaving office. You agreed and sacrificed the lives of almost 1,000 more American troops to secure what one might call an "indecent interval" that let Bush get out of Dodge without an outright loss hung around his neck.

As the growth of ISIL/ISIS and the chaos in the area today have made clear, your famous "surge" did little more than achieve a temporary lull (after a lot more killing). It failed to achieve its most significant stated purpose to create space for a political resolution of the Sunni-Shiite civil conflict. It did, however, have one very important benefit. The "surge" got you your fourth star.

On the issue of torture, it seems clear that the straight-arrow Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine General Peter Pace, did not get the memo for how

to rationalize away these disgraceful crimes. For 18 months, he was apparently unaware of FRAGO 242, which became obvious when Pace and Rumsfeld gave widely different answers to a question at a Pentagon press conference on Nov. 29, 2005.

Gen. Peter Pace: It is absolutely the responsibility of every U.S. service member, if they see inhumane treatment being conducted, to intervene, to stop it.

Rumsfeld: But I don't think you mean they have an obligation to physically stop it; it's to report it.

Pace: If they are physically present when inhumane treatment is taking place, Sir, they have an obligation to try to stop it.

Needless to say, Pace did not get the usual second term as JCS Chairman.

Selective Prosecution

These gravecrimes are the ones for which you should stand trial. Personally, I might even be inclined to give you a pass on your marital infidelity and possibly even on sharing classified information with your mistress, if so many true patriots weren't being prosecuted and imprisoned for sharing evidence of U.S. government misconduct with the American people.

And there is one other sore point regarding your esteemed career. According to a Washington Post report by Joshua Partlow, datelined Kabul, Feb. 11, 2011, you shocked aides to then Afghan President Hamid Karzai when you suggested that Afghan parents had deliberately burned their own children in order to exaggerate claims of civilian casualties from U.S. military action in Konar Province.

Partlow quoted two of Karzai's aides who met with you in a closed-door session at the presidential palace and found your remarks "deeply offensive." They said you had dismissed allegations by Karzai's office and the provincial governor that many civilians had been killed and that you claimed that residents of Konar had invented stories, or even injured their children, to pin the blame on U.S. forces as a ruse to end the operation.

"I was dizzy. My head was spinning," said one participant, referring to Petraeus's remarks. "This was shocking. Would any father do this to his children? This is really absurd."

You declined comment at the time. So I will add my own assessment, borrowing a famous line from another dark chapter of American history: "Have you no sense of decency sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

Yours truly,

Ray McGovern

Ray McGovern works with Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He was an infantry/intelligence officer during the early Sixties, and then served as an analyst and Presidential briefer during a 27-year career with the CIA.

The Challenge of Ending Wars

Official Washington's "tough-guy-ism" the one-upping macho rhetoric about how to respond to foreign crises makes it hard for leaders to avoid wars and perhaps even harder to end wars, a dilemma addressed by ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Americans are not very good at ending their involvement in wars. No, that's not a pacifist statement about a need to stop fighting wars in general. It is instead an observation about how the United States, once it gets involved, for good or for ill, in any one war, has difficulty determining when and how to call it a day and go home.

A major reason for this difficulty is that Americans are not Clausewitzians at heart. They tend not to see warfare as a continuation of policy by other means, but instead to think of war and peace as two very different conditions with clear dividing lines between them.

Americans thus are fine with wars that have as clear an ending as the surrenders of the Axis powers in World War II, which continues to be for many Americans the prototype of how a war should be begun, conceived, and concluded. But America's wars since then have not offered conclusions this satisfying.

The one that came closest to doing so was Operation Desert Storm in 1991, which swiftly and decisively achieved its declared objective of reversing the Iraqi swallowing of Kuwait. Even that victory, however, left an unsatisfying aftertaste in some (mostly neocon) mouths, because Saddam Hussein remained in power in Baghdad.

It thus is difficult for U.S. leaders, even if they are capable of thinking in disciplined Clausewitzian terms, to explain and to justify to the American public, and to the political class that makes appeals to that public, the wrapping up of an overseas military involvement without a clear-cut, World War II-style victory. This is a problem no matter how well-founded and justified was

the original decision to enter a war.

Other dynamics are commonly involved in such situations, including the one usually called mission creep, the tendency in an overseas military expedition for one thing to lead to another and for one's military forces gradually to take on jobs beyond the one that was the original reason for sending them overseas. Any nation can get sucked into mission creep, but Americans are especially vulnerable to it.

The yearning for clear-cut and victorious conclusions to foreign military adventures is one reason. Others are the American tendencies to see any problem overseas as a problem for the superpower to deal with, and to expect that if the United States puts its minds and resources to the task it can solve any problem overseas.

Some insights about this subject can be gleaned from comparing two big recent U.S. military expeditions: the one in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 and the one in Afghanistan that began in 2001 and continues today. There is no comparison between the two regarding the original reasons for initiating them, and in that sense it is unfortunate how much the two came to be lumped together in subsequent discussion.

One was a war of aggression with a contrived and trumped-up rationale; the other was a direct and justified response to a lethal attack on the United States. Iraq really was the bad war and Afghanistan the good one. But as time and costs dragged on and Afghanistan became America's longest war ever, it gradually lost support among Americans and Afghans alike.

The failure in Afghanistan was in not finding, and taking, a suitable off-ramp. The off-ramp that should have been taken was reached within the first few months of the U.S. intervention, after the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack that was the reason for the intervention had been roused from their home and their sometime allies, the Afghan Taliban, had been ousted from power.

Regardless of what would have happened in Afghanistan after that, there would not have been a return to the pre-September 2001 situation there, both because the Taliban would have no reason to ally again with a bunch of Arab transnational terrorists who had brought about such a result, and because the United States' own rules of engagement changed so much that no such return would be allowed to occur whether or not U.S. troops were on the ground.

No good off-ramp was found with the Iraq War, and there never was going to be a really good one, given how ill-conceived the war was in the first place and how little thought the makers of the war had given to the post-invasion

consequences.

The U.S. administration that perpetrated the war did a political finesse of the problem, using a surge of force to reduce the violence in the civil war enough to be able to say that they did not leave Iraq falling apart, and then setting with the Iraqi government a schedule for U.S. withdrawal that would have to be implemented by the next administration.

That set the stage, of course, for promoting the myth that the war had been “won” by the time power was handed over in the United States and for blaming the subsequent administration, when it duly implemented the withdrawal schedule it had been given, for all the later indications that the war clearly had not been “won.”

It also set the stage, now that the United States has troops back in Iraq, for talk about the need for a “long-term American presence” to avoid repeating the supposed mistake of cutting and running. How long is “long-term” does not get specified. In other words, no off-ramp is identified. In other words, it’s again the familiar problem of not knowing how and when to wind up involvement in a foreign war.

The error committed in Afghanistan, of missing the ramp and turning what had been a justified response to an attack on the U.S. homeland into an endless attempt at nation-building in a country thousands of miles away, risks being repeated in Iraq.

The problem of ISIS, the reason for the latest intervention in Iraq, will go away, but not in a sufficiently clear-cut manner to satisfy the American yearning for victory and for drawing bright lines to mark the division between war and peace. There won’t be a surrender ceremony on the deck of a tugboat, let alone a battleship.

The Obama administration needs to articulate as clearly and specifically as possible what the off-ramp will look like, a formulation such as “ultimately destroy” ISIS doesn’t cut it. Public opinion needs to be prepared for a departure from Iraq that makes sense in terms of the specific U.S. interests served while being much less satisfying than securing someone’s unconditional surrender or complete and unambiguous destruction. If departure is not to come from anything but impatience and exhaustion, the only other alternative is an endless U.S. military presence.

And an endless presence is no solution at all. It certainly is not from the standpoint of wise use of U.S. resources. Nor would it be from the standpoint of solving Iraq’s problems, given how any such solution depends on political

accommodation of differences among Iraqis themselves, and given the resentments that arise from the inevitable damaging effects of the use of U.S. military force, another lesson from the war in Afghanistan.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a [blog post](#) at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

The Neocon Plan for War and More War

Exclusive: A major test for President Obama is whether he will in the face of the Republican midterm victories submit to neocon demands for more wars in the Middle East and a costly Cold War with Russia or finally earn the Nobel Peace Prize that he got at the start of his presidency, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Buoyed by the Republican electoral victories, America's neocons hope to collect their share of the winnings by pushing President Barack Obama into escalating conflicts around the world, from a new Cold War with Russia to hot wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and maybe Iran.

The new menu of neocon delights was listed by influential neocon theorist Max Boot in a [blog post](#) for Commentary magazine, an important outlet for neocon thinking. Boot argued that the Republicans and thus the neocons have earned a mandate on national security policy from the electoral repudiation of Obama's Democratic Party.

