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On the Brink of Nuclear War

Special Report: As nuclear war looms in Korea, the life-or-death question is whether President Trump and his team can somehow marshal the skill and strength of President Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis, writes historian William R. Polk.

By William R. Polk

In the [first part](#) of this essay, I gave my interpretation of the background of the current confrontation in Korea. I argued that, while the past is the mother

of the present, it has several fathers. What I remember is not necessarily what you remember; so, in this sense, the present also shapes or reshapes the past.

In my experience as a policy planner, I found that only by taking note of the perception of events as they are differently held by the participants could one understand or deal with present actions and ideas. I have tried to sketch out views of the past as we, the North Koreans and the South Koreans, differently view them in Part 1 of this essay.

Now I want to undertake a refinement of the record I have laid out. I want first to show how our perception, the interpretation we place on the events that swirl past us, adds a new and formative element to them. Whether consciously or not, we tend to put events into a pattern. So the pattern itself becomes part of the problem we face in trying to understand events. Staking out a path – an interpretation or a theory of what random bits and pieces mean or how they will be interpreted and acted upon by others – is a complex and contentious task.

Getting it wrong can lead us astray or even be very dangerous. So the interpreter, the strategist, must always be tested to see if his interpretation makes sense and the path he lays out is the one we want to travel. I will make this explicit below.

My experience in what was certainly the most dangerous situation America ever experienced, the Cuban Missile Crisis, led me to believe that at least in a crisis *how* we think about events and what we remember of the past often determines our actions and may be the deciding difference between life and death. So here I will begin with the mindset that underlay American policy for the last half century.

Anyone who reads the press or watches TV is beset with countless scraps of information. In my experience in government service, the deluge of information was almost paralyzing. Some of my colleagues joked that the way to defeat our adversaries was to give them access to what passed over our desks every day. It would immobilize them as it sometimes immobilized us.

How to separate from the flow the merely interesting from the important and how to relate one event to others were demanding tasks. Making them useful has been undertaken by strategists time after time over the last several thousand years. Machiavelli is the best known among us, but he was far from the first. [I have dealt with these issues in detail in *Neighbors and Strangers: The Fundamentals of Foreign Affairs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).]

Theory of Deterrence

The latest and arguably the most persuasive recent attempt to develop a sort of

framework or matrix to bring some sense of order and some ability to understand events has been the theory of deterrence. While “just a theory,” it set American policy toward the Soviet Union in the Cold War. It was developed to understand and deal with the Soviet Union in the Cold War, but it will determine much of what America tries to do with North Korea today.

To simplify and summarize, Cold War strategists led by such men as Henry Kissinger, Thomas Schelling and Bernard Brodie believed that ultimately relationships among nations were mathematical. Deterrence thus meant gathering the elements that could be added up by both sides. If country “A” had overwhelming power, country “B” would be deterred in its own interest from actions that were detrimental to them. Failure to “do the sums” correctly in the “game of nations” was to “misplay.”

Emotion and even politics had no role; in the real world. It was *realpolitik* that governed. Put another way, the weak would add up their capabilities and would necessarily give way to the strong to avoid being destroyed.

The great Greek historian Thucydides long ago set the tone: “Right, as the world goes,” he wrote, “is only in question between equals in power; the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Only by acting in this mindset would the national interests, the *real* interests, of each country be preserved and peace among nations be achieved.

Deterrence worked reasonably well up to and including the Cuban Missile Crisis. But during that crisis, as some of the theory’s critics had long held, a potentially fatal flaw became evident.

The flaw is that “national interest” – what can be added up or quantified as the assets and what gives it its strength – is not necessarily always coincident with “interest of government.” That is, governments may not always be guided by a rational calculation of national interest. There are times when leaders cannot afford, even if they precisely add up the figures, to act according to such slow-moving impulses as national interest. They may be subject to quite different and more urgent impulses. They may be emotional or otherwise be irrational, fearful of their lives or worried that they would lose their positions, or they may be driven by public opinion or by the different calculations of such other centers of power as the military. Being guided by the abstract calculation of national interest may then be impossible.

Let me illustrate this from my experience in the Cuban Missile Crisis, then in a war game the Department of Defense (DOD) organized to reexamine the Missile Crisis and finally in a meeting in Moscow with my Russian counterparts.

In the Missile Crisis, both President Kennedy (certainly) and Chairman Khrushchev (probably) were under almost unbearable pressure not only in trying to figure out how to deal with the events but also from the warnings, importuning and urging of their colleagues, rivals, supporters and from their military commanders. Whether either leader was in danger of overthrow of his regime or assassination is still unknown, but both were at least potentially at risk because the stakes were, literally, the fate of the world and opinions on how to deal with the possibility of ruinous war were strongly held.

Obviously, the loss to both of their nations in the event of a nuclear exchange would have been catastrophic so the national interest of both was clear: it was to avoid war. But how to avoid it was disputatious. And it was not nations that were making decisions; it was the leaders, and their interests were only in part coincident with national interest.

We were lucky that at least Kennedy realized this dilemma and took steps to protect himself. What he did is not well understood so I will briefly summarize the main points. First, he identified General Lyman Lemnitzer, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), as the main hawk. Lemnitzer was pushing him toward a nuclear war and had shown his hand by presenting a "black" plan ("Operation Northwoods") to be carried out by the JCS to trigger war with Cuba.

[Curiously, "Operation Northwoods" is hardly known even today. It was described by the eminent scholar on intelligence James Bamford in *Body of Secrets* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 82 ff, as the "launching [of] a secret and bloody war of terrorism against their own country in order to trick the American public into supporting an-ill-conceived war they intended to launch against Cuba." Provocations were to be manufactured: hijacking of aircraft, murders and the explosion of the rocket that was carrying astronaut John Glenn into space. Lemnitzer lied to Congress, denying the plan's existence, and had many of documents destroyed. Although he was dismissed as chairman of the JCS by Kennedy, the organization he formed within the JCS continued to plan covert actions. It would have been surprising if Kennedy did not worry about a possible attempt on his government.]

Fearing a Coup d'Etat

Apparently realizing that the plan could easily have been turned into a coup d'état, Kennedy removed Lemnitzer as far from Washington as he could (to Europe to be the NATO commander). Kennedy also assembled a group of elder statesmen, most of whom had served under the Eisenhower and Truman administrations in positions senior to the current military commanders and were identified as conservatives – far from Kennedy's image as a liberal.

Ostensibly, he sought their advice, but in practice what he sought was their approval of his decisions. He also was careful to instruct the public in his speech on the Monday, the first public acknowledgement of the crisis, that he was firmly in control and was determined to protect American interests.

Then, in the solution to the crisis, removing the American missiles from Turkey, he pretended that their removal was not a price he had to pay to end the crisis. Thus, in several ways, he neutralized potential critics, at least during the crucial time of the Crisis. But, not long afterwards, he was assassinated by persons, forces, or interests about whom and whose motivation there is still much controversy. At minimum, we know that powerful people, including Lemnitzer, thought Kennedy had sold out national interest in pursuit of the interest of his administration.

At the same time in Moscow, Mr. Khrushchev probably risked his life by accepting the humiliation imposed on his regime by the forced withdrawal of Russian missiles from Cuba. Apparently, for of course we do not know, he felt less immediate danger than Kennedy because the Soviet system had always distrusted and guarded against its military commanders. A Lemnitzer there would probably have been "disappeared," not just sent into a polite exile. And hovering beside each of the senior officers of the Soviet army was a political commissar who was responsible to the civilian administration – that is, to the Communist Party leadership – for the officer's every move, every contact, almost every thought. The military did what the civil leadership told it to do.

I presume Khrushchev believed that he had his colleagues with him, but that cannot have been very reassuring given the record of the Politburo. And, when he died, Khrushchev or at least his reputation paid a price: he was refused the supreme accolade of Soviet leadership; he was not buried with other Soviet heroes in the Kremlin Wall. That we know; what we cannot know is whether or not he thought he was, or actually was, in danger of being overthrown.

What is clear is that he was strong enough – and faced with no blatant or destructive action by America – that he was able to surmount the "interest of government" to protect "national interest." In short, he was not backed into a corner.

Were it not for the strength and bravery of both men, we might not have survived the Missile Crisis. Obviously, we cannot always be so served. Sometimes, we are apt to be dependent on weaker, more timorous and less steady men. This is not an abstract issue, and it has come back to haunt us in the Korean confrontation as it surely will in other confrontations. Understanding it may be a matter of our survival. That was not just my view but was also was even then the nagging worry of the DOD.

Thus, in the aftermath of the crisis, the DOD sought reassurance that deterrence had worked and would continue to work. That is, it sought to test the theory that leaders would add up the sums and be governed by what they found rather than by political, emotional or other criteria.

A Nuclear War Game

To this end, the DOD commissioned the conflict strategist Thomas Schelling to design and run a politico-military war game to push the experience of the Missile Crisis to the extreme, that is to find out what the Russians would they do if they were dealt a severe, painful and humiliating nuclear blow?

Schelling's game pitted two small teams of senior, fully-briefed U.S. government officers against one another in the Pentagon. Red Team represented the USSR and Blue Team the U.S. Each was provided with all the information Khrushchev would have had. Shortly after assembling, we were told that Blue team destroyed a Red Team city with a nuclear weapon. What would Red Team do?

Since it was far weaker than the United States, by the deterrence theory it would cave in and not retaliate.

To Schelling's exasperation, the game proved the opposite. It showed that action only in part depended on a rational calculation of national interest but rather in circumstances of crisis, would be governed by the political imperatives faced by the government. I have discussed this in detail elsewhere, but in brief, the members of Red Team, who were among the most experienced and gifted men from the State Department, the White House, the CIA and the DOD, chaired by the very conservative admiral who was Chief of Naval Operations, decided unanimously that Red Team had no option but to go to general war as fast and as powerfully as it could.

Shelling stopped the game, saying that we had "misplayed" and that if we were right he would have to give up the theory of deterrence. We laid out the reasons for our decision.

That decision was taken on two grounds: the first was that acquiescence was not politically possible. No government, Russian or American or other, could accept the humiliation of the loss of a city and survive the fury of those who felt betrayed. Even if at ruinous cost, it would strike back. This is a lesson apparently still unlearned.

Indeed, it could cause the death of each person reading this essay if applied in real life in a nuclear first strike as I will shortly make clear in discussing the Korean crisis.

The second basis for the decision was that, despite Kissinger, Schelling and other “limited nuclear war” advocates, there is no such thing as limited nuclear war in the real world. A nuclear strike would inevitably lead to retaliation, nuclear if possible, and that retaliation would lead to counter-retaliation.

In the war game, Red Team realized that if Mr. Khrushchev were to retaliate for America’s destruction of Baku by incinerating St. Louis, it would have posed a challenge, regardless of who was at fault or what the odds of success were, that Kennedy could not have ducked. He would certainly have been overthrown and almost certainly assassinated if he had not responded. He almost certainly would have destroyed a second Russian city.

Tit-for-tat had no stopping point. Each response would lead to the next and quickly to general war. So Red Team went immediately to the best of its bad options: hitting back immediately with everything it had: in short, we opted for general war.

Fortunately that scenario was not tested. In the real Cuban Missile Crisis, no city was incinerated. Neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev was pushed beyond “calculation.” But it was a very close call. My own hunch, from having been one of the 25 or so civilians closely involved in the real-life crisis, is that Kennedy and his team could not have held firm much longer than the Thursday or Friday of that terrible week.

The implications are clear – and terrifying – but neither Shelling nor other Cold Warriors have accepted them. We are still today approaching the conflict in Korea with the mindset that our war game showed was fatally flawed.

The last test of the result of the war game came when I lectured on strategic planning and participated in a seminar on the Missile Crisis with the members of the then principal advisory group to the Politburo, the Institute of World Economy and International Affairs of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In a word, my opposite numbers there agreed with the analysis I have just laid out: Khrushchev could not have accepted an American nuclear attack. He would have responded even though he realized that the overwhelming advantage – the “numbers” – were against him.

They also agreed that in practical terms there was no such thing as limited nuclear war. A “limited” nuclear strike would be, inevitably, the first step in a general war.

Lacking Wise Leaders

I will speculate below on how the actual events of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the result of the war game might apply to the current conflict in Korea. Here

let me anticipate by saying that we have no reason to believe that the men who will decide the issue are of the caliber of Kennedy and Khrushchev.

Both Kennedy and Khrushchev were strong, pragmatic, experienced and well supported men. In today's conflict between the United States and North Korea, neither Donald Trump nor Kim Jong Un evince similar attributes. Some critics even question their sanity. But, they will make the decisions, so I focus on them, their motivations and their capacities. I begin with Mr. Trump.

I have never met Mr. Trump and our backgrounds are very different so I am driven to two, admittedly incomplete and questionable, ways of understanding him. The first of these is his own description of his thought process and way of acting. The three characteristics that seem to me most germane to foreign affairs and particularly to the confrontation in Korea are these:

—On November 12, 2015, Mr. Trump declared, "I love war." In fact, as the record showed, he went to considerable trouble to deny himself the pleasures of going into harm's way during the Vietnam War. And, now, should he decide to take America to war, he would not put his own life in danger.

In my time in Washington, such "war-lovers from afar" were often referred to as "chicken-hawks." They loved to talk about war and to urge others to get into it, but, like Mr. Trump, they never volunteered for action and never, in their pronouncements, dwelt on the horror of actual combat. For them war was another TV episode where the good guys got a bit dusted up but always won.

Mr. Trump presumably meant by the word "war" something very different from real war since he explained, "I'm good at war. I've had a lot of wars on my own. I'm really good at war. I love war, in a certain way but only when we win."

For Mr. Trump, as his actions show, every business deal was a sort of war. He conducted it as what military strategists call a zero-sum game: the winner took all and the loser got nothing. There was little or no negotiation. "Attack" was the operational mode and his opponent would be driven to defeat by the threat of financial ruin. This was the "certain way" he called his many "wars on my own."

The record bears him out. He overwhelmed rivals with lawsuits against which they had to defend themselves at ruinous cost, convinced them that if they did not acquiesce he would destroy them and was unrelenting. He was very good at it. He made his fortune in this form of "war." He seems to believe that he can apply his experience in business to international affairs. But nations are not so likely to go out of business as the rivals he met in real estate transactions and some of them are armed with nuclear weapons.

—On several occasions, Mr. Trump set out his understanding of the role of

nuclear weapons. In 2015, as a candidate, he was quoted as saying, "For me, nuclear is just the power, the devastation is very important to me." But I find no evidence that he realizes what "devastation" really means. It is one thing to drive a business rival into bankruptcy and quite another to oversee the burning to death of hundreds of thousands or millions of people and relegating still more to homelessness and starvation in a ruined environment.

One supposes that he is aware of what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but they are misleading. Modern nuclear weapons are far more powerful: a one megaton weapon, for example, is about 50 times as powerful as the weapon that destroyed Hiroshima. Those of us who dealt with the threat of nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis were aware of the effects of such "standard" weapons.

I see no evidence that Mr. Trump knows what a nuclear war would actually do. Indeed, he is quoted as saying, "what is the point of having nuclear weapons if you don't use them?" He will find advisers who will tell him that they must be used. The ghost of General Lemnitzer hovers near the Oval Office.

Proud of Unpredictability

—Mr. Trump prides himself on unpredictability. Unpredictability was his business strategy. As he told an interviewer from CBS on January 1, 2016, "You want to be unpredictable ... And somebody recently said — I made a great business deal. And the person on the other side was interviewed by a newspaper. And how did Trump do this? And they said, he's so unpredictable. And I didn't know if he meant it positively or negative. It turned out he meant it positively."

Another time Trump said on TV "I want to be unpredictable." The record shows his use of the ploy, but perhaps it is more than just a ploy. Perhaps it is a manifestation of his personality, so I want to probe its meaning.

Years ago, I was informed that the CIA maintained a staff of psychoanalysts to profile foreign leaders. If the office still exists, the doctors presumably do not practice their arts on American officials, and certainly not on the President. As part of their professional code, psychiatrists are not supposed to diagnose anyone they have not personally examined, and I doubt that anyone will be able to get Mr. Trump to lie down on the couch.

But, as psychiatrists Peter Kramer and Sally Satel have pointed out, Mr. Trump has shown himself to be "impulsive, erratic, belligerent and vengeful" so "many experts believe that Mr. Trump has a narcissistic personality disorder." Reacting to having such a leader with his hand on the nuclear trigger, Maryland Congressman Jamie Raskin introduced a bill to establish an "Oversight Commission on Presidential Capacity" (H.R. 1987) as authorized by the 25th Amendment to the

Constitution. It has not been acted upon and it allows the President latitude to “pardon” himself.

Since his actions and the efforts of others do not offer much insight, I suggest his actions lend themselves to a perhaps instructive analogy, the game of “chicken.”

–In “chicken,” two drivers aim their speeding cars at one another. The one who flinches, turns aside, or (as Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it to me during the Cuban Missile Crisis) “blinks,” is the chicken. The winner is the driver who convinces the loser that he is irrational, deaf to all appeals and blind to danger. He cannot get out of the way.

In Mr. Trump’s strategy of war, the irrational man wins because he cannot be reached with any warning, argument or advice. Knowing this, the other man loses precisely because he is rational. Three things follow from this analogy. They seem evident in Mr. Trump’s approach to the issues of war or peace:

The first is that irrationality, ironically becomes a rational strategy. If one can convince his opponents that he cannot be reasoned with, he wins. This has worked for years in business for Mr. Trump. I see no reason to believe that he will give it up.

The second is that the driver of the car does not need information or advice. They are irrelevant or even detrimental to his strategy. So, we see that Mr. Trump pays no attention to the professionals who man the 16 agencies set up by previous administrations to provide information or intelligence.

One example where his professed plan of action flies in the face of the intelligence appreciation is Iran. As the former deputy director of the CIA David Cohen found “disconcerting,” Mr. Trump has repeatedly said that Iran was not abiding by the terms of the Iranian-American deal on nuclear weapons before “finding the intelligence to back it up.” But that is inherent in Trump’s strategy of confrontation. He surely knows – but does not care – that the entire intelligence community holds that Iran has abided by the deal.

In Trump’s mind, intelligence analysts are “back seat drivers” and should keep quiet. By questioning his blindness, they suggest to the driver of the other car that Mr. Trump might swerve aside. Thus, they threaten to destroy the irrationality that is the essence of his strategy.

And, third, what Mr. Trump, the “driver” of the car in the “chicken” confrontation, does need is absolute loyalty. Those who sit beside him must never question how he is driving. Any hint of their trying to dissuade his actions threatens to destroy his strategy. So, as we see almost daily, at any

hint of disagreement, he pushes his copilots out of the car. Indeed, at least one hardly even got into the “car” before being pushed out the door.

His actions both in business and in the presidency illustrate these points. He takes pride in irrational actions, shifting from one position to another, even its opposite, on what appears to be a whim. He disdains advice even from the intelligence services and also from presumably loyal members of his inner circle. What he demands is absolute loyalty.

Finally, it seems to me that Mr. Trump has understood, far better than most of us, that the public likes to be entertained. It is bored by consistency. It doesn't pay much attention to explanation or analysis. And as the financially successful record of the TV industry and the sorry record of the book publishing industry show, the public wants entertainment. Mr. Trump caters to popular taste: every episode is new; every remark, simple; every threat, dramatic; and, perhaps most powerfully of all, he echoes angers, disappointments, hurts, desires that many of his supporters also feel.

This mode of operation worked for Trump in the business world. His image of ruthlessness, determination and even irrationality caused some of the biggest potential rivals to get out of his way and many others to accept his terms rather than risk a collision. It is not Trump or his mode of operation that has changed but the context in which he operates. Citibank with which he clashed did not have nuclear weapons; North Korea does. So how does Kim Jong Un measure up?

Measuring Kim Jong Un

Kim Jong Un is the third generation of the North Korean leadership. That position is almost beyond the comprehension of modern Westerners. Ruling dynasties went out of fashion in the First World War. But perhaps consideration of “dynasty” can be made to yield useful insights. One who tried to learn what dynastic succession could tell us was the great medieval North African philosopher of history, Ibn Khaldun.

Observing Berber and Arab societies, Ibn Khaldun found that the first dynasty, sweeping in from the desert, was made up of men who were rough and vigorous; their sons still remembered times of struggle and retained their hardihood, but the third generation grew use to ease and settled into luxury. Its leaders kept power by relying on outside forces. The fourth generation lost it all.

The fit to Korea is far from exact, but it is provocative. Kim Il-sung was a guerrilla warrior, not unlike the warring tribal leaders with whom Ibn Khaldun dealt. Sweeping in from Siberia he took power (admittedly with Soviet help), ruled for nearly half a century and established the dynasty; in the second

generation, his son Kim Jong-Il came seamlessly to power on his death in 1994. While he shared little of his father's war-like experiences, he seems to have been a hard man, as Ibn Khaldun expected. But he gives just a hint of the growth of the enjoyment of the new environment. The luxury he enjoyed was exactly what Ibn Khaldun would have predicted. He took as his mistress a beautiful dancer. From this union came Kim Jong Un, the personification of the third dynasty.

Young Kim Jong Un grew up in what was, in Korean terms, the lap of luxury and as a child was allowed to play the child's game of soldiers. His soldiers, however, were not toys; they were real. There is no certain information, but it is believed that he was made a senior officer in the North Korean army when he was just a child. When he was 12 years old, his father sent him to a private school in Switzerland. Being provided with a personal chef to cook Korean dishes as well as a tutor and a driver/bodyguard, he does not seem to have really been "in" Europe.

He was taken out of the Swiss school when he was 15 and put into a public school in Korea. Those few who knew him have commented that he was intensely patriotic. At his father's choice, although he was not the elder son, he was singled out as the successor, the man of the third generation.

Despite this unusual background he seems remarkably like an ordinary American schoolboy: he loved sports, particularly basketball, spent a lot of time watching movies and was an indifferent student. This is just about all know about his background. He did not emerge in public until about the time his father was dying.

In 2009, he is thought to have married a beautiful young women who has been variously described as a singer in a popular music group, a cheerleader in a sports event and a doctoral candidate in a Korean university. When his father finally died in 2011, the 32-year-old Kim Jong-un became North Korea's leader. But on assuming power, he showed himself a more ruthless, determined and absolute ruler than Ibn Khaldun would have predicted.

Almost immediately, he purged his father's top general among other senior officials, and allegedly he ordered or tolerated the murder of his elder brother whom he must have seen as a potential rival. More generally, he proved himself skillful in organizing the bitter memories of the Korean War among his people to support his regime.

To explain in part the inconsistency of what he did and what was expected of the third generation, I suggest that that he must have constantly had before him lesson of Saddam Husain who lacked nuclear weapons, could not defend himself and was hanged. Watching these events as a young man, Kim Jong Un must have been

convinced that he could not afford to give himself up to luxury. As his opponents charge, he may have many vices but sloth is not one of them.

Policy Options

From this sketchy background of the two men whose hands are on the nuclear trigger, I turn to what their choices are. That is, what is the range of policies they must be considering or enacting to accomplish what they say are their objectives.

As I understand his objectives, the ruler of North Korea is determined to protect his regime (and of course his own life) and believes he can do so only if he has the capacity to deliver a blow sufficiently painful to any attacker that would deter him.

As Siegfried Hecker, the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory who has visited North Korea seven times and toured its nuclear facilities, has written (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 7 August 2017), Kim Jong Un “is determined to develop an effective deterrent to keep the United States out.” His answer is a missile-carried nuclear weapon.

Contrariwise, President Trump’s announced objective (which in general echoes that of previous administrations) is to get the North Korean government to stop its development of both nuclear weapons and missiles. He has, theoretically, a range of policies to effect his objective.

Taking back my former role as a policy planner, I would divide the possible courses of American action, the cost of each and its likelihood of being accomplished as follows:

–The first possible policy is what could be called “bluster and threat without armed action.” This is what President Trump is doing today. His outbursts apparently go over well with his loyal supporters but his words have not apparently at least so far affected Kim Jong Un.

However his words have delivered the worst possible result: it has increased North Korean fear of U.S. invasion, has increased Kim Jong Un’s determination to develop a deliverable nuclear weapons capability and has probably stoked the war fever of the Koreans.

Thomas Schelling, with whom I disagreed on other issues, got this one right. As he wrote in *The Strategy of Conflict*, “madmen, like small children, can often not be controlled by threats” and “if he is not to react like a trapped lion, [an opponent] must be left some tolerable recourse. We have come to realize that a threat of all-out retaliation gives the enemy every incentive, in the event he

should choose not to heed the threat, to initiate his transgression with an all-out strike on us; it eliminates lesser courses of action and forces him to choose between extremes.”

In making that choice, Kim Jong Un hears President Trump, threatening “fire and fury, the likes of which this world has never seen before.” (Kim responded with the threat to bomb America’s air base on Guam island “to teach the U.S. a severe lesson.”)

Mr. Trump said America was “locked and loaded” and its “patience is over.” And, in addition to remarks on the internet and to audiences all over America, he authorized a simulated war exercise (known as Foal Eagle 2017) by some 300,000 troops armed with live ammunition in and around South Korea which, of course, the government of the North regarded as provocative. But the U.S. did not alert its troops in South Korea nor its aircraft on Guam nor its ships at sea that an outbreak of hostilities was imminent. In short, the threat appeared all talk but no action.

Sen. John McCain, a man with some experience in combat, commented that President Trump’s recent fiery rhetoric on North Korea would only ratchet up the heat for a possible confrontation but nothing else.

As the conservative political commentator Anthony Cordesman wrote on August 5, 2017, “One would hope that the North Korean ‘crisis’ is moving away from bluster and counter bluster ... [since] gross overreaction and issuing empty threats discredits the U.S. in terms of allies support and is not a meaningful bargaining tool in dealing with fellow blusterers like Kim Jong Un.”

Conclusion: the likelihood of this line of action accomplishing the stated objective of American policy is near zero, but the costs are twofold: first, the threat of intervention forces the North Korean government to accelerate its acquisition of the very weapons America wishes it to relinquish and serves to keep its armed forces on alert lest the Americans convert threat to attack or stumble into war; the second cost is that such a policy undercuts the image Americans wish to project as the upholders of peace and stability even if not always of democracy and independence.

