

The Journal of
**International
Security Affairs**

No. 29, Spring/Summer 2015



HOTSPOTS & FLASHPOINTS

Featuring articles by **Michael Rubin** *and* **Paul Rosenzweig**



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Editor's Note

Today, the United States faces a world in chaos. From the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific, a dizzying array of crises now challenges regional stability—and, by extension, America's strategic interests abroad. In this edition of *The Journal*, we take a tour of some of today's most prominent geopolitical hotspots and flashpoints.

We start our examination in the southern Persian Gulf, as Oren Adaki of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies explains why Yemen could well be the region's next failed state—and why this would constitute a dangerous development for the United States and its allies. From there, Jantzen Garnett of the Institute for the Study of War provides a probing look at the Islamic State's newest franchise, situated in Israel's geopolitical backyard of the Sinai. The American Enterprise Institute's Michael Rubin then looks at the past and present of the most prominent “frozen conflict” in the greater Middle East: the Western Sahara. Tom Wilson of the Henry Jackson Society follows up with a detailed overview of Israel's changing threat environment—and of the changes taking place in Israeli policymaking as a result. We round out our examination of the region with M. Zuhdi Jasser of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, who makes a compelling case that anti-Semitism makes up a core element of Islamist political thought and practice.

From there, we branch out to Asia—and beyond. First, Stratfor's Phillip Orchard outlines the brewing crisis in the South and East China Seas, where China's “reclamation” activities are increasingly challenging the regional legal order and strategic *status quo*. Herman Pirchner of the American Foreign Policy Council offers up a comprehensive, and compelling, description of the current struggle taking place for the soul of Ukraine. The National Defense University's Leo Michel takes a different tack on much the same subject with his description of what the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is doing to deter Russian behavior in Ukraine, and beyond. Paul Rosenzweig of Red Branch Consulting then takes us behind the scenes of the changes taking place in cyberspace, the next great arena of conflict between the United States and its adversaries. We wrap up with Celina Realuyo of the National Defense University, who argues for a serious strategy to tackle the finances that help sustain and empower the Islamic State terrorist group.

Our coverage does not stop there, however. This issue's “Perspective” interviewee is former Under Secretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith, who weighs in on the Syrian civil war, the unfolding nuclear deal with Iran, and a multitude of other issues. This time out, our “Dispatches” come from Finland, China and Spain. And our book reviews cover a quartet of important new contributions dealing with Russia, espionage and American foreign policy.

In short, like the current state of the world, this issue of *The Journal* offers a great deal of food for thought. We hope that you find its pages interesting—and illuminating.



Ilan Berman
Editor

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YEMEN ON THE BRINK

Oren Adaki

On March 25th, Saudi Arabia and a coalition of eight other Arab states began military operations in Yemen as part of Operation Decisive Storm. The stated goal of the campaign, which relied heavily on coalition air strikes, was to restore Yemen's internationally recognized government to power. The Yemeni government, led by President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, had been undermined by Shi'ite Houthi rebels advancing from the country's northern provinces, who seized the Yemeni capital in late September, forcing Hadi to flee Sana'a. Hadi then called on the international community for help from his new refuge in the strategic port city of Aden. When the Houthis subsequently advanced on the city in late March, Hadi escaped the country on a plane marked "Saudi Medevac," and Saudi Arabia began its military campaign.

The initial phase of the operation lasted about a month, and targeted Houthi positions throughout the country, including military bases and installations. The air strikes succeeded in neutralizing much of the rebels' military edge, taking out Houthi-controlled air bases and ballistic missile sites that could have been used to strike deep into Saudi territory. While this stage of the operation appeared to be geared toward containing the Houthi crisis within Yemen's borders, the Saudi-led coalition announced on April 21st that Decisive Storm had come to an end, inaugurating a second phase—entitled Operation Restoring Hope—focused on finding a political solution to the ongoing crisis.

Yet the military efforts of the Arab coalition appear to have had only limited success in stemming the rebel advance in the country. The Houthis have continued to press their offensive in southern Yemen. In early April, they battled Popular Commit-



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tees (local armed resistance groups allied with President Hadi) for control of the port of Aden, eventually seizing parts of the city, including the presidential palace. Air strikes have likewise not been capable of dislodging the rebels from their positions in and surrounding the capital or other vital locations in the country.

A five-day cease-fire went into effect on May 12th, allowing for humanitarian aid to reach civilians besieged by war in the region's most impoverished nation. Hours later, violations to the cease-fire were already being reported on both sides. The Houthis reportedly advanced in several locations and the Saudi-led coalition responded by carrying out limited air strikes against rebel positions. Houthi fighters also allegedly fired rockets into population centers in southern Saudi Arabia and directed sniper fire at Saudi border posts.

So the situation remains. When hostilities began in late March, the spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition told reporters that the operation achieved its goals "within the first 15 minutes."¹ But several months, two operations, and a cease-fire later, it seems that the combatants in Yemen's prolonged crisis are heading toward a stalemate desired by none.

Who are the Houthis?

The Houthis, formally known as Ansar Allah, are part of Yemen's Zaidi Muslim community, which are composed of more than a third of the Yemeni population. Zaidi Islam is a branch of Shiism that emerged in the ninth century from a dispute regarding leadership succession of the Muslim community following the Prophet Mohammad. The origins of Shi'ite doctrine are defined primarily by the belief that religious leadership following Mohammad should run through the line of Ali bin Abi Talib, Mohammad's son-in-law. Mainstream Shi'ite ideology reveres twelve *imams*—or religious leaders—following Mohammad, and its fol-

lowers are therefore sometimes referred to as "Twelver Shi'ites." Meanwhile, the Zaidis broke with the Twelvers over the appropriate candidate for the fifth *imam*. They are therefore called "Fiver Shi'ites," or Zaidis for their preferred contender at that time, Mohammad's great-great grandson, Zaid bin Ali.

In sharp contrast to other regional arenas, Sunni-Shi'ite tensions have never been a serious concern in Yemen. That fact may in part be due to the Zaidis' doctrinal similarities to Sunni Islam. That is, Zaidi jurisprudence is more similar to Sunni legal tradition than to that of the Twelver Shi'ites in Iran. The Zaidis actually rely on the legal tradition of Abu Hanifa, a founder of one of Sunni Islam's four juridical schools. The Zaidis also do not consider their leaders infallible, a long-held belief in most Shi'ite communities. There is also no precedent in Yemen of mosques segregated along sectarian lines. While most mosques are affiliated with one group or another, Yemen's Zaidis and Sunnis have prayed together for centuries in a manner unimagined in places like Iraq or Syria.²

It is also important to remember that the Zaidis are not just a peripheral minority group suddenly vying for power. Indeed, the Zaidis ruled Yemen for over a thousand years under an Imamate overthrown in 1962 by Adbullah al-Sallal's republican revolution. The rulers of the Zaidi Imamate in Yemen governed by religious fiat—they claimed lineage from the Prophet Mohammad and imposed their reading of Islamic law as the law of the land. Following Yemen's game-changing 1962 revolution, the Zaidis and their northern strongholds were marginalized by the new central government in Sana'a and their ideology came under attack by the spread of Saudi-sponsored Wahhabism, a strand of Sunni doctrine that is more directly antagonistic toward Shi'ism than traditions embraced by Yemen's Sunnis.

