

July 19, 2002

Dear Friends,

Hardly a day goes by without strident headlines reporting on terrorism or the threat of it. It seems to me, however, that there is a great deal of confusion about what terrorism is and therefore about what to do about it. While the following cannot hope to be definitive, it may be sufficiently suggestive to encourage more precision and therefore more effective protection for us all.

“Terrorism” is a label loosely applied to at least three quite separate sets of threats and actions. The first of these is simply the action of psychopaths. To outsiders, it appears essentially aimless. The Manson murders may be an example of this sort of violence for the sake of violence. The second is politically directed action for which the motivation is so generalized that outsiders have difficulty in defining it or responding to it. It is possible that the movement of Osama bin Ladin falls in this category. Bin Ladin has not provided a clear definition, at least in terms to which we can meaningfully respond, of what he is for and what he is against. The third category, in contrast, is specific in objective and clear in motivation. Various national movements today fall in this category. To them, as I will suggest, a rational and effective response can be identified and implemented.

It seems to me obvious that if the actual or potential targets of these diverse groups – which many Americans now believe to be us -- fail to distinguish them and so try to use the same measures against them all, their efforts are likely not only to fail but also to incite the very actions they seek to prevent. So let me consider them one by one:

\* \* \*

*First, the action of psychopaths:* Every gathering of any significant number of people will contain what might be thought of as “marginal” people, that is, people living on the margin of what the group as a whole regards as normal. Clearly the norm will vary. Some societies extol violence and not only tolerate but even venerate those who employ it. The feud has been raised almost to an art form among the Scots, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Arabs and countless other people. It hovers just below the surface, and not always far below, in American culture. Look at the vicarious pleasure taken from (and large amounts of money spent on) books and films about the Mafia, the gun-slingers and warriors. We have a taste for violence.

Harmless? For most of us, probably. Some social scientists think such vicarious indulgence in fantasy allows us to burn off our angers or assuage our frustrations; others hold that this aspect of media both teaches and encourages anti-social behavior. A similar debate goes on over pornography: does it promote rape or enable those who, in frustration, might actually rape to otherwise abort their inclination? We cannot agree on an answer.

It seems to me, however, that we can probably agree that how such materials, which are often highly specific and deeply moving, affect people depends on the audience. Some of us can laugh while others are incited. It is arguable that if we could find some way to identify those who could be, or might be, pushed over the edge toward violent, anti-social behavior, we might be able to find some way to protect them (and us). The problem is that no one has any reasonable, legal or moral idea on how this could be done.

Some correlations that appear logical have been drawn: there is probably a greater propensity to strike out in fury from those who feel deprived or without hope. The obvious group in America is black teenagers. Among them, crime is particularly prevalent. However, some of the most shocking instances of violence have been perpetrated by affluent white American adults. Violence is not new in our society; it is well documented from the earliest colonial times to the present.

What we can do to modify the culture that promotes or allows violence remains elusive. Getting richer, better educated, more religious, more integrated, even more sober have all been seen not to make much difference. In practice, we have adopted the policy of removing those guilty of violent action from society. The weaknesses of this response are evident: it takes place only after the action and has resulted in America having one of the world's highest rates of incarceration.

Allow me a personal example: when I was President of the Adlai Stevenson Institute, I received several death threats. One seems sufficiently serious that I called in the head of the University of Chicago police, the commander of the City of Chicago police for that area and the regional director of the FBI. The summary of their considered reaction was two-fold: the threat *was* serious – it was made by a young man of known violent psychopathic tendencies -- but there was nothing any of these three police forces could do about it. As they put it, he had not yet done anything; he had not attempted or succeeded in killing me. I felt that once a person had made such a threat, legal action against him should be possible. However, the best they could suggest was that I be as careful as possible. At the time, that was cold comfort.

Where no threat was made, as has been the case in a number of horrifying attacks and murders, the answer I got from all three police officials was probably as good an answer as we can get. Short of putting the entire population in jail, we are unlikely to be able to prevent random or unexpected acts like the shootings by pupils in schools, killing fellow office workers by disgruntled employees or simply random acts by deranged loners like the one a few years ago by a man with a rifle on the tower at the University of Texas. There will always be psychopaths among us.

\* \* \*

*The second category of violent action* is a loose one and might usefully be broken down into various kinds. However much they differ from one another, a common distinction from psychopaths is that they organize themselves into groups.

The objective for some is money. This is the goal of the Mafia in America or the various clones of the Mafia in Russia and overseas communities of Chinese, Cuban, Russian Jewish and other groups. Others combine the quest for money with a quest for status or political power.

