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Strategic Thinking in the Era of Cultural Wars

A comment

Abstract

Modern war presents an embarrassing challenge to modern powers resting on a robust social, economic and military infrastructure. It is very difficult, though not completely impossible, to see Europe soon adopt and relentlessly pursue the strategy that will effectively defend its open society from its enemies. To combat these enemies, European societies need to devise a counter strategy that will cope with the structural tension between them, allowing for stern measures against the external enemies and their internal collaborators that will also be granted legitimacy by the mainstream of the open society.

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A New Kind of War

Modern war presents an embarrassing challenge to modern powers resting on a robust social, economic and military infrastructure. This brings an essentially open society to a profoundly different battlefield that sanctifies human life and is devoted to the promotion of the quality of life on the one hand, with societies that are, to different degrees, tribal, authoritarian and dysfunctional, on the other. The latter very often failed to meet the challenges of the modern era, and are unwilling to pay the cultural price of the transformation required for securing a better future for their children that predominantly is the adoption of pluralistic values and practices, specifically female equality.

What we have is not a total confrontation of those two. But whereas it is operationally an accumulation of radical elements of the latter that are assaulting the soft targets of the former, culturally it is a much deeper phenomenon. It is politically far beyond the small numbers of active terrorists, because even if these radicals do not become the leaders, they are nevertheless very often widely supported in these societies or at least not marginalized in them. By far the most important behavioral evidence of their political prominence is the fact that even if their own governments rejects or even actively fight a specific radical group, their society is not willing to disown them and to delegitimize their struggle against the open societies.

Measured with the traditional yardstick of national power, the nations with a robust infrastructure, a highly developed technology, and the economic resources, are better organized and much more functional. They have easily dominated the world order and effortlessly imposed their will over the dysfunctional and failing entities, let alone safely enjoyed the fruits of their success. Unpredictably, the most radical and violent of the most dysfunctional entities are increasingly finding effective ways not only to undermine the world order established by the Western democracies, but also to ruthlessly and fundamentally threaten their way of life into the sanctity of their American, European (and Israeli) home.

Some of this is a product of technological change and the needs of the modern way of life. It concerns also the weapons - the destructive force and availability of explosives, the accuracy, range and accessibility of the delivery systems (rockets, missiles and others), the aggressive opportunities of cyberwar etc. But more than anything else it is about the vulnerability of a society that is accustomed to and critically dependent on a high quality of life, connectivity, civil liberties and freedom of movement of people and goods.

The Pathology of Radical Liberalism

But beyond technology and physical vulnerability, the most effective weapon in the arsenal of violent radicals who are fighting against strong and successful open societies, is a cultural distortion in the value system of these open societies themselves. This distortion is ever-widening since the second half of the previous century, spilling over from the radical outskirts into the mainstream of the liberal community. The essence of this distortion is driving the invaluably positive and constructive values of pluralism, human rights and openness ad absurdum, even to the point, where they become self-defeating and even pathologic. It is only very recently and very partially that the mainstream open society is beginning to identify this pathology.

A pathological twist of desirable values is difficult to detect. In the first half of the 20th century, Western civilization paid a horrendous price for the delayed recognition of two other pathological twists: first, the fascist twist of the desirable values of patriotism, and - much later recognized by European elites - the Stalinist-communist pathological twist of the exalted value of equality. Their misguided propagators marketed the twisted product as the ultimate solution for national decay and poverty respectively, much like the radical kneejerk-liberals marketing their goods as the ultimate solution to war and discrimination, contemptuously pushing the balanced and moderate liberals into a defensive position.

When these radicals creep into the mainstream, they become dominant on the public scene and set the agenda around this twisted versions of liberalism, than the other radicals - those who abhor the values of pluralism, democracy, human rights, women equality and the like, and seek to impose their will through indiscriminate violence and terror - have their day.

The Strategy of the War against the Open Society

These twisted versions and the vulnerabilities of the open society are the major weapon used against Western society by its new enemies. They know that open societies cannot abide protracted and indecisive wars. They are, therefore, willing to bring about enormous punishment and suffering on their own people without immediate reword of any kind, trusting that the open society will break first, even if its pain is immeasurably smaller. They are well aware of the supreme value attached in open societies to human life and therefore focus on inflicting civilian and military casualties, and express a deep cultural aversion of hurting and killing innocent enemy civilians, and consequently draw the fire deliberately to their own women and children. They are aware of the post-colonial sensitivity to humiliation of nonwhite Asians and Africans, and hence create provocations designed to generate precautionary measures that will appear on the screen and social networks as humiliating.

Above all, these violent and intolerant radicals are cognizant of the ultra-liberal simple-minded article of faith, denying the cultural determinant of human behavior, concerning the universality of the imperative desire to peacefully engage in a Western style nation and society building. Through their longstanding and consistent patterns of conduct, they are providing conclusive evidence that they follow, on the relevant issues, a set of values and priorities that are antithetical to those of the open societies they fight. In the present atmosphere in Europe and elsewhere, they can, nevertheless, be assured that any reference to this established fact will be widely branded by many liberals as "racism": the ultimate "one-size-fits-all" battle-cry of political correctness.