In the early 1990s, Zaidi community leaders began to organize under what was then coined *Al Shabaab al-Mu'min*, The Believing Youth, a revivalist movement promoting the Zaidi religious creed in the face of the growing entrenchment of Saudi Wahhabism in Yemen. At the time, the group was led by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi and mainly disseminated Zaidi propaganda, such as video and cassette recordings.

The United States' inauguration of the war on terror following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003 galvanized the nascent Zaidi movement.³ The group began staging anti-American rallies in Yemen, possibly in the mold of revolutionary Shi'ite Iran, with particular vitriol directed toward then-president Ali Abdullah Saleh for his close ties with Washington. It was in this context that the current anti-American Houthi slogan first emerged: "Death to America, Death to Israel, Damnation Upon the Jews, and Victory to Islam."

The road to rebellion

As the Zaidi movement transitioned from revivalism to radicalism, the Yemeni government felt increasingly threatened and led a concerted effort to arrest the group's leader, Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, even going so far as to place a \$55,000 bounty on his head.⁴ In turn, this perceived attack against the Zaidi movement spurred al-Houthi to launch the first of what would become a series of six wars against the government, known as the Saada wars. After the Yemeni military killed al-Houthi along with two hundred of his loyalists in Saada province in 2004, the Zaidi movement was renamed after him, giving birth to the Houthi movement as we know it today.

Hussein's father, Badreddin al-Houthi, took the helm of the Houthi movement after his son's death, and was eventually replaced by another son, Hussein's brother, Abdel Malek al-Houthi,

who still leads the group today. Under Abdel Malek's direction, the Houthi movement fought an additional five wars with the Yemeni military between 2005 and 2010, even drawing in regional superpower Saudi Arabia in 2009 following a Houthi incursion into Saudi territory which killed a Saudi border guard.

The Yemeni government brokered a cease-fire agreement with the Houthis in early 2010, concluding six years of war with the northern Zaidis which had left more than 100,000 Yemenis internally displaced, scores dead, and rendered government authority in the north virtually nonexistent. But just a year later, the Houthis were once again voicing their opposition to the central Yemeni government, this time as part of the Arab Spring protests which engulfed the Yemeni capital. The protests called for the ouster of longtime Yemeni strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had ruled the country for over three decades. Saleh's corruption during his presidency was staggering, and the subject of widespread outrage on the Yemeni street; a subsequent United Nations report released in 2015 claimed that Saleh had amassed up to \$60 billion, equivalent to Yemen's annual gross domestic product (GDP).⁵ Ironically a Zaidi himself, Saleh led the Yemeni government's military campaigns to squash the Houthi rebellions in the north, bolstering Houthi grievances against the government in general and Saleh specifically.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) laid the groundwork for the transition of power from Saleh to his deputy Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi in 2011, and Saleh eventually stepped down in early 2012. Notably, the GCC plan enshrined Saleh's immunity from prosecution for all his past actions as president and guaranteed him the right to return to the country. As part of the GCC initiative, a transitional dialogue process called the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was launched in early 2013 in an effort to propose reforms

that could repair the broken Yemeni political system.

Though the Houthis were not involved in the GCC agreement, their participation in the National Dialogue Conference was a watershed moment in their movement's history. A Houthi representative was included in the NDC's nine-member presidency and a Houthi delegation attended the nearly year-long conference. This political representation marked a sharp departure for the Yemeni government's treatment of the Houthis; the government had spent massive resources fighting the rebels for six years. The Houthis ultimately rejected the NDC's recommendation to divide Yemen into six federal regions, fearful of ramifications for their northern power bases. Yet the NDC served to legitimize the Houthi movement. By the time the NDC came to a close in January 2014, the Houthis had transformed from a northern rebel group to a full-fledged political opposition movement.

Despite their growing political legitimacy, just weeks following the conclusion of the National Dialogue Conference the Houthis began consolidating their presence in Yemen's northern Amran province and staged an attack against Sunni tribal forces in that area. Their efforts culminated in July, when they successfully seized the entire province and fatally attacked the Yemeni general leading an army brigade sent to repel their offensive.

Later that same month, the Yemeni government lifted subsidies on fuel in an effort to secure an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan, causing gasoline prices in the country to soar. The Houthis capitalized on the popular outcry in the country, and by August hundreds of Houthi protestors were on Sana'a's streets calling for the resignation of the "corrupt" Yemeni government.

When government forces clashed with protestors in the capital, Sana'a, the

Houthi rebels responded by deploying their militias and seizing control in mid-September. In a sign of their newfound power, the rebels raided the downtown residences of prominent military and political officials and took over government offices and military bases in and around the Yemeni capital. The United Nations soon intervened and brokered a cease-fire agreement known as the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, which called for increased representation for marginalized sectors of Yemeni society, including the Houthis, and a reinstatement of fuel subsidies. The Houthis, however, refused to sign the annex to the agreement, which stipulated the withdrawal of all armed militias from the capital. Instead, they consolidated their power in the capital and continued their military offensive throughout the country, gradually extending control southward into Yemen's Sunni heartland. In a matter of weeks, the Houthis had seized the significant port city of Hodeidah on the Red Sea coast as well as Ibb province, a mere 100 miles from the Gulf of Aden.

By the beginning of 2015, the Houthis achieved stunning military successes in the country, emboldening them to reject attempts to draft a new constitution, as laid out in the Peace and National Partnership Agreement. Ultimately, the rebels stormed the presidential palace in Sana'a, held President Hadi and other government ministers under house arrest, and forced Hadi and his cabinet to resign under duress.

Hadi eventually fled the capital to his hometown of Aden in February, where he rescinded his resignation and appealed to the international community to come to the aid of his embattled government. When Houthi rebels appeared to be closing in on Aden in March, Hadi slipped out of the country with apparent help from Riyadh, and Saudi Arabia promptly announced the commencement of Operation Decisive Storm the following day.

Unlikely allies at home

The Houthis' successful offensive was undoubtedly due in part to a widespread sentiment in Yemen that Hadi's government was indeed corrupt and ineffective, as they had claimed. However, there can be no question that their staggering military successes were in part due to the help of Yemen's former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

It may surprise outside observers of Yemen that Saleh, a man who waged six brutal wars against the Houthis during his presidency, would ally himself with the group. Saleh once famously described his political maneuvers during his 33-year-long tenure as "dancing on the heads of snakes,"⁶ as he was known for shifting his alliances in Yemen's complex tribal landscape to secure his tight grip on power. Thus, it came as no surprise to Yemenis that Saleh joined forces with his Houthi arch-rivals in order to resurface as a key player in Yemeni politics a mere three years after stepping down.

Despite relinquishing power, Saleh still commanded the loyalty of key units in the Yemeni military. Saleh had spent over three decades elevating his associates to top military positions, strengthening his patronage network and ensuring his control over the military even after his departure from politics. Notably, Saleh's son Ahmed was commander of Yemen's powerful Republican Guard and Special Forces, and his nephew Yahya headed Yemen's Central Security Forces. Due to disproportionate dominance of the Saleh family and their associates over the military, President Hadi moved to restructure Yemen's security forces in late 2012 and early 2013, absorbing the forces loyal to Saleh into five new military branches.