"I am convinced [national security policy] was as important a factor in this election as it was in the 2006 midterm when, in the midst of Iraq War debacles, the Republicans lost control of the Senate," wrote Boot, who then blamed Obama for pretty much everything that has gone wrong:

"The president did himself incalculable damage when he set a 'red line' for Syria last year but failed to enforce it. That created an image of weakness and indecision which has only gotten worse with the rise of ISIS and Putin's expansionism in Ukraine."

Boot's recounting of that history is, of course, wrongheaded in several ways.

It may have been foolish for Obama to set a “red line” against chemical weapons use in Syria, but there is growing evidence that the Syrian government was not behind the lethal sarin attack of Aug. 21, 2013, and that it was instead a provocation by rebel extremists. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Collapsing Syria-Sarin Case.”](#)]

Further, Putin’s approach to the Ukraine crisis in February 2014 was reactive, not provocative or expansionistic. It was the European Union and the United States (led by neocons such as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman and Sen. John McCain) that set out to overturn the Ukrainian status quo.

Neocon support for political disturbances in Kiev, including Nuland [plotting how to “glue this thing,”](#) contributed to the putsch that ousted elected President Viktor Yanukovich and touched off a bloody civil war. Putin was supporting the status quo, i.e., maintaining the elected government, not instigating its overthrow. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“The Powerful Group Think on Ukraine”](#) and [“Treating Putin Like a Lunatic.”](#)]

And, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria arose not from Obama’s timidity but from the neocon-inspired invasion of Iraq last decade. ISIS emerged from the hyper-violent Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which didn’t exist until President George W. Bush followed neocon advice to invade and occupy Iraq. The terrorist group, rebranding itself as the Islamic State, moved on to Syria where the neocons were seeking another “regime change” in the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Neocons Revive Syrian ‘Regime Change’ Plan.”](#)]

If Obama had bombed the Syrian military in summer 2013, as Boot and other neocons wanted, not only might Obama have been attacking the wrong people for the sarin attack, he might well have precipitated the collapse of the Syrian government and a victory for either ISIS or al-Qaeda’s Nusra Front, the only two effective fighting forces among the anti-government rebels. There would have been a good chance that jihadist banners would be flying over Damascus, creating a terrorist state in the heart of the Middle East.

In other words, Boot is working not only from a false narrative but a dangerous fantasy. Nevertheless, it is a narrative that is widely accepted inside Official Washington where one of the favorite sayings is “perception is reality.” So, although Boot’s perception is factually unhinged, it is regarded as “reality” by many “smart people” in the world’s most powerful capital.

Dangerous Prescription

After laying out his false diagnosis that Obama’s supposed failure to destroy

the Syrian military in 2013 led to the crises of Ukraine and ISIS in 2014 Boot then prescribes what needs to be done.

First, he wants the Republican-controlled Congress to pour more money into the U.S. military or, as he puts it, "Save the defense budget from the mindless cuts of sequestration, which are already hurting readiness and, if left unabated, risk another 'hollow' military."

Second, launch a full-scale economic war against Russia while dispatching the U.S. military to defend the Ukrainian regime now in control of Kiev and to other nations on Russia's borders. Or, as Boot says: "Impose tougher sanctions on Russia, freezing Russian companies entirely out of dollar-denominated transactions, while sending arms and trainers to Kiev and putting at least a Brigade Combat Team into each of the Baltic republics and Poland to signal that no more aggression from Putin will be tolerated."

Third, keep the U.S. military fighting in Afghanistan indefinitely. Or, as Boot says, "Repeal the 2016 deadline for pulling troops out of Afghanistan and announce that any drawdown will be conditions based."

Fourth, recommit a larger U.S. military force to aid the Iraqi military and to invade Syria. Or, as Boot says, "Increase the tempo of airstrikes against ISIS, and send a lot more troops to Iraq *and* Syria to work with indigenous groups we need at least 15,000 personnel, not the 1,400 sent so far." [Emphasis added to point out that sending U.S. troops into Syria would amount to an invasion.]

Though the Syrian government has tolerated U.S. airstrikes against ISIS, the idea of sending U.S. soldiers into Syria would be a game-changer and underscores how casually neocons call for committing the U.S. military to war and how disdainful they are of international law. If Boot's intentions on Syria aren't already obvious, he further recommends "launching airstrikes on Iran's proxy, [Syrian President] Bashar al-Assad."

Despite the breathtaking quality of this recommendation, Boot tries to tamp down any alarm by adding: "This isn't a call for U.S. ground combat troops, but we do need a lot more trainers, Special Operators, and support personnel, and they need to be free to work with forces in the field rather than being limited to working with brigade and division staffs in large bases far from the front lines."

Apparently Boot foresees a Libya-style operation in which the U.S. military and its allies destroy a government's armed forces from the air while rebels on the ground ultimately take power. In 2011, the Libya strategy led to the ouster and murder of Muammar Gaddafi followed by the country collapsing into violence and

chaos, including the killing of the U.S. ambassador in Benghazi and the decision by Western governments to abandon their embassies in Tripoli.

In Syria, such a scenario would likely lead to a victory by Islamic extremists, but it would fit with the Israeli strategy of favoring the ouster of Assad, an Iranian ally, even if the conflict ended with al-Qaeda-related radicals in power.

Boot's recommendations match closely the strategic interests expressed by Israel's Likud leadership. As the Israeli Ambassador to the United States Michael Oren told the Jerusalem Post in September 2013, "The greatest danger to Israel is by the strategic arc that extends from Tehran, to Damascus to Beirut. And we saw the Assad regime as the keystone in that arc.

"We always wanted Bashar Assad to go, we always preferred the bad guys who weren't backed by Iran to the bad guys who were backed by Iran." Oren added that this was the case even if the other "bad guys" were affiliated with al-Qaeda.

Bomb, Bomb Iran

And, if instigating a new Cold War with Russia and expanding wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria aren't enough for you, Boot also advocates what would amount to a military ultimatum to Iran, saying: "Make clear that any deal with Iran will require the dismantlement of its nuclear facilities not just a freeze that will leave it just short of nuclear weapons status."

And what if Iran refuses to dismantle its nuclear facilities or throws out international inspectors? Then, presumably Obama would have to enforce this new "red line" with yet another war, this one against Iran, just as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and neocons have long favored. Remember Sen. McCain breaking into a Beach Boy tune to extol the idea to "bomb, bomb, bomb Iran."

Boot makes it clear that what is important for Obama is to realign U.S. foreign policy with the desires of Israel and the Sunni states against Shiite-ruled Iran. He says: "End the rapprochement with Iran that has scared our closest allies in the Middle East, and make clear that the U.S. will continue its traditional, post-1979 role of containing Iranian power and siding with the likes of Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE over Tehran."

In case you're wondering, Boot is not just some lonely neocon voice in the wilderness. He is a senior fellow at the powerful Council on Foreign Relations and a close associate of the Kagan family of neocon royalty, which includes Robert Kagan's wife, Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland.

Boot is also a friend of retired four-star General and former CIA Director David Petraeus. It was Boot who was moderating a speech by Petraeus on Oct. 30 at New York's 92nd Street Y when former CIA analyst Ray McGovern was denied entrance and arrested. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question.](#)"]

So, the neocon thinking is now out in the open. Boot has explained how the neocons view the national security implications of the Republican electoral victory and how Obama should bend to this supposed mandate. But Boot also has left little doubt what will follow if Obama does submit to the neocon agenda a future of endless warfare across the Middle East and even nuclear brinkmanship with Russia.

There has long been a madness to neocon thinking, matching what the most extreme elements of the Israeli government seem determine to create, a roiling chaos across the Middle East amid fantasies of "regime change" somehow producing Arab leaders compliant with Israeli interests.

Yet, to carry out these schemes, which far exceed the capabilities of even Israel's highly capable military, the American neocons and Israeli hardliners need the U.S. taxpayers' money to pay for the wars as well as young American soldiers coming from small towns and large cities across the United States to be dispatched halfway around the world to kill and die.

As President Obama heads into the final quarter of his presidency, he must decide whether he will be led down that bloody path or finally stand up to the neocons (and their allies in Congress and within his own administration) and seek reasonable accommodations for peace with the countries on Max Boot's hit list.

[For more on the neocon agenda, see Consortiumnews.com's "[What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis](#)" and "[Why Neocons Seek to Destabilize Russia.](#)"]

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

Standing in an Adversary's Shoes

Americans are notoriously disinterested in history, preferring to focus on the present and often reacting to the latest crisis. But the past can teach important lessons including the need to understand an adversary's perspective and to avoid unnecessary conflicts, as ex-U.S. diplomat William R. Polk explains.

By William R. Polk

Months before the Cuban Missile Crisis was upon us, I made a tour of Turkey. There I visited a U.S. Air Force base where 12 fighter-bombers were on "ready alert." Of those two were always on "hair trigger alert," with engines running and with the pilots sitting in the cockpits. Poised for take-off, each was armed with a one-megaton bomb and programmed for a target in the Soviet Union.