These kneejerk-liberals, radicals in a very different sense, are the moral and political equivalents of the "useful idiots" that unknowingly and inadvertently served Stalin's ambitions. They are responsible for prostituting the exalted values of human rights to the pathological absurd where they objectively serve even barbarian tenured "victims" and lay the blame at the doorstep of the structurally guilty open societies that try to prevent the destructive effect of those violent enemies who hold liberal values in contempt.

The strategy of these violent, authoritarian and intolerant enemies is to target the seam between the open society's national security interests on the one hand, and it's deeply held liberal values on the other. Between those two there is an almost inevitable structural tension. The radical enemies of those open societies try to manipulate this tension towards "a zero-sum-game", where the open society will capitulate to their violent dictates on the national security level, fearing a profound and irretrievable damage to its most fundamental values.

The most difficult and most important challenge facing an open society is to devise a functioning strategy that will successfully cope with this structural tension, even in the face of both major provocations of its external enemies and the pathological twist of the manipulative purists at home.

A Strategy for the Open Society

The crafting of such strategy must start with the recognition that this tension is indeed structural. It is impossible to secure pure and unabated individual liberties without compromising public security to a point that makes the exercise of these same individual liberties impossible (conversely, security without civil liberties is not absolute in the long run either and cannot be considered, anyway, as tolerable in an open society). At its best, the open society seeks to strike a functioning balance that can simultaneously provide an acceptable level of security while maintaining and even strengthening the core of its open and free value system. This balance is constantly varying with the changing perception of threats and a developing awareness to social inequities.

The most difficult dilemmas for the decision maker who is formulating a strategy do not arise in the daily conduct vis-a-vis even the most violent confrontations. They daunt him when he has to consider the only responsible and possibly effective response to this kind of war, namely deterrence.

If the decision maker's perspective is limited to conflict management in the narrow sense of the term - enhancement of defensive measures and "proportional" responses - he will ultimately fail to deliver what his society expects of him: Prevent its enemies from confronting the open society with a zero-sum-game choice between national capitulation and moral bankruptcy. The worst choice that he can make is politically and psychologically the most seductive - to treat the challenge as a accumulation of individual incidents and to treat them with supreme reluctance to use force, designed to prevent even the appearance of compromising open society values. The assumption behind this course of action is that whereas this society can contain the physical damage of the violent attack, it can much less afford to endure a deviation from its value system. The problem with this seductive strategy is multifaceted.

First, the overly restrained response gives the enemy no compelling motivation to desist, even temporarily his provocation: The cost is too low and the benefit of causing pain too tempting.

Second, a succession of timid responses that encourage the perpetrator to persist in his provocation, almost inevitably produce in their accumulation blunders of lost control. These will be paraded by the external enemy as well as the homegrown purists as exposing the structural brutality of the open society. Thus, the so-called "proportional" responders (they are not - see below) combine all possible evils: they both produce more violent provocation and, at the same time, strengthen the perception of value bankruptcy.

Third, inadequate responses, perpetuated provocations and repeated successes of the enemy eventually breed loss of public trust in a political system that failed to provide basic security. It also brings about the rise of populist political forces that promote stern measures and simplistic solutions. These measures truly undermine the core values of the open society.

A strategy of deterrent response offers no easy "solution" to the structural predicament of open societies facing morally uninhibited enemies. Pursuance of such a strategy is a long, frustrating and thankless process that is bitterly assaulted from the advocates of firm hand on the right, as well as from the advocates of human rights on the left. It is also often misunderstood by the impatient lot at the center. The first are (rightly) outraged that the enemy is not adequately punished for its violent provocations. The second (rightly) complain about the stern steps that their society is taking, despite their seeming incompatibility with its liberal values. In the center the understanding of the structural tension between national security requirements and individual rights does not always override the

frustration with the absence of an elegant and speedy response to the threats and to the dilemmas that they generate.

Legitimacy

It is here, at the home-front of the open society, that the most complicated and deeply-rooted difficulties of the adoption of this balanced strategy are encored. The political leadership must deal not only with a sophisticated and manipulative enemy; it must, first and foremost, secure the legitimacy for this strategy in the mainstream of the open society itself. The deciding battle of this whole struggle is waged on the battlefield of legitimacy within that open society. The challenge is, consequently, not only to identify and pursue a strategic course of action that will deter the enemy, but one that will grant legitimacy on the home front, in spite of the harsh measures that deterrence often calls for.

