



“Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die”. This often repeated phrase celebrating the valor of the British Light Cavalry in carrying out their orders, regardless of the nearly inevitable outcome is heard frequently by our soldiers, revised as “Ours is not to reason why....” I know I heard it when I was in the service.

On the battlefield it is appropriate. But for us back home in a democracy, it constitutes a dereliction of our duty as citizens not to carefully examine the reasons we send lethal force across the seas to foreign nations. It’s with that in mind I submit the following regarding US activities in Africa and now China.

Chicago Tribune editor Ivo Daalder recently penned an article headlined “Trump gambit drives Tehran into China’s nuclear arms.” President Trump’s efforts to disarm Iran is not working. According to the article “(f)ar from forcing Tehran back to the table, the administration’s new policy has driven Iran into the hands of the Chinese.”

The U. S. has a long history in North Africa. In 1948 president Harry Truman, needing a place to put 100,000 refugees from the German prisoner of war camps recognized the provisional Jewish government as [the] de facto authority of the Jewish state. This was despite his advisors repeated warning that the Arabs will never accept this. Since that time there has been unending conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

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In 1953 we assisted in Britain's effort to retain control of Iran's oil field by having the CIA kill their popular leader Mohammad Mosaddegh, Prime Minister of Iran, for the unpardonable sin of his asking Britain for a fifty percent cut of the profits from the oil fields of Iran. At the time the profits from the Iranian oil fields provided fifty percent of Britain's annual income from all sources. For this effort the Iranian people went from loving Americans to hating us, with consequences including the embassy siege and hostage crisis in 1979 and our continuing rocky relationship.

On 9/11 we were attacked with the leading reasons being our occupation troops in Saudi Arabia and support for Israel. In response we invaded Afghanistan and remain there 19 years later.

Meanwhile the Bush-Cheney administration decided to initiate an aggressive war by invading Iraq, ostensibly to remove weapons of mass destruction, a ruse so thin and cheap on its face that the wool being pulled over America's and the World's eyes was half cotton by pushing General Colin Powell to appear before the UN with false information. An aggressive war is a violation of international law and treaties we signed and was the basis of the Nuremberg Trial in 1945 when we charged Germany for starting an aggressive war. We invaded and found no weapons. But we didn't leave Iraq.

We decided to remove Saddam Hussein and did so and still we did not leave. Instead we have used it as a military base for additional military "adventures."

Barack Obama gained the presidency determined to end our conflicts in the Mid-East. Instead he increased our war efforts in Syria after deciding former ally Bashar al-Assad was really a villain.

Donald Trump became president determined to end our conflicts abroad as a waste of our time and effort. Instead his administration joined forces with a Saudi-led coalition military effort in the Mid-East.

The bombing campaign led by that coalition led to the death of an estimated 85,000 children of hunger since the bombings began in 2015. His administration stays close to Saudi Arabia's

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leader Mohammed bin Salman - the same man who ordered the assassination of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The U. S. formed an Africa Command in 2007. Its website states: “U.S. Africa Command, with partners, counters transnational threats and malign actors, strengthens security forces and responds to crises in order to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability and prosperity.” What are “national interests” in Africa are apparently very fluid; they change with each administration – but the killing continues. This is who our sons and daughters report to when they are assigned to serve in Africa.

How effectively has the Africa Command accomplished their goals?

Since we have been involved approximately 850,000 North Africans have been killed due to war. The migrant population in the Middle East has doubled between 2005 and 2015 to 54 million people. In the year 2015 the number of refugees to Europe surged to 1.3 million people. Think of this, people who speak Arabic as a native language accustomed to North African culture fled for their lives to another continent where the language, customs and job opportunities are completely different. Now think of the receiving states in Europe.

This has been terribly disruptive for Europe and created a great deal of cost and conflict.

Meanwhile our African Command has spread all over Africa chasing “terrorists.”

I don’t blame the African Command for any of this. In Iraq ISIS is gone, but the country is broken beyond repair. You are welcome to have electricity if you have a generator – some “security, stability and prosperity.”

Meanwhile, while we are so heavily involved in the affairs of the North Africans, our government has hardly asked us if this was wise or necessary. And we have done all this on a credit card. No pain America, you go about and do your thing, meanwhile your government will take care of your interests in Africa. I’ll bet you didn’t know you had so many interests in Africa. Is this just another series of misadventures like Vietnam?

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We are a great nation, but not without problems of our own. And great nations sometimes confuse themselves thinking that their wealth and prosperity confirms God's special favor and wiser than others, obligated to reform nations around them in their own image. This I believe we are doing now. U.S. Policy seems to be that it is our duty to fix "them."

And in our self-manifested view of omnipotence, we have determined we can violate international law. This does create a problem when we hold up international law as a standard to others, particularly China now for its unlawful incursions in the South China Sea. Whatever short term advantage we perceive in ignoring or excusing our own transgressions, we are obviously encouraging others to violate the law. We therefore encourage instability and, disorder and thereby do incalculable damage to our own long-term interests.

Now is the political season with candidates coming to voters asking for votes. Perhaps now is the time to raise this issue with them.

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