

Confessions of a Military Futurist

Recently, an editor for an e-newsletter with over one million subscribers said my October 2001 op ed, "One Front: Two Wars" was "amazingly prescient." But, then he said it made sense because I was a student of history. You must study a lot of history and other subjects to be a 'futurist'. Not that the past will repeat itself. But that history helps understanding the dynamics of human events and what 'drivers' internally and externally make history happen.

I started studying 'long range planning' in graduate school in 1979. In 1990 it became my day job with occasional other tasks dealing with here and now analysis. Each situation – past, present and future - is unique in history. Yet, taking all situations holistically provides a perspective on predicting the range of options from today's dynamics. These dynamics don't mature in a straight line but more like a tree branch with each extension being a plausible outcome. General predictions for outcomes can work pretty well.

When I was the Team Leader for the third 'Army 21' study (unpublished) in 1990-92 my bosses ordered me to edit out only two things. The references to using Army forces in domestic disturbances and political problems with service ban on homosexual behavior were red-lined. Funny how the Regular Army in riots came true a month after we finished (92) and President Clinton's early executive order caused upheaval over homosexuality (93). Our study projected to 2015 and sometimes I feel like the news is reading a script I've already seen.

Also, I was one of a few voices, and mine had no microphone, that said a world-wide ideological challenge to the U.S. could arise. It would be the expression of grievances from the Have Nots against the Haves couched in the identity of a civilization. I'd built on Huntington's Clash of Civilizations. It could have been Islamic or Hindu as well as Chinese or African. I suspected Islamic was more likely to ignite the passions when an idea resonates. Yet, I called it 'Gandhi With Guns' to capture the dynamic of anti-colonialism that Gandhi unleashed with a much different tone.

In 1997 I was the Team Leader to develop the enemy for a U.S. Army future war game of 'less than vital interests'. The enemy, called 'Orange' instead of the usual 'Red', was based in the Aceh province on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. Orange was an Al Qaeda-like insurgency with world-wide reach. The war game directors emphasized the criminal activities financing the organization. They fussed in pre-game preparation to not make the enemy too Muslim. But, the Muslim identity was the unifying factor for Orange as it is for the Islamists, regardless of what Christian apologists and other Muslims say about Islamists.

I lead the team creating the first 'Red' for these Army After Next wargames, so I advised several Red Commanders and was the Red Commander in the 1999 game. We thought up asymmetric attacks against the U.S. and allies. We discussed using civilian airliners, but with targets other than the Twin Trade Towers. When I heard the first radio report on 9-11 I guessed what was up. However, I had estimated that we would not be attacked

until the 2005-10 timeframe. Likewise, attacks on tourists in Egypt weren't a surprise.

The point of the preceding isn't self promotion. It's an illustration of why I say what I say. Which leads me to the bottom line. There is a key dynamic at work around the world worth noting.

The dynamic is how wars change through time. Wars eliminate the fence-sitters in the middle. Wars commit the uncommitted. Wars push people to choose sides. It's the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides. It may take years and years, but the dynamic is inexorable.

Muslims can decide to be observant and support the world-wide domination of Islam – whether by the Islamists or under kinder, gentler leaders. Or, Muslims can decide to not live under the laws of the Sharia as their Koran (the Word of God to them) demands and live with individual freedom of religion.

The West will decide if Islamic civilization is barbaric compared to the West or not. The deciding majority will lead to victory or defeat of the Western Civilization.

In the Great U.S. Culture War, ACW II, the dynamic driving Bible-reading and believing 'Reds' apart from the Secular and selective Bible-scoffing 'Blues' is greater than the temporary unity any Islamist attack may afford.

Understanding military futurism doesn't make it pleasant.

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