

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE®

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WHO ARE WE?

AND WHY ARE WE NOT WHO WE WERE?

POLITICAL AND MILITARY ISLAM

IN THE THREE MONTHS SINCE OUR JANUARY ISSUE DETERIORATING FOREIGN RELATIONS HAVE CONTINUED TO DOMINATE HEADLINES AND POLITICS AS THE RESULT OF POLITICAL/ECONOMIC PRESSURE APPLIED ALONG HISTORIC FAULT LINES IN UKRAINE; AND THE MULTIPLE POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS TENSIONS BETWEEN VARIOUS BRANCHES OF ISLAM IN THE NEAR EAST (NE) AND AFRICA. WHILE THEIR GOALS AND ARGUMENTS DIFFER GREATLY, EACH MAY DELIVER CONSEQUENCES THAT COULD PLAGUE OUR WORLD NOW AND WELL INTO THE FUTURE.

OUR TITLE QUESTION OF “WHO ARE WE?” ENGAGES THE MATTER OF IDENTITY AT MANY LEVELS INCLUDING THOSE SUPREMELY IMPORTANT ONES OF RELIGION AND CULTURE WHICH HAVE THE POWER TO DEFINE POPULATIONS AND TO PUSH THEM TO CONFLICT.

TO SOME DEGREE, GREATER OR LESSER DEPENDING UPON TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCE, ALL PEOPLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH DRAW LINES THAT DISTINGUISH THEIR RELIGION FROM OTHERS. THESE LINES EXTOL THEIR PARTICULAR FAITHS; THEY ENCLOSE AND PROTECT THE FAITHFUL FROM COMPETING BELIEFS; AND THEY SUPPORT THE INTERNAL AUTHORITY THAT RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS MUST CREATE TO SUSTAIN THEMSELVES IN THE

POLITICAL SLASH/BASH OF THE SECULAR WORLD IN WHICH THEY MUST CONDUCT THEIR MISSION.

IN THE PROCESS OF DRAWING THESE LINES, SCALE CAN BE ALTERED; THINGS THAT AT FIRST APPEAR SMALL CAN BE MAGNIFIED TO TAKE ON NEW OR GREATER MEANING. AND HAVING A FLEXIBLE SCALE PUTS PRESSURE ON IDENTITY TO CREATE THE STRENGTH OR CHARACTER REQUIRED TO KEEP PACE. ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN ALL ITS MANY GUISES — RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, HISTORICAL, LEGAL, TRIBAL, ETC. — DOMINATES THE NE’S CURRENT REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS.

SPEAKING TO THE PRESS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE IN FEBRUARY ON THE SUBJECT OF TERRORISM, PRES. OBAMA EMPHASIZED THAT “AMERICA IS NOT AT WAR WITH ISLAM” AND REFUSED TO LABEL THE HOSTILITIES IN IRAQ/SYRIA AS ISLAMIC TERRORISM, BUT INSTEAD CHOSE TO IDENTIFY IT WITH THE MORE GENERAL, NON-SECTARIAN LABEL “VIOLENT”. IN THE INTEREST OF ACCURACY HE MIGHT HAVE ADDED, “BUT AN OFF-SHOOT OF ISLAM IS AT WAR WITH US”.

THERE IS ALWAYS AMPLE ROOM IN POLITICS FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF EVASIVE OR LESS THAN SPECIFIC LANGUAGE, AND POLITICAL LEADERS DEPEND UPON IT WHEN HAVING TO

IN THIS ISSUE: WE UPDATE SOME PREVIOUS COMMENTS ON ISLAM AND OUR INCREASINGLY COMPLEX PRESENCE IN THE NEAR EAST.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE: WE WILL BEGIN TO EXPLORE THE MULTIPLE CHANGES IN AMERICAN CULTURE WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WAYS IN WHICH WE SEE OURSELVES AND OTHERS SEE US. THIS WILL START WITH AN EXAMINATION OF ISLAM AS A THREAT TO OUR CULTURE.

CENTER FOR PUBLIC CONSCIENCE

P.O. Box 220722
WEST PALM BEACH,
FL 33422-0722

WWW.
centerforpublic
conscience.org

Email:
moconscience@aol.com

Bromwell Ault
Editor/Founder

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TAKE UNCOMFORTABLE POSITIONS OR WHEN FACING UNWANTED FACTS. THE MEANING OF “AT WAR” WOULD NOT ORDINARILY BE A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION, BUT IN THE REALM OF DIPLOMACY/POLITICS/GOVERNMENT MEANINGS ARE FLUID AND CAN QUICKLY CHANGE.

WAR IS ABOUT POWER AND DOMINANCE — MY POWER AGAINST YOURS; MY WILL AGAINST YOURS; AND, IN THE END, MY LIFE AGAINST YOURS. THAT’S THE ETERNAL EQUATION OF WAR. IT IS COMMON TO ALL WARS FROM THEIR BEGINNINGS TO THEIR ENDS.

“ . . . IS ALWAYS READY TO STATE ITS TRUTH TO THE NEXT GENERATION.”

LIKE ALL EQUATIONS, IT STATES ITS TRUTH FIRMLY, WITHOUT QUALIFICATION, AND ENDURES LONG AFTER ITS POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC OR TERRITORIAL AMBITIONS ARE NO LONGER REMEMBERED OR RELEVANT. IT NEVER BLURS OR WEAKENS, AND IS ALWAYS READY TO STATE ITS TRUTH TO THE NEXT GENERATION.

WHITE HOUSE SEMANTICS ASIDE, WE ARE ENGAGED IN THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST AN OPPONENT WHO CLAIMS TO REPRESENT ISLAMIC AUTHORITY — LEGAL, SCRIPTURAL, TERRITORIAL AND MORAL — AND TO EXERCISE IT BY MEANS OF HIS CHOICE, INCLUDING EXTREME VIOLENCE.

HIS METHODS AND BELIEFS RUN COUNTER TO THE VALUES OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND PROBABLY OFFEND OTHER ELEMENTS OF GREATER ISLAM, ALTHOUGH TO WHAT EXTENT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE.

WAR OFTEN SETTLES ONLY SURFACE ISSUES, NOT UNDERLYING ONES. IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT THE ISLAMIC STATE (IS) WILL BE DEFEATED, AS HAVE PAST EFFORTS OF MUSLIM EXPANSION, AND WE WILL THEN RELISH THE RESULTING FEELINGS OF PEACE, VICTORY, JUSTIFICATION, ETC.

IS, HOWEVER, IS ONLY AN ASPECT OF ISLAM; IT IS THE THREAT OF THE MOMENT AND HAS CAPTURED OUR ATTENTION, BUT WE THINK ISLAM POSES OTHER, LARGER, MORE DANGEROUS THREATS TO OUR COUNTRY AND OUR WESTERN CIVILIZATION. WHILE THESE ARE NON-MILITARY AND LONG TERM, THEY ARE NONETHELESS REAL. THEY ARE CULTURAL AND HUMANITARIAN WITH SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, AND NO JUDGMENT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ISLAM IS VALID WITHOUT RECOGNIZING THEM. THEY WILL BE EXAMINED LATER.

IN THE PURSUIT OF MEDIA COVERAGE IS HAS GONE WELL BEYOND MOST OF THE WORLD’S ACCEPTED STANDARDS BY VIDEO TAPING ITS MULTIPLE BEHEADINGS OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY PRISONERS AND, EVEN WORSE, ITS INCINERATION OF A FELLOW MUSLIM JORDANIAN PILOT. TODAY, IS IS A REGIONAL BATTLEGROUND THREAT AS IT ATTACKS THE BOUNDARIES, CHURCHES, MOSQUES, PEOPLE, FAITHS AND INSTITUTIONS OF ANY COMMUNITY THAT WILL NOT JOIN IT.

GIVEN IS’ SHOCKING CRUELTY AND DISREGARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, WESTERN PUBLIC OPINION NOW INCREASINGLY CALLS FOR ITS DEFEAT. THE WEST’S PRESENCE HAS COME TO BE A CONSTANT BASED ON ITS NEED FOR ACCESS TO OIL AND THE SUEZ CANAL, AND ITS MOUNTING EMPHASIS OF DEMOCRACY, FREE MARKETS AND WORLD TRADE AS KEY INGREDIENTS IN ATTEMPTING TO ACHIEVE GLOBAL PEACE, STABILITY AND PROSPERITY. OUR VIEW OF THE FUTURE ALSO INCLUDES HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION WHICH WE SEE AS NOBLE GOALS BUT WHICH ARE REJECTED BY OTHER ENTRENCHED SYSTEMS MARKED BY PRIOR CLAIMS AND DIFFERENT PURPOSES.

THE NE IS A CULTURAL CAULDRON, AND ISLAM IS A BASIC ELEMENT IN ITS MIX WHICH ENJOYS, AND OFTEN IMPOSES, SPIRITUAL DOMINANCE OVER NINE TIME ZONES FROM WESTERN AFRICA TO INDONESIA. THE IS IS A MINOR OFF-SHOOT OF GREATER ISLAM, BUT BECAUSE OF THE LATTER’S SILENCE IN THE FACE OF IS ATROCITIES, A CASE OF THE TAIL WAGGING THE DOG CAN BE MADE.

THE ONE WORD THAT ALL RELIGIONS FEAR IS “SCHISM” WHICH CAN REACH INTO AND DIVIDE ALL AREAS OF THEIR OPERATIONAL AND BELIEF STRUCTURES. “SCHISM” GOES BEYOND BATTLEFIELDS AND BOMBINGS, AND EVEN BRUTAL EXECUTIONS. IT INEVITABLY BRINGS ABOUT, WHETHER ON A LARGE OR SMALL SCALE, CULTURAL CHANGE. IN THE NE, IF SCHISMATIC UPHEAVAL IS ADDED TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS OF WAR, THE CAULDRON WOULD BE SURE TO BOIL OVER.

BUT CULTURAL CHANGE TENDS TO BE SLOW MOVING AND, ONCE WE LOOK BEYOND THE PRESENT HEADLINES AND HOSTILITIES, WE MUST CONSIDER LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE MANY DIVISIONS THAT FOR CENTURIES HAVE PREVENTED ISLAM FROM MAKING A REAL ACCOMMODATION WITH ITS FELLOW ABRAHAMIC FAITHS — JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY. THIS

DIVISION IS ONE OF THE clearest that recorded history allows us to view, and it is quite surprising, considering their common origin, how much the Muslim message in the Quran can differ from those in the Bible's Old and New Testaments of Judaism and Christianity where there are many statements of shared principle.

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To come to any kind of sensible response to Islam today we must be frank about what it is and what it is not and, most importantly at this time — “What is the IS?” and “What is its role in the life of contemporary Islam?”

There are several answers which provide enough information to understand the second question of IS' current status in Islam. First, IS is a very recently formed and fast moving military entity driven by its leader to establish its own version of Islamic faith. It subjugates and commands obedience by extreme violence against both other Muslims and non-Muslims.

It has been able to attract funds and converts from Islamic and Western populations, including those in Europe and the U.S., by its skillful use of modern media and communications techniques; and the weapons it has purchased or captured are equally advanced. No method of killing or torture seems beyond its comfort zone; nor are exceptions granted for age or gender.

The IS is fueled by religious fervor by which its acts of random violence are wrapped in righteousness and messianic purpose. The goal of IS is to convert the world to Islamic law and faith and to destroy, or subvert, those institutions and cultures, especially Western ones, that have embraced and pursued a vastly different view of political, social, cultural and religious life.

What is perhaps less recognized is that, while IS is seen today as an off-shoot of mainstream Islam, it is a repeating part of the Muslim cycle of history and Islam's wars with its many opponents — Europeans, Mongols, Turks, as well as the many desert tribes that have populated North Africa and the NE.

To our contemporary Western eyes the atrocities that IS perpetrates are uniquely vicious and barbaric, but they are no more so than those committed by both Christians and Muslims during the Crusades, embarked upon to deliver Christianity's holy sites from Muslim possession.

Today's IS warfare across Syria and Iraq is similar to that of early Islam's seventh century expansion through North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Muslim forces were quick moving, well armed by the standards of their time and there were no pitched battles of massed cavalry, infantry, bowmen or artillery as used in the later European invasions.

