INTEGRATING NON-MILITARY ARTS OF STATECRAFT TO ADDRESS NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

John Lenczowski

For many years, we have faced a crisis of leadership the consequence of which is a failure to address strategically our nation’s internal vulnerabilities and external threats. U.S. national security policy has consisted of serial tactical actions that mostly address symptoms of problems and not their causes. This is why we have failed to defeat radical Islamist terrorism. It is also why we are failing to curb the aggressive initiatives of Iran, China, North Korea, and others who mean us harm.

Multiple sources of this failure include confused ideas and principles, a lack of moral-strategic clarity, intellectual failure, and inadequate professional skill. The combination of these factors has prompted our single greatest national security challenge—and opportunity—that will face a new administration: how to develop a truly integrated grand strategy to defeat our current enemies and to eliminate threats from adversaries who may become enemies. Such a strategy will have to incorporate not only the military means that we consider to be the principal method

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of national defense but also the many non-military arts of statecraft that have been neglected, marginalized, and underfunded.

The National Immune System and Our Internal and Conceptual Vulnerabilities

A major obstacle America (and most of its Western allies) must overcome to ensure long-term security—particularly in confronting radical Islamism—is an internal one. It is the weakness of our "national immune system." This consists of the nation's collective commitment to certain values, principles, and ideas. A strong national immune system is characterized by a widespread national consensus about our fundamental national principles and a corresponding strength of conviction about them. This strength is measured by the nation's will to defend, to fight for, and even to risk dying for, those convictions.

Over the past half century and even longer, America has been assaulted by ideas that denigrate its history and culture, stress group identity, discourage assimilation of immigrants, and encourage the Balkanization of the country into different cultural groups. All this amounts to a relentless assault on traditional American values by those who reject the principles of the Declaration of Independence and who would "fundamentally transform," to use President Barack Obama's term, America as conceived by its Founders.

This attack derives from the Marxist-materialist-relativist-multicultural rejection of the central pillar of the Declaration, namely, the self-evident truth that "all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Instead, the internal enemies of the Declaration believe that rights do not come from any Creator but are endowed by men to other men. This belief represents the doctrine of "might makes right"—whereby those with the greatest power, whether majoritarian or coercive, determine what constitutes morals, justice, and rights. Lest anyone be under any illusion, this is also the ruling doctrine of fascist, Nazi, communist, and radical Islamist regimes.
As John F. Kennedy made clear in his inaugural address, “the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God” (Kennedy 1961). That was the central issue over which the Cold War was fought. It is the central issue of the cultural war in the West today. It lies at the heart of our ability to discern whether an alien ideology such as radical Islamism is a threat to our system and culture or not.

If there is any hope that the America as conceived by its Founders will have a future as a democratic republic of self-governing people, our governing elites will have to rediscover its foundational principle. A new president will not be able singlehandedly to undo a half century of subversion of this principle, but he or she can take a leading role in using the bully pulpit to articulate what is at stake when that principle is rejected.

The rejection of this core American principle has produced a concept of liberty that in large segments of our society has become license. This concept is constantly revealed in our popular culture and the habits of our people—the rise of sexual libertinism, the widespread pornographization of our entertainment media, the blithe violation of wedding vows, the rise of out-of-wedlock births, the breakup of families, the harm all this does to children, the rise of cheating in our colleges, the persistence of the drug culture, the degradation of language, dress, and manners, and other manifestations of selfishness.

All this is visible to the rest of the world, and it sends signals of weakness to our enemies. As Livy (2002, Book 1) once counseled, a good way to defeat one’s enemy is to spread among its population the ideas of selfishness and hedonism. Selfish, pleasure-seeking people are, and are seen as, morally decadent and incapable of defending a cause higher than their pleasures. Osama bin Laden and the other radical Islamists have perceived this in America and concluded that this is their opportunity to attack our country via terrorism and “civilizational jihad”—the effort to transform Western societies into Islamic ones. Fortunately, their perception of America is only half right. Not everyone in our society is part of this culture.

In waging civilizational jihad, the Islamists immigrate to Western societies and refuse to assimilate. Furthermore, they work to create a parallel legal system of Sharia law within those societies. Saudi Arabia funds and builds mosques throughout the West and uses its financial power to eject politically moderate imams from existing mosques and replace them with radical Wahhabists (Choksy and Choksy 2015). Meanwhile,
multicultural advocates have little problem with any of this. They make no demands for the reciprocal construction of churches in Saudi Arabia for the large population of Christians working there.

