

Coping with the Sense of Drift and Disorder in World Affairs, Part 1:

In *The Financial Times* of April 23, 2015, Philip Stephens begins a perceptive article with the obvious statement that "It is easier to say that Obama never gets it right than to come up with an alternative strategy."

Of course it is. It was never easy to construct a coherent policy, but it was never impossible. The problem we face today is different. It is that for a long time we have not been presented by our leaders with *any* strategy. So the obvious question a citizen (and a tax payer) should demand be answered is *why*, despite all the effort, all the proclamations and all the lives and money we are spending, does almost every observer believe that we do not have a policy that we can afford and that accomplishes our minimal national objectives? In this first part of a two-part essay, I will address that problem.

In short, where is the problem? It is tempting to say that it is our lack of statesmen. Where are the heirs to the men who put the world back together again after the Second World War? By comparison to those who we empower today, they appear heroic figures. True, they had monumental faults and made costly mistakes, but they thought and acted on an epic scale and tried to cope with unprecedented problems -- the reconstruction of Europe, the ending of colonialism in Africa and imperialism in India, the amalgamation of scores of new nations into an acceptable structure of the world community and the containing of unprecedented dangers from weapons of mass destruction. Today, only half joking, Europeans say that they see only one world-class statesman -- German Chancellor Angela Merkel. I seek but find no comparable leaders on the American scene. As Mr. Stephens judged, "Barack Obama has led from behind on the global stage [while] Republicans [are thinking only in terms of] a bumper sticker world."

We may lament our poverty of leadership, but there are ways to make it function. "Princes," since long before Machiavelli have always used advisers; some even listened to them. Surely the capable people among us -- like the "wise men" who whispered in the ears of those earlier leaders -- can guide today's leaders toward more viable policies and away from the chaos that engulfs us.

Why is this not happening? Is it that what they have to say is not "popular" or that they cannot reach the decision makers? Or that the structures we have built into our political and economic systems block them? Is it the enormity of the problems we face? Or is it that we lack information? Or is it the want of a matrix or framework in which to place what we know and to decide on the feasibility and affordability of what we want? More fundamentally, could it be that we, the citizenry, the voters and the tax payers, simply do not care enough or keep ourselves well enough informed to make our leaders preform the tasks they avidly seek and we pay them to do?

Each these possible causes of our current malaise urgently demands our attention. Let me briefly look at them and then move in my second essay toward a guide to a viable policy.

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First, let us admit that the world is indeed more complex today than in earlier times. There are more "actors" and at least some of them have to perform in front of audiences that are more "politicized" than they used to be. Nationalism affects more people than a century ago, and today it is laced with religion in an explosive mixture. A spreading and intensifying sense of fairness and minimal rights shapes actions among peoples who used humbly to submit. Bluntly put, fewer people today are willing to suffer or starve than were their grandfathers.

Second, nations that hardly existed are caught up in insurgencies, guerrilla wars and various forms of violence. Supra- or non-national religious movements are not new, but they have become very "worldly" and are now sweeping through Africa and Asia. Some are sowing hatred and massacring or driving into exile whole populations. At the same time, corrupt governments and "warlords" impoverish societies while outside manipulation by force of arms and "dirty tricks" further destabilizes or even destroys political order, leaving trails of shattered lives. The quest for "regime change" by the North has plunged much of the South into chaos. Floods of migrants pour out in desperate quest for safety while many of those who remain will die wretchedly watching their children grow to adulthood stunted from sickness and hunger. We and several "theys" are stirring the pot. But, regardless of who created these problems, they must be faced today. And they are certainly complex.

Third, while events are certainly complex, we know an astonishing amount about them. Never in human affairs have so many studied so much. So our leaders are primed to do their jobs. At least they should be. Information is not lacking. In the United States we employ some 17 intelligence agencies manned by upwards of one hundred thousand presumably skilled people, a Department of State and associated agencies employing (at my last count) nearly 20,000 officers, a White House staff including the National Security Council numbering in the hundreds, a galaxy of war colleges through which pass most of the senior officers of over half of the world's military and security services, dedicated staffs and subsidized "think tanks" like RAND and more or less independent think tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations, Brookings, etc.. The media doesn't do as much as it used to do to educate us, but it is now augmented by "blogs," opinion pieces, reports and memoirs. Multiple organizations of the United Nations and hundreds of non-governmental organizations provide almost daily accounts of every human activity. And some people still read and even write books.

