

The Business of Small Wars

by G. Murphy Donovan (August 2017)



*“Capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them” –
Lenin*

Once upon a time wars had beginnings and ends, official declarations of active combat followed by official treaties of truce or surrender. Indeed, words like “victory” and “defeat” had meaning in another era. Enemies had names too, names that identified empires, a region, a religion, a nation/state, or even race; names like Greeks, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Vikings, Saracens, Mongols, Protestants, Catholics, Turks, Germans, Italians, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese. and more recently, the Vietnamese.

In the past, wars had goals and intended consequences too. All that changed with the advent of the 21st century.

The face of war is no longer ethnic or national and surely not religious. Indeed, the only “enemies” that might be flogged with nationality are Russians, occasionally the Chinese if you speak quietly enough. Oddly enough, Europeans and Americans

are not at war with either Russia or China. The West is, however, at undeclared war in more than a few small venues, at war with Islamists of several stripes. Small wars with Sunnis predominate while the proxy war with Shiite Iran is garnished with nuclear potential.

Still, only Russians are routinely patronized or slandered as belligerents; indeed, sanctioned with penalties for behaviors more characteristic of Washington than Moscow. Few if any Muslim autocracies are burdened with draconian sanctions no matter how badly they behave.

Withal, Americans [routinely](#) interfere with foreign elections, create clandestine provocations, sponsor [coups](#), and violate national sovereignty on a global scale from [Latin](#) America to Eastern Europe to [Africa](#) to the Middle East and on to South Asia. By last count, since 1945, the United States has [sponsored](#) soft or hard coups in no fewer than 55 sovereign states, a fourth of the countries that make up the United Nations. [Ukraine](#) and Libya are the latest American-sponsored coup casualties. Still we are led to believe that Russia is the primary threat to global comity.

Indeed, we are told, by folks who should know better, that clandestine and overt imperialism is a Slavic gene. Genetic authorities like General James Clapper, erstwhile DNI, have [said](#) as much about the Russians.

[In the world of real accounting, Russians and the Chinese are the fiduciary or budgetary logic for first world wars that no one in the West intends to fight. The Russians are necessary

to justify proliferate Pentagon spending on big ticket weapons systems. Concurrently, the US Department of Defense and affiliated contractors now provide arms to friend and foe alike in various Muslim small wars.]

Throughout, war in the *Ummah* is cloaked in euphemism. Real or active hostiles, mostly Muslims these days, cannot be specified by race, sect, or nationality as if none of these things mattered. Race and ideology only seem to matter if the target is a Russian strawman.

Ideology apparently doesn't matter in small kinetic wars with third world or "developing" countries, especially if toxic belief is some metastasized variant of Islam.

Changing Muslim "hearts and minds" apparently doesn't cover primal practices either: behaviors like child abuse, misogyny, harems, slavery, pedophilia, or the beheading of apostates and infidels. Putative US "partners" like Saudi Arabia, and lesser Arabian potentates, still sponsor international terror and domestic rituals like throat-slitting and stoning. Human rights atrocities in the *Ummah* are routinely ignored or romanticized in the name of culture or religious moral equivalence.

Mohammed, the Koran, and Islam are not merely beyond reproach or criticism. The sacred troika has been [stricken](#) from public political debate of any sort. It seems that only Muslims are qualified to judge Islamic crimes. All public discussion of bad actors is now cloaked with code words like "extremist, radical, or militant." Obvious ties to Muslims and Islamic

ideology do not seem to matter.

The faith and ethnicity of even the worst Muslim madmen are literally unmentionable.

Somehow, any Islamist fanatic who behaves badly is not a true Muslim either. Europe and America are not at war with Arabs, Persians, or Muslims no matter the obvious ideological, national, or ethnic affiliations of bomb throwers or jihadists.

The politically-correct view of a fourth of the world's population is that Islam is an ideology of "peace," no matter the mountain of evidence to the contrary. Believing that the *jihad* is a peace movement is another triumph of hope over experience. Moral equivalence is the now the burka of criminal immunity.

Allied science and Intelligence, presumably fact-based disciplines, seem to be useless for peeling the Islamic onion. Indeed, candid analysis of historical or contemporary Islamic ideology or behaviors is, at a minimum, risky business.