Multiculturalist attitudes have been significantly fueled by the relativist spirit of "multi-morality," which is at odds with the central pillar of the American system. If there is no objective, universal moral order in the world, if one cannot claim one civilization and its moral foundations as superior to another, then how is it possible for the United States and the West to hold the moral high ground against radical Islamism or any other pernicious "lifestyle choice" that people might make?

**Moral-Strategic Clarity**

The first principle of national security policy is to be clear as to who are our enemies, adversaries, friends, and allies. This requires "moral-strategic clarity": the ability to comprehend which powers and ideologies are inimical to the interests and core principles of our republic. If our national leadership does not subscribe to the principles of the Declaration, if it sees nothing particularly harmful about Islamism or the current variants of communism, it will not be able to do what is necessary to defend against these ideologies or the powers that have adopted them. Similarly, a lack of moral-strategic clarity will result in the devaluation of traditional allied relationships that are based on common values.

**Confronting Enemies and Adversaries**

We currently have active enemies who are at war with us. One is the larger movement of radical Sunni Islamism that has taken the form of Al Qaeda, the Islamic State (otherwise known as ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh), and related movements. The other is radical Shia Islamism as represented by the ruling Mullahs of Iran.

*Radical Sunni Islamism.* We have responded to radical Sunni Islamist terrorism principally with armed force and intelligence. We have killed thousands of terrorists. But as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pertinently asked in his 2003 Global War on Terrorism memo, "Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?" (Rumsfeld 2003). The recruitment of new terrorists is the central strategic problem of this war. Military means can combat such recruitment only insofar as stopping the Islamic State's
military advances exposes the falsity of its claim to inevitable victory. The more ISIS suffers defeat, the less likely its potential recruits will be enticed to fight for it.

But the recruitment of new terrorists is mostly a political problem with its propaganda, ideological, and doctrinal religious dimensions. This is the “war of ideas.”

The problem is that we are in an ideological war where we have virtually no ideological warriors and no government agency that is serious about such a war. It took the State Department 11 years after the 9/11 attacks to set up its Center for Strategic Counter-terrorism Communications (now called the Global Engagement Center). The problem is that this Center is insufficiently funded or manned by personnel with serious knowledge of ideological warfare. This Center should be only one of many governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to the non-military dimensions of this war.

Assuming a modicum of moral-strategic clarity at its foundation, a truly integrated strategy in this war must begin with “opportunities intelligence” collection, that is, the collection of information about the vulnerabilities of our enemies that can be exploited in a variety of ways. It should be recognized that the war of ideas is only partly between American ideas and radical Islamism. Rather, it is principally a war within Islam itself—between politically moderate Moslems and the radical Islamist terrorists.

Then, the many relevant participants in an integrated strategy must be strengthened. U.S. Special Forces must be able to study the ideology and strategic doctrines of radical Islamism and incorporate knowledge of these things into their information operations. U.S. Military Information Support Operations (MISO) and Military Information Support Teams (MISTs) have cultural intelligence knowledge and skill in cross-cultural communication to contribute effectively in this fight. But they must no longer be underfunded and neglected.

The war of ideas cannot be fought if U.S. foreign policy unilaterally refrains from even mentioning Islam and Islamism. Such self-censorship derives from two sources: (1) the politically correct, multiculturalist requirement to legitimize radical Islamism by morally equating it with
other variants of Islam or other religions on the grounds that all religions are the same at heart, and (2) a specious legal judgment that having anything to do with religion in foreign policy constitutes a violation of the First Amendment. The latter judgment totally ignores the long history of U.S. support of religion and religious groups during the Cold War, such as the broadcasting of religious services over U.S. international radios.

The radicalization process must be countered by offering competitive ideas (such as human rights), by countering radical Islamist propaganda, by anathematizing radical Islamist ideas, by exposing the corruption and hypocrisies of the leaders of radical Islamist movements, by winning hearts and minds, and by supporting competing forces who are capable of coexisting with religious minorities and the West, including politically moderate Muslim leaders and imams. These solutions are to be found in the arts of public diplomacy, foreign assistance, information policy, strategic communications, political action (both overt and covert), and political/ideological warfare.

Central to the messages that must be sent in this ideological war are themes that strike at the religious-ideological heart of Islamism’s appeal. For example, those who hope to find meaning for their lives in radical Islamism should be told that killing innocent people will not make them martyrs but will send them straight to hell. For such a message to be effectively communicated, it is necessary that the messenger have some literacy with religion and philosophy. Ideally, such messages should come from politically moderate Muslims who must be supported through truly covert means (Sookhdeo 2012, 37–41).

Other instruments of statecraft must also be integrated into a true whole-of-government strategy. This includes the intensification of economic sanctions against Islamist terrorists and the manifold uses of cyber methods.