Even those of us who, by government criteria, have no "need to know," have access to most of this flood of information. Some is withheld from those of us our Government does not "clear" to receive it, but most of the withheld or at least delayed information is actually about "us" -- the covert activities, foibles, misdemeanors and crimes of our team. Our leaders are keen to inform us about the (false) beliefs and (dangerous) actions of foreigners. And even if Government often does not help us to understand other peoples, most of what we need to know about them is available in the public domain beyond the reach of government censorship.

So censorship is not the only reason we are not well informed. We citizens must accept much of the blame. Many of us sit on vast "dry" islands where the floodtide of information does not reach or where we or others have built dykes to keep it out. We have allowed the media to drop the pretense of informing us; its job is to entertain us. When "news" is read out by attractive "presenters," it is also a form of entertainment. Television is not conducive to difficult issues. It is best on "sound bytes." But it is not only the nature of the media that is formative: most observers believe that it is in large part our laziness or lack of concern that keeps us ill-informed and little engaged. We read little and seek reassurance more than knowledge. Above all, we wish to avoid being challenged. As Alex de Tocqueville observed of us, "... the majority undertakes to supply a multitude of ready-made opinions for the use of individuals, who are thus relieved from the necessity of forming opinions of their own."

And it is not just opinions or judgments on contemporary affairs, but even general knowledge that is missing. Surveys show that many Americans do not know where Vietnam, the Ukraine or Afghanistan are. Some could not find our national capital on a map. As Aaron Burke remarked in the February 14, 2014 *Washington Post*, some of our would-be ambassadors knew nothing of the character, politics, language, religious affiliation of even those countries to which they were being sent. Senator John McCain was filmed on C-Span commenting that some of the nominees were "totally unqualified." In this, sadly, they represent us.¹

Is this ignorance² important? The French conservative philosopher, Josef de Maistre answered that it is because "every nation gets the government it deserves," If citizens are uneducated or passive, they can be controlled, as the Roman emperors controlled their peoples with bread and circuses, or as other dictatorships have with "patriotic" demonstrations or manufactured threats. Indeed, a people can make themselves willing dupes as the Germans did when they voted Hitler into power in a free election. Ignorance and apathy are the pathogens of representative government. Under their influence, constitutions are weakened or set aside, legislatures become rubber stamps, courts pervert the law and the media becomes a tool. So, even in a democracy, when we duck our civic duties in favor of entertainment and do not inform ourselves, the political process is endangered.

Danger, as our Founding Fathers told us, is ever present. They thought of our system as an experiment and doubted that we could maintain it over time. We have come close to losing it. And today we see signs of its fragility. American ignorance and apathy extend even to issues immediately affecting the lives of most of us -- like jobs, housing, food and health -- and when it comes to devoting attention to such possibly terminal issues as nuclear war, baseball always wins. The choice, as the expression goes, is a "no brainer." This can be disastrous because, as our first president warned us, unscrupulous politicians can manipulate the public. George Washington found this particularly dangerous in foreign affairs. As he wrote in his Farewell Address, the dangers inherent in dealing with other countries may lead to

the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of Government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty.

His words demand our attention because we all welcome comfortable simplicity in place of confusing complexity, and it is in military affairs where the lack of statesmanship among the leaders and ignorance among the people is most clear.

In one of the great theatrical gestures known to history (or legend), that eagle among the hawks, Alexander the Great, demonstrated the easiest way to deal with complexity. To untie the Gordian knot -- the very symbol of complexity -- he simply cut it. His point was that there is no need to understand if one has a sharp knife. Alas, as the decades of the cutting of knots in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and other places has shown, no matter how sharp the knife, the knot may not be so neatly sliced as Alexander thought. Indeed, as we have observed in our recent wars, "knots" prove capable of reuniting their coils.