Although Hadi's restructuring of the military sought to reduce Saleh's lingering influence in Yemen, the former Yemeni president soon found a new comeback strategy in the emerging Houthi rebel movement. Reports indi-

cated that Saleh and the Houthis reached an understanding late last year to work together toward creating a mutually beneficial situation—spoiling the transition process that removed Saleh from power and elevating the significance of the Houthi rebels.⁷

Another player was present as well. From very early on, there were signs of the Yemeni military's collusion in the Houthi rebel offensive. Reports suggested that the rebels faced minimal resistance in their takeover of the Yemeni capital in late September, and they were soon spotted patrolling the streets of Sana'a in Yemeni military uniforms. Moreover, one of the rebels' first orders of business was to storm the residence of Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, an elite army commander who turned on Saleh during the 2011 protests by calling for his resignation. The Houthis swiftly gained control of much of the Yemeni military's heavy weaponry—including tanks, rocket-propelled grenades, and air force fighter jets—providing the rebels with a significant military edge over their opponents.

While the full extent of Saleh's backing for the Houthi rebels remains murky, he has been singled out internationally for his role in Yemen's current crisis. Both the United Nations and the United States sanctioned Saleh in early November 2014 for "undermining the political transition of Yemen."⁸ The U.S. claimed that Saleh had become "one of the primary supporters" of the Houthi rebellion soon after he stepped down from the presidency in 2012.⁹

A helping hand from Iran

There are also growing indications that the Houthis have been receiving support from an aspiring regional hegemon: namely, Iran. Indeed, the history of Iranian support for the Houthi movement is long, dating back at least to the Sa'ada wars between 2004 and 2010. During that time, bilateral relations between Yemen

and Iran began to strain, with Yemeni officials routinely accusing the Islamic Republic of backing the Shi'ite rebels.¹⁰

Since 2009, there have been a number of reports highlighting Iran's military support for the Houthis. In October 2009, Yemen seized an arms-laden Iranian ship manned by Iranian weapons experts sent to replace other Iranian nationals fighting alongside the Yemeni rebels. A joint U.S.-Yemeni military operation seized yet another ship off the coast of Yemen in January 2013, the *Jihan 1*, containing a cache of weapons. The cache included significant weaponry, such as Katyusha rockets, heat-seeking surface-to-air missiles, Iranian-made night-vision goggles, and advanced artillery systems. Despite Iranian denials, markings on the weapons indicated they had come from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) facilities. U.S. officials subsequently confirmed that the weapons were intended for the Houthi rebels.¹¹

After the Houthis took the port of Hodeidah in October 2014, reports indicated that they received a weapons shipment at a port in the area from an unspecified allied "Islamic country,"¹² suspected by most to be Iran. Most recently, in March, an Iranian ship is reported to have unloaded more than 180 tons of weapons and military equipment at the Houthi-controlled Saleef port in western Yemen.¹³

Iran has also not limited its illicit arms shipments to the Houthis to maritime transfers. Recent evidence has suggested that Iran is utilizing Pouya Air, an airline previously designated by the U.S. for its weapons shipments to Syria, in order to send arms to the Houthis by air.¹⁴ Moreover, Tehran signed an air transport agreement with the Houthis in March, ensuring fourteen flights a week between Sana'a and Tehran, not to mention a continuous arms transfer route from Iran to the Shi'ite rebels.¹⁵ Secretary of State John Kerry stated in April that

these weekly flights from Iran were being used to shuttle destabilizing "supplies," and the spokesperson for the Saudi-led military coalition went so far as to claim that a majority of these flights was ferrying arms and ammunition.¹⁶

There are now several indications that the Iranians have not only supplied the Houthis, but trained them as well. Yemeni officials claim that Houthis have been traveling to Lebanon and Iran for training for some time now, indicating that 100 Houthi fighters trained in Iran in 2014 alone.¹⁷ Though virtually impossible to confirm, a senior Iranian official admitted in December 2014 that the IRGC's Qods Force had stationed a "few hundred" military personnel to directly train Houthi combatants in Yemen, in addition to about a dozen Iranian military advisers already on the ground.¹⁸ A news report in late March suggested that members of the IRGC were training Houthis in the use of Yemen's air force.¹⁹

Iran has also provided vital financial support to the Houthi movement. In 2012, U.S. officials noted that along with weapons, Iran was regularly sending several million dollars in cash to Yemen to back the Shi'ite rebels.²⁰ In December 2014, a Yemeni official warned that "sacks of cash" from Tehran had been arriving at Sana'a International Airport, some of which were channeled via Iran's Lebanese proxy, Hezbollah.²¹

Beyond military and financial support, Iran and its proxies have also been a great source of guidance for the Houthis. In late 2009, reports emerged of a secret meeting along the Yemeni-Saudi border between Houthi rebels, the IRGC, and Hezbollah.²² The latter also assisted the Houthis in establishing Al Masira, a Houthi radio and television station that provides the Houthis with a reliable means of disseminating their propaganda in Yemen and beyond.²³

Recent reports highlight the growing relationship between Hezbollah and

the Yemeni rebels.²⁴ In May, a Hezbollah commander close to the terrorist group's leadership spoke of Hezbollah's advisory role vis-à-vis the Houthis, allegedly teaching the rebels the art of guerrilla warfare and operational timing.²⁵ Harping on long-standing Shi'ite narratives of oppression, the Hezbollah commander commented, "We are wherever the oppressed need us... Hizbollah is the school where every freedom-seeking man wants to learn." When Houthi spiritual leader Abdel Malek al-Shami died as a result of injuries sustained from a Sunni terrorist bombing of a mosque in March, he reportedly was buried in Lebanon at a cemetery in the Hezbollah stronghold of southern Beirut alongside Hezbollah terrorist mastermind Imad Mughniyeh.²⁶

The road ahead

The ongoing Houthi crisis poses serious challenges to U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Yemen, a country that serves as a base for operations for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Senior American intelligence officials have called AQAP "the most dangerous of al-Qaeda's" affiliates, particularly due to the group's repeated attempts to strike Western targets outside of Yemen's borders.²⁷ After all, AQAP claimed credit for the terrorist attack on the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 and has attempted to carry out several brazen attacks in the U.S. These include the 2009 Christmas Day plot to bomb a Detroit-bound passenger airplane, two attempts to down cargo planes with explosives disguised as printer cartridges in October 2010, as well as a May 2012 attempt to bomb a U.S.-bound airliner.

The sidelining of President Hadi, a staunch U.S. counterterrorism partner, surely does not bode well for future efforts to combat AQAP in the country. This became especially clear in late March, when Houthi forces took control

of the al-Anad airbase in southern Lahij province. The base previously served as a key site for joint Yemeni-U.S. counterterrorism operations, including as a base for drone strikes, and AQAP has targeted the base in the past in retaliation for U.S. drone strikes against its operatives.

Perhaps even more troubling than the apparent ouster of President Hadi is the evident reinvigoration of AQAP in recent months. From the outset of the rebellion, AQAP framed the conflict in starkly sectarian terms and championed itself as the vanguard of Yemen's Sunni Muslims in the face of a Shi'ite rebel onslaught.²⁸ This narrative was bolstered by the fact that until the beginning of Operation Decisive Storm, AQAP was one of the only forces on the ground launching attacks against the rebels. Consequently, a growing number of reports indicate that more Sunni tribesmen have joined forces with the terrorist group in battles against the Houthis—a boon for AQAP recruitment in the country.²⁹

The Houthi rebellion has also created a dangerous power vacuum in the country, which AQAP has been more than happy to exploit. AQAP routinely capitalizes on moments of crisis in Yemen, as it did in 2011 when massive Arab Spring protests filled the streets of Sana'a. While more troops were recalled to the capital to squash the protests, AQAP mobilized in the south and started seizing territory—eventually announcing the establishment of an emirate in the Yemeni province of Abyan in 2011.