From the Nineteenth century until fairly recently, virtually every American city was controlled by bosses who either themselves ran or were allied to those who ran criminal syndicates. When the famous American “muckraker,” Lincoln Steffens (who wrote *The Shame of the Cities*), was asked what was the cause of our malaise, he replied, comfortably, that it was all in the Bible. In the Garden of Eden, he quipped, when guilt was sought, Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent; but, said Steffens, it was the apple that really was the cause. Ours is a society that puts great emphasis on the apple.

As long as many Americans are prepared to trade freedom for protection (as the city bosses found), or to buy illegal drugs or liquor (as we see today), there will be a lot of “apples.” And, even when peddlers of liquor, drugs or political protection go more or less straight, as they tend to do when they accumulate enough wealth, there is always a hungry new group pushing up from below into their places. In America, we have identified this with immigration: in its difficult quest for position in society each new group throws up new “mafias” – the latest is the Russian Jewish mafia in New York and New Jersey – and the process begins anew.

The police and the courts do what they can, but no one seriously believes that the “war” on crime or the “war” on drugs has been or can be won. The best we seem to be able to do, despite much ballyhooing and occasional but usually short-lived “crusades” is to keep the level of violence within what we regard as politically acceptable boundaries.

When we turn from our domestic problem to foreign affairs, our options widen but the “targets” also become more diffuse. They widen because many of the restraints that operate domestically are either totally removed or relaxed. We could not conceivably bomb Harlem for housing drug dealers or invade “Little Italy” for protecting the Mafia, but we could and did attack Afghanistan for harboring the followers of Osama bin Ladin. At the same time, our actions become more diffuse because the motivation of groups such as al-Qaida are not so simple as those of the Mafia. However angry we are at them, we have to admit that they are not simply criminals. They draw on angers that are both widespread and deep. Moreover, they arise from conditions and trends over which we have little knowledge and less control and which may be irresolvable.

So what can we do? Our answer, so far, has been to engage in a real, if undeclared, war. Kill as many as possible and incapacitate the rest. But, while that policy has been applied more vigorously than anyone could envisage doing at home, it is proving difficult or impossible to focus. We could kill people but we could not get at what motivated them. It follows both logically and historically that those killed will eventually, perhaps even soon, be replaced by others. Let me dilate on this.

The movement began (and we supported it then) to put a stop to the Soviet Russian attempt to take over Afghanistan. Many of those involved equated the Soviet Union with imperialism and, often having been thwarted in their nationalistic pursuits in their own homes, they transferred to Afghanistan their angers and frustrations. This accounts for the wide range of nationalities in the movement.

The core group, and most of the money (apart from that supplied through Pakistan and otherwise by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency) was Saudi Arabian. At least in its proclamations, the group was rebelling against what it regarded as the corruption and worldliness of the Saudi ruling family and its supporters. After the Russians were defeated, America became a target because it supported the Saudi rulers, buying oil from them and stationing American troops in the country. We proclaimed that our reason for putting troops there was to protect Arabia from Iraq; Saudi dissidents believe our real intent was to protect the Saudi royal family.

To explain and get support for their program, those who followed Osama bin Ladin wrapped their criticism of the regime in religious terms: the Saudi rulers had apostated, “turned back” from Islam. “Turning back” (Arabic: *riddah*) is a religiously evocative charge anchored in Islamic history: after the death of Mohammed, many of his tribal adherents “turned back” to their old ways or, as Muslims saw it, to paganism. The modern charge is that the Saudi regime similarly turned back from its Islamic foundation, the Wahhabi movement, and sold out to the materialistic, irreligious Americans.

How we can react to this attack on the Saudi ruling system through the attack on us, other than military or “police” action, is limited in various practical ways. Let me consider them.

Since my time in government, every administration has echoed the position of its predecessor, that a basic American objective in the Middle East has been to obtain petroleum on acceptable terms. The loss of Saudi production, by far the largest now available, would, it is believed, be a devastating blow to the world economy. A revolution, coup d’etat or anarchy in Arabia might halt the flow of oil. Thus, both Democratic and Republican administrations have affirmed their belief that the American national interest required the preservation of the Saudi regime.

Since all the United States National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) I have seen cautioned that almost any attempt to modify the regime might cause it to tumble, we have refrained from encouraging reform. This is a historically curious interpretation of Saudi affairs since the one phase in recent history that virtually all Saudis praise was the rule of King Faisal when, under the influence of Shaikh Zaki Yamani, fundamental reforms were begun. (Particularly in education but also in liberalization of the position of women.) Since Faisal’s death, the Saudi government has dropped reform and even abrogated some of Faisal’s measures. We have not only tacitly approved this reactionary policy but have emphasized our support by assisting the regime to acquire weapons, skills and organization to defend itself against its internal critics.