Without deterrence that spaces out and limits the hostile provocations, the open society cannot dedicate itself to the constructive calling that is the essence of its raison d'être. Legitimacy is not only the lifeblood of the open society. More specifically, national resilience that is so indispensable for a protracted confrontation with an enemy with an implacable objective, cannot be sustained without it.

This implacability deserves some elaboration. Contemporary conflicts between Third World entities and Western powers are often manipulatively portrayed in the perspective of the struggle against colonialism, disregarding the essential distinction between the well-defined and limited objective of freedom from foreign domination, on the one hand, and the present challenge, on the other. Beside some specific issues, the latter often reflects an unlimited grievance against the achievements of the developed societies. It sometimes also reflects a revengist outrage in response to the disrespect towards the failing entities the assailants of the democracies come from. This is typically accompanied with an outspoken gratification from the pain inflicted on those who managed to offer their children a good life that outweighs the quest to offer the same to their own generations to come. Under these circumstances, the conflict has no terminating mechanism and open society resilience is absolutely essential.

Deterrence

A widespread urban legend contends developed and strong democracies have no legitimate means in their arsenal to effectively deter tribal and authoritarian societies. This is, presumably, because those societies exhibit their indifference to the welfare of their own people, and "have nothing to lose" while their warriors "love death." This is the image radical Third Worldists and their purist accomplices seek to promote when they advocate guilt-ridden appeasement. They point, rightly, to the fact that even

stern measures did not stop the radicals and their violent struggle. It is indeed frustratingly true that there is no relevant equivalent to the WWII Berlin bunker or the unconditional surrender of Japan. But a different concept of deterrence, much less festive and terminal than unconditional surrender, yet profoundly significant and critically important to open societies on the operational level, is at hand. This alternative is not a theoretical construction; having been applied and tested for decades, its performance can be empirically assessed.

Two conceptual preconditions are essential for the formulation of a practical and successful deterrence strategy. The first is recognition of the inherent limitation of the validity of deterrence and its scope. Absolute and permanent prevention of major violence of this kind is structurally impossible. The psychopathological crave to hurt the undeservedly successful, prosperous and sanguine enemy is too powerful and the control of ultra-radical elements is never absolute. What is both indispensable for democracies and possible within the self-imposed restrictions of open societies, is a sustainable dramatic decline in the intensity of violent assaults to a level that deemed tolerable by this society, as well as the spacing out of these eruptions that cannot be prevented.

The key is thus dual: The first is the acceptance that this assault cannot be altogether prevented either by a simple minded once-and-for-all "military solution" or, alternatively, a hallucinatory appeasing "political solution". The second is determination and resilience that would contain for decades the level of violence to a limited degree punctuated only by occasional eruptions. In terms of human experience, such a strategy is not new or revolutionary. This is exactly how modern societies function in spite of crime and poverty: serenity in the face of the structural absence of an all-embracing "solution", coupled with a determined attempt to bring the levels of crime and poverty down alongside resilience, enabling the containment thereof. (True liberals of the old school were keenly aware of that when they made a decisive contribution to the welfare state).

The second precondition is willingness to employ means and counter-measures in the defense of democracies that will both hurt tribal and authoritarian assailants that are indifferent to the welfare of their own people to the point, where it is intolerable to them, and at the same time win broad-based legitimacy in the mainstream of the open society that is employing these means. The key for identifying the measures that will stand both tests - intolerability and legitimacy - is the yardstick that measures the proportionality of the response to the violent provocations.

Proportionality

By dint of its moral standards and value system, the open society is obligated to respond proportionally to challenges it is facing. The operational translation of this commitment varies with the perception of

the magnitude of the threat and with public mood, but primarily with the ever changing zeitgeist, molded by the elites and accepted by the mainstream. The accepted interpretation in the West in recent decades uses a yardstick of the level of violence and the number of casualties. This has the advantage of simplicity and the appearance of universal equality. The problem is that it plays into the hands of the tribal and authoritarian radicals who are violently seeking to impose their will on open societies.

In search of easy legitimacy, the supporters of this approach have given up on deterrence, actually encouraging the perpetrators and perpetuating confrontation by those they seek to dissuade. Responding in kind in terms of the level of violence and the number of casualties is self-defeating, because of the profound cultural dissimilarity between the two societies. It is the honest discussion of this dissimilarity, crucially important to strategic thinking in the new age of conflict, that is the ultimate taboo of the new pathological streak of liberalism, enshrined in radical political correctness.

It is only when these profound differences - chiefly the radical's wanton disregard of the welfare of their own people in the pursuit of revenge and perceived rights - are factored into the strategic equation that adequately effective measures can be employed to bring down the threat to a level that is tolerable for the open society. An understanding of the fundamentally non-Western nature and depth of the motivation will call into question the futile attempt to appease the radicals with concessions that will make democracies more vulnerable without satisfying the radicals. A realistic appreciation of the high level of punishment that is acceptable to the radical perpetrators will expose the defending targeted nations to the inevitable failure of a "proportional" response, when measured with the irrelevant yardstick of the level of violence and number of casualties.