There is one striking, 180° difference, however, between IS now and Islam's early, rapid expansion. The present IS policy of conquest demands the conversion of its victims to Islam (“Live and convert, or die”) without exception, whereas in its early years an economic factor took precedence over ideology. Then, victorious Muslims, captivated by the wealth of their newly acquired lands, established a system whereby only non-Muslims paid taxes. Religious conversion by Christians or others was discouraged by laws which punished by flogging anyone attempting to convert, as conversions reduced the pool of tax payers and, therefore, the Muslim revenue. This is one non-military distinction between IS and its forebears. There are others.

Among the tribes and towns of seventh century N. Africa there were shortages of resources, money and almost everything else except sand and poverty; and yet a measure of economic enterprise, as above, was able to prevail over Islam's membership and missionary functions. Not so today; as IS control carries an “all or nothing” label.

Islam's birth set it apart from earlier Judaism and Christianity. As it is rooted in the itinerant tribes of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, its development took place subject to the scarcities of desert life. Unlike Europe to its north, where land was the prime generator of wealth, in the desert areas that bordered the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean trade was the most successful creator of wealth. Mostly, the region's commerce followed long-established merchant routes that passed through small villages and, less frequently, urban centers formed by the meeting of several routes.

The patterns of this early history have been repeated in Islam's home-grown efforts to expand within its native area and in its more ambitious attempts to plant its law and beliefs in Europe and Asia — fast, well-armed attacks upon civilian populations and institutions followed by the rapid establishment of the all-encompassing Muslim law, Sharia. This does not mean that IS techniques are a direct copy of those of early Islam; it does mean that there are elements common to both that have survived fifteen hundred years of major economic, political, theological, military and social change.

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING

We have said this before, but its truth becomes ever more important in the technological age in which we live. Civilizations experience periods of greater or lesser technological progress in their transit of time. In our time over the past two centuries, we have undergone

A TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN ITS SCOPE AND PACE. IT HAS INCLUDED NEW SOURCES OF ENERGY, POWER GENERATION, WEAPONRY, FOOD, COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORTATION, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION, WHILE OUR GREATEST FAILURE HAS BEEN OUR INABILITY TO RECOGNIZE THAT OUR INDIVIDUAL ENJOYMENT OF THIS INGENUITY MASKS SOME SERIOUS NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR PLANET AND THE LIFE-SUPPORTING STRUCTURES WE HAVE PUT ON IT.

TECHNOLOGY'S ABILITY TO CHANGE OUR LIVES AND OUR PERCEPTIONS IS FELT AT EVERY LEVEL AND LOCATION OF OUR EXISTENCE AND BY EVERY SPECIES AND ELEMENT IN OUR ENVIRONMENT. IT PRESENTS ITSELF, OFTEN UNANNOUNCED AND WITHOUT PROOF OF IDENTITY, AS A NEW AND PERMANENT PRESENCE WITH WHICH WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE THAN TO LIVE. IT HAS THE POWER TO ALTER EDUCATION, WARFARE, COMMERCE, COMMUNICATION, RELIGION AND MANY OTHER LESSER ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES. OUR RECORD OF HOW OUR CIVILIZATION HAS MANAGED AND APPLIED THIS DRIVER OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS HAS BEEN MIXED, AT BEST. WE WILL TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT RELIGION, NOTABLY ISLAM, AS AN EXAMPLE.

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THIS YOUNGEST OF THE THREE DESERT RELIGIONS CHALLENGES OUR CONTEMPORARY WESTERN CIVILIZATION OF GREEK AND ROMAN ORIGINS IN SEVERAL WAYS. THE FIRST IS MILITARY; OTHERS WHOSE IMPACTS ARE MORE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL WILL BE COVERED LATER.

ACROSS THE SPAN OF ITS EXISTENCE ISLAM HAS FOLLOWED A PATTERN OF ATTEMPTED EXPANSION BEYOND THE REGION OF ITS BIRTH IN NORTH AFRICA AND ARABIA. ITS BREAK-OUTS TO THE EAST PROVED MORE SUCCESSFUL AND LASTING THAN ITS EFFORTS TO REPLACE CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE WHERE ITS NORTHERN PENETRATIONS WERE BEATEN BACK IN FRANCE, AUSTRIA AND RUSSIA.

THESE ATTACKS EMPLOYED THE TACTICS AND TECHNOLOGY OF THEIR TIME — PITCHED BATTLES, HORSES FOR TRANSPORTATION AND COMBAT, SIEGES/STORMING/DESTRUCTION OF DEFENSES AND FEW OR NO PRISONERS TAKEN IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH MUSLIM SCRIPTURE'S CALL FOR "DEATH TO INFIDELS", AND, MORE PRACTICALLY, BECAUSE PRISONERS HAD TO BE TRANSPORTED, FED AND LODGED.

WHAT EMERGED AS A REPEATED PATTERN FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURIES WAS INVASION, DEFEAT, CONSOLIDATION, RECOVERY, MOTIVATIONAL RENEWAL AND THEN ANOTHER CYCLE OF THE SAME. AS ISLAM'S HOME TERRITORY WAS MARKED BY LARGE AREAS OF UNPRODUCTIVE DESERT LAND, EXTENSIVE POVERTY AND PRIMITIVE COMMUNICATIONS, IT TOOK CONSIDERABLE TIME AND EFFORT TO REBUILD THE WILL AND MEANS NECESSARY TO LAUNCH ANOTHER CAMPAIGN,. BUT EVERY FEW HUNDRED YEARS CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE MUSLIM WORLD COULD ALIGN THEMSELVES IN A WAY THAT SEEMED TO FAVOR A NEW CAMPAIGN. CRITICAL TO THIS PROCESS, OF COURSE, WAS

THE AVAILABILITY OF A LEADER SO GIFTED WITH THE ABILITY TO INSPIRE AND LEAD THAT HE COULD RE-ENERGIZE THE MUSLIM SENSE OF MISSION BY MILITARY ACTION.

THIS PROCESS OF DEFEAT, RECOUP AND REPEAT WAS EFFECTIVELY TERMINATED BY THE DISCOVERY OF OIL AND ITS SUBSEQUENT TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD'S DISTRIBUTION OF ENERGY AND WEALTH. NO REGION EXEMPLIFIES THIS TOTAL ECONOMIC/SOCIAL MAKEOVER MORE THAN THE NE, AND THE PRESENT STATUS AND SEEMING SUCCESS OF IS IS A DIRECT RESULT OF IT. AT THE TURN OF THE LAST CENTURY IS WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE; TODAY IT IS A REALITY THAT TARGETS ALL ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF THE REGION.

IT EXISTS AND SUCCEEDS BECAUSE IT HAS AT ITS COMMAND ALL THE WEAPONS OF MODERN INTERNATIONAL WARFARE — MONEY, WEAPONS, OIL, COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY — AND AN IDEOLOGY SO VIOLENT THAT IT INSTILLS INSTANT FEAR.

THE NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER HAS ESTIMATED THAT 20,000 VOLUNTEERS FROM 90 COUNTRIES HAVE JOINED IS WITH 3,400 OF THEM COMING FROM WESTERN NATIONS; AND THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WHO HAVE EITHER JOINED OR TRIED TO JOIN IS IS NOW 150, UP FROM 50 A YEAR AGO¹. THESE FIGURES ARE SHOCKING IN SEVERAL WAYS — IN THEIR TOTAL NUMBERS, IN THE DEGREE TO WHICH THEY EXPRESS ACCEPTANCE OF IS BRUTALITY AND BY THEIR OVERSHADOWING OF VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN EARLIER JIHAD CAUSES IN AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, IRAQ AND ELSEWHERE².

IT IS MOST PROBABLY THE SECOND OF THE ABOVE THAT SHOCKS AND OFFENDS US MOST, AND IT IS DIRECTLY TRACEABLE TO THE POWER OF OUR MODERN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY. IS IS AS MUCH A PRODUCT OF TECHNOLOGY IN A BIZARRE WAY AS IT IS OF RELIGION. IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO PUT TO VERY SUCCESSFUL USE THE SOCIAL MEDIA OF OUR TIME TO MARKET ITS IDEOLOGY OF BLOODSHED, TORTURE AND DEATH; AND HAS DESENSITIZED AND RADICALIZED YOUNG MALES AND FEMALES FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS.

IT HAS BOUGHT SILENCE WHEN IT NEEDED TO AND HAS CREATED NOISE IN THE STREETS. IT HAS PURCHASED WEAPONS, SOLD OIL AND OBTAINED FUNDING JUST AS ANY LARGE COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE DOES. IT FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE IMPACT OF WHAT APPEARS ON THE SMALL SCREEN IN OUR LIVING ROOMS ON NETWORK EVENING NEWS, OR ALL DAY CABLE. IT LOATHES OUR DEMOCRACY AND USES OUR FREEDOMS TO ATTACK OUR YOUTH WITH SLICK PROPAGANDA NOT SEEN SINCE DR. GOEBBELS' CAMPAIGNS OF THE NAZI HEYDAY. PROPAGANDA IS PRIMARILY A CULTURAL MATTER WHICH WE WILL DISCUSS LATER, BUT IT ALSO HAS A POWERFUL MILITARY CONTEXT BY PROVIDING RECRUITS FOR THE IS BRAND OF JIHAD.

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THERE IS ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH IS THREATENS ITS NEIGHBORS AND IS ENABLED BY OUR 21ST CENTURY

COMMUNICATIONS. THE EARLIER WAVES OF EXPANSION INTO EUROPE AND ASIA OCCURRED AT TIMES MARKED BY LIMITED TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES. MEN AND ARMS MOVED SLOWLY AND HAD TO BE FED OVER THE COURSE OF DRAWN OUT CAMPAIGNS. AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, NEWS ONLY BECAME AVAILABLE LONG AFTER THE EVENTS IT REPORTED. THERE WAS NO CHANCE FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN ISLAM'S SPIRITUAL AND POPULATION CENTERS IN MECCA AND MEDINA AND ITS DISTANCE BATTLEFIELDS. MOREOVER, RELIGIOUS WARS LEAVE A DIFFERENT IMPRINT ON THE CIVIL LIFE OF THEIR CONQUERED POPULATIONS THAN THOSE WAGED BY PROFESSIONAL MILITARY FORCES FOR POLITICAL OR TERRITORIAL ADVANTAGE.

AN IS WEBSITE IS CERTAIN TO OFFER A SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT "TAKE" ON ITS ACTIVITIES FROM THOSE FOUND IN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MSM), BUT FOR IS ITS WEBSITE SERVES A MARKETING, NOT A REPORTING, FUNCTION WHICH HAS PROVED UNEXPECTEDLY SUCCESSFUL.

THE COMMUNICATIONS FACTOR IS POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT TO ISLAM, AND TO IS IN PARTICULAR IN ANOTHER ASPECT OF WARFARE — ITS FUTURE DIRECTION AND DEVELOPMENT. IS HAS ACCOMPLISHED SURPRISING RESULTS, BUT IT IS NOT ALONE. THERE ARE OTHER GROUPS (I.E., AL QAEDA, AL-SHABAAB, TALIBAN, BOKO HARAM ETC.) THAT SHARE IS' PURPOSE AND VIOLENT METHODS AND OPERATE IN OTHER AREAS ACROSS AFRICA AND SOUTHERN ASIA.

HERE, IT'S WORTH LOOKING AT A MAP. NORTHEASTERN NIGERIA IS HOME TO BOKO HARAM THAT EMBRACES MASS BRUTALITY WITH ENTHUSIASM EQUAL TO IS. IT HAS KIDNAPPED, MURDERED AND RAPED ITS WAY THROUGH ITS JUNGLE TERRITORY WITH SIDE EXCURSIONS INTO NEIGHBORING CHAD AND CAMEROON. WE SHOULD RECALL THAT WITHIN THE PAST TWO YEARS FRANCE SENT TROOPS TO CHAD TO FACE AND REMOVE THE EXTREMIST FORCES THERE. NORTH OF CHAD LIE THE THREE LARGE NATIONS THAT MAKE UP MOST OF THE SOUTHERN SHORE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN — ALGERIA, LIBYA AND EGYPT. WHILE ALGERIA HAS RECENTLY BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN A DELICATE BALANCE AND AVOID HOSTILITIES, EGYPT CONTINUES ITS DECADES OLD BATTLE WITH THE EXTREMIST MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD.