George Washington, judged by today's standards, was neither so well informed nor so lavishly advised as are modern American leaders, but at least on war and peace his instinct was sure and at the end of his career, he embodied the American myth of national decency. In his "Farewell Address," he told us that the only safe -- because moral -- policy is to "Observe good faith and justice towards all Nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all...In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded [because] The Nation, prompted by illwill and resentment sometime impels to War the Government, contrary to the best calculations of policy...The peace often, sometimes perhaps the Liberty, of Nations has been the victim...Real Patriots...are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests."

Partially echoing the values Washington hoped would underlie American action and reacting to the far stronger forces that have grown as America grew, Dwight Eisenhower proclaimed during the 1956 joint Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt that we must all be governed by "One Law," not one law for us and our friends and another for other states.

On the eve of his departure from the White House, Eisenhower picked up and expanded another of Washington's -- and the Founding Fathers' -- main themes,³ the danger of "those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of Government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to Republican Liberty." Against the power of "the military-industrial complex," Eisenhower memorably warned that

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some fifty miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

To judge how little we have heeded his warning, just multiply the figures Eisenhower cites for the costs of the guns, warships, rockets and planes. When he spoke, our aggregate cost of all the tools of war was about \$320 billion; today the cost (in inflation adjusted dollars) is more than double that amount and also is larger than the aggregate outlay of all other nations. And, beyond the monetary cost thus measured is the security cost -- the world has become far more dangerous at least in part *because of* our emphasis on our military role. So, Eisenhower questioned, is this "the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking?"

Is anyone who has his hand on the wheel, that is any responsible leader, seriously considering whether there is a smoother, safer, more economical and less painful road? If so, I have failed to identify him. And, apparently, neither has Mr. Stephens of *The Financial Times*.

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One aspect of this problem is that the military, drawing on the prestige they gain as our defenders, are vastly over funded and catered to by both the Executive Branch and the Legislature. As Washington and Eisenhower feared, they have become a state within our nation. This is evident in almost every aspect of the comparison between the military and civilian parts of our government. Consider the contrast with the Civil Service. It is as sharp in America as in "tin pot" dictatorships in the Third World. When I served in government, I observed that any general and many colonels could summon up an Air Force plane for a junket whereas even the Under Secretary of State had to get special clearance from the President and then negotiate with the Pentagon for official trips; then there were and still are wildly disproportional side benefits given to the military and what amount to penalties assessed to the civilians. For example, roughly half of all ambassadorial appointments were removed from the Foreign Service and given to non-professionals. As Edward Luce wrote in the December 7, 2014 *Financial Times*, "imagine how [much] harder it would be...to recruit talented military officers if plum generalships were handed out to amateurs who had never worn a uniform."

The transformation of America into a military culture has deep roots. Arguably it began long before the formation of the Republic in the settler wars with the native Americans. In the "young republic," it was carried forward in the war of 1812, Andrew Jackson's push into "the Floridas" and James K. Polk's war with Mexico. Then, during and after the Civil war, Americans became truly a warring people.⁴ This legacy was carried forward in two world wars, hundreds of smaller military actions⁵ and a half century of Cold War.

Few Americans, I suspect, are fully aware -- despite scores of books and hundreds of articles⁶ -- of the dimensions of our country's commitment to the military establishment and the "security" culture embedded in it. Eisenhower's Military-Industrial Complex has grown not only in size⁷ but in spread. It is now shapes Congressional action, influences media reporting and convinces labor to cooperate in its projects. Indeed, it is built into the fabric of American society and economy to an extent that would have terrified the Founding Fathers.

Beyond the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Media-Labor Complex, as it has become, are three other powerful aspects of the "security state." The first of these is the creation of a more or less autonomous elite army within the standing army which, itself, is apart from what the Founding Fathers thought of as our prime military force, the state militias. This Special Operations Force, according to the Congressional Research Service in 2013 (the latest available figures) was composed of some 67,000 troops and operated under a separate budget of about \$7.5 billion. It has its own "think tank," sources of intelligence, school and even its own magazine (*Special Warfare*) that prints favorable articles by journalists from all over the world on "politico-military" affairs.

The second aspect of the growth of the military is in overseas bases. They are believed to number over 1,000 and are located in about 63 countries. These figures do not include the "floating bases" on aircraft carriers, troopships and "insertion" vessels nor, for the most part, the bases jointly operated with other countries and special intelligence facilities.