Nearby, on the Black Sea at Samsun, I watched on radar planes from an RAF squadron probing Soviet air defenses in the Crimea. And elsewhere in Anatolia, in supposedly secret locations, a group of American "Jupiter" missiles was aimed, armed and ready to be fired.

Were these weapons defensive or offensive? That is, were they a threat to the Soviet Union or a defense of the "Free World." My colleagues in the American government thought they were defensive. They were part of our "deterrent." We had put them there to protect ourselves, not to threaten the Russians.

The Russians thought otherwise. So, in response, they decided to station some of their missiles in Cuba. Their strategists believed that in balancing ours on their frontier, theirs on our frontier also were defensive. We thought otherwise. We regarded their move as unquestionably offensive and nearly went to war to get them to remove their missiles.

At a "few minutes to midnight," we both came to our senses: we stood down our Jupiters and the Russians removed their weapons from Cuba.

The first lesson to be learned in this near catastrophe was *try to understand the opponent's point of view*. Knowing what the other person thinks is always sensible – as we know and act in daily life – even if one does not believe that the other person is right or even if one does not intend to be guided by what he discovers. Unfortunately, as history teaches us, this is a lesson rarely applied in foreign affairs.

As I pointed out in the months before the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Russians had a point: the missiles we had in Turkey were obsolescent. They were to be

propelled by liquid fuel. That form of fuel required several minutes to be ignited. If they were to be used, they had to take off before Soviet missiles or aircraft could destroy them on the ground. That, in turn, meant that they could only be “first strike” weapons. By definition, a first strike is “offensive.”

I urged that we get them out of Turkey. We did not do so. Our military considered them an integral part of our strategic defense. We left them there until the Russians put their missiles into Cuba. Then, we took them out. We got rid of ours only when they got rid of theirs. So, in a sense, the Missile Crisis was tit-for-tat. I thought that was a very foolish way to endanger the world!

Another Lesson

There was another lesson to be learned from the Missile Crisis. Our strategy and the Soviet strategy both assumed that the leaders of each state were not only fully informed but also rational. Being *rational*, they would not actually do what they *knew* would completely destroy the world.

Neither we nor the Russians accurately then pin-pointed how a confrontation was likely to happen. We both just assumed that “the delicate balance of terror” would be maintained short of actual combat. That was the ultimate gamble. Was the gamble sensible?

I was convinced that it was not. What it did, I thought, was to confuse two very different motivations. This was and may again be crucial to our survival so let me make it clear.

Obviously, both we and the Russians were in part motivated by “interest of state.” That is, neither side wanted its country to be destroyed. Our strategy of mutual deterrence aimed to protect our country; that was the aim of even the most bellicose of the nuclear hawks.

While they sneered at the slogan “better Red than Dead,” they secretly were influenced by it and assumed that its opposite form influenced the Russians. They were right. Their counterparts in the Soviet system, as I learned during later meetings with my Russian counterparts at the Soviet Academy of Science, shared the basic motivation.

The Russians may not have had a catchy slogan to sum it up, but like us, they realized that both the United States and the Soviet Union would have been ruined in a nuclear exchange.

Those of us, both Americans and Russians, who were informed about nuclear weapons knew the meaning of that statement. You probably have heard it before, but allow me to remind you:

In a nuclear exchange, at least 100 million people would have been immediately incinerated; perhaps five times that many would have been so badly wounded, burned or radiated that they would shortly die; most of the world's cities would become just contaminated ruins; the whole Earth would have been covered in a thick layer of smoke impenetrable to the sun so that temperatures would fall and the ground would be frozen to a depth of about three feet; there would be no available liquid drinking water. Since graves could not be dug in the frozen ground by the (few) starving and emaciated survivors, the whole Earth would be covered by rotting corpses.

Therefore, sensible men, both Americans and Russians, would do all we could to avoid it. That was the basis of the theory of mutual deterrence.

But, when "interest of government" was factored into the equation, the equation lost coherence. That is because it is, after all, not *countries* but *governments* that make the decisions of war or peace. Once the personal motivations of rulers had to be considered, our strategy made far less sense. Consider why this is so.

The governments of both the United States and the Soviet Union – like all governments – ultimately rest on the perception by their supporters that they are acceptable. Often this means just "patriotic." And, as we know, the definition of patriotism varies widely. What seems sensible and patriotic to one person or group may seem like cowardice or treason to another.

Killing 'Weak' Leaders

If rulers egregiously flaunt their incapacity, corruption or lack of patriotism, they build resentments that can, and often do, result in breakdowns, *coups d'État* or even revolutions. In the course of these actions not only governments, in the abstract, but rulers as individuals are often killed.

So, quite separate from the "interest of state," leaders have strong reasons to protect themselves. And almost always the best – sometimes the only – way to do this is to be "tough," to "stand tall," to force the other fellow to "blink." Being a "peacenik" even in times of peace is dangerous; in a crisis it can be lethal.

This divided interest between what was required in the national interest and what political leaders might have to do to stay in power or even to stay alive became evident both in the Missile Crisis itself and was made even more clear in a "war game," what the German General Staff called a *kriegspiel* or simulated combat, that was conducted in the Pentagon shortly thereafter.

The Kennedy Administration organized the war game to extend the Missile Crisis into a scenario of what might have happened next. Briefly put, the game posed

the possibility that the Russians had not removed their missiles from Cuba or had otherwise provoked the United States and that the United States had decided to take action.

In the game, "Blue Team" – the United States – "took out" a Russian city with nuclear weapons. So, those of us on "Red Team" were required to face the question of how we would respond. We were trying to think like our Russian counterparts and were given access to all the information our intelligence services had amassed on them and what we thought they knew of American capabilities.

We and our principals took our roles very seriously. At the most senior level of our government, we were charged with coping with what amounted to a second missile crisis. To illustrate what might happen, we were provoked to make fateful decisions. And we had to do so "in real time."

Between the Blue Team attack and Red Team's response could be only a few minutes. Otherwise, Blue Team might have fired other missiles to wipe out "ours." Our team decided that there were four possible responses:

First, we could, at least theoretically, do nothing. Chairman Nikita Khrushchev would announce to his people that he was sorry for the damage and the loss of a hundred thousand or so fellow Russians, but that there was nothing he could do. If he ordered a counterattack, it would bring upon Russia unimaginable devastation. So, he had decided to just accept the humiliation and the pain.

Was this realistic? The members of our team, who were among the most experienced and best-informed men in our government, decided that such a move would have caused Khrushchev to be shot in an immediate *coup d'État* and that whoever took his place would unquestionably have fired the Soviet missiles anyway.

So inaction or even a long delay was impossible. Regardless of "interest of state," the "interest of government" – just staying alive – would have prevented it. The chairman of our team, the admiral who was the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, agreed that he would have been among the coup leaders if he were Russian.

Losing a City

The second possible answer was tit-for-tat. The Russians could have launched a retaliatory missile to "take out" a comparable American city, say Dallas or Cleveland or Boston. That would have incinerated an equivalent number of Americans, a few hundred thousand or so, and pulverized the city.

We had to imagine what then would have happened. We tried to picture President

Kennedy going before the television cameras to inform the American public that the crisis was ended: we destroyed one of their cities and they destroyed one of ours. So we were even.

“Sadly,” he would have had to go on, “if any of you had relatives in Dallas (or Cleveland or Boston), you just don’t have them any longer. They have been evaporated. Let us now go on with our lives and forget the unfortunate events of the last few days.” It is not hard to imagine what would have happened to him and his Administration.

Alternatively, in a third option, the President could have then moved a step forward into hostilities by knocking out a second Russian city. The Russians could have similarly responded by destroying a second American city. Was this possible or likely?

We quickly saw the flaws in this course of action: First, the much touted military advantages of a first or unexpected strike would have been lost. Each side had been roused to fury, but neither would have been incapacitated.

Second, once “escalation” had begun, there would be no stopping point. The second city would be followed by third, fourth and others. In my experience even with the crisis in which no missiles were fired, I was sure no one could have withstood the strain.

Toward the end of that week, we were all utterly exhausted. And, speaking for myself at least I was not sure any longer of my judgment. It seemed clear to us on Red Team that within days or even hours, the exchanges would have escalated into general war. We found no justification for step-by-step retaliation. That left only the fourth option.

The fourth option was general war. Our team concluded that a massive attack on the country of “Blue Team” was inevitable. Immediate and all-out nuclear bombardment of the United States offered the only hope that the Russians could disable the American forces before they could do massive damage to Russia. Unanimously, we signaled our decision.

The game master, Professor Thomas Schelling of MIT and author of *The Strategy of Conflict*, told us that we had “misplayed” the game. He did not believe we had correctly predicted the Russian reaction. But to find out, he asked us to assemble the next morning to discuss our action.

When we and most of the senior officials of our government gathered in the War Room of the Pentagon, Schelling said that, if he thought there was any justification for our decision, he would have to give up the theory of deterrence. We replied that the theory had been proven to be flawed by the very

game he had designed. Simply put, it was that *rulers* not *nations* decided man's fate.