LIBYA IS A TALE OF FAILED POLICY ON THE PART OF THE COALITION FORMED TO REMOVE ITS LONG-TERM DICTATOR, MUHAMMAR GADHAFFI, AND TO BRING SELF-GOVERNMENT TO THE LIBYAN PEOPLE. HAVING ACCOMPLISHED THIS, OUR POLICY MAKERS DECIDED IT WAS OF PRIMARY POLITICAL IMPORTANCE FOR LIBYANS TO BRING ABOUT THEIR OWN RECONSTRUCTION AND REFORMATION WITHOUT OUR BEING INVOLVED. THIS HANDS-OFF POLICY RESULTED IN A VACUUM WHICH WAS IMMEDIATELY FILLED BY THE ANCIENT TRIBAL INTERESTS NEWLY FORMED INTO MILITIAS ARMED BY WEAPONS TAKEN FROM OUR OR GADHAFFI'S STORES.

POWER FOLLOWS GUNS AND IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR AL-QAEDA TO RECOGNIZE THE OPPORTUNITY AND ESTABLISH A PRESENCE. AND THAT'S WHERE THINGS STAND TODAY — NO FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND ONLY WHAT FLEETING STABILITY

CAN BE GAINED FROM COMPETING TRIBAL AND SECTARIAN INTERESTS. POLICY PURITY CAN BE A NOBLE GOAL, BUT RARELY SURVIVES ARMED POLITICS AT STREET LEVEL. IN LIBYA'S CASE IT NEVER HAD A CHANCE.

IN NORTH AFRICA AND BELOW TO THE EQUATOR, AFRICAN STATES AND POPULATIONS LIVE ONE STEP REMOVED FROM INSURGENCY WITH THE POSSIBILITY ALWAYS PRESENT THAT TODAY'S SEPARATE GROUPS WILL COMBINE AND IGNITE. THINK OF THE IMAGE OF A BURNING LOG WITH TWO TONGUES OF FLAMES SEPARATED BY A SPACE LICKING AT ITS SURFACE; AND THEN SUDDENLY, AS THE HEAT BUILDS, THEY JUMP THE SPACE AND BECOME ONE LARGER, HOTTER AND FASTER FLAME.

ISLAMIC EXTREMIST GROUPS ARE ACTIVE THROUGHOUT THE IMMENSE AREA COMPOSED OF NORTH AFRICA, THE NE AND SOUTHERN ASIA. THEIR LEADERS ARE OPPORTUNISTS AND RELIGIOUS ZEALOTS FUELED BY SCRIPTURE AND RESENTMENT, AND ALWAYS SEEKING A WAY TO THE NEXT LARGER, MORE POWERFUL, MORE IMPORTANT LEVEL. BOKO HARAM'S LEADER LAST MONTH PROFESSED LOYALTY AND COMMON CAUSE WITH AL-QAEDA, AND EVENTUALLY WE WILL LEARN WHETHER THIS TRANSLATES INTO THEIR MILITARY OPERATIONS.

COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER GROUPS CAN FAST-TRACK THE OPERATIONS OF ALL AND MOVE THEM CLOSER TO THEIR ULTIMATE GOAL OF CREATING A MUSLIM STATE UNDER SHARIA LAW WITH A CALIPH AS ITS LEADER. SUCH A FUTURE COULD OFFER LOCAL LEADERS MORE OPPORTUNITY TO SATISFY THEIR PERSONAL AMBITIONS, BUT THE BIG PRIZE WOULD BE GAINED BY THE BROAD INSURGENCY WHICH, BY THE FUSION OF ITS TERRITORIAL, LEGAL AND GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS, COULD ACHIEVE STATEHOOD.

SUCH A STATUS WOULD HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO ALTER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RELATIONS IN UNCOMFORTABLE WAYS WITH THE GREATEST BENEFITS BEING THOSE IN THE PUBLICITY AND PROPAGANDA ARENA. THERE, ANY PAN-ISLAMIC ENTITY WOULD SECURE PRIZES OF INESTIMABLE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE.

THE PROCESS OF CONSOLIDATION AMONG ELEMENTS OF EXTREME ISLAM POSES ONE MORE DANGER WHICH COULD APPEAR SUDDENLY AT ANY TIME OR PLACE — THE EMERGENCE OF A CHARISMATIC LEADER WHO COULD COMMAND THE BROAD RECOGNITION AND APPEAL THAT A UNIFIED MOVEMENT REQUIRES. SUCH A LEADER WOULD ALSO PROVIDE A FACE, AN IDENTITY AROUND WHICH GROUPS AND EMOTIONS CAN COALESCE.

OUR TIME EMPLOYS IMAGES IN WAYS UNKNOWN BEFORE. WE ARE ABLE TO CONVEY THEM INSTANTLY TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD — REPORTING NEWS, CHANGING ATTITUDES, PROMOTING POLICIES AND, WHETHER LEGITIMATELY OR NOT, ALWAYS INFLUENCING OPINION. IDENTITIES CAN BE MADE OR DESTROYED AND IDENTITY, ESPECIALLY IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS, IS A POWERFUL WEAPON. IT WOULD BE COMFORTING TO THINK THAT WE USE IT WELL AND WISELY, BUT WE DON'T.

ISLAM IS A RELIGION WITH CLOSE TO TWO BILLION MEMBERS IN MANY NATIONS. WHILE WE HEAR ITS MANY ACCENTS, WE EXPECT IT TO SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, AND ITS FAILURE TO DO

SO CONCERNING THE ACTIONS OF IS AND OTHERS HAS CONFUSED THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN THE NE. THERE, THE SUNNI/SHIA DIVISION IS WIDE AND DEEP, REFLECTING CENTURIES OLD DIFFERENCES.

OUR PRESENT MILITARY INVOLVEMENT DATES BACK ABOUT THIRTY YEARS TO OUR EFFORTS TO HELP THE AFGHANS END THEIR RUSSIAN OCCUPATION BY PROVIDING THEM WITH ARMS AND SPECIAL SERVICES FORCES. HAVING UPPED THE ANTE IN IRAQ WITH DISASTROUS RESULTS, WE HAVE BACKPEDALLED TO WHERE, EVEN WITH AIRSTRIKES, OUR POLICY IS ONE OF HALF-IN AND HALF-OUT. THE REAL PROBLEM POSED BY THIS STATUS IS THAT, EVEN IF WE WERE TO MILITARILY ELIMINATE THE IS COMMAND AND FORCES, IT WOULD BE HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT WE COULD SORT OUT THE AREA'S LONGSTANDING RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS.

TO EVEN BEGIN TO ESTABLISH A LIMITED SENSE OF HARMONY WOULD INVOLVE COOPERATION AND RECONCILIATION BY ISLAMIC LEADERS IN THE NE AND ELSEWHERE AND PERHAPS A BODY TO MONITOR DISPUTES, IMPLEMENT POLICY AND MEASURE/ANNOUNCE PROGRESS. THIS MAY BE THE POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS "PIPE DREAM" OF ALL TIME, BUT WORKING WITH OTHER NATIONS AND RELIGIONS MAY OFFER THE ONLY CHANCE TO HEAL ISLAM'S SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS. ITS DIVISIONS SEEM UNREACHABLY DEEP AND EVEN ITS MORE MODERATE MESSAGE APPEARS CRUSTED OVER WITH HEREDITARY ENMITY. MOREOVER, INTERNAL CHANGE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A MOTIVATING FACTOR OF ISLAMIC LIFE.

TIME WILL ALWAYS HAVE THE LAST WORD. FOR NOW, IT SEEMS THAT THE NE'S ECHOES OF THE PAST WILL CONTINUE TO FRUSTRATE OUR HUMANITARIAN AND MILITARY POLICIES OF THE MOMENT. THE LATTER ARE BY NO MEANS CLEAR, AS THE PRESIDENT HAS AVOIDED ANY COMMENT THAT MIGHT BE PERCEIVED AS CRITICAL OF ISLAM AND HAS BEEN INDECISIVE OR CONTRADICTIONARY IN HIS RESPONSES TO KEY EVENTS.

FOREIGN RELATIONS INEVITABLY HAVE DOMESTIC POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS, BUT THESE ARE NOT MATTERS FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE POLITICAL POLLSTER. AND IN THE NE, GIVEN THE MIXTURE OF MONEY, RELIGION, TRIBES AND OTHER INTERESTS THAT IS ALWAYS AT WORK, NO OPINION POLLING PROCESS COULD BE HELPFUL OR TIMELY. WE ARE IN A BAD SITUATION PRIMARILY OF OUR OWN MAKING. THERE ARE NO EASY SOLUTIONS, NOR COMFORT SPOTS WHERE WE CAN STOP AND REST. WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE OUR BEST EFFORT RELYING ON OUR CONSTITUTION, LAWS, VALUES AND COMMITMENTS TO OTHERS. FIRMNESS AND PATIENCE ARE NECESSARY, OFTEN AT THE SAME TIME, AND WHETHER THEY WILL SUCCEED MAY WELL BE BEYOND OUR POWER TO DETERMINE.

WE MUST BE OPEN IN OUR DISCUSSION OF ISLAM'S VERSION OF THE ROLE IT CONTEMPLATES FOR ITS SPIRITUAL AND SECULAR POWER IN THE NE AND BEYOND, AND WE MUST NOT MAKE THE MISTAKE OF CONSIDERING IT "OUR NEW BEST FRIEND". WE COULD "DECLARE PEACE AND LEAVE", BUT WE'VE DONE THAT AND IT DIDN'T WORK; WE ARE IN TOO DEEP. WE HAVE MADE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE, BOTH FRIENDS AND ENEMIES AND

SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT WE MAY BE INVOLVED MILITARILY IN THE NE FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD. A DECADE? A GENERATION? OR MORE? TAKE YOUR PICK. IT IS A SITUATION NOT ENTIRELY UNDER OUR CONTROL.

THE HUMANITARIAN DIMENSION

A STATE OF WAR REQUIRES MORE THAN ONE PARTY — THOSE WHO ATTACK AND THOSE WHO ARE ATTACKED. HISTORY ASSURES US THAT THESE ROLES, AND THEIR JUSTIFICATION, ARE INTERCHANGEABLE. FOR INSTANCE, IN WWII WE WERE ATTACKED BY THE JAPANESE AT THE INSISTENCE OF A "WAR PARTY" WITHIN ITS GOVERNMENT THAT CLAIMED WE WERE THREATENING ITS SECURITY BY CUTTING OFF ITS OIL SUPPLY. APPROXIMATELY SEVENTY YEARS LATER WE INVADED IRAQ BASED ON THE ARGUMENT PUT FORTH BY A HIGHLY PLACED GROUP IN OUR STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENTS THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WAS A THREAT TO OUR SECURITY BECAUSE HE POSSESSED WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (WMD).

THE LENSES, THROUGH WHICH JAPAN'S "WAR PARTY" AND OUR NEOCONS PERCEIVED NATIONAL THREATS THAT REQUIRED ATTACKING ANOTHER NATION, WERE PROBABLY SIMILAR, AS WERE THE PERCEPTIONS THAT RESULTED. BOTH WERE TINTED BY ECONOMICS — FOR JAPAN, AN ISLAND NATION WHOSE ECONOMY WAS BASED ALMOST COMPLETELY ON IMPORTS, THERE WAS THE LURE OF RICH RESOURCES OF TIN, RUBBER, OIL, TIMBER AND MORE IN THE MOSTLY DUTCH AND BRITISH COLONIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE AMERICAN PHILIPPINES; AND FOR US, IRAQ'S EXTENSIVE OIL RESERVES.

