

Strategic Mendacity

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (January 2021)



Le mas passe-temps, Céret, Chaïm Soutine, 1920-21

Everyone behaves badly—given the chance.

—Ernest

Hemingway

Civilian and military national security mandarins often find duty, honor, and country in the breach these days.

Ambassador Jim Jeffrey admitted as much recently

calling US troop numbers in Syria a “shell game.” If you read or saw media reports on the latest Pentagon sleight-of-hand, you might think deceiving the White House, the Congress, or the public is the exception rather than the rule.

In an earlier CENTCOM Syria scam, then commanding General Llyod Austin admitted to spending \$500 million to train “four or five” anti-Assad freedom fighters. Then again, \$500 million is chump change for Congress or the Pentagon. Austin is the Secretary of Defense in waiting for the Biden administration.



Mendacity at the Pentagon and Military Departments, especially about war, weapons, and politics is now standard operating procedure.

On the E-Ring it’s called “gaming the system.”

Forensics of Deceit

The candor deficit in Washington might be a modern legacy of size and money, an obese defense establishment in the wake of World War II. Size and transparency in Washington often exist in inverse proportions.

Recall, the invasion of Korea, for more than a few years, was called a “police action,” not a war. Subsequently, the truth about Vietnam was not manifest until a Beltway bandit at RAND Corporation blew the whistle.

The Pentagon Papers snuffed the light at the end of General Westmoreland’s tunnel.

Daniel Ellsberg revealed that Robert McNamara and his generals attempted to rationalize Vietnam with fake numbers and fake measures of effectiveness. The omens of defeat were buried serially by Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon horse holders under mounds of meaningless data.

Cooking the truth continues today with the Islamic Wars, ongoing now for 50 years.

The first Iraq war comes to mind. Recall then Secretary of State General Colin Powell and CIA Director George Tenet lied to the country and the world at the UN about Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction."

In 2013, DNI General James Clapper, USAF, went before Congress to equivocate about universal NSA domestic surveillance as did General Keith Alexander, US Army, fibbing about the same program. Obscenely expensive programs like PRISM are justified by the Islamist threat and then hidden from the taxpayer and all but a few of the usual Beltway suspects.

Another former NSA Director, General Mike Hayden, USAF, believed Edward Snowden's cryptologic candor about PRISM was treasonous whilst Alexander's and Clapper's perjury on the same subject got a wink and a nod.

Since the 9/11 Saudi/Muslim attack on New York, Uncle Sam's deep state has been butchering fiscal and constitutional integrity in the name of "terror" and national defense.

Federal programs that can't pass the smell test are routinely festooned with exotic code words and classifications in the name of security. Alas, keeping taxpayers in the dark is **the** singular security objective that transcends all foreign menace.

Protecting "sources and methods" in every-day practice is a caveat for "covering-your-ass." CYA in Intelligence

matters is not optional. It's mandatory.

The tone for any government agency is set at the top for good or ill. In a world where truth is a villain, any clever liar has *nomenklatura* or flag officer potential. Albeit, systemic universal deceit at home under a burka of national security is a little like recycling the Constitution to make toilet paper.

When asked about moral bankruptcy, a character in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* was asked how he got there. He answered: "Two ways; gradually, then suddenly." And so it goes today at the Pentagon, the FBI, and the Intelligence Community where big money talks and *bravo sierra* walks.

The American military, the US Army especially, has a vintage tradition of altering the present and the past. George Armstrong Custer is the iconic example. At Little Big Horn, Custer died as a lite colonel, but is buried at West Point as a flag officer, a Civil War brevet rank.

Custer was a victim of hubris and corporate stupidity long before Sitting Bull cancelled his commission.



The famed 7th Cavalry was not real cavalry either, rather more like horse-drawn infantry, that had to dismount to load and fire outdated Springfield single-shot carbines. The Cheyenne and Sioux at Little Big Horn fought from the saddle with the Henry repeating rifles – like true calvary. Custer left his margins of victory: good Intelligence, Gatling guns and artillery, in the rear too, compounding ego deficits.