The cultural difference originates, as mentioned earlier, with the raison d'être. Open societies are engaged primarily in constructive building and improving of their society and are judged by their people for their contribution to their freedom and quality of life. This constructive endeavor cannot proceed for long in an environment of violence, even on a relatively low level of a few assaults on the civilian population per month and even if it causes only a few casualties. What can easily derail this endeavor is an atmosphere of fear, apprehension and uncertainty, which is far more disruptive than that caused by criminal activity (let alone traffic accidents) with a much larger count of casualties. Responding to such assaults on a "proportional" level of violence or number of casualties is ridiculously senseless.

The societies of the perpetrators live anyhow with a much higher domestic level of violence and have shown in any case little or no real interest in constructive nation or society building or in improving their own freedom and quality of life. They typically come from a political culture that exhibits

extremely low levels of pluralism of any kind, oppression of women, very little tolerance towards religious, ethnic, national and other minorities, persecution of homosexuals and other "deviants" as well as extensive use of violence in their national and tribal disputes, both on the political and the personal level. These sometimes deteriorate to full-scale civil wars. Three generations after decolonization they have demonstrated precious little homegrown progress towards a more free and tolerant society that is better adjusted to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

No wonder the violent assaults on Western democracies come mostly from individuals and groups from failed Arab states like Pakistan and Afghanistan, rather than from constructive post-colonial entities such as India and Singapore. (And it's not "Islam" - hundreds of millions Muslims in India and Indonesia, for instance, have a very different record). It is the political culture that devastated Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya, and is keeping others in that region hopelessly underdeveloped that also produces the challenge to European and other democracies.

A response to assaults emanating from societies that are accustomed to this violent and failing way of life with a "proportional" level of violence or number of casualties that they have inflicted, will hardly be even noticed against the background of their own internal fighting. Needless to say, it will not be interrupting any non-existent nation-building. The objective of the reaction must be to deter them from violently dictating their will to open and developed societies through a response that is intolerable for them to endure.

The principle of proportionality is morally important and can be politically applicable with effective benefits to the defense of the open societies, when it is interpreted in terms of its distinctive effects on different societies and political cultures. A response is proportional when it inflicts on the aggressor the pain and harm that are equivalently intolerable to the perpetrator by his subjective judgement to the harm he inflicted in his assault. Anything less than a response that is perceived as intolerable by their own society, will inevitably encourage ruthless and determined actors to gratify their quest for revenge and power. This distinction will apply even in the much less harsh environment of domestic crime. A wise and responsible judge, considering a proportional punishment for a mobster who extorted a pianist by threatening to break his fingers and finally did so, will understand that the issue is not the broken bones, not even the pianists lost revenues, but the devastation of his life's meaning.

The Costs of an Ineffective Strategy

Open societies have the power - both physical and moral - to follow such a strategy and win even in the new complex and confusing war. They are physically strong enough to inflict an unbearable cost

over a long time, until their assailants for such stern action realize that there is no other way to force their enemies to desist.

The problem with the adoption of such a strategy is twofold. First, in the new ideological environment with the pathological streak of liberalism gaining ground, affected people will go to extremes to deny the magnitude of the challenge and devise creative excuses avoid the deterrent counter-measures. Second, societies that are unpreparedly faced with the scary prospects of a barbaric, never-ending and incomprehensible war tend to panic and follow irresponsible leaders who offer shortsighted and counterproductive measures. The first problem was thoroughly discussed above. The second deserves some elaboration.

The 20th century deep rooted pathology of the right, though delegitimized after WWII, was not rooted out. Much more latent after the rise of the new fashionable pathology of the left, it is still lurking in the shadows. When policies inspired by the twisted streak of liberalism are perceived incapable of protecting the open society, and ideologically motivated terrorism makes streets and homes unsafe, it appeals again to horrified and confused people.

In this psycho-political environment of fear and confusion the danger is that the pathological right will radicalize the legitimate right. What is even more menacing and often very likely, is that while the legitimate left is radicalized by the pathological left, also the legitimate right is radicalized by the pathological right. That spells out political polarization that is even more dangerous to the open society system than the direct damage of terrorism and war.

Polarized open societies malfunction when their common value system is ripped apart by a zero-sum-game, where a wide consensus on crucial issues becomes next to impossible. In a state of profound crisis, when disagreeable yet essential emergency measures are called for, the indispensable legitimacy for the necessary deviation from the desired modus operarndi cannot be broad-based and robust. Without this legitimacy, the society is torn between those who advocate appeasement, and those who are willing to compromise the very foundation of pluralism. This helps the worst enemies of this open society - those tribal and authoritarian radicals that are indifferent to the welfare their own people - to drive a wedge between the two and undermine the whole system to their benefit. In the new battlefield of these cultural wars, this is the updated term for defeat of democracies even when the enemy cannot scores a real victory.