LIKE MOST WARS, THEY WERE SETTLED BY MILITARY METHODS AND CONCLUDED BY POLITICAL LEADERS. PEACE BRINGS SOME CHANGES AND LIFE ADJUSTS ITSELF ACCORDINGLY UNTIL NEW TENSIONS APPEAR (OR THE OLD ONES REAPPEAR) AND THE PROCESS IS REPEATED. THIS HAS BEEN THE HISTORY OF WAR AND PEACE AMONG THE MANY NATIONS AND PEOPLES OF THE WORLD FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

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PRES. OBAMA'S JUDGMENT THAT "WE ARE NOT AT WAR WITH ISLAM" STEMS FROM HIS LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT THE CURRENT WAR WITH IS MAY BRING. HE AVOIDS EVEN THE SUGGESTION THAT OUR MILITARY ENGAGEMENT WITH IS CONSTITUTES A RELIGIOUS WAR. BUT IF WE DISCARD THE CUSTOMARY CAUSES OF WAR (I.E., FOOD, WATER, LAND, MINERALS, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OR SUCCESSION, COMMERCIAL OR NAVIGATIONAL ACCESS, SECURITY) WE ARE LEFT WITH RELIGION WHICH, IN ITS MANY FORMS OVER THE COURSE OF OUR PLANET'S CIVILIZATION, HAS BEEN A PERSISTENT PROVIDER OF THE EMOTIONS AND BELIEFS THAT LEAD TO WAR.

THROUGHOUT OUR TIME ON EARTH THE MOST OBVIOUS AND PUBLICIZED RESULTS OF WAR HAVE BEEN THOSE THAT ARE FORCEFULLY IMPOSED ON THE LIVING OF OUR DAILY LIVES. THESE

INCLUDE PROPERTY DESTRUCTION/CONFISCATION, POLITICAL CHANGE OR REPRESSION, ECONOMIC DISLOCATION, LOSS OF FREEDOMS AND INSTITUTIONAL PROTECTION, GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE, CURRENCY REFORM, MEDIA CONTROL AND OTHERS THAT, SINGLY OR IN COMBINATION, DETERMINE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE.

THERE ARE OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF WAR WHICH WE EXPERIENCE DIFFERENTLY FROM THOSE ABOVE. THERE ARE CULTURAL ONES, WHICH WE WILL EXPLORE LATER, AND THERE ARE OTHERS WHICH, BECAUSE OF THEIR NATURE AND EXTENT, WE REFER TO AS “HUMANITARIAN”. MANY OF THESE ARE SILENT, INVISIBLE AND/OR IMPOSSIBLE TO DETECT OR REPAIR.

IS’ PROFESSED PURPOSE IS TO ESTABLISH AN ISLAMIC CALIPHATE IN THE NE UNDER THE SHARIA LAW LAID OUT IN THE QURAN. THEN, HAVING ACHIEVED THE REGIONAL TERRITORY, POPULATION AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE MUSLIM LEADERSHIP AND STATEHOOD, IT WOULD WIDEN ITS GOAL TO THE GLOBAL EXPANSION OF ISLAMIC FAITH. THIS IS A MISSION, PERCEIVED AS HOLY BY MANY MUSLIMS, WHICH HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED BEFORE IN CIRCUMSTANCES LESS FAVORABLE AND HAS FAILED. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT; WHETHER THE PRESIDENT ADMITS IT OR NOT; WE ARE EMBROILED IN A WAR WITH A RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED PART OF ISLAM WHOSE TRUE SIZE AND REACH HAVE NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED.

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WAR AND ITS INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES ATTACH THEMSELVES TO OUR LIVES, AND TO THOSE THAT FOLLOW US, IN MANY WAYS BEYOND MILITARY CONFLICT. THE LATTER HAS ALWAYS REQUIRED THE REBUILDING OF RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN ORDER TO REESTABLISH FUNCTIONAL COMMUNITIES. THIS IS AN UNDERTAKING WHICH, BECAUSE ITS PROGRESS IS VISIBLE TO ALL ON A DAILY BASIS, ENABLES POPULATIONS TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF REPLACING THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR WITH THAT OF PEACE.

ONE ASPECT OF LIFE THAT HAS BEEN ASSIGNED AN INCREASING BURDEN IN RECOVERING FROM OUR RECENT WARS AND THEIR LETHAL WEAPONS IS WHAT WE REFER TO AS “HUMANITARIAN”. BROADER THAN THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS WHICH WE WILL ALSO EXPLORE IN A SUBSEQUENT CHAPTER, IT INCLUDES A RANGE OF WAYS BY WHICH OUR HUMAN PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES MAY BE ALTERED WITHOUT OUR INTENTION, OR EVEN KNOWLEDGE.

HOLY WARS HAVE A WAY OF BRINGING OUT OUR MOST VIOLENT NATURES AND ACTIONS, AND IS HAS BROUGHT TO NE WARFARE A CLEARLY ARTICULATED AND PUBLICIZED POLICY OF BRUTALITY AGAINST MILITANTS AND CIVILIANS — THE KIDNAPPING AND EXECUTION OF PRISONERS, CIVILIANS AND JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN, AND THE RAPE AND SALE OF FEMALES REGARDLESS OF AGE.

RELIGIOUS WARS AND THEIR COLLATERAL VIOLENCE ARE NOT NEW TO HUMAN HISTORY, BUT FOR THE WEST, AT LEAST, THEY PEAKED IN THEIR INTENSITY AND CRUELTY IN THE

PRE-ENLIGHTENMENT EARLY YEARS OF EUROPE’S PROTESTANT REFORMATION. BUT THAT WAS THEN. AS VICIOUS AND LACKING IN CIVIL JUSTICE AS THOSE TIMES WERE, POPULATIONS, EXCEPT IN THE LARGEST CITIES, WERE SPARSE AND REMOTE. NEWS, WHEN IT TRAVELLED, SPREAD SLOWLY AND MOSTLY BY WORD OF MOUTH. THE TIME FRAME FOR LEARNING OF EVENTS WAS NOT CURRENT, BUT WELL AFTER THE FACT WHICH TENDS TO DILUTE BOTH THEIR IMPACT AND THE IDENTITY THAT TRIBES, SPECIES, RACES, RELIGIONS AND OTHER DISTINCTIVE GROUPS MUST FORGE AS THEY GROW IN THE NUMBERS, KNOWLEDGE, WEALTH AND STRENGTH REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THEIR JOURNEY FROM DISTANT AND CLOUDED ORIGINS TO THEIR UNKNOWN DESTINY.

“IT IS A VOLATILE ELEMENT RENDERED MORE DANGEROUS BY OUR UNSURE HANDS.”

IDENTITY IS THE UNSUNG HERO OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. MORE OFTEN SOUGHT THAN ACHIEVED, IT HAS BEEN A LESS THAN CLEARLY RECOGNIZED DRIVER OF WARS AND PROGRESS WITH THE DIFFERENCE LYING IN THE WAY WE CHOOSE TO EXPRESS IT. IT IS A VOLATILE ELEMENT RENDERED MORE DANGEROUS BY OUR UNSURE HANDS.

IN THOSE PAST RELIGIOUS WARS, AND THEIR ATROCITIES COMMITTED IN GOD’S NAME, NEWS OF THEM WAS SPREAD GUARDEDLY FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER. THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS A MASS AUDIENCE AND THE NUMBER OF EYE-WITNESS REPORTERS OF EXECUTIONS WAS NO LARGER THAN THE GROUPS THAT GATHERED OUTSIDE PRISONS TO WITNESS JUSTICE BEING SERVED.

TODAY, IS’ BRUTALITY INCLUDES SOME OF THE SAME TECHNIQUES USED THEN (BEHEADINGS, TORTURE, BURNING, KIDNAPPING, ETC.) BUT WITH ONE EXTRAORDINARY DIFFERENCE — THE INTERVENTION OF TIME AND TECHNOLOGY. NOW THE MULTIPLE HORRORS OF IS’ RELIGIOUS WAR ARE SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD IN A MATTER OF MINUTES. THEY DO NOT REQUIRE US TO SEEK THEM OUT; THEY APPEAR WITHOUT NOTICE OR INVITATION ON COMPUTER AND TV SCREENS IN OUR OFFICES, HOMES, SCHOOLS, WAITING ROOMS, TRAVEL TERMINALS, GYMS, RESTAURANTS, ETC.

FOR US, THESE INHUMAN IMAGES POSE A PROBLEM. WHILE WE FIND THEM AND THE BEHAVIOR THEY PUBLICIZE OFFENSIVE, THEIR ABILITY TO SHOCK US AND TO SHAKE OUR BELIEF IN THE CHANGED NATURE OF OUR RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS BESTOWS ON THEM THE STATUS OF INSTANT AND IMPORTANT NEWS ITEMS. AS SUCH, THEY ARE QUICKLY GATHERED, REPORTED, MARKETED AND DISPLAYED BY OUR MSM. THAT IS OUR MEDIA’S FUNCTION AND, UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION’S FIRST AMENDMENT, IT IS SUBJECT TO VERY FEW RESTRICTIONS.

TECHNOLOGY AND YOUTH

LET’S RETURN TO THE CROWD ASSEMBLED OUTSIDE A 17TH CENTURY ENGLISH PRISON TO OBSERVE AN EXECUTION

FOR WHICH THERE WAS NO RECORD EXCEPT ARTISTS' DRAWINGS OR PAINTINGS WHICH COULD ONLY BE AFFORDED BY THE UPPER CLASSES. VIOLENT EVENTS OCCURRED; WERE COMMENTED ON, OR NOT, DEPENDING UPON WHETHER THEIR SUBJECT MIGHT ANTAGONIZE CIVIL OR RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES; AND THEN WERE REPLACED IN THE SLOW MOVING NEWS CYCLE OF THE TIME BY OTHER EVENTS.

EXCEPT FOR ITS VELOCITY AND NUMBERS THIS CYCLE PLAYED OUT IN WAYS SIMILAR TO OUR PRESENT MODEL. OTHER THAN THESE ADVANTAGES OF SPEED AND SIZE, HOWEVER, THERE ARE TWO MORE DEMOGRAPHIC BENEFITS OFFERED BY OUR 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY — THE EFFICIENCY OF ITS DELIVERY AND TARGET MECHANISMS.

DELIVERING NEWS HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY TECHNOLOGY AS MUCH AS ANY OTHER ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. FROM COACH TO CANAL, PONY EXPRESS, SHIP, RAIL, RADIO AND NOW ELECTRONICALLY BY TV/COMPUTER IT PROVIDES SOUNDS, PICTURE AND TEXT FOR READY VIEWING WITHIN INCHES OF OUR EYES AND EARS. WITH INSTANT, TARGETED DELIVERY AVAILABLE, HOW DO WE SHAPE OUR TARGETS? NOT ALL MARKETS (I.E. TARGETS) ARE EQUALLY EASY TO DEFINE, BUT IN THE CASE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY WE KNOW THAT IT IS CLOSE TO UNIVERSALLY USED BY THE UNDER 25 YOUTH MARKET, AND EVEN WIDELY FAVORED BY OLDER GROUPS WHO, HAVING COME TO IT LATER IN LIFE, MAY LACK THE SKILLS OF YOUNGER USERS, BUT STILL COMMIT TO IT AS A FAVORED, IF NOT ESSENTIAL, MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

THE END RESULT IS THAT ANYONE USING CYBER TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER A MESSAGE CAN BE ASSURED OF REACHING YOUTHFUL USERS. FOR IS, THIS IS A "MUST". IT CANNOT HOPE TO FILL ITS RECRUITMENT GOALS FROM OLDER, CAREER ORIENTED TYPES WITH FAMILY STRUCTURES AND THEIR OBLIGATIONS IN PLACE, BUT RATHER MUST AIM TO REACH YOUNGER, MORE INNOCENT PEOPLE WITH MINDS AND VALUES NOT FULLY FORMED THAT CAN BE SWAYED BY THE PERSUASION, IDEALIZATION AND RADICALIZATION THAT JIHADIST GROUPS EMPLOY TO GAIN NEW MEMBERS.

IS HAS BEEN SKILLFUL IN ITS USE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA WIDELY PREFERRED FOR STUDENT COMMUNICATION FROM THE EARLY GRADES THROUGH COLLEGE. THE FINAL STEP IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS, RADICALIZATION, IS ONE THAT REQUIRES THE RECRUIT TO SEVER ALL PERSONAL TIES TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, SCHOOLS, CHURCH, COMMUNITY, PETS AND TRADITION — A DAUNTING STEP TO TAKE, AND YET ONE CHOSEN BY THOUSANDS OF YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FROM THE UK, USA, FRANCE, CANADA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN EUROPE, AFRICA AND ASIA.