It appears that the current Houthi rebellion has similarly breathed new life into al-Qaeda's Yemeni affiliate. AQAP has managed to wage a three-front war—staging attacks against the Houthi rebels, the Yemeni military, as well as targeting U.S. and other Western interests in the country. In light of this increased operational capability, it should not have come as a major surprise when the terrorist group seized

control of the coastal city of al-Mukalla in early April, subsequently raiding the local branch of the Central Bank and other key government offices. AQAP fighters also staged a prison break in the city, freeing over 300 inmates including AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi.

AQAP's strengthened hand is just one concern for U.S. counterterrorism officials focused on Yemen. A major fear is the prospect that Yemen could go the way of Syria, continuing to spiral out of control and attracting jihadi operatives of all stripes, especially given the increasingly sectarian nature of the crisis. In this scenario, Yemen could become a haven not just for al-Qaeda affiliates, but for a host of other extremist organizations as well—groups that could destabilize the country for years to come and foster even more anti-American activity. This is already becoming a reality, as evidenced by the emergence of an Islamic State cell in Yemen in March that has already claimed a series of brutal attacks in the country.

The resurgence of Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen is another discouraging development, threatening to spoil the country's delicate political transition which began in 2011 and potentially destabilizing Yemen for the foreseeable future. Moreover, it throws a wrench in President Obama's description of Yemen as a model of peaceful political transition in the Arab world,³⁰ and could ultimately engender even more divisions in a country which celebrated the removal of Saleh's authoritarian rule.

Beyond the danger to Yemen's stability, the current Houthi rebellion also threatens to spill over Yemen's borders, with serious consequences for the region and the broader international community. The Houthis have already killed a number of Saudi soldiers in cross-border mortar attacks, even hitting major population centers in Najran and Jizan. The Saudi-led military campaign against

the Shi'ite rebels in Yemen could also exacerbate the already simmering sectarian tensions in Saudi Arabia, most prominently in the Kingdom's Eastern Province, where Shi'ites make up about a third of the population. In fact, reports in April suggested that Saudi security services were severely cracking down on Shi'ites in the Eastern Province in an attempt to prevent them from protesting against Operation Decisive Storm.³¹

The Houthi rebellion inched closer toward becoming a crisis of international proportions when the Houthis began repositioning missiles, artillery, and small armed boats on the strategic island of Perim in the Bab al-Mandaab strait in early April. Perim sits at the narrowest point of the strait and commands the fourth-busiest oil and fueling shipping bottleneck in the world, connecting the Gulf of Aden to the Mediterranean by way of the Red Sea.

The Bab el-Mandeb strait not only serves as a conduit for the international oil trade, but also for nearly all trade by sea flowing south from Europe to Asian markets. Any interference in shipping traffic through the Strait could therefore severely affect international commerce writ large, effectively rendering the Suez Canal obsolete and forcing shipping to reroute to longer and costlier journeys. It is also worth noting that Israel depends upon shipping in and out of the Bab el-Mandeb strait for its maritime commerce between Asia and Eilat. When Israel went to war in 1967, in part its *casus belli* was Nasser's decision to block off another important Red Sea chokepoint, the Straits of Tiran. Keenly aware of the strait's strategic importance, coalition forces swiftly eliminated the Houthi presence on Perim through a combination of air strikes, naval bombings, and a Saudi special forces landing.

Iran's involvement in the Houthi crisis further threatens to upend the geopolitical balance in the region, with the

Islamic Republic advancing on several fronts throughout the Middle East. Iranian officials were quick to gloat over this possible development. Days after the Houthis seized the Yemeni capital in September, Ali Riza Zakani, a prominent member of the Iranian parliament, exclaimed, "Three Arab capitals have already fallen into Iran's hands,"³² suggesting that after Damascus, Beirut, and Baghdad, Sana'a would be next. Iran's growing role in the region is undeniable, and the dangerous prospect of an Iranian forward operating base in Yemen is deeply concerning to American allies throughout the Middle East.

Continued relevance

Only time will tell what will become of Yemen's current Houthi crisis. However, no matter the outcome of the current Saudi-led military operation, what is becoming increasingly apparent is that it will not be the final nail in the coffin of the Houthi movement. The Houthis have proven that they are a force to be reckoned with, and that efforts to marginalize them completely are doomed to fail.

As such, they will continue to play an important role in Yemen's political future. The country's future stability and survival may just depend on the extent to which a political accommodation can unite Yemen's disparate political movements, including the Houthis, to create a strong, central government capable of tackling the country's myriad problems.



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AN ISLAMIC STATE IN THE SINAI

Jantzen W. Garnett

Despite major efforts by Egyptian security forces, ongoing—and intensifying—levels of violence now predominate across the northern Sinai Peninsula. A recent attack targeting the Multinational Forces and Observers (MFO) base in North Sinai has drawn renewed international attention to the threat posed by militant groups operating in the area.

Chief among these is *Wilayat* Sinai, or Sinai Province, an Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) affiliate that was previously known as Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM). The June attack on the MFO base was claimed by *Wilayat* Sinai and confirmed by the U.S. government in a formal press release.¹ And while the exact details of the attack are still unknown, the group's targeting of international peacekeepers represents a clear escalation of the already-fraught security environment in the Sinai—and a potential change in the dynamics of the conflict there.

Indeed, since joining ISIS, *Wilayat* Sinai has increasingly adopted tactics, techniques, and procedures employed by ISIS in Iraq and Syria. So far, however, it has by and large refrained from targeting civilians or international forces. As such, the targeting of the MFO base indicates a major shift in the group's *modus operandi*, and a potential portent of things to come.

Ideological (d)evolution

Wilayat Sinai originally pledged *baya* (a religious oath of allegiance) to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in November 2014, and subsequently reaffirmed its fealty in a video that was released in May 2015.² Following its original November 2014 pledge,



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ABM was formally incorporated into the ISIS structure—rebranding itself *Wilayat Sinai* and in the process becoming one of ISIS' first external affiliates.

The merger raised new questions and concerns about the capabilities of the already-deadly terrorist organization. While a simple name change does not in and of itself indicate increased lethality, recent operations carried out by *Wilayat Sinai* suggest that the group has received expertise and possibly resources from ISIS. It is useful, then, to trace the group's recent evolution as a way of understanding where it came from—and where it is heading.

Even prior to pledging allegiance to ISIS, *Wilayat Sinai* (then ABM) was already widely considered to be the most dangerous *Salafi-jihadist* group operating in Egypt. It had a history of attacks, including a string of stand-alone vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and suicide-VBIED operations in the latter half of 2013 and January 2014. The group, however, suffered a number of setbacks in the early months of 2014; at least nine key operatives were killed in clashes with Egyptian forces, including a co-founder of the group and three veterans of the Syrian *jihad*. Eight other members were arrested in March 2014, six of whom were subsequently executed by Egyptian authorities this past May.

The lethality and frequency of the group's attacks dropped significantly after March 2014. Nevertheless, it did manage to carry out a few terrorist attacks, most notably one near al-Farafra in Egypt's Western Desert. In July 2014, elements of the group conducted an armed assault against a military post there, killing 22 soldiers. The following month, ABM released a video that concluded with photos from the attack and a caption warning of a forthcoming one. A number of deadly roadside IED attacks targeting military convoys

in North Sinai followed. And, having gradually reconstituted itself after an operational pause, ABM launched its first complex attack (combining the tactics of an SVBIED followed by a heavily armed assault) against the Karam al-Qawades military post in North Sinai on October 24, 2014. At least 28 soldiers died in the attack.