The Limited Strike Option

–The second possible policy would be to attack selected targets, including members of North Korea’s government, with Special Forces and/or drones. Employment of such tactics even in less organized societies, such as Somalia, Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan, have created chaos but have not produced what their advocates predicted.

North Korea is a regimented state with a high level of “security” comparable to China. In the 1960s, I once was ordered to find out what the CIA might be able to do with this or a similar option to slow down Chinese nuclear development. The CIA was then sending agents into China from secret bases on Quemoy and Matsu. I asked what they found out. The responsible CIA officer replied that he did not know because none ever returned. That experience would probably be repeated in Korea.

Conclusion: the likelihood of such action accomplishing the stated objective of American policy is near zero, but the cost could be catastrophic: An American attack, even if denied and covert, almost certainly would trigger a North Korean response that might provoke an American counterstroke that could escalate to nuclear war.

–The third possible policy would be to encourage North Korea’s neighbors to attempt to coerce it to disarm and/or to scale back its military policy. Such a policy could aim to get China to control the North Koreans and possibly then encourage or allow Japan and/or South Korea to acquire nuclear weapons and so, themselves, pose a threat to North Korea and indirectly to Chinese interests.

Mr. Trump has several times called on the Chinese to effect the American policy on North Korea and has expressed his disappointment that they have not done so. When their own interests were at stake, the Chinese did impose sanctions and cut back on the import of Korean coal, iron ore and seafood. But China can hardly be expected to lend itself to be a tool of American policy. It too has memories of the Korean War and of attempts to weaken or overthrow it. Today, it also sees the U.S. as its rival in the Pacific. So, it is unlikely that Mr. Trump’s saying that “they do Nothing for us with North Korea, just talk. We will no longer allow this to continue” – will win Chinese support.

If not the Chinese, what about the Japanese? As I have pointed out in Part 1 of this essay, Japan is tarred by the nearly half century of its brutal regime in Korea. Korean “comfort women,” sexual slaves, are still seeking compensation for the misery inflicted on them and their plight is standard fare in Korean media.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has been pushing for Japanese rearmament and is known for his hard line on North Korea, is not a good choice to convince North Korea to cooperate with America. Encouraging militarism in Japan will raise bitter memories all over East Asia.

Moreover, were Japan to rearm itself with nuclear weapons or were South Korea to be given them, as Mr. Cordesman thinks Mr. Trump may feel forced to do, the overall and long-range objectives of the United States would be severely damaged: the “cure would be worse than the malady.”

We don't need more nuclear weapons powers; the political history of South Korea gives little assurance of a "responsible" nuclear policy; and there is no reason to believe that a nuclear-armed South Korea or a nuclear-armed Japan would be more successful than a nuclear-armed America.

Worse, if South Korea and Japan were to develop or acquire nuclear weapons, such action might set off a scramble by other nations to acquire them. The world was already deadly dangerous when only two states had nuclear weapons; the danger of use by design or accident was multiplied when five more states acquired them and if the number keeps on growing accidental or deliberate use will become almost inevitable.

To spread weapons further is against America's national interest although some of President Trump's advisers apparently discount the danger and believe enhanced nuclear power at home and selective spread abroad is to the interest both of the nation and of his administration.

Conclusion: the likelihood of getting others to successfully accomplish American objectives vis-à-vis North Korea is near zero. Faced with nuclear-armed South Korea and Japan, North Korea would logically accelerate rather than cut back its weapons program. China has its own policies and is unlikely to serve as an American proxy. Moreover, the costs of giving South Korea and Japan nuclear weapons is potentially enormous.

The Nuclear Option

—The fourth theoretical policy option would be an American or American-led "coalition" attack on North Korea similar to our two attacks on Iraq and our attack on Afghanistan. America could hit the country with almost any level of destruction it chose from total annihilation to targeted demolition. Knowing that they could not prevent attacks, the North Koreans have adopted a policy that sounds very like America's Cold War strategy against the Soviet Union, mutual assured destruction or MAD. What would this amount to in the Korean conflict?

The cost of war to North Korea would be almost unimaginable. If nuclear weapons were used, much of North Korea would be rendered unlivable for a generation or more. General Douglas MacArthur had wanted to use the nuclear bomb during the first Korean War in the early 1950s, but even with only conventional weapons used in that conflict, the Koreans suffered casualties, reportedly, of about one in each three persons.

If the U.S. used nuclear weapons this time, millions, perhaps as many as 8 million to 12 million, would be killed and many of the rest of the 26 million

inhabitants would be wounded or afflicted with radiation sickness. Once initiated, the attack would have done this damage in minutes or hours. So how would the North Koreans respond?

Their government would order them to retaliate. That is what they are constantly being trained to do. As the Korean War demonstrated, the North Koreans are determined fighters. It would be foolish to expect them to surrender.

The North Korean army is said to be the fourth largest in the world, roughly 1 million men, and is backed up by an active reserve about 5-6 times that many from a potential enrollment of about 10 million. This force is equipped with perhaps 10,000 tanks and self-propelled cannon.

The numbers are impressive but, as in chess, it is position that counts in war. The North is believed to have about 12,000 cannon and roughly 2,300 rockets within range of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. Seoul has a population of somewhat more than 10 million people and, in the event of an American attack on North Korea, the North Koreans have said they would obliterate it.

As David Wood wrote on April 18, 2017, "In a matter of minutes, these heavy, low-tech weapons could begin the destruction of the South Korean capital with blizzards of glass shards, collapsed buildings and massive casualties that would decimate this vibrant U.S. ally and send shock waves through the global economy."

In addition to the South Koreans who would suffer and die, there are about 30,000 US troops in the armistice zone. They, and the hundreds of thousands of dependents, supporters and families of the troops living in Seoul, are hostages to U.S. policy. They also would suffer terrible casualties.

Could the North Koreans carry out such massive counterstrikes? There seems little or no doubt that they could, even if they were subjected to massive first strikes even with nuclear weapons. The North Koreans learned from the first Korean War to use mobile, hard to detect or target, launchers and to go underground to prepared firing points.

Probably many of the North Korean weapons would be destroyed, but there are so many that the surviving pieces could inflict massive casualties. Almost incredible photos, from North Korean television, published in *The Sun* on April 26, 2017, showed demonstration by hundreds of North Korean artillery pieces and rocket launchers firing into the sea. In the event of war, they would be firing into Seoul.

Then there are the missiles. Japan generally and U.S. bases in Japan and on the island of Guam are within the range of North Korean mid-range rockets. And

Alaska and the U.S. West Coast are either already or soon will be within range. Would North Korea use them as a counterstrike? On August 7, as *Business Insider* reported, "North Korea issued a stark warning to the US: If you attack us, we will retaliate with nuclear weapons."

Judging from my experience in the Cuban Missile Crisis, I am sure that we would have done so. It is unlikely that Kim Jong Un would do less than John F. Kennedy.

Losing Los Angeles

If in reply to an American attack, the North Koreans struck the United States what would be the result? Loren Thompson speculated in the August 30, 2017 issue of *Forbes* on "What a Single North Korean Nuclear Warhead Could Do To Los Angeles." He picked Los Angeles because it is or soon will be in range of North Korean missiles and would be an obvious choice against which to threaten retaliation. With a population of more than 13 million, it is the second largest city in America.

As I write this, North Korea appears to have demonstrated a somewhat less powerful thermonuclear weapon, about seven times the power of the bomb that obliterated Hiroshima, but Thompson speculates on the result of Los Angeles being hit by a bomb that North Korea presumably will soon have, about 33 times as powerful as the Hiroshima bomb.

Hit by it, all structures, no matter how securely built with reinforced concrete, within a radius of half a mile from ground zero "would be either totally destroyed or rendered permanently unusable." The enormous pressure created by the fireball would heavily damage the adjoining circle of 2½ to 3 miles. Virtually all civic facilities (electrical grids, water mains, transport facilities, etc.) would be rendered inoperative and civil services (fire departments, police, hospitals, schools) would be destroyed or severely damaged.

A cloud of radioactive materials would be spread over a far larger area. And perhaps as many as a million people would have been burned to death immediately with many more grievously wounded and unable to get help. And that would be only in the first hours or days. In the following days, the wounded, often suffering from burns, hungry, thirsty, terrified and desperate, would limp out of the core area into the suburbs and surrounding towns, overwhelming their facilities.

Los Angeles would be only one target. North Korea would have nothing to lose by using all of its missiles and bombs. Some might go astray or malfunction, but some might hit San Francisco, Seattle, perhaps Denver and more remotely St. Louis, Dallas and perhaps Chicago. If one reached New York, the damage would be

far greater than in Los Angeles.

Conclusion: As Steven Bannon, President Trump's former "Chief Strategist" is quoted as saying, "There's no military solution [to North Korea's nuclear threats], forget it. Until somebody solves the part of the equation that shows me that ten million people in Seoul don't die in the first 30 minutes from conventional weapons, I don't know what you're talking about, there's no military solution here, they got us."

That may explain why he was fired. And retired Lt. General James Clapper, who as the former Director of National Intelligence was not in danger of losing his job, told CNN, we must "accept the fact that they are a nuclear power."

An attack on North Korea, while almost certainly devastating to North Korea, would be prohibitively expensive for America. Moreover, while it would temporarily prevent North Korea from posing a nuclear threat, it would create another area of chaos, like those created in Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Afghanistan. Attacking North Korea is not a rational policy choice.

Trying to Talk

-The remaining policy option is negotiation. What would be negotiable and what not? What would be the modalities? What would constitute success and what would be the result of failure? How could a result be made believable and how could it be enforced?

I think we must begin by recognizing that it would be irrational for North Korea to give up missiles and nuclear weapons. Despite the horror with which I view nuclear weapons, they are very attractive to small nations. They level the playing field. A Texas saying from my youth sums it up: Mr. Colt's invention of the cowboy's pistol "made all men equal." The nuclear weapon is pistol writ large. It is the ultimate defense.

For Kim Yong Un to give up his nuclear weapons, while we keep ours and have announced that we intend to overthrow his regime, would be tantamount to his committing suicide. He may be evil, as many believe, but there is no reason to believe that he is a fool.

Could not America offer in the course of negotiations a series of graduated steps in which over time a slow-down and ultimate elimination of missiles and nuclear weapons could be traded for ending of sanctions and increased aid? The answer, I think, is "yes, but." The "but" is that Kim Yong Un would almost certainly insist on three things: the first is that he would not give up *all* his weapons and so would insist that North Korea be recognized as a nuclear power; the second is that he not be humiliated in the negotiated cut; and the third is

that some formula be worked out to guarantee the deal. I have dealt with the first two issues above; I turn now to the third, how to guarantee the agreement.

The Bush administration invasion of Iraq in 2001 showed that America could create excuses to void any commitment it might make and provide excuses for any action it wished to take. The current push by the Trump administration to renege on the treaty made with Iran and written into American law by the Senate must convince the North Koreans that a treaty with America is just a scrap of paper. He must be convinced that America cannot be trusted.

But, if China and Russia were prepared to guarantee the deal and Japan and South Korea acquiesced to it and also gave up their option to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons, that could be the first step in a phased series of steps that might be productive. At the same time, America would have to give up its ineffective sanctions, stop such provocative acts as the massive war game on the frontier and the barrage of threats and undertake a sort of Marshall Plan to lift North Korea out of poverty and hunger.

Conclusion: I am convinced that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future to get Kim Jong Un or any conceivable successor to give up deliverable nuclear weapons. Thus, there can be no “success,” as described in current policy statements by the Trump administration. But, arrangements can be created – by enlisting China and Russia as partners in negotiations and by renouncing threats and such damaging (and ineffective) policies as sanctions – to gradually create an atmosphere in which North Korea can be accepted as a partner in the nuclear “club.”

Failure to move in this direction will leave us, at best, in the limbo of fear and the possibility of stumbling into war. This is obviously a gambit that may fail. What is clear, however, is that none of the alternatives has worked or is likely to work. To embark on this path will require a degree of statesmanship, which we may not have.

How to Do It

If the United States government should decide to try this option, I think the following steps will have to be taken to start negotiations:

First, the U.S. government must accept the fact that North Korea is a nuclear power;

Second, it must commit itself formally and irrevocably to a no-first-strike policy. That was the policy envisaged by the Founding Fathers when they denied the chief executive the power to initiate aggressive war;

Third, it must remove sanctions on North Korea and begin to offer in a phased pattern aid to mitigate the current (and potentially future) famines caused by droughts and crop failures; helping North Korea to move toward prosperity, and reducing fear; and

Fourth, stop issuing threats and drop the unproductive and provocative war games on the DMZ.

Will, or even can, any American administration move in this direction? I think the answer will depend in large part on the education of the government leaders and the public among both of whom the level of ignorance of the real costs of war, especially nuclear war, is politically crippling.

As I have suggested, Mr. Trump has shown no comprehension of the costs of war in a nuclear context. Nor has the general public. The pictures of children on Guam being told not to look at the flash of the fireball reminds one of the ridiculous advice to school children in America in the Cold War to take refuge under their desks.

The reality of a modern war must be explained and taught. I do not know if Korean children are so taught, but their parents or grandparents knew it firsthand. This generation of Americans has never seen war up-close in America although some of their fathers saw it in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, memories fade and Americans today do not want to be informed of the danger of a new war. Escapism is one of the great dangers we face.

In the American tradition, the President is the nation's teacher. We must insist he perform that task or we could pay the supreme price of falling off the edge into the dark void of nuclear war.

William R. Polk is a veteran foreign policy consultant, author and professor who taught Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. President John F. Kennedy appointed Polk to the State Department's Policy Planning Council where he served during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His books include: *Violent Politics: Insurgency and Terrorism; Understanding Iraq; Understanding Iran; Personal History: Living in Interesting Times; Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times; and Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change.*

How History Explains the Korean Crisis

Special Report: Many Americans simply view North Korea and its leaders as "crazy," but the history behind today's crisis reveals of a more complex reality

that could change those simplistic impressions, as historian William R. Polk explains.

By William R. Polk

The U.S. and North Korea are on the brink of hostilities that if begun would almost certainly lead to a nuclear exchange. This is the expressed judgment of most competent observers. They differ over the causes of this confrontation and over the size, range and impact of the weapons that would be fired, but no one can doubt that even a "limited" nuclear exchange would have horrifying effects throughout much of the world including North America.

So how did we get to this point, what are we now doing and what could be done to avoid what would almost certainly be the disastrous consequences of even a "limited" nuclear war?

The media is replete with accounts of the latest pronouncements and events, but both in my personal experience in the closest we ever came to a nuclear disaster, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and from studying many other "flash points," I have learned that failure to appreciate the background and sequence of events makes one incapable of understanding the present and so is apt to lead to self-defeating actions. With this warning in mind, I will recount in Part 1 how we and the Koreans got to where we are. Then in Part 2, I will address how we might go to war, what that would mean and what we can do to stay alive.

Throughout most of its history, Korea regarded China as its teacher. It borrowed from China Confucianism, its concepts of law, its canons of art and its method of writing. For these, it usually paid tribute to the Chinese emperor.

With Japan, relations were different. Armed with the then weapon of mass destruction, the musket, Japan invaded Korea in 1592 and occupied it with more than a quarter of a million soldiers. The Koreans, armed only with bows and arrows, were beaten into submission. But, because of events in Japan, and particularly the decision to give up the gun, the Japanese withdrew in less than a decade and left Korea on its own.

Nominally unified under one kingdom, Korean society was already divided between the *Puk-in* or "people of the North" and the *Nam-in* or "people of the South." How significant this division was in practical politics is unclear, but apparently it played a role in thwarting attempts at reform and in keeping the country isolated from outside influences. It also weakened the country and facilitated the second intrusion of the Japanese. In search of iron ore for their nascent industry, they "opened" the country in 1876. Hot on the Japanese trail came the Americans who established diplomatic relations with the Korean court in 1882.

American missionaries, most of whom doubled as merchants, followed the flag. Christianity often came in the guise of commerce. Missionary-merchants lived apart from Koreans in segregated American-style towns, much as the British had done in India earlier in the century. They seldom met with the natives except to trade. Unlike their counterparts in the Middle East, the Americans were not noted for "good works." They spent more time selling goods than teaching English, repairing bodies or proselytizing; so while Koreans admired their wares all but a few clung to Confucian ways.

China's Protection

It was to China rather than to America that Koreans turned for protection against the Japanese "rising sun." As they grew more powerful and began their outward thrust, the Japanese moved to end the Korean relationship to China. In 1894, the Japanese invaded Korea, captured its king and installed a "friendly" government. Then, as a sort of byproduct of their 1904-1905 war with Russia, the Japanese seized control, and, in accord with the policies of all Western governments, they took up "the White Man's burden." American politicians and statesmen, led by Theodore Roosevelt, found it both inevitable and beneficial that Japan turned Korea into a colony. For the next 35 years, the Japanese ruled Korea much as the British ruled India and the French ruled Algeria.

If the Japanese were brutal, as they certainly were, and exploitive, as they also were, so were the other colonial powers. And, like other colonial peoples, as they gradually became politically sensitive, the Koreans began to react. Over time, they saw the Japanese intruders not as the carriers of the "white man's burden" but as themselves the burden. Some Koreans reacted by fleeing.

Best known among them was Syngman Rhee. Converted to Christianity by American missionaries, he went to the West. After a torturous career as an exile, he was allowed by the American military authorities at the end of the Second World War to become (South) Korea's first president.

But most of those who fled the Japanese found havens in Russian-influenced Manchuria. The best known of these "Eastern" exiles, Kim Il-sung, became an anti-Japanese guerrilla and joined the Communist Party. At the same time Syngman Rhee arrived in the American-controlled South, Kim Il-sung became the leader of the Soviet-supported North. There he founded the ruling "dynasty" of which his grandson Kim Jong-un is the current leader.

During the 35 years of Japanese occupation, no one in the West paid much attention to Syngman Rhee or his hopes for the future of Korea, but the Soviet government was more attentive to Kim Il-Sung. While distant Britain, France and America played no active role, the near-by Soviet Union, with a long frontier

with Japanese-held territory, had to concern itself with Korea.

It was not so much from strategy or the perception of danger that Western policy (and Soviet acquiescence to it) evolved. Driven in part by sentiment, America forced a change in the tone of relations with the colonial world during the Second World War and, driven by the need to appease America, Britain and France acquiesced. It was the tide of war, rather than any preconceived plan, that swept Korea into the widely scattered and ill-defined group of "emerging" nations.

As heir to the dreams of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed that colonial peoples deserved to be free. Korea was to benefit from the great liberation of the Second World War. So it was that on December 1, 1943, the United States, Britain and (then Nationalist) China agreed at the Cairo Conference to apply the revolutionary words of the 1941 Atlantic Charter: "Mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea," Roosevelt and a reluctant Churchill proclaimed, they "are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."

At the April-June 1945 San Francisco conference, where the United Nations was founded, Korea got little attention, but a vague arrangement was envisaged in which Korea would be put under a four-power (American, British, Chinese and Soviet) trusteeship. This policy was later affirmed at the Potsdam Conference on July 26, 1945, and was agreed to by the Soviet Union on August 8 when it declared war on Japan. Two days later Russian troops fanned out over the northern area. It was not until almost a month later, on September 8, that the first contingents of the U.S. Army arrived.

Aftermath of War

Up to that point, most Koreans could do little to effect their own liberation: those inside Korea were either in prison, lived in terror that they soon would be arrested or collaborated with the Japanese. The few who had reached havens in the West, like Syngman Rhee, found that while they were allowed to speak, no one with the power to help them listened to their voices. They were to be liberated but not helped to liberate themselves. It was only the small groups of Korean exiles in Soviet-controlled areas who actually fought their Japanese tormentors. Thus it was that the Communist-led Korean guerrilla movement began to play a role similar to insurgencies in Indochina, the Philippines and Indonesia.

As they prepared to invade Korea, neither the Americans nor the Russians evinced any notion of the difference between the *Puk-in* or "people of the North" and the *Nam-in* or "people of the South." They were initially concerned, as least in their agreements with one another as they had been in Germany, by the need to

prevent the collision of their advancing armed forces. The Japanese, however, treated the two zones that had been created by this ad hoc military decision separately.

As a Soviet army advanced, the Japanese realized that they could not resist, but they destroyed as much of the infrastructure of the north as they could while fleeing to the south. On reaching the south, both the soldiers and the civil servants cooperated at least initially with the incoming American forces. Their divergent actions suited both the Russians and the Americans – the Russians were intent on driving out the Japanese while the Americans were already beginning the process of forgiving them. What happened in this confused period set much of the shape of Korea down to the present day.

The Russians appear to have had a long-range policy toward Korea and the Communist-led insurgent force to implement it, but it was only slowly, and reluctantly, that the Americans developed a coherent plan for “their” Korea and found natives who could implement it. What happened was partly ideological and partly circumstantial. It is useful and perhaps important to emphasize the main points:

The first point is that the initial steps of what became the Cold War had already been taken and were quickly reinforced. Although the Yalta Conference included the agreement that Japan would be forced to surrender to all the allies, not just to the United States and China, President Truman set out a different American policy without consulting Stalin.

Buoyed by the success of the test of the atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, he decided that America would set the terms of the Pacific war unilaterally; Stalin reacted by speeding up his army’s attack on Japanese-held Korea and Manchuria. He was intent on creating “facts on the ground.” Thus it was that the events of July and August 1945 anchored the policies – and the interpretations of the war – of each great power. They shaped today’s Korea.

Arguments ever since have focused on the justifications for the policies of each Power. For many years, Americans have argued that it was the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, not the threat or actuality of the Soviet invasion, that forced the Japanese to surrender.

Spoils of War

In the official American view, it was America that won the war in the Pacific. Island by island from Guadalcanal, American soldiers had marched, sailed and flown toward the final island, Japan. From nearby islands and from aircraft carriers, American planes bombed and burned its cities and factories. Hiroshima

and Nagasaki were the final blows in a long, painful and costly process.

Truman held that the Russians appeared only after the Japanese were defeated. Thus, he felt justified – and empowered – to act alone on Japan. So when General Douglas MacArthur arranged the ceremony of surrender on September 2, he sidelined the Russians. The procedure took place on an American battleship under an American flag. A decade was to pass before the USSR formally ended its war with Japan.

The second crucial point is what was happening on the peninsula of Korea. There a powerful Russian army was present in the North and an American army was in control of the South. The decisions of Cairo, San Francisco and Potsdam were as far from Korea as the high-flown sentiments of the statesmen were from the realities, dangers and opportunities on the scene. What America and the Soviet Union did on the ground was crucial for an understanding of Korea today.

As the Dutch set about doing in Indonesia, the French were doing in Indochina and the Americans were doing in the Philippines, the American military authorities in their part of Korea pushed aside the nationalist leaders (whom the Japanese had just released from prison) and insisted on retaining all power in their own (military) government. They knew almost nothing about (but were inherently suspicious of) the anti-Japanese Koreans who set themselves up as the “People’s Republic.” On behalf of the U.S., General John Hodge rejected the self-proclaimed national government and declared that the military government was the only authority in the American-controlled zone.

Hodge also announced that the “existing Japanese administration would continue in office temporarily to facilitate the occupation” just as the Dutch in Indonesia continued to use Japanese troops to control the Indonesian public. But the Americans quickly realized how unpopular this arrangement was and by January 1946 they had dismantled the Japanese regime.

In the ensuing chaos dozens of groups with real but often vague differences formed themselves into parties and began to demand a role in Korean affairs. This development alarmed the American military governor. Hodge’s objective, understandably, was order and security. The local politicians appeared unable to offer either, and in those years, the American military government imprisoned tens of thousands of political activists.

Cold War in Vitro

Although not so evident in the public announcements, the Americans were already motivated by fear of the Russians and their actual or possible local sympathizers and Communists. Here again, Korea reminds one of Indochina, the

Philippines and Indonesia. Wartime allies became peacetime enemies. At least *in vitro*, the Cold War had already begun.

At just the right moment, virtually as a *deus ex machina*, Syngman Rhee appeared on the scene. Reliably and vocally anti-Communist, American-oriented, and, although far out of touch with Korean affairs, ethnically Korean, he was just what the American authorities wanted. He gathered the rightist groups into a virtual government that was to grow into an actual government under the U.S. aegis.

Meanwhile, the Soviet authorities faced no similar political or administrative problems. They had available the prototype of a Korean government. This government-to-become already had a history: thousands of Koreans had fled to Manchuria to escape Japanese rule and, when Japan carried the war to them by forming the puppet state they called Manchukuo in 1932, some of the refugees banded together to launch a guerrilla war. The Communist Party inspired and assumed leadership of this insurgency. Then as all insurgents – from Tito to Ho Chi-minh to Sukarno – did, they proclaimed themselves a government-in-exile.

The Korean group was ready, when the Soviet invasion made it possible, to become the nucleus of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The USSR recognized it as the sole government of (all) Korea in September 1948. And, despite its crude and often brutal method of rule, it acquired a patina of legitimacy by its years of armed struggle against the Japanese.

Both the USSR and the U.S. viewed Korea as their outposts. They first tried to work out a deal to divide authority among themselves. But they admitted failure on December 2, 1945. The Russians appeared to expect the failure and hardly reacted, but the Americans sought the help of the United Nations in formalizing their position in Korea. At their behest, the U.N. formed the "Temporary Commission on Korea." It was supposed to operate in all of Korea, but the Russians regarded it as an American operation and excluded it from the North. After a laborious campaign, it managed to supervise elections but only in the south, in May 1948.

The elections resulted in the formation on August 15 of a government led by Syngman Rhee. In response, a month later on September 9, the former guerrilla leader, Communist and Soviet ally Kim Il-sung, proclaimed the state of North Korea. Thus, the ad hoc arrangement to prevent the collision of two armies morphed into two states.

The USSR had a long history with Kim Il-sung and the leadership of the North. It had discreetly supported the guerrilla movement in Manchukuo (aka Manchuria) and presumably had vetted the Communist leadership through the purges of the 1930s

and closely observed them during the war. The survivors were, by Soviet criteria, reliable men. So it was possible for the Russians to take a low profile in North Korean affairs. Unlike the Americans, they felt able to withdraw their army in 1946. Meanwhile, of course, their attention was focused on the much more massive tide of the revolution in China. Korea must have seemed something of a sideshow.

