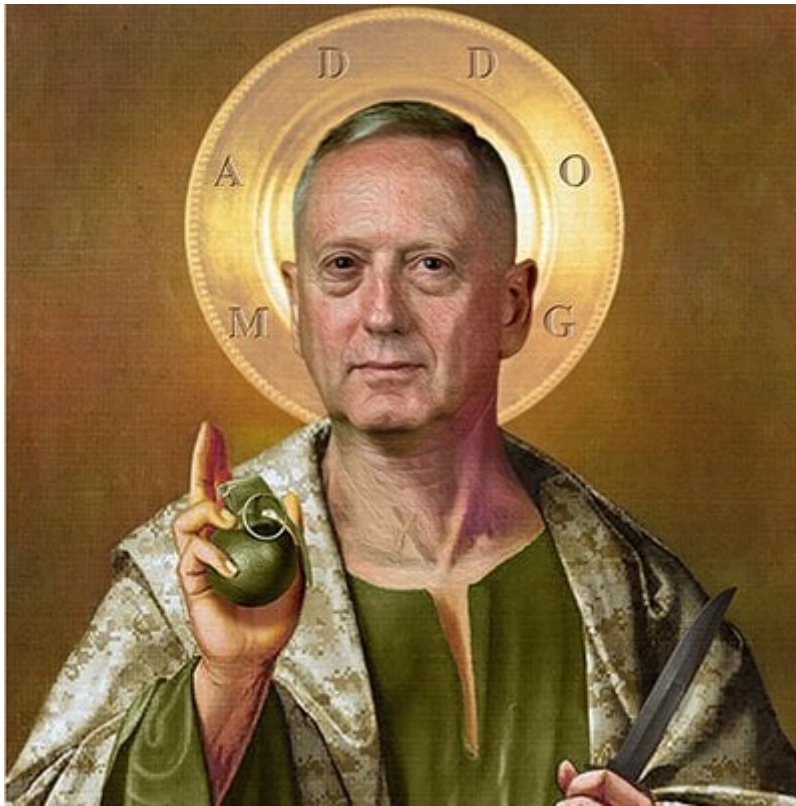


Pulling the Plug

by G. Murphy Donovan



“There are some assholes in the world that just need to be shot.” – James Mattis

Foreign policy in the Trump era is a tug-of-war, a test of wills between national pragmatists and global utopians. Binary equations might be simplistic, but if it has done nothing else, the Trump agenda has exposed the venal politics and pratfalls of “social” democracies, here and in Europe. The contest is a struggle, as irony would have it, between voices arguing for change and the “business as usual” crowd.

Conventional strategy in the west is nothing short of Kafkaesque. Imperial NATO expands and picks fights with Russia whilst sponsoring regime change fiascos in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria, and Libya, just to name a few. Absurd attempts to suppress Muslim militants has become a game of “whack-a-mole” while Islamic state sponsors are feted as allies or

“partners.” Persian, Arabian, and Pakistani terror sponsors now enjoy a kind of kinetic immunity while the rest of Mohamed’s flyover country has become a free-fire zone for American nerds.

Midst all the hyperbole, hysteria, and faux news about national strategy, Trump clearly represents the progressive side of the equation. An entrepreneurial pragmatist, he is a Scot who relishes a good fight. Who would have thought that a brash, if not vulgar, developer from Queens would take on the moribund elites of two nanny state political parties and fight both sides, so far, to a standstill?

Indeed, standoff might be the operative word in the run up to 2020.

Donald Trump ran on an agenda of innovation and still he seeks to implement those changes. Irony now approaches absurdity as the traditional American left, including apparently the Pentagon, digs in to defend the status quo tooth and nail. Name the issue: border control, the wall, immigration, alliances, strategic threat, small wars, foreign aid, military assistance, regime change, or trade.

None of Trump’s skepticism on these issues was ever a secret.

That campaign admonition to “drain the swamp” was a shot across the Beltway establishment bow, right and left. America could be “great again,” claimed Trump, if Americans would abandon post-WWII global socialist fantasies and embrace the verities of enlightened national pragmatism. For Trump, self-interest, call it nationalism if you must, is a virtue.

If prosperity matters, self-interest is indeed the tide that floats all entrepreneurial boats.

Trump literally suggests that we do what’s best for America first and then worry about all the many *sierra hotels* posturing at the United Nations. In many ways Donald Trump is

a rough-hewn incarnation of Adam Smith and the 18th century fiscal "Enlightenment" that made the United Kingdom and the United States great to begin with.

Alas, oxymorons like democratic or Christian socialism now litter the "allied" landscape. Hyphenated socialism, the leaf litter from the defunct *Internationale*, inspired a host of globalist movements like the United Nations, the European Union, and NATO. Other internationals like the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for African unity (OAU), the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Arab League followed. Many official globalist alliances have racial or religious predicates.

Non-governmental global organizations are worse still, the BDS, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Muslim Students Association are examples.

Globalism in all of its historical variants has three milestones; first zeal, then coercion, and finally implosion. Eric Hoffer put it best. "Every great cause begins as a movement, then becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket." The United Nations, as an example, is already a destination *sierra hotel* for failed politicians from around the globe.