THE DECEPTION INVOLVED IN RADICALIZATION, WHICH APPEARS OBVIOUS TO ADULTS, SETS A DANGEROUS TRAP FOR YOUNGER AND LESS MATURE TARGETS. WHAT WILL THE IMPACT BE ON THE NEW JIHADIST? WHO ARE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO, KNOWINGLY OR NOT, TAKE THIS POISONED BAIT? AT WHAT POINT IN THE RADICALIZATION PROCESS AND AT WHAT PLACE IN THE RECRUIT'S BEING DOES HE/SHE OBSERVE RANDOM KILLING

OF FELLOW HUMANS FROM INFANTS TO THE INFIRM WITHOUT RECOILING IN HORROR OR EVEN REGISTERING DISAPPROVAL?

“... A POWERFUL, ONE-WORD MEASURE OF MORE HUMAN MISERY THAN WE LIKE TO ADMIT IN OUR SOCIETY.”

THE SOURCES OF THIS FAILURE OF HUMANITY THAT ARE MOST OFTEN MENTIONED ARE THE SAME ONES THAT ARE CITED AS CAUSAL ELEMENTS IN OTHER SOCIAL PROBLEMS — POVERTY, LACK OF EDUCATION, BROKEN HOMES, PARENTAL ABUSE, EMOTIONAL ISOLATION, LACK OF FRIENDS AND/OR SELF-CONFIDENCE, SOLITARY PERSONALITY, FEELING PHYSICALLY UNATTRACTIVE OR SOCIALLY AWKWARD, SEEMINGLY ENDLESS PLAYING OF VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES, LACK OF IDENTITY AND OTHERS. THESE ARE OFTEN PARTIALLY OR WHOLLY COMBINED INTO THE MUCH SHORTER LABEL, “DISAFFECTED” — A POWERFUL, ONE-WORD MEASURE OF MORE HUMAN MISERY THAN WE LIKE TO ADMIT IN OUR SOCIETY.

WHAT TURNS ONE OR MORE OF THESE EXPERIENCES INTO IRREVERSIBLE, ANTAGONISTIC, LIFE-CHANGING DIRECTIONS THAT UNDO THE TIES OF EARLIER VALUES, GOALS AND HISTORY? ADVERSITY? FAILURE? ABUSE? REJECTION? THE ALIENATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY LONG CHILDHOOD HOURS SPENT PLAYING VIOLENT COMPUTER GAMES WHICH PLACE THE ABILITY TO DESTROY LIFE AND PROPERTY WITHOUT CONSEQUENCES IN YOUNG HANDS?

AND AT WHAT POINT IS SUCH A COMPUTER GAME PLAYER, WHO LATER BECOMES A COMPUTER SCIENCE GRADUATE OF A LONDON COLLEGE, TURNED INTO “JIHADI JOHN”, THE IS EXECUTIONER OF JOURNALISTS, WAR PRISONERS AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF WORKERS? “DISAFFECTED” DESCRIBES WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW, AS MUCH AS WHAT WE DO.

IN ADDITION TO SERVING RADICAL ISLAM'S MARKETING AMBITIONS OUR NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGY OFFERED ANOTHER ENORMOUS ADVANTAGE. BY SHOWING IN GREAT DETAIL THE WEALTH AND PROGRESS OF THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IT STIRRED UP FEELING'S OF RESENTMENT IN THE MOSTLY POVERTY STRICKEN LAND OF ISLAM. THIS INSTANT, VISUAL ACCESS TO THE LIFE OF THE PRIVILEGED WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR ADVANCED COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES OF THE PAST HALF CENTURY.

“THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD. IN FACT, IT ISN'T EVEN PAST”³

BETWEEN THE 8TH AND 12TH CENTURIES ISLAMIC TERRITORY AND CIVILIZATION SPREAD THROUGHOUT PARTS OF AFRICA, EUROPE, ASIA AND THE NE, ENGAGING IN WARS WITH MONGOLS AND TURKS AND OTHERS. WITH THEIR OPPONENTS' COLLAPSE, ISLAM AND ITS DOMINANT RELIGION BROUGHT ABOUT AN AGE OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND REMARKABLE ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT. THIS HISTORY OF ISLAM'S “GOLDEN AGE” IS A KEY ELEMENT FOR MOST MUSLIMS IN THEIR CONCEPT OF ISLAM'S IDENTITY.

AND THERE'S THAT WORD, “IDENTITY” AGAIN; WE CAN

“FOR A CALIPHATE OPPORTUNITY IN TODAY’S
WORLD IT HAS GREAT PROMISE.”

NO MORE ESCAPE IT THAN WE CAN FAULKNER’S LIVING “PAST”. BY CONJURING A VISION OF PRIOR GLORY IN WAR AND PEACE, IT HAS PLAYED A LARGE PART IN ISLAM’S WAVES OF EXPANSION. WHY SHOULD WE EXPECT ANYTHING DIFFERENT TODAY? AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE KEY MOTIVATION OF IS LEADER ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI IS ONE OF IDENTIFICATION THAT IS REVEALED IN HIS STATED AIM OF REESTABLISHING AN ISLAMIC CALIPHATE.

A CALIPHATE IS MORE THAN A GROUP OF MARAUDING MILITANTS. IT LAYS CLAIM TO CONTROL TERRITORY, HAS A SINGLE LEADER, THE CALIPH, WITH BOTH RELIGIOUS AND TEMPORAL POWER TO EXERCISE BROAD AUTHORITY; AND BY DEVELOPING THE NECESSARY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES AND AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT IT ACQUIRES STATEHOOD. WITH STATEHOOD, A MOVEMENT BECOMES A POLITICAL ENTITY WITH THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT FOREIGN RELATIONS WITH OTHER NATIONS, OR GROUPS OF NATIONS, AND TO HOPE TO BE VIEWED BY THEM AS A NEWLY ADDED MEMBER OF THE “FAMILY OF NATIONS”. STATEHOOD, EVEN FOR ROGUE REGIMES, CONFERS SOME POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS, BUT FOR IS ITS MOST IMPORTANT PRIZE IS THAT OF IDENTITY.

WITH IDENTITY AND STATEHOOD POLITICAL POWER BECOMES EASIER TO ATTAIN AND TO USE. WE HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF AL-BAGHDADI’S FUTURE PLANS OTHER THAN TO EXPAND ISLAM GLOBALLY, BUT LOOKING AT A MAP CAN SUGGEST SOME CLEAR POSSIBILITIES. A CALIPHATE COMPRISING THE AREAS WHERE IS BEGAN ITS MILITARY AND TERRITORIAL OPERATIONS, SYRIA AND IRAQ, WOULD HAVE A CENTRAL AND IMPORTANT POSITION IN THE NE, ABUTTING ALL OF TURKEY’S SOUTHERN BORDER AND ENJOYING SYRIA’S ACCESS TO THE MEDITERRANEAN.

LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF THE NE AND SURROUNDED BY MUSLIM COUNTRIES, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE ITS MARK GEOPOLITICALLY. IT COULD EXTEND ITS INFLUENCE NORTH THROUGH TURKEY AND SOUTH TO EGYPT BOTH OF WHICH HAVE EXPERIENCED RISING LEVELS OF SECTARIAN CONFLICT. BUT THESE TWO COUNTRIES’ MOST IMPORTANT COMMON DENOMINATOR IS THEIR CONTROL OF TWO OF THE WORLD’S MOST IMPORTANT WATERWAYS — THE BOSPORUS/SEA OF MARMARA/DARDANELLES COMPLEX THAT JOINS THE BLACK AND MEDITERRANEAN SEAS AND THE SUEZ CANAL THAT ALLOWS PASSAGE FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN TO THE RED SEA AND THEN TO THE INDIAN OCEAN.

GIVEN THE INCREASE IN THE SIZE AND NUMBER OF TODAY’S MERCHANT SHIPS AND THE READY AVAILABILITY OF ANY AND ALL KINDS OF ARMS TO TERRORISTS, THESE NARROW, CROWDED PASSAGES INVITE ATTACK. A CANAL WITH MULTIPLE LARGE SHIPS IN TRANSIT COULD FIND TRAFFIC HALTED OR SIGNIFICANTLY DELAYED FOR A LONG PERIOD. AND AN EXPLOSIVE ATTACK DISABLING SHIPS AT BOTH ENDS WOULD REQUIRE THE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS OF OWNERS, GOVERNMENTS, BANKERS, UNIONS, INSURANCE COMPANIES, MARITIME AGENCIES, CUSTOMS BUREAUS, SHIP BROKERS AND SURFACE TRANSPORT COMPANIES TO EVEN BEGIN TO SORT OUT THE MESS.

IN THE LANDS THAT LIE BETWEEN THESE TWO CRITICAL BODIES OF WATER THERE ARE LARGE OIL DEPOSITS, VAST DESERT SPACES, CENTURIES OF TRIBAL/SECTARIAN CONFLICT, THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE THREE DESERT RELIGIONS, CONCENTRATIONS OF WEALTH IN FEW HANDS, DEEP POVERTY AND FEW OUTPOSTS OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL THOUGHT OR PRACTICE. FOR A CALIPHATE OPPORTUNITY IN TODAY’S WORLD IT HAS GREAT PROMISE.

A CIVILIZATIONAL CONCERN ?

WE HAVE REFERRED TO IS BEING A POTENTIAL PRECURSOR TO A WIDER ISLAMIC CONFLICT WHICH COULD EXPAND ITS IMPACT BEYOND RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL MATTERS TO A SCALE THAT WOULD AFFECT ALL HUMAN SOCIETY ON OUR PLANET. THERE IS NO PROOF OF THIS. THERE IS ONLY HISTORY, RELIGIOUS FERVOR AND STATEMENTS OR WRITINGS, NOW AND IN THE PAST, TO WHICH WE CAN ASSIGN CREDIBILITY OR NOT.

THE FIRST FACTOR THAT SUGGESTS A CIVILIZATIONAL THREAT FROM ISLAM IS THAT THE MUSLIM FAITH IS BASED ON THE BELIEFS AND COMMANDS EXPRESSED IN THE QURAN. UNLIKE THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION WHICH SEEKS TO ESTABLISH ITS SPIRITUAL BELIEFS ON EARTH, ISLAM’S HOLY TEXT, WHICH CLAIMS TO BE GOD’S WORDS AND WILL REVEALED TO MUHAMMAD, CALLS FOR MUSLIMS TO CONVERT THOSE OF ALL OTHER FAITHS TO ISLAM, BY USE OF FORCE IF NECESSARY, AND TO INSTALL MUSLIM SHARIA LAW THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

SHARIA IS NOT LIKE THE CIVIL LAW THAT THE WEST HAS DEVELOPED TO GOVERN PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS, BUT RATHER A CODE BASED ON ONE MAN’S REPORT OF DIVINE CONTACT, INTENDED TO PROVIDE GOVERNMENT OF ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES — RELIGIOUS, CIVIL, COMMERCIAL, JUDICIAL, CRIMINAL, ETC. ITS AUTHORITY CAN BE INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY BY THE CLERICS WHO ADMINISTER IT, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS STRUCTURE AND ORIGIN “JUSTICE” TENDS TO BE SWIFT, AND PENALTIES CAN INCLUDE DEATH AND VARIOUS FORMS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE SUCH AS FLOGGING, AMPUTATION, STONING, ETC.

THE DIFFERENCES IN TONE AND PRACTICE BETWEEN SHARIA AND OTHER HISTORIC RELIGIONS IN EAST AND WEST ARE WIDE AND MANY, BUT NONE IS MORE OMINOUS FROM A CIVILIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE THAN THE IMPOSITION OF THE GLOBAL LAW AND RELIGION OF ONE FAITH. ONE RECENT EXAMPLE SERVES THIS POINT. IN THE WEST, OVER PAST CENTURIES RESPECT FOR ANTIQUITIES OF ALL CULTURES HAS GROWN. TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT FROM PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SOURCES HAVE ALL BEEN GENEROUSLY ALLOCATED TO THEIR STUDY AND PRESERVATION, WHEREAS IS IN ITS SYRIAN/IRAQI HOMELAND DESTROYS PRICELESS, ANCIENT ARTWORKS BECAUSE THEIR IMAGES MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPED IN THE PAST. EVEN THE

EXISTENCE OF THESE ANTIQUITIES IS SEEN AS BLASPHEMOUS BY THE IS, AS THEY WERE A DECADE OR SO AGO WHEN THE TALIBAN ALSO DESTROYED AFGHANISTAN'S ANCIENT MONUMENTS.