Winning hearts and minds through the various methods of public diplomacy is an essential component to such an integrated strategy. Some United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programs and the Peace Corps have met success in building good will
in various countries. But these agencies must be funded according to national strategic need, and the national security-minded community must refrain from across-the-board anathematization of “foreign aid”—especially when such aid achieves national strategic goals without having to kill people to do so.

Private NGOs must complement governmental efforts. Some private NGOs have found remarkable success in winning hearts and minds through cultural methods (e.g., the LibForAll Foundation in Indonesia) and through long-term relationship building and development assistance (the Asia America Initiative in the Moslem regions of the Philippines). Another organization that is doing path-breaking work in winning minds is Good of All, which promotes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an “idea virus” on social media to “digital natives” to inspire ideals that can combat and pre-empt ideological radicalization.

Iran and radical Shia Islamism. The principles of ideological war apply as well to radical Shia Islamism led by Iran. The Iranian regime has been conducting a cold war with the United States since 1979 that has gone essentially unreciprocated. The ruling Mullahs have consistently violated diplomatic norms, seized hostages, committed and supported terrorism, killed hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, aggravated the sectarian divide in Iraq that has helped give rise to the Islamic State, and are developing nuclear weapons that can threaten us and our allies.

If we were serious about eliminating this threat and achieving genuine peace with the Iranian people, we would be conducting a cold war, using the many instruments of non-military power that were used principally by the Eisenhower and Reagan administrations in an integrated strategy against the Soviet empire. As Sun Tzu counseled, to defeat the enemy without using force is the “acme of skill” (Sun Tzu 1963, 77). Since 1979, we have used such non-military instruments only sparingly, episodically, tactically, and inconsistently.

The question is whether we are interested in a containment policy that assumes the permanence of the Islamist regime—a policy that points to permanent coexistence and the mere mitigation of the symptoms of tension—or a policy that seeks to end the sources of tension that lie in the ideological genetic code of the regime itself. The latter policy is what characterized the Reagan integrated strategy toward the USSR.

The Mullahs have even more vulnerabilities than the Islamic State: the alienation of huge segments of their population due to corruption, mismanagement, failed domestic policies, and the fundamental illegitimacy of the regime itself.
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Illegitimate regimes suffer one great Achilles heel: fear of their own people—a serious internal security problem. This was a key vulnerability of the Soviet regime. It is also the central vulnerability of the Chinese and North Korean regimes, which are posing increasingly looming threats to the United States and a liberal international order.

China. China is conducting the world’s biggest military buildup. It has developed a myriad of weapons of asymmetric warfare targeted against the United States. It has built its “underground great wall”—a warren of what some have estimated to be three thousand miles of underground tunnels through which they can drive road-mobile ICBM launchers, and in which they are concealing their nuclear arsenal (Gertz 2012; Karber 2011). They are building and militarizing new islands in the South China Sea and harassing their neighbors. They have tens of thousands of intelligence collectors in our country and are conducting massive cyber theft of our national security secrets and intellectual property.¹ They have developed a sophisticated doctrine of economic and financial warfare targeted against the United States (Liang and Xiangsui 2002). And they have the capability of knocking out our nationwide electrical grid with an electromagnetic pulse generated by an atmospheric nuclear explosion above the American continental landmass (Pry 2015). Such an attack would send the nation back to the pre-electricity era and cause the deaths of 70 to 90 percent of the American people (Gaffney 2014; Foster et al. 2004).

Our national leadership withholds all these truths from the American people. It has responded to Chinese provocations in the South China Sea weakly or barely at all. It is failing to respond in kind to Beijing’s military buildup. And it has eroded what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn called the “mightiest weapon” that America had during the Cold War—our international broadcasts, which today comprise not only radio but also TV, Internet, and social media (Solzhenitsyn [1980] 1986, 53).²

Communicating with people living under totalitarian rule is key to bringing about peaceful regime change as was done in the Cold War against Soviet communism. Such communications enable us to (1) counter the propaganda their regimes use to keep them in line; (2) give them honest history; (3) give them mass communications channels that can enable them to reach large numbers of their fellow oppressed citizens (this combats the regimes’ attempts to atomize them and leave each individual alone against the state); (4) inspire them with a superior moral and political vision for their societies, a vision based on human rights; and (5) give them hope and embolden, but not incite, them to resist oppression.³
Arguably, these means of communication with oppressed peoples are the single most effective way of putting strategic pressure on an aggressive totalitarian regime. But the Obama administration has tried to shut down all Voice of America short-wave broadcasts in Mandarin and Cantonese, notwithstanding the fact that short-wave radio is Beijing's principal method of communication with its billion-plus people.

