

August 19th, 2007

Homeland Security: what we need to know that politicians and pundits will never say (VII)

BY Stan Goff

Part 7

While the United States was in the process of breaking England to its will in the Sterling Zone and figuring out how to fill the newly emerging post-colonial voids in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia, Eurocommunism began gaining a popular foothold in places like Italy, Spain, France, and Greece. This did not sit well with Truman, whose administration had settled on a strict policy of “containing” communism, especially since communist-led governments — still following Moscow’s lead — were unlikely to go along with GATT. The additional benefit of anticommunism was to paint the communist political movement as a nearly-demonic threat as a means of justifying massive spending abroad to a war-weary American population, and to push Western Europe under a putative American security umbrella.

During the war, the most disciplined and tenacious of the underground resistance movements to Nazi occupation had been peopled and led by communists. This gave communism a positive reputation among the masses, and instilled the Eurocommunists with a sense of postwar political entitlement.

In Greece, as early as 1944, this resulted in an open conflict between the Greek monarchy and the Greek Communist Party’s resistance movement, the Democratic Army. By 1946, this conflict deteriorated into a full-scale civil war. In a typically cynical maneuver to protect Soviet national-interest strategies at the expense of other national communist parties, [Stalin had agreed in secret with Churchill in 1944 to cede Greece](#) to the British as an area of “influence.” When the civil war began, it began with British occupation still in place.

But as British influence was being displaced by American power, the Truman administration made the civil war in strategically-placed Greece a high priority. The [Comintern](#) was implementing a policy of abandonment in Greece; and the Americans stepped in with a new postwar paradigm that combined the military and economic goals of the Truman administration — [the Truman Doctrine](#).

Two ... ideas which had been crucial to the development of official thinking in important parts of the national security bureaucracy were... One... that the struggle in Greece was part of a global battle between economic systems... the President had delivered a speech at Baylor University in Texas in which he declared that the United States was “the giant of the economic world,” with the responsibility for setting “the future pattern of economic relations.” Posing the fundamental split in the world between “free enterprise” and “planning,” he strongly implied that the one led to peace while the other meant war. Two days before the President’s scheduled appearance before Congress, [White House Counsel] Clark Clifford came to [Secretary of State Dean] Acheson with a revision suggested in the White House to the effect that “continued chaos in other countries and pressure exerted upon them from without would mean the end of free enterprise and democracy in those countries and that the disappearance of free enterprise in other nations would threaten our economy and our democracy.” Acheson opposed the insertion of this ideological language on the grounds that it might embarrass American relations with the Socialist government of Great Britain. But a number of major advisers in the administration attached considerable importance to this point

If Clifford’s articulation of the economic conflict was too ideological for Acheson’s taste, his second suggestion smacked too much of realpolitik; Clifford wanted a reference in the speech to Greece’s strategic importance and to “the great natural resources of the Middle East.” When British Marshal Montgomery had asked the U.S. chiefs of staff in the fall of 1946 what value they attached to Middle Eastern oil, “their immediate and unanimous answer was-vital.” [War Secretary James] Forrestal was almost obsessed with the strategic importance of the area to the United States. But the State Department concluded that it would create an unfortunate impression if it appeared that the enunciation of the American Responsibility had something to do with oil. The administration

anticipated enough problems in distinguishing the new American relationship to the Mediterranean from Britain's imperial role. As it was, Acheson was asked some pointed questions in the hearings about possible connections between the President's dramatic announcement of America's new "responsibility" for the Eastern Mediterranean and the authorization two days earlier of the trans-Arabian pipeline. Acheson replied that there was none. The charge made by leftist critics and a few disappointed British imperialists that the Truman Doctrine was principally a piece of petroleum diplomacy is a serious distortion. Nevertheless, there is no doubt, as Stephen Xydis observes in his exhaustive study of the relevant documents, that one motive for the United States' intervention was to stabilize the area so as to "contribute to the preservation of American oil concessions there."

(Barnet, Richard, *Revolution and Intervention - The United States in the Third World*, 1968, p. 118)

American policy during the Greek Civil War, which lasted from 1946-49, and after, became an American foreign policy template. So did the rhetoric which accompanied these policies.

When President Truman announced the decision to help the Greek monarchy win the civil war, he stressed that the commitment was prompted by the "terrorist activities of several thousand armed men..."

(Barnet, p. 101)

The other claim was that other countries were funneling support to the Greek Communists (when in fact the Comintern had directed that they be left to their fate at the hands of the monarchy and its allies). Truman:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of the minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression of controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

Sound familiar? Of course, the actual post-Civil War government was anything but democratic. It was essentially a military dictatorship that allowed US investors free access to its national markets.

Structurally, the US participation in the Greek Civil War helped establish the first, tentative foreign policy apparatus for post-WWII interventions. It also inaugurated the tacit alliance between the US press and US imperial policy.

