

Dunces and Doctrines

by G. Murphy Donovan (April 2016)

Jeffrey Goldberg has the April Fool's cover of *The Atlantic* this Spring, a confectioner's [assessment](#) of seven some odd years of the team Obama foreign policy. Celebrity journalism is usually classified as either an orchid or an onion. Either/or because there are few media outlets these days that are truly "fair and balanced." The politics of the left, and [far left](#), dominates most political coverage today. Goldberg's treatment of the Obama years is no exception.



Political correctness is the dominant meme of 21st Century journalism. *The Atlantic* is a [pioneer](#) with that genre. No surprise then that this first of many forthcoming Obama media report cards is an orchid; indeed, a veritable bouquet of muddled apologetics and pettifoggery.

Goldberg doesn't specifically claim that team Obama has a foreign policy "strategy." He prefers the word "doctrine." Therein lays the rub.

Strategy is a national vision with clear goals. Doctrines are the principles and practices consistently applied to achieve specified goals. The first speaks to "what" and the latter speaks to "how." Doctrine is irrelevant without clear objectives. Indeed, doctrine, operational art, and tactics are moot without coherent strategy.

Journalists like Goldberg and politicians like Obama are, however, excellent examples of the vision deficit among contemporary politicians and pundits alike. Both men might have benefited from a couple of years of military school or service before presuming to abuse the verities of leadership, strategy, doctrine, or tactics.

National strategy is ever about winners and losers. Alas, strategic thinking is now conflated with game theory and social engineering, hypotheses that see "win/win" outcomes and global nirvana through the gauze of flawed assumptions, wishful thinking, and "humanitarian" claptrap. Indeed, goals like victory,

success, or winning are often [demonized](#).

Specific bogymen for the left are now familiar: Wall Street, banks, enterprise of any sort, nationalism, military solutions, tradition, history, Benjamin Netanyahu, Vladimir Putin, and now Donald Trump. The Bush family used to be the all-purpose scapegoat for Obama malfunctions, but according to Goldberg, the Bush regimes have been rehabilitated.

Failed or fraudulent [domestic](#) or [defense](#) programs or institutions never make team Obama's rogue's gallery. Government failure is just another fiscal stimulus under no-fault "doctrine."

When capitalism fails, a business is likely to disappear, unless government intervenes. Conversely, when federal domestic or foreign adventures fail, fiasco is sustained with better funding. There are few moral hazards with contemporary government, especially at the federal level where money is printed – and deficits, debts, defeat can be rationalized or ignored by executive order.

Uncle Sam is a red, white, and blue Santa Claus for social programs at home and profligate aid programs abroad. These days, both classes of dependents are too big to fail.

The 21st century may be known to historians as the "no fault" era of social democracy. Barack Obama didn't invent no-fault culture, but it is a world view that fits his national security "doctrine" like a burka. Doubling down on botched humanitarian interventions, small wars, and regime changes are hallmarks of recent Obama follies.

At the same time, notions of victory, success, and winning have disappeared from the national conversation. Leaders who abhor victory usually refuse to recognize failure either. Foreign policy has become an absurdity, small wars that kill [Muslims](#) with drones powered by "humanitarian" oxymorons.

The no-fault era is exacerbated by several personal Obama quirks that contribute to strategic confusion; ego, a prickly personality, secrecy, racial/religious identity paranoia, demonization, and little tolerance for disagreement. When things go south for team Obama; the "other," domestic or foreign enemies are blamed – with one notable exception. No matter the obscenity or atrocity, the faith of his fathers, Islamism and Muslim culture, enjoys immunity from censure

or sanction.

In contrast, European allies are castigated by the President and Goldberg about moral responsibilities, yet nary a word about *Ummah* accountability. Apparently terrorism, Islamism, refugees, and Muslim dystopia in general are now just extensions of “white man’s burdens” – if you buy the moral logic of Obama and *The Atlantic*.

Jews, Russians, the Chinese, Christians, high school graduates, white males, conservatives, libertarians, or Republicans are the preferred demons. If you are not an open borders social democrat, you are, by definition, a bigot. Most traditional values, western culture or nationalism especially, are thought to be varieties of intolerance or racism.

Ironically, the Goldberg puff piece confirms Obama’s temperamental insecurity and immaturity. The commander-in-chief does not suffer dissent gladly, projects his character flaws to others, and he is likely to demonize opponents with petty snubs and surrogate invective. Obama’s treatment of Putin and Netanyahu are illustrative.

Putin is dismissed as a KGB thug and Netanyahu has been characterized as a “chicken shit.” In fact, Putin is a born again orthodox Christian and Netanyahu is a Special Forces war hero. Nonetheless, guano seems to be an Obama policy theme. Goldberg tells us that Obama defines his foreign policy doctrine as “don’t do stupid shit.” Team Obama should know, the Oval Office seems to have redefined shit – and stupid – as virtues.

The juvenile pettiness in the Obama era is an example. Early on, the president made a public spectacle of removing the Winston Churchill bust from the White House.

There is a prominent counterpoint to the apologetic Goldberg hypothesis. Call it the Limbaugh theorem. Rush Limbaugh, pundit/comedian on the right, claims that Obama has a very explicit strategy underwritten by specific cynical goals. The Limbaugh thesis suggests that Obama thinks more of third world “victims” than he does about European or American uniqueness, say nothing of “greatness.” For Limbaugh, Obama’s strategy is to take America down a peg or two to achieve a kind of global moral and cultural equivalence for all.

Withal, any smug recitation of White House spin confirms dystopic policy, the abject stupidity of intervention or regime change in a Muslim culture where the default setting is primitive theocracy. Alas, strategic malpractice is now aggravated by a refugee/immigrant *tsunami*. Immigration, the latest administration tar baby, says all that needs to be said about “no-fault” foreign policy.

The most recent Islamic atrocity in Brussels is, alas, another case study in the pathology of appeasement. ISIS now conducts forays against EU from a sanctuary a few blocks from the capital of Europe. In response, the continent again cowers under impotent solidarity pledges and meaningless light shows. Belgium provides more manpower *per capita* to ISIS than any other civilized nation. Tolerance and terror are the wages of European apathy. The ghost of Quisling haunts the capitals of Europe.

What sane analyst argues that the answer to Muslim terror, jihadism, or cultural pathology is more religious ghettos in the West, Europe, or America? The sad truth of Muslim crusades to date is that the West has put its values and culture at risk in exchange for seed beds of theofascism.

The administration is fond of claiming that the Islamic State is the illegitimate product of Syrian tyranny or Russian collusion. *Al Baghdadi* may be a bastard, but then he is America’s bastard; indeed, the love child of impotent foreign policy in the Middle East.

G. Murphy Donovan writes about the politics of national security.

To comment on this article, please click