

The Suicide Strategy of the West

Americans, it has been observed, have little or no strategic sense. *Strategy*, as any schoolboy used to know, comes from a Greek word meaning “generalship” in the broad sense of the art of “projecting and directing” (OED) a campaign as opposed to the tactical abilities needed to marshal men on the battlefield. The American can-do approach makes us great tacticians, whether in business, in scholarship, or in foreign policy. Show us whom to kill, what dissertation topic to tackle, or what regime to topple, and we can do the job effectively, but ask us to consider all the consequences of a war, grasp an historical period in its fullness, or develop a long-range plan for dealing with the Islamic world, and too many of us act like the spoiled corporate executives whose concern for the company is limited to the quarterly earnings statements that determine their compensation.

Donald Rumsfeld, to take only one example, appears to be a superb tactician, both in business and in the Department of Defense, but his hopeless ignorance of history and foreign affairs, combined with his apparent inability to think beyond the end of the fighting, has not served us especially well in Iraq. When the insurgency sputters out, as it will inevitably, and Iraqi politicians can go into the bazaar and pretend to believe one another’s lies long enough to form a makeshift government, the problems we have created for ourselves will have only begun.

The hopelessness of American strategic thinking has been on gaudy display in our approach to Islamic insurgencies in the Balkans. In Bosnia and Kosovo, neoconservatives and neoliberals showed their determination to back Osama bin Laden and his allies in their campaign to restore Islamic rule. And just as leading neoconservatives formed a committee to support the Islamic terrorists in Bosnia, the Podhoretzes, Bill Kristol, Richard Perle & Co. are now leading a committee that supports the Islamic terrorists in Chechnya. They—and the administration they are leading by the nose—are also keen on Turkey’s entrance into the European Union, a subject that has provoked little discussion and no debate within the small cadre of politicians who

rule the nearly 300 million helots who pay their salaries.

Turkey’s defenders insist that she is an ally of the United States—and Israel—and, while not perfect, the Turkish government is a shining example of democracy in the Middle East. Most Americans accept this argument because they know only two things about modern Turkey: first, that she is a secular state, a bulwark against Islamism; second, that she is a nationalist state, the very opposite of the Ottoman Empire. There once was some truth in both assertions; today, however, they are more false than true. The ruling party of Prime Minister Erdogan, the Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish acronym AK) is explicitly Islamist, though the prime minister himself has learned to moderate his rhetoric since 1998 when he was sentenced to ten months in prison for reading an inflammatory Islamic poem containing the lines “The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers . . .”

Erdogan’s critics wonder if his newfound “moderation” reflects a change of heart, as opposed to a tactic aimed at pleasing the power behind the government—namely, the military. But, while the old-guard generals are still hewing to the secular line, many younger officers are not immune to the lure of the old religion. Not long ago, I spoke with a teacher in a school for officers’ children. The school, naturally, did not acknowledge Islamic holidays, but, nonetheless, a high proportion of students always managed to become ill on those days so that they could stay home.

The AK is a moderately nationalist party, but this does not preclude an ambition to restore the glories of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire has been gone since World War I, but it is hard to have a conversation with a Turkish political intellectual without hearing something like this: “Of course, nobody wants to restore the Ottoman Empire, but, I must confess, we knew how to rule the Arabs, and, under Ottoman rule, the turbulent Balkans were quiet.” Imagine if a German politician were to say, “Now, I don’t want to restore the Third Reich, but

Hitler showed the French a thing or two and really kept the Jews in line.”

The Ottoman Empire’s vast complex of provinces stretching from North Africa to Budapest will never be rebuilt—not in the Middle East and not in Europe. Ever since the peoples of the Balkans expelled them, however, many Turks have dreamed of returning to Europe, either to get back the property they had stolen or, at least, to become a player on the Continent. Now, thanks to pressure from the United States and the stupidity of the leaders of the European Union, this dream may soon be realized.

The general dangers of including Turkey in Europe should be obvious to anyone: It brings the European frontier into the Middle East; it exposes all of Europe to a flood of Anatolian immigrants and legitimates the Islamization of Germany and France; and, by including a country whose Third World economy and level of education make Greece and Portugal seem like Germany, it threatens the jobs and economic stability of the entire Continent.