Our policy in Saudi Arabia, the younger people in government and public policy study groups may not remember, is a clone of our policy in Iran before the revolution there. In the 1950s and 1960s, any hint of criticism by American officials of the Shah's government was regarded as irresponsible, dangerous, almost seditious. Warnings were not only discredited but those who issued them were themselves regarded with suspicion. (There were echoes of the McCarthy attack on those who similarly had warned of the collapse of the Nationalist government in China.)

As a member of the Iran Task Force, I joined Robert Komer (then Deputy Director of the National Security Council and later Deputy Secretary of Defense) and Kenneth Hansen (formerly head of the Harvard-Ford Foundation Advisory Group to the Iranian Government and then deputy head of the Bureau of the Budget) in warning that our policy of giving unqualified support to the Shah and promoting a massive build-up of his armed forces and security service, rather than promoting stability, was undercutting it. We were overruled for, I think, two persuasive reasons: on the one hand, no one wanted to risk any action or advice, however mild, for which he later could be accused of "losing" Iran (as others had been accused of losing China) and because short-term tactics always won every contest against longer-term strategy. What we faced then is, I imagine, exactly what our successors face today regarding Saudi Arabia. The responsible officials must find that the immediate personal risk far outweighs any presumed long-term national benefit.

Even though what I had recommended for Iran was never tried, I was reprimanded for suggesting it. In fact, what Komer, Hansen and I recommended was a very paltry program. It amounted, as I later told the Shah, only to suggesting that his interests would be better protected if he had a more effective way of monitoring what his government was doing. Our "revolutionary" reform amounted to creating something like the U.S. Bureau of the Budget. Because he was minutely if often ill informed about the inner workings of our government, the Shah was furious. He told me he regarded me as the principal American enemy of his government. When he finally altered his position (as he showed by giving my program at the University of Chicago the then largest grant Iran had ever given abroad), it was too late. So we "lost" Iran – and its oil.

Without being a Cassandra – but unable to resist pointing out that Cassandra was right – I think we would be foolish not to consider at least the possibility of an Iranian sort of revolution in Saudi Arabia.

How could it happen? If it did what could we do? And how would it affect us? I turn to these three questions. But I begin with some basic information on Saudi Arabia.

We should not blind ourselves to realities: Osama bin Ladin is popular among Saudis --and the citizens of other oil-producing Gulf states. As my friend, the distinguished French specialist and former ambassador, Eric Rouleau, pointed out in this month's issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Bin Ladin's popularity arises not so much as a Muslim (for in that guise he has no recognized standing) but as an opponent of the Saudi royal regime. And, therefore, as an anti-American. We have little ability to judge *how many* Saudis agree with his criticisms. The "worst-case" possibility, as the intelligence people

would put it, is that they are many. Is this the reality? To move toward an answer consider that disturbing signs are coming out of Arabia with more frequency and in more places and among more groups than ever before.

Again, remember Iran: there, right up to the Revolution, virtually all the “experts” thought the government was strong, that it was supported by those who counted and that the religious establishment was just a bunch of ignorant, dirty old men mumbling medieval platitudes. The only one of our Foreign Service officers who attempted to learn about the religious establishment was reprimanded (and ultimately “selected out” of the Service) for the bad judgment he showed in wasting his time studying the *mullahs*. They were unimportant because in addition to all their other faults, they were out of touch with “the people” -- that is, with those we knew and who were modern, technically qualified and westernized. All the “signals” we heard from Iran came from our kind of people. Alas, they too were out of touch.

Of course, Saudi Arabia is not Iran and there are obvious differences. But there are also similarities that are worth contemplating. Consider four “straws in the wind:”

- first, those with whom we are in touch in Arabia and on whom we (and the royal family) ultimately rely have shown a remarkable tendency to hedge their bets by putting their assets abroad. Although the state has recently become painfully short of money (running at a deficit, cutting subsidies to its supporters and accumulating domestic and foreign indebtedness of about \$200 billion), members of the Saudi ruling elite are believed to have stashed away abroad over \$700 billion and almost all have acquired houses in safe havens.

- Second, since the heydays of the 1980s, per capita income has fallen more than 75% so that about three of each ten Saudi males and over nine in each ten Saudi females is without work and without much hope of ever finding a secure and “acceptable” future. One does not need to look very far to see that often when people lose hope in their future they turn to religion and then often combine it with revolt.

- Third, while discontent is measured in individual, personal terms, the scale in which it is measured is, at least in part, the visible manifestations of vast wealth among the privileged. These same signs are evidently beginning to affect those who have been regarded as the solid core of the state, the religious establishment. Wealth is by now equated with corruption, and corruption has become equated with un-Godliness.

- And, fourth, criticism of the rulers is now often stated in religious terms, that is, aimed at one leg of the bipod that traditionally has upheld the regime, the Wahhabi establishment. Whether this group will follow the Iranian pattern no one can yet say, but obviously those who wish to topple the regime, believe it is vulnerable.