The analytical appraisal of the effectiveness of strategies adopted by open societies to meet the challenges of these cultural wars can benefit considerably by a more specific discussion of the experience of different Western democracies. The study of two cases is particularly instructive: that of

Israel that faced this challenge first and in the most massive way, and that of Western European democracies that are culturally the least prepared for it and are struggling to adjust under extremely difficult circumstances.

Two important preliminary distinctions will help to focus the discussion on the distinct issue of cultural wars. First, this is not about terrorism or about asymmetric war, although acts of terror and asymmetric war are often the instruments. Second, this is not about struggles, however intensive and broad, that have limited and defined objectives like getting a Western power out of a territory outside its home country claimed by the assailants - not about the equivalents of Kenya, Malaysia, Algeria, Vietnam or even Northern Ireland.

The US is not selected as a case study, although it is an open society, dramatically assaulted in 2001 by Arab radicals bearing a cultural of unlimited grievance. This is because it is not perpetually and critically threatened by this kind of war on the scale comparable to Israel and Europe. While Israel is set in a geographic and political environment of extreme hostility and violence, Europe has a soft defense system and is harboring millions of potential recruits for harm, the US is much less vulnerable in the face of such external enemies and has no substantial domestic problem of this kind.

Israel – from Miscarriage to Successful Containment

The new version of cultural war has been challenging Israel longer and more dangerously than any other democracy. Its roots can be traced back to the 1980s after the peace with Egypt removed the most important Arab state from the military equation, and the Iran-Iraq war attritioned the other major enemies, and the ensuing collapse of the Soviet Union obliterated the danger of swiftly reconstructing Arab armies after an unsuccessful war with Israel. Israel experienced in the beginning of the new age an outstanding miscarriage in this kind of war when it failed to understand the new rules of political engagement. It also scored an outstanding success in containment two decades later when it adopted the right strategy.

The First Lebanon War

In the early 1980s, when Arab conventional armies were no longer in a position to present a multi-front strategic threat to Israel (but before the Soviet implosion), the longstanding Palestinian violent provocations drew Israel into a major military action in Lebanon. A decade after having been driven out of Jordan, the PLO established itself in the hollow shell of the Lebanese state, determined to prevent the regional consolidation of Sadat's strategy. Israel used the inescapable need to forcefully respond to these provocations as a pretext for an undeclared grand scheme of establishing in Lebanon

a Christian dominated state that would expel the PLO, pry it loose from Syrian domination and conclude a peace treaty with its Israeli patron.

In its immediate aftermath, the war could be presented at least as a partial operational success, since the PLO was indeed ceremonially exiled to Tunis. But what doomed it to be a strategic miscarriage was something immeasurably more important than even the subsequent operational failure of the grand idea. One of the two core ingredients of an effective response of an open society to this kind of war - robust and wide-based public legitimacy - was conspicuously missing. This legitimacy started eroding early in the day, when the gap between the declared objective of shoving the PLO beyond the 40 kilometer range of its rockets and the grand scheme was exposed. The erosion deepened, when the Lebanese Christians partners demonstrated both their manipulative undependability and their barbaric fighting conduct. The legitimacy finally lost its wide base and eventually collapsed when the war endlessly lingered on.

The cost of this "First" Lebanon war went far beyond the casualties and the unattained objectives, deep into the foundations of Israel's social and political structure. Some of the preconditions for the negative change in this arena were already in place, but the Lebanon war deepened and consolidated it. The 1973 War generated a bitter domestic dispute, with the left accusing the center and the right of rejecting peace, bringing about the painful war and being ill prepared for it, but the absolute need to fight was never called into question. Furthermore, the peace with Egypt a few years later produced a wide consensus in the center of the political spectrum that alleviated a considerable portion of the domestic discontent. In the Lebanon war, conversely, the problem related to the very legitimacy of sending the conscript army to fight for what about half its soldiers and their parents doubted was essential to Israel's security.

Polarization

This widespread questioning of the legitimacy of the war and the consequent entrenchment in the positions of both sides ushered in two decades of destructive polarization in Israel's political history. In the 1980s and the 1990s two political camps conducted a zero-sum game, primarily on the Palestinian issue, both willing to do almost anything to stay in power and create irreversible fait accompli that would booby trap the opposite camp. This obsession to beat the other side and undermine its objectives came at the expense of what open societies are best at: hammering out a workable compromise that seeks to optimize different legitimate values with a structural tension between them, producing a course of social and political action that the mainstream can identify with and pursue. With no change whatsoever in the preferences of the Israeli electorate (only because two radical rightwing parties did not cross the electoral threshold and "wasted" a few thousand votes),

Israel transformed its policy in 1992 from preventing a Palestinian state at all costs to embracing the PLO as a partner in the Oslo Process.