Beyond the game, what actually happened was both crucial, perhaps even vital, but little considered. In real life, America did not "take out" a Russian or even a Cuban city. *We found a way for both of our governments to avoid losing face or being overthrown and to do what we needed to have happen so that the Earth was not destroyed.*

We stood down our missiles and they stood down theirs. Castro was furious. Mao was dismissive. But Kennedy, against the advice of the hawks and with the help of Adlai Stevenson, opened a way that Chairman Khrushchev could accept ... and stay alive.

Wisely, he stepped back from the brink. He could afford to do so – probably just barely – because of Kennedy's decision to remove the Jupiters. His hawks did not overthrow or murder him. But, for his wise action, they never forgave him. As a sign of their disgust, they got their revenge after his death: his body was not buried with full honors in the Kremlin Wall like the other Soviet leaders' bodies had been but was relegated to distant and "unpatriotic" obscurity.

Lesson: if the aim of strategy was to stay alive it was safer to avoid combat. Wise diplomacy was more effective than the battle ax.

Virtually Automatic

The Cuban Missile Crisis was long ago and the issues were complex so let me dredge up a more recent and simpler case to illustrate perceptions of attack and defense and to show that the decisions on what to do about them can be taken without grand strategic judgments, ideology or even anger but can be virtually automatic. That is especially true if they are taken too late. I turn to piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Surely, we believed, the Somali pirates gave us a clear case of aggression against which we must defend ourselves. As we saw them, they were an ugly, brutal bunch of terrorists. And since they had taken up arms, so must we. Indeed, by the time we recognized that there was a problem, arms seemed to be the only possible answer.

A frequent saying in government circles is "never mind the cause; we have to act with what we see on the ground today." Often, by that time, there is little scope. So without further ado, we shoot from the hip. But pause a moment to consider how the problem arose and how the Somalis saw it.

Somalia was one of those countries that never became a nation-state.

Traditionally, it was a collection of societies – like indigenous peoples in the Americas, the rest of Africa and much of Asia. (So understanding it may be of value to us elsewhere.)

Then in the late Nineteenth Century, France, Britain and Italy invaded the country and set up colonies which they euphemistically termed “protectorates” and began to challenge or replace local institutions, rulers and alliances. (As also happened in much of the “Third World.”) In the aftermath of the Second World War, we foreigners turned most of the area into a UN “trust” under Italian control. After 15 years, parts of it were recognized as an independent nation-state.

“Nation=statehood” was a concept that had grown over several centuries in Europe. It was wholly alien to the Somalis. They were not a *nation* but lived in collections of extended families which were only sporadically and vaguely related to one another, and none of their leaders had any experience in forming or managing the apparatus of a *state*.

Indeed, given the generations of foreign rule, none of them had any experience in government. And being poor and “underdeveloped,” their societies lacked the minimal organizations we take for granted in nation-states.

So, like many African and Asian countries, Somalia went through a series of coups. Those leaders who survived and came to the fore were often the most violent and unprincipled. They enriched themselves and their gangs while the general population survived in chronic poverty and even hunger. Indeed, in 1974 and 1975, a severe drought led to widespread starvation. Somalia’s one great asset was the sea and its most productive inhabitants were fishermen.

Then beginning in about 1990, huge “factory” ships from several Western nations and Japan began to arrive along the coast. Violating international agreements and using sonar and radar to locate fish and huge nets to catch them, they virtually “fished out” the previously rich waters. It has been estimated that they took billions of dollars worth of tuna and other edible fish and killed or otherwise disposed of every other kind of sea life.

Worse, they plowed up the underwater formations where the fish bred and dumped overboard thousands of tons of toxic and even nuclear waste. Soon, the sea and beaches of Somalia were just lifeless extensions of the inland deserts. The Somalis again began to starve. It did not take long for the fishermen, who after all were sailors, to turn into pirates.

We were outraged. Piracy is a heinous crime. We knew that because we have all grown up on stories of Captain Kidd and Blue Beard. Soon the press was filled

with lurid accounts of the seizure of yachts and even of big ships and the kidnapping of their crews. Ransoms were paid, but European and American governments came under pressure "to do something."

So we began to patrol the Indian Ocean with our navies. Military action seemed to be the only possible response. The Somalis were committing a vile form of aggression. They were terrorists. That was perfectly clear. At least to us. Very few officials, businessmen or even journalists asked why the Somalis were acting in such an outrageous fashion.

Of course, the answer was simple: the fishermen were desperate. And, inevitably, the more desperate or more determined among them turned to violence. Warlords in Somalia as in Afghanistan soon took command. Well before "Blackhawk Down," we were killing Somalis and they were killing one another. Violence bred violence.

To our military, the Somalis were the bad guys. So the only answer seemed to be force. But force did not work there any more than it did in Vietnam, Afghanistan or Iraq. Faced with the choice of starving or stealing, the Somalis chose as you or I would have done in their place.

Perhaps some attempt to *anticipate* the problem raised by illegal destruction of their main natural resource might have been "a stitch in time..." Knowing the *sequence* of events and attempting to understand why the Somalis became our adversaries might have saved thousands of lives and billions of treasure. But we paid little or no attention to their view of aggression and defense. At least, one could argue, until too late.

Other Applications

From little Somalia, there are at least three lessons of wide application to American foreign policy. While we, the rich and powerful, can sometimes work our will on the poor and weak, our actions have consequences. The consequences will often be costly to us and painful to them. Worse, they may radiate throughout their societies for generations. Or even spill over into wider areas.

Leave aside the costs we, the British and the Russians incurred in another far-off land, Afghanistan about which I have often written. Consider instead the more pervasive but subtle issues that we see in much of Africa, some of Asia and even parts of Europe and Latin America.

The turmoil we see in all those areas, I argue, is largely a result of the forced transition from *society* to *state*. Forcing societies to become states and so to fit our definition of how they should organize themselves and how they can interface with us often does not work and even more often leads to the very results we had sought to avoid.

Looking at the “failed states” in anger or despair, we forget our own past. We should remember that it took our ancestors generations to begin to create the skills, cadres of dedicated people and public institutions that made nation-states possible.

Thomas Hobbes told us how expensive the task was in England while in France, Germany and Italy it took centuries longer and cost much more. In the Balkans, it is still incomplete. Indeed, to the degree it was accomplished, it was the result of periodic and ghastly wars. Obviously, it hardly started in much of the world.

We Westerners have made up the rules for the world in which both we and the “underdeveloped” live. The rules presume a world of nation-states. But the Somalis are not and never have been a nation-state, so they did not have the *mechanisms* that meshed into the gears of the modern, Western-inspired international system.

They could not, for example, access the world court to enforce the laws on fishing in their waters. They could not organize a government that could overpower the warlords or the pirates. (When they tried to do so with their traditional means, Islamic brotherhoods, we prevented them because we saw those organizations as dangerous terrorists.) We had trouble even identifying who or what they were by legal, political and diplomatic criteria.

And, like most African societies, Somalia was “post-colonial:” that is, its experience for generations had been *being ruled* rather than *ruling itself*. In short, it was thrust into a situation to which European nation-states had adapted only after generations and only then imperfectly. It was asked to act like a nation-state when it lacked the experience, the people and the will to do so.

And, despite what the neoconservatives have preached, we lacked the knowledge, the means or the acceptability to do the job for them. Inevitably, more went down in our attempt to impose our will upon them than our “Black Hawk.”

The Islamists

I turn now to the most complex and most urgent of our problems, our conflict with the Islamic *Salafi* movement and various mainly Muslim states. The *urgency* is obvious as we are on the brink of yet another war.

The *complexity* arises from several causes: first, to understand them requires some appreciation of a coherent but to most of us an alien way of life, belief and organization. Few people in our governments or even in our universities have taken the time or made the effort to comprehend that system.

Second, relations with that other way of life stretch back over centuries and widely over a vast area of the Earth; so there is great variety. And, third, our lives have been in part conditioned by the same factors that I mentioned in Somalia – our power, wealth and dynamism and their weakness, poverty and relative lethargy.

Even a motivated and intelligent reader would find little help in the media or in the deluge of “quickie” books to see a sequence in may appear to be random events or to understand the point of view of our adversaries among the one billion Muslims.

So each time we run into opposition, we face the question: “do we shoot?? People who seek simple answer usually say “yes.” If you have a gun and you think you are in danger, the obvious thing to do is to use it. We have done so, or threatened to do so, just in recent years, in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Balkans and Libya and have been complicit in the acts by others in Palestine, Indonesia and various other parts of Africa.

All of these are Muslim or Muslim-related conflicts. Several of our intrusions were multiple so that, overall and often, we have convinced many Muslims that it is not only their *politics* but their *faith* that we have identified as our enemy.