Added to the domestic pressures on the Saudi state could be pressures exerted from abroad. Two are already evident: they are, first, the continuing and ugly war between the Israelis and the Palestinians, in which America is widely regarded (not only in the Arab countries but in Israel and throughout Europe) as playing the crucial

supporting role to the Israelis, and, second, the American plan, repeatedly announced by President Bush, to invade Iraq.

Let us be clear about these. Arabs in general and Saudi Arabs in particular have been poor supporters of the Palestinian cause. They have exploited the Palestinians and given them little succor. But, of course, they feel guilty about their actions and inactions. For the generally poor performance, they blame their governments. In a revolutionary situation, this could be a determining factor as it was in Iraq in 1958.

At least as significant as the Palestinian issue in determining what happens in the Middle East, and pointedly in Saudi Arabia, is the anticipated American invasion of Iraq. Saddam Husain is almost as disliked among educated Arabs as he is in Washington. But, to adapt the phrase so often used by American politicians, Arabs often feel that “while he is a son-of-a-bitch, he is *our* son-of-a-bitch.” Since the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser, the Arabs have been very short of big men, and for some, Saddam Husain is what the Arabs call a *fahal*, (Arabic: a “stallion.”). As much as they dislike him, few would welcome a western move to overthrow him. Neither I (nor anyone else) has any way of knowing, but I suspect this is true even among Arabs in Baghdad. Even those we recognize as the leaders of the Kurds, who certainly have ample reason to hate him, have indicated (against their own financial interests since we are subsidizing them) opposition to an American invasion.

If an invasion could be, to use a favored term of the military, “surgical,” an argument could be made that after the shock, everyone would accept the new reality. Military men and particularly those familiar with espionage, however, usually admit that in war few things go as planned and outcomes rarely match expectations. Two imponderables must be faced:

- First, the Iraqis might actually fight an American invasion. Nationalism has a way of uniting even bitter enemies against external threat. Then, although American casualties might be light, Iraqi casualties would likely be heavy. Remorse at having allowed American bombers and troops to use or pass over their territories would almost certainly follow in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and perhaps elsewhere. Scenes of suffering Iraqis would add to the pressure on the Saudi (and perhaps other Gulf states’) regimes and perhaps on Egypt’s. If, as might be considered to protect American lives, and as probably has been mooted, Israel joined the United States in the attack, this pressure would be multiplied many fold.

- Second, even if the war were quickly and painlessly won, the question would arise, “how to get out.” While military men have long known that attack was easier than retreat, political planners have been slow to recognize how hard withdrawal is. As I witnessed in my government career, intervention was far easier, more attractive and neater to plan than “exit strategy.” Even a successful military action could leave behind in Iraq a situation as bad, or in some ways even worse, than the one that now exists.

Could this be true? Consider three points:

1.The state: invasion *could be* the death knell of the Iraqi state. De facto, Iraq is already divided with Kurdistan virtually an autonomous state. If that division is made permanent and if the Shi'a south emerges more or less independent, there will be three small and probably unstable states on the frontier of three relatively powerful states, each of which has an "interest" in Iraq. Turkey has been in virtual war with Iraqi Kurdistan from long before Saddam Husain. Iran is religiously and culturally allied to the Shi'a south. Syria has both ideological and cultural ties with central (Arab Sunni) Iraq. The neighbors each will be tempted to intervene or will be lured in by would-be partisans. The results could be chaotic.

2.Leaders: Presumably, Saddam Husain will be exiled or killed. Who will take his place – or places if Iraq breaks up? Almost certainly any replacement for Saddam for at least the central (Iraqi Sunni) area will come from the ranks of Saddam's party. Will he be better? More pointedly, since he will have to prove that he is not our puppet, could he *afford* to be what we would regard as better? I have had the opportunity to observe one after another several Iraqi leaders and found that each one was worse than the one before. Our intelligence and diplomatic people have not, to the best of my knowledge or that of anyone to whom I have spoken, been able to identify anyone even remotely qualified – and certainly not to our liking -- to fill that role.

3.Infrastructure: Presumably much will be destroyed in the fighting. Physical things are relatively easy to fix. Once Iraq begins to pump oil, both the Kurdish North and the far south will have substantial incomes. The middle area will not. Someone, presumably we, will have to pick up the tab. What will be much harder than roads, bridges, dams, factories etc., however, will be reconstituting administrations. Since the Baath Party reaches deep into society, replacing it will be a complex, subtle and demanding process, one at which America has little experience and not a good record.

So what do we do about Saddam Husain? As I wrote two years ago in *The New York Review of Books*, I do not think there is a good answer. Even Kenneth M. Pollack, who favors invasion, wrote in the March/April 2002 issue of *Foreign Affairs* that there are no "good policy options toward Iraq."