The third aspect is the extension of the military into "security" and intelligence fields that are partly or wholly funded by the Department of Defense and often are commanded by serving military officers. According to a recent book, 1,074 new federal government organizations, the existence of which is "classified" and generally withheld from public knowledge, and nearly 2,000 private companies work out of at least 17,000 locations within the United States and an unknown number abroad.⁸

More unsettling but not surprising is that with so much power behind them, some senior military commanders feel able to step outside of their statutory roles to pontificate on affairs beyond their competence and authority. One who this year frightened our European allies was US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, the head of NATO's operational command. He was taken to task by the German Chancellor, as reported in the March 7, 2015 issue of the highly respected German weekly *Der Spiegel*, for "dangerous propaganda" in publicly recommending policies verging on warfare with Russia. The German Foreign Minister, Frank Walter Steinmeier, Intervened personally with the NATO General Secretary because of Breedlove's statements. Breedlove's action was not unprecedented. General David Petraeus essentially ran American affairs in Afghanistan and Iraq while treating the statutory American authority, the ambassador, as a junior partner.⁹ Elsewhere also, senior military officers have frequently violated the word and the intent of the framers of the Constitution in forming and proclaiming policies. In the most famous case of assumption of such powers in the past, President Harry Truman fired General Douglas MacArthur. That was long ago.

It isn't only, as the American psychologist Abraham Maslow is quoted as saying, "if you only have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail," but also that ambitious men naturally seek opportunities. In business, they seek money; in the military they seek promotion. Pursuing these goals is often admirable but unchecked it also creates dangers or harms the public interest. History writings are full of accounts of generals who destroyed civilian regimes and often destroyed republican liberty. A prudent people will insist that its government both *use* its military when necessary and always *control* it. Fear that the people would fail to do so animated the discussions of our Founding Fathers when they were writing our Constitution in 1787.¹⁰ Our first military leader warned us of the danger as I have quoted him above.

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So now consider what we have been doing on the two major American wars of the post-Vietnam years. Because I have written on them in detail elsewhere, I will only touch on those aspects that will flesh-out the skeleton I have sketched above or illustrate why we need to avoid tactical lunges and adopt strategic thinking.

I begin with Iraq. Iraq illustrates failure to understand the context in which we act, our propensity to jump before looking and our role in creating a security threat.¹¹

Consider first the context: Iraq was one of the many countries that evolved from the collapse of imperialism. Put together by the British at the end of the First World War from three provinces of the Ottoman Empire under an imported and British-controlled monarchy, it never found a secure political identity. To control the country, the British built a military organization that in comparison with other aspects of the regime and the society was strong. Consequently, Iraq suffered military coup after coup. Most incoming dictators were simply predatory, but the last in the sequence, Saddam Husain, made Iraq socially and economically one of the most advanced countries in Africa and Asia. Profiting from increasing oil wealth, he promoted the growth of a middle class, secularized the regime and provided the public with free health services and free education. Whereas in 1920, under the British, only 30 Iraqis were receiving secondary education (and the British thought that was too many), in 1985 the student population reached nearly one and a half million. The number of doctors went from 1:7,000 to 1:1,800 and life expectancy rose from 40 to 57 years. Schools, universities, hospitals, factories, theaters and museums proliferated. Saddam's aim was power, and like many Third World leaders he was not an attractive person, but perhaps without meaning to do so, he set in motion events that would have forced Iraq to become a more democratic society. "Would have," that is, had development not been short-circuited by war.

The first war began in September 1980 with an Iraqi attack on America's enemy, the revolutionary Iranian government led by Ayatollah Khomeini, that had overthrown the government of America's ally, the Shah. The American government took a short-sighted view of the war and assisted the Iraqis with provision of the most sophisticated intelligence then available (which enabled the outnumbered Iraqis to defeat the Iranians in crucial battles), but at the same time it supplied Iran with lethal military equipment (in the Iran-Contra affair). Both the Iraqis and the Iranians realized that America was playing a cynical game. Henry Kissinger summed it up by saying, "It's a pity they both can't lose." It does not seem, in retrospect, that serious thought was given to how war would impact on both societies and on American interests. This is borne out by the extension of the war to Kuwait.