Custer was just the last chapter in generations of Indian War mythology, a history written by putative “victors.” Alas, the American Indian guerrilla was ultimately beaten after two centuries by disease, famine, poverty, and Manifest Destiny – not the US Army.

Withal, the generational Muslim wars of the 20th / 21st Centuries are starting to look a lot like those 19th Century Indian wars. The difference between then and now is numbers

and ideology. And today, we are no better at guerrilla wars abroad than we were at small wars at home in 19th Century Montana.

Our E-Ring brass seems to understand all of the science and none of the arts of war. The US Army, with rare exception, was confined to wooden forts in Indian country on the frontier for 200 years. How is that any different from the various “green (read safe) zones” that pockmark the Muslim world today?

The Jihad has 1.5 billion potential adherents worldwide and a common Islamic bond. The US Army will not be able to put Mohamed’s culture, or calvary, on an Oklahoma reservation.

If you ask a brass hats about military success today, they will argue about how bad things might get without small wars. What doesn’t happen is now a measure of effectiveness at DOD.

Victory is off the table.

Choosing Sides

The Saudi/Muslim 9/11 surprise attack on New York radically changed the threat matrix for the American national security community. Islamic terrorism and small wars came to dominate the rhetorical and funding agenda. Coincidentally, at the turn of this century, America was still dependent on Arab oil.

Choosing between oil or justice has always been a no brainer for both American political parties.

To this day, only Shia state sponsors like Iran are held accountable. The Sunni Islamic majority, the actual authors of most terror and Islamist atrocity, still enjoy permanent petro-chemical and fiduciary immunities.

The global struggle with Islam is compounded by a long-standing religious rift. The Sunni/Shia schism is a classic, if not definitive, zero-sum religious war; no certain winners, yet a permanent potential for unlimited infidel and apostate casualties.

The allied Intelligence Community and DOD have now successfully parsed Sunni political Islam from terror too, creating a free fire zone for *Jihad* in Europe, South Asia, the Middle-East, and now North Africa. Inertia here is staggering. Islamic terror now justifies an unlimited DOD budget for a series of small wars that the Pentagon has no intention of winning.

Letting Muslims, especially state sponsors of Islamism, off the hook for political terror is a little like watching a replay of Nuremberg show trials where most German nationals and National Socialism got a pass from clueless allied Cold Warriors.

Political ideologies like National Socialism, Communism, and now Islamism matter because ideology motivates.

Indeed, the Sunni *Jihad* is about to succeed in Afghanistan after nearly a half century of American operational inertia. Alas, the next Taliban target in South Asia is probably the Islam bomb in Islamabad.

When Afghanistan falls again, Nuclear Pakistan is but one bullet away from regime change. Imagine a world where both Sunni and Shia Islamists have nuclear arsenals.

Cold War Redux

Taliban victory in Afghanistan is the step-child of the Cold War with the Soviet Union.

Ironically, both Americans and Russians were motivated by different, yet synergistic, illusions in South Asia. Moscow

thought it was fighting Islamic subversives while America believed it was financing *Mujahadeen*, alleged anti-Soviet “freedom fighters.”

Moscow prudently bailed out of Kabul after ten years; while Washington, after a half century, clings to the Taliban tar pit, at this point a tactical and fiscal black hole.

We now hear that CIA “death [squads](#)” are back in business in Afghanistan, replaying a desperate tactic that didn’t work earlier in Vietnam. These teams, while nominally Afghan, are trained and led by ex-special force “contractors,” hired and paid by CIA. In such operations; secrecy, deception and deniability are wing men.

Former “freedom fighters,” the *Mujahadeen* of South Asia now thrive under names like *Taliban*, *Al Qaeda*, and *ISIS* courtesy of CIA, DOD, and the American taxpayer.

Recall 1990 and Frank Fukuyama’s “end of history” when the old Soviet Union imploded whilst Europe and America still couldn’t take yes for an answer. As the Soviet Union disintegrated midst late 20th century succession turmoil in Russia, Washington and Brussels dismantled the old Warsaw Pact, Yugoslavia, and any chance of *rapprochement* with Moscow.