Let us be clear what is at stake: There is no doubt that Saddam Husain is an ugly dictator. He may be the worst now around, but he is certainly not alone. The "bad dictator club" has many members. We are even quite cozy with some of them. The critical difference, if there is one, is that we believe or profess to believe that, alone of all his kind, he is a serious threat to world peace.

Frankly, I find this assessment difficult to credit. Yes, he must have access to chemical and biological weapons – what state hasn't? But, despite a great deal of discussion, I have yet to see serious speculation, much less credible evidence, that he has access to nuclear weapons. Moreover, so far at least, he is isolated. He has not been allied with the other people we regard as threats: Iran hates him since (with our active help) he virtually destroyed a whole generation of Iranians. The Baath regime of Syria regards him much as the Stalinists regarded the Trotsky-ites, as a traitor to their cause. He is, or at least has been, strongly opposed to (and more strongly opposed by) the Islamic

movement than many of our friends. Many forget that Osama bin Ladin wanted to form an international brigade to throw him out of Kuwait. In short, he is in a corner. It is at least worth considering whether or not that corner is where we want him. If so, might it not be wise to avoid giving him a means to get out of it?

How could he get out? One way is by making common cause with other Arabs. We know he is making efforts to repair his relations with other Arab regimes. That will not be easy in the current situation but might become easier if any of dangers I described above become realities. Then his options increase and ours narrow.

It follows that, as he has done in the past, Saddam will watch us closely. We must be especially careful not to send the wrong signals. Here our record is appallingly bad. Before he invaded Kuwait, the (first) Bush Administration instructed our ambassador in Baghdad to tell him that the United States took no position on the frontiers among the Arab states. (This was not a misunderstanding by our ambassador, although her career was ruined by it. The same message was copied to all our Middle Eastern embassies.) In the context of the Iraqi claim on Kuwait, Saddam reasonably took this to be a green light. So, he moved to effect what every Iraqi government since 1921 regarded as its rights over territory the British had “broken off” as part of their imperial strategy. Surprised by the invasion, we then changed the signal: we did care about frontiers among Arab states. Iraq paid a heavy price for its greed and our inconsistency. There were, of course, some in the Middle East who felt that we had acted on purpose with the intent to trap him in a war so we could defeat him. In his account of the events, George Bush Sr. lends some credence to this charge.

This time, our signals are certainly clear. President Bush Jr. has repeatedly – and consistently --announced that we intend to overthrow and “replace” Saddam. What this threat amounts to reminds me of an old adage from the frontier days in Texas: never point a gun at a man unless you kill him. That is precisely what the Bush Administration has been doing, pointing the gun and threatening but not shooting. So what, we should ask, does President Bush expect Saddam Husain to do?

What will he do? I don't think we need to search for exotic answers. He probably will react like any one of us would when facing a man with a gun who says he is going to kill us – try to save his life any way he can. So, I assume, Saddam, who, whatever else he is, is a street-smart fighter, has concluded that he might as well pull all the stops. If he believes us, and why would he not, he has nothing to lose. He would be a fool not to empty his economic bag to acquire “deterrents” at any cost. Facing what we thought to be a similar situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, we did exactly that: we acquired a nuclear arsenal.

If, in this situation, he decided to spend billions of dollars, could we be sure he could not acquire a nuclear bomb? There are, after all, now many potential sources. If he reads or knows about our now vast literature on deterrence, he will know that “assured mutual destruction” worked to keep us and the Russians from attacking one another and may be what prevented India and Pakistan from going to war. He has often been told that if he had waited to attack Kuwait until he got a nuclear weapon, our reaction would have

been complete different. So, I presume that right now he is dangling vast amounts of money before arms peddlers, corrupt government officials and who knows who else to try to acquire at least one bomb.

This is speculation, but what is less speculative is that if he were under clear and present danger to his life, Saddam would hit back with everything he had. After all, even a cornered rat will turn and fight. Even if he had not managed to acquire a nuclear bomb, he would almost certainly use his available stocks of chemical and biological weapons before being killed. The very threat, “pointing the gun,” thus, may bring about or hasten the very disaster against which we are seeking to protect ourselves and others.

Equally dangerous, although in a different way, as I have pointed out, invasion of Iraq *could be* the trigger that explodes Saudi Arabia.

But, skeptics would point out, the Saudi state, with our help has mobilized an impressive army and security force. Moreover, the armed forces are divided so that the regular army (which elsewhere has usually been the source of coups against governments) is balanced by a National Guard that was in origin tribal and is assumed to be loyal to the ruling family. There is no known, coherent, organized, large-scale opposition to these forces.