Kuwait was another of the legacies of imperialism. In the eyes of every Iraqi leader, including its British-installed and American-favored three kings, Kuwait was an Iraqi province. It was the British who had forced the Ottoman Empire to give it quasi-autonomous status in 1913 and in 1923 got both the puppet Iraqi government and the precursor of the Saudi state to recognize its frontiers. Initially, Britain was interested in using it to block any threat to its Indian empire. Following Indian independence in 1947, that interest was replaced by the special relationship under which newly oil-rich Kuwait invested heavily in cash-starved England. Additionally, both Britain and America were keen that it keep its separate status so that no one Middle Eastern power dominate oil production. Then, for reasons that are still obscure but certainly evinced a lack of strategic thinking, the American government gave the impression that it would not oppose the Iraqi attempt to take over Kuwait.

It happened like this: The war with Iran lasted eight years, killed tens of thousands Iraqis and cost about \$15 billion yearly. (Proportionally, the Iraq-Iran war was more costly than

the American war in Vietnam.) Saddam Husain proclaimed that he was fighting Iran on behalf of the Arabs and particularly of the Kuwaitis who had a deep fear of Iranian aggression.

Initially at least, the Kuwaitis (and other Arab leaders) agreed with him and supported his war effort. But as the fighting stalemated, they not only stopped their aid to Iraq but demanded repayment of what they had lent. Saddam had used up all of Iraq's reserves. The price of oil fell below what could sustain his regime. He became desperate. He begged and pled but to no avail. A violent man, he decided to take what the Kuwaitis would not give, but, himself a crafty politician, Saddam sought American approval. He probably thought America "owed him one" for having fought its enemy, Iran. So he thought America might agree to his reclaiming Kuwait. When he met with American ambassador, she (on orders) told him that the US Government "took no position on Arab frontiers." Saddam took this to be a "green light" -- like President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger given to Indonesia's General Suharto to reclaim East Timor¹² -- and invaded. The American ambassador told *The New York Times* that no one thought (with no sense of history and apparently no appreciation of Saddam's desperation) the Iraqis would take "*all of Kuwait!*"

The Americans and others, including the Russians, reacted sharply. Kuwait's assets were frozen out of Saddam's reach. The UN demanded an Iraqi withdrawal. And Saddam became even more desperate. Some in the American government apparently believed that the Iraqis might plunge into Saudi Arabia's eastern province where its oil fields are located. So America put together a coalition, including Saudi Arabia and Syria, to chase the Iraqis out of Kuwait. It was successful. President George H.W. Bush ordered the invading forces to break Saddam's army but not to occupy the country.

However, the war against Saddam was allowed to spill over into actions that were not then foreseen by American leaders and for which the United States and Iraq would pay a fearful price. The US acted in ways that increased Saddam's desperation and increased his sense of humiliation. It also allowed or perhaps even condoned actions that promoted sectarian -- Sunni-Shii -- hostilities to a level not experienced in the Islamic world for centuries and, by giving the impression that it was hostile to all aspects of Islam shifted such previously anti-Saddam activists as Usama bin Ladin into leaders of a *jihād* against America. Little or no thought was given, apparently, to how the initial objective of getting the Iraqis out of Kuwait could be turned into a stable and constructive result.

Much worse, of course, was to follow a decade later in the George W. Bush administration.¹³ It was not caused by Saddam's attack on Kuwait but was a deliberate act of aggression. It was justified to the American public by the allegation that Iraq was developing nuclear weapons. That allegation was false and Bush must have known; he simply ordered his Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, to lie to the public and America's allies. Whereas George Washington had warned in his Farewell Address that "The Nation [that is, the public], prompted by illwill and resentment sometime impels to War the Government, contrary to the best calculations of policy," George W. Bush's Government deceived the Nation. Those who realized what was happening, as Washington had also warned, the ". Real Patriots...are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests."

Those interests included preservation of the lives of at least 4,500 soldiers who died and the several hundred thousand American soldiers who were wounded. Also of interest were the expenditure of c. \$2 trillion in treasure and the opportunity cost of 2.6 million men and women whose labor could have contributed to the American economy. Less tangible but no less real was the goodwill that America had long enjoyed among all Iraqis and other peoples and a peace that has been lost in unending war. This was all predicted and much could have been avoided.