ABM's pledge of *baya* to al-Baghdadi followed that attack, and took the form of an audio statement released on November 10, 2014. A few days later, the group claimed responsibility for the Karam al-Qawades attack—the first claimed in the name of *Wilayat Sinai*.³ Thereafter, the militant group increased operations throughout North Sinai, culminating in synchronized and well-coordinated attacks carried out across the region in January 2015, which went well beyond any previous terrorist acts carried out by the group in both sophistication and scope. They included, among other incidents, a triple-SVBIED attack inside the security corridor of North Sinai's provincial capital, al-Arish, as well as concurrent assaults on a number of security positions across the region.

The exact death toll is still unknown, due to a moratorium imposed on the Health Ministry by the government shortly after the attacks occurred. *Wilayat Sinai* itself claimed the attack left "hundreds" dead. Some residents of al-Arish estimated the death toll to be nearly 100.⁴ Most media reports, meanwhile, put the number at no less than 30 dead with dozens of others wounded. The lack of transparency, and unwillingness to release official figures, suggests that the attacks may have been more devastating than the government would like to acknowledge.

Growing lethality

Prior to the January synchronized attacks, there had been little or no evidence that *Wilayat Sinai* had obtained

technical assistance or advanced weaponry from ISIS. The sort of complex attack carried out by the group at that time, however, indicated improved logistical support, an increase in funds, technical assistance in constructing explosives, and additional recruits. It represented the largest, most sophisticated attack conducted by the group to date—and is the clearest indication that *Wilayat Sinai* has received support from ISIS, perhaps significantly so. It was against this backdrop that *Wilayat Sinai* launched a mortar and rocket attack against the international peacekeepers' base in North Sinai.

At the time, the group claimed it had attacked the base's airstrip as a response for the arrest of a woman by Egyptian security forces in the nearby town of Sheikh Zuweid. But other reasons were likely behind the attack. For instance, the MFO consists of troop contributions from 12 countries, eight of which have participated to one extent or another in the anti-ISIS coalition now operating in Iraq and Syria. *Wilayat Sinai's* decision to target the MFO base, therefore, might be a form of retribution carried out on the periphery of the hostilities taking place in the Levant. It was also a demonstration of sorts. With it, the *Wilayat Sinai* signaled its willingness to target the peacekeepers and reaffirmed that it is capable of conducting such an attack—and likely will pursue similar actions in the future.

Here, too, the influence of ISIS can be felt. As its ideology has changed, *Wilayat Sinai* has incrementally adopted many of ISIS' operational methods. The pace at which they began implementing ISIS' methods increased steadily after pledging allegiance, but even prior to its formal rebranding the group began adopting some of ISIS' tactics. ABM's first public indication of affinity with ISIS was in a January 23, 2014, audio message by the group's religious leader, Sheikh Abu Usama al-Masry, in which

he encouraged the "*mujahideen* brothers" of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham to stand firm and have patience for God's assistance.⁵ Then, in July 2014, during an *Eid al-Fitr* sermon at the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, al-Masry called on God to "grant victory to our brothers in the Islamic State and open Baghdad and all the country to them as well as the hearts of the people."⁶

Subsequently, in August 2014, the group adopted a campaign of beheadings and executions carried out in much the same manner as that of ISIS, filming and disseminating the videos on *jihadi* forums and Twitter. The first video surfaced in August 2014 and showed the beheading of four civilians accused of cooperating with Israel's Mossad spy service.⁷ The manner in which they were killed mimicked the high profile beheadings of American and British hostages that have been carried out by ISIS. A second video published by the terrorist group surfaced in early October, showing the beheading of three civilians and the execution of another. All of the victims had been accused of cooperating with Israeli or Egyptian security forces.⁸

In early 2015, the Sinai witnessed a significant increase in the number of summary executions and beheadings. Eight bodies were found beheaded and strewn along North Sinai roadways with dozens of others found shot in apparent execution-style killings. Many local residents blamed *Wilayat Sinai* for the beheadings, which proved accurate; on February 9th, the group released a gruesome video of the eight beheadings, which were carried out in broad daylight along the side of the al-Arish-Rafah highway.⁹ Although the majority of the execution-style killings since have not been publicly claimed, they too are presumed to be the work of *Wilayat Sinai* militants.

These tactics are designed to intimidate the local population so as to discourage would-be informants from working

with the security forces. Another tactic utilized by the terrorist group, albeit to a lesser extent, is home demolitions.¹⁰ In a video released in October, armed militants are shown searching a house late at night for a man accused of cooperating with the Egyptian security forces. Not finding him at home, they remove his wife and two small children and demolish the house with explosives. As the militants are shown clearing the house, an excerpt from a speech by ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammed al-Adnani is heard, in which he advises “remove their families from their homes and thereafter blow up their homes.” This tactic, along with beheadings and executions, bears a strong resemblance to the intimidation campaign undertaken by ISIS in Mosul prior to its seizure of the city and the declaration of the “caliphate.”

Other signs of a deeper association also persist. *Wilayat Sinai* has taken efforts to at least appear to distribute money to locals in need, as evidenced by a photo set published by their media office. The photos allegedly depict *mujahideen* distributing funds to residents whose homes were destroyed by the military during security operations targeting the militants. The alleged funds were distributed in clearly marked Air Mail envelopes with “Islamic State, *Wilayat Sinai*” written prominently across the front. The distribution of “Islamic State” aid money is, like the fear tactics of executions and beheadings, a hallmark of ISIS social outreach efforts in their Iraqi and Syrian territories. In additional efforts, armed and masked militants were photographed handing out treats to the children of local Sinai residents and photos of militants distributing food aid to the local population were also circulated online.

Furthermore, *Wilayat Sinai* has—on occasion—enforced, at least to a limited extent, its own interpretation of *sharia* (Islamic law) by confiscating and burning marijuana during traffic stops at

mujahideen checkpoints in North Sinai.¹¹ In January, photos of militants stopping vehicles, confiscating marijuana, and then burning it along the side of the road were published by *Wilayat Sinai*’s media office. These sorts of events double as, or perhaps are purely, public relations stunts designed to enhance the group’s image. And since joining ISIS, their media profile has grown dramatically.

Resilient militancy

For all of its counterterrorism efforts to date, it is likely that the Egyptian government has unwittingly assisted *Wilayat Sinai*’s recruitment efforts.

Within days of the October attack against the Karam al-Qawadis military post, the Sisi government responded by implementing a plan to establish a 500-meter (0.3-mile) wide, 13.5-kilometer (8.4-mile) long “buffer zone” along the Sinai’s border with the Gaza Strip. The plan called for the eviction of 1,156 families and the demolition of 802 homes. Subsequently, in January 2015, the Egyptian military began implementing phase two of the project, which doubled the initial 500-meter wide zone to a full kilometer and required the evacuation of an additional 2,044 families and demolition of another 1,220 homes.¹² A third phase, expanding it an additional kilometer, was announced in April. The buffer zone is intended to stop the flow of weapons and fighters coming from the Gaza Strip through hundreds of tunnels under the border. In all likelihood, however, the forced evictions, loss of homes, jobs, and major sources of income (i.e., the smuggling of licit and illicit goods into Gaza) for the local population has given *Wilayat Sinai* more fodder for recruitment.