The difference between Islam and the rest

All the great challenges of war and peace are moral imperatives, as Immanuel Kant might say, to choose between right and wrong. Inclination, purpose, and ideology, unfortunately, have little to do with correct choice. Morality is duty. Correct behavior, even in war, is an obligation, ironically, only for those who believe in rationality – and civilization.

Kant provided Europe with the best metric for defining true civilization. Civilization is a cultural requirement to distinguish between can, could, and "should."

The chasm between Islam and the West is this difference between ethics and morality. Ethics are imposed or external rules for conduct. Morality is a personal choice based on reasonable experience and evolved principles of right and wrong. Historical hat tip to Erasmus, then Kant.

Thus, we can appreciate how Islamic behavior might be "ethical" under Koranic dictates and still be abhorrent to non-Muslims, cultures with more evolved moral sensibilities. Islam is about religious ethics and rules, a culture largely governed by external mandates, not logical choices or conscience.

Therein is the rub. Reason, logic, morality, and derivative legal traditions of the Greco/Roman/Judeo/Christian culture are not necessarily the stuff of imperial Islam. Indeed, the rise and colonial success of Islamism starting in the 7th Century could be seen as a reaction to the perceived decadence of neo-classical civilization. Absolute Islam was, and still might be, the antithesis of the evolved liberties, freedom, logic, reason, and the science of classic, Judeo/Christian, and post-*Moriscos* Europe.

The Roman Mediterranean littoral, a decaying empire, was ripe for the taking and one could argue that that struggle has continued in fits and starts for the last fourteen centuries.

The so called “Dark Ages” between the rise of Islam and the European Renaissance was the price that history paid, in part, for original Islamic cultural recidivism.

History always moves on two axis, forward is as likely as backwards. Apologies to Hegel, Marx, and Fukuyama.

The iconoclasm of groups like ISIS and *Al Qaeda* today speaks volumes about how many Muslims, in tradition and practice, think about non-Islamic cultures, especially Jews. In general, tolerance and diversity are not Islamic virtues. Muslim ideological and military *jihād* is a tradition with deep roots in world history.

The quest for “caliphate” today is a replay of earlier religious globalism, now run amok on an unprecedented scale.

The recidivist strain of Mohamed’s vision is dominant in Arab Islam; indeed, it is the motive behind many small wars and global terrorism today. In fact, the evidence that recidivist Islam is [financed](#) by wealthy Sunni Arabs, and to a lesser degree by Shiite Persians, is now overwhelming. Inspired by a seminal Persian religious coup in 1979, similar theocratic politics have spread like a virus in the Sunni world.

Still, apologists will argue that American and European imperial or colonial interventions and associated misadventures in the Muslim world energizes or stimulates the global *jihād*. There is probably some truth in all of these explanations.

So where does all of this leave us?

If the ethics of institutional Islam are incompatible with the evolved moral and legal traditions of European culture, what is the state of play? Clearly, the West is not winning the kinetic battles, those small wars and the more elusive “war on terror.” American generals now openly admit to failure on both fields of battle.

Yet, the same EU/NATO nexus that huffs, puffs, and expands to confront a manufactured Russian threat trembles before the Islamic Fifth Column in Europe and most of the religious small wars in the *Ummah*. Faced with Islamic imperialism or Islamic terror, the EU and NATO are paper tigers.



Business as usual.

More ominous still is moral and legal decay, where evidence suggests that Euro/American values are themselves metastasizing, becoming more alien, more like the toxic ethics that sustain Islam. Surely immigrants are a very large toe on

the EU and NATO cultural scale. Nonetheless, the real sea-change seems to be in American willingness to throw prudence and law to the winds in several venues which now include Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