True enough, but again consider Iran. There the Shah controlled the largest, best-equipped, most pampered and ostensibly most loyal army and efficient security forces in the area. Who could oppose that? The opposition was ideologically divided, geographically scattered and leaderless. It was even mostly incarcerated. No contest. Or so it seemed until everything fell apart. Revolutions seem to always happen like that. What, after all, did the Bolsheviks have in 1917 to match the Tsar’s millions of soldiers? But that was not where the revolution happened. As our great statesman John Adams remarked to Thomas Jefferson, “Revolution [happens] in the minds of the people.” When it happens, weapons are irrelevant because those who carry them refuse to use them or turn them against their leaders.

If there is at least the possibility of something like the Iraqi coup of 1958 or the Iranian revolution of 1979 occurring in the near future, my next question is, ‘what could we do?’ Our options, I think, fall into three categories:

- First, we could commit more forces to the area and engage more aggressively in covert actions designed to protect the Saudi state. Would this work? No one can know. It might, but, historically, one searches in vain for examples. It did not work in Iran; it did not work in Iraq; and, although the circumstances were somewhat different, it did not work in Vietnam. The great 14<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Ibn Khaldun coined a phrase that suggests why: he said that once the “dye of sovereignty” fades, a regime is doomed. Then no amount of arms or outside help can save it. However, in *his own interest*, the responsible official must demonstrate that he is not “soft” on the current enemy. That is why we could not admit our defeat in Vietnam. We had to keep on trying even when the game was lost. So, in the Middle East in the near future (and who knows where later), emphasis on military and intelligence intervention will remain attractive

options. I also believe that they will not work once a “revolutionary atmosphere” has been created. Further, I think that employing them is likely to speed up the creation of that atmosphere.

- Second, we could distance ourselves from the Saudi state, indicating that while we share the interest of profitably exploiting petroleum, we recognize the right of the Saudi people to set their own course and that the Saudi regime, as now constituted, is not what we regard as “our kind of state,” a democracy. Implicit or explicit is the call for reform. Such a policy, even if undertaken gradually, gently and gingerly, would be dangerous not only to the Saudi regime (which would inevitably regard it as an invitation to its enemies) but more pointedly to those in our government who are identified with such a policy. A somewhat comparable policy on China in the 1940s and 1950s resulted in the bureaucratic “lynching” of the State Department’s China specialists. Even if they were convinced it was in the American national interest, few government officials would espouse such a policy. Therefore, I suspect that it is the sort of policy that will be thought of only after the fact when people will say, “If only we had...” Whatever its theoretical merits or demerits, in practice, it is unlikely. So what remains?

- The third possible line of policy is mere prudence: if there is a danger that some day, one way or another, the flow of Middle Eastern oil might be interdicted, we should anticipate the possibility and do what we can to make alternative arrangements. Several possible things might be done: We could

1. Stockpile yet more “strategic reserves” of oil in underground reservoirs. This is short term and of limited effect, useful only to bridge a short crisis. We probably have done as much in this field as usefully can be done.

2. Encourage greater production from other areas -- Russia, Central Asia, Alaska, Nigeria. This is already being done probably as rapidly and effectively as it can be. To do more, quickly enough to prevent a major energy crunch occasioned by even temporary loss of Saudi oil, would be difficult and would create a whole new range of problems.

3. Restructure the price framework of energy use. American politicians run for cover when this option is discussed. But, in Europe, \$4/gallon gasoline has not caused revolutions. If such a tax increase caused us to be more careful of energy, the benefits could be enormous: cutting down on energy imports would impact favorably on our balance of payments exposure; make us less subject to pressures from other governments; increase government revenues that could, for example, ensure the future of the now-endangered Social Security program; and make economically feasible alternative (and domestic) sources of energy. Yet, this policy will require such political bravery that, again, I fear it will not be considered until it is almost literally forced down our throats. Statesmanship is in shorter domestic supply than foreign oil.

More likely is a dramatic and sudden “shock.” An Iraqi-style coup d’etat or an Iranian-style revolution in Saudi Arabia, which even if ultimately put down, would send a

shudder of horror through the world economy. We are now witnessing how fragile that economy is and how much more it is affected by perceptions than by realities.

In short, I think that our current approaches to the grab-bag of challenges in this, my second category of “terrorism,” are likely to exacerbate rather than solve them.

\* \* \*

*The third category* of what the American government today regards as acts of terrorism arises in situations both better defined and more wide-spread than the other two. This category also has, I believe, a solution that fits in the American tradition and could be effectively implemented. But, the way in which we are now approaching this issue will not work, involves us with allies that do not accord with our national character and makes enemies of those whose admiration for us has been one of our strongest assets in the past. To examine it, I will first set the political and legal context, then I will identify the principal problem areas and finally I will set out what I believe could be a solution.