So far, it is unclear how many new recruits the group has garnered as a result. But there is mounting evidence that the displacement caused by Egyptian security measures has the potential to be a boon for the organization; to wit, a

recent photo report published in late May depicts some three dozen camouflage-clad militants marching and training in what is alleged to be a new group of recruits for the group.¹³

Nor are there signs that *Wilayat Sinai* has been significantly impeded by the stepped-up security operations the Egyptian authorities have employed to target it. Indeed, there are indicators that *Wilayat Sinai*'s operations will increase in frequency, lethality, sophistication, and complexity as the target set grows to encompass international peacekeepers and potentially other foreign interests. The group appears to have received technical assistance, training, and possibly even limited funds from ISIS, and is seizing munitions and likely gaining recruits—all of which have added to its capabilities.

These new capabilities can be expected to increase the frequency of large, complex attacks carried out by *Wilayat Sinai*, similar in nature to the January triple-SVBIED attack in al-Arish. With their recent battlefield successes, Sinai militants are certain to be emboldened to aim for larger targets. Their growing boldness—and the acquisition of heavy weapons—means that the already-volatile situation in the Sinai is likely to expand still further.



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WHY THE WESTERN SAHARA MATTERS

Michael Rubin

With the Middle East in chaos, it is understandable that few in Washington have time for the Western Sahara. After all, Syria has become the world's largest generator of refugees. Iraq continues to teeter on the brink of chaos, and both Yemen and Libya are mired in civil war. Iran is resurgent. Afghanistan's stability likely will not last long beyond the withdrawal of U.S. troops. The Islamic State has re-introduced a twisted, reactionary version of the Caliphate, replete with plunder, rape, and slavery, and Boko Haram, which has now taken over vast swathes of northern Nigeria and moved into Cameroon as well, isn't far behind in its brutality. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, meanwhile, operates across the Sahel from Algeria to Sudan.

So why is the fate of the Western Sahara important? It is home to barely 500,000 people—equivalent to the city of Fresno, California—spread over a 100,000-square-mile patch of desert, an area the size of Colorado. It boasts only one town with over 100,000 people, and just five over 10,000 people. In other words, if the Western Sahara were ever to become independent, then it would be the least densely populated country on earth.

Increasingly, however, Morocco and the Western Sahara are the only oases of security and stability across a region teetering on the brink of failure. If there are two lessons of the post-9/11 era, the first is that governed spaces trump ungoverned spaces, and the second is that reform-minded regimes make better allies than autocracies which flirt with terrorism. Given the choice between a strengthened partnership with Morocco and empowering the Polisario Front, an authoritarian group which has declared itself the head of a self-styled Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), the choice should be clear. Not only does Moroccan control over the Western Sahara



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best deny that territory to the terrorists, Islamists, and criminal gangs which increasingly plague North Africa and the Maghreb, but it also provides the best hope for the Sahrawi to flourish both culturally and economically.

The United States has, for more than two decades, stayed on the fence with regard to the Western Sahara, and continues to pay heed to the United Nations-promoted idea that the status of the Western Sahara should be determined by referendum. Algerian and Polisario filibustering, however, has undercut any census to determine eligibility, condemning the remaining Sahrawi refugees stuck in Polisario-run refugee camps in Algeria to a festering limbo which now threatens to metastasize into an engine for terror and instability. Embracing Sahrawi autonomy under Moroccan rule not only recognizes the status quo, but represents the only responsible policy, from both a humanitarian and security perspective.

A history of possession

At the core of questions about Morocco's claims to the Western Sahara is a dispute about their legitimacy: Is the Moroccan claim to sovereignty righting historical wrongs, or is a naked land grab meant to expand Moroccan territory in order to enable the kingdom to loot the Western Sahara's resources, as so many proponents of Sahrawi independence suggest?

Those suggestions, however, are a red herring.¹ True, the territory has phosphates, but they are just a pittance compared to the 50 billion metric tons—85 percent of the world's total—found in Morocco itself.²

Moreover, there is much historical fact to back Morocco's claim. A succession of dynasties governed the present-day kingdom from the early decades of the Islamic conquest.³ As with all entities at the time, control rested less on

formal boundaries and more on an ability to tax and conscript, and so informal borders shifted constantly, both within dynasties and between them. Generally speaking, however, the Idrisid dynasty (788-974 AD) that was centered in Fez did not extend its control to what is now the Western Sahara, but the contemporaneous Midrarid dynasty (823-977 AD), based in the eastern central Moroccan town of Sijilmasa, dominated the trade routes through the Western Sahara to what is today Mauritania. Thereafter, the Almoravid dynasty (1062-1147 AD), based in Marrakech, ruled over both Morocco and the Western Sahara as a cohesive whole. Then the Almohad Caliphate (1121-1269) and their successors largely let the Western Sahara slide away. The Marinids (1217-1465) arose from the Banu Marin, however, a nomadic tribe arose from the northern fringe of the Western Sahara, and proceeded to rule all of Morocco. By the second half of the sixteenth century, the Sadid Sharifs (1510-1659) had pushed Moroccan rule deep into the Sahara to include what is now northern Mali. Finally, the Alaouite Dynasty, which began in 1631 and continues to rule Morocco today in the person of King Mohammed VI, has consistently claimed Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara, although its ability to assert control fluctuated with time.

Thus, regardless of whether Morocco formerly ruled the Sahara at any given time or whether some desert tribes were in rebellion, five Moroccan royal dynasties trace their roots to the region. Sahrawi nationalism, on the other hand, is largely an artificial, Cold War construct. Historically, it would be far more accurate to recognize Sahrawis as part of the diversity which has always marked the Moroccan national identity. Indeed, many Sahrawis have married into various Moroccan groups over the centuries, so that Moroccan and Sahrawi identities are far from distinct.

In the late nineteenth century, European colonialism threw a wrench into Moroccan control of the territory. Spain was a relative latecomer to the scramble for Africa. Against the backdrop of the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference in which European powers met to resolve formally their sometimes competing colonial claims, Spanish forces seized the barren and resource-poor Western Sahara (which was initially divided into the southern Río de Oro and northern Saguia el-Hamra). Gaining European recognition of its conquest was one thing, but pacifying the locals proved to be quite another. For the first half-century of Spanish occupation, local tribes resisted any Spanish administration. After 1934, the Spanish grip was stronger, but quiet and acquiescence do not always correlate.

Why didn't Morocco step up to assert its claims when Spain invaded the Sahara in 1884? Ultimately, the answer was because it had little diplomatic leverage and its military was too weak to repel the Spanish army. True, Morocco had managed to maintain its independence for centuries, even as European powers gobbled up huge swathes of Africa further away and less accessible than Morocco. But, by the late nineteenth century, the kingdom too was in the crosshairs of European geopolitical competition.

Spain declared war on Morocco in 1859 over a dispute about the borders of Ceuta, to this day a seven-square-mile enclave on the North African coast surrounded by Morocco and the Mediterranean. The Portuguese had captured Ceuta in 1415, and transferred it to Spain in 1668; the territory has always been an irritant to Moroccans, much the way many Spaniards resent the British presence at Gibraltar. The Spanish-Moroccan War lasted just over six months and ended in a decisive defeat of the Moroccan army and the occupation of Tetuán. When the Spanish seized the Western

Sahara 25 years later, there was little Morocco could do.

For Morocco, the situation grew more tenuous in the first decades of the twentieth century. The French army had conquered Algeria in 1830 and, beginning in 1848, the French administered Algeria as an integral part of France. It was in this context—to protect Algeria's flank and to prevent any other power from taking advantage of Morocco's geostrategic importance with coasts on both the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean—that the French began increasingly to interfere in Moroccan affairs, eventually claiming Morocco as part of their sphere of influence. Other imperial powers were not going to leave such a status unchallenged. On March 31, 1905, Kaiser Wilhelm II landed in Tangiers to meet with Moroccan Sultan Abdelaziz and proceeded to endorse Morocco's sovereignty. France saw this as both provocative and detrimental to Paris' interests. The war of words between the French and Germans escalated into the summer, with French and German forces mobilizing for war.