The position of the United States was different in almost every aspect. First, there was no long-standing, pro-American or ideologically democratic cadre in the South.

The Rise of Rhee

The leading figure, as I have mentioned, was Syngman Rhee. While Kim Il-sung was a dedicated Communist, Rhee was certainly not a believer in democracy. But ideology aside, Rhee was deeply influenced by contacts with Americans. Missionaries saved his eyesight (after smallpox), gave him a basic Western-style education, employed him and converted him to Christianity. Probably also influenced by them, as a young man he had involved himself in protests against Korean backwardness, corruption and failure to resist Japanese colonialism. His activities landed him in prison when he was 22 years of age. After four years of what appears to have been a severe regime, he was released and in 1904 made his way into exile in America.

Remarkably for a young man of no particular distinction – although he was proud of a distant relationship to the Korean royal family – he was at least received if not listened to by President Theodore Roosevelt. Ceremonial or perfunctory meetings with other American leaders followed over the years. The American leaders with whom he met did not consider Korea of much importance and even if they had so considered it, Rhee had nothing to offer them. So I infer that his 40-year wanderings from one university to the next (BA in George Washington University, MA in Harvard and PhD in Princeton) and work in the YMCA and other organizations were a litany of frustrations.

It was America's entry into the war in 1941 that gave Rhee the opportunity he had long sought: he convinced President Franklin Roosevelt to espouse at least nominally the cause of Korean independence. Roosevelt's kind words probably would have little effect – as Rhee apparently realized. To give them substance, he worked closely with the OSS (the ancestor of the CIA) and developed contacts with the American military chiefs. Two months after the Japanese surrender in 1945, he was flown back to Korea at the order of General Douglas MacArthur.

Establishing himself in Seoul, he led groups of right-wing Koreans to oppose every attempt at cooperation with the Soviet Union and particularly focused on

opposition to the creation of a state of North Korea. For those more familiar with European history, he might be considered to have aspired to the role played in Germany by Konrad Adenauer. To play a similar role, Rhee made himself "America's man." But he was not able to do what Adenauer could do in Germany nor could he provide for America: an ideologically controlled society and the makings of a unified state like Kim Il-sung was able to give the Soviet Union. But, backed by the American military government and overtly using democratic forms, Rhee was elected on a suspicious return of 92.3 percent of the vote to be president of the newly proclaimed Republic of Korea.

Rhee's weakness relative to Kim had two effects: the first was that while Soviet forces could be withdrawn from the North in 1946, America felt unable to withdraw its forces from the South. They have remained ever since. And the second effect was that while Rhee tried to impose upon his society an authoritarian regime, similar to the one imposed on the North, he was unable to do so effectively and at acceptable cost.

The administration he partly inherited was largely dependent upon men who had served the Japanese as soldiers and police. He was tarred with their brush. It put aside the positive call of nationalism for the negative warning of anti-Communism. Instead of leadership, it relied on repression. Indeed, it engaged in a brutal repression, which resembled that of North Korea but which, unlike the North Korean tyranny, was widely publicized. Resentment in South Korea against Rhee and his regime soon grew to the level of a virtual insurgency. Rhee may have been the darling of America but he was unloved in Korea. That was the situation when the Korean War began.

Resumption of War

The Korean War technically began on June 25, 1950, but of course the process began before the first shots were fired. Both Syngman Rhee and Kim Il-sung were determined to reunite Korea, each on his own terms. Rhee had publicly spoken on the "need" to invade the North to reunify the peninsula; the Communist government didn't need to make public pronouncements, but events on the ground must have convinced Kim Il-sung that the war had already begun. Along the dividing line, according to one American scholar of Korea, Professor John Merrill, large numbers of Koreans had already been wounded or killed before the "war" began.

The event that appears to have precipitated the full-scale war was the declaration by Syngman Rhee's government of the independence of the South. If allowed to stand, that action as Kim Il-sung clearly understood, would have prevented unification. He regarded it as an act of war. He was ready for war. He had used his years in power to build one of the largest armies in the world

whereas the army of the South had been bled by the Southern rulers.

Kim Il-sung must have known in detail the corruption, disorganization and weakness of Rhee's administration. As the English journalist and commentator on Korea Max Hastings reported, Rhee's entourage was engaged in a massive theft of public resources and revenues. Money intended by the foreign donors to build a modern state was siphoned off to foreign bank accounts; "ghost soldiers," the military equivalent of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, who existed only on army records, were paid salaries which the senior officers pocketed while the relatively few actual soldiers went unpaid and even unclothed, unarmed and unfed. Bluntly put, Rhee offered Kim an opportunity he could not refuse.

We now know, but then did not, that Stalin was not in favor of the attack by the North and agreed to it only if China, by then a fellow Communist-led state, took responsibility. What "responsibility" really meant was not clear, but it proved sufficient to tip Kim Il-sung into action. He ordered his army to invade the South. Quickly crossing the demarcation line, his soldiers pushed south. Far better disciplined and motivated, they took Seoul within three days, on June 28.

Syngman Rhee proclaimed a fight to the death but, in fact, he and his inner circle had already fled. They were quickly followed by thousands of soldiers of the Southern army. Many of those who did not flee, defected to the North.

Organized by the United States, the United Nations Security Council – taking advantage of the absence of the Soviet delegation – voted on June 27, just before the fall of Seoul, to create a force to protect the South. Some 21 countries led by the United States furnished about three million soldiers to defend the South. They were countries like Thailand, South Vietnam and Turkey with their own problems of insurgency, but most of the fighting was done by American forces. They were driven south and nearly off the Korean peninsula by Kim Il-sung's army. The American troops were ill-equipped and nearly always outnumbered. The fighting was bitter and casualties were high. By late August, they held only a tenth of what had been the Republic of Korea, just the southern province around the city of Pusan.

The Chinese Prepare

Wisely analyzing the actual imbalance of the American-backed southern forces and the apparently victorious forces commanded by Kim Il-sung, the Chinese statesman Zhou Enlai ordered his military staff to guess what the Americans could be expected to do: negotiate, withdraw or try to break out of their foothold at Pusan. The staff reported that the Americans would certainly mobilize their superior potential power to counterattack.

To guard against intrusion into China, Zhou convinced his colleagues to move military forces up to the Chinese-Korean frontier and convinced the Soviet government to give the North Koreans air support. What was remarkable was that Zhou's staff exactly predicted what the Americans would do and where they would do it. Led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Americans made a skillful and bold counterattack. Landing at Inchon on September 15, they cut the bulk of the Northern army off from their bases. The operation was a brilliant military success.

But, like many brilliant military actions, it developed a life of its own. MacArthur, backed by American Secretary of State Dean Acheson and General George Marshall – and ordered by President Truman – decided to move north to implement Syngman Rhee's program to unify Korea. Beginning on September 25, American forces recaptured Seoul, virtually destroyed the surrounded North Korean army and on October 1 crossed the 38th parallel. With little to stop them, they then pushed ahead toward the Yalu river on the Chinese frontier. That move frightened both the Soviet and Chinese governments which feared that the wave of victory would carry the American into their territories. Stalin held back, refusing to commit Soviet forces, but he reminded the Chinese of their "responsibility" for Korea.

In response, the Chinese hit on a novel ploy. They sent a huge armed force, some 300,000 men to stop the Americans but, to avoid at least formally and directly a clash with America, they categorized it as an irregular group of volunteers – the "Chinese People's Volunteer Army." Beginning on October 25, the lightly armed Chinese virtually annihilated what remained of the South Korean army and drove the Americans out of North Korea.

Astonished by the collapse of what had seemed a definitive victory, President Truman declared a national emergency, and General MacArthur urged the use of 50 nuclear bombs to stop the Chinese. What would have happened then is a matter of speculation, but what did happen was that MacArthur was replaced by General Matthew Ridgeway who restored the balance of conventional forces. Drearly, the war rolled on.

During this period and for the next two years, the American air force carried out massive bombing sorties. Some of the bombing was meant to destroy the Chinese and North Korean ability to keep fighting, but Korea is a small territory and what began as "surgical strikes" grew into carpet-bombing. (Such bombing would be considered a war crime as of the 1977 Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions).

The attacks were enormous. About 635,000 tons of high explosives and chemical weapons were dropped – that was far more than was used against the Japanese in

the Second World War. As historian Bruce Cumings has pointed out, the U.S. Air Force found that “three years of ‘rain and ruin’” had inflicted greater damage on Korean cities “than German and Japanese cities firebombed during World War II.” The North Korean capital Pyongyang was razed and General Curtis LeMay thought American bombings caused the deaths of about 20 percent – one in five – North Koreans.

Carpet-Bombing the North

LeMay’s figure, horrifying as it is, needs to be borne in mind today. Start with the probability that it is understated. Canadian economist Michel Chossudovsky has written that LeMay’s estimate of 20 percent should be revised to nearly 33 percent or roughly one Korean in three killed. He goes on to point to a remarkable comparison: in the Second World War, the British had lost less than 1 percent of their population, France lost 1.35 percent, China lost 1.89 percent and the U.S. only a third of 1 percent. Put another way, Korea proportionally suffered roughly 30 times as many people killed in 37 months of American carpet-bombing as these other countries lost in all the years of the Second World War.

In all, 8 million to 9 million Koreans were killed. Whole families were wiped out and practically no families alive in Korea today are without close relatives who perished. Virtually every building in the North was destroyed. What General LeMay said in another context – “bombing them back to the Stone Age” – was literally effected in Korea. The only survivors were those who holed up in caves and tunnels.

Memories of those horrible days, weeks and months of fear, pain and death seared the memories of the survivors, and according to most observers they constitute the underlying mindset of hatred and fear so evident among North Koreans today. They will condition whatever negotiations America attempts with the North.

Finally, after protracted battles on the ground and daily or hourly assaults from the sky, the North Koreans agreed to negotiate a ceasefire. Actually achieving it took two years.

The most significant points in the agreement were that (first) there would be two Koreas divided by a demilitarized zone essentially on what had been the line drawn along the 38th parallel to keep the invading Soviet and American armies from colliding and (second) article 13(d) of the agreement specified that no new weapons other than replacements would be introduced on the peninsula. That meant that all parties agreed not to introduce nuclear and other “advanced” weapons.

What needs to be remembered in order to understand future events is that, in effect, the ceasefire created not two but three Koreas: North, South, and the

American military bases.

The North set about recovering from devastation. It *had to* dig out from under the rubble and it *chose to* continue to be a garrison state. It was certainly a dictatorship, like the Soviet Union, China, North Vietnam and Indonesia, but close observers thought that the regime was supported by the people. Most observers found that the memory of the war, and particularly of the constant bombing, created a sense of embattlement that unified the country against the Americans and the regime of the South. Kim Il-sung was able to stifle such dissent as arose. He did so brutally. No one can judge for certain, but there is reason to believe that a sense of embattled patriotism remains alive today.

South's Military Dictatorships

The South was much less harmed by the war than the North and, with large injections of aid and investment from Japan and America, it started on the road to a remarkable prosperity. Perhaps in part because of these two factors – relatively little damage from the war and growing prosperity – its politics was volatile.

To contain it and stay in power, Syngman Rhee's government imposed martial law, altered the constitution, rigged elections, opened fire on demonstrators and even executed leaders of the opposing party. We rightly deplore the oppression of the North, but humanitarian rights investigations showed little difference between the Communist/Confucian North and the Capitalist/Christian South. Syngman Rhee's tactics were not less brutal than those of Kim Il-sung.

Employing them, Rhee managed another electoral victory in 1952 and a third in 1960. He won the 1960 election with a favorable vote officially registered to be 90 percent. Not surprisingly, he was accused of fraud. The student organizations regarded his manipulation as the "last straw" and, having no other recourse, took to the streets. Just ahead of a mob converging on his palace – much like the last day of the government of South Vietnam a few years later – he was hustled out of Seoul by the CIA to an exile in Honolulu.

The third Korea, the American "Korea," would have been only notional except for the facts that it occupied a part of the South (the southern perimeter of the demilitarized zone and various bases elsewhere), had ultimate control of the military forces of the South (it was authorized to take command of them in the event of war) and, as the British had done in Egypt, Iraq and India, it "guided" the native government it had fostered. Its military forces guaranteed the independence of the South and at least initially, the United States paid about half the costs of the government and sustained its economy.

At the same time, the United States sought to weaken the North by imposing embargos. It kept the North on edge by carrying what the North regarded as threatening maneuvers on its frontier and, from time to time, as President Bill Clinton did in 1994 (and President Donald Trump is now doing), threatened a devastating preemptive strike. The Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff also developed OPLN 5015, one of a succession of secret plans whose intent, in the words of commentator Michael Peck, was "to destroy North Korea."

And, in light of America's worry about nuclear weapons in Korea, we have to confront the fact that it was America that introduced them. In June 1957, the U.S. informed the North Koreans that it would no longer abide by Paragraph 13(d) of the armistice agreement that forbade the introduction of new weapons. A few months later, in January 1958, it set up nuclear-tipped missiles capable of reaching Moscow and Peking. The U.S. kept them there until 1991. It wanted to reintroduce them in 2013 but the then South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won refused.

As I will later mention, South Korea joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1975, and North Korea joined in 1985. But South Korea covertly violated it from 1982 to 2000 and North Korea first violated the provisions in 1993 and then withdrew from it in 2003. North Korea conducted its first underground nuclear test in 2006.

There is little moral high ground for any one of the "three Koreas."

New elections were held in the South and what was known as the Second Republic was created in 1960 under what had been the opposition party. It let loose the pent-up anger over the tyranny and corruption of Syngman Rhee's government and moved to purge the army and security forces. Some 4,000 men lost their jobs and many were indicted for crimes. Fearing for their jobs and their lives, they found a savior in General Park Chung-hee who led the military to a coup d'état on May 16, 1961.

General Park was best known for having fought the guerrillas led by Kim Il-sung as an officer in the Japanese "pacification force" in Manchukuo. During that period of his life, he even replaced his Korean name with a Japanese name. As president, he courted Japan. Restoring diplomatic relations, he also promoted the massive Japanese investment that jump-started Korean economic development. With America he was even more forthcoming. In return for aid, and possibly because of his close involvement with the American military – he studied at the Command and General Staff school at Fort Sill – he sent a quarter of a million South Korean troops to fight under American command in Vietnam.

Not less oppressive than Rhee's government, Park's government was a dictatorship. To protect his rule, he replaced civilian officials by military officers. Additionally, he formed a secret government within the formal government; known as the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, it operated like the Gestapo. It routinely arrested, imprisoned and tortured Koreans suspected of opposition. And, in October 1972, Park rewrote the constitution to give himself virtual perpetual power. He remained in office for 16 years. In response to oppression and despite the atmosphere of fear, large-scale protests broke out against his rule. It was not, however, a public uprising that ended his rule: his chief of intelligence assassinated him in 1979.

An attempt to return to civilian rule was blocked within a week by a new military coup d'état. The protests that followed were quickly put down and thousands more were arrested. A confused scramble for power then ensued out of which in 1987 a Sixth Republic was announced and one of the members of the previous military junta became president.

The new president Roh Tae-woo undertook a policy of conciliation with the North and under the warming of relations both North and South joined the U.N. in September 1991. They also agreed to denuclearization of the peninsula. But, as often happens, the easing of suppressive rule caused the "reformer" to fall. Roh and another former president were arrested, tried and sentenced to prison for a variety of crimes – but not for their role in anti-democratic politics. Koreans remained little motivated by more than the overt forms of democracy.

Relations between the North and the South over the next few years bounced from finger on the trigger to hand outstretched. The final attempt to bring order to the South came when Park Geun-hye was elected in 2013, She was the daughter of General Park Chung-hee who, as we have seen, had seized power in a coup d'état 1963 and was president of South Korea for 16 years. Park Geun-hye, was the first women to become head of a state in east Asia. A true daughter of her father, she ruled with an iron hand, but like other members of the ruling group, she far overplayed her hand and was convicted of malfeasance and forced out of office in March 2017.

The Kim Dynasty

Meanwhile in the North, as Communist Party head, Prime Minister from 1948 to 1972 and president from 1972 to his death in 1994, Kim Il-sung ruled North Korea for nearly half a century. His policy for his nation was a sort of throw-back to the ancient Korean ideal of isolation. Known as *juche*, it emphasized self-reliance. The North was essentially an agrarian society and, unlike the South, which from the 1980s welcomed foreign investment and aid, it remained closed. Initially, this policy worked well: up to the end of the 1970s, North Korea was

relatively richer than the South, but then the South raced ahead with what amounted to an industrial revolution.

Surprisingly, Kim Il-sung shared with Syngman Rhee a Protestant Christian youth; indeed, Kim said that his grandfather was a Presbyterian minister. But the more important influence on his life was the brutal Japanese occupation. Such information as we have is shaped by official pronouncements and amount to a paeon. But, probably, like many of the Asian nationalists, as a very young man he took part in demonstrations against the occupying power. According to the official account, by the time he was 17, he had spent time in a Japanese prison.

At 19, in 1931, he joined the Chinese Communist Party and a few years later became a member of its Manchurian fighting group. Hunted down by the Japanese and such of their Korean collaborators as Park Chung-hee, Kim crossed into Russian territory and was inducted into the Soviet army in which he served until the end of the Second World War. Then, as the Americans did with Syngman Rhee, the Russians installed him as head of the provisional government.

From the first days of his coming to power, Kim Il-sung focused on the acquisition of military power. Understandably from his own experience, he emphasized training it in informal tactics, but as the Soviet Union began to provide heavy equipment, he pushed his officers into conventional military training under Russian drillmasters. By the time he had decided to invade South Korea, the army was massive, armed on a European standard and well organized. Almost every adult Korean man was or had been serving in it.

The army had virtually become the state. This allocation of resources, as the Korean War made clear, resulted in a powerful striking force but a weakened economy. It also caused Kim's Chinese supporters to decide to push him aside. How he survived his temporary demotion is not known, but in the aftermath of the ceasefire, he was again seen to be firmly in control of the Communist Party and the North Korean state.

The North Korean state, as we have seen, had virtually ceased to exist under the bombing attack. Kim could hope for little help to rebuild it from abroad and sought even less. His policy of self-reliance and militarization were imposed on the country. On the Soviet model of the 1930s, he launched a draconian five-year plan in which virtually all economic resources were nationalized. In the much-publicized Sino-Soviet split, he first sided with the Chinese but, disturbed by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, he swung back to closer relations with the Soviet Union.

In effect, the two neighboring powers had to be his poles. His policy of independence was influential but could not be decisive. To underpin his rule and

presumably in part to build the sense of independence of his people, he developed an elaborate personality cult. That propaganda cult survived him. When he died in 1994 at 82 years of age, his body was preserved in a glass case where it became the object of something like a pilgrimage.

Unusual for a Communist regime, Kim Il-sung was followed by his son Kim Jong-Il. Kim Jong-Il continued most of his father's policies, which toward the end of his life, had moved haltingly toward a partial accommodation with South Korea and the United States. He was faced with a devastating drought in 2001 and sequential famine that was said to have starved some 3 million people. Perhaps seeking to disguise the impact of this famine, he abrogated the armistice and sent troops into the demilitarized zone. However, intermittent moves including creating a partly extra-territorialized industrial enclave for foreign trade, were made to better relations with the South.

Then, in January 2002, President George Bush made his "Axis of Evil Speech" in which he demonized North Korea. Thereafter, North Korea withdrew from the 1992 agreement with the South to ban nuclear weapons and announced that it had enough weapons-grade plutonium to make about 5 or 6 nuclear weapons. Although he was probably incapacitated by a stroke in August 2008, his condition was hidden as long as possible while preparations were made for succession. He died in December 2011 and was followed by his son Kim Jong-un.

With this thumbnail sketch of events up to the coming to power of Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump, I will turn in Part 2 of this essay to the dangerous situation in which our governments – and all of us individually – find ourselves today.

William R. Polk is a veteran foreign policy consultant, author and professor who taught Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. President John F. Kennedy appointed Polk to the State Department's Policy Planning Council where he served during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His books include: *Violent Politics: Insurgency and Terrorism; Understanding Iraq; Understanding Iran; Personal History: Living in Interesting Times; Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times; and Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change.*

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The Battle for Palestine

From the Archive: On the centennial of the British-French Sykes-Picot deal to carve up the Mideast, it’s worth recalling other ways Europe worsened the region’s problems, including the Israeli-Palestinian mess, ex-JFK adviser William R. Polk recalled in 2014.

By William R. Polk (Originally published on Aug. 11, 2014)

What we call the “Palestine Problem” is really a European Problem. No European society treated Jews as full members, and most have ugly records of anti-Semitism. Even relatively benign Western governments exploited, segregated or banished Jews (and such other minorities as Gypsies, Muslims and deviant Christians). Less benign governments practiced pogroms, massacres and expulsions. European history reveals a pervasive, powerful and perpetual record of intolerance to all forms of ethnic, cultural and religious difference.

Jewish reaction to the various forms of repression was usually passivity but occasionally flight interspersed with attempts to join the dominant community.

When Jews were attacked by Christian mobs during the Crusades, they suffered and tried to hide; when they were thrown out of such medieval cities as Cambridge, they fled to new refuges; when they and the Muslim Arabs were forced out of Spain in 1492, most found refuge in Muslim countries which were far more tolerant of minorities than contemporary Christian societies; when Eastern (*Ashkenazi*) and “Oriental,” mainly Spanish, (*Sephardic*) Jews in small numbers began to reach Germany, Austria, France and England in the Eighteenth Century, many converted to Catholicism; finally, most of the European and American Jewish

communities assimilated culturally and by generous public actions sought to prove their social value to their adopted nations.

Generally speaking, they were successful in their efforts in America, England and Italy but failed in France, Germany and Austria. Even when they faced existential threats, there is no record of a serious attempt by European Jews to defend themselves.

In the latter years of the Nineteenth Century, the reaction of the Jewish communities residing in Europe began to change. In part this was because, like other European peoples, Jews began to think of themselves as a nation. This transformation of attitude led to a change from the desire for escape to a temporary haven (*Nachtsyl*) to permanent establishment in what Theodor Herzl called a *Judenstaat*, the creation of a separate, faith-based nation-state which was viewed as the permanent solution to anti-Semitism. This was the essential aim and justification for Zionism.

Nineteenth Century Europeans understood and approved of the concept of nation-states but only for themselves; in France, Germany, Italy, Austria and the Balkans, Europe was reforming itself along national lines. However, no European nation-state was willing to tolerate a resident rival nationalism. So Herzl's call for Jewish nationhood was generally regarded as subversive by non-Jews and was feared by the more established Jewish communities and the religious establishment as a probable cause of an anti-Jewish reaction. These attitudes would remain in contention down to our times.

Keen for Imperialism

Even before the Europeans were imbibing the ideas of nationalism, their ruling classes were thrusting into the Americas, Africa and Asia to create empires. Spain dominated the Americas and was insistent that the ethnic-religious problems of the Old World not be transmitted there so it sought ethnic "purity" of its colonizers; neither Jews nor suspect *conversos* were allowed. England effectively ruled India beginning in the last years of the Eighteenth Century, and the nature of its colonial government, drawn from the middle class, generally precluded Jewish involvement.

On the contrary, when France invaded Algeria from 1830, it opened its doors to fairly large-scale Jewish immigration from Malta and elsewhere. Germany briefly tried to create an empire in Africa but was stopped by the First World War.

Russia meanwhile was consolidating its Asian empire and in parts of it created Jewish zones in some of which people of non-Semitic backgrounds were absorbed into Jewish culture, but, in the western heart of the Russian empire, anti-

Semitism was pervasive and violent. By the Nineteenth Century, Russian Jews were leaving in vast number for Western Europe and the United States. In the last decade of the Nineteenth Century almost 200,000 arrived in America alone.

Despite the differences, we can see that while nationalism was the ideology of choice domestically, imperialism captured the imagination of Europeans in foreign affairs. So how did these two ideologies impact upon what most Europeans regarded as “the Jewish problem?”

In England, we see most clearly what some leading politicians thought might be the answer: encouraging the emigration of Jews from Europe to the colonies. One of the early proponents of this, essentially anti-Semitic, policy was Sir Laurence Oliphant. As he proposed, getting rid of the Jews as neighbors – that is, in England – and thus solving the “Jewish Problem” would foster British trade and help Britain consolidate its empire if they established themselves as colonies in Africa or Asia.

Added to the benefit imperialists identified was the vague but attractive idea held by many fervent Christians that if the Jews returned to the Holy Land, they would become Christian. Thus, support for Zionism seemed to many Europeans to be a win-win policy.

Colonial Neglect

Europeans knew little about the peoples they were conquering in Africa and Asia and did not regard their well-being as of much importance. Americans, let us admit, were even more brutal in dealing with native Americans. So were the Australians with the Aborigines and the South African Boers with the Bantu. Rich, Western societies generally regarded the poor of the world, and especially other races, colors and creeds, as subhuman, without claims on freedom or even sustenance.

This was the attitude taken up by the early Zionists toward the Arabs. Even their existence was often denied. The Zionist leader, Israel Zangwill, described Palestine and Zionist aspirations for it as being “a country without a people for a people without a land.”

Zangwill’s was a powerful slogan. Unfortunately, it masked a different reality. Given the technology of the times, Palestine was actually densely populated. The overwhelming numbers of the inhabitants were villagers who farmed such land as they could water. Water, never plentiful, was the limiting factor.

Nomads lived on the edges but they were always few in number, never as much as 15 percent of the natives. They too used sparse resources in the only way they could be used, by moving their animals from one temporary source of grazing to

another as rain made possible.

Until massive amounts of money and new technologies became available from the 1930s, population and land were in balance but, of course, in balance on a lower level than in wetter, richer climates where societies had more advanced technologies.

Oliphant, his successors in the British government and others in the French government were not concerned about what their policies did to native peoples.

The British were keen to take the lands of African blacks and to plunder the Indians of India while the French engaged in policies approaching genocide in Algeria. As focused on Palestine, the British sought to solve the problem of what to do with the Jews at the expense of peoples who could not defend themselves – and to benefit from the work of the Jews rather like medieval kings did – rather than to reform their own attitudes toward Jews.