This view of our relationship has a long history, dating back to long before the Crusades, and it has been periodically reinforced over the centuries. I will be short and will hit only the main points:

Throughout most of the last thousand years, both in Europe and in Africa and most of Asia, there was relatively little movement inside and among societies. More people catch the train from Washington to New York in a single day than traveled that far in the 500 or so years of the Middle Ages.

Most people, both in the West and throughout Africa and Asia, were, by our standards, almost unimaginably poor. Many lived on the edge of hunger. Few had even what we would call rudimentary skills. The economy was at the subsistence level. Money hardly existed. Tools and even clothes were handed down generation to generation.

There was little trade beyond the distance a person could walk in a day except along rivers and along the seacoast. And that was minimal. We get a sense of this life by the story of one exotic food: sugar was such a luxury that Columbus’s patron, the great Queen Isabella of Spain, gave one of her children a sugar cone as a grand Christmas present.

Then just on the eve of the Renaissance, Europe began a commercial transformation. Borrowing from the practices of Muslim East, first the Italians

and then the Dutch set up banks, adopted the practice of letters of credit and learned how to spread risks through multiple ownership and insurance. In a variety of activities the latent energy of the Europeans was released.

Each successful experiment led to the next. Boats became stronger so the acquisition of more Atlantic fish, particularly the cod, to overcome European famines, taking of African slaves to work the new sugar plantations and (after 1492) importing silver for coinage became possible.

The first true factories were set up to make rope for sailing ships. Piece by piece, step by step, Europeans forged ahead. By the Eighteenth Century, Europeans mastered a source of energy in coal and embarked upon the Industrial Revolution.

Muslim Worries

Even before the effects of this revolution were pervasive, perceptive Muslim leaders felt the ground slipping under their feet. They had reason. Napoleon had begun the wave of Western conquest when he conquered Egypt in 1798. He destroyed its then government and tried to convert the Egyptians to the ideas of the French Revolution. He did not succeed in planting those ideas, but he played havoc with the existing institutions.

Quite suddenly in the years around the turn of the Eighteenth into the Nineteen Century, the balance between Europe and the Middle East was overturned. What has been called "the impact of the West" began to overwhelm Muslim societies, undermine their economies and alter their customs. In a study I did at the start of my academic career, I found that in Lebanon when industrial Europe came into contact with the cottage industry of the East in the 1830s, the Middle East reeled under the blow.

In the one year of 1833 an estimated 10,000 workers were forced into idleness in Damascus and Aleppo; by 1838, urban men were wearing fezzes imported from France and drinking from glass made in Bohemia; by a few years later, even the Bedouin's headdress was made in Birmingham. New ideas from the West changed clothing styles so that the key luxury import from the further East, the Cashmiri shawl, went out of fashion.

By mid-century, the old Baghdad-Damascus caravan was finished. By 1854, the French and Austrian steamers, plying the coastal Levant towns, had, in the words of the British consul, "annihilated the local carrying trade." Routes of trade were forgotten or even reversed: Aleppo traditionally got its coffee from Yemen and then began to get it from Santo Domingo via France; pepper which had come to Beirut from the East via Baghdad was, after the advent of steam, sent to

Baghdad via Beirut.

Meanwhile in India, the British were chipping away the foundations and territory of the great Mughal Empire. Starting in Bengal, they began a march across the subcontinent and, as they went, they sometimes replaced and often modified laws, customs, governmental procedures and relationships among Muslims and Hindus and between both of them and Europeans.

Tremors of the “impact of the West” radiated through the Islamic world. In response, the first great movements of *salafiyah* began to be organized.

I have elsewhere defined *salafiyah* but briefly put, it was the Muslim version of the Protestant movements within Christianity in northern Europe and New England. Protestant reformers in Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries Europe thought that it was necessary to “purify” their societies by going back to origins in order to create a solid basis from which to advance.

That concept sparked the great commercial and intellectual revolution in Holland, Belgium and North Germany that laid the basis for modern Europe. Muslim *Salafis* similarly sought to go back to original beliefs, clearing away innovations, to establish a firm basis on which a “pure” order could be reestablished and the future secured. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism.”](#)]

Recapturing Dignity

The *Salafis* were not so interested in commerce as the Lutherans, Calvinists and their various offshoots; their underlying objective was to recapture the power and dignity of the days when Islam was a world leader. They believed that by stripping away the shroud of dark ages and returning to “purity,” that is, to the original, Quran-inspired religious belief and social practice, they could advance toward a dignified, powerful and Divinely-ordained future.

Several of these early *Salafis* created vast, enduring and far-flung societies – virtual religious empires – that were the most vigorous and popular movements of their times.

Among their leaders were the Arabian Ahmad ibn Abdul Wahhab (the founder of Wahhabism); the Algerian/Libyan Muhammad bin Ali as-Sanusi (the founder of the North African Sanusi Brotherhood); the Sudanese Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi (the founder of the African Mahdiah movement); the Iranian Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (who inspired movements throughout the Ottoman-Turkish, Qajar-Iranian and Mughal-Indian empires); and the Egyptian theologian Muhammad Abduh (whose students taught millions of young Muslims all over Asia and Africa).

Until fairly recently, we in the West have known little of these men and their movements, but they were as influential among their peoples as Luther and Calvin were among Westerners. And, as we see, their influence is growing among today's 1 billion Muslims.

The early Muslim movements did not stop the "impact of the West" nor did they appeal to the Christian and Jewish populations of their areas. The Christians and the Jews eagerly accepted the Western intrusion and generally profited materially, intellectually and politically from it.

However, toward the end of the Nineteenth Century a few, mainly Lebanese Christian, members of the western-educated elite began to try to define a political doctrine that could overcome religious difference. Their purpose remained essentially the same as in earlier *salafiyah* – protection against Western intrusion – but they focused more sharply on the political and military challenge.

They thought that, if they dropped or at least obscured the criteria of religion and focused on something they all could share, the desire for liberty, they could gather together and become strong. The philosophical or emotional answer, they thought, was the same one that was then rallying Christians in Italy, Germany and France and beginning to affect the Jewish peoples of central and eastern Europe – *nationalism*.

Nationalism, as understood by the Arabs, was at first a geographically limited concept. The word adopted to encapsulate "nation" also meant "dwelling" or by extension "village" (Arabic: *watan*). Ironically, it is a reasonable Arabic translation of the word "national home" used by the early Zionists (Hebrew: *heimsta'at*).

The Zionists used "national home," as they said, to avoid frightening the British by admitting that they aimed to create a nation-state in Palestine. That was not the intent of the Arabs. They wanted to frighten the British and French into leaving their lands. For that purpose they had to devise a different concept and use a different word (Arabic: *qawmiyah*).

Their efforts led them over the past century through other definitions of nationalism including pan-Arabism and a sort of socialism. All of these efforts came up short. None accomplished what the people sought, an acceptable degree of parity with the West (including Israel). All that was left was what they had started with, religion.

Self-Defeating Outrage

So we see today a return to *Salafiyah*. And again the parallels with the rise of

European Protestantism are suggestive. Europe in the age of Luther and Calvin was violent, bitterly divided and intolerant. Horrible crimes were committed by all parties in the name of religion in the Thirty Years War. Then and later hundreds of thousands died before passions cooled.

No outside force the only ones close enough and powerful enough being the Catholic Church and the Spanish empire ameliorated or possibly could have ameliorated the process or calmed the tempers. When the Church and/or Catholic states used force as they did, for example, in the Netherlands, parts of Germany and the British isles, their efforts further inflamed the furies.

Today, when religious beliefs are also intertwined with post-colonial angers, thwarted ambitions and relative deprivation, passions are perhaps even more sensitive than they were in the Thirty Years War. If, as I believe, this is true or even if it is only a part of the whole story, the ability of outsiders to affect the course of events is similarly restricted.

Worse, it is likely to be even self-defeating. The more we intervene, the more intense and long-lasting is likely to be the reaction. The more violent our intervention the more long-term damage we are likely to do.

The record of the past few years is compelling. The numbers of displaced, wounded, killed, of stunted children, of widespread misery, of the loss of civic decency and the rise of terror among the survivors, of the set-back to the feeble growth of legal, social, cultural and political institutions, of blasted infrastructure which took decades to develop, of the enormous wastage of financial and human resources desperately needed throughout the world and of the often alarming and dangerous impact on fragile ecosystems all of these make evident the dangers of intervention in situations in which we lack the knowledge, the tools and the acceptability that we often think we have.

As the terrifying "joke" of the Vietnam war put it, "we destroyed the village in order to save it." And even when we did so to stop the ugliness and viciousness of "the bad guys," we often resorted to tools and practices that were hardly more humane: like many Americans I carry in my memory the picture of the little Vietnamese girl running down a street on fire from napalm.

We used napalm later also in Iraq. Was it more humane than poison gas or cutting off peoples' heads? Decapitation is surely barbaric. But let us not forget that the French did that publicly until the eve of the Second World War; the Saudis still do it and the Iraqis actually decapitated Saddam Husain with a rope rather than a sword.