With all the disagreements and internal conflicts, Israel had a very wide consensus covering that mainstream both before and after these two decades: Since the establishment of Mapai in 1930, until the early 1980s as well as later, from the "Second Intifada" in the beginning of this century up to the present day. This provided the Israeli society with the all-important asset - national resilience - essential for survival in a protracted conflict that has already lasted for generations and is not perceived by the Israeli mainstream as ending in the foreseeable future.

The severe erosion of this resilience in the era of polarization was clearly demonstrated under both Labor and Likud governments in the second half of the1990s. The weaker-then-ever Arafat could easily manipulate Rabin, Netanyahu and Barak, who had no solid domestic hinterland to back them and were constantly (and understandingly) obsessed with maintaining their own narrow political base. Far beyond the common concern of any politician to bolster his position at the expense of his rivals, they could not focus on meeting the external threats, fearing that their legitimate response will be misrepresented and used by the opposing camp to bring them down.

Ascribing the weaknesses of the Israeli society in these two decades of polarization exclusively to the grand ambitions of the war in Lebanon and to their inevitable failure would be too simplistic. However, nothing short of a major breakdown of the mainstream's trust that Israel goes to war only to defend her vital security cold have produced such a deep polarization and its consequent costs. Mainstream Israelis can forgive their government in extreme cases even for being ill prepared for war, or for the mismanagement thereof (1973, 2006), providing the war itself is perceived legitimate. This, as we had shown above, was different.

The "Second Intifada"

What delivered Israel out of polarization and strategic blunders to the limited and frustrating yet extremely important victory in the new kind of war discussed here were, paradoxically, the same Israeli leader that concocted the Lebanon war, and the same Arab enemy that so ingeniously used the polarization that followed. Arafat brought about the "Second Intifada" and Sharon defeated it. Intoxicated by his success in the 1990s to manipulate and intimidate a power immeasurably superior to the Palestinians, Arafat miscalculated in assuming that the weakness the polarized Israeli society demonstrated in the face of limited terrorism indicated that it could be broken by a massive dose of the same medicine.

What the Palestinians launched after Arafat rejected a Palestinian state in Camp David in 2000 was named "Intifada", but unlike its predecessor in the late 1970s, it was not essentially a popular uprising but an all-out war of terror against the Israeli people that made life in Israel intolerable. The nature of this war changed profoundly the rules of the strategic game.

The dramatic change happened within the Israeli society. The Israeli mainstream, with increasingly fewer exceptions like the deepest left, became gradually convinced of three things: that the war was about Israel, not just about the West Bank and Gaza, that the enemy is the contemporary Palestinian national movement, not just the "extremists" among them, and that their objective is to break the Israeli society rather than to protest and seek termination of occupation. The most direct impact in reinforcing this perception was the cultural setting of the massive suicide bombing campaign against the Jewish civilian population: not just the barbarity of the acts and their perpetrators, but the wall-to-wall bloodthirsty consensus on the Palestinian side in support of these role models for their children.

With this clear perception of the enemy, its radical objectives, its foul measures and the intolerable prospective outcome, there was no longer a problem of legitimacy. Burned by his mistakes in the Lebanon War two decades earlier, PM Sharon waited until the American administration accepted (after the capture of the weapon shipments of the Karin A) that Arafat instigated the violence and until he could secure the crucial support of mainstream Israeli public opinion (after the Passover Massacre in Netanya) to launch a major military operation in the West Bank. This time the strategy worked, because it combined a massive blow to the enemy, full domestic legitimacy in Israel and a political understanding in Washington.

The blow hit the Palestinians where it hurt the most: reoccupying their cities and refugee camps, humiliating their leader under siege in his compound in Ramallah, cordoning them off with fences and walls, controlling their every move for years, searching their houses for terrorists and weapons and preventing their access to Israel. It was a proportional response to the war of terror the Palestinian people condoned against the Jewish population in Israel: This war made life in Israel intolerable, and the response demonstrated the intolerable cost to the Palestinians, without targeting their civilians. By mostly disregarding European protests, Israel also demonstrated that the Palestinians cannot hide behind the Europeans for immunity from Israel's response to their massive violence.

The Fruits of Deterrence and Legitimacy

The proof of the success of this strategy is in the fact that almost a decade and a half after the colossal provocation and the massive punishment, Palestinian terrorism is suppressed to a fraction of the level

of the time immediately before operation "Defensive Wall." Occasional eruptions are a major nuisance but not coming even remotely close to the intolerable levels in the beginning of the century. This is primarily thanks to deterrence. The motivation for violence is there and many terrorist attempts are intercepted almost every day, but the Palestinian community as a whole has no appetite for an all-out showdown, assuming that Israel has both the power and the determination to respond massively, resting on a resilient society that is not polarized, regardless of its heated political discourse.