Thus, as Claude Montefiore, the president of the Anglo-Jewish Association, declared on Nov. 30, 1917, “The Zionist movement was caused by anti-Semitism.”

The Deep Cause of War

The two World Wars set the parameters of the “middle term” causes of the struggle for Palestine. Briefly, we can sketch them under four headings: first, the desperate struggle of the British to avoid defeat in the First World War by courting Jewish support; second, the struggle of the British both to defeat the still powerful Ottoman empire and to avoid the danger of mutiny of Muslims in their Indian empire; third, the British attempts to “square” of the triangle of promises made during the war to Arabs, Jews and their French allies; and, fourth, the management of a viable “mandate,” as they renamed their League of Nations-awarded colonies.

Taken together, these acts form the “middle term” of the causes of war in our times. They are:

First, in the final period of the First World War, the Russians were convulsed by revolution and sought a separate peace with Germany (the 1917-1918 negotiations that led to the Brest-Litovsk treaty). The Germans’ incentive for the treaty was that it allowed them to shift their powerful military formations from the Eastern front to the Western front. They hoped that in one huge push they could overwhelm the already depleted and exhausted Anglo-French armies before America could effectively intervene.

The Allied High Command thought this was likely. Slaughter of the Allied forces had been catastrophic. At the same time, England faced bankruptcy. It had drawn down its own reserves and exhausted its overseas credit. It was desperate.

So what options did the British have? Let us be clear: whether their assessment was right or wrong is irrelevant because *they acted on what they thought they knew*. They believed that support for Zionist aspirations would, or at least might, change their fortunes because *they thought that*:

–The Bolsheviks who had become the Russian government were overwhelmingly Jewish and seeing British support for what was presumably their aspiration for a national home, they would rescind or not implement the contentious and unpopular Brest-Litovsk treaty and so keep the German army from redeploying on the Western front;

–A large part of the officer corps of the German army was Jewish and seeing British support for what was presumably their aspiration for a national home and also being disillusioned by the losses in the war and the way they were discriminated against by the Prussian high command they would either defect or at least fight less hard; and

–The American financial world (“Wall Street”) was controlled by Jews who, seeing British support for what was presumably their aspiration for a national home, would open their purses to relieve the desperate need of Britain for money to buy food and arms. (Again, these British perceptions may have been far off the mark but they were their perceptions.)

This appreciation was the justification for the Balfour Declaration of Nov. 2, 1917. As then-British Prime Minister David Lloyd George later declared, “The Zionist leaders gave us a definite promise that, if the Allies committed themselves to give facilities for the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine, they would do their best to rally Jewish sentiment and support throughout the world to the Allied cause.”

British Maneuvering

Second, the Balfour Declaration was not a “stand alone” document: Britain had already sought the support of the predominant Arab Muslim leader. Since the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph had declared support for the Central Powers, *Sharif* [“noble descendant of the Prophet”] Husain, who was then the governor of Mecca, was the most venerated Muslim the British could hope to use to accomplish their two urgent objectives: the first was defeating the Ottoman army (which had just captured a whole British division and was threatening the Suez Canal) and the second was preventing what their jittery security service was always predicting, another Indian “mutiny” and/or the defection of the largely Muslim Indian army as a result of the declaration of a *jihad* by the Sultan-Caliph.

To accomplish these twin aims, the British encouraged the *Sharif* of Mecca to

proclaim his support for the Allied cause and to organize a "Revolt in the Desert." In return, the British offered to recognize Arab independence under his rule in most of the Middle East.

The British offer was spelled out by the senior British official in the Middle East, Sir Henry McMahon, in a series of official letters of which the first was dated July 14, 1915. The area to be assigned to Husain was essentially "Syria" or what is today divided into Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, part of Arabia and Palestine/Israel. This initial offer was subsequently reconfirmed and extended to Iraq by a series of separate declarations and acts.

Although the British government had committed itself to support Arab claims for this area, it also began the following year negotiating with France and the Russian empire for this and other parts of the Middle East. An Anglo-French accord was reached in 1916 by Sir Mark Sykes with M. Georges Picot. Their agreement allocated to France much of what had been promised to the Arabs and designated as an international zone the then Ottoman coastal areas from the Sinai frontier with Egypt including Gaza up to and including the now Lebanese city of Tyre (Arabic: *Sour*) except for a small British enclave at Acre.

Third, as the war ended and the negotiations began in Paris for a Treaty of Peace, the British had to try to explain, hide or revise these three wartime agreements. They were embarrassed when the new Bolshevik government published the hitherto secret Sykes-Picot agreement, but they managed for years to keep the Husain-McMahon correspondence secret. What they could not hide was the Balfour Declaration. However, they began a process of "definition" of their policy that ran completely counter to what the Zionists had expected.

Zionist Goals

The Zionists, from the beginning, were determined to turn Palestine into a Jewish nation-state (Herzl's *Judenstaat*), but, being sensitive to British politics, their leaders denied "the allegation that Jews [aimed] to constitute a separate political nationality." The word the Zionists proposed for what they intended to create in Palestine, coined by Max Nordau as a subterfuge "to deceive by its mildness," was *heimstette* (something less than a state, roughly a "homeland") to be employed "until there was no reason (soto dissimulate) our real aim."

Predictably, the deception fooled no one. As Lord Kitchener had remarked when the Balfour Declaration was being debated in the English Cabinet, he was sure that the half million Palestinians would "not be content [with an Old Testament role as a suppressed minority to be] hewers of wood and drawers of water." He was right, but few people cared. Certainly not then.

The native Palestinians were not mentioned in any of the three agreements: the agreement with *Sharif* Husain dealt broadly with most of the Arab Middle East while the Sykes-Picot agreement shunted them, unnamed, aside into a rather vague international zone and the Balfour Declaration used the curious circumlocution for them as “the existing non-Jewish communities.” (However, while focusing on Jewish aspirations and avoiding naming the Palestinians, it specified that nothing should be done that would “prejudice” their “civil and religious rights.”)

It was not until 1919, at the Paris Peace Conference, that an attempt was made to find out what the Palestinians wanted. No one in Paris knew; so, strongly opposed by both Britain and France, President Woodrow Wilson sent a mission of inquiry, the King-Crane Commission, out to the Levant to find out. Wilson, already desperately ill and having turned over leadership of the American delegation to my cousin Frank Polk, probably never saw their report, but what the Palestinians, Lebanese and Syrians told the American Commissioners was essentially that they wanted to be left alone and if that was not feasible they would accept American (but not British) supervision. The British were annoyed by the American inquiry; they did not care what the natives wanted.

The British were also increasingly disturbed that *heimstatts* was being taken to mean more than they had intended. So, when Winston Churchill became Colonial Secretary and as such was responsible for Palestine, he publicly rebuked the Zionists for trying to force Britain’s hand and emphasized that in the Balfour Declaration the British government had promised only to support establishment in Palestine of a Jewish homeland. It did not commit Britain to make Palestine as a whole the Jewish homeland.

Echoes of these statements would be heard, because shouted back and forth over the following 30 years, time after time. Ultimately the shouts would become shots.

Irreconcilable Differences

British attempts over the years to reconcile their promises to the Arabs, the French and the Zionist movement occupies shelves of books, filled a number of major government studies and was taken up in several international conferences. The promises were, of course, irreconcilable.

One must admire the candor of Lord Balfour, the titular author of the Balfour Declaration, who, in a remarkable statement to his fellow Cabinet ministers on Aug. 11, 1919, admitted that “so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers [Britain and France] have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which at least in letter, they have not

always intended to violate.”

Fourth, having driven out the Ottoman Turkish forces, the British set up military governments. Knowing about these double- or triple-deals, efforts at concealment, post-facto interpretations, lawyer-like quibbles, linguistic arguments and Biblical allusions, the British commander, General (later Field Marshal, Lord) Edmond Allenby, refused to be drawn into the fundamental issue of policy, declaring that such measures as were being taken were “purely provisional,” but the military government quickly morphed into a British colony, defined by the new League of Nations as a “mandate” in which the imperial power was obligated to “uplift” the natives and prepare them for self-rule.

Practical decisions were to be set by the civil High Commissioner. The first such official was an English Zionist, Sir Herbert Samuel, who came into office to begin large-scale immigration of Jews into Palestine, to recognize de facto a Jewish government (the “Jewish Agency”) and to give Jewish immigrants permission to acquire and irrevocably hold land that was being farmed by Palestinian villagers. I turn now to the transformation of Palestine under British rule.

The Deep Cause of War

The Palestine, which the British had conquered and around which they drew a frontier, had a surface area of 10,000 square miles (26,000 square kilometers) and had been divided among three *sanjaqs* (subdivisions of a province) of the Ottoman *villayet* (province) of Beirut. The British had expelled its governors and their civil, police and military officers, who were Ottoman officials, and had established a colonial government.

The population of 752,000 was divided mainly between 600,000 Arabic-speaking Muslims and roughly 80,000 Christians and the same number of Jews. Each group had its own schools, hospitals and other public programs staffed by religiously educated men. The Jews were mostly pilgrims or merchants and lived mainly in Jerusalem, Haifa and the larger towns. Christians, similarly, had their own churches and schools, but unlike the Muslims and Jews they were divided among a variety of sects.

A British study in 1931 found them to include adherents of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Uniate (Melkite), Anglican, Armenian (Gregorian), Armenian Uniate, Jacobite, Syrian Catholic, Coptic, Abyssinian, Abyssinian Uniate, Maronite, Chaldean, Lutheran and other churches. Whatever else the land of Palestine produced, it was certainly luxuriant in religion.

The Palestine that emerged at the end of the First World War was also an heir to the Ottoman Empire because the British had decided that Ottoman laws were still

in effect. What these laws mandated would play a major role in Palestinian-Zionist affairs so they must be noted. The key point is that in its later years, the Ottoman empire had attempted various reforms that were primarily aimed at increasing its ability to draw tax revenue from the population.

The most important of these changes was the imposition of quasi-private ownership on the traditional system of land ownership. From roughly 1880 onward, wealthy urban or even foreign merchants, money lenders and officials were able to acquire title to lands by agreeing to pay the taxes. Similar systems and similar transfer of "ownership" occurred in many areas of Asia and Africa. "Modernization" often came at the price of legal dispossession. So important was this was a concept and a process in future events that it must be understood.

Land in Palestine (and adjoining Lebanon as in Egypt, India and much of Africa and Asia) was an extension to a village. Like the houses, the plots mirrored the kinship structure. If a family tree were superimposed on a map, it would show that adjoining parcels were owned by close relatives; the further away the land, the more distant the kin relationship. One could read into the land ownership pattern the history of births, deaths, marriages, family disputes and the waxing and fading of lineages.

Despite the Ottoman changes, villagers continued to plow and harvest according to their system. In fact, they did everything they could to avoid contact with the government. They did so because the collection of taxes resembled a military campaign in which their grain might be confiscated, their cattle driven away, their sons kidnapped for military service and other indignities imposed.

In Palestine as in Syria, Iran and the Punjab where the process has been carefully studied, peasants often agreed to have their lands registered as the possession of rich and influential merchants and officials who would promise to protect them. In short, the new system promoted a sort of mafia.

That was the legal system the British found when they set up their government in Palestine. Ottoman tax records specified that large blocs of villages and their lands "belonged" not to village crop farmers but to the influential "tax farmers."

One example was the Lebanese merchant family, the Sursuks. In 1872, the Sursuks had acquired a kind of ownership (known in Ottoman law as *miri*) from the Ottoman government for a whole district in the Vale of Esdraelon near Haifa. The 50,000 acres the Sursuks acquired was apportioned among some 22 villages. In return for the title to the land, they agreed to pay the yearly tax which they extracted from the villagers in their multiple roles as tax collector, purchaser of shared crops and money lender. They apparently made at least 100 percent profit yearly

on their purchase; the land was one of the most fertile areas in the country.

As an English traveler, Lawrence Oliphant, wrote in 1883, this land “looks today like a huge green lake of waving wheat, with its village-crowned mounds rising from it like islands, and it presents one of the most striking pictures of luxuriant fertility which it is possible to imagine.”

While the law was Ottoman, it corresponded to English practice dating from the Seventeenth Century “enclosures” of commons. The British imposed it on Ireland and enforced it on the Punjab, Kenya and other parts of their empire.

Selling the Land

The Sursuks had purchased the land, according to the records, for an initial £ 20,000. Under the Land Transfer Ordinance of 1920, they were allowed to sell it. So in 1921, the Zionist purchasing agency bought the land and villages for £726,000. The Sursuks became rich; the Zionists were delighted; the losers were the villagers. Some 8,000 of them were evicted.

Moreover, for the most laudable of reasons – the Zionist regulation that forbade exploitation of natives – the dispossessed villagers could not even work as landless laborers on their former lands. Nor could the land ever be repurchased from the Jewish National Fund which provided that the land was inalienable.

Both anger and greed gripped the Palestinian upper class: some sold their lands for what appeared then astronomical prices, but about 80 percent of all purchases were from absentee owners, like the Sursuks.

In less than a decade, tensions between the two communities reached a flash point. The flash point was then, and continued to the present time to be, the place where the Wailing Wall abutted the principal Islamic religious site, al-Aqsa mosque. For the first time, on Aug. 15, 1929, a mob of several hundred Jewish youths paraded with the Zionist flag and sang the Zionist anthem.

Immediately, a mob of Arab youths attacked them. Riots spread across the country and for the first but far from the last time, Britain had to rush in troops. Within two weeks, 472 Jews and at least 268 Arabs had been killed. It was a harbinger of things to come

The British were deeply disturbed. Riots were expensive; a civil war would be ruinous. So the Home government decided to seek advice on what it should do. It turned to a man with great experience. Sir John Hope-Simpson had been a senior officer in the elite (British) Indian Civil Service, had helped to solve serious problems in Greece and in China and had been elected to Parliament as a Liberal. He was commissioned to find a solution.

Not surprisingly, he concluded that the issues were land and immigration because “the result of the purchase of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund has been that the land ... ceased to be land from which the Arab can gain any advantage either now or at any time in the future. Not only can he never hope to lease or to cultivate it, but, by the stringent provisions of the lease of the Jewish National Fund, he is deprived for ever from employment on that land. Nor can anyone help him by purchasing the land and restoring it to common use. The land is mortmain and inalienable. It is for this reason that Arabs discount the professions of friendship and goodwill on the part of Zionists.”

Hope-Simpson pointed out that Palestine was a small territory, only 10,000 square miles of which more than three quarters was “uncultivable” by normal economic criteria; with 16 percent of the good land owned by Jews or the Jewish National Fund. He thought that the remainder was insufficient for the existing Arab community. Further sales, he was sure, would provoke further Arab resistance and violence. Thus, he recommended a temporary halt to immigration.

Zionist Protests

Infuriated by his report, the Zionists immediately organized a protest movement in and around the government in London and in the English press. Under unprecedented pressure, the Labour Party government repudiated Hope-Simpson’s report and refused to consider his recommendation. From the episode, the Zionist leaders learned that they could change government policy at its source by applying money, propaganda and political organization. Dealing with the ultimate authorities first in England and then in America would become a persistent Zionist tactic down to the present time. Palestinians never developed such a capacity.

The Zionist aim was, naturally, to bring to Palestine as many immigrants as possible and to bring them as quickly as possible. Between 1919 and 1933, 150,000 Jewish men, women and children came to Palestine. In the four years from 1933 to 1936 the Jewish population quadrupled. In 1935, as many arrived as in the first five years of the Mandate, 61,854.

Seeing that the British government had spurned even its own officials and that it would not or could not control either the land or population issues, the Palestinians became increasingly furious. They concluded that their chance of protecting their position by peaceful means was almost nil.

In 1936, a general strike, something unheard of before, turned into a siege; terrorists blew up trains and bridges and armed bands, which also for the first time included volunteers from Syria and Iraq, roamed throughout Palestine and, most sobering of all, the Arab elite which had worked closely with the British

as judges and officials registered their “loyal opposition”:

According to senior Arab officials in the Palestinian government, “the Arab population of all classes, creeds and occupations is animated by a profound sense of injustice. ... They feel that insufficient regard has been paid in the past to their legitimate grievances, even though these grievances had been inquired into by qualified and impartial investigators, and to a large extent vindicated by those inquiries. As a result, the Arabs have been driven into a state verging on despair; and the present unrest is no more than an expression of that despair.”

Annoyed but not deterred, the British Colonial Office decided, as it was then also doing in India, to crack down hard on the “troublemakers.” It put Palestine under martial law and brought in 20,000 regular soldiers to be quartered on rebel villages, blew up houses of suspected insurgents and imprisoned Palestinian notables. Over 1,000 Palestinians were killed. But it was clear to the government in London that these were measures could be only temporarily and that more durable (and affordable) policies must be found and implemented. The British appointed a Royal Commission to find a solution.

Seeking a Solution

Echoing what previous investigators had found and recommending much of what they had suggested, the Royal Commission report has a modern ring. It concluded that:

“An irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. ... There is no common ground between them. The Arab community is predominantly Asiatic in character, the Jewish community predominantly European. They differ in religion and in language. Their cultural and social life, their ways of thought and conduct, are as incompatible as their national aspirations. ... In the Arab picture the Jews could only occupy the place they occupied in Arab Egypt or Arab Spain. The Arabs would be as much outside the Jewish picture as the Canaanites in the old land of Israel. ... *This conflict was inherent in the situation from the outset. ... The conflict will go on, the gulf between Arabs and Jews will widen.* (emphasis added)

Agreeing that repression “leads nowhere,” the Royal Commission suggested the first of a number of plans to partition the land.

Partition sounded sensible (at least to the English), but in 1936 there were too many Palestinians and too few Jews to carve out a viable Jewish state. Small as it was to be, the Jewish state would have 225,000 Arabs or only 28,000 less than the 258,000 Jews, but it would contain most of the better agricultural land. (The land expert of the Jewish Agency reported that the proposed Jewish state

would contain 500,000 acres "upon which as many people could live as in the whole of the remainder of the country.")

Partition was immediately rejected by Vladimir Jabotinsky who was the intellectual father of the Israeli terrorist groups, the Stern Gang (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael*) and the Irgun (*Irgun Zva'i Leumi*), and the sequence of Israeli leaders, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu.

He warned the British that "We cannot accept cantonisation, because it will be suggested by many, even among you, that even the whole of Palestine may prove too small for that humanitarian purpose we need. A corner of Palestine, a 'canton,' how can we promise to be satisfied with it. We cannot. We never can. Should we swear to you we should be satisfied, it would be a lie."

The Zionist Congress refused the Royal Commission plan, and patterning themselves on Gandhi's passive resistance movement, the Palestinians set up a "National Committee" which demanded that the British allow the formation of a democratic government (in which, the Arab majority would have prevailed) and that the sale of land to the Zionists be stopped until the "economic absorptive capacity" could be established.

And they offered an alternative to partition: essentially what today we call a "one state solution": Palestine would not be divided, but the current ratio of Jewish and Palestinian inhabitants would be maintained.

The Royal Commission proposal got nowhere: because the Zionists thought they could get more while Palestinian leaders could not negotiate since they had been rounded up and put in a concentration camp.

Blocked from peaceful and non-violent action, the Palestinian leaders and their followers began a violent campaign against the British and the Zionists. To protect themselves, the British created, trained and armed a Jewish paramilitary force of some 5,000 men. Violence grew apace. In 1938, the Mandate government reported 5,708 "incidents of violence" and announced that it had killed at least 1,000 Palestinian insurgents and imprisoned 2,500.

Neither the British, nor the Zionists, nor the Palestinians could afford to give up. In the middle of the Great Depression, the British could not afford to rule a hostile country from which they expected no return (unlike Iraq, Palestine had no oil); the Zionists, faced with the existential challenge of Nazism and having gone far toward statehood, could not agree to the terms proposed by the Palestinians; and the Palestinians saw in every shipload of immigrants a threat to their hopes for self rule.

So, eight years after the Hope-Simpson report, two years after the Royal

Commission another British Government commission (the "Palestine Partition Commission") was sent to try to redraw the map in some fashion that would create a larger Jewish state.

A Single State

The best deal the partition commissioners could get for the Jewish state was an area of about 1,200 square miles with a population of roughly 600,000 of whom nearly half were Palestinians; to increase the Jewish ratio to Palestinians, the proposed Jewish state would have had to be drastically reduced in size.

A rumor that the British had decided to recognize Palestinian independence had the expected effect: throughout Palestine, Arab groups danced with joy in the streets and Zionist militants bombed Arab targets.

Actually, the British did decide to implement much of the new proposal: the Government favored a plan to stop Jewish immigration and to restrict land sales after five years and after ten years to make Palestine a single state under representative government. The policy was approved by Parliament on May 23, 1939.

The Zionist reaction was furious: Jewish hit squads burned or sacked government officers, stoned policemen and on Aug. 26 murdered two senior British officers. Five days later, the Second World War began.

While attention was otherwise directed in the midst of the war, partition was formally rejected by the Zionist organization in the so-called Biltmore program proclaimed in America in May 1942, and the solution to the dilemma of Jewish-Palestinian population ratios would be found in 1948 when most of the Palestinian population fled or was driven out of Palestine.

During the 1930s, while most of the world was plunged in a stultifying depression, the Jewish community, the *Yishuv*, profited from a material and cultural expansion. Money poured in from Europe and America. While the amounts were small by today's standards, Jewish donations enabled land to be bought, equipment purchased, factories opened, systems of transport set up and housing to be built.

Jerusalem was built in stone by Arab labor and Zionist money, and Tel Aviv began to look like Miami. The *Yishu* became a quasi state with its own schools, hospitals and other civic institutions, and enlivened by the influx of Europeans, it pulled increasingly away from both the Palestinian community and from the surrounding Arab societies. That has remained the persistent aspect of "the Palestine Problem": while physically located in the Middle East, the *Judenstaat* was and is a European rather than a Middle Eastern society.

Palestinian Evolution

The Palestinians slowly began to evolve from a colonial, peasant-farmer, village-centered society. Their agriculture spread in extent and began to focus on such specialized crops as Jaffa oranges, but villagers continued their traditional habit of isolating themselves from (now British) government and did not develop, as did the Zionists, their own governmental and administrative institutions.

The growing but still tiny urban middle class of Christians and Muslims worked with the British administration and enrolled their children in British-run, Arabic-language, secular schools. That is, they accommodated. Meanwhile, the traditional urban elite contested power not so much with the Zionists as with one another; whereas the Arab leaders spoke of national causes, they acted in and asserted leadership over mutually hostile groups.

Overall, the Palestinians never approached Israeli determination, skill and financial capacity; they remained divided, weak and poor. That is, they remained over all a colonial society. What constituted their national cause was not so much a shared *quest* for independence as a *reactive* sense of having been wronged.

So, year-by-year as more immigrants arrived and as more land was acquired by the Jewish National Fund, opposition increased but never coalesced. Whereas anti-Semitism created Zionism, fear of Zionism fostered a Palestinian reaction. But, until another generation had passed that reaction remained only a seedbed of nationalism, not a national movement. To understand this, we must look back to the previous century.

The idea of nationalism came to the Levant (Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria) and Egypt nearly a century after it had become dominant in Europe, and it came only to a small and at first mainly Christian elite. One's identity came not from a nation-state, as in Europe, but either from membership in an ethnic/religious "nation" (known in Ottoman law as a *millet*) – for example, the Catholic "nation" – or, more narrowly, membership in a family, a clan or a village. The Arabic word *watan* catches exactly the sense of the French word *pays*: both "village" and "nation."

Arabs, like Europeans, welcomed nationalism, *wataniyah*, as a means to overcome the evident and weakening effects of division not only among the religious communities, particularly the division between Muslims and Christians, but also among the families, clans and villages.

In Palestine, nationalism by the end of the British mandate had still not coalesced into an ideology; to the extent the concept of a *watan* had been

extended beyond the village and had become popular, it was a visceral reaction to the thrust of Zionism. Anger over loss of land and the intrusion of Europeans was general, but the intellectual underpinning of nationalism was slow to be formulated in a way that attracted much of the population. It still had not attracted general support until long after the end of the British mandate. In part, it became possible in large part because of the destruction of the village communities and the fusing of their former residents in refugee camps: simply put, the *watan* had to die before *wataniyah* could be born.

A More Powerful Drive

Jewish nationalism, Zionism, drew on different sources and embodied more powerful thrusts. The Jewish community as a whole benefitted from two experiences: the first was that for centuries in what they call their *diaspora* virtually all Jewish men had meticulously studied their religious texts. While intellectually narrow, such study inculcated a mental exactitude that could be, and was, transferred to new, secular, broader fields when the opportunity presented itself in the late Eighteenth Century in Austria, Germany and France.

Thus, with remarkable speed, Polish and Russian Jews emerged in the West as mathematicians, scientists, physicians, musicians and philosophers, roles that were not part of the religious tradition. While the British had certainly been wrong to believe that Jews dominated the Bolshevik movement in Russia, Jews also certainly played a major political and intellectual role both there and in Western Europe.

The second experience that increasing numbers of Jews shared was the *sense* of exclusion but increasingly the *reality* of participation. During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, while often disliked and occasionally maltreated, Jews were generally able to take part in Western European society.

Thus, they were able to expand their horizons and to develop new skills. Many thought that they had arrived at a satisfactory accommodation with non-Jewish Europe. It was the shock of finding this not to be true that motivated Theodor Herzl and his colleagues to begin the quest for a separate Jewish nation-state, a *Judenstaat*, outside of Europe, and it was the conservatism of religious Judaism that forced the Zionist movement to reject offers of lands in various parts of Latin America, Africa and Asia and to insist on the location of that nation-state in Palestine.

Jews, of course, had to focus more on Europe than on Palestine. The Zionist movement was located in Europe and its leaders and members were all European. From the end of the First World War, secular, "modern" Jews began to migrate to Palestine and soon outnumbered and overshadowed the traditional Jewish pilgrims.

Then, from the election of Hitler in 1932 and the collapse of the Weimar Republic in 1933, pressure on the German Jewish community moved through increasingly ugly incidents like the 1938 *kristallnacht* toward a crescendo of anti-Semitism. Desperate, increasing numbers of Jews sought to flee from Germany. Most went to other countries – particularly America, England and France – but they were often not welcomed and in some cases were actually prevented from entering. (America implemented restrictions and accepted only about 21,000 Jewish refugees up to the eve of the Second World War.)