If I had to choose my form of execution, I believe I would find decapitation

preferable to being burned alive. Is carpet bombing which kills the bystanders or chemical defoliation which can induce cancer and birth defects less horrible than suicide bombing? Were Saddam Hussein's or Gaddafi's prisons more cruel than Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo? If any of those comparisons redound to our credit, they surely are very narrow calls.

Another Problem: Ourselves

And they raise another problem: what they do or did to those of us who were involved in doing them. It isn't only the victims but is also the perpetrators who are harmed by violence. The pilot who pushes the release button does not see what his bomb does; so maybe he is protected from a sense of horror or guilt by ignorance, but the sniper can sometimes see the head of his victim explode.

The Special Forces or Green Beret soldier apparently, in the words I have heard them say, positively delight in their power to inflict pain and death. What is the long-term effect of such experiences on our own society and culture? Surely, they cannot be beneficial.

Thus, for our own sakes as well as for the sake of the people we assert our ability to guide, I strongly believe that we would be well advised to stay out of conflicts we should by this time have learned that we cannot solve but which we know we have the ability to make far worse.

This is not, of course, to suggest that we wash our hands of the world's problems or that we stop trying to help the victims. We can and should help. Better, my experience teaches me, it would be to help at arms' length through the UN, regional associations, foundations and NGOs, but all of these need the money and talent we have so often wasted in military ventures. Think what the \$4 trillion or \$5 trillion we threw away in Iraq and Afghanistan could have done!

We are spending less today in fighting the Islamic State but, even without "boots on the ground," our activities there are costing over \$1 million a day. As the months stretch into years, so will the millions become billions.

The sorrows and tribulations of the people in the world's trouble spots should be our concern. But we must not "destroy the village to save it." We must put aside the gun. That is the first step. Then we must allow the healing and *restraining* processes to take effect within troubled societies – as history teaches us they are likely to do.

How soon that will happen depends in part on how much pressure we apply. The more we intervene militarily the longer it is likely to take. The "mission accomplished," as we now see, was never accomplished despite years of combat. It is still not accomplished. Surely, we have learned that lesson in Afghanistan

and Iraq. Or have we?

As hard as it will be for us and our political leaders to accept, we must recognize that there are no shortcuts. What we hope to see happening is more likely to happen if we allow the troubled peoples to set their own course. Then, to the degree that they have scope to act without being accused of being unreligious or unpatriotic, the more intelligent, less violent and more constructive of their leaders are more likely to be able to restrain the more destructive; our actions, by threatening to pin upon them the label of weakness, incapacity and treason are apt to make their efforts impossible. Or get them killed. That is, the same process is active here that we saw in the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Also, as we saw in that crisis, we should be constrained to working within the same parameters we set for other nations. The bottom line is avoiding aggression. Of course, we must defend ourselves. But, as recent history makes clear, defense and aggression often are hard to distinguish. What is defense to one is often aggression to the other.

Mutual respect and mutual forbearance should be our objective. This is not, as Mrs. Thatcher would have said, to "go wobbly," to appease, to pussyfoot or to be just weak-willed liberals. It may be a matter of life or death and certainly can help us avoid catastrophes.

But, we should realize that adopting a strategy of avoiding conflict will often be difficult. Public angers are far easier to whip up than to dispel. Demagogues multiply like rabbits and sometimes we follow them like lemmings. All the polls tell us how ignorant we are as a people. And, looking around us, we must ask ourselves where we can find today the wise leaders we need to guide our actions. I confess that I cannot identify them.

So it is not surprising that today we are moving away from coherent, well-reasoned and effective *strategy* and indulging in scattered, short-sighted and unsuccessful *tactics*. We jump from one crisis to the next with little thought on how we keep repeating our mistakes.

There is truth in the old saying that when one is in a hole, his first step ought to be to stop digging. We need to pause and take our bearings. We need to do this for our sakes as much as for "theirs."

I end on a very personal demonstration of a proof for what I have written: when many years ago I was first visiting such Asian and African lands as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, both Sudans, Libya and Algeria, I was welcomed – as an American – with open arms. Today, I would be in danger of being shot.

William R. Polk was a member of the Policy Planning Council, responsible for North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia, for four years under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, He was a member of the three-men Crisis Management Committee during the Cuban Missile Crisis. During those years he wrote two proposed peace treaties for the American government and negotiated one major ceasefire between Israel and Egypt. Later he was Professor of History at the University of Chicago, founding director of the Middle Eastern Studies Center and President of the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs. He is the author of some 17 books on world affairs, including *The United States and the Arab World*; *The Elusive Peace, the Middle East in the Twentieth Century*; *Understanding Iraq*; *Understanding Iran*; *Violent Politics: A History of Insurgency and Terrorism*; *Neighbors and Strangers: The Fundamentals of Foreign Affairs* and numerous articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *The Atlantic*, *Harpers*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and *Le Monde Diplomatique* . He has lectured at many universities and at the Council on Foreign Relations, Chatham House, Sciences Po, the Soviet Academy of Sciences and has appeared frequently on NPR, the BBC, CBS and other networks. His most recent books, both available on Amazon, are *Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change* and *Blind Man's Buff, a Novel*.

The Mystery of Ray McGovern's Arrest

Exclusive: On Oct. 30, ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern was arrested for trying to attend a public speech by retired Gen. David Petraeus. McGovern had hoped to ask Petraeus a critical question during Q-and-A but was instead trundled off to jail, another sign of a growing hostility toward dissent, McGovern says.

By Ray McGovern

Why, I asked myself, would the New York City police arrest me and put me in The Tombs overnight, simply because a security officer at the 92nd Street Y told them I was “not welcome” and should be denied entry to a talk by retired General David Petraeus? In my hand was a ticket for which I had reluctantly shelled out \$50.

I had hoped to hear the photogenic but inept Petraeus explain why the Iraqi troops, which he claimed to have trained so well, had fled northern Iraq leaving their weapons behind at the first whiff of Islamic State militants earlier this year. I even harbored some slight hope that the advertised Q & A might afford *hoi polloi* like me the chance to ask him a real question.

However rare the opportunity to ask real questions has become, it can happen. Witness my extended (four-minute) questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta on May 4, 2006. The exchange wasn't exactly the oh-so-polite give-and-take of the Sunday talk shows but it represented what Americans should expect of democracy, a chance to confront senior government officials when they engage in deception or demonstrate incompetence especially on issues of war or peace.

It seems a safe guess that somebody wanted to protect Petraeus from even the possibility of such accountability on Oct. 30. Also, let me make clear that I had no intention of embarrassing the retired four-star general and ex-CIA director with a question about his extramarital affair with his admiring biographer Paula Broadwell, which precipitated his CIA resignation in November 2012.

Many an aging male ego has been massaged by the attentions of someone like Broadwell, and she seemed happy to do the massaging to expedite the research on *All In*, her biography of the fabled general. I had decided to resist the temptation to refer to the Biblical admonition against entrusting large matters to those who cannot be faithful in small things.

The affair may not have been a small thing to Mrs. Petraeus, but it pales in significance when compared to the death and destruction resulting from Petraeus's self-aggrandizing disingenuousness and dissembling about prospects for eventual success in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Petraeus Agonistes

Assuming that Petraeus's expertise in counterinsurgency warfare was more than mere pretense, he knew both expeditions were doomed to failure. And he certainly now knows the inevitable answer to the question he famously posed to journalist Rick Atkinson in 2003 as U.S. forces troops began to get mired down in the sand of Iraq "Tell Me How This Ends."

The twin conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq "ended" if that's the right word for these late-stage fiascos with two additional stars pinned to Petraeus's uniform and with some 6,700 gold stars sent to the wives, husbands, or parents of U.S. troops killed, plus tens of thousands of purple hearts for those badly injured in both body and mind. A bad bargain for the American people and especially the dead and maimed U.S. troops not to mention the hundreds of thousands of dead and maimed Afghans and Iraqis but a pretty successful career move for Petraeus, if not for his fateful extramarital affair.

Surely, in the grim light of all the bloodshed, L'Affaire Broadwell can be seen

as a minor peccadillo, the least of Petraeus's sins. But many of his ardent admirers view the sexual indiscretion as the only blot on his otherwise spotless dress uniform festooned with row after row of medals and ribbons.

It was my intent to put the spotlight, via a question or two, on Petraeus's far more consequentially dishonest behavior. And this seemed particularly important at this point in time, as his starry-eyed emulator generals seem no less willing than Petraeus to throw a new wave of youth from a poverty draft into a fool's-errand sequel in Iraq and Syria.

In any event, it seems reasonably clear why they did not let me enter the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30. Someone thought that the thin-skinned ex-general might be discomfited by a less-than-admiring question. His speech was to be another moment for Petraeus to bathe in public adulation, not confront a citizen or two who might pose critical queries. [For more on Petraeus and his acolytes, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question.](#)"]

Lingering Mystery

But one mystery lingers. The "organs of state security" (the words used by the Soviets to refer to their intelligence/security services) were lying in wait for me when I walked into the Y? Why? How on earth did they know I was coming?