Those are serious enough reasons to oppose Turkish entrance into the European Union, but there is another, far more serious threat that post-Christian Europe does not wish to consider. Despite the secular Western veneer, Turkey remains a brutally repressive state that routinely persecutes Christians and is a source of anti-Christian terrorism. Since the Young Turk revolution led by Mustafa Kemal, Turkey has officially been a secular state, but that official move did not change the religious identity of the Turkish people, nor did it ameliorate the brutality of Turkish policy.

Since her establishment, Turkey has been a notorious violator of what are called “human rights”: Non-Turks have been periodically subjected to murder and ethnic cleansing; the press is censored, publications are shut down or destroyed, and journalists and opposition leaders are beaten and murdered. In March, an International Women’s Day demonstration in Ankara was suppressed by a squad of police who beat, bludgeoned, and kicked the misguided women. As little as we may sympathize with

international feminism, women have it particularly difficult in Turkey, where they are forbidden both the equal rights enforced in Western states *and* the right to wear religious clothing in government buildings—a law that effectively deprives Muslim women of their civil rights. And I do not know what to make of the justice minister's blanket statement that the Turkish police, like police everywhere, "have the right to use violence."

Despite a provision for religious liberty in the Turkish constitution, the government of Turkey has done everything it can to make the work of the Orthodox patriarchate difficult, if not impossible. Orthodox Greeks have been persecuted to the extent that only a handful are left throughout Turkey—only 20,000 in 1995, fewer still today. This ethnic cleansing, which has been going on continuously, is accomplished by a number of means, including discriminatory tax rates, confiscation of property, and the government's refusal to protect Christians from the periodic pogroms that have broken out. From this tiny Greek remnant, it is very hard to recruit more than a few priests. Nonetheless, the government insists that the patriarch must be a Turkish citizen. Imagine if the Italian government passed a law saying that only an Italian citizen could be pope.

In 1971, the government closed the patriarchate's seminary in Chalke and, in 1975, shut down the Church's printing press. Turkey has also been putting her greedy hands on the Church's property through various sorts of legal chicanery. In 1964, a secret law was passed stripping Greeks of the right to transfer property, invalidating gifts made to the Church by wealthy Greek businessmen who had to flee Turkey.

Turkey has also taken more direct measures to reduce the scope and importance of the Greek Orthodox Church: murder and mayhem. If we set aside the terrible events that followed World War I and concentrate only on what has happened since the end of World War II, there is still a dismal record of oppression, such as the events of September 6, 1955, when, in only six hours, a mob organized by government agents succeeded in destroying thousands of Greek shops, homes, schools, and all of the Greek newspapers in Turkey, or the brutal period of 1963-64, when the government forced the expulsion of 48,000 Greeks.

Anti-Christian fanatics are free to stage riots outside the patriarchate with

scarcely any intervention from the police, and, last October, someone lobbed a bomb into the patriarch's residence. Srdja Trifkovic and I had interviewed Patriarch Bartholomew not a year before that bombing. He was both diplomatic and irenic, but he was also frank in explaining the impossible circumstances in which he found himself—unable even to protect, much less restore, some of the most ancient monuments in Christendom.

Turkey naturally supported the Muslim takeover of Bosnia and the NATO bombing that supported them, just as she later supported the illegal U.S.-led attack on Yugoslavia in support of the Albanian Muslim terrorists in Kosovo. There was dissension among some Turkish politicians, who insisted that NATO did not do enough in bombing the Serbs. Turkish volunteers also played a prominent part in the terror campaigns against Christians in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Turkey's support for terrorists in the Balkans is indirect, but the same cannot be said for the government's actions on Cyprus, part of which it has occupied since 1974. During the invasion, about 200,000 Greek Cypriots were expelled from their homes, and, in 30 years of occupation, Turks have carried out exactly the same policies of terrorism and repression that characterized the later days of the Ottoman Empire: 500 churches have been destroyed, looted, or desecrated; over 40 have been turned into mosques.

The West's failure to resist the tide of Islamic terrorism is not a new story. When Mehmed II conquered Constantinople in 1453, he was encouraged by Renaissance intellectuals to think of himself as the emperor of the entire Roman world. He planned to make good on his claim by taking over what was left of Serbia, eliminating Hungary as a threat, seizing control of Albania and the Dalmatian Coast, from which he apparently intended to launch an invasion of Italy. If ever the West faced a threat, this was it.