The press and the public immediately grasped that the Truman Doctrine was a watershed. The Washington Post clearly heard what the President was saying, and they thrilled to it. "He was asking America to be Atlas, offering to lead his country in that tremendous role."

"The epoch of isolation and occasional intervention is ended," was the exultant judgment of The New York Times. "It is being replaced by an era of American Responsibility." The next day the Times put the message even more clearly: "A new and positive foreign policy of worldwide responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order."

(Barnet, p. 122)

The Truman Doctrine prefigured the next four decades by confronting communist-led governments, but also by characterizing any and all *national liberation* movements as "communist." In the same way the Global War on Terror (GWOT) today becomes the blanket narrative behind which *all* US imperial-maintenance initiatives can hide, the Red Menace was the Evil One in this Manichean fable. And in the same way, the narrative

became in many respects self-fulfilling.

The American experience in Greece was formative, and set the US on a path that would be in many respects determinative until today. Communism *per se*, a political movement, was not the main issue; but it was an important narrative to divide the world into Good and Evil (which are *religious*, not ethical categories) as a quasi-permanent ideological backdrop for all US actions, foreign and domestic. The US would demonize the Communist Bloc, led by the USSR, then practice guilt-by-association against any entity that resisted the US diktat.

This is not to say that anticommunism was pure ploy. The fear of communism as a popular movement, by capitalists, had been tangible ever since 1917. It was fascism itself that was deployed to blunt the spread of revolution into the European metropolis in the 1930s, when the global depression was devastating precisely the people to whom communists most appealed — urbanized factory workers. Robin D. G. Kelley's historical account in [Hammer and Hoe - Alabama Communists during the Great Depression](#) described a now-forgotten militant Black Communist movement in the American South at that very time — one which coincided with the expansion of coal and steel production in the American South.

This movement came to be predominated by a particular organizational form, named Marxism-Leninism (a term coined by Stalin to suggest his own continuity thesis, from Marx to Lenin, to him). [Marxism-Leninism](#) was an organizational form (and I stress both words, “organizational” and “form” to differentiate it from ideological rhetoric) that was itself forged in civil war and defense against invasion; and what it did was militarize the movement, and eventually, whole societies. I will refer to this phenomenon as Karl Marx himself did — “barracks-socialism.”

Barracks socialism's advantage was that it was capable, within this form, of defending itself from attack, and of attacking. Given how this highly disciplined form appeared just as many nations were about to be drawn into the conflagration of WWII, the Marxist-Leninists were at a unique advantage in building resistance movements, like the ones in Greece, Yugoslavia, France, Italy, Spain, and China. When the war was over, these formations, now under central guidance from the Comintern, were left with a very high degree of credibility because of their performance against the Nazis and the Japanese during the war.

The rejection of GATT by the Comintern, then, sealed the deal on the Cold War. It was on; and Greece was a preview.

In a quasi-democracy like the US, political rhetoric has the tendency to begin as an instrumental lie then become a perceptual truism. The same bourgeois patriarchy that controls the levers of US power comes to believe its own rhetoric.

Bourgeois: Ruling class of productive property owners, including finance capitalists who effectively own and run banks and capital markets.

Patriarchy: A system of male (as male) power over women (as women). A system of sexual class, reinforced — like economic class — by economic, political, and cultural norms against a backstop of threatened violence against resistance.

Intervention in Greece took the nationalist desire for independence (from GATT, for example) and conflated it with Communism, a trick made easier by the fact that the most effective resistance movements in the wake of WWII were led by, or included significant numbers of, communists (*e.g.*, China, the most populous nation on earth).

Communists in China moved to the forefront of a national liberation struggle would succeed in seizing state power by 1950 (triggering the Truman administration to invade Korea under the auspices of the freshly-minted United Nations). It was also true in [Vietnam](#) (Indochina), [Algeria](#), [South Africa](#) (against the Boer regime), [Mozambique](#), [Angola](#), [Guinea-Bissau](#), [Congo](#), and [several others](#). In those instances where communists were not the dominant force within nationalists formations, the polarization of the Cold War would pit the US against national independence movements, driving them into alliances, tacit or overt, with the Soviets... who adopted a policy of provisional (and sometimes very reluctant) support for the nationalists.

Perhaps the most important thing to emphasize here — because it will hold true in later upheavals in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Iran — is that these revolutionary surges were not waged in order to establish Marxist-Leninist, or even small-S socialist, societies. This was understood even by the communists who

participated in them. These were movements primarily for *national* independence.

The conflation of national independence with communism, and the substitution of “competing ideology” for actual circumstances and motives in the mind of the American citizenry were deliberate obfuscations to support an American foreign policy that had hung its hat on anticommunism. The centrality of nationalism in these social struggles was thereby hidden from public consciousness here in the US, *where it remains hidden to this day*.