My initial reaction was that the culprit could be a lingering BOLO, the "Be on the Look-Out" warning that the State Department had issued against me earlier for my non-violent anti-war stances. In September, thanks to a civil rights lawsuit filed on my behalf by the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund (PCJF), the State Department rescinded that BOLO alert for me, under which State Department agents had been ordered to stop and question me on sight.

State Department documents acquired under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the damning evidence behind that draconian (and patently unconstitutional) order was "political activism, primarily anti-war."

The proximate cause was my standing silently with my back to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Feb. 15, 2011, to protest the unconscionably violent policies she had promoted, including her vote for the Bush-Cheney war of aggression against Iraq (which she thought politically smart at the time) and her infamous suggestion during her political campaign that we could "obliterate" Iran.

In response to my silent protest, I was roughed up, cuffed, arrested, and jailed as Clinton delivered a major speech at George Washington University admonishing foreign governments not to stifle dissent. Heedless of the irony, Clinton did not miss a syllable, much less a word, as she watched me snatched directly in

front of her and brutally removed. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Standing Up to War and Hillary Clinton](#)."]]

The charges were immediately dropped, since there were simply too many cameras recording what actually did happen to me. A State Department investigation into my background came up dry; but the words "political activism, primarily anti-war" were enough to get me BOLOed.

The State Department assured my pro bono lawyers at the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund that State not only had rescinded the BOLO but also had notified other law enforcement agencies that the BOLO was "non-operational." But I remained suspicious that, while the State Department's assurance may have been made in good faith, God only knows (and then only if God has the proper clearances) what other organs of state security had entered the "derogatory" information about the danger of my "political activism" into their data bases.

Had my "derog" been shared, perhaps, with the ever-proliferating number of "fusion centers" that were so effective in sharing information to track and thwart the activists of Occupy including subversives like Quakers and Catholic Workers? However, as I reflected on the circumstances of my arrest on Oct. 30, I came to discount the possible role of the BOLO.

Taken by Surprise

As I walked up the steps to the 92nd Street Y on Oct. 30, I had no idea there would be a reprise of the treatment accorded me three-and-a-half years ago at Hillary Clinton's speech.

My friend and associate in Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS) Bill Binney, a former Technical Director at the National Security Agency before he left in protest against NSA's unconstitutional eavesdropping on Americans, long since advised me to assume that I am one of several thousands subjected to post-Fourth-Amendment surveillance.

So I had taken the precaution of asking a friend, who was in no way linked to me via email or phone records, to order the ticket for me, just on the off-chance the organs of state security might learn I intended to hear Petraeus speak at the 92nd Street Y and might do something to prevent my attending.

Actually, it was pure coincidence that I happened to be in New York on the day of the Petraeus event. Months before, I had committed to teaching classes at Manhattan and Fordham universities on Oct. 30. I learned of the Petraeus event much later.

At that point, I chose what I thought would be a safe way to purchase a

ticket. But I apparently failed to practice the kind of “tradedcraft” in terms of limiting associations that is needed to function in today’s democratic society.

How did the organs of state security learn I was coming? It is more likely to have been guilt by association than the residue from a BOLO. In short, when I travel to New York to teach, I normally email my friend Martha at Maryhouse in the Bowery the Catholic Worker house founded by her grandmother, Dorothy Day.

If there is a free bed, I gratefully receive Catholic Worker hospitality and have a chance to enjoy the company of those who have been placed at the margins of society, as well to witness the selfless kindness of those forming authentic relationships with them.

Here’s the catch. Catholic Workers are involved not only in extending hospitality but also in activism, trying, as Dorothy Day did, to make the world a less violent, more caring place. It is primarily the activism, of course, that brings scrutiny from the organs of security, but you might call it “political activism, primarily anti-war,” as the State Department did.

Moreover, the Catholic Worker Movement is an international organization widely looked upon as subversive of the Establishment, and this adds to the suspicion. In recent years, many of my Catholic Worker friends have been arrested for protesting the use of drones to kill foreigners dubbed “militants,” most of whom don’t look like most of us.

But the targets can now include American citizens, as President Barack Obama turns the Constitution upside down and takes it upon himself to act as judge, jury and executioner. Yes, the Fifth Amendment has gone the way of the Fourth, and the First has become an endangered species. Worth protesting before it too is extinct, would you not agree?

At The Tombs

In a kind of poetic justice, it turns out my friend Martha has the same court date as I have the morning of Dec. 8 at the New York City Criminal Court building (aka “The Tombs”) at 100 Centre Street in New York, where I spent the night/morning of Oct. 30/31. She was arrested with about 100 others at a Sept. 22 action dubbed “Flood Wall Street,” protesting the important role of the financial industry in facilitating air pollution and global warming.

In an aside, Martha told me that the police had as much trouble getting handcuffs on the “polar bear” sitting next to her that day as they did on Oct. 30 trying to bend my injured left shoulder back far enough to get the cuffs on me. I look forward to standing at the same dock where Martha will be defending her action which was very much in the tradition of “Grannie.”

My Catholic Worker friends comfort the afflicted, while in no way shying away from afflicting the comfortable, as the saying goes. And for that, they often pay a price, including being snooped upon, in violation of the Fourth Amendment, for exercising their rights under the First.

I am not making this up: In the fall of 2010, Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine criticized the FBI for conducting “anti-terrorism” spy operations against the Catholic Worker Movement and even the Thomas Merton Center in Pittsburgh. According to Fine, spies were sent into the Merton Center to “look for international terrorists.” One of the informers photographed a woman he thought was of “Middle Eastern descent” to have her checked out by “terrorism analysts.”

So my possible tradecraft lapse may have been contacting my Catholic Worker friends. On Oct. 26, I sent Martha an email with the innocuous title, “Room in the Inn?” It contained the usual request for simple lodging at the Catholic Worker together with details regarding my classes at Fordham and Manhattan and the Petraeus event.

While the title and other metadata accompanying that message might seem singularly unsuspecting, eavesdroppers covering Martha’s or my email addresses (or both) would have had no trouble ferreting out an email exchange following an earlier attempt to attend an event at the 92nd Street Y, three years ago.

On Sept. 8, 2011, a group of Catholic Workers, together with others all of us with valid tickets were summarily expelled, most of us 10 minutes *before* an event sponsored by the Jewish Policy Center. That event bore the title “9/11 a Decade Later: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges” and featured former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, ex-Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and George W. Bush’s press spokesman Ari Fleisher. It was moderated by neoconservative talk show host Michael Medved.

Since I was not among those subjected to Y security’s preventive strike before the performance, I sat quietly for Medved’s opening rant about radical, fundamentalist Muslim terrorists, but then stood up in silent witness against the right-wing invective. I was unceremoniously, violently thrown out after a mere two minutes.

More relevant here: I still have in my email inbox a message of encouragement dated Sept. 12, 2011, in which Martha reminded me that every action, “successful” or not, is important; adding, “We of the Catholic Worker are ‘fools for Christ,’ as the saying goes.”

Only Metadata

You are perhaps thinking that the National Security Agency stores only metadata; and, if so, you would be wrong. Content is saved. So if the government wants to access the content of emails from the past, no problem.

As Bill Binney reminded me, former FBI director Robert Mueller let that particular cat out of the bag three-and-a-half years ago. In his testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 30, 2011, Mueller bragged about having access to “past emails and future ones as they come in.”

Binney explains that the metadata is used to access the content. And, thanks to the documents provided by Edward Snowden, we know that under NSA’s PRISM operation, data is routinely collected directly from Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple (and God knows where else, again assuming God is cleared).

So my best guess is that I can blame the “subversive” activities of the Catholic Workers and the monitoring of them by the organs of state security, for my recent arrest and overnight accommodations in The Tombs.

The people at the World Can’t Wait in New York, who were also aware of my plan to take in the Petraeus performance, are known to have been targets of eavesdropping, too. With the surfeit of people sorting through emails from suspicious folks, it may be that both the Catholic Workers and the World Can’t Wait were monitored all to keep us safe, of course.

It seems the height of irony that it may have been NSA’s eavesdropping that enabled the White House to get rid of Petraeus, when he was getting too big for his britches (and I allude here not only to his dalliance with Broadwell). To Bill Binney, it is clear as day that the President was ready to move against Petraeus right after Obama’s re-election in November 2012.

A Final, Sad Irony

A couple of days after my arrest and jailing, I received a sympathetic email from “George” in Germany, who described himself as a national security whistleblower in his own right. George strongly suggested I ditch my Gmail account.

“Before Edward Snowden’s revelations last spring,” he said, “I too was using Gmail as my primary address. I was dismayed to learn that Google was an NSA PRISM partner.” George strongly suggested that I switch to a more trustworthy email provider outside the U.S. and actually suggested one in particular.