- After two decades or more of warfare in South Asia, drug war lords and the *Taliban* are more prosperous than ever. Afghanistan might now officially be designated a narco state where culture has been reduced to chronic [pedophilia](#) in Kabul and [drug-addled](#) theocracy in the countryside. Unlike the Soviets, American generals can't see the wisdom of cutting losses with Afghan "partners" in yet another Great Game where America now loses in slow motion.
- Syria goes from bad to worse. US regime change policy has now morphed into outright invasion and intervention. There is no legal or moral basis at home or abroad to send American troops or aircraft into a sovereign country like Syria. The [proxy](#) fight with Russia, an invited guest in Syria, has now become a bizarre variety of nuclear "chicken." The political class in Washington, right and left, seems to be itching for a fight with Russia. Syria is likely to provide the pitch.
- Since the execution of Saddam Hussein, Iraq has transformed from a Sunni dictatorship into a dysfunctional Shia client state. Without US troops, air support, and logistics, Iraq is sure to fall prey to the religious and ethnic [divisions](#) that have been exacerbated by three consecutive puerile wars in as many decades. If and when Americans leave, Iraq will probably be sliced and diced by the sectarian and ethnic warlords that now litter the landscape in the Levant. Iraq and Syria now have Libya potential.
- The Emirates have always been a rare mix of decadence, religion, and absolutist duplicity. On the one hand, Qatar hosts the largest US military base in Arabia. On the other hand, Qatar is now ostracized and sanctioned

for its support of terrorists abroad. Anti-Qatari recriminations are led by Saudi Arabia. Qatar's real offense is *Al Thani* apostasy. The royal family in Qatar is a little too cozy with Turks, Persians, and cheeky Shiites.

Uncle Sam is working both sides of the street in Qatar; at once chastising the *Al Thanis* for underwriting Islamism while sweetening the *jihad* pot with \$15 billion worth of American made F-15 fighters.

Concurrently, the Pentagon is selling Saudi Arabia all the legitimacy that oil-money can buy. The new Saudi military aid package tops [\\$350 billion](#), a whopping windfall for American defense contractors. All the while, Riyadh is the principal exporter of neo-fascist Wahhabism, the darkest side of Sunni political theology. Lest we believe that the House of Saud will use US weapons to fight Islamist terror, think again.

At the moment, Saudi Arabia is using British and American advisors and weapons to bomb Yemen, the most desperate nation on the planet, back to the Stone Age. The great Yemini sin is Shiism. They are not sufficiently Sunni.



Beltway rationalizations for arming the Islamist enemy are beyond cynical. Apparently, with victory off the table, Pentagon and Defense nabobs believe that jobs and arms sales are acceptable substitutes. When the threat is not “existential,” why not make a few bucks off both sides in all those small and “long wars?” Conflicts have become revenue streams.

Concurrently, Washington has inserted itself into the bottomless pit of the most intractable religious schism in recorded history. The Muslim tilt was bad enough, now America is throwing in with the worst of Sunni sectarians. Europe is already caught between a rock and shellshock, the need to suppress an Islamist Fifth Column at home while keeping the wider Sunni *jihad* at bay.

Surely the West wallows in a strategic vacuum, but military malaise now transcends operational competence and strategy. American generals haven’t had a coherent plan to resolve these matters since Jimmy Carter was a plebe. Military stasis is compounded now by political vacuity, and deficits in the moral

realm. Islam has been granted moral equivalence by fiat, a flawed assumption that Muslim political ideology and praxis is no better or worse than any other religio/political code of ethics or behavior.

The moral evasion here suggests that the Islamist proselytizer is no different than a Quaker or a Methodist preacher who might sport a beard, caftan, and headgear. Equating all religions, or any religion, with Islam creates a civic hazard that is validated by barbarous evidence on a daily basis.

The lawless ethics of modern political Islam is now mimicked by politicians in Brussels and Washington. Strategic vacuums have been filled by a suicidal business ethics where Europeans and Americans seem willing to sell the rope with which Muslim jihadists will hang the West.

Money talks while common sense walks. A culture that cannot find true north on its moral compass is bound to be devoured by history.

Islam and its adherents are accountable for neither belief nor action. The fusion of church and state is at the heart of the Muslim dilemma. If the West is to win the war of ideas in the "clash of civilizations," it needs to worry less about the ethics of tactics and more about the morality of strategy, and the hazards of "business ethics" becoming a default setting – at home and abroad.

Any kid in the East Bronx knows that the big dog on the block sets the tone for the neighborhood. The example is set at the top in all cultures large and small. America is still the big dog in the global pack. Uncle Sam needs to raise his game, set

some boundaries in the marketplace of ideas – and the business of small wars.



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