It is notable that even Bush's strategist, David Kilcullen, who had been recruited by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and relied upon by General David Petraeus, was quoted as saying that "Perhaps the most stupid thing about Iraq was invading the country in the first place."¹⁴

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I turn now to the failure of American policy in Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan at least since the time of Alexander the Great had repeatedly and violently demonstrated their determination not to be ruled by foreigners. In 1842 they inflicted the worst defeat the British army suffered in the Nineteenth century. Soberly, the British then recognized that they were not going to transform the Afghans and that attempting to do so was not worth the cost. So, essentially, they played their new version of "the Great Game" by Afghan rules. They bribed, cajoled and flattered the Afghan rulers and where they could and at little cost fought a sort of French-Moroccan *Beau Geste* or American-style "Wild West" campaign on the Northwest Frontier against the tribal peoples.¹⁵ They recognized that what they really wanted -- to keep the Russians out of South Asia -- didn't require more.

When their turn came, the Russians were not willing to take such a detached approach. In 1979, they dived into Afghanistan and tried, as they were doing in their Turkish Central Asian provinces, to Russify and partially to Communize it. Their policy was more than a failure; it was a catastrophe.¹⁶ And a catastrophe both for the USSR, which they played a major role in destroying, and also for Afghanistan, which they made into "failed state." It was that failed state -- a shattered, warlord-plagued malestrom -- the Russians had left behind that the Taliban movement tried to overcome with a violent assertion of primitive "Afghanism."

Objectively, America never had any compelling interest in Afghanistan. It had no known major resources, was poor, backward and remote. Moreover, anyone with a slight knowledge of history would know that it had proven to be one of the most difficult countries in the world to rule, much less to "regime change" or "nation build." Not only had the Afghans defeated the British and the Russians but they tolerated only a modicum of control by their own government. Each village or small neighborhood of villages ruled itself and was rigidly locked into traditional culture. That culture¹⁷ was not to America's liking, but it was Afghan's culture. Slowly and cautiously, it had been evolving toward a more "enlightened" and liberal pattern.

Evolving, that is, when left more or less to its own devices. When under attack, Afghan society closed upon itself and reverted to customs that the Russians had found (and Americans would find) objectionable. Generally, however, at least the Americans have not found disapproval of customs to be a sufficient reason to invade other societies. What caused the American invasion was, ironically, a playing out of two commands of the *Pushtunwali*, the Afghan "way."

First was the absolute imperative of the Afghan way, the granting of protection (*malmastia*) to fleeing warriors. The Taliban honored this tradition by giving sanctuary to Usama bin Ladin whose followers in the al-Qaida movement had attacked America in 2001. The US Government demanded that Usama be handed over. The Afghan Government refused. To have done so would have been, in Afghan eyes, a mortal sin. So, second, America itself employed another recognized part of the Afghan code, *badal*, or revenge. It attacked. As the then Taliban Minister of War later told me, "we understood your desire for revenge...It is also our way." It was the Afghan way, but was it either necessary or useful to America? Put another way, could American objectives have been accomplished at lesser cost in another way?

To answer that question requires a definition of objectives: First was the objective of the American political leaders. They believed that they had to demonstrate toughness. About 9 in 10 Americans (and between 6 and 7 Britons) favored the invasion. It was easy for the President to ride the popular surge. Indeed, he not only rode but spurred on war fever. Second, as George Washington had long before warned, "The Government sometimes...adopts through passion what reason would reject." Reason would have avoided a ruinous war. But instead of adopting the course demanded by the National interest, or trying to think with the public through the options, Bush played on popular emotion. The Taliban were bad and America had to punish them. Third, on their side, the Taliban leaders knew that a war would be ruinous for them. They were not very adroit, but they tried to find a way to avoid it. They could do so only within the code by which they lived. To have met the American demand to surrender Bin Ladin would have been a mortal sin, but they had some flexibility in applying malmastia -- they had to *protect* Bin Ladin but need not to *allow* him to act as he might wish. So they took him into "protective" custody and proclaimed that they would prevent him and his followers from engaging in further foreign activities. It is not clear that the Bush administration even considered any possible variation of that option.