To conquer Hungary, though, Mehmed would have to subjugate what was left of Serbia and take control of the Danube, which was guarded by the Hungarian-held fortress of Belgrade. He vowed that he would storm the citadel, conquer Hungary in two months, and eat his dinner peacefully in Buda. By the spring of 1456, Western leaders knew he was preparing a major expedition.

Sadly, the great crusading powers of

Western Europe—England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, the greatest Italian states—were either not interested or actively collaborating with the Turk. England and France were just mopping up after the Hundred Years' War, and France, even when she regained her strength and confidence, preferred to make a deal with the sultan. In the 16th century, François I made his infamous alliance with Sultan Suleyman against Emperor Charles V. France would aid the sultan in the conquest of Austria by simultaneously attacking. As a reward, France would receive Northern Italy, while Southern Italy, as a former possession of the Eastern Roman Empire, would be handed over to the tender mercies of the Turks.

Some Italian rulers would have deserved their fate. In 15th century Italy, Genova and Venice were hotly engaged in a contest to determine which could sell more of the West on better terms to their Turkish friends. When Janos Hunyadi and St. John of Capistrano finally drove Mehmed II from the walls of Belgrade, the victors discovered two Venetian ships, part of a contingent promised and outfitted by the Serene Republic for her Ottoman partner.

Today, the West is facing a challenge from Islam that is, perhaps, more serious than any we have faced since the days of Suleyman the Magnificent. Now as then, the West seems unable to make a united front to defend its interests. We have grown so accustomed to hearing our President refer to Islam as a "religion of peace" that we are hardly alarmed when we read of the massive numbers of Muslims living in Europe and North America. The West is once again its own worst enemy.

In the United States, the President makes grandiose speeches about waging a "War on Terror," but leading members of his own party have been subsidized by the Albanian terrorists in Kosovo, and one of the dominant conservative leaders in the Republican Party, Grover Norquist, has forged an alliance with Islamic groups that have transparent ties to terrorist organizations. Karl Rove says publicly that Norquist has done nothing wrong. Echoing Gertrude Stein, Rove dismisses the scandal with the quip, "There's no there there." This is like the child who hears a burglar and pulls the covers up over his eyes. Until American Christians learn to deny their votes to any party or politician who collaborates with the jihadists, they will have no one to blame but themselves. <C

At Concord
by David Middleton
—for W.B.C. and D.A.B.—

We sat at tables, gathered there by one
Who funds colloquia on liberty
Out of a great estate he left in death
To teach those truths that make a free man free.

Fourteen were northern, two up from the South
To read Thoreau on Walden and John Brown
And then debate before observers sent
To hear the points we made and write some down.

The conversation started well enough —
Closeness to nature, inwardness of life
We need apart from commerce, the retreat
Of self into a self beyond all strife.

But soon those old, deep fault lines reappeared,
Assaults of Reb on Yankee, Yank on Reb—
Communion with a solitary god
Spun like a dream out of the mind's dark web

Or else subordination to the true
Essence of that one Father-God of all
Transcended by an artless Emerson
Whose smiles glum Hawthorne thought could so appall.

Then as the final session reached its close
One southerner drew valid parallels
Between abortion and forced servitude
And said our rage should harrow both those hells.

Eyes rolled at first in silences last heard
In antebellum mansions where no voice
Dared question, like our liberal masters now,
Whose bullwhip tongues would lash us with “pro-choice!”

The “ontological status of the fetus”
Really unresolved? just “a clump of cells”?
The southerner fired back with one clean shot:
“That baby has a soul where Christ indwells.”

And so the talking ended with lines drawn
Along the Mason-Dixon once again,
Brown lauded for Kansas slaughterings to save
Those men whose unborn kin long knives have slain.

In Concord was no concord for Thoreau
Had left us to obey a “higher power”
Emancipating us from everything
But that which wills the will's unfettered hour.

The Rebels headed home fired up to march
Through Georgias of the North to win a war
On that same principle which freed the slaves
Or what else were the Yankees fighting for?