So, in increasing numbers, mainly secular, educated, Westernized Jews went to Palestine. The numbers were important but more important was that the individuals and groups coalesced to create a new community. It was this “nation-state-in-formation,” the *Yishuv*, that set the trend toward the future.

Shaping Palestine

Nothing like these impulses were felt by the Palestinians. They had never experienced pogroms but lived with neighbors of different faiths in a carefully structured and religiously sanctioned form of mutual “tolerance” and, despite the Ottoman Empire’s moves toward modernization/westernization/fiscal control, they lived in an acceptable balance with their environment. Few had an enlivening contact with European thought, industry or commerce. To the English, they were just another colonial people, like the Indians or the Egyptians.

That is how the British officials in Palestine treated the Palestinians. As I read Indian history of the same period, I find striking parallels: colonial officials in India were equally dismissive of even the richest and most powerful Hindu and Muslim Indians. As “natives” they had to be kept in their place, punished when they got out of order and rewarded when they were submissive. Generally, the poorer natives could be treated with a sort of amused tolerance.

But the Jews didn’t fit in the colonial pattern and could not be treated as “natives.” After all, they were Europeans. So the British colonial officials never felt comfortable dealing with them. Should they “belong to white men’s clubs” or not? With the natives one knew where he stood. With the Jews, relations were at best uncertain. Worse, they were adept at going over the heads of the colonial officials direct to London. This minor but important aspect of the Palestine problem was never resolved.

Then, suddenly, as Germany invaded Poland, the world slipped into war.

The War Years

Both Palestinians and Zionists enlisted in large numbers – 21,000 Jews and 8,000 Palestinians – to help the British in their hour of need. But both kept their

long-term objectives firmly in mind: both continued to regard British imperialism as the long-term enemy of freedom. And, like the Hindu Parliamentarian Subhas Chandra Bose, the Muslim Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husaini actively flirted with the Axis. Bose led a Japanese-supplied and -sponsored army into India. (Bose's Palestinian counterpart, Hajj Amin had no such army. He fled the country.)

What Bose had tried to do fighting the British in India, Jewish terrorists, inspired by Vladimir Jabotinsky, began to do in Palestine. By 1944, Jewish attacks on British troops and police, raids on British arms and supply depots and bombings of British installations had become common, and military training camps were set up in various *kibbutzim* to train an army to fight the British.

In response, the British commander-in-chief in the Middle East issued a statement condemning the "active and passive sympathisers [of the terrorists who] are directly... assisting the enemy."

On Aug. 8, 1944, a Jewish attempt was made to assassinate the High Commissioner and on Nov. 6, 1944, members of the Stern Gang murdered Prime Minister Churchill's personal representative in the Middle East, the British Minister of State Lord Moyne. Churchill was furious and told Parliament that "If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future are to produce a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past. If there is to be any hope of a peaceful and successful future for Zionism these wicked activities must cease and those responsible for them must be destroyed, root and branch."

In the last months of the war, the tempo of attacks increased. Carefully planned raids were made on supply dumps, banks and communications facilities. With Germany going down in defeat, Britain had become the Zionist Enemy Number One.

The Holocaust

But for a time, Zionist action focused on Europe. As the war ended, the enormity of the Nazi crimes against the European Jews came to public attention, and demands to "do something" for the survivors moved to the forefront of British and American politics. The British asked the U.S. government to join it in enforcing a solution no matter what that solution might be.

In America, there was a sense of collective guilt: anti-Semitism, like anti-black prejudice, while still common was beginning to be equated to Nazism and Fascism. But only beginning. America had actually turned back Jews trying to flee Nazi persecution. So when President Harry Truman announced in December 1945

that the U.S. would begin to facilitate Jewish immigration, there was little public or Congressional support. (Only 4,767 Jews were actually admitted.)

Meanwhile, various schemes were bandied about to do something for Europe's Jews. One, never really seriously considered, was to give a part of defeated Germany to the Holocaust victims as their *heimstette*. It died aborning when moves toward the Cold War argued for the reconstruction of Germany as a barrier to the Soviet Union.

No one, to my knowledge, suggested that Americans cede a part of the United States as an alternative Israel. Americans quickly adopted the European program for having the "Jewish Problem" solved at the expense of someone else.

Zionists, quite reasonably, were not prepared to bet their future on Western benevolence. They were determined to act, and they did so in four interconnected programs: first getting the survivors of the Holocaust to Palestine; second, lobbying the American government to support their cause; third, attacking any and all whostood in their way; and, fourth, making staying in Palestine too expensive for Britain.

Building a Jewish Presence

First, the Zionists understood and were informed by the British studies that if they were to succeed in taking over Palestine, they would need far more Jewish immigrants than the British were likely to allow. So already in 1934, shortly after the Hope-Simpson report, they organized the first ship, a Greek tramp steamer, to take "illegals" to Palestine. The little SS *Velos* would be the first in what became a virtual fleet, and the 300 passengers it carried would be followed by many thousands in the years to come. British attempts to limit the flow – to try to keep the peace in Palestine – were generally ineffective and were, in part nullified by the anti-Semitism of the European states and particularly by the Nazis.

The Nazi involvement in the Palestine issue and the Zionist relationship to the Nazis form its most bizarre aspect. By 1938, not only the Nazis but also the Polish, Czech and other Eastern European governments were determined to get rid of their Jewish citizens. The Zionist leaders saw this as a major opportunity. So they sent an emissary to meet with the Nazis, and even with the Gestapo and the SS, to propose to help them speed the Jews away: they proposed that if the Nazis would allow the Zionists scope, they would set up training camps for selected young people to be shipped to Palestine.

Hitler had not yet made up his mind on "the final solution" but he was keen to promote a Jewish exodus. So the German officials, including Adolf Eichmann,

made a deal with the Zionists that enabled them to select would-be emigrants. The choice of who was to go was purely pragmatic: it was not on humanitarian needs but on physical and mental *capacity* of the candidates to join the incipient Zionist army, the Haganah and its various offshoots.

By the end of 1938, the first batch of about a thousand Jews was being organized and trained by the "Committee for Illegal Immigration" (*Mossad le Aliyah Bet*), and roughly that many started their journey each month.*

As the Nazis moved to implement "the Final Solution," they lost interest in the relatively small-scale Zionist emigration operation and began their horrible liquidation program in which millions of Jews, Gypsies and others died at Auschwitz, Treblinka and other concentration camps. With Europe closed to them, the Zionists turned to encouraging and facilitating the migration of Jewish communities from the Arab countries. To take over Palestine, they needed Jews from anywhere and so they actively recruited them from Iraq to Morocco. Then, as the war reached its final stages, the Zionists turned back to Europe.

Their first move was to take over – literally to buy – the virtually defunct Red Cross headquarters in Romania. The newly arrived Soviet army was otherwise occupied so under the "Red Cross" emblem, the Zionist organization was able to restart the program of shipping Jews to Palestine. What the Zionist agents found was that the condition of the hundreds of thousands of remaining Romanian Jews was desperate; they were willing to go anywhere to get out Romania. Allegedly 150,000 signed up to go to Palestine, but the problem remained, how to get them there.

The answer was found in Italy. Stationed there was the small Jewish logistical support formation enlisted by the British in Palestine. Its main piece of equipment was exactly what the Zionist organizers most needed, the truck, and they were also decked out in British army uniforms and armed with British army documents.

Under Zionist orders and literally under British noses, they ranged throughout Italy, gathering displaced persons in their trucks and delivering them to ships that had been hired by the Zionists to smuggle them into Palestine.

Then disaster struck: along with other formations, the Jewish unit was redeployed. So the Zionists made what was by far their boldest move: in one of the most remarkable ventures of the Second World War, they created a fictitious British army.

A Fake Army

In the chaos of the last months at the end of the Second World War, Allied

military units and supply dumps were scattered throughout Western Europe. Most troops were in the process of being redeployed or sent home. Command-and-control structures were falling apart. Dumps were often unguarded or even forgotten.

So, into this chaos, the Zionists ventured. Almost overnight, they “became” a separate British army formation with their own faked documents, phony unit designation and looted equipment. They drew petrol for their trucks and fuel for the ships with which they could rendezvous on the coast. With forged requisition papers they seized a building right in the center of Milan to use as their headquarters and others to create staging areas in various areas of Italy.

Second, they were utterly ruthless in achieving their objectives. As Jon and David Kimche have written in *The Secret Roads*, the European Jews “hated the Germans who had destroyed their corporate life; they hated the Poles and Czechs, the Hungarians and Rumanians, the Austrians and the Balts who had helped the Germans; they hated the British and the Americans, the Russians and the Christians who had left them, so it seemed to them, to their fate. They hated Europe, they held its precious laws in contempt, they owed nothing to its peoples. They wanted to get out. ... Thus, *anti-goyism*, that malignant growth in Jewish life, received a new lease of life. Linked with Zionism, it now galvanised the Jewish camps in Europe.”

Their Zionist guides stimulated this hatred among the Displaced Persons (DPs) because, as the Kimches wrote, “they had to be uplifted; they had to be galvanised; they had to be given a stronger pride than their cynicism, and a stronger emotion than their demoralised if understandable self-seeking. The only thing that could do it, as they had seen during the Hitler era, was propaganda – hate propaganda for preference.”

Jews who attempted to go back to their former homes found their ways barred; others had taken over their houses and shops so their attempted return stimulated vicious riots, particularly in Poland, that convinced most Jews that they could not restart their old lives. If they needed further convincing, the Polish government closed the frontier and threatened to shoot returnees. And where the displaced persons were in temporary camps, their hosts were anxious to speed them on their ways.

By All Means Necessary

So, the Zionists felt justified in slandering, boycotting or even destroying those who thwarted or threatened to reveal their actions. When the head of the United Nations program charged with giving aid to the displaced persons in Germany, General Sir Frederick Morgan, reported that some “unknown Jewish organization” was running a program to transfer European Jews to Palestine –

exactly what they were doing – he was pilloried as an anti-Semite.

That charge came easily. It was a charge, not unlike the McCarthyite charge of being a Communist, that all those who dealt with or wrote about the Palestine problem would learn to fear. It was used often, usually effectively and was always bitterly resented by those so attacked. It is a tactic that Zionists and their supporters often employed and is still employ frequently today.

Third, back in Palestine, the Zionist organization was doing all it could to make staying in Palestine too expensive for Britain. The Zionist army, the Haganah, its elite military force, the Palmach and the two terrorist organizations (in British eyes)/freedom fighters (to the Zionists), the Stern Gang and the Irgun, were attacking government buildings, blowing up bridges and taking hostage or shooting British soldiers.

When I first went to Palestine in 1946, the streets of every city were rivers of barbed wire, with frequent barriers and checkpoints manned by heavily armed British soldiers. The calm of evenings was frequently shattered by the sounds of machinegun fire and by night exploding bombs could be heard nearby. Everyone, including the soldiers of Britain's crack parachute division, was constantly on edge. Calm was feared as a prelude to the storm. Danger was everywhere, even when not intended.

On Christmas Eve 1946 at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem I sat in the midst of a congregation armed with the unreliable but lethal sten gun, expecting at any minute one might be dropped and go off. A few days later, I was nearly shot, in the midst of Jerusalem by a very nervous soldier. Everyone was suspect in the eyes of everyone else.

Denying Responsibility

When the Zionist civil authorities tried to stand aloof, pretending that they knew nothing of the use of terror, the British published intercepted documents showing that they were orchestrating the attacks and were involved in collecting and passing out arms to the insurgents. For the first time against the Zionists the British cracked down as they had done against the Palestinians, and as they had been doing and were still doing against the Indians in their independence movement, putting hundreds of Jews into what amounted to a concentration camp.

In riposte, Jewish terrorists/freedom fighters blew up the headquarters of the British government in Jerusalem, the King David Hotel, killing 91 people and wounding about 46. To the English Parliament, press and public, the bombing was taken as an act of war. The Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee denounced it as a "brutal and murderous crime ... an insane act of terrorism."

But the “brutal and murderous crime ... an insane act of terrorism” accomplished its purpose. Almost everyone – except of course the Palestinians – had concluded that the attempt by the British to establish an acceptable level of security had failed.

Fourth, the American government had long since decided to throw its support to the Zionists. Already at its presidential convention in 1944, the Democratic Party issued a statement stating that “We favor the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization and such a policy as to result in the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth.”

Shortly before his death, President Franklin Roosevelt affirmed that declaration and promised to do what was necessary to effect it. (But he, like the British in the First World War, also made a conflicting promise to the Arabs: just as the British had promised the *Sharif* of Mecca so Roosevelt promised King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, that he “would take no action which ... might prove hostile to the Arab people.” Then he immediately reversed himself, reaffirming his unrestricted support for Zionism.)

When he came into office, President Harry Truman called in August 1945 for the immediate admission to Palestine of 100,000 European Jews. Not to be outdone, Truman’s Republican opponent, Gov. Thomas Dewey, called for the admission of “several hundreds of thousands.” The rush to win Jewish money, influence in the press and votes was on. It has grown stronger year by year.

Caught in the Middle

Feeling increasingly isolated and desperate to turn to the host of problems it faced – both domestically and throughout the other parts of its increasingly fragile empire – the British government urged that America join in what was hoped to be a final commission, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which was to focus not primarily on Palestine but, for the first time, on the plight of the European Jewish community.

It was in the emotional vortex of the hideous German concentration camps that the Commission began its work; its work would be continued in the context of American partisan politics. Its result was shaped both by the sight of the misery of the surviving Jews in Europe and driven by the political winds in America. It paid virtually no attention to the Palestinians.

The end of the mandate was in sight. The British decided to withdraw on May 15, 1948, eight months to the day after they had withdrawn from India. The results were similar: they had inadvertently “let slip the dogs of war.” Millions of Indians and Pakistanis and nearly a million Palestinians would pay a terrible

price.

India was, perhaps, a more complex story, but the sole justification for the British rule of Palestine was the British obligation specified in the preamble to the Mandate instrument to “be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made on November 2nd, 1917, by the Government of His Britannic Majesty, and adopted by the said Powers, in favor of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

Britain had failed. Indeed, three months before its forces withdrew, Britain warned the UN Security Council that it would require foreign troops to effect the UN decision to divide the country. In reply, the U.S. Government ducked. On Feb. 24, it informed the UN that it would consider the use of its troops to restore peace but not to implement the partition resolution. On March 19, it went further, suggesting that action on partition be suspended and that a trusteeship over all Palestine be established to delay final settlement. Britain refused.

UN Division

The United Nations decision was to divide Palestine into three zones: a Jewish state, a Palestinian state and a UN administered enclave around the city of Jerusalem.

While Britain and America argued at the United Nations, Palestine slid into war. Over 5,000 people had been killed since the end of the Mandate had been announced: trains were blown up, banks robbed, government offices were attacked, and mobs, gangs and paramilitary troops looted, burned and clashed.

Then on April 10, about five weeks before the final British withdrawal, came the event that would establish the precondition of the Palestinian refugee tragedy – the Deir Yasin massacre. The regular Zionist army, Haganah, had tried to take the village, known to be peaceful and, insofar as anyone then was, neutral, and ordered the terrorist group, the Irgun, which was under its command, to help.

Together the two forces captured the village. The Irgun, possibly acting alone, then massacred the entire village population – men, women and children – and called a press conference to announce its deed and to proclaim that this was the beginning of the conquest of Palestine and Trans-Jordan. Horror and fear spread throughout Palestine. The precondition for the flight of the entire Palestinian

community had been established. Much worse was to follow.

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*.

Muslim Memories of West's Imperialism

From the Archive: A century ago, Britain and France secretly divided up much of the Mideast, drawing artificial boundaries for Iraq and Syria, but Muslim resentment of Western imperialism went much deeper, as historian William R. Polk described in 2015.

By William R. Polk (Originally published Sept. 4, 2015)

One result of the great transformation we call the Industrial Revolution in the northern hemisphere was the increasing scale of the European commercial, political and military domination of societies and states scattered from Morocco to Indonesia and from Central Asia deep into Africa. For convenience, because of their location, their relative weakness and their Islamic orientation, I called these Afro-Asian societies "the South."

Because of the scale of the issues and peoples I am considering, I cannot hope to deal with all aspects of my subject, or indeed with any part of it in

satisfactory detail, but I will endeavor to provide enough to give the reader a basis to get an overview of the growth of thought in “the South.” [For the first part of this series addressing the ancient roots of Muslim grievances see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Why Many Muslims Hate the West.”](#)]

So, here I begin where Muslim thinkers and political activists began with their perception of the disparity in power, wealth and knowledge between the North and South. At various times from the late Eighteenth Century, throughout much of Asia and Africa, some individuals set forth their analyses of the challenges they perceived and what they thought they needed to do to meet them. At first, the most important of these movements were religious.

Then, in the early years of the Twentieth Century, nationalism replaced religion as the dominant theme of political thought. At first nationalism was regionally or linguistically divided; then increasingly commentators broadened the scale of their thought ethnically and linguistically. Europeans led the way. First Turks, then Arabs and later other peoples followed.

Nationalism reached its high point in mid-century when it incorporated social, educational and economic programs. Toward the end of the century, when socially active nationalism failed to produce the reality of power or the sense of dignity that were its goals, disillusionment set in.

There were many reasons for failure insincerity, rivalry or corruption of leaders, imbalance of military and civic components of society, the magnitude of the tasks to be performed with insufficient means and, above all, foreign military threat and intervention but a growing number of politically active people concluded that, regardless of the causes of failure, failure itself was starkly evident.

Next, I will bring this account to the present. With nationalism and socialism no longer judged to provide a “roadmap” in the early years of the Twenty-first Century, opinion makers particularly in the Arab lands returned to – but dramatically altered and implemented – the dominant theme of the Nineteenth Century politics, the quest for power and dignity through religion, leading to the United States, Russia, China and the several Middle Eastern governments engaging in counterinsurgency programs.

Overall, I aim to show how the reactions of “the South” incorporated common themes despite the enormous social, cultural and geographical diversity of the peoples. Only if we take into account the scale of the events can we hope to understand them and move toward “affordable world security.”

Islamic Revival

Salafiyah is the Arabic name given to Islamic revivalist movements. The word masks a complex concept. Even native Arabic speakers usually translate it as “reactionary.” But the word *salafi* in classical Arabic means a person who stands both in the rearguard and in the vanguard – Arabic delights in such contrasts. Muslim thinkers meant by it the process of going back to the beginnings in order to find a firm or “pure” base upon which to build a theologically correct system of thought and action for the present and the future.

At first sight the concept appears to outside observers as wholly exotic or even incomprehensible. But there have been historical and are contemporary movements in Christian societies that are comparable. Thus, a first step in understanding *Salafiyah* is to observe what Muslim movements and thinkers had in common with Christian movements and thinkers.

The counterpart to Islamic *Salafiyah* in Christianity is the Protestant movement we associate with Martin Luther and John Calvin. Their thought was adopted, modified and spread by the English and Welsh Puritans during their exile in Holland and their mission in Massachusetts where they founded a fundamentalist theocratic state.

The quest for “purity” or “fundamentalism” is today represented by dozens of Protestant sects, whose members include the 40 or so million Americans who call themselves “Born Again” Christians.

Clearly, the word *Salafiyah* makes the Muslim movement sound more exotic than it really is. If we go to the essentials it should be comprehensible to us. So what is it really all about? What was it trying to deal with? What were its main ideas? Why were people attracted to it? Answers to these questions must be sought because they matter today. To move toward answers, I begin with a short look at history.

In the Quran and in the sayings of Islam’s Prophet Muhammad, Islam was described as the religion common to Jews, Christians and Arabs. As the Quran put it, it is “the Religion of Abraham,” but unlike Judaism and Christianity, Islam was delivered in the Arabic language so that the Arabs could understand it. (Quran 39/27-28).

Muslims believe that Islam was religion as God meant it to be. That is, they believe, that the Quran *corrected* innovations and perversions Jews and Christians made to the original message. For example, the Quran denies that Jesus could have been the “son” or God or a god himself although he was accorded a special relationship to God and was himself regarded as a prophet senior to Muhammad.

The original message was the religion Muhammad proclaimed in Madinah. The Islam spelled out in the Quran and acted out in Madinah is a worldly religion, focused on what the individual should do in this life. It provides a detailed system of law, social organization and deportment. It has few ambiguities, is authoritative but many of its followers have found it to be austere. It is not filled with solace for misery and presumes security, dominance and social homogeneity.

Then, as Islam spread afield from the area around Madinah in the Seventh Century, Muslims encountered peoples of vastly different cultures. Within a few centuries, millions of the inhabitants of large areas of Europe, Asia and Africa had come to think of themselves as Muslims. But, while having adopted the core features of Islam, most of the converts retained elements of their previous faiths and ways of life.

In this way, Islam also resembled Christianity. For example, in Mexico, Catholicism incorporated the ancient gods, renaming them saints, and converted their temples into churches. Islam similarly found ways to incorporate many of the ideas and practices of the converts.

Islamic Customs

The formal, textual and original elements of Islam often sat lightly on the shoulders of the converts: Bedouin tribesmen continued to deal with one another, as they had done in pre-Islamic times (the time of "ignorance," *jahaliyah*), in accord with their custom. Afghan Pushtuns similarly followed their own pre-Islamic code, the *Pushtunwali*, and their legal system, the *Ravaj*, so that, for example, their women did not inherit property even from their husbands as they should according to the *Shariah*, and vengeance (Pashtu: *badal*) was mandatory even against fellow Muslims although it is specifically forbidden in the Quran (4/92-93).

Mongol converts to Islam continued to be guided by the *Yassa*. In India and Sumatra, Hindu practices were brought into Islam by converts, with Muslims even making pilgrimages to Hindu shrines (*durgahs*), while in Africa animistic customs similarly continued to be practiced in the name of Islam.

Other customs were introduced as a result of changing circumstances. A prime example is the veiling of women. Veiling of women was probably not practiced in the time of Muhammad and is nowhere specifically ordered in the Quran. The closest the Quran comes to mentioning the veiling of faces is in verse 24/31 which orders "believing women" to cover their breasts and not to flaunt or reveal their [physical or bodily] "ornaments" (*zinat*) except to their husbands or other specified close relatives or impotent men and slaves.

It is not practiced in a number of Muslim societies, including the Kazaks, Tajiks and Kirghiz of Central Asia, the Malays and Javanese of Southeast Asia and the Kurds and Iranians of the Middle East and the Berbers of North Africa. It was common, however, in Christian Byzantium at the time of the Arab invasion, and was adopted presumably from them by free-born, upper-class Arab women. It is not altogether clear why and for whom veiling was mandatory. My hunch is that it was seen to be practiced in more advanced societies (Byzantium and Safavid Iran) by the aristocracy and also was a means to differentiate high-borne (Arab) women from native slaves.

Thus, both geographically and temporally, Islam was modified. An austere religion, it was everywhere "invaded" by manifestations of popular desire for emotional contact with the Divinity. The cult of saints spread and to visit them and urge their blessings Muslims made pilgrimages that rivaled the obligatory Hajj. Particularly in times of distress, as in the wake of the devastating Thirteenth-Century Mongol invasions, mysticism offered an escape from misery and fear.

When the traditions of Islamic law grew weak in the Middle Ages, moves were commonly made to reestablish contact with the cultural and legal core of the community. Thus, for example, the great Fourteenth-Century Muslim Arab traveler Ibn Batuta was everywhere welcomed as a recognized scholar and practicing judge of the Sharia.

Aware of contradictions of text and practice, a few Muslim theologians, like the Christian Puritans, sought to return to the earliest manifestations of their faith to find theologically solid bases (*usul*) upon which they could rebuild. Both the Muslim Fundamentalists and the Puritans regarded deviations from textual ordinances as sins.

The first major Muslim thinker to preach fundamentalism was Muhammad bin Hanbal (Ibn Hanbal) who was born in Baghdad 780 AD. His life work was the gathering of *hadiths*, the tales passed down generation after generation from contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad.

What he was seeking, and what his followers sought, was a means of evaluating and purging the contemporary manifestation of Islam by recourse to what the Prophet had actually done or said during his lifetime. That was, of course, a dangerous challenge to the ruling establishment. Rulers, warlords and judges had formed their own system of belief and had built into it their own privileges and status.

So they reacted to Ibn Hanbal's challenge by subjecting him to the Islamic version of the Inquisition (*Mihna*) which condemned him, throwing him into prison

and torturing him. Unbowed, he died in Baghdad in 855 after having gathered about 28,000 *hadiths* which next only to the Quran form the “fundamentals” of the Islamic religion.

Rise of the Wahhabis

The man who took what Ibn Hanbal gathered and formed it into the interpretation of Islam adopted in our times by the austere sect of the Saudi Wahhabis, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Caliphate was Taqi al-Din ibn Taimiya. Ibn Taimiya was born in 1263, almost 500 years after Ibn Hanbal, at Harran (on what is today the Syrian-Turkish frontier). As a small child he fled from the terrible Mongol invasions to Damascus where he studied and later taught the rite or legal school (*madhhab*) of Ibn Hanbal.

Like Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taimiya argued that returning to Islam (as the Prophet and his immediate circle had practiced it) was crucial, but it was the clear and present danger posed by the foreign invader that captured much of his thought and action. In this he set a theme that has echoed down to our time.

In his time, it was the Mongols who were destroying Islamic societies and killing Muslims. Resisting them was a vital interest for his community. He was rewarded when they received one of their rare defeats at a battle near Damascus. With their threat removed, he turned his efforts against the off-shoots of Islam – Ismailis, Nusairis and others, whom he regarded as heretics and so, “domestic invaders.”

Throughout his life Ibn Taimiya was a dedicated “striver for the faith,” a *jihadi*, but his zeal led him, as it had Ibn Hanbal and would lead many of his followers, into conflict with the Establishment in his own community. He was several times imprisoned, rehabilitated and again imprisoned.

During one period of imprisonment, he wrote a commentary on the Quran, thereby setting a style that would be copied by later prisoners of conscience. One of his Twentieth-Century followers, the Egyptian cleric Sayyid Qutub also wrote a commentary on the Quran while in prison.