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THERE IS AN IMPORTANT AND LARGELY UNKNOWN FACET WHICH HAS NO COUNTERPART IN OUR SOCIETY AND THE EFFECT OF WHICH WE CANNOT PREDICT IN OUR RELATIONS WITH ISLAM. IT IS THAT THE QURAN IS THE BASIS FOR THE EDUCATION OF ALL ISLAMIC YOUTH. IN LATER YEARS STUDENTS MAY BRANCH OUT INTO ENGINEERING OR SCIENCE COURSES, BUT THE QURAN IS THE BEGINNING AND CONTINUING PRESENCE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND PROVIDES A DEEP BOND BETWEEN MUSLIMS FROM DIFFERENT AGES AND LOCALITIES. THIS IS AN ELEMENT BEYOND OUR REACH; PART OF AN ARGUMENT IN WHICH WE HAVE NO VOICE. DOES IT INSTILL THE KIND OF COHESION IMPERVIOUS TO THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS? WE CANNOT BE SURE; WE ONLY KNOW THAT IT IS A MAJOR FORCE WITH WHICH OPPONENTS OF ISLAM MAY HAVE TO CONTEND.

SOMEWHAT SIMILAR IS THE DETERMINATION BY "MODERATE" MUSLIMS TO WHAT DEGREE THEY WILL SUPPORT, OPPOSE OR KEEP SILENT REGARDING IS' CONTINUING WAR OF EXPANSION. AS WITH QURANIC EDUCATION, THIS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER JOINED WITH AND TIED TO MANY THREADS OF ISLAMIC LIFE.

GIVEN IS' EXTREME AND SHOCKING METHODS, "MODERATE" MUSLIMS MAY FEEL THAT IT IS LIKELY TO BURN ITSELF OUT AND LEAVE MAINSTREAM ISLAM FREE TO PURSUE ITS OWN PRESENT, LESS CONTROVERSIAL COURSE. THERE'S THE COMFORT OF AVOIDING INFLAMMATORY ACTION IN SUCH A STANCE, AND ALSO THE REFUGE THAT IS IS ONLY DOING WHAT IS COMMANDED BY THE QURAN OF ALL MUSLIMS — TO CONQUER THE INFIDELS, TO SPREAD ISLAMIC FAITH AND LAW THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

"MODERATE" ISLAM HAS BEEN SLOW TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST ITS FELLOW MUSLIMS IN IS. THIS COULD RESULT FROM JUST WANTING TO AVOID THE BITTERNESS OF A SCHISM WITHIN ISLAM OR FROM FEAR FOR THEIR OWN LIVES IF THEY OPPOSE IS. BOTH ARE REAL POSSIBILITIES SUPPORTED BY ISLAM'S RECORD OF DEALING WITH DISSENT IN THE PAST.

AGAIN, WE DO NOT HAVE ANY VAGUELY RELIABLE MEANS OF ESTIMATING THE TRUE NUMBERS OF "MODERATE" MUSLIMS, HOW THEY WOULD DIVIDE OVER ALIGNING WITH OR AGAINST IS OR, EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, PERHAPS, UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH A REALIGNMENT MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO OCCUR.

OUR RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC STATES OF THE NE CARRY HEAVY BAGGAGE FROM THE PAST CONCERNING LONG-RUNNING ANTAGONISMS OVER OIL, MONEY, RELIGION, ISRAEL AND MORE. THESE DO NOT DISAPPEAR EASILY; BUT RATHER OVER TIME HAVE SOLIDIFIED AND ENDURED WITHIN ISLAM'S BELIEF AND EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS. THE KIND OF JOINT POLICY ADJUSTMENT

NECESSARY TO REMOVE THIS OVERHANG OF ILL WILL DOES NOT NOW SEEM POLITICALLY POSSIBLE.

THIS HISTORY OF UNRESOLVED DIFFERENCES INCLUDES SOME OF THE MOST THORNY AREAS OF HUMAN INTERACTION — EMOTION, RELIGION, POLITICS AND IDENTITY JUST FOR STARTERS — WHICH ARE LEAST LIKELY TO PRODUCE BREAKTHROUGHS IN NEGOTIATIONS. ON THE BATTLEGROUND LEVEL THEY UNDERLIE THE PERCEPTION AMONG MANY MUSLIMS THAT THEIR ACTIVE MILITARY PARTICIPATION WITH THE US AGAINST IS IS A ROLE THEY SHOULD SHUN.

IN OUR POSTWAR SUPERPOWER PERSONA WE HAVE COME TO EXPECT THAT WE WILL BE GREETED AND TREATED WITH DEFERENCE AND AUTHORITY, IF NOT AS LIBERATING SAVIORS, WHEREVER WE CHOOSE TO INTERVENE⁴. THIS IS AN UNWARRANTED READING OF BOTH HISTORY AND OUR PRESS CLIPPINGS, BUT IT HAS FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES.

THE GREAT, OVERARCHING DIFFICULTY IN ATTEMPTING TO CREATE ORDER OF ANY SORT IN THE NE IS THE ASYMMETRIC WEB OF LINES OF DIVISION THAT MARK IT AND THE LIVES OF ITS OCCUPANTS. THESE EXIST TO DEFINE OR DIVIDE RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, ETHNIC, TRIBAL, GEOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ENTITIES. THEY EXIST SEPARATELY AND IN COMBINATION, AND HAVE TESTED THE EFFORTS OF PAST GENERATIONS TO OVERCOME THEM, AS THEY NOW DO OURS.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE IS AND ITS EXCEPTIONALLY BRUTAL METHODS MAY WELL DRAW ANOTHER LINE. IS, OF COURSE, HOPES THAT IT CAN BY FORCE IGNITE AND COMBINE MULTIPLE PARTS OF ISLAM IN A MOVEMENT THAT, LIKE PREVIOUS ONES, WILL ACHIEVE QUICK SUCCESS BY CONQUEST AND CONVERSION. IT RELIES ON THE BELIEF THAT VIOLENT JIHAD CAN BRING NORTHERN AFRICA AND SOUTHERN EUROPE/ASIA TOGETHER UNDER ISLAMIC CONTROL, AND THAT FROM THIS MASSIVE BASE A FURTHER GLOBAL EXPANSION COULD BE LAUNCHED. THE BELIEF IN A UNIFIED MUSLIM EXPANSION IS NOT A NEW ONE, BUT CAN IT BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THOSE THAT PRECEDED IT?

“... WEIGHED DOWN WITH CAUSES AND GOALS RENDERED UNATTAINABLE BY THEIR GENETIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES.”

THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE IS COIN IS THAT THE VIOLENT JIHAD IT CALLS FOR MAY ACTUALLY SPLIT, RATHER THAN UNIFY, GREATER ISLAM, CREATING OPPOSING FACTIONS AND MORE LINES OF DIVISION WITHIN COMMUNITIES ALREADY WEIGHED DOWN WITH CAUSES AND GOALS RENDERED UNATTAINABLE BY THEIR GENETIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES.

AMERICA'S COURSE

HERE IS THE SITUATION FACING AMERICA IN APRIL OF 2015. WE FIND OURSELVES FIGHTING AN AIR WAR AGAINST AN ENEMY THAT CLAIMS TO REPRESENT THE ISLAMIC FAITH IN ITS

EFFORTS TO EXPAND THE REACH OF MUSLIM RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL CONTROL. WE ARE UNABLE TO GAUGE THE REAL SUPPORT WITHIN ISLAM FOR IS — I.E., THE NUMBER OF MUSLIMS THAT WOULD ALLY WITH IT, BECAUSE OF SPIRITUAL BELIEF OR POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM, IN AN OPEN CHOICE.

THE WAR WE ENGAGE IN HAS ECONOMIC POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND HUMANITARIAN ROOTS. IT IS THE LATTER HOWEVER, THAT INCREASINGLY DETERMINED OUR MILITARY RESPONSE, AS IS' BRUTAL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS, JOURNALISTS AND CIVILIANS BECAME WIDELY PUBLICIZED.

AS "SUPERPOWER" AND "LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD", BOTH LABELS WHICH OUR POLITICAL CLASS CANNOT REFRAIN FROM USING, WE WERE FORCED TO RECOGNIZE THAT IT FELL UPON AMERICA TO RESPOND WITH ACTION, NOT JUST WORDS, TO RID THE NE OF THIS NEW SOURCE OF TERROR AND INSTABILITY.

OUR PROBLEM IS THAT WE ARE, AND HAVE BEEN, DEEPLY DIVIDED AMONG OURSELVES AS TO THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE MUST ACT AS THE WORLD'S POLICEMAN WHEN THINGS HEAT UP IN FOREIGN LANDS. THIS IS NOTHING NEW. EVEN IN THE VERY REAL GLOBAL CRISIS LEADING UP TO WWII, THERE WAS A STRONG AND VOCAL ISOLATIONIST POSITION LED BY SENS. TAFT, VANDENBERG AND BORAH THAT OPPOSED FDR'S ATTEMPTS TO PREPARE OUR FORCES FOR WAR AND TO AID ENGLAND.

BUT THE HUMANITARIAN CAUSE, WHICH BECOMES MORE SUPPORTABLE AS IS ATROCITIES APPEAR ON OUR TV SCREENS, HAS SHOWN THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN MAKE A CONNECTION BETWEEN TERRORISM IN THE NE, NORTH AFRICA, NIGERIA, SOMALIA, ETC. AND OUR ROLE AS "LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD". THE TROUBLE IS THAT THE LIST OF "HOT SPOTS" IS GROWING RAPIDLY. IN AFRICA, BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA ATTEMPTS TO SPREAD ITS DESTRUCTION TO CHAD, MALI AND CAMEROON WHILE AL-SHABAAB'S FORCES INCREASE THEIR PRESENCE IN SOMALIA, ETHIOPIA AND KENYA. IN YEMEN, HOUTHIS INSURGENTS STAGED A COUP, WHICH REMOVED FROM OFFICE THE PRESIDENT THAT WE HAD SUPPORTED, AND ARE NOW ENGAGED IN FACTIONAL FIGHTING IN BOTH THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF THAT COUNTRY. ADD LIBYA AND NOW TUNISIA WHERE THE GULF OF TUNIS PROVIDES THE MEDITERRANEAN'S SECOND NARROWEST MARINE CROSSING TO THE EU.

THE DOTS ARE BECOMING MORE NUMEROUS AND THE SPACES BETWEEN SMALLER. THE SAUDI MONARCHY SITS AT THE CENTER OF AN ARC OF MEDITERRANEAN INSURGENCY THAT EXTENDS FROM SYRIA SOUTH TO SUEZ AND WEST TO LIBYA. THE WORLD ON EUROPE'S SOUTHERN DOORSTEP IS ON FIRE AND, WHETHER WE WISH TO OR NOT, WE WILL HAVE TO DEFINE OUR SUPERPOWER STATUS FOR FRIENDS AND FOES ALIKE IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL/RELIGIOUS REALITY.

WE HAVE BUMBLING IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ, LIBYA AND SYRIA, BUT BUMBLING IS NOT THE POLICY REQUIRED OF A SUPERPOWER. AMERICA NOW FACES ITS OWN IDENTITY CRISIS AND MUST ARTICULATE A POLICY THAT BY WORD AND DEED WILL BEGIN TO ANSWER OUR TITLE QUESTION IN LIGHT OF TODAY'S REALITIES.

CURRENTLY, WITH OUR ARMED SERVICES FILLED BY VOLUNTEERS, THE IMPACT OF MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS IS SOMEWHAT LESS THAN WHEN THE DRAFT WAS IN USE, BUT THERE IS STILL A LARGE SEGMENT THAT BACKS "NO BOOTS ON THE GROUND" POLICY UNDER ALMOST ANY CIRCUMSTANCE OTHER THAN OUR BEING ATTACKED.