Why ironic? In the years after my birth in 1939, Germany was widely considered the cutting edge on matters of eavesdropping and enhanced interrogation

techniques, and most Germans didn't challenge these forms of oppression even when it touched them personally. Perhaps saddest of all, those with some pretense to moral leadership first and foremost the Catholic and Lutheran Churches could not find their voice. Is that history repeating itself in the U.S.?

In *Defying Hitler*, Sebastian Haffner's journal of his life as a lawyer in training to become a judge in Berlin in the early 1930s, the author (whose real name was Raimund Pretzel) provides an eerily reminiscent account of what ensued after Berlin's equivalent of the attacks of 9/11 the burning of the Reichstag.

"I do not see that one can blame the majority of Germans who, in 1933, believed that the Reichstag fire was the work of the Communists. What one can blame them for, and what shows their terrible collective weakness of character ... is that this settled the matter.

"With sheepish submissiveness, the German people accepted that, as a result of the fire, each one of them lost what little personal freedom and dignity was guaranteed by the constitution, as though it followed as a necessary consequence. If the Communists had burned down the Reichstag, it was perfectly in order that the government took 'decisive measures.' ... from now on, one's telephone would be tapped, one's letters opened, and one's desk might be broken into." (pp. 121-122).

Substitute Americans for Germans, terrorists for Communists, September 11, 2001, for 1933, and give some thought to where we seem to be headed. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that "there is such a thing as being too late," a quotation that, ironically, President Obama is fond of citing. It would be a good thing if we Americans woke from our lethargy before it is too late.

Ray McGovern works for Tell the Word, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. He served as an Army officer and then a CIA analyst for a total of 30 years, including two tours in Germany. He now serves on the Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).

Petraeus Spared Ray McGovern's Question

Exclusive: New York City police arrested ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern to prevent him from attending a public event where he planned to pose a pointed question to retired Gen. David Petraeus, another sign of how much U.S. neocons love

democracy, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

Former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, who was arrested by New York City police on Thursday night to prevent him from attending a speech by retired Gen. and ex-CIA Director David Petraeus, told me the day before that he was planning to ask a question during the Q-and-A.

McGovern, who writes regularly for Consortiumnews.com, compared his goal in New York to his famous questioning of then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Atlanta in 2006 when McGovern pressed Rumsfeld on false statements he had made about Iraq's WMD and ties to al-Qaeda.

But the 75-year-old McGovern was blocked from entering the event at the 92nd Street Y, was roughly put under arrest, and was held overnight in jail. He described his ordeal in an interview with RT, saying "I was warned as soon as I got to the ticket-taker, 'Ray, you're not welcome here.'"

McGovern, who was suffering from a shoulder injury, said he was caused sharp pain by being forcefully handcuffed. "If you've seen the footage, you can see me screaming in pain as they try to pin my left wrist around behind my back," McGovern told RT.

He was hauled off to a local precinct and charged with resisting arrest, criminal trespass and disorderly conduct. He said he spent the night on a stainless steel cot.

In our conversation a day earlier, on Wednesday, McGovern said he was calling from the bus traveling between Washington and New York en route to speak at his alma mater, Fordham University. But he said he also planned to attend the Thursday speech by Petraeus, who was one of President George W. Bush's favorite generals during the Iraq War. McGovern noted that prominent neocon theorist Max Boot was moderating the Petraeus talk.

During the Iraq War under President Bush and the Afghan War under President Barack Obama, Petraeus collaborated closely with leading neoconservatives as they pushed for escalations of the two conflicts. In 2009, Petraeus was part of a successful behind-the-scenes effort by Bush holdovers to trap Obama into a "surge" of 30,000 troops into Afghanistan.

"Before Obama's decision to dispatch 30,000 troops, the Bush holdovers sought to hem in the President's choices by working with allies in the Washington news media and in think tanks," I wrote in 2010. "For instance, early in 2009, Petraeus personally arranged for Max Boot [a neocon on the Council on Foreign

Relations], Frederick Kagan and Kimberly Kagan [two other leading neocons] to get extraordinary access during a trip to Afghanistan.

“Their access paid dividends for Petraeus when they penned a glowing report in the Weekly Standard about the prospects for success in Afghanistan if only President Obama sent more troops and committed the United States to stay in the war for the long haul.”

Upon their return, the three wrote: “Fears of impending disaster are hard to sustain, if you actually spend some time in Afghanistan, as we did recently at the invitation of General David Petraeus, chief of U.S. Central Command.

“Using helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, and bone-jarring armored vehicles, we spent eight days traveling from the snow-capped peaks of Kunar province near the border with Pakistan in the east to the wind-blown deserts of Farah province in the west near the border with Iran. Along the way we talked with countless coalition soldiers, ranging from privates to a four-star general,” the trio said.

A Manipulated Obama

How Obama was manipulated into the Afghan “surge” by Bush’s holdovers with the help of the neocons was chronicled, too, in Bob Woodward’s 2010 book, *Obama’s Wars*, which revealed that Bush’s old team made sure Obama was given no option other than to escalate troop levels in Afghanistan. The Bush holdovers also lobbied inside neocon-friendly media for the troop increase behind Obama’s back.

Woodward’s book notes that “in September 2009, Petraeus called a Washington Post columnist to say that the war would be unsuccessful if the president held back on troops. Later that month, [Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman, Adm. Mike] Mullen repeated much the same sentiment in Senate testimony, and in October, [Gen. Stanley] McChrystal asserted in a speech in London that a scaled-back effort against Afghan terrorists would not work.”

This back-door campaign infuriated Obama’s aides, including White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, Woodward reported. “Filling his rant with expletives, Emanuel said, ‘Between the chairman [Mullen] and Petraeus, everyone’s come out and publicly endorsed the notion of more troops. The president hasn’t even had a chance!’” Woodward reported.

Mouse-trapped by this clever maneuvering, Obama acquiesced to the 30,000-troop “surge” although he reportedly regretted his decision almost immediately. In the end the “surge” and Petraeus’s counterinsurgency strategy that went with it had little impact on the Afghan War beyond extending the carnage and adding another 1,000 or so U.S. troops to the rolls of “the fallen.”

Petraeus's cozy relationship with Boot was also underscored in 2010 when the four-star general accidentally found himself in a public-relations kerfuffle because some of his prepared testimony to Congress had contained a mild criticism of Israel.

Concerned that his standing in Official Washington might be jeopardized if he were deemed "anti-Israel," Petraeus begged Boot to help him head off the controversy. The e-mails from Petraeus to Boot revealed Petraeus renouncing his own testimony in March 2010 because it included the observation that "the enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests" in the Mideast.

Petraeus's testimony had continued, "Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support."

Running Scared

Though the testimony was obviously true, many neocons regard any suggestion that Israeli intransigence on Palestinian peace talks contributed to the dangers faced by American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan or by the U.S. public from acts of terrorism at home as a "blood libel" against Israel.

So, when Petraeus's testimony began getting traction on the Internet, the general turned to Boot at the high-powered Council on Foreign Relations, and began backtracking on the testimony. "As you know, I didn't say that," Petraeus said, according to one e-mail to Boot timed off at 2:27 p.m., March 18, 2010. "It's in a written submission for the record."

In other words, Petraeus was saying the comments were only in his formal testimony submitted to the Senate Armed Services Committee and were not repeated by him in his brief oral opening statement. However, written testimony is treated as part of the official record at congressional hearings with no meaningful distinction from oral testimony.

In another e-mail, as Petraeus solicited Boot's help in tamping down any controversy over the Israeli remarks, the general ended the message with a military "Roger" and a sideways happy face, made from a colon, a dash and a closed parenthesis, ":-)".

The e-mails were made public by James Morris, who runs a Web site called "[Neocon Zionist Threat to America](#)." He said he apparently got them by accident when he sent a March 19 e-mail congratulating Petraeus for his testimony and Petraeus

responded by forwarding one of Boot's blog posts that knocked down the story of the general's implicit criticism of Israel.

Petraeus forwarded Boot's blog item, entitled "A Lie: David Petraeus, Anti-Israel," which had been posted at the Commentary magazine site at 3:11 p.m. on March 18. However, Petraeus apparently forgot to delete some of the other exchanges between him and Boot at the bottom of the e-mail.

McGovern was aware of this history and told me that he thought an opportunity to question Petraeus in such a setting with Boot might prove illuminating. After his arrest and release, McGovern told RT that he had planned to ask Petraeus, who was responsible for training the Iraqi army, about his failure to train those forces sufficiently to stand up to a recent offensive by the Islamic State.

"Will you come out of retirement and try to do it better this time to train the Iraqi forces?" McGovern said, describing his intended question.

Petraeus retired from the U.S. Army in 2011 to become the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, which he left in disgrace in November 2012 after revelations that he had an extramarital affair with an admiring female biographer.

"This is no saint. This is actually no great strategist," McGovern said of Petraeus. "He's an embarrassment to the U.S. Army in which I used to be proud to have served."

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