In the Thirteenth Century, Ibn Taimiya, like his long-dead mentor Ibn Hanbal, spent his life inveighing against such innovations as the cult of saints and the then highly popular Sufi mystical movement. To try to silence him, the rulers clapped him into prison and, when that did not keep him from reaching out to the public, they took away his paper and ink.

Unable to communicate, he soon died. But the rulers were too late. So popular was he in Damascus that reportedly virtually the entire city, some 200,000 men and 15,000 women, attended his interment which was held, ironically, in the Sufi

cemetery.

While Ibn Hanbal had seen the danger to Islam to be its own worldly success, Ibn Taimiya saw the deadly threat to be both internal laxness and foreign invasion. Their messages were heard but made relatively little impact for the next 500 years: rulers governed, scholars wrote learned commentaries and the public went about its business.

Then what has been called the "impact of the West" began and their messages took on a new urgency. As Ibn Hanbal had told them, they found their societies to be weak and their faith corrupt, and as Ibn Taimiya demonstrated in his fight against the Mongols, foreign invasion must be stopped before the community itself was destroyed.

What to do? What was needed, a few Muslim thinkers began to assert, was both to purge corrupt practice and to make the original, "pure," texts available beyond the closed, sophistic, ossified circles of the religious scholars. Only if their societies were internally strong, the reformers argued, could Muslims cope with the foreigner.

The first prominent figure in the long parade to follow to propose this answer was the Indian theologian Imam Quṭb ad-Dīn Aḥmad Walī Allāh who was regarded by Muslim contemporaries as their greatest scholar and who is commonly known as Shah Waliullah ("the Devotee of God") and he lived mainly in Delhi from 1703 to 1762. (The Arabic word *imam* means "one who stands in front" and is applied to the person who leads the prayer.)

Quṭb al-Dīn's scholarship impressed millions of Muslims, but perhaps more important were his efforts to popularize the basic religious text, the Quran. He translated the Quran into the then lingua franca of South Asia, *Farsi* (Persian), so that it could be read, discussed and understood by the whole society. Today, he is often thought of as the spiritual father of Pakistan.

Foreign Intervention

Following the time of Quṭb al-Dīn, increasing numbers of foreigners arrived and foreign activities penetrated Islamic societies more deeply.

Consider these events:

–In Eighteenth Century India, Englishmen paid a sort of homage to local customs. They dressed in Bengal style, smoked hookahs and even kept harems (*zenanas*). Then, province by province, they took over and finally in 1857, after the revolt of the Muslim Sepoy army, they destroyed the Mughal Empire and came to despise and segregate the Indians.

–In the Crimea the Russians invaded, impoverished or drove away much of the previously thriving population. In the Crimea, Russians also fought the destructive war that Tolstoy recounts in two of his novels.

–In Java, the Dutch clamped a colonial regime on the natives and, when they tried to reassert their independence, killed about 300,000 “rebels” between 1835 and 1840; they also fought Sumatra “rebels” between 1873 and 1914.

–In Algeria, after the bitter 15-year-long war that began in 1830, the French stole the lands and imposed an apartheid regime on the survivors.

–In Egypt, less violently but pervasively, the English looted the country. As David Landes wrote in *Bankers and Pashas* (p.316), the Egyptian treasury was plundered “of untold amounts for indemnities, fraudulent and semi-fraudulent claims, exorbitant prices to purveyors and contractors, and all manner of bribes, designed to buy cheap honours or simply respite from harassment.” Of all this, the ruler of Egypt had little understanding and could, in any case, do little because of the pressure of the European powers.

Everywhere, by the middle of the Nineteenth Century, all foreigners enjoyed more privileges than do modern diplomats: foreigners charged with crimes could appeal their cases to courts in Europe and even if their crimes were against natives, the local government had no jurisdiction over them.

The speed of the transformation astonished the natives. It is illustrated by two events in the Levant: Whereas in 1830, a British consul had not been allowed to enter the city of Damascus, ten years later in 1840, another British consul actually chose the governor of Lebanon.

As the evidence of their weakness, sometimes demonstrated on the battlefield but also in the market place, came to seem more shameful, the Muslim search for guidance in the Quranic phrase the *sirat al-mustaqim* (the road of those who would be virtuous) became urgent. When they didn't find this guidance, a guide came looking for them.

An Influential Thinker

By far the most influential Muslim thinker of the Nineteenth Century was a much more worldly figure than even the Indian Muslim Qutub al-Din and inevitably more controversial. Controversy, indeed, began with the attachment (*laqab*) to his name that usually designates where a person comes from. (In this style, I would be called William Polk Texan.)

Jamal al-Din's *laqab* was “al-Afghani” although he was probably born in Iran. Why did he switch his birthplace? The usual explanation, which I believe to be

correct, is that he wanted to be thought of as a Sunni or Orthodox Muslim (as the ruling ethnic group of Afghanistan was) rather than a Shii or minority-group Muslim (as most Iranians were). That is, he wanted to put himself into the mainstream of Islam.

Putting himself in the mainstream of contemporary affairs, Afghani certainly did in a career that took him over much of the Muslim world from Afghanistan to Egypt and from Istanbul to India. (Professor Nikki R. Keddie has written a number of works that touch on Afghani's career. One of the best deals with the controversy Afghani was partly responsible for provoking, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran* (London: Frank Cass, 1966). Keddie uses the published catalogue of Afghani's papers to correct the version he and his Arab followers put out on his life. As she sums up his career, "Through most of his life, he was consistent in working for the independence of Muslim states from foreign rule, but his emphasis was almost always particularly anti-British, perhaps because of early experiences in India." His tactics were based on his appearing to be an Orthodox religious figure as shown in his book *Refutation of the Materialism*.)

In contrast to what appear to have been frustrating and unsuccessful encounters with the sultans, shahs and pashas, Afghani exercised a profound influence on Muslim intellectuals and theologians in Afghanistan, Iran, India, Turkistan, Ottoman Turkey and Egypt. His message to them was in essence simple: Muslims must get back to the origins of their religion if they hoped to free their lands from imperialism. And they must do it themselves since no foreigner would help them.

During his years teaching in Egypt, Afghani made common cause with the Egyptian cleric Muhammad Abduh. (Still the best book on Abduh is Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A study of the Modern Reform Movement inaugurated by Muhammad 'Abduh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

Although, in later years, Abduh would become eminently "respectable" as the rector of Azhar University which was the heart of Islamic scholarship, and the chief judge (*Mufti Am*) of the Egyptian Islamic court system, he and Afghani then just tolerated outsiders. They oscillated between audiences at court and exile.

Then, just before the 1879-1882 nationalist uprising led by the Egyptian officer Ahmad Arabi against British rule, Afghani was sent out of Egypt and Abduh was sent into internal exile in his village. When the British suppressed the uprising, Afghani and Abduh moved to Paris where they founded the short-lived but immensely influential journal, *Al-Urwa Al-Wuthqa*. Its message was that *both* European domination and Oriental despotism must be ended and that the way to do it was to reinvigorate Islam and establish it as the ruling doctrine.

The magazine's name is difficult to translate. It means something like a stirrup (which upholds one) that cannot be broken. It was one of three dissident and more or less clandestine journals of the time. Also in Paris, Aleksandr Herzen founded *Kolokol* (The Bell) that similarly influenced a generation of Russians.

At roughly the same time as Afghani and Abduh were holding forth, a sequence of Tatar or Turkish intellectuals in and around Bukhara began a similar mission. The most significant of these men was Ismail Bey Gaspirali who, like Jamal al-Din and Muhammad Abduh, founded a journal, *Tarjuman* (Turco-Arabic: "translator"), which was read throughout the Ottoman Empire, Russia and India. It provided a running critique of what many Turkic peoples had come to see as the source of their weakness, an ossified Muslim clergy which was unable to halt, and actually abetted, the advance of Russian imperialists.

It wasn't only the Russian Tsars who were imperialists in Central Asia. At roughly the same time as Catherine the Great was pushing into Western Muslim lands, the Qing (Manchu) emperors of China were moving into the sheikhdoms and principalities of Turkistan. There they virtually wiped out the Buddhist Dzungar people and installed Muslim Turks (Uighurs) as puppet rulers.

In 1864, the Uighurs revolted and set up an independent Turkish kingdom. When their state was recognized by Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, the infuriated Chinese overthrew the kingdom and put the population into what amounted to a "reservation" (*Hui Jiang*). Under oppressive Chinese rule, the Uighurs were not able to produce either significant Islamic scholars or national leaders and still today are trying to assert their national existence both by resisting the Chinese and by participating in the armed struggles of other Muslims. We will see them again in the Islamic Caliphate.

Overall, these Turks, Arabs, Persians and Indians restricted themselves to sermons, slogans and scholasticism, but others began to try to implement similar thoughts in direct action. I now turn to them.

A Militant Revival

The first of the militant revival groups did not aim at the Europeans because, except for a few intrepid travelers, there were no Europeans in Arabia. Called into action by the theologian Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1787), the *Wahaibyah* or as they called themselves "Unitarians" (*Muwahhidun*), were, and are today, Sunni Muslim followers of the teachings of Ibn Hanbal as interpreted by Ibn Taimiyah.

They think of themselves as essentially a continuation of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad. They like to point out, that, just as he found a haven in

Madinah when he was driven out of Mecca, so Abd al-Wahhab was given refuge in the town of Dariyah. It was in Dariyah (now a suburb of Riyadh) that Abd al-Wahhab acquired the ally who assured his worldly power.

The marriage of Ibn Saud's son to a daughter of Abd al-Wahhab was the beginning of a partnership that has lasted to this day. Muhammad ibn Saud, himself a townsman, was recognized by the nearby Arab tribes as a natural leader and Abd al-Wahhab addressed their religious needs.

Like the tribesmen whom the Prophet had organized in the Seventh Century for the wars of the Conquest, they were wild and warlike. Managing them required a clear and acceptable code, astute diplomacy and the deflection of their hostilities abroad. The result, as the great Arab historian Ibn Khaldun wrote of Islam, was to "turn their faces in the same direction."

The direction where the faces of the recently united tribesmen turned in 1802 was the Shia city of Karbala, which in Bedouin style they sacked and in Hanbali style, since the inhabitants were heretics, they massacred.

Heretics were not their only targets. In the next few years, the Wahhabi-led tribesmen conquered Jiddah, Mecca and Madinah. In each place, they destroyed the tombs of saints. Everything that was not specifically authorized by the Quran was considered an illegal innovation (*Bida*). Religious fervor (*jihad*) was combined with the Bedouin tradition of raiding (*ghaza*). It was a fearsome combination and, as it did in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, it swept all before it. By 1811, the Wahhabi-Saudi-tribal empire extended from Aleppo to the Indian Ocean.

Possibly the nonchalant Ottoman government would not have reacted to this attack on its Arab provinces, but the Wahhabi conquest of Mecca could not be tolerated because the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph was also the guardian of Islam's Holy places. So in 1812, he authorized his nominal vassal, the already powerful Albanian ruler of Egypt, Mehmet Ali Pasha, to dislodge the Wahhabis. That action began a long series of wars through which the Wahhabi-Saudi-tribal combination survived to the present.

A generation later, in 1837, another Islamic revival movement was founded by a Berber who had been born in what is now Algeria about 1790. Muhammad bin Ali al-Sanusi was a scholar who spent much of his early life studying in the libraries of Fez, Cairo and Mecca.

Strongly influenced by Islamic mysticism, Sufism, he tried to push aside worldly concerns to devote himself to prayer. But, in the North Africa of his time, he could not. The French invasion of Algeria in 1830 blocked his return from

pilgrimage to his homeland and forced him to create a different sort of "homeland" in Libya. What he created was the *Sanusiyah*.

Realizing that a revivalist movement, as he planned for the *Sanusiyah* to become, could not exist without popular support, Muhammad bin Ali also realized that a people ignorant of Islam could never be relied upon to protect it.

His solution was similar to what the Prophet had done: it was to graft onto the tribesmen who merely "submitted to Islam" (the *Muslimun*) a brotherhood of true believers (*Muminun*) who would be their religious guides (*imams*). He set about creating this brotherhood in the university he founded in a Libyan oasis.

Founding Lodges

As the brotherhood grew, its missionaries founded scores of "lodges" (*zawiyahs*) throughout the deserts and steppes of North Africa through Egypt and all the way into the Arabian Hijaz. They covered an area larger than Europe. A typical *zawiyah* was a more or less permanent encampment composed of a mosque or prayer room, a dormitory, a guest room and a school.

Virtually all of the people reached by the Sanusi "brothers" in this vast area were nomadic tribesmen on whom the requirements of Islam rested lightly. [The best account of the relationship of the *Sanusiyah* and the Bedouin is E.E Evans-Pritchard's *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949). He had been the Political Officer in Cyrenaica of the British army for two years during the Second World War and when we became friends he was Professor of Anthropology at Oxford and a Fellow of All Souls College. His student and follower, Emrys Peters, also a close friend, carried on his studies and became Professor of Anthropology at Manchester University.]

What made the unlikely combination of religious scholars and nomads work was that the Bedouin got two things they wanted an overarching but not oppressive unity (or at least occasional intertribal truce) and the codification of religion in easy to understand terms that did not violate such popular religion as they already practiced.

Muhammad bin Ali, unlike the more theoretical reformers, chose not to challenge the innovations (*bida*) that had become their way of life but sought only to refine them. Probably, that would be nearly all one would have to say of the *Sanusiya* had it been left alone in the vast Sahara. But that was not to be.

After the conquest of Algeria which the French completed about 1860, they moved deeper into Africa. Theirs was an unrewarding advance there were no rich prizes like Algeria in the vast interior but their advance was inexorable. Finally, at the village of Fashoda on the White Nile, they bumped into the British who also

were moving south and west into the African interior from Egypt.

The two Powers divided Africa between them in the 1898-99 Anglo-French Partition Agreement, which legitimated, at least in European law, the French advance into "their" area. There, the French ran into the *Sanusiya*, and in 1902 they destroyed the first of the Order's lodges. As the French advanced, they destroyed each lodge that they encountered. Much worse was to come.

While the French were advancing from the south, a newly "awakened" Italy had discovered nationalism and began to think of itself as Rome Reborn. Contemporary Italians knew that their ancient ancestors had farmed the coastal plain of Cyrenaica (now eastern Libya) and thought they could meet the needs of their growing population by colonizing it.

So, like the French in Algeria, they moved in to seize the land. Driven by nationalist fervor, the Italians also wanted to win status among the European Powers by acquiring an African empire. In 1911, they landed their first troops. The Sanusi leadership did not want to fight, but organized by the Sanusi creed, the Bedouin resisted. The Italian invasion began a war that lasted nearly 30 years.

Evans-Pritchard wrote, the Grand Sanusi was "anxious to avoid any action which might enable those powers [France and Italy] to accuse him of political designs. He wished only to be left alone to worship God according to the teachings of his Prophet, and when in the end he fought the French it was in defence of the religious life as he understood it. In its remarkable diffusion in North and Central Africa the Order never once resorted to force to back its missionary labours. He even refused the aid asked for by 'Arabi Pasha in Egypt in 1882 and by the Sudanese Mahdi in 1883 against the British. But when the French invaded its Saharan territories and destroyed its religious houses, and when later the Italians, also without provocation, did the same in Cyrenaica, the Order had no choice but to resist."p. 27-28.

An Italian-Driven Genocide

As carried out by the Italians, the 30 years' war soon became genocide. The Bedouin, calling themselves "protectors" (*muhafizat*) and called by the Italians "rebels" (*rebelli*), fought as guerrillas while the Italians used counterinsurgency tactics to try to create "furrows of blood" (*solci di sangria*) among the tribes, hoping to incite them to fight one another.

What the Italians called *politico-militari* tactics – which phrase Americans translated and tactics largely copied – did not work because as the Italian military commander wrote, "the entire population took part directly or

indirectly in the rebellion." [General Rodolfo Graziani, *Cirenaica Pacificata*, (Milano, 1932), p. 60/]

As counterinsurgency failed, the Italians turned to genocide. Within a few years, they killed nearly two-thirds of the population of Cyrenaica. Among the casualties were virtually all of the Sanusis. But, as the Englishman who knew them best, Evans-Pritchard, has written, "With the [Italian] destruction of the Sanusiya the war continued to be fought in the name of the religious order. It then became simply a war of Muslims to defend their faith against a Christian Power. Deep love of home and deep love of God nourished each other. Without due appreciation of the religious feeling involved in the resistance it would be, I think, be impossible to understand how it went on for so long against such overwhelming odds." [Evans-Pritchard, *Op. cit.*, 166]

In place of the Sanusi family, who abandoned the Bedouin to their fate, a remarkable figure who combined the best of the Bedouin and Sanusi attributes came to the fore. Umar al-Mukhtar, known as "the Lion of the Desert," became a hero to his people in his resistance to the Italians.

Al-Mukhtar carried on the tradition begun by Sharif Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi ("the Algerian") in the Algerian struggle against the French and as Amir Abd al-Karim al-Khattabi would lead the Berbers of the Rif in their war against the French and Spanish. What they held in common was their religious faith and the determination to keep their societies free and independent.

Umar al-Mukhtar emerges out of obscurity for Western viewers in the 1981 film *Lion of the Desert* where he is portrayed by Anthony Quinn. Abd al-Karim's war in the Rif was the subject of Vincent Sheean's reportage that subsequently became his 1926 book, *An American among the Riffis*. I got to know Abd al-Karim in Cairo, at the end of his long exile in 1954 and wrote a short account of his life in *Perspective of the Arab World: An Atlantic Monthly supplement*, 1955.

These were not the only struggles fought in the name of Islam against imperialism. For instance, when the Muslims of Java tried to win independence, the Dutch killed about 300,000 of them between 1825 and 1830 and they suppressed the people of Sumatra in a similarly brutal war from 1873 to 1914. But the one struggle that stands out, particularly in English memory, is the *Mahdiah* war in the Sudan.

Hunting for Slaves

From the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, the northern Sudanese Funj sultanate converted to Islam and began to use the Arabic language. Then in 1820, Mehmet Ali Pasha, the ruler of Egypt, decided to monopolize the hunt for African

slaves and invaded the country.

Having limited resources, Mehmet Ali's grandson and successor hired Europeans to administer the Sudan. One of them, General Charles Gordon, was a vociferous exponent of Christianity who looked upon the native Muslims as pagans and was determined to stamp out their customs. Sudanese anger built against him and the Egyptians.

Finally in 1881, another of those figures we have seen all over the Islamic world came to the fore. Muhammad Ahmed reached back into Muslim legend and proclaimed himself the *Mahdi*, a man sent by God to rectify injustice (*zhulm*) and return the people to the true path (*sunnah*). He organized his followers into armed zealots called the *Ansar*.

The choice of the name *Ansar* is an allusion to the men who made possible Muhammad the Prophet's flight from Mecca. So Muhammad al-Mahdi was putting himself in the position of the Prophet and his 30,000 to 40,000 followers in the center of the Muslim tradition. But, while he acted in the name of Islam he proclaimed himself to be virtually the equal of the Prophet Muhammad. Despising his claim and underestimating his power, the Egyptian government allowed itself to be defeated in small encounters by the Mahdi's followers. They, in turn, took their victories as proof of God's favor. So, by the time the British, who were effectively running Egypt, decided to suppress the *Mahdiyyah*, it had become a national movement.

Fortunately for the British, the Mahdi died of typhus, but the *Mahdiyyah* lingered on. Finally, in the spring and summer of 1898, the British attacked, destroyed the Sudanese army and absorbed Sudan into the growing British empire.

(I have dealt with the Sudan in more detail in my book *The Arab World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). More detailed is Peter Holt, *the Mahdist State in the Sudan 1881-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958). The government the British imposed on Sudan was patterned on their administration in India which was made up primarily of graduates of Cambridge who had excelled in athletics (known as "the blues") so the contemporary joke was that the Sudanese government was "the rule of the Blacks by the Blues.")

Muslims in the Philippines were never able to organize a mass resistance to the Sixteenth Century Spanish invasion nor to the Nineteenth Century American invasion. Under the Spaniards, the population of most of the northern islands was converted to Catholicism while the Muslims retreated to the south.

To try to stop the American troops, the Muslims fought as guerrillas. Not having modern arms, they often fought with agricultural tools in suicide attacks that

became a feature of modern guerrilla warfare. To stop the suicide attacks, the American government adopted the relatively heavy pistol, the .45 that became the standard officers' weapon for the next century.

While Britain and Russia were often on the brink of hostilities, and in the Crimean War actually fought one another, they shared a determination not to allow the peoples they conquered to move toward freedom. Their common opponent was the "Pan-Islamic" movement.

Fear of Pan-Islam played a role in shaping British and Russian policies toward much of Asia and French policy toward Africa. Like the French and the Russian empires, the British had conquered and ruled over millions of Muslims, and, like the French and Russians, they were sure that the Muslims were always on the point of revolting.

A Russian 'Domino Theory'

British security officers, like army generals, were always preparing for the last war and their text was the 1857 "Mutiny." Their fears were echoed by the Russians who imagined a sort of "domino theory" in which its Central Asians would rise and one after another topple the imperial structure. And the French had reason to fear the same thing as a result of their brutal policies in Algeria and Morocco.

All was based on rumor and much was myth but apprehension was real. The mood may now be best judged not in sober (or not so sober) diplomatic dispatches but in the then wildly popular novel, a precursor of the James Bond series, John Buchan's *Greenmantle*, which cast sinister Turkish and German agents from whom the civilized world was saved only by intrepid British agents. Buchan gave us "007" long before Ian Fleming invented him.

But the danger of Pan-Islam was largely a figment of the imperial powers' imagination. Muslims did not even conceive such a movement as Pan-Islam. A few like Afghani and Ismail Bey Gaspirali reached out beyond their immediate neighborhoods but most reformers were strictly local. And very few did more than write or talk.

Armed rebellions in the name of Islam were rare. Indeed, all over the Muslim world, reformers and militants were admitting at least to themselves that, regardless of aims, tactics and dedication, religion-based nationalism had failed to stop foreign intrusion.

So, in a ragged pattern, disillusioned Muslims from Central Asia to Sudan and from Java to Morocco began to search for new ways to defend their societies, cultures and religion. To a growing number and finally to most, the answer

seemed to be found not in their own background but in the West.

To be “modern” and strong, they were coming to believe, required adoption of the mainly secular ideology of the West. To what Asians and Africans made of western style nationalism I now turn.

Western Modernism

Arabic did not have a word for “nation.” Had you asked a Nineteenth Century Egyptian what was his “nation,” he would have given you the name of his village. The Bedouin would not even have understood the question.

In Persian, Turkish and Berber as in other African and Asian languages, no word fit the new need. The word that the Arabs first pressed into this service was *watan*, but *watan*, like the French word *pays*, meant village. It took not only a linguistic but also a mental leap to change village to nation.

Farsi (Persian) and Turkish use a word for nation that is derived from the medieval practice of assigning minority peoples of a common faith, often called a “confession,” a separate status. In Farsi, it is *mellat* and in Turkish it is *millet*. Both are derived from the Arabic word *millah* which in classical Arabic meant rite or [non-Muslim] religion. The majority community members referred to themselves not as a *millah* but as Muslims.

Thus, ironically, the word for a separate, non-Muslim minority community was adopted as the word for the whole population. In Central Asia, the Uighurs and other Turkic peoples used either a religious (Muslim) or a linguistic (Turki) designation. Malays use the Malay word, *Bangsa*, while the Indonesians used a borrowing from Dutch, *nasion*.

In the North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, it was the Ottoman Empire that started the transformation. The Ottoman Empire had few trained men, little industry, a weak army and almost no financial resources, but it was able to govern a vast, heterogeneous empire a feat beyond the capacities of its richer successors.

Its strategy was to tolerate other loyalties. Religious or ethnic communities (*millets*) governed themselves, apportioned and collected the taxes that were due the Empire and judged themselves according to their own customs. Each was, in effect, a miniature nation-state.

The aims of the imperial government were limited to collecting sufficient taxes in an economical way and to protecting its frontiers. It even tolerated successful rebellion. Its administration was loose: its provinces had none of the restrictions of nation-states, as European Powers recast them into Syria,

Iraq or Palestine at the end of the First World War. The “Syrian,” “Iraqi” or “Palestinian” moved as easily between Baghdad, Damascus, Mecca, Jerusalem, Istanbul or Cairo as the American would from Dallas to Los Angeles.

Watan-defined or separate state nationalism (*wataniyah*) was dedicated to breaking up this polyglot, multinational, religiously tolerant empire. It did this first in the Ottoman Balkans in the Nineteenth Century: Greeks broke loose from 1821; Serbians, 1868; Montenegrins, 1878; Romanians, 1878; and Bulgarians, 1879.

It was the challenge of these movements and of the Armenians, who fought a guerrilla war and engaged in urban terrorism to try to create their own nation-state, that stimulated the Ottoman Turks to develop what came to be called Turkism (*Turkçuluk*).

Turks, who had not thought of themselves as a national group (*millet*) like the various minorities in their empire, could not distinguish themselves from Arabs or Kurds by identifying themselves as Muslims. They shared that designation. Their only unique feature was language.

Language as Bond

As Turkism’s ideologue, Mehmed Ziya Gokalp wrote, language is a bond “superior to race, populism, geography, politics and desire. While still in the cradle, with the lullabies he hears, [the child] is under the influence of the mother tongue. All our religious, ethical, artistic feelings, which give existence to our soul, are taken by means of this language. Our way living is totally an echo of this.”

[Ziya Gokalp (1876-1924) was a leading Turkish intellectual who is best known for his book (written in the old Ottoman Turkish) *Turkçuluk Asasleri* (The bases of Turkism) which was published in 1920. Himself influenced by European sociologists, particularly by Emile Durkheim, he provided the rationale and stimulus for Kemal Ataturk’s brand of secular, language-based, single state nationalism in place of pan-Islamism, pan-Turanism and Ottoman identity.]

Not only among the Turks, but also among the Arabs language is fundamental to national identity. Even illiterate Bedouin relish classical poetry as not even the most erudite Western audience could be said to relish Shakespeare’s sonnets. Politically more important, shared language overcame separate religion. *Arabiyah* seemed to Christian Arabic-speakers the road toward participation in the dominant community.