THIS DIVISION IS AT WORK IN OUR CONGRESS ON A CONSTANT BASIS WHERE INDECISION, COMPROMISE, SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS AND IMPRECISE LANGUAGE ENABLES ITS MEMBERS TO EMBRACE CONTRADICTORY POSITIONS. FURTHER, OUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES' ACTIONS ARE OFTEN TAKEN ON THE BASIS OF POLLS — NOT ONLY TO GAUGE APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL FOR VOTES CAST, BUT ALSO TO PROVIDE DIRECTION FOR FUTURE POSITIONS.

THE CURRENT DEBATE OVER DEFINING WAR POWERS IS ONE THAT WE HAVE HAD ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST. THE CONSTITUTION STATES THAT "THE CONGRESS SHALL HAVE POWER . . . TO DECLARE WAR"⁵ WHICH SERVED US THROUGH WWII. THEN WE FOUND OURSELVES IN A NEW POLITICAL ERA IN WHICH WE WERE EXPECTED TO BE PARTS OF INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCES, POLICE ACTIONS, PEACE KEEPING FORCES AND OTHER JOINT EFFORTS CALLED FOR BY THE UN OR ALLIES IN REGIONAL DEFENSE PACTS (I.E., NATO, SEATO, ETC.); AND THE PROXY WARS OF THE COLD WAR.

THERE IS ANOTHER ASPECT OF OUR SUPERPOWER POSITION THAT WE MUST DEFINE IN VIEW OF THE GROWING DESTABILIZATION BROUGHT ON BY IS IN THE NE AND A NEWLY EMERGENT RUSSIA IN UKRAINE. BOTH AIM TO RESTORE PRIOR HISTORICAL IDENTITIES — ISLAM OF ITS GOLDEN YEARS AND THE RUSSIA OF THE CZARS. IT DOES NOT MATTER THAT THE EXCESSES OF THESE PERSONA WERE REJECTED BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THEIR BORDERS; THE EMBERS OF GLORY NEVER GROW COLD AND ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE TO BE USED AGAIN AS FUEL BY A POWERFUL LEADER WHEN CIRCUMSTANCE PERMITS.

* * *

HOW LONG WILL OUR EXECUTIVE/LEGISLATIVE EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL IMPASSE CONTINUE? FOR REELECTIVE REASONS, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DO NOT WANT TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR PAST VOTES IN FAVOR OF A FAILED WAR. SIMILARLY, THE PRESIDENT, WHOSE APPROVAL IS NECESSARY AND WHO MUST SERVE AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, DOES NOT WANT TO BURDEN HIS PARTY OR HIMSELF WITH FULL BLAME. EACH BRANCH, IT SEEMS, WANTS THE AUTHORITY TO CLAIM SUCCESS AND ENOUGH LATITUDE TO AVOID CENSURE IN THE EVENT OF UNWANTED OR UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES.

ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL QUALITIES OF SUPERPOWER STATUS HAS TO BE LEADERSHIP WHICH IN THE PAST HAS BEEN EXPRESSED IN WIDELY DIFFERENT WAYS BY, FOR INSTANCE, THE MONGOLS, ROME, NAPOLEON, VICTORIAN ENGLAND, ISLAM AND OTHERS INTENT ON BENDING THEIR TIMES AND POPULATIONS TO THEIR PURPOSES.

IN OUR POSTWAR, SUPERPOWER AGE THE U.S. HAS DEFINED ITSELF MORE BY GIVING FINANCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND MILITARY (OFTEN LIMITED TO NON-COMBAT SUPPLIES) AID THAN BY ESTABLISHING A FIRM LEADERSHIP ROLE. THIS HAS BEEN ASCRIBED TO OUR SENSITIVITY TO OUR ALLIES' POLITICAL CONCERNS. A NOTABLE EXCEPTION WAS PRES. G.H.W. BUSH'S SUCCESSFUL ASSEMBLY OF THE COALITION THAT BLOCKED AND THEN DEFEATED SADDAM HUSSEIN IN KUWAIT/IRAQ.

NOTHING IS CONSTANT IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY DEVELOPING, EXERCISING AND RETAINING LEADERSHIP, BUT THE ARGUMENT CAN BE MADE THAT THE SUPERPOWER STATUS WE INHERITED FROM OUR DOMINANT ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND INDUSTRIAL PARTICIPATION IN WWII HAS BEEN STEADILY AND CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED. OUR IMPRESSION, LOOKING BEHIND OUR AND OUR WESTERN EUROPEAN ALLIES' PPR (POLITICAL/PUBLIC RELATIONS), IS THAT OF A RELUCTANT LEADER, WITH A DIVIDED ELECTORATE BEHIND HIM, ATTEMPTING TO LEAD AN EVEN MORE RELUCTANT GROUP OF ALLIES.

THIS SEEMS DECIDEDLY LESS THAN WHAT IS CALLED FOR BY THE PROBLEMS OF OUR TIME. WE'VE SEEN THIS FILM BEFORE WHEN WE AND EUROPE REACTED TO HITLER'S PIECE BY PIECE AGGRESSIONS LIKE A DEER CAUGHT IN HEADLIGHTS. FORTUNATELY, WE HAD AVAILABLE TO US THE VISION AND VOICE OF WINSTON CHURCHILL. HE WAS NOT ABLE TO MOVE EUROPE OR OUR GOVERNMENT TO TIMELY ACTION, BUT HE WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE AN EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP AROUND WHICH THE ALLIES COULD GATHER. THEY WERE FORTUNATE THAT, WHILE RALLYING THE FORCES OF FREEDOM, HE WAS JOINED BY EQUALLY DEDICATED AND CONTROVERSIAL LEADERS IN FDR AND GENERAL DE GAULLE. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY SUCH PRESENCE AVAILABLE ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC TODAY. NOR, PROBABLY, WOULD WE BE ANY MORE LIKELY TO TAKE ACTION IN OUR COMMON CAUSE THAN WE DID THEN.

SHATTERED IMAGES

SINCE OUR HAVING SAVED EUROPE IN TWO WORLD WARS, A GROWING BODY OF PUBLIC OPINION HAS BOUGHT INTO THE IMAGE OF THE US AS TOP COP IN A WHITE HAT BRINGING AMERICAN LAW, COMMERCE, DEMOCRACY, PROTECTION AND "THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY" TO POORER, WEAKER NATIONS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE AND/OR MAINTAIN THEIR OWN IDENTITIES IN THE WORLD'S "HOT SPOTS".

WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THIS ON OCCASION, BUT WE HAVE ALSO FAILED. GEOPOLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE JUST TOO COMPLEX AND FAST MOVING TO ASSUME THAT WE CAN REGULARLY REPLICATE OUR SUCCESS AND GOOD FORTUNE ELSEWHERE. AND YET, MANY AMERICANS, IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, BELIEVE WE CAN. WHAT ARE WE TO TAKE AWAY FROM OUR MULTIPLE INVOLVEMENTS IN THE NE OVER THE PAST GENERATION? GIVEN THE RELIGIOUS AND TERRITORIAL ISSUES THAT PLAGUE THIS REGION AND THE SLOWNESS OF RESPONSE BY

SIDELINE MUSLIM AND EUROPEAN NATIONS, SHOULD WE EXPECT TO REMAIN ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ITS HOSTILITIES FOR ANOTHER DECADE OR TWO? UNTIL MID-CENTURY? OR BEYOND?

IT IS IN TRYING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS SUCH AS THESE THAT OUR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL PURPOSES MUST BE JOINED. IN IDEOLOGICALLY DIVIDED, 21ST CENTURY AMERICA, SUCH HARMONY IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR DOMESTIC USE OR FOR EXPORT.

MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, AMERICA NEEDS A STRONG DOSE OF REALITY ABOUT ITSELF AND ITS GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN TO ANSWER THE QUESTION "WHO ARE WE? AND WHY ARE WE NOT WHO WE WERE?" WE MIGHT CONSIDER THAT OFTEN, WHEN ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH OUR IDENTITY, WE "CLAIM KIN" TO OUR FOREBEARS. WOULD THEY DO THE SAME?

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH . . ." NOT

"HISTORY IS MUCH LONGER IN THE NE THAN ITS ISLAMIC, CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH FAITHS."

BEHIND TODAY'S HEADLINES AND BENEATH THE SURFACE POLITICS OF THE NE LIE THE OLD ARAB/PERSIAN ANTAGONISMS. IRAN'S SHIITE ROOTS ONLY GO BACK ABOUT 500 YEARS, BUT THE IRANIANS, LIKE THE EGYPTIANS, CAN TRACE THEIR ORIGINS AS A PEOPLE BACK TO ABOUT 4,000 YEARS B.C. HISTORY IS MUCH LONGER IN THE NE THAN ITS ISLAMIC, CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH FAITHS.

IT IS A LAYERED HISTORY OF ECONOMIC, SECTARIAN AND TERRITORIAL CONFLICT; AND ITS POLITICS CAN BE SEEN AS A THREE DIMENSIONAL CHESS GAME PLAYED ON SPINNING BOARDS WITH EXPLODING PIECES.

"OLD" IS A RELATIVE TERM, IN ALMOST ANY USAGE, BUT IS ESPECIALLY MEANINGLESS IN THE NE. FOR INSTANCE, OUR PRESENT ERA OF INSTABILITY REVEALS CIVIL WARS, TERRORIST INSURGENCIES OR FAILED GOVERNMENTS IN LIBYA, SYRIA, EGYPT, IRAQ AND YEMEN WHICH WE HAILED AS "THE ARAB SPRING" WHEN THEY FIRST APPEARED.

THE "OLD ORDER" THAT EXISTED BEFORE "THE ARAB SPRING" WAS ONE OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES CONTROLLED BY STRONG LEADERS SUCH AS GADHAFFI, SADDAM HUSSEIN, MUBARAK AND BASHAR AL-HASSAD ALL OF WHOM HAD MISERABLE HUMAN RIGHTS AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT RECORDS, BUT WHO COULD CONTROL EVENTS AND THEIR OPPOSITION ENOUGH TO MAINTAIN ORDER. THIS ORDER IS SEEN AS OLD NOT IN TERMS OF ACTUAL LONGEVITY, BUT BECAUSE IT PRECEDED WHAT WE NOW FACE.

THE LINE BETWEEN "OLD" AND "NOW" WAS DRAWN BY OUR INVASION OF IRAQ AND OUR DESTRUCTION OF THE POLITICAL BALANCE THERE. THE RESULTING POWER VACUUM PROVIDED AN IRRESTIBLE OPENING FOR PREVIOUSLY CONTROLLED SECTARIAN AND POLITICAL FACTIONS, AS IT ALSO DID IN LIBYA WHERE WE REMOVED GADHAFFI, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT IN EGYPT WHEN WE ADOPTED A PASSIVE ROLE DURING THE POPULAR UPRISING

AGAINST MUBARAK. IN SYRIA, WE REVERSED COURSE AND REPEATEDLY CALLED FOR HASSAD'S DEPARTURE, BUT FAILED TO TAKE ACTION WHEN WAVES OF VIOLENCE WASHED AWAY THE RED LINES WE HAD DRAWN IN THE SAND.

HINDSIGHT IS PERFECT AND WE DO NOT MEAN TO SAY THAT OUR ROLE IS AN EASY ONE. TEAMS FROM BOTH OF OUR MOST RECENT ADMINISTRATIONS (GOP — BUSH, CHENEY, RUMSFELD, RICE; AND DEMOCRATS — OBAMA, BIDEN, PANETTA, CLINTON) HAVE PROVED AT BEST INADEQUATE AND AT WORST COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

WE SUSPECT THAT THIS STEMS FROM WASHINGTON'S DEEP CONCERN WITH THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ASPECTS OF BEING THE WORLD'S TOP COP SUPERPOWER, AND ITS INABILITY TO RECOGNIZE HOW MUCH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THAT STATUS HAVE CHANGED, ESPECIALLY IN AN AREA AS UNIQUELY SITUATED AND CONFLICTED AS THE NE.