This last distinction, significantly relevant to the legitimacy component of the proposed strategy, deserves some elaboration at the very end of the discussion on Israel's response to the new kind of war. Unlike the 1980s and 1990s, since the "Second Intifada", most Israelis are neither committed to the left, nor to the right. Alongside a small left and a somewhat larger right wing minority, there is a majority in the middle of the political spectrum that combines the adoption of the most fundamental paradigms of both the right and the left. That of the right is profound suspicion, with some important exceptions, of the regional Arab environment and mistrust of the Palestinians. The most essential paradigm of the left is the aversion from Israeli control over millions of Palestinians. This majority is comprised of people who, on the one hand, never subscribed to the peace and guilt obsession of the deep left messianism (or lost their confidence in it) and, on the other hand, were never mesmerized by, or sobered up from, the vision of "Greater Israel" of the deep right messianism.

This majority has no single party who's MPs express this combination, but without its support in a political block, no government can come to power in Israel or keep it. It will grant legitimacy to a policy in this cultural war that is both tough enough to deter even a barbaric enemy and committed to no other hidden agenda or grand design. Only one of these ingredients was there in the First Lebanon War (1982). Both were met in Defensive Shield (2002).

Europe – from Trauma and Confusion to possible Polarization

No society could be more ill prepared for the new kind of war discussed here that of those of Western European countries. Not only were their people fortunate enough to have experienced no real challenge to their way of life for more than two generations, but their values and political system made a unique contribution to this peaceful reality. The problem Europe is facing today, in adjusting and responding to the assault on their open society by a culture that does not share these values; traditionally, the European elites misinterpreted this peaceful reality.

West European Perceptions and Vision

More specifically, the problem is with two Western European assumptions. The first concerns the main reason for this peaceful era and consequently the means required to sustain and develop it. The second

is the assumption concerning the potential universality of the European experience and consequently the expectation of a European leadership role in leading the "International Community" in this direction. Western European elites are, of course, not a monolith, but beyond their divergent perceptions, there is a common denominator representing a prevailing approach that profoundly affects this political culture.

Europeans have indeed made an unprecedented and enormously important contribution to civilization, transforming their continent from a slaughter house to a peaceful haven, by replacing rampant national violence with compromise, interdependence and the pursuit of the common regional good. Their mainstream elites, however, associated the credit for this momentous achievement with the "soft" abstention from the use of massive force, often going as far as proudly advocating appeasement (e.g. "addressing the root causes of terrorism" and "engagement"). Abhorrently delegitimizing forceful measures, they conveniently chose to deny that they could effectively apply their soft means among the free members of their own culture, only because the United States, assisted by the European governments these elites condemned, was willing to risk global extinction to deter the external enemy and secure the freedom of Europe. Were it not for the nuclear deterrent, Soviet tanks could do in Frankfurt and Rome what they did in Budapest and Prague.

This selective denial became deeper, easier and more prevalent after the demise of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the European Union. The reinforced narrative of these elites now went as far as declaring ideological victory and almost denying the very existence of an enemy altogether. Tribal and authoritarian societies might occasionally resort to violence to protest their individual racial mistreatment or their collective colonial usurpation, but the deterrent threat or use of forceful response must be recognized as the essence and origin of the problem, certainly not an indispensable part of the solution. What is called for is the universal application of what worked so well in Europe - dialogue, elimination of poverty, education, promotion of democracy, addressing the justified grievances of the underprivileged and ultimately incorporation in the international community of equal nations with the universally accepted and European inspired standards of human rights and justice. They admitted that the realization of this vision was difficult and may take time, but denied the massive cultural impediment that put the universal application of this narrative in question.

Denial of the Impact of Political Culture

Some of the most important features of this cultural impediment were discussed in detail in the beginning of this essay. It is not an accident that the violent enemies of the open society system come from failed societies and failed states like Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. What ruined these societies, maintained their tribal and authoritarian structures and aborted the processes

that enabled many other post-colonial states to become successfully incorporated in in the modern world and offer their citizens hope and a good life, was primarily their culture. Paradoxically, while political correctness forbids identifying the violence with culture, the perpetrators mostly declare that they are motivated by their culture. This culture is certainly not "Islam," but it is a distinct perverted version of a culture that is prevalent in some Islamic (notably Arab) societies and dangerously nesting in many Arab and Muslim immigrant communities in Europe.

It is this reality that is most fiercely denied by the mainstream of Western European elites, primarily the academic, the journalistic and the artistic, in the multicultural age. They cannot accept that any non-European culture, even when emphasizing that it is certainly not "Islam" as a whole, can be aggressive and seek domination and the destruction of their own way of life, beyond appeasement ("engagement") and dialogue. These elites cannot accept the possibility that the tenured victims of colonialism and discrimination would wage a cultural war that requires a response of deterrence and controlled exposure. However, failure to recognize the nature of a war and to identify the enemy makes strategic defeat inevitable. Denying even the existence of a war, beyond individual eruptions of extremism, makes it worse. Under these circumstances the response must be all but useless.