Among those Arabs excited by the reform movement in the Ottoman Empire were young Christian Arabs in Lebanon and Syria, many of whom were associated with

the American Protestant schools. At first, their writings were mainly anti-Turk. The first was a book in French by a Syrian Christian called *Le Reveil de la Nation Arabe*, but he had few readers. Most Arabs were still anxious to join the Turkish opposition to European invasion.

Thus, linguistic and by extension cultural preservation came to be equated with preservation of the nation. It is difficult for English speakers to evaluate the importance of this statement because secure in the imperialism or even colonialism of English which has conquered and settled whole vocabularies of German, French, Latin and even Arabic most of us scorn what appear to be just pedantic linguistics. However, not only the embattled natives but also their foreign rulers grasped well the political importance of linguistics.

Look first at the French: A key element in the *mission civilisatrice*, the politically correct French term for imperialism, was the suppression of Arabic and its replacement with French. In Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria, street signs were posted in French; laws were promulgated in French; transactions in government offices and law courts also were in French. And bright young students were encouraged to study in France so that they would think in French. If one wanted to get ahead, the path was signed in French.

The Russian Language

The same policy was practiced by the Russians in Central Asia. Russian was the language that led to good jobs in commerce and was necessary for postings in government. That was the pattern already set under the Tsars, but, to the Soviet government, it was only the first step.

The Communists rightly saw that language was a weapon as well as a tool. In 1926, they implemented a policy to widen the gaps among the various Turkic peoples. By dropping the use of the old script (*Osmanlu*) and putting Azeri Turkish into the Latin alphabet, as they did in 1926, and then into Cyrillic as they did in 1936, they cut the upcoming generation off from its cultural and historical roots. Young people could no longer read what the Nineteenth Century reformers had written.

The second step was to divide the common written language by dialects, forming a new written language of each, so that an Uzbek could no longer read what a Tajik or an Anatolian Turk was writing.

When this policy did not work fast enough or completely enough to satisfy Josef Stalin, he followed the plan first set out by the Germans during their occupation of the Crimea to expel the natives. He arranged the shipment of 191,044 Crimeans, mainly women and children, deeper into Central Asia. Shipped

by unheated and unprovisioned cattle cars, many died en route to forced labor camps.

The government then razed the departing population's cultural relics including mosques and graveyards, renamed thousands of towns and villages, burned Turkic language books and manuscripts and erased mention of the people in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.

Chinese policy under Chiang Kai-shek toward the Turks in Turkistan (Xinjiang) went even further. Following revolts in 1933 by the Kazak people and in 1944 by the Turkish people of Ili who proclaimed the short-lived "East Turkish Republic," Chiang denied that there were such people as the Turks, saying that they were just part of the "greater Chinese race." As Chinese, the Turks should give up Turkish and learn Chinese. [Linda Benson, *The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang* (Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1990), 27.]

Malay nationalists were gripped by something like Chiang's ethnic policy. For the British, Malaya was a vast rubber plantation and to work it the British imported cheap, indeed almost slave, labor from India and China.

To keep the peace with the politically more active members of these groups, they hit on the idea of amalgamating them into the feeble Malay nationalist movement. That provoked a reaction. Fearing the loss of their nation (Malay: *melayu* from the Turkish *millet*) the tiny nationalist party, led by Ibrahim Yaacob sought to ally itself with Indonesia.

Neither the British nor the Dutch would tolerate such a program and he was forced out of public life. For the moment Malay nationalism went down without even a whimper, but the idea of some sort of southeast Asian entity would resurface and is alive today.

Malaya would not have gained much strength from an association with Indonesia. Indeed, until about 1920, there was no conception of an "Indonesia;" it was only then that the dissident native elite began to try to overcome their divisions into Java, Bali, Sumatra and the other islands. Before that time, what passed as nationalism was a polite, Dutch tolerated, move to better educate the population.

What was remarkable about it was that one of its early advocates and publicists was a Muslim woman, Raden Kartini, who lived from 1879 to 1904 and who was also a pioneer of women's liberation. The Dutch were in favor of the educational programs she encouraged because, like colonists elsewhere, they were trying to build an inexpensive native bureaucracy.

But nationalism had no part in this effort and the Dutch vigorously opposed it.

They not only fought uprisings but successfully kept the various small societies apart from one another.

It was only in 1927 that Achmed Sukarno founded the secular Indonesian National Party (*Partai Nasional Indonesia*). The Dutch promptly put him in prison. He was released by the Japanese a decade later when they invaded the islands. Then, when the Japanese surrendered, the Dutch returned and, with British support, tried to reestablish their rule. For five years, they fought vicious battles against Indonesian guerrillas before giving up and recognizing Indonesian independence in 1950. [See M.C. Ricklefs. *A Modern History of Indonesia*, (Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1981) and Adrian Vickers, . *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

The Indian Struggle

In India, the struggle against British imperialism lasted much longer than the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch. In India, there was an empire to be reckoned with.

Like the Ottoman Empire the Mughal empire was decrepit, but Britain treated them differently. Whereas the British saw the Ottoman empire as useful in blocking a Russian break out into the Mediterranean, the Mughal empire had few any redeeming features in British eyes. Piece by piece they dismantled it using its own subjects as their helpers. Finally, the helpers turned against them in the 1857 Sepoy "Rebellion," Sepoy being Anglicized Persian for Sipahi (soldiers).

The rebellion was a viciously fought war in which the British took few prisoners and wiped out whole villages. When the British with their Indian allies put it down, they both destroyed the Mughal empire and set aside the Muslims as disloyal natives. It effectively ended not only the Mughal empire but also the remaining British toleration of the Muslim community. Muslims were banned from the British armed forces and the sharp turn to relative support of the Indian Hindus with great implications for the future.

Having lost the status they had previously enjoyed, Indian Muslims, then about 40 million in number, transferred their loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph as the actual spiritual and potential political leader of the Muslim world.

So when, in the First World War, Britain attacked the Ottoman Iraqi provinces, the Sultan responded with just what Britain most feared, call for a holy war, *jihad*. To the surprise of the British, however, the Indian Muslim response was muted. Meanwhile, the relationship of Muslims to Britain and to Hindu society was undergoing both cosmetic and profound changes.

Perhaps the most profound change in Muslim-Hindu- British relationships was that

lower caste and untouchable Indians who were condemned to perpetual slavery in Hinduism continued converting by the millions to Islam. While far less numerous than the Hindus, Muslims had become a major political force which both the Hindu nationalist movement and the British sought to use for their own ends.

Also politically important were the links established by the Muslim elite directly with England over the heads of the British rulers in India. Two leading figures demonstrate this trend. The first was the Aga Khan who was the immensely rich leader of the Ismaili community.

When the middle-class Englishmen who made up the membership of the British clubs in India did not welcome him, he shrewdly found a way into the top crust of English society. He saw that the royal family and the aristocracy were addicted to horseracing so he used his money, connections and skills to become an outstanding breeder and racer of horses. He was everywhere sought after in England and could take his political arguments direct to decision makers.

The second Indian Muslim was a product of the best of English education. Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) read law at the Inns of Court in London. The British found him a formidable adversary precisely because he was so powerfully "English." He treated the British civil servants, the members of the Indian Political Service, as though in a debate at the Oxford Union and parlayed his forensic skills, his Muslim identity and his popularity into a major role even in the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress.

At the same time, Jinnah created an independent power base as the leader of the All-India Muslim League. Originally, he sought to work with the Hindus against the British and toward a united India, but, by 1940, he had come to believe that Muslims and Hindus would never be able to work and live together in a single state. Thus, he espoused the idea of a separate Muslim state. He would become the "father" (*Babu-i Qawm*) of Pakistan.

Jinnah's legal skills were comparable to those of the Kashmiri Hindu, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who studied at Cambridge University and read law at the Inner Temple in London. He was at least as "at home" in English as in Hindi and was very close to the English aristocracy, even having an affair with Lady Mountbatten, the wife of the last British High Commissioner.

An Egyptian Uprising

Meanwhile, among the Arabs, a major nationalist revolt broke out in Egypt in April 1919. Egypt then had a small wealthy, educated elite that had become accustomed over a generation to working with the British authorities. During that period, the British had reluctantly and slowly allowed the children of the

elite to attend Cairo's sprawling university.

There, they turned away from the ideas that were permeating Turkish and Arab societies. Many of their leading figures like Taha Husain, the blind religious scholar and novelist, had begun to argue that Egypt was not an Arab land or indeed even a part of the Middle East but rather a member of the Mediterranean cultural zone.

It was in this context a growing sense of capacity and a growing sense of being part of what I have called "the North," that Egyptians heard the Allied, and above all, President Woodrow Wilson's, proclamations of a new era of peace and independence. Riding this wave of hope, a sober and theretofore British approved member of the elite, Saad Zaghlul, led a delegation (*wafd*) to respectfully request permission to attend the Paris Peace Conference and present its case for independence.

The British were not amused. They turned him down and warned him that he was breaking martial law. Given that he was a former minister in their puppet regime, the British were astonished when Zaghlul began to organize resistance among the university students.

The British, who had a low opinion of Egyptian will and courage, cracked down, arresting and exiling Zaghlul. The students responded with terrorism. Push led to shove. After three years of sporadic violence, the British wisely offered a compromise: they would agree to limited independence. So, limited independence under a docile monarchy and a contented aristocracy was what Egypt lived under until the end of the Second World War.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, on June 30, 1920, a minor incident set off a revolt of the tribes that then made up a large part of the population of what had been the Ottoman provinces (*pashaliks*) of Baghdad and Basra. It was a spontaneous outburst of anger and does not seem to have been motivated by any sense of nationalism although religious sentiment played a significant role.

The tribesmen, with no overall leadership and no announced goals, derailed trains, killed 1,654 soldiers (at a cost to themselves of about 10,000 people). As T.E. Lawrence was quick to point out, the cost to Britain was six times as much as the British had spent stimulating the wartime "Revolt in the Desert."

The cost was too high and the benefit too low so the young Winston Churchill did something that did not seem ever to occur to an American president: he organized a meeting to plan a new policy. That new policy resulted in the creation of quasi-independent states in Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. The new order was sufficient to give Britain a satisfactory degree of control at minimal

cost for a generation. [Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970)]

What the new order which was partially copied by the French in Syria and Lebanon allowed was a brand of national identity appropriate to separate nation-states. That was the local or state based nationalism known as *wataniyah*, which was always unsatisfactory to the younger Arabs. But they were at yet unsure even who they were: Iraqis, Syrians, Lebanese, or more vaguely, Arabs.

Defining a Nation

Meeting in Brussels in December 1938, an assembly of the most gifted Middle Eastern students tried to reach agreement on the meaning of the words "Arab" and "Arab nation." An Arab, they decided, was pretty much anyone who thought he was an Arab and who spoke Arabic.

What was different in this meeting was that for the first time, they used a word to replace the current term *wataniah*. They decided that it was national sentiment (*al-shuur al-Qawmiyah*) that was the key element. So let me dig into the meaning of *qawmiyah*.

What the students were trying to emphasize is that if the Arab people were split into artificial states, as the French and British had done in the Mandate system they constructed at the Paris Peace Conference, the Arabs could never achieve independence, power or dignity. Only if they recognized a pan-Arab loyalty could they move toward those fundamental objectives.

And, as always among the Arabs, the word chosen was crucial. So what was *qawmiyah*? It is the quality living by the terms appropriate to a *qawm*. To understand what that means, consider the basis of the Arab experience, the tribal or desert background.

In desert conditions, survival is a group activity. A lone individual cannot survive. But pasture for animals and water for humans, which are always meager, depend upon irregular rainfall. So the group cannot be large. It ranged in size from about 50 to a hundred or so people, usually descendants of a single man.

Among the Arabs, this group was not the tribe (*Qabila*), which might number hundreds or even thousands, and so could rarely assemble, but to the clan (*qawm*). To the *qawm* the individual owed total loyalty and from his membership in it derived social identity, legal standing and protection. He was absolutely honor bound to protect fellow members and to avenge any wrong to any member.

These were the sentiments the young Arab nationalists wanted the members of

their movement to exemplify. To them, the granting of quasi-independence under the League of Nations was not a step forward but a reinforcement of foreign control carried out by local puppets among an artificially divided people.

If the young nationalists needed any proof of the result, it was provided by the weakness, cowardice and disunity made manifest in the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli war. In their petty jealousies and conflicting aims, the Arab governments had allowed almost the entire Arab population of Palestine to lose what the Arab League had proclaimed to be an integral part of the Arab World.

The defeat was a humiliation of unprecedented proportions. The most memorable critique of the separate or *wataniyah* Arab leadership was by the Syrian Christian diplomat and educator, Constantine Zurayq, who wrote: "Seven Arab states declare war on Zionism in Palestine, stop impotent before it and then turn on their heels [content only to make] fiery speeches but when action becomes necessary, the fire is still and quiet" [*The Meaning of the Disaster (Maana al-Nakba)*, Beirut 1949.]

His words would echo down the years and still sound loudly today.

The Rise of Nasser

One of the men who watched the war under fire was the Egyptian officer Gamal Abd al-Nasir (aka Nasser), who came out of the battle gripped by two ideas: the first was that the only hope for the Arabs was an overarching sense of *qawmiyah* or pan-Arab unity. The second was that the existing "old regimes," starting with King Faruq (aka Farouk) of Egypt must go.

Except in Egypt where exiling Faruq was easy, he failed to accomplish his first objective the old regimes were deeply enmeshed in systems of privilege, custom and corruption and remained in power in most of the Arab states. Seeing this, he slowly realized that that change must be profound to be effective. Indeed, it required a social, economic and intellectual revolution.

To achieve his goals or even to survive, Nasir (Nasser) thought that he had to create what I have called "new men." They were not a separate class but existed in each social class. Usually, they were "graduates" of the army, acquired a sort of uniform, were encouraged by special privileges and were able to earn several times the income of traditional workers.

Unfortunately for his regime, his social revolution was deflected and stopped by his "Vietnam," his involvement in the Yemen revolution of 1962, and the ensuing 1967 war with Israel. But, during his short life (he died in 1970 at the age of 52), he personified the Arab quest for Qawmiyah.

Very different was the experience of the men who led the Algerian struggle for independence, but they shared a slow evolution of nationalism comparable to Egypt's. Like the Egyptians who thought of themselves as part of a Mediterranean culture, prominent Algerians sought to "evolve" into Europeans. These Algerians put aside Arabic to be admitted on equal terms into France. Their best known leader, Farhat Abbas, even denied that there was such an entity as the Algerian nation.

But many Algerians concluded that becoming sort-of French was not an option. As some of the Vietnamese Communist leaders experienced, from working and living in France, they knew that the French would not accept them on any terms. The leading Algerian in this group was Messali Hadj.

Messali Hadj was not a member of the French tolerated Algerian elite. He was a working man and his target was the Algerian worker population of France, the laborers who actually wielded the shovels and did much of the hard work on French roads and in French factories. His first move was to form a club for them, for which crime the French put him into prison.

When he got out in 1937, he organized the first real political party, calling itself the *Parti Progressiste Algerien*. But, only the name was French. It demanded full independence and the redistribution of lands taken by the settlers. Those were nearly capital crimes. During the Second World War, he was condemned to 16 years of hard labor and the party was outlawed. Bullets soon replaced bars.

Post-War Hopes

At the end of the Second World War, a euphoria swept the colonial world inspired by Franklin Roosevelt's "ringing" words about freedom, much as the Egyptian had reacted to similar pronouncements at the end of the First World War. The words of others, such as Winston Churchill, were less ringing and those of Charles de Gaulle were much more guarded and vague, forecasting a French effort "to lead each of the colonial people to a development that will permit them to administer themselves, and, later, to govern themselves."

The Algerians organized for freedom. Indeed, some thought they had already become free. Among them were the people of the little Algerian town of Setif who gathered to celebrate. Their originally peaceful manifestation was broken up by private Frenchmen, the French police and the French army. And some 40 villages in the area were bombed by the French air force. Estimates of Algerian casualties range from 10,000 to 45,000.

That tragedy may be taken as the seedbed of modern Algerian nationalism. Messali

Hadj reemerged to reform his party which won the municipal elections of 1947 but was overwhelmed by fraud and intimidation in the next round of elections. He was again arrested and deported. This action was an early case of what today is called "decapitation," but it was not successful. A new generation of Algerians, many of whom had served in the French army during the Second World War, concluded that they could gain nothing with ballots and began to think in terms of bullets. Among the new leaders was Ahmad ben Bella.

Ahmad ben Bella was a decorated soldier and favored violent action. Electrified by the French defeat in Indochina, he and a group of colleagues formed the "Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN). Nov. 1, 1954 was the effective beginning of the Algerian war.

The French accepted the challenge. In the first major engagement, French soldiers were ordered to kill every Arab they met. They did. French soldiers massacred about 12,000 Algerians.

The brutality was returned in kind. In the first three years of the war, the *militants* killed more than 7,000 "turncoat" (*Harki*) Algerians. Some of these killings were used as an indoctrination ritual that, like the Mau Mau "oathings," was meant to convert an untested recruit to commit an act from which he could not turn back. Above all, the FLN like other Arab guerrillas and terrorists feared disunity. Today, the Islamic Caliphate is apparently using the same tactics.

The war was fought on three "fronts." One was in Europe and America where efforts were made to get the United Nations and the other Powers to press the French to give Algeria independence; a second was in Cairo, Tunis and Rabat where Ben Bella and his colleagues gathered funds mobilized men into an "external" army that never fought but was prepared for the conditions of independence. The third was in Algeria where small bands (*wilayas*) actually fought the French army.

The principal guerrilla leader, Ramdane Abane, decided on a bold and nearly suicidal campaign: the Battle of Algiers. It began with the general strike of Jan. 28, 1957. To put it down, the French army used all the tactics of counterinsurgency. Militarily the army won, but politically their campaign was a disaster.

Special Forces (paratroop) use of torture and murder revolted the French. But it was not French opinion that caused de Gaulle to give up: it was the French army's threat to overthrow the French government itself. De Gaulle was so frightened that he ringed the presidential palace with anti-aircraft cannon and he left Paris secretly for the safety of a French army group in Germany.

Having survived an attempted coup, De Gaulle was so infuriated that he sent 20,000 French soldiers with tanks, artillery and aircraft into the European suburb of Algiers where they killed a large number of French citizens. With them beaten down, the French government was able to bring the war to a close in the Evian Accords of March 17, 1962. (During this time, I was the head of the "Interdepartmental Taskforce on Algeria" in the U.S. government.)

The Palestinian Struggle

Very different was the struggle of the Palestinians at the other end of the Mediterranean. About 800,000 Palestinians had been driven out of their land before and during the 1948-1949 war. While, for years, Israelis denied their involvement, Israeli government documents prove that the forced exodus was deliberate, well planned and brutal. It left scars which have shaped Arab nationalism and today shape Arab guerrilla warfare and terrorism. More narrowly, this Israeli action ironically created the first "international" movement of the Arabs.

Internationalization of the Arabs happened in two interrelated ways. On the one hand, the international community decided that the Palestinian refugees could not be left to die. So in the summer of 1950 a new United National organization (UNRWA) was created to care for them.

I first visited several refugee camps in 1950, and in 1963, while a member of the Kennedy Administration, I was offered the job of Deputy Commissioner General of UNRWA, but the State Department would not release me to take it.

While the most employable, the best educated and the lucky among the Palestinian refugees found temporary or permanent homes in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and even further afield, the vast majority were assembled in about 50 what were assumed to be temporary camps in Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. They were to be supported given food, shelter, medical care, schooling and clothing at a per capita subsidy of \$27 yearly.

If the material diet was insipid, it was sustaining. The emotional diet was noxious. It was a blend of exaggerated memories, unrealistic hopes, enforced idleness and real angers. Within a decade over half of the Palestinians had never lived outside the camps. They blamed their hosts, the Arab governments and peoples, for the loss of their homeland.

And, in turn, their hosts felt insulted. Worse, their hosts used them as sources of cheap labor and that increased both their sense of misery and anger. To would-be leaders, they were raw material. Inevitably, the more radical turned to what I have called violent politics. Reports of the 1950s and 1960s are filled

with hijackings, kidnappings, murders. [I provide a record of these events in my book *The Arab World Today* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), Chapter 16.]

Actions replaced words and thoughts. Unlike the other national movements, this one gave rise to no definitions or programs of nationalism. All thought of the Palestinians was directed toward the sole goal of Return. How to accomplish that goal was always elusive; what was clear was that at least in their experience, "internationalization" was not conducive of pan-Arab unity.

Pan-Arab unity remained avidly sought. The last of the nationalist groups to espouse it was the "Resurrection" (*Baath*) Party formed by the French-educated, Greek Orthodox but personally secular Syrian intellectual, Michel Aflaq (1910-1989).

From 1932, he went through several major changes in style and organization. At first, he espoused Communism, but when the Communists opportunistically endorsed French colonialism, he broke with them and, together with a fellow Syrian (Salah Bitar) who also has studied in the Sorbonne, set out to create an Arab socialist national party. He dissolved the party when in 1958 the Syrian army decided to merge Syria into the Nasserite United Arab Republic (the UAR).

When the UAR broke up in 1961, Aflaq's reputation declined in Syria. During the 1966 coup d'état (that led eventually to the seizure of power by Hafez al-Assad), Aflaq fled Syria and went to Iraq. There, two years later, one of the men whose thought he had influenced, Saddam Hussein, seized power. Hussein welcomed and publicly honored Aflaq but did not allow him much political influence or action.

Saddam did, however, publicly proclaim his regime's support of Baathism as part of his rivalry with Assad. Thus, ironically, while the basic idea of Baathism was Arab unity, it became itself an example of the pressures that led to Arab disunion.

Failed Nationalism

In summary, it became evident to the younger generation that nationalism and "Arab Socialism" had failed in the tasks they had assumed to protect the Arab "nation" and to create a sense of national unity and dignity. As I wrote above, there were many reasons for failure insincerity, rivalry or corruption of leaders, imbalance of military and civic components of society, the magnitude of the tasks to be performed with insufficient means and, above all, foreign military threat and intervention but a growing number of politically active people concluded that, regardless of the causes of failure, failure itself was

starkly evident.

With that recognition that nationalism had failed to produce the reality of power or the sense of dignity that were its goals, disillusionment set in. What remained was only the heritage of religion. I will address its contemporary manifestations in my next and final essay.

William R. Polk is a veteran foreign policy consultant, author and professor who taught Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. President John F. Kennedy appointed Polk to the State Department's Policy Planning Council where he served during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His books include: *Violent Politics: Insurgency and Terrorism*; *Understanding Iraq*; *Understanding Iran*; *Personal History: Living in Interesting Times*; *Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times*; and *Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change*.

Yemen as Vietnam or Afghanistan

From the Archive: With U.S. weapons, Saudi Arabia is waging a brutal air war on impoverished Yemen, turning a long-simmering civil war into a proxy fight with regional rival Iran, a scenario that reminded retired U.S. emissary William R. Polk of his work for President Kennedy on an earlier Yemeni war.

By William R. Polk (Originally published on April 1, 2015)

As the events unfold with the Saudi and Egyptian engagement in Yemen, I was reminded of my discussion with Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser on "his" Yemen war, sometimes called the North Yemen Civil War that began in 1962, became a stalemate and finally ended in 1970. As Mark Twain may have said, "history doesn't repeat but sometimes it rhymes." The rhymes, at least, seem unmistakable.

In the course of our first lengthy talk on Yemen, Nasser (rather angrily) replied to one of my comments, "you don't think I will win the war, do you?"



"No, Mr. President," I replied, "I don't."

"Well, you would be surprised to know that I have acquired your [America's] secret analyses of guerrilla warfare."

"Oh, Mr. President," I shook my head, "I know the people who wrote those reports. They are rubbish. I would throw them away if I were you."

He just looked at me, even more angrily, thinking I suppose, that having pulled off an intelligence coup, I was trying to trick him by claiming that it was really not a coup but a mistake. Then he said, "I know how to use helicopters, too." (Their use was then being touted by our military as our great weapon against the Viet Minh fighters in Vietnam.)

"And you lost one yesterday, didn't you?" I jibed.

"How did you find out about that?"

"Well, Mr. President, we spend a lot of money on the CIA finding out about such things and one way or another they usually do. That is what the CIA is supposed to do. They don't always succeed but sometimes they do."

"Well," Nasser retorted, "you American's think you know all about everything, and you don't even have any of your people in Sanaa and none up in the north where the fighting is going on. You don't know anything about Yemen." Then, without thinking of the implication, I suppose, he said, "You should go see."

"Mr. President," I quickly said. "I regard that as an invitation." Impolitely, I then stood up. He looked at me with narrow, angry eyes. He obviously had not meant what I had inferred.

"All right, go see," he said. "I will give instructions that you can go

anywhere you want, talk to anyone you want, see everything.”

“But, of course, I cannot even get there without your help,” I said.

“You can have my plane.”

Rather off-handedly and not warmly, we shook hands. I said goodbye and rushed back to our embassy and wrote an “eyes only” message to President John Kennedy. I did not want it scattered around our government so I prevailed upon the CIA station chief to send it by his rather more restricted route. It was encrypted and sent in three batches. Before the second batch got sent, a reply came back: “go.”

Off to Yemen

So I went, and Nasser was as good as his word. I spent hours with his military commander, Abdul Hakim Amr who gleefully unfolded the huge map of showing the planned Egyptian sweep of the mountains to the east (while Anwar Sadat, then rather on the fringes of the Egyptian Establishment, angrily protested against Amr’s indiscretion with a foreigner. He never forgave me for being there).

I went up to the supposed battle zone, near Saada, went out to all the villages where the war was, according to the CIA and British intelligence, being fought, met with the new Yemeni Leader Sallal and all the new Yemeni leaders, and then flew back to Cairo.

Disclosure (as they like to say in the media): I was bribed. As a going-away present, I was given 500 pounds of Yemeni coffee. Nothing so welcome to a traveler as 500 pounds of anything! But thanks to me, our Cairo embassy was “in coffee” for years!

I did not see President Nasser on my return but sent him a message through the Governor of Cairo, Salah Dessouki, that I hoped to go down to the Saudi-Yemen frontier to meet with the guerrilla leaders, and somewhat jokingly I said to my friend Salah, “I want to be very sure that President Nasser knows exactly where I am going. And, Salah, please tell the President not to do anything silly.”