THE US IS NOT ALONE IN NOT BEING ABLE TO BRING PEACE, OR EVEN STABILITY, TO THE NE. OUR HISTORIC EUROPEAN ALLIES THROUGH TWO WORLD WARS, WITH GERMANY NOW ADDED, ARE ABLE TO AVOID THE NE'S DIFFICULT REALITIES BY CITING THEIR EU STATUS, BUT THE TRUTH IS THAT THEIR INCREASINGLY LARGE AND LOUD MUSLIM POPULATIONS POSE FAR GREATER DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS THAN THOSE IN THIS COUNTRY — FOR NOW. HERE AND THERE, REAL PROGRESS WILL COME ONLY WHEN ISLAM AND THE WEST CAN RECOGNIZE THAT THE PATHS WE ARE NOW ON WILL LEAD TO CIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICT. CHANGES CAN BE MADE, BUT THEY WILL CALL FOR NEW GOALS, METHODS AND VISION. POWER SHIFTS WILL BE INEVITABLE, BUT NEED NOT DESTROY THE PROCESS. CURIOUSLY, IN THIS CIVILIZATIONAL CONFRONTATION ISLAM IS THE MOST VULNERABLE, AS WE WILL EXPLORE IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING — ALMOST!

THE WARS BEING WAGED IN THE NE AND UKRAINE ARE THE UNSUCCESSFUL RESULT OF EFFORTS BY MILITARY, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTERESTS TO RESOLVE HISTORIC, COMPLEX ISSUES OF THESE REGIONS. THESE ISSUES AND INTERESTS ARE ACTIVE IN OLD WORLD ASIA, EUROPE AND AFRICA AND ARE PUTTING ROOTS DOWN IN NEW WORLD NORTH AMERICA. THEY INDICATE THAT, DESPITE MANKIND'S EXTRAORDINARY TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS OVER THE LAST TWO MILLENNIA, IT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO PRODUCE CONSISTENT HUMAN THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR TO DEAL WITH LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH WEALTH, POWER, RELIGION, STATUS, TERRITORY, POPULATION, IDENTITY, NATURAL RESOURCES, IDEOLOGY, ETC.

THERE LIES AN ENORMOUS TASK AHEAD THAT PROBABLY CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA IN THE WEST AND JAPAN IN THE EAST. THE SCALES OF TIME, THOUGHT AND ACTION REQUIRED ARE

BEYOND OUR PRESENT REACH, BUT HOPE IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE.

* * *

NO PROJECTION OF FUTURE HUMAN INTERACTION IN UKRAINE/NE AND OTHER WAR ZONES IN ASIA AND AFRICA SHOULD IGNORE THE SHOCKS TO THE PSYCHES OF CIVILIAN POPULATIONS DRIVEN FOR SHELTER FROM WINTER COLD AND ARTILLERY SHELLS INTO EITHER BASEMENTS OR REFUGEE CAMPS LACKING FOOD, WATER AND HEAT. IF AND WHEN PEACE COMES, THE SUFFERING OF NON-COMBATANTS WILL NOT BE REPRESENTED IN WHATEVER AGREEMENT IS MADE. THE LOOK OF TERROR, FEAR AND DEPRIVATION WILL REMAIN IN THE FACES OF CHILDREN AS THEY GROW OLDER; THERE WILL BE NO ARTICLE, SECTION, OR PARAGRAPH WITH LANGUAGE THAT WILL REMOVE IT.

THERE IS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION LEFT HERE. WILL THESE LIVES HAVE BEEN SO DECIMATED THAT THEY WILL HAVE NO MORE OF WAR, OR WILL THEY OFFER ONLY A GENERATIONAL PAUSE AND THEN BECOME THE WAGERS OF THE NEXT ONE?

WHETHER WE CHOOSE TO CALL OURSELVES "SOLE SUPERPOWER" OR "LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD" IS NOT IMPORTANT. SELF-SERVING LABELS RARELY ARE. WHAT IS VITAL IS THAT AMERICA, RIGHT OR WRONG, IS THE CRITICAL ELEMENT IN THE GROUP OF NATIONS HERE, IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE THAT COMPRISE WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN OUR TIME. IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE FOR US TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STAGE OR ABANDON OUR ROLE.

WE WILL HAVE TO BECOME A TRUE LEADER. WE WILL HAVE TO UNIFY, ASSEMBLE AND LEAD WESTERN CIVILIZATION IN DECLARING ITS VALUES AND INTERESTS AND ACTING COOPERATIVELY ON THEIR BEHALF.

WESTERN CIVILIZATION HAS PRODUCED WONDERFUL LANGUAGES FOR THEATRE, POETRY AND LITERATURE. NOW IT MUST PRODUCE A NEW FORM OF POLITICAL LANGUAGE — FIRM, CLEAR, DEVOID OF SELF-SERVING BOMBAST AND POLITICAL POSTURING. THIS LANGUAGE MUST BECOME THE NEW LINGUA FRANCA⁶ OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY, SHUNNING BOTH "BOOSTERISM" AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS. IN THE UN, FROM THE SMALLEST COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IT MUST STATE WESTERN CIVILIZATION'S POSITIONS AND ITS WILLINGNESS TO DEFEND THEM UNAMBIGUOUSLY.

THIS WILL CALL FOR A NEW KIND OF THOUGHT AND BEHAVIOR BY US AND OTHERS, BUT AGAIN, WE MUST TAKE THE LEAD. WE MUST CONVINCE THE WESTERN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES THAT BOTH OUR FUTURES ARE JOINED AND THAT WE MUST BEGIN TO THINK AND ACT AS MEMBERS OF A COMMON CIVILIZATION FACING A THREAT AGAINST WHICH THEIR NATIONAL AND EU POLITICAL ATTITUDES HAVE PROVED COMPLETELY INADEQUATE.

"WE CANNOT GIVE ORDERS TO OTHERS
AND EXEMPTIONS TO OURSELVES."

THIS WILL REQUIRE NOTHING LESS THAN NEW WAYS OF DIPLOMACY AND HOW WE AND OUR ALLIES DECLARE OUR IDENTITY AND VALUES. THIS WILL HAVE TO BE A TRANSFORMATIONAL PROCESS THAT WE INITIATE BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. WE CANNOT GIVE ORDERS TO OTHERS AND EXEMPTIONS TO OURSELVES.

POLITICAL COURAGE IS ABSENT OR IN MODEST SUPPLY HERE AND IN EUROPE, AND THERE ARE MANY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC WHO WILL SEEK REFUGE IN "BUSINESS AS USUAL". BUT WESTERN CIVILIZATION NOW CONFRONTS DANGERS PECULIAR TO OUR TIME — LIFE-CHANGING TECHNOLOGIES, NUCLEAR WEAPONRY, OVERPOPULATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, RESOURCE DEPLETION AND MORE.

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, THE EU AND THE UN WOULD BE ABLE TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, BUT THEY ARE SUBJECT TO THE SAME KIND OF POLITICAL PARALYSIS THAT WE ARE. TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THIS CENTURY AMERICA WILL HAVE TO LEAD.

NONE OF THIS WILL COME EASILY. EUROPE HAS REASON TO BE WARY OF SOME ASPECTS OF AMERICAN LEADERSHIP, BUT IF AMERICA AND EUROPE CANNOT FORGE AN EFFECTIVE ALLIANCE, EACH ONE, ACTING ALONE, BECOMES LESS ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURES FROM OLD AND NEW FOES.

A PROGRAM SUCH AS THIS COULD NOT TAKE PLACE IN OBAMA'S REMAINING YEARS OR IN A DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION HEADED BY OBAMA HIRES SUCH AS BIDEN OR CLINTON. THERE IS JUST TOO MUCH BLOOD UNDER THE BRIDGE FROM POLICY FAILURES AND SECURITY BREACHES CONDUCTED BY OUR INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES DURING OBAMA'S PRESIDENCY. AND, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT A REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION COULD MUSTER THE SENSITIVITY NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN WESTERN CIVILIZATION'S PEACEFUL PREEMINENCE.

— FINIS —

NATIONAL SHAME

TWO RECENT INCIDENTS HIGHLIGHT HOW FULLY OUR POLITICAL PARTIES ARE COMMITTED TO BICKERING AND BITCHERY OVER RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT.

THE FIRST INVOLVED PM NETANYAHU'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS. THOSE WHO OBJECTED MOST LOUDLY SAW IT AS AN AFFRONT TO THE PRESIDENCY AND NOT WORTHY OF TAKING

PLACE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. IN BOTH POSITIONS, THOSE WHO TOOK THEM CLAIMED TO BE VICTIMS. AN ALTERNATE APPROACH WOULD HAVE WELCOMED THE ISRAELI PM AS THE LEADER OF OUR LONGEST AND STRONGEST DEMOCRATIC ALLY IN THE NE AND VIEWED HIS REMARKS AS EVIDENCE OF OUR SUPPORT OF FREE SPEECH.

THE SECOND INCIDENT WAS THE WRITING AND SIGNING BY 47 GOP SENATORS OF AN OPEN LETTER TO IRAN'S AYATOLLAH KHAMEINI ADVISING HIM THAT THE AGREEMENT IN PROGRESS RE IRAN'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY COULD BE CANCELLED BY HIS SUCCESSOR(S). THIS ISSUE HAS PAINFUL POLITICAL PRESSURE POINTS FOR BOTH PARTIES, BUT WE THINK THE REPUBLICAN SIGNATORS MADE A SERIOUS PPR ERROR BY ADDRESSING IT TO KHAMEINI AND GIVING THE APPEARANCE OF "TRADING WITH THE ENEMY". THEY COULD HAVE SAID THE SAME THING IN SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT LANGUAGE IN AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT AND AVOIDED MUCH CRITICISM, BUT THEY SEEM TO HAVE BEEN GUIDED BY THEIR NEVER-ENDING NEED FOR PUBLICITY.



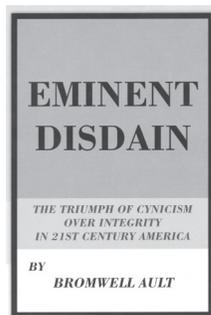
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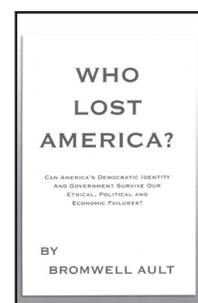
- ¹ ASSOCIATED PRESS VIA PALM BEACH POST. 2/12/15 MILITANTS LURE STEADY STREAM OF RECRUITS BY KEN DILANIAN.
- ² IBID
- ³ REQUIEM FOR A NUN, 1950, WILLIAM FAULKNER
- ⁴ THE REQUIREMENTS AND PRIVILEGES OF OUR SUPERPOWER STATUS WILL BE EXPLORED MORE FULLY IN A SUBSEQUENT ISSUE AS ONE OF MANY ANSWERS TO "WHO ARE WE? AND WHY ARE WE NOT WHO WE WERE?"
- ⁵ U.S. CONSTITUTION, ARTICLE I, SECTION 8
- ⁶ A COMMON LANGUAGE USED IN AN AREA OF MANY LANGUAGES
- ⁷ THE AVERAGE COMPENSATION FOR ALL MAJOR LEAGUE PLAYERS IN 2014 WAS SLIGHTLY OVER \$4 MILLION

EDITOR'S BIO

MR. AULT IS RETIRED FROM BUSINESS, A GRADUATE OF YALE UNIVERSITY, AND THE AUTHOR OF: A RETAIL FOOD STUDY (LA ROCHE & Co. NYC, NY 1957) WHICH DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCE AND GROWING DOMINANCE OF THE SUPERMARKET IN AMERICAN FOOD RETAILING; EMINENT DISDAIN: THE TRIUMPH OF CYNICISM OVER INTEGRITY IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA.; AND WHO LOST AMERICA? CAN AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY AND GOVERNMENT SURVIVE OUR ETHICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FAILURES?



THE AUTHOR'S MOST RECENT BOOK, WHO LOST AMERICA?, DEALS WITH TOPICS COVERED IN MOC ISSUES 19 THROUGH 27. BOTH IT AND HIS FIRST VOLUME, EMINENT DISDAIN, ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE PUBLISHER AUTHORHOUSE, AT 888-280-7715 OR AT AUTHORHOUSE.COM.



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