If the issues are military security or regional stability, most globalist organizations are just expensive boy's clubs, tree houses for mustabators. Even organizations like NATO did little in the Korean or Vietnam conflicts and now do even less in the various Muslim small wars, especially the so-called "war on terror."

In recent combat; the commanders are Yanks, the money is American, the airpower and the casualties are usually volunteer GIs too. Germany, arguably the globalist doyenne of Brussels, is the reigning queen of open borders, a policy which, ironically, may allow religious fascists to do to

Europe in the 21st Century what Hitler's political fascists could not do in the last century.

Angela Merkel may have a lot to answer for when the fascist army of God marches through the Brandenburg Gate.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation might be the worst globalist Trojan horse. The OIC has 57 Muslim member States (nearly 2 billion citizens), 56 of which also party in New York at the UN. Islam's oligarchs fund little of the fight against terror, fight few of the many Muslim small wars, and provide little help with migrant, refugee, or border security problems.

Indeed, the Muslim migrant blitz across Europe is a sponsored, mirror image of the "*el norte*" surge in the Americas. The policy issues in both cases are not fences, borders, resources, or racism.

European and American national sovereignty is the consensus target for both the Catholic left and Islamist right.

Muslim and South American satraps take little responsibility for their own citizens, refugees, or migrants. Trump argues, not without merit, that the US would do best for the world by doing better for Americans at home. Trump is not talking about isolationism; he's talking about protecting and reprioritizing American national interests.

If border control and associated crime imports are issues, America is a train wreck. If national infrastructure is a yardstick, the potholes of strategic neglect are manifest on every road, bridge, rail line, tunnel, and dog walk from east to left coast. If military campaigns, military assistance, and foreign aid are relevant, America hasn't won a real fight since 1944.

Indeed, the very words "success" or "victory" seem to have been stricken from contemporary American strategic

vocabulary.

Even those 20th Century wins would have been impossible without the Russians, a former strategic ally now demonized by both political parties. The small wars era is now most notable for chronic foreign policy myopia: fey allies, ephemeral tactics, flaccid operational arts, and default strategies.

Success is now defined by exception, what has not happened. We are successful because we have not experienced a nuclear war. Never mind that we have been hip deep in the Sunni/Shia quagmire since 1948, with no end in sight.

2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the modern Muslim *jihad*. America and Europe underwrite the carnage by selling the priciest military toys on the planet to Sunni partisans.

Unfortunately, armaments are one of a few exports where America still competes in the world economy. Indeed, the American strategic establishment today is, in the main, an army of sutlers where ethics like planning, programming, budgeting, procurement, and gun running have replaced erstwhile values like duty, honor, country – and victory.

Vapid strategy is now calculated by half measures; euphemisms like peace keeping, stability, confidence and nation building. Clichés like “mission accomplished” have become code to flit from one pyrrhic 3rd World sanguinary boondoggle to the next.

Small wars have no beginnings or end dates just body bags, deficit spending, and bigger national cemeteries. Real battles are now budget fights, inside the Pentagon on the E-Ring. Old generals never die anymore either, they just become Beltway bandits or fake news pundits.

General James Mattis, USMC, comes to mind as we speak of default policies. Mattis came to prominence at DOD as a tough guy. Indeed, they called him “mad dog” Mattis. Alas, even old soldiers have trouble finding their steeds or their spurs

nowadays.

The Mattis bark turned out to be worse than his bite.

The former top Marine probably hedges his bets, believing that the White House will host a different CINC in two years. Mattis may be correct, but the Department of Defense and America's security will not be any better in the wake of his terminal tour on the E-Ring.

Three issues apparently inspired Mattis to fall on his sword; rapprochement with Russia, allied burden sharing, and small wars in the *Ummah*. Trump's sentiments on these issues were always prescient. And in all cases, Trump the amateur, exhibits more common sense, if not the policy high ground, on all three.

Collectively, new thinking has been wanting at State and DOD for decades.

The Russians do make better allies than enemies. NATO partners are military security dead beats. EU member states do not pay their fair share of NATO costs. If two world wars proved nothing else, those blood baths demonstrated that smug and complacent West Europeans will do as little as possible as long as possible without a swift kick in their six o'clock.

Trump is correct about those Muslim wars too, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria included. America does not have any answers for an Islamic world that is unwilling to address the Shia/Sunni suicide pact and the many cultural pathologies that litter either side of that chasm. Muslim terror is a symptom not a cause.

Wars with fanatics, and their state sponsors, not prosecuted quickly and conclusively, inevitably end badly. ISIS is just another campaign, not the war. The larger global clash of civilizations abides.

Good soldiers know how to take orders, follow orders, and make the best of plans, even those with which they may disagree. Resignation is always an option too; alas, not usually the stuff of heroes midst several ongoing wars.

Lyndon Johnson quit under fire in the middle of the Vietnam War. That fateful decision made Nixon and Kissinger possible and the War in Southeast Asia droned on for another seven years to an ignominious end.

When Trump tries to pull the plug on failed policy, chaps like Mattis at the Pentagon keep filling the tub with inertia.

Going wobbly under fire is usually the road not taken by devil dogs. Good leaders, especially Marines, know how to prevail – or cut their losses.

Secretary James Mattis, like Secretary Robert McNamara before him, did neither.

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