First, the context: Those of us who live in states which adequately express our sense of nationhood have the luxury of rising above nationalism: we have turned our attention to transnational or supranational economic, cultural and political definitions, speaking of the “global village,” “the world economy” and other catchy phrases to show that we have risen above mere nationhood. Ours is a luxury beyond the reach of much of the world’s population. For that part of the world’s people, nationhood does not satisfactorily correspond with statehood. For them, and one suspects that even for us when challenged, nationalism is still the world’s most powerful guiding light. I think there is no doubt that it was nationalism rather than communism that defeated us in Vietnam and it is nationalism rather than Islam that lies behind many of our current problems. So let us focus on it.

Nationalism is not just political, as many social scientists have thought, or just related to the nation-state, but is a far broader concept at the very fundament of personal identity. Expressing, as it does, kinship, language, religion, ethnicity and neighborhood, it still creates – as in various forms it must have in the most primitive societies -- a force transcending ideology, logic or reason. Even when it apparently is not the determinant of politics, it rests, barely submerged below the surface, ready to appear when challenged.

But since we live in a world where identity is defined by membership in a state, nationalism is also underpinned by law. Not to belong, to be “outside” is, in the most basic sense, to be an “outlaw.” Without that symbolic membership card, the passport, getting a job, traveling, even residing securely anywhere (except in a detention camp) is always difficult and sometimes impossible. One ceases to be a person and becomes a dossier, a “case.” In fact, the “cases” are the lucky ones. They may gain admittance to a refuge in Canada, the United States or one of the European countries. Such people seem many to their hosts but, viewed overall, they constitute only a select few. Many are not even recognized as cases. For what life is like for a representative sample of them, I refer you to the article “Lost in Cairo” by Caroline Moorehead in the June 13, 2002 issue of *The New York Review of Books*. Theirs is the condition of hundreds of thousands of

people in the world today. We would not be wrong to think of them as the *lumpenproletariat* of the refugee world. Pathetic as is their fate, they do not constitute a serious threat of terrorism. But, to the stateless, they represent the abyss into which they might be thrown.

Those who are sometimes capable of making at least a nuisance of themselves are many millions greater. They are peoples who live in geographically more or less coherent accumulations which are not recognized as states. The Palestinians are the most prominent of these “extra legal” nations. Just a few years ago, the Jews were in the same situation. Desperate to acquire legal status for their nation, that is statehood, they are prepared to fight; if they do not have other means, they become terrorists as both the Jews and the Palestinians have done. The Jews won; the Palestinians have so far at least lost.

Still more millions live in states in which their nations are treated and/or regard themselves as alien. The Çeçens, Kashmiris, Berbers, Kurds, and Basques are only the better known among more than a hundred. China has at least a dozen of whom, having largely driven out or subdued the Tibetans, they regard the Uigurs as the current “problem.” Even after allowing some of its larger nations to form states, Russia still has at least a score who live in semi-autonomous “republics.” No small part of the African tragedy today is the result of inattention to nationality in the European carving out of chunks of territory into colonies which then became states.

I think of these groups as the “unrequited” or unfulfilled nations. They are today’s survivors of a process of homogenization that has gone on, often successfully, for centuries or even for millennia as small groups were merged into larger and then into confederations and finally into states. Most of the nations we know today underwent this process. In ancient times, the most famous was China which from Shang times was formed by the conquest and Sinification of hundreds of peoples. In Europe, Germany is the outstanding example: until 1648, what became Germany was divided into over 900 sovereign states. Following the treaty of Westphalia in that year, the number was reduced to 355 and in 1803 Napoleon amalgamated them into 150. The Germanic Confederation still numbered 36 until 1871 when Bismarck united them into the German Empire.

Germany was bucking the historical trend: under the influence of nationalism, the older empires were breaking up. Particularly in the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires, but also in the British Empire, national groups rediscovered their identity and began to press for recognition. When the empires resisted, the thwarted nationalists used terrorism as their means of calling attention to their plight and forcing their overlords to grant them autonomy or freedom. Some succeeded on their own: one after another, the peoples of Montenegro, Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Roumania got autonomy or independence; others like the Armenians, Georgians, Czechs and Slovaks did not. Their desire came before the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

When the victorious allies met at Paris, they considered the “world” to be divided into 31 sovereignties each of which, except for defeated Germany and Revolutionary Russia, was represented by a delegation. But they realized that many nations were not

included. Under the influence of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, the decision was taken to try to work out arrangements for them.

Wilson believed that the drive toward national identity was not to be denied; he also believed that it might be accommodated in a new world order that would “make the world safe for democracy.” To that end, he sent out a clarion call for “the self-determination of peoples.” That is, simply put, to let people express their will and affirm their identity as we do in democracies, by voting in plebiscites. Unfortunately, governments, even his, were deaf, but others have been listening ever since.