Ultimately, the Algeiras Conference led to a truce, but it did not last. On July 1, 1911, against the backdrop of an uprising against Sultan Abdelhafid, who had taken over from Abdelaziz two years earlier, the Germans sent a gunboat to the Moroccan port of Agadir—theoretically to protect German commercial interests and rescue German merchants. The French responded by sending troops to Fez, and the British dispatched warships off the Moroccan coast, fearing the Germans' ultimate goal was to establish a base that could threaten Gibraltar. Again the powers negotiated a solution, but the French were willing to take no more chances: with the 1912 Treaty of Fez, they and the Spanish established a formal protectorate over Morocco, with the Spanish controlling along the northern coast minus Tangiers as well as the

Spanish-occupied areas of the Sahara, while the French ruled supreme everywhere else.

The United States quietly supported Moroccan independence beginning in the 1940s, and gave more overt diplomatic support in the 1950s.⁴ But it was overbearing French manipulation of the monarchy—exiling Mohammad V to Madagascar and replacing him on the throne with his uncle Mohammed Ben Aarafa—that ultimately did French control in. Facing riots and active opposition, the French ultimately allowed Mohammad V to return and, in 1956, granted Morocco formal independence. The Spanish forfeited their protectorate along the northern coast, but continued to hold the Western Sahara. The following year, Morocco formally laid claim to the territory, the repossession of which became the Kingdom's dominant foreign policy goal. In 1963, Morocco successfully pushed the United Nations to formally designate the Western Sahara to be non-self-governing territory and, in 1965, the Moroccans spearheaded a non-binding but symbolically important UN General Assembly resolution demanding Spain give up its colony.

Momentum certainly seemed to be on the Kingdom's side. The age of imperialism was ending. Between Morocco's independence and 1975, when the Spanish ultimately decided to evacuate the Western Sahara, three dozen African countries gained independence, including Equatorial Guinea which the Spanish had given up in 1968.

Snubbed by the ICJ

But Moroccan efforts at diplomacy were not enough to overcome Cold War reality. In 1974, the Moroccan government had sought an International Court of Justice ruling confirming Morocco's claims to the Western Sahara. What they got fell short. It has become conventional wisdom among proponents of Sahrawi

independence and too many journalists that the Court's 1975 finding shot down Morocco's claims to the Western Sahara. The BBC, for example, wrote in a 2014 profile of the Western Sahara that "In October 1975 the International Court of Justice rejected territorial claims by Morocco and Mauritania... [and] recognised the Saharawis' right to self-determination," while *Foreign Policy In Focus*, a magazine for leftist academics and activists in the United States, stated, "Morocco has occupied Western Sahara since 1975 in violation of...a decision by the International Court of Justice."⁵

Such a reading willfully misrepresents both the International Court's finding and its context. First, the court issued an advisory opinion rather than a legally binding decision. At issue before the Court were two questions. The first question was: "Was Western Sahara (Rio de Oro and Sakiet El Hamra) at the time of colonization by Spain a territory belonging to no one (*terra nullius*)?" while the second was, "What were the legal ties between this territory and the Kingdom of Morocco and the Mauritanian entity?"⁶

The court disputed Morocco's claim that the Western Sahara was *terra nullius* when the Spanish armies colonized it, but found overwhelmingly that there were legal ties between the Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco consistent with Morocco's claims and that several Sahrawi tribes held allegiance to the Moroccan Sultan. Why the seeming inconsistency? The historical evidence which Morocco had submitted was overwhelming and not easy to dispute, but 1975 was the height of the Cold War. The Sahara question was entangled in the Cold War as Morocco was a staunch ally of the West, while the Polisario Front and its Algerian and Cuban backers were Soviet clients. The Non-Aligned Movement distrusted Morocco's links to the West and largely sided with the Polisario.

Nor should the finding that the Western Sahara was not *terra nullius* at the time of the Spanish invasion imply that the Western Sahara was a distinct entity. The judges' interpretation centered on the question of whether there were tribes and chiefs who were theoretically capable of autonomy; not whether those tribes and chiefs actually were independent.⁷ In short, the deck was stacked. Manfred Lachs, the president of the court for the proceedings, was Polish. There was also a Soviet judge, Platon Dmitrievich Morozov. Louis Ignacio-Pinto was Beninese. At the time, Benin was perhaps the staunchest Marxist state in Africa. Nor could Morocco expect a fair hearing from Nagendra Singh, the Indian judge. India had been the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was suspicious of the West to start. By the 1970s, it had largely shed any pretense to neutrality and moved firmly into the Soviet camp in foreign policy, even signing a Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1971.

The Moroccan government was dissatisfied with the Court's split decision. Just weeks after the Court's decision, 350,000 Moroccans marched unarmed into the Western Sahara waving Moroccan flags and carrying copies of the Qur'an in what became known as the "Green March." Spanish forces watched the incursion, but did not fire on the crowds. In effect, the non-violent action marked the end of any Spanish pretense of control. This was confirmed barely a week later when, on November 14, 1975, the governments of Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania agreed to the Madrid Accords which effectively divided the Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania.⁸

Cold War proxies

Not everyone was willing to accept a peaceful, diplomatic resolution. Houari Boumediene, commander of Algeria's revolutionary council and indisputable

leader of the country after leading the 1965 coup, transformed Algeria into an authoritarian, socialist, Soviet-oriented state. Morocco was no democracy and was also often abusive of human rights, but its orientation was decidedly Western. The two states were always staunch political and cultural rivals. Morocco was a conservative, traditional monarchy while Algeria was a reactionary republic. The Cold War only exacerbated the conflict, as did the "Sand War," a 1963 skirmish sparked by Morocco's attempt to reclaim territory around Tindouf which French colonial authorities had transferred from Morocco to Algeria when France was suzerain over both.

When Spain withdrew from the territory and Mauritania ceded its claims in the Western Sahara to Morocco, Algeria sought to undercut its neighbor and rival. Its chief tool was the *Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguia el Hamra y Río de Oro*, better known as the Polisario Front. Founded in 1973, the Polisario had launched occasional guerilla actions against Spanish garrisons and, more frequently, Sahrawi residents who did not accept the Polisario as their representatives. The Polisario's campaign took a new direction after the Spanish withdrawal. On February 27, 1976, it declared the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and proceeded to resist what it argued was Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara.

The subsequent guerrilla conflict killed 7,000 Moroccan soldiers and 4,000 Polisario guerrillas, not to mention perhaps 3,000 Sahrawi civilians. Fighting displaced tens of thousands of others. Ultimately, it was the Moroccan army's construction of a huge, 1,500-mile-long sand and stone berm and trench system with minefields and forward operating bases along the Western Sahara's frontier with Algeria and Mauritania which confirmed Moroccan control over the territory and precipitously diminished the

Polisario insurgency on the Moroccan side of the berm.

The Polisario launched one final unsuccessful offensive in 1989 against the Moroccan-held town of Guelta Zemmour, but the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing financial crisis amongst Cuba and its other clients took their toll: While some African countries and more radical regimes continued to lend diplomatic support, the Polisario found their more substantive international backing whittling away. The Polisario's leadership recognized that, lacking popular support and now largely blunted militarily, they would never achieve their aims by force. Enter the United Nations: On April 29, 1991, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 690, which created a United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) with a mission to arrange a referendum among the Sahrawi about self-determination. On September 6, 1991, a cease-fire took hold.