So Bush ordered the attack. Despising the ragged, ill-armed guerrillas, the Americans struck. The war might have ended in a bloody but limited raid. Instead, without much thought, it morphed into a conflict that, *so far*, has lasted nearly 14 years, has cost America 2,357 casualties, perhaps 50,000 wounded and at least \$1 trillion. The number of Afghans killed or wounded is not known but is certainly in the hundreds of thousands; the sick and malnourished amount to nearly half the population; a whole generation of children have been "stunted" and will never grow to full potential; the traditional civic order has been replaced by a corrupt and brutal collection of mafias that both engage in the largest drug business in the world and also steal (and ship abroad) billions of US aid dollars. There is no light at the end of that tunnel.

I find no evidence that the American Government at any point from before the invasion to the present carefully considered whether or not it really had any strategic interest (the Russians were in full retreat and we no longer had a compelling interest in protecting India) in Afghanistan. It simply took whatever seemed to be the next step as the trajectory of events seemed to dictate and, since other than bribery it had little to offer, those steps were military.

During the last 14 years, we have relied almost exclusively on military action. At first, the action was "boots on the ground." Recently, in our attempt to cut American casualties, we have shifted largely to "coercive air power."¹⁸ Our aim has been to "decapitate" the guerrilla forces and to beat down insurgent attacks. Both have failed. On the one hand, as we have killed more senior and experienced leaders, younger and more ambitious or violent men have replaced them, and, on the other hand, surveys show that guerrilla action has increased -- not been suppressed -- in and around areas that have been attacked by drones or special forces.¹⁹

If we cannot win, have we tried negotiation? No, in fact we have made any form of negotiation virtually impossible. Among our moves, one stands out baldly: the American military and the CIA have maintained a "kill list" of insurgents to be shot on sight.²⁰ Because the list is secret, no Talib can know if he is on the list. So he is apt to suspect that any offer of negotiation is really a trap, designed both to kill him and to divide and weaken his movement.²¹

The cost of our failure to win or negotiate is still being paid: we are still engaged in combat, still striking targets, still shoveling in billions of dollars to a failed puppet government. And in this unending war, we have created far more enemies than we have "pacified" or killed. Now they come not only from Muslim Asia and Africa, but even from Europe and America. They are enemies we helped to create. We were sold a phony policy and self-defeating means to implement it: counterinsurgency never worked anywhere and certainly has not worked in Afghanistan.

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It would be rewarding if one could say that our experience in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan has made us wiser in our approaches to Somalia, Syria, Libya and Yemen, but it is hard to substantiate that conclusion. Yet the lessons are there to be learned. There are more, but consider just these few

- military action can destroy but it cannot build;
- counterinsurgency does not work and creates new problems;
- nation building is beyond the capacity of foreigners;
- piecemeal, uncoordinated actions often exacerbate rather than solve problems;
- the costs of military action are multifold and usually harm not only the attacked but also the attacker's society and economy;
- reliance on military action and supply of weapons to the client state encourages it to undertake actions that make peace-seeking harder rather than easier;
- war radiates out from the battlefield so that whole societies are turned into refugees. In desperation they flee even far abroad and create unforeseen problems.
- the sense that the attacker is a bully spreads and converts outsiders into enemies;
- failure to understand the society and culture even of the enemy is self-defeating;
- angry, resentful people eventually strike back where they can and so create a climate of perpetual insecurity.

The result of such actions is deforming to the central objective of an intelligent, conservative and constructive American foreign policy -- the preservation of our well-being. So, in the second part of this essay, I propose to show how we might begin to approach strategic thinking to accomplish our central national objective.

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¹ As Burke pointed out, both the Democrats and the Republican thus pay off political debts by appointing "bundlers" of massive campaign contributions. Now it is the turn of the Republicans to cry

² Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) see Chapter 6, "The Consequences of Political Knowledge and Ignorance.

³ The Founding Fathers were deeply suspicious of the military and of the people's ability to control it. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts was particularly concerned that in an earlier draft on the Constitution, there was "no check here against standing armies in time of peace" and wanted to limit the standing army to "two or three thousand" because "if there be no restriction, a few States may establish a military Government." James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (New York: Norton, 1987), 481 ff. Bradford Perkins noted in *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), I, 62, that the delegates "did not want either to deny the president to power to resist surprise attacks or to give him a means to initiate military action. James Wilson of Pennsylvania, a leading figure in the convention, assured his colleagues, 'it will not be in the power of a single man, or a single body of men, to involve us in such distress' as war."