Pushing NATO to the new Russian frontier, absent a Warsaw Pact threat, was not just provocative: it was myopic on a cosmic scale. The fail in Europe was compounded by playing a bogus Russian card in domestic American politics, exposing the corruption and partisan politics at DOD, the Intelligence Community and at the Justice Department.

Trust in federal institutions is now strategic road kill. Institutions like DOD, the FBI, and CIA are now, apparently, above reproach or accountability. What was once occasional CYA spin from a few apparatchiks is now a seditious, divisive Beltway culture.

Withal, given the advancing pincer of Islamic and Chinese imperialism, Russia would have made a far better ally than Mecca or Beijing on any day of a now perilous 21st Century.

The China Syndrome

Over the years, tactical “whack-a-mole” with Islam and operational roulette with Russians in Europe provided a plethora of strategic opportunities for the Chinese. Whilst Washington and the EU ignored or appeased the Islamist threat, and reinvented another pointless Cold War with Russia, Beijing made the most of American foreign policy folly – and cupidity.

Strategic myopia in Europe and America provides the Chinese with a bumper crop of low hanging fruit. Beijing is now selling Uncle Sam the rope with which America might be hung.

Literally, China now owns the global strategic initiative, if not the global market place. Ironically, Covid-19, a timely Chinese export, put the United States, already dependent on Chinese imports, into the worst economic and political tailspin in a century.

Conspiracy theorists will now feed off the Covid-19 import controversy for decades.

Key Judgements

China, not Russia, now owns: American retail, US debt, Silicon Valley *et al*, and at least one major American political party. The Beltway political demographic most likely to accommodate or please Beijing and Mecca is poised to get back to the future – back to business as usual before 2016.

American foreign policy is now hostage to Chinese market Communism on the global left and Islamic theocracy on the global right. For those who still believe in candor or truth, it should be clear that domestic and foreign

totalitarians are not just trending – they're winning.

We are apt to dismiss deceit and fake news as inconsequential, especially after the cumulative consequences become strategic. Deception at home is a very expensive lie. Only fools support regimes or institutions that cannot be trusted.

Trust, after all, is truly the only indispensable domestic or foreign policy defense resource.

Epilogue: The Wages of Candor

The long cruel saga of General Mike Flynn, former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, is the exception that proves the new rule, especially in American Intelligence. There may have been a time when the US Intelligence Community spoke truth to power. That standard died with the advent of modern political Islam and Obama/Clapper/Brennan era apologetics.

The summary execution of Flynn's career and reputation is a testament to wages of truth on all matters Islamic or Russian. Flynn was [fired](#) first at DIA for suggesting that political Islam was a bigger menace than any single or collective variety of terror.



And mufti did not spike Mike Flynn's guns.

In a July, 2016 interview with the *Intercept*, General Flynn asserted in no uncertain terms that unreformed Islam was politics in a religious burka. "Let's face it: right now,

we're losing, and I'm talking about a very big war (with Islam), not just Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan,"

With that bold declaration about truth and war, Flynn graduated from infidel to apostate.

When Donald Trump dared select General Flynn as national security advisor, he and Trump became existential threats to IC *nomenklatura*. Both he and the president became clear and present dangers to a deeply partisan and vindictive deep state.

Both had to go; first Flynn, then Trump. With 30 years of Intelligence experience, General Flynn was especially dangerous because he knew where all the bodies were buried.

Subsequently, the Intelligence Community, the Justice Department, and media hacks on the left recalibrated their guns for Michael Flynn. Sadly, the Flynn execution was more than a bit of a circular firing squad.

As team Obama left the national stage midst a blitz of coup attempts, like the Flynn targeting, the entire national security community, including DOD, was compromised, reduced to a smoking pile of collateral debris. At the moment, we are left with an inert national defense megaplex that few can believe or trust.

Fake news is now underwritten, officially, by fake Intelligence.

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