The principle Iraqi resistance to the United States-led occupation of Iraq is nationalist, and the [key nationalists are both Sunni and Shia](#). The secular Sunni resistance, which has forced the Americans to allow it to run Anbar Province (and [which is now in a shooting war against the so-called al Qaeda franchise](#), the [Islamic State in Iraq](#) (ISI)), is composed of nationalist formations.

Likewise, the most popular Shia formation in Baghdad is Muqtada al Sadr’s *Mahdi Army* is Iraqi-nationalist in its political identity. Yes, there are ethnic divisions in Iraq, but there are also many intermarriages, and — before the disruptions of provocateurs — many mixed neighborhoods.

Like African Americans, whose past ethnic identities might have been Congo or Ibo or Hausa, etc., the sustained common experience of colonial control paradoxically created a unifying identity and culture that was unique and separate (though a regional Kurdish community with an armed struggle ongoing in neighboring Turkey maintained a strongly-felt Kurdish national identity). In the case of African America, that process was pushed further by the forced separation from African communities and erasure-from-above of past ethnic identity; but the general dynamic is the same. Iraqi nationalism is real; and it is powerful. That is precisely the reason Sadr is considered so dangerous by the Americans; he has consistently called for Sunni-Shia and secular-Islamist *Iraqi* resistance to the occupation.

Once the post-WWII US had broken in its covert operations apparatus on Greece, it quickly turned its attention to the newly emerging independence movements, and left battered Britain to lose its own anti-independence struggle against India (the jewel in the crown of the former Sterling Zone).

Underestimating the power and attraction of post-colonial nationalism, and triumphant after Greece, the Truman administration launched down a disastrous path that would lead to Korea.

Another vast area populated by multiple ethnicities, that was forged into a common cause (and the culture of that cause) by foreign domination, was China.

In 1945, Truman immediately garrisoned Marines in China as part of the forced repatriation of Japanese occupation forces. In 1947, confident that the US-puppet President (General) Chiang Kai Shek — the son of a wine merchant — could function as China’s steward. Instead, the ambitious Chiang accelerated attacks against the war-weakened but popular Chinese Communists with all the force at his disposal, expanding a [civil war](#) between the Kuomintang and the CCP that began in 1927, and was put on hold occasionally only to fight Japanese.

Under guidance from the industrial-obsessed Comintern, led by the struggling and newly-minted Soviet Union, the Chinese Communists had tried basing themselves with China’s small, urban, industrial working class. This had rendered them vulnerable to Chiang’s *Kuomintang* (KMT, a national independence party established by Sun Yat Sen), and in 1927 Chiang massacred thousands of Communists in Shanghai. When Mao Zedong ascended to leadership, he abandoned the urban-centric strategy of the Comintern and elected to base the build-up of resistance in the vast rural areas of China. When the war against the Japanese occupation was over, and the civil war re-erupted, weakened as they were, Mao’s rural-centric organization paid off. Self-sustaining and dispersed, the forces of the Red Army were able to systematically encroach on the urban centers and choke them off.

While Chiang was reassuring his American patrons that all was under control, the “facts on the ground” created by the [protracted rural-based strategy of Mao](#) had turned the countryside into a great sponge that could soak up the brunt of Kuomintang attacks. In June 1950, this civil war culminated in the victory of the [Chinese Communist Party](#)’s *People’s Liberation Army*.

Truman, whose administration had been pursuing a delusional policy of negotiating a rapprochement between the KMT and the CCP — and who had Chiang as its equivalent to [Ahmad Chalabi](#) — was stunned. At home, Truman’s administration was being red-baited by the right-wing, as [McCarthyism](#) took hold, for being “soft on

communism.” As happens in the US, election cycles combine with this kind of masculinist baiting (being *soft on...* communism, drugs, crime, terrorism, etc.) to create a race to the bottom. Truman took the bait.

He set up a “[Federal Loyalty Board](#)” at home to spy on government employees; and he committed troops to fight in another post-Japanese-occupation civil war on the Korean Peninsula. In November 1950, Truman even threatened to drop an atomic bomb on China. That war was fought to a stalemate, with a truce (not an armistice) signed in June 1953. The use of conventional, direct military force had run headlong into a new post-WWII reality.

Meanwhile, Truman was following up on GATT.

End Part 7

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 4](#)

[Part 5](#)

[Part 6](#)

Stand by for Part 8

Permission to reprint online granted provided the repost links to the original at this site.

Posted by stan in [Analysis-Synthesis](#)

This entry was posted on Sunday, August 19th, 2007 at 11:49 am and is filed under [Analysis-Synthesis](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the comments [RSS 2.0](#) feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

Comments are closed.

© Copyright 2007, All work is the copyright of the respective creators.
Insurgent American, Theme based on design by [haran](#) and converted by [John Hesch](#).