⁴ This is the title of the interpretive history of the American people on which I am at work.

⁵ Richard F. Grimmett (on March 10, 2011) and Barbara Salazar Torreon (on August 30, 2013) reported to Congress on "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad" from 1798. Down to 2013, they found 5 declared war, 6 undeclared wars and hundreds of other military actions. (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service.)

⁶ Just to mention a few: Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War* (New York: Macmillan, 2010); Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Stephen M. Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: Norton, 2004.

⁷ On one firm, Lockheed Martin, see William Hartung, *Prophets of War* (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

⁸ Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American Security State* (New York: Little, Brown, 2011). They point out (page 86) that 21 new organizations were created in just the last three months of 2001. In 2002, 34 more were created; then in 2003, 39, in 2004, 30, in 2005, 34, 2006, 27 and "twenty-four or more each were added in 2007, 2008 and 2009."

⁹ In "The Killing Machines" *The Atlantic*, September 2013. Mike Bowden, recounts the argument between the US Ambassador to Pakistan Cameron Munter in 2011 and CIA Director Leon Panetta over the ambassador's authority to veto assassinations. Munter quoted Title 22 of the US Code of Federal Regulations that made the ambassador the chief American authority in the country to which he was appointed. "That means," commented Bowden, "no American policy should be carried out in any country without the ambassador's approval." Panetta took the dispute to President Obama who ruled in favor of the CIA.

¹⁰ Madison, *Notes*, passim.

¹¹ I have dealt with Iraq intensively in *Understanding Iraq* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

¹² Henry Kissinger and others denied it at the time, but we now have access to the documents and know that they condoned and conspired a few years before, in 1975, with the Indonesian dictator General Suharto, certainly no more attractive a figure than Saddam, on the invasion. (See Briefing book 62 in the nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/)

¹³ Senator George McGovern and I dealt with how to get out of Iraq in *Out of Iraq* so I will not review it here.

¹⁴ Ken Sengupta, "David Kilcullen: The Australian helping to shape a new Afghanistan strategy," *The Independent*, July 9, 2009.

¹⁵ A first hand account is General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing it On; Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the North-West Frontier of India* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, n.d. 1925?)

¹⁶ The best account is Rodric Braithwaite, *Afghantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89* (London: Profile Books, 2011). Also see William R. Polk, *Violent Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) Chapt. 11.

¹⁷ Largely based on Islamic law but including elements that were pre-Islamic. The social code featured segregation of women, revenge for insult (*badal*), protection of refugees (*melmastia*) and absolute independence. In the south, it was known as the *Pukhtunwali*.

¹⁸ Robert Pape, the author of *Bombing to Win*, in the April 21, 2015 *New York Times*. Pape was a professor in the US Air Force's School of Advanced Airpower Studies.

¹⁹ Sengupta, op. cit. quoting the principal adviser to the American commander, General David Petraeus, "These strikes are totally counter-productive. It is a strategic error to personalize the conflict in this way, it'll strengthen the enemy and weaken our friends. How can one expect the civilian population to support us if we kill their families and destroy their homes." Also see the 2012 Stanford University Law School/New York University Report, "Living Under Drones" (<http://www.livingunderdrones.org/report/>). Which quotes US Admiral Mike Mullan as saying "there is evidence to suggest that the strikes have aided militant recruitment and motivated terrorist activity." And, perhaps even more conclusive, was the report (published by Andrew Cockburn, the Washington editor of *Harpers*, in April 30, 2015 in Lobelog, <http://www.lobelog.com/how-assassination-sold-drugs-and-promoted-terrorism/#more-29104>) made by Rex Rivolo for the Institute for Defense Analysis, that showed that "Each killing quickly prompted mayhem. Within three kilometers of the target's base of operations, attacks over the following 30 days shot up by 40%."

²⁰ Jo Becker and Scott Shane, Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will," *The New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

²¹ I have discussed this and other aspects of the Afghan conflict in a series of essays in my book *Distant Thunder* (Washington 2011).