And answering. When we liked them or agreed with their causes, we considered them the “George Washingtons of their peoples,” freedom fighters. The list is familiar: Parnell against Britain in Ireland, Gandhi against Britain in India, Abdul Karim al-Khatabi against the French and Spanish in Morocco, Menahem Begin against the British in Palestine, Ahmed Bin Bella against the French in Algeria and Ahmad Shah Masoud against the Russians in Afghanistan. Dozens of others are less well remembered. Most recently, Nelson Mandela became an icon for the fight he personified against apartheid in South Africa.

When we approved their causes, we considered those who led their struggles to be freedom fighters; when we did not, we classified them as terrorists; if we changed our minds about their causes, we altered their designation from terrorist to freedom fighter or vice versa.

Others, we have viewed, when we were even aware of them, with indifference. Who of us ever heard of the Çeçens before a few years ago? Yet the Çeçens have been struggling against the Russians – tsarist, Communist and now whatever we choose to call the Russian government – since 1732. Tsarist and Communist, the Russians engaged in brutal search and destroy campaign against them, burning villages and massacring or starving peasants. Defeated and seemingly facing annihilation, roughly half of the Çeçen population fled to the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the Nineteenth century. In his short and relatively little known novel, *Hadji Murad*, which with eerie precision forecast today's conflict, Leo Tolstoy begins with a double metaphor: on a walk, he notices a "beautiful thistle plant of the crimson variety, which in our neighborhood they call 'Tatar' and carefully avoid when mowing -- or, if they do happen to cut it down, throw out from among the grass for fear of pricking their hands." He continues, “when I had at last succeeded in plucking it, the stalk was all frayed and the flower itself no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful. Moreover, owing to its coarseness and stiffness, it did not seem in place among the delicate blossoms of my little bouquet. I threw it away feeling sorry to have purposelessly destroyed a flower that looked beautiful in its own environment. 'But, what energy and tenacity! With what determination it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life!' I thought.”

Like the Çeçens, the Kurds are little known among us, but they too have struggled, unsuccessfully, to come together and apart from Turks, Persians, Arabs – and their ancestors – for time out of mind of man. While we still pay little or no attention to

the Kashmiris and their desires, we realized there was a problem in their land when India and Pakistan came close to a nuclear war over possession of it and when we realized that their attempt to subdue the Kashmiris was nearly bankrupting India.

What all these separate and diverse experiences share is the lesson that military force did not work. Even when thousands or tens of thousands were killed, the struggle continued.

What those struggles that have ended also teach us is that there is another course of action that usually does work. It is essentially the one set out by President Wilson. When a people becomes convinced that it has a chance to satisfy -- not necessarily all but a satisfactory minimum of -- its quest for national identity and legal existence, a negotiated settlement becomes possible.

If past experience is any guide, empires and multinational states will be reluctant to allow this course. The British are a remarkable exception. They have allowed devolution not only of their empire but even of their central kingdom. Even though they pay a great price for their current policies, the Russians have shown themselves unwilling to allow the Çeçens to answer President Wilson's question; the Indians have refused even to consider allowing the Kashmiris this peaceful option. Others will also resist. If, as I believe, we decided such a policy made sense as the best approach to controlling terrorism and moving toward a great degree of peace and decency, we would have to marshal world opinion. This, at long last, would be a suitable and heroic task for the United Nations.

Even one success could make evident the great benefits to the subdued nations, to their overlords and to us. Kashmir would, perhaps, be a logical place to start. There the danger of nuclear war is clear and present and the burden on the Indian economy is oppressive, particularly when so much needs to be done to uplift the Indian people. And we have a great stake in making it succeed.

Such a policy will not be easy to implement. It will require great patience, a willingness to accept shortfalls and failures and an ability to learn from them, but the alternative, let us be clear, is to fall into a trap. Indeed, we are on the edge of the trap today. In our hurriedly constructed coalition, we can easily make the fatal mistake of considering all expressions of the desire for self-determination as terrorist and of using against them police or military repression. It is as though we had decided in the 1960s to side with the Mississippi sheriffs against the civil rights advocates. We will find a lot of "sheriffs" all over the world. "Come join us," a number of world leaders are already saying as President Putin did, "your Afghans are our Çeçens." Or Kurds, Tamils, Palestinians, Tamils, Kashmiris, Tibetans or dozens of other current and future minorities that wish to achieve self determination. "They are all terrorists. Let us fight them together!"

In that direction lies not only failure to stop terrorism and recurrent threats to our lives but, far more important, the destruction of the fragile fabric of our civilization, with its respect for freedom, decency and human rights, that we have so painfully, laboriously

and expensively struggled to create. At the end of that road is not only a garrison state but a world prison.

© William R. Polk, July 19, 2002