In the European case it is not only useless, it is dangerously counterproductive. European societies are continuously exposed to an ever higher level of barbaric assaults. The mainstream of their elites and often their governments, denying the broader phenomenon, blame it only on some extremists or on ISIS and a small number of local fanatic supporters. Frightened and confused, many Europeans lose their confidence in those who failed to defend them and even to offer a reasonable explanation, and turn to other leaders for reasoning and protection. These leaders too often offer an equally simple-minded narrative on the other pole of the political scale. The irresponsible measures they offer promise to bring immediate relief, but are counterproductive in the long run and profoundly destructive to the very foundations of the open society.

Immigration

The problem is dramatically exacerbated with the massive influx of immigrants from countries of origin and a political culture that are associated with the assailants. Even if the association of the challenge to the European way of life with Muslims and particularly Arabs were unsubstantiated, it would still be a solid political reality. So far, we have seen just the already dramatic immediate consequences of more than a million immigrants arriving in one country, big and economically strong as it may be, and everyone is aware that millions more could follow, depending on the goodwill of a power-hungry Middle Eastern potentate (Though democratically elected, Turkey's President Erdogan exhibits strong

authoritarian tendencies). He conditions restraint of Arab immigrant's movement though Turkey into Europe on freedom of eighty million Muslim Turks to enter at will into Europe without requiring a visa.

Terrified Europeans, who associate a threat to their way of life with Arab and Muslim immigrants - old and new - are told that there is no real association between the two. Many of them turn to those who paint a distorted picture of necessary and total connection (Muslim= terrorist) and suggest radical means to counter it. When both perceived threats - rampant violence and massive uncontrolled immigration - truly become clear and present, those who turn to this alternative leadership could become a major force in some of the most threatened European societies.

Polarization

Many in Europe and beyond hope is that the public outrage with the harsh realities of unremitting terrorism and the clear inability to deal with the problem or even properly identify it within the existing European paradigms, will change the attitude of the existing elites and some of the leaders towards a more balanced, realistic and effective action. This optimistic expectation unfortunately seems unlikely to materialize.

A much more likely scenario that is already apparent is one of polarization, where the old elites who helped create the circumstances that caused the problem, as well as the new emerging leaders who are offering short sighted "solutions" for it, become more deeply entrenched in their ideological investment. It is happening on both ends of the cultural and political spectrum: The distinct left, harboring and unwittingly legitimizing its no longer marginal pathological version on the one hand, and the distinct right, harboring and unwittingly legitimizing its no longer negligible fascist version on the other. Far more than a debate about the most desirable policy on terrorism and refugees, this is the grand battle over the identity and future of Europe. The old elites are unlikely to abandon their dominant position and the new ones can finally hope to replace them, riding a wave of public discontent.

As we have shown here in a very different context, polarization is detrimental to any successful strategy for this new kind of war because it precludes satisfying the indispensable need for broad-based, robust and lasting legitimacy.

Prerequisites for an Effective Strategy

It is very difficult, though not completely impossible, to see Europe soon adopt and relentlessly pursue the strategy that will effectively defend its open society from its enemies. The strategy of these violent, authoritarian and intolerant radicals target, as we have shown the seam between the open society's

national security interests on the one hand and it's deeply held liberal values on the other. To combat these enemies, European societies need to devise a counter strategy that will cope with the structural tension between them, allowing for stern measures against the external enemies and their internal collaborators that will also be granted legitimacy by the mainstream of the open society.

To do this, Europeans will have to meet three requirements. All are difficult to digest because they challenge Europe's most deeply held cultural preferences.

The first is to recognize the cultural nature of the war and the unlimited grievances that motivate it. Recognizing that the enemy is unappeasable will allow the focusing of counter-measures where they belong. Recognizing and publicly admitting that for the foreseeable future it is a never-ending war with a frustrating victory only offering containment and new enemies on the horizon, will spare public disappointment. It may also diminish somewhat the appeal of false messiahs who promise once-and-for-all "solutions", either through indiscriminate violence, or through capitulation.

The second is to seek a response that will be as intolerable to the perpetrators as their violence and disruption of the European way of life and its open society. It needs to be proportional on a deterrence scale - not in kind or in technically-measurable magnitude - but in severity and effect. In the European case, these are rarely military or violent responses and are rather typically associated with immigration policy and with monitoring of sections of immigrant communities.

The third is to weigh the costs to the open society values of the unpalatable counter measures taken, not by juxtaposing them with the existing fastidious ones that are all but useless. They need to be juxtaposed with the destructive effect on these same values of the much more stern means that will inevitably be resorted to if these unpalatable counter measures are not taken. Beyond the operational level, the question must be what is the cost of the rise of social forces that threaten to profoundly change the prevailing liberal value system? They will rise to prominence and power if this system itself will not adjust to the new needs of the new era.