Salah burst out laughing and said, “Bill, I certainly will not say that to the President!”

So I flew to Riyadh and, with the permission of then Crown Prince Faisal, with whom I had a rather close relationship, I took the American ambassador’s airplane and flew down to Najran where I spent an evening with a group of the guerrilla leaders.

As we sat around a campfire, outside of Najran, we drank tea, ate a lamb roast

and then, in a fairly typical desert encounter, we had a poetry duel. By pure luck, I happened to know the poem being recited and I capped the verse of one of the men. In their terms, that was like a passport for me. And we could then have a serious and frank discussion on the war, the strengths and weaknesses of the royalist forces and what might bring the war to a conclusion.

Our talk went on almost all night. Finally, just at first light, I had barely gotten to sleep when the first of four Egyptian but Russian-piloted TU 16 jet bombers arrived overhead from Luxor. They dropped 15 200 kg bombs on the oasis and on us. My pilot was just worried about his plane. The rest of us had other worries!

The biggest danger, in fact, was from the shrapnel falling from the anti-aircraft cannon. They were totally ineffective against the TU 16s as they could not reach them. (One of my aides, an Air Force colonel informed me that the TU-16s were at about 23,000 feet and the 90 mm cannon would reach about 18,000 feet.)

But a few people around us were killed. Another of my aides, a Marine Colonel, presented me with a wicked looking piece of one of the bombs. It had fallen or been blown not far from the place I was lying.

On our return flight to Riyadh, I wrote Nasser a "thank you" note, saying "Mr. President, I am most grateful for your kind hospitality in Egypt and Yemen, but I don't think you needed to entertain me in other countries."

Our ambassador, my good and old friend, John Badeau, was not amused. He said, "Bill, just say thank you and, please, don't hurry back!"

It was a few months later when I next saw President Nasser. We had a long and very frank talk then about Yemen. I compared it to Vietnam which I was already sure would be a disaster. I pointed to the huge cost to us of Vietnam, how it disrupted all our domestic social goals and how it poisoned Americans trust in one another. I warned that in my opinion, Yemen might do the same to Egypt, disrupting what Nasser was trying to do to uplift his people and end their tragic poverty.

In our talk, Nasser said, "I certainly didn't agree with you, Bill, but I knew you would tell me the truth as you saw it." Somehow, the Israelis found out about this and later the chief of Prime Minister Golda Meir's cabinet, Mordachai Gazit told me, "We know that President Nasser trusts you."

As I was leaving, Nasser took me out to my car and even opened the car door for me. His guards were as astonished as I was, Apparently, he had never before done this. As we shook hands, he said, "Well, Bill, where are you off to this time?"

“This time, Mr. President, I am not going to tell you!”

He burst out laughing as did I. We did not meet again but our frankness and respect later enabled me to work out the 1970 ceasefire on Suez with him shortly before his death.

It is hard to believe that history now seems to be repeating with Egypt and Saudi Arabia again engaged in a counter-guerrilla war in Yemen! For Nasser, it was Egypt’s Vietnam. Will the new Yemen war be Egypt’s (and Saudi Arabia’s) Afghanistan? I think it is very likely. All of the signs point in that direction.

And, as I have laid out in numerous essays on Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Mali and Algeria, and in my little book *Violent Politics*, guerrilla wars are almost never “won” but usually drain the supposedly dominant power of its wealth, moral position and political unity.

William R. Polk is a veteran foreign policy consultant, author and professor who taught Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. President John F. Kennedy appointed Polk to the State Department’s Policy Planning Council where he served during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His books include: *Violent Politics: Insurgency and Terrorism; Understanding Iraq; Understanding Iran; Personal History: Living in Interesting Times; Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times; and Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change.*

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Falling into the ISIS Trap

Special Report: The Islamic State has entered into "phase two" of its plan. After establishing a rudimentary "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq (phase one), it is now seeking to provoke the West into a self-defeating overreaction, a trap that "tough" politicians are falling into, as historian William R. Polk describes.

By William R. Polk

The terrorist outrage in Paris has brought the reaction that "the ISIS strategist" assuming there is such a singular person expected and wanted, a massive, retaliatory bombing raid.

The strategist knows that such military action by the West has proven self-defeating in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere. These predictable reactions and overreactions not only did not stop the insurgents, but helped them recruit more supporters by hurting a lot of uncommitted bystanders. ISIS learned the

lesson; our leaders apparently have not.

Anger and revenge are emotionally satisfying but not productive. The issue we face is not just how to retaliate against ISIS, which is easy, but how to achieve affordable world security. The first steps are to understand where these extremists come from, why some people support them and what they want. Only then can we cope with them.

But, as I read the press, listen to the statements of world leaders and watch the takeoff of fighter-bombers, I see little sign our leaders have found the road toward security. I do not find the satisfactory beginnings of a careful and sophisticated analysis in what is now being said or done. So, drawing on many years of observation, discussions and research, I here offer a few notes on terrorism and our counterinsurgency policies and will focus on ISIS (also known as ISIL, Daesh or the Islamic State).

I cast my comments in five areas: (1) our assets and those of our opponents; (2) their strategies and ours; (3) what drives their actions; (4) the results of our actions; and (5) our options. I begin with our advantages and weaknesses and theirs:

–The United States, the major West European states and Russia employ large intelligence services that are informed by a variety of surveillance devices (telephone tapping, radio intercepts, code breaking, aerial and satellite imagery and other, even more esoteric, means of tracking, observing and identifying people).

In addition, our security services continue to employ traditional covert activities and have virtually unlimited funds to buy information, encourage defection and “rent” temporary loyalty. Plus, the bulk of the community from which the attacks are mounted wish the attacks would stop. Thus, our most important asset is the desire among the vast majority of people in all societies who simply do not want their lives deranged. They want to live in peace.

Picking Sides

–Resident populations in rebel-held areas are probably neutral. But they are caught between two dangers: ISIS and us. What we do and what we do not do will sway them in one direction or the other. The “ISIS strategist” understands this and seeks to get us to harm or frighten the bystanders. When and where they can, many will run away from the near danger (as hundreds of thousands have).

But, in today’s counterinsurgency weapon of choice aerial bombing there is little difference between “near” and “far.” Targeted killings may kill leaders (and people in close proximity), but aerial bombings are more massive and less

discriminating. The “ISIS strategist” knows that the heavier our attacks the more they will rally support to the ISIS banner.

–**ISIS’s major asset** is the asymmetrical nature of the targets that the two sides expose to one another: modern industrial states like ours are highly articulated and are, necessarily, complex whereas ISIS’s organization is loose, inexpensive and scattered. We saw this contrast clearly, even before the rise of ISIS, in the Sept. 11, 2001 al-Qaeda attack on America. The attack cost the lives of only a couple of dozen terrorists and probably less than \$100,000 but killed several thousand victims and cost the American economy perhaps \$100 billion (a cost compounded by the long-running follow-on wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In addition, there were the psychological, legal and political costs. Al-Qaeda had little to lose in terms of law and morality, but it pushed the United States into activities that weakened its traditional values and created distrust among its citizens. For al-Qaeda, it was a very cheap victory.

–**ISIS’s vulnerability** is that the vast majority of Muslims want, as people everywhere have always wanted, to go about “mundane affairs,” gathering and consuming, working and playing, competing and procreating. They are not fanatics and do not want to be martyrs or heroes.

Indeed, the “ISIS strategist” takes a dim view of these common people. In the document that forecast ISIS strategy *Idarah at-Tawhish*: (*The Management of Savagery*) the strategist or strategists wrote:

“Notice that we say that the masses are the difficult factor. We know that they not generally dependable on account of [how the foreign imperialists and native turncoats have shaped them and we realize that there will be] no improvement for the general public until there is victory. [Consequently, our strategy] is to gain their sympathy, or at the very least neutralize them.”

How does the “ISIS strategist” propose to do that? His answer is a socio-political program aimed at “uniting the hearts of the people” by means of money, food and medical services and by providing a functioning system of justice to replace the corrupt system of its domestic rivals. That program has had some success but is vitiated or potentially undermined by ISIS violence and the terror it projects.

(Sayyid Qutb, an Islamic theorist who was executed in Egypt in 1966, may be taken as the philosopher behind Muslim Fundamentalism, and Abu Bakr Naji, perhaps a *nom de guerre* or even a committee, may be – or may have been – what I call “the strategist.” For more details, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism.”](#))

Ill-Advised Wars

–The American-European and Russian strategies against guerrillas and terrorists have both relied primarily on military action. This was obvious in our campaigns in Afghanistan. The Russians are now at least in part repeating in Syria the strategy they employed in Afghanistan just as we repeated much of our Vietnam war strategy in our engagement in Afghanistan. The U.S., our allies and Russia are now apparently embarked on the same general strategy in Syria and Iraq.

The supposedly more sophisticated strategies (such as encouraging training, anti-corruption campaigns, “security” programs, jobs creation, various forms of bribery and other economic activities) are given relatively minor attention. Least attended is the political dimension of insurgency.

Yet, at least by my calculation, the reality of insurgency is the reverse of how we are spending our money and devoting our efforts. I have calculated that in insurgency politics accounts for perhaps 80 percent of the challenge; administration is about 15 percent; and the military-paramilitary component is only about 5 percent. A look at the program numbers shows that our allocations of money, political savvy, administrative know-how and military power are in reverse order.

–Three reasons explain why these allocations which, although proven ineffective, are still employed: the first is failure to understand the political dimension of insurgency as I believe most of the counterinsurgency “experts” fail to do; the second is that “standing tall,” beating the drum and calling for military action win plaudits for political leaders; and the third is that arms manufacturers and the workers who make the weapons want to make money.

On that last point, President Dwight Eisenhower was right: the military-industrial complex (to which we have added the lobby-corrupted Congress) is “the tail that wags the dog” of American politics.

We don’t have to guess what the strategy of ISIS is. Their leaders have told us what it is. *The Management of Savagery* (using the Arabic word *tawhish*, which evokes a sense of dread and is applied to a desolate area, the haunt of wild beasts, where there is no humanity or softness but only savagery, terror or cruelty) specified the long-term campaign to destroy the power of those societies and states that ISIS calls “the Crusaders,” i.e., the Western powers, which ISIS identifies as imperialists, and to cleanse Islamic society of the turncoats who support them.

The Three Stages

–The ISIS campaign falls into three stages:

The first stage is “vexation” of the enemy aimed at creating chaos in which the forces of the foreign powers and their local proxies are distracted and exhausted while Muslim terrorists and guerrillas learn how to use their power effectively.

The second stage is the “spread of savagery,” which begins locally with small-scale attacks and metastasizes. Individuals and local groups take up the cause and act either on their own or with limited coordination. Those who carry out ISIS programs will do so because they have adopted its ideas not because they are directed by any central authority.

As their campaigns spread, ISIS’s enemies, and particularly the United States, will seek to retaliate but will be frustrated. “America will not find a state on which it can take its revenge, because the remaining [states] are its clients,” according to the plan. “It has no choice but to [occupy] the region and set up military bases. [This will put it at] war with the population in the region. It is obvious at this very moment that it stirs up movements that increase the *jihadi* expansion and create legions among the youth who contemplate and plan for resistance.”

“So,” the “ISIS strategist” writes, the correct tactic is to “diversify and widen the vexation strikes in every place in the Islamic world, and even outside of it if possible, so as to disperse the efforts of the alliance of the enemy and thus drain it [of energy, will and money] to the greatest extent possible.

“For example: If a tourist resort that the Crusaders patronize in Indonesia is hit, all of the tourist resorts in all of the states of the world will have to be secured by the work of additional forces, which [will cause] a huge increase in spending.”

As though implementing this plan, ISIS claimed that its supporters downed a Russian airliner in recent days in the Sinai Peninsula as it returned from the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Shaikh.

The plan continues: “If a usurious bank belonging to the Crusaders is struck in Turkey, all of the banks belonging to the Crusaders will have to be secured in all of the countries and the draining [that is, the costs of security] will increase.

“If an oil interest is hit near the port of Aden, there will have to be intensive security measures put in place for all of the oil companies, and their tankers, and the oil pipelines in order to protect them and draining will increase. If two of the apostate authors are killed in a simultaneous operation in two different countries, they will have to secure thousands of writers in

other Islamic countries.

“In this way, there is a diversification and widening of the circle of targets and vexation strikes which are accomplished by small, separate groups. Moreover, repeatedly (striking) the same kind of target two or three times will make it clear to them that this kind (of target) will continue to be vulnerable.”

The attack on Paris was not, as *The New York Times* announced on Nov. 16, a change of ISIS tactics; it was an event that fit exactly into the second stage of the long-range strategy.

‘Fighting Society’

The third stage is the “administration of savagery” to establish “a fighting society.” To minimize the air power of its enemies, ISIS has turned itself into an almost nomadic state, virtually without frontiers. But within the areas it controls, it has set out a socio-political program that aims at “uniting the hearts of the people by means of money, food and medical services and by providing a functioning system of justice under *Sharia* [Islamic] governance. From this base it will become possible to create a rudimentary state.”

The “ISIS strategist” draws a lesson from the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. Since the Afghans could not defeat the Russians in formal battles, they aimed to provoke the Russians so that their forces over-extended themselves and they were caught in a wasting, unwinnable conflict. This conflict bankrupted the Soviet economy while the harsh tactics the Russian army employed cost the Soviet Union the support both of their own people and the Afghans. America and Europe, the “ISIS strategist” believes, can be lured into a similar trap.

In this struggle, the “ISIS strategist” believes, violence is the key. It weakens the enemy while it performs as the school almost the social “hospital” needed to transform corrupt societies into tomorrow’s Islamic “true believers.” In this policy, ISIS may have been inspired by Frantz Fanon, the Afro-French-Caribbean psychiatrist, whose book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, reached a vast audience in the Third World.

As Fanon wrote, violence is a “cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.”

The “ISIS strategist” thought of violence both in those terms and in the impact of violence on its opponents, writing: *Jihad* “is naught but violence, crudeness, terrorism, frightening (others), and massacring.”

It also must be conducted ruthlessly: “*Jihad* cannot be carried out with

softness. Softness is one of the ingredients of failure for any *jihadi* action. Regardless of whether we use harshness or softness, our enemies will not be merciful to us if they seize us. Thus, it behooves us to make them think one thousand times before attacking us.

“Consequently, there is nothing preventing us from spilling their blood; rather, we see that this is one of the most important obligations since they do not repent, undertake prayer, and give alms [as required in Islam]. All religion belongs to God.”

Making the enemy “pay the price” can occur anywhere: “if the apostate Egyptian regime undertakes an action to kill or capture a group of *mujahids* [combatants] *mujahids* in Algeria or Morocco can direct a strike against the Egyptian embassy and issue a statement of justification, or they can kidnap Egyptian diplomats as hostages until the group of *mujahids* is freed.

“The policy of violence must also be followed such that if the demands are not met, the hostages should be liquidated in a terrifying manner, which will send fear into the hearts of the enemy and his supporters.”

As we know, liquidating captives in a terrifying manner is an ISIS specialty. But, as we look over guerrilla wars, we see it to have been generally practiced.

Guerrilla Playbook

–**The ISIS politico-military doctrine** that the “strategist” lays out can be described as a religious version of what Mao Zedong and Ho Chi-minh proclaimed as their kind of war: a combination of terrorism when that is the only means of operation, guerrilla warfare when that becomes possible as areas of operation are secured, and ultimately – when the conflict “matures” – the creation of a warlike but minimal state. This sequence often has played out in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries all over the world as I have reported in my book *Violent Politics*. It is ugly, brutal and costly, but it has nearly always eventually succeeded. ISIS has adopted it.

As ISIS leaders tells us, they regard their struggle “not as an economic, political, or social battle” with state-like opponents for territory but “a battle for minds,” underwritten by a determined proclamation of Islam. Nothing quite like it has been on the world stage since the great wars of religion in Europe some 400 years ago.

Why would Western nations today plunge into the kind of battle? If we cannot answer that question and ultimately cope with the answer we have many painful years ahead of us.

–The **ISIS guidebook**, *Management of Savagery*, begins with an interpretation of the world Muslims inherited from imperialism and colonialism. Not only Muslims but most of the peoples of the Third World suffered grievously. And their descendants harbor painful memories of “the ghastly destruction of souls.” According to ISIS, the great powers and their native proxies “killed more people than have been killed in all of the wars of the *jihadis* in this century.”

Is this just hyperbole, designed to inflame hatred of us? Unfortunately, it is not. Whether we remember these events or not, the descendants of the victims do.

Memories of the years beginning after Columbus led the way across the Atlantic become increasingly bitter. As first the Europeans, then the Russians and later the Americans – the world’s “North” – gained in relative power, they thrust into the “South,” destroying native states, upending societies and suppressing religious orders. Imperialism, with the resulting humiliation and wholesale massacres of populations, although largely forgotten by the perpetrators, remains today vivid to the victims.

The numbers are staggering: in one relatively small part of Africa, the Congo, where one in ten is a Muslim, the Belgians are estimated to have killed about twice as many natives as the Nazis killed Jews and Roma – some 10 million to 15 million people.

Hardly any society in what I call “the South” lacks memories of similar events inflicted by “the North.” Look at just the more recent military record:

In Java, the Dutch imposed a colonial regime on the natives and, when they tried to reassert their independence, killed about 300,000 “rebels” between 1835 and 1840; they similarly suppressed Sumatra “rebels” between 1873 and 1914.

In Algeria, after a bitter 15-year-long war that began in 1830, the French stole the lands of the natives, razed hundreds of villages, massacred untold numbers of natives and imposed an apartheid regime on the survivors.

In Central Asia, the Russians and Chinese impoverished or drove away previously thriving populations. While in a bitter war in the Caucasus, as Tolstoy recounts, the Russians virtually wiped out whole societies.

In India, after the attempted revolt of 1857, the British destroyed the Mughal Empire and killed hundreds of thousands of Indians. In Libya, the Italians killed about two-thirds of the population of Cyrenaica.

Old Grievances and New

One may reasonably say that these things are long in the past and should be

forgotten. Perhaps, but there are other slaughter, just in the last few decades, that cannot be so excused. In the American campaign in Vietnam (a non-Muslim society), napalm, cluster bombs and machineguns were followed by defoliation, cancer-causing chemicals and assassination programs that, in total, killed perhaps 2 million civilians.

In Afghanistan, the numbers are smaller because the population was smaller but, in addition to about half a million deaths, a whole generation of Afghan children have been "stunted" and will never grow to their normal size or, perhaps, mental abilities. Afghan casualties in the Russian war are unknown but could not be less than half a million. In Iraq, as a result of the U.S. invasion in 2003, estimates run up to about a million Iraqi deaths.

Death is only one result of war; the survivors face continuing terror, starvation, humiliation and misery. As the structure of societies is severely damaged or destroyed, civic life has often been replaced by gang warfare, torture, kidnapping, rape and desperate fear.

Studying these events, I am reminded of Thomas Hobbes's description of mankind before civilization, "poore, nasty, brutish and short."

Collectively these and other results of imperialism, colonialism and military intrusions into "the South" of the world constitute a holocaust as formative to current Muslim action as the German holocaust has been to Jewish action.

The scars still have not healed in many societies. We see the legacy in the fragility or complete destruction of civic organizations, the corruption of governments and the ugliness of violence.

As the "ISIS strategist" writes, and as I have heard from many informants in Africa and Asia, we of the "North" practice racial and religious double standards. When "they" kill a European, we rightly react with horror. Any killing is abominable. But when "we" kill an African or Asian, or even large numbers of Africans or Asians are killed by ISIS or another terror group, we hardly notice.

On Nov. 13, the day before the attack on Paris, a similar attack was carried out in Beirut, Lebanon, in which 41 people were killed and about 200 were injured. Almost no one in Europe or America even noticed. This is not merely a moral issue although it is certainly also that but cuts to the quick of the issue of terrorism.

Memories of events such as these go far to explain why young men and women, even those from relatively affluent and secure societies are joining ISIS. To "airbrush" the record, as an English journalist with wide experience in Asia has

recently written, is to fail to understand what we are up against and what we might be able to do to gain affordable world security.

Successful Insurgencies

–**The results of insurgency** are described in my book *Violent Politics*. There I have shown that in a variety of societies over the last two centuries in various parts of Africa, Asia and Europe, guerrillas have nearly always accomplished their objectives despite even the most draconian counterinsurgency tactics.

Consider just one example, Afghanistan: the Russians and then the United States deployed hundreds of thousands of soldiers, large numbers of mercenaries and native troops and used unprecedented amounts of lethal force over nearly half a century of warfare.

While the outcome is not yet definite, it is obvious that, at minimum, the guerrillas have not been defeated. Afghanistan has been called “the graveyard of imperialism.” Its role in destroying the Soviet Union has been well-documented. It is not through with us yet.

Consider also results in those parts of the world where hostilities have been relatively subdued. When I was a young man, in the 1940s and 1950s, I could go into villages practically anywhere in Africa or Asia and been received cordially, fed and protected. Today, in virtually all of those places, I would be in danger of being shot.

So what are our options in this increasingly dangerous world? Let us be honest and admit that none is attractive. Public anger and fear will certainly make some of them difficult or impossible to effect. But I will here put them all “on the table” and evaluate them in terms of cost and potential effectiveness.

The first response, which was announced by both Presidents François Hollande and Barack Obama in the first hours after the Paris attacks is to engage in all-out war. The French Air Force immediately bombed areas where ISIS is believed to have training camps.

The next step, presumably, although neither leader was specific, will probably include the sending of ground troops to fight in Syria and Iraq in addition to the bombing campaigns now being mounted by both countries and Russia. This is an extension and intensification of current policy rather than a new venture, and, to judge by the Russian experience in Afghanistan and ours in Afghanistan and Iraq, the chances for destroying ISIS are small. Those chances will be lessened if we also attempt to “regime change” in Syria.

A second option, which I assume is being broached in Washington as I write, is

for Israel to volunteer to invade Syria and Iraq as well as using its air force to supplement or replace the other air forces operating there. This option would be militarily painful for ISIS but would fit exactly into its long-range strategy.

Moreover, it would play havoc with the emerging anti-ISIS bloc of Iran, Russia and Syria. If Israel advances this idea, as I think likely, it will probably be rejected while Israel will be "compensated" with a large new grant.

A third option is for the United States to reverse its anti-Assad policy and join with his regime and with Russia and Iran in a coordinated campaign against ISIS. While this policy would be more rational than either of the first two options, and might be initially more successful, I do not believe that alone it will accomplish its objective.

Drone and special forces strikes are already being employed and will almost certainly be continued as an adjunct to whatever is adopted as the main thrust, but they have not proven decisive where tried elsewhere. Indeed, at least in Afghanistan, they have proven to be self-defeating.

As the "ISIS strategist" predicted, such attacks will increase local hostility to the foreigner while, if the ISIS combatants are wise, they will simply melt away to return another day. Worse, by "decapitating" scattered guerrilla units, they will open the way for younger, more aggressive and ambitious leaders to emerge.

Domestic Repression

Coordinated with any of the above three options, I think it is almost certain that the United States and the European powers will tighten their domestic security programs. Controls on movement, expulsion (particularly in France) of alien or quasi-alien populations, mounting of raids on poorer urban areas, increased monitoring and other activities will increase.

These tactics are what ISIS hoped would happen. Outlays for "security" will rise and populations will be "vexed." But these policies are unlikely to provide complete security. When terrorists are prepared, as those in the Paris attack were, to blow themselves up or be killed, attacks can be expected regardless how tight security measures are.

So what about non-military and non-police measures? What are the options that could be considered? Two combinations of economics and psychology come to mind:

The first is amelioration of the conditions in which the North African Muslim community now lives in France. The slums circling Paris are a breeding ground

for supporters of ISIS. Improvement of living conditions might make a significant difference, but experience in America and also in France suggests that "urban renewal" is far from a panacea.

Even if it were, it would be hard for any French administration to undertake. It would be expensive when the French government believes itself to be already overburdened, and French anti-Muslim feeling was strong long before the Paris attacks. Now, the public mood is swinging away from social welfare toward repression.

As in other European nations, the combination of fear of terrorism and the influx of refugees will make implementation of what will be described as a pro-Muslim program unlikely.

Perhaps even more unlikely is one that I think ISIS would most fear. The "ISIS strategist" has told us that the major resource of the movement is the community, but he recognized that, despite horrific memories of imperialism, the public has remained relatively passive.

This attitude could change dramatically as a consequence of invasion and intensification of aerial bombing. ISIS believes it will, turning increased numbers of now "neutral" civilians into active supporters of the *jihadis* or into *jihadis* themselves.

Obviously, it would be to the advantage of other countries to prevent this happening.

Some prevention of ISIS violence can be accomplished, perhaps, with increased security measures, but I suggest that a multinational, welfare-oriented and psychologically satisfying program could be designed that would make the hatred that ISIS relies upon less virulent.

Inadvertently, ISIS has identified the elements for us: meeting communal needs, compensation for previous transgressions, and calls for a new beginning. Such a program need not be massive and could be limited, for example, just to children by establishing public health measures, vitamins and food supplements.

Organizations (such as Médecins Sans Frontières, the Rostropovich Foundation, the Red Cross and Red Crescent) already exist to carry it out and indeed much is already being done. The adjustment is mainly in psychology the unwillingness for nations to admit wrongdoing as we have seen in the German "apology" for the Holocaust and the failure of the Japanese to apologize for the Rape of Nanking. It would cost little and do much, but, in these times, it is almost certainly a non-starter.

So, sadly, I fear that we are beginning to move toward a decade or more of fear, anger, misery and loss of basic freedoms.

[For more on these topics by William R. Polk, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Why Many Muslims Hate the West.](#)" and "[Muslim Memories of West's Imperialism.](#)"]

William R. Polk is a veteran foreign policy consultant, author and professor who taught Middle Eastern studies at Harvard. President John F. Kennedy appointed Polk to the State Department's Policy Planning Council where he served during the Cuban Missile Crisis. His books include: *Violent Politics: Insurgency and Terrorism; Understanding Iraq; Understanding Iran; Personal History: Living in Interesting Times; Distant Thunder: Reflections on the Dangers of Our Times; and Humpty Dumpty: The Fate of Regime Change.*
