

# The Passy Press®

## Letters to the Editor

From: John Hennessy <jackhennessy@undisclosed.com>  
To: Nick Gardiner <enpg@thepassypress.com>  
Sent: January 11, 2017 at 5:08 PM GMT+1  
Subject: Robert Hardy Essay, December 2016

Dear Sir,

The major premise underlying Robert Hardy's essay seems to be that it is somehow "up to us" to defeat Isis either alone or with others. I respectfully disagree. It should not even be on our list of strategically important goals.

Let me deal with his three points in order.

First, "replace the Salafi jihadi ideology with another". This implies that the 1300 year conflict between the 2 major branches of Islam, that began in 633 upon Muhammad's death, as to whom was his rightful successor, and continues till today, can be replaced by a more benign Islam, wherein Muslim Scholars both Sunni and Shi'a agree to settle peacefully the 1300 year off and on conflict.

History would seem to indicate that only when the internal fight between the 2 main branches was ended by the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 was peace imposed through out that Empire by the Sunni Sultans. This lasted for the 600 years of Ottoman rule. It was maintained by force, enslavement, and brutality to any opposition, inside or outside the Empire. Sunni Persia (now Iran) remained outside the Ottoman Empire and secular until the 1979 Revolution that deposed the secular Shah and imposed Shia rule, reigniting the conflict.

Perhaps a more realistic alternative would be for the West to support secular leaders, such as Ataturk, who established in 1923 the secular Republic of Turkey with the end of Ottoman rule. That would imply strong US support for the more modern Muslim States, such as Morocco, Indonesia, and Jordan, even though they are not true democracies.

Second point. I certainly agree we should let all of the current terrorist groups and national leaders continue to fight each other, but forget the idea of us and or our allies arming or advising any participants, either States or "Good" terrorist group(s). That has backfired in Syria and Afghanistan.

I agree wholeheartedly that the primary US goal should be to recognize that in the entire region, Iran is our only strategic enemy and the only player in this fight that could and probably will cause serious damage in the future to us or our allies. So far they are

# The Passy Press®

the only winner in the Syrian war, except for Russia. With the ending of sanctions, Iran will get stronger economically and even more of a threat. However, they are not likely in the foreseeable future to represent an existential threat, at least to us.

This is not the case with Russia and China. Containing them will take all of our attention, energy and resources.

Furthermore, as Senator Webb recently commented, Humanistic intervention, itself an oxymoron, should be publicly abandoned as a US policy choice now and forever. Well over \$1trillion of the public's money have been wasted on our Quixotic adventures in the Near and Far East.

Finally, the 3rd proposal is basically the same as the second. To repeat: We do not have a dog in this fight and must state that emphatically and publicly as US foreign policy.

Is there any hope then for peace? In the very long lens of history, perhaps the example of the peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 will be repeated in the Middle East. Only after nearly 150 years of bitter and bloody religious wars in Europe, roughly from 1524 to 1648, when all the combatants were exhausted and willing to come to the table was a lasting peace agreement achieved.

Might we dream that such could eventually occur between the Sunni's and Shi'a Iran and their disciples in the region. Highly unlikely, especially now that sanctions have been eliminated and Iran is clearly the dominant power.

In the meantime, let's avoid all humanitarian interventions, under whatever cloak they are masquerading under. Let's stay strong and not chase rainbows.

Sincerely,

John M Hennessy

*John Hennessy is the former Chief Executive of CS-First Boston and was Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury.*