The administration has been silent when it comes to standing for the human rights of the Chinese people who continue to live under a Party dictatorship with all its methods of totalitarian internal security. Those who believe that genuine peace between China and the United States can be built solely on commercial relations forget the lesson taught by Andrei Sakharov. He said that the Soviet leadership would never have peace with the West until it achieved peace with its own people. And this could not happen until it respected their human rights.

If we wish to mitigate and ultimately remove the threats from the toxic powers we face, we must use all the principles and instruments of public diplomacy, strategic influence, and political warfare that we used against the Soviet empire.

**Indispensable Structural and Cultural Reforms**

Central to the development of an integrated strategy is the need to reform the structure and culture of the State Department so that it will reward excellence not just in government-to-government diplomacy but also public diplomacy and strategic influence.

The key structural change should be the creation of a U.S. Public Diplomacy Agency that would be responsible for all forms of such relations and strategic influence. In it should reside all the functions of the former U.S. Information Agency, USAID, the Peace Corps, the various media of the Voice of America, and other relevant offices of the State Department such as human rights, labor, women's issues, democracy building, and so forth. There is a good argument that the Peace Corps personnel should be distanced from association with current U.S. foreign policy for their own protection abroad and hence should not be part of the State Department. However, so long as the agency stands alone, it will continue to be an orphan whose work will perennially be strategically neglected and underfunded. The new agency's head should be the Deputy Secretary of State and a statutory observer in the National Security Council with the same rank as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of National Intelligence.
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The only way a new Public Diplomacy Agency has a chance to succeed is if there are career incentives to exhibit excellence in its respective fields. The simplest reform in this regard would be to require by law that 50 percent of all ambassadorships and Deputy Assistant Secretarships occupied by career Foreign Service Officers must be filled by officers who have had the larger part of their careers in this agency. The creation of this agency and its elevation in importance will be the single most effective reform of a Department that has so badly needed reform for so long.

An equally important measure is the revival of a strategically serious covert political action capability that can achieve its goals without exposing the American role. During the Cold War, the CIA had the use of its “mighty Wurlitzer”—a myriad of instruments, including newsletters, journals of opinion, books, magazines, broadcasting stations, and political and cultural front organizations to fight the war of information and ideas against communism. Much of this program was extremely effective. But it became controversial and therefore vulnerable to internal criticism because a significant part of it involved influencing U.S. domestic media and other organizations. Such domestic influence is not necessary for such a program to be effective abroad. Supporting foreign journals of opinion, newsletters, and other media, distributing literature, film, and messages over social media, and supporting foreign anti-Islamist organizations should be a major part of an integrated strategy.4

Conclusion

Preventing people from becoming terrorists is vastly preferable to killing them once they become so. Harnessing the power of people living under dictatorial oppression is also preferable to armed confrontations. But all the necessary instruments of statecraft will fail at these tasks and our messages will ring hollow if we do not visibly stand for the core principles of our political system—principles that uniquely enable us to hold the moral high ground in international conflicts whose central theaters are in the moral battlespace. This means nothing less than rejecting the alien and un-American concept that human rights are endowed by the state. Indeed the entire American system of majority rule with inalienable minority rights is logically and practically impossible unless those rights are endowed by a power higher than majority rule. The only chance that we can restore a strong national immune system and a strong and enduring national defense is by rebuilding a consensus around the core principle of our political order.
Notes

1. This uncertain figure was given to the author multiple times in personal conversations and interviews over the past three years with senior FBI and other U.S. counterintelligence officials. When the author cited figures such as ten thousand and twenty thousand intelligence collectors, he was corrected by these authoritative figures and charged with making a significant underestimation. The highest estimated figure the author has heard from such sources is fifty thousand. The term *intelligence collector* refers not to a trained, professional intelligence case officer but rather to the entire array of those given intelligence collection tasks, including such case officers, visiting business representatives charged with learning U.S. industrial secrets, technologies, and manufacturing processes, and graduate students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and other programs (even including design!) in American universities, who are charged with securing the latest scientific and technological innovations of both their professors and even fellow students.

2. Solzhenitsyn ([1980] 1986, 129) also characterized these radios as “the mighty force that resides in the airwaves . . . whose kindling power in the midst of the communist darkness cannot even be grasped by the Western imagination.” As much as he touts the power of these instruments, he laments their misuse by U.S. foreign policy (Solzhenitsyn [1980] 1986, 49–53).

3. For an analysis of the critical role of public diplomacy and political warfare in the U.S. strategy to bring down the Soviet empire, see Lenczowski (2016).

4. For a detailed set of recommendations that expand on those discussed here, see Lenczowski (2011).

References


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