Morocco consolidated control over the Western Sahara, initially with a brutal hand, but its behavior was nothing compared to the ruthlessness employed by the Polisario. The Polisario held Sahrawi refugees as virtual hostages in camps in the western Algerian province of Tindouf. It separated children from their families, and sent them to Cuba for re-education, and it often executed those who opposed the Polisario's dominance or questioned its tactics or positions. After the cease-fire, the Polisario illegally kept more than 400 Moroccan prisoners-of-war for an additional 14 years. These were subjected to regular torture, and the Polisario repeatedly forced its Moroccan prisoners to donate blood for wounded Polisario fighters. The Polisario summarily executed many Moroccan POWs years after the cease-fire mandated their release.

While MINURSO continues to monitor the cease-fire, it failed in its mission to sponsor a referendum. The problem was

not only the Polisario, but also the group's Algerian backers. Preparations broke down over a simple question: Who gets to vote? While the Polisario Front claims more than 100,000 Sahrawi refugees live in refugee camps in Tindouf, and some journalists and short-term visitors parrot that figure, diplomats with long experience in the camps and in the region, as well as former refugees, estimate that no more than 40,000 reside in the camps. Only half of these are actual refugees from the portion of the Western Sahara that Morocco controls; the remainder has roots in Algeria, Mauritania, or Mali and so have no standing in the referendum. In theory, the UN should be able to solve the problem, but Algeria refused to allow free access to independent observers to conduct a true census. As a result of these disputes, an indeterminate number of refugees have remained in the Tindouf camps for the almost quarter century since MINURSO's establishment.

While many countries might shy away from hosting any refugee population into perpetuity, cynicism and corruption twists Algeria's position. Today, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic exists on paper only, thanks to Algerian largesse, which sees the Polisario as a useful wedge against rival Morocco and so bankrolls its diplomatic missions.

Money also matters. In 2007, the European Union's Anti-Fraud Office detailed with precision the diversion of humanitarian aid destined for Sahrawi refugees confined to the Tindouf camps. The diversions began with the connivance of the Algerian military in the Mediterranean port of Oran and continued as the convoys made their nearly 1,000-mile trek to the camps. The basis for much of the fraud was the Polisario (and Algerian) inflation of the number of refugees. In effect, the European Union was feeding ghosts.⁹ Too many Algerian military officers and politicians have a vested interest in keeping the conflict alive.

Overcoming stalemate

Active war is not going to erupt again between Algeria and Morocco, and the Polisario lacks the capacity to renew its fight inside Morocco. The problem is not the Sahrawi insurgency, but rather broader regional collapse.

Fueled by loose weapons from Libya, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist groups have destabilized wide swathes of the Sahel. Tunisia might be the shining star of the Arab Spring, but it too is facing a terrorist challenge. On March 18, 2015, terrorists loyal to the Islamic State attacked the Bardo Museum in the country's capital, killing 22. A month and a half later, the *jihadi* Ifriqiyah Media called on those loyal to the Islamic State to transform the summer months into a "Summer of Hell" in Tunisia.¹⁰ Nor is Tunisia alone in facing a looming terrorist threat. On May 9, 2015, for example, the Islamic State released an audio tape purporting to be from the Ansar al-Khilafah Battalion in Algeria, pledging allegiance to self-styled Islamic State Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and four days later, Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi from El Mourabitoune, a *jihadist* group which operates in the Sahel and Sahara, likewise pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.¹¹ After Syria and Iraq, nowhere does the Islamic State control more territory than in Libya. Across North Africa and the Sahel, from the Red Sea to the Atlantic, only Morocco is truly stable.

While 45 countries might recognize the fiction of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic—largely as a precondition to receive Algerian aid or discounted gas—Polisario authority does not extend beyond its presence in the Tindouf refugee camps. Tindouf itself is a miserable place: It has no natural resources and no agricultural potential. Residents live not only off aid, but also smuggling. Polisario smuggling is evident in markets around Algeria, Mali,

and Mauritania, where merchants sell aid supplies delivered to Tindouf.

Siphoned aid is only the tip of the iceberg. Polisario smugglers also transport African migrants northward toward Europe, and *jihadis* and weaponry southward from Libya, through Algeria, and across the Sahel. Counterterrorism analysts say that AQIM now recruits in Polisario camps.¹²

It would be in the security interest not only of the United States but also every country in North Africa and the Sahel to hamper these smuggling networks. The Tindouf camps are not the only source of such smuggling, but they are a catalyst. The simple fact is that the camps need not exist. Many residents of the Tindouf camps seek to return to Morocco, which welcomes them with open arms. Whereas from the 1970s through the 1990s, Morocco treated the Western Sahara as a poor backwater, Mohammed VI of Morocco has spearheaded economic development in the region.¹³ As a result, living standards in the Western Sahara are now higher than in the rest of Morocco. Rather than simply exploit the region's minimal mineral wealth or its more robust fisheries, the government focuses on sustainable development, tourism, businesses, and education. Many returnees, meanwhile, suggest that thousands more would follow if the Polisario allowed them to leave.

More importantly, the Moroccan government no longer simply seeks to annex the territory. In 2006, the Moroccan Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS) proposed an autonomy plan for the territory, somewhat modeled on the autonomy of Spanish regions and the Canary Islands under Spanish sovereignty. In 2007, Nicholas Burns, then-Undersecretary of State for Policy, called the Moroccan plan "a serious and credible proposal," and a bipartisan group of 173 congressmen—including nearly every member of the leadership—sent

a letter to President George W. Bush expressing support for the Moroccan proposal.¹⁴ Algeria, always statist, continues to oppose such autonomy for fear that it might set a precedent for Algerian Berbers to demand similar freedoms. But while Algeria has stonewalled, Morocco has moved forward with its plans. Former Polisario members and refugees occupy the highest positions and set policy. On November 6, 2014, the 39th anniversary of the Green March, Mohammed VI announced “advanced regionalization,” effectively complete autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty.¹⁵

Diplomats naturally seek compromise, but win-win situations only work when both sides sincerely seek a settlement. Had the referendum enshrined in the MINURSO mission been viable, it would have long ago occurred. Boilerplate language for direct negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario are meaningless if not counterproductive when one party filibusters a permanent, realistic solution. With AQIM wreaking havoc in the region, and the Islamic State looking at North Africa and the Sahel as a new front, the United States and its European and African allies should no longer sit idle and let the problem fester. Washington should embrace stability and security, not take them for granted.

It is time to side unequivocally with Rabat. Morocco has been a staunch friend to the United States for centuries, ever since becoming the first country to recognize American independence in 1777. It is time to repay the favor. The United States should overtly recognize Moroccan sovereignty over the Western Sahara so long as Morocco fully implements its regionalization policy and utilizes the commodity and fishing resources of the region as well as potential offshore gas primarily for the development of the region, as required by international law. The ineffectual MINURSO experiment should be ended as an expensive arti-

fact of the past. Rather than persist in a process that effectively holds Sahrawis in Tindouf hostage to the Polisario, the United States and United Nations should demand that Algeria allow Sahrawi refugees to travel with their families freely, by bus, to Morocco. No longer should the Polisario be allowed to keep family members hostage to encourage the return of the few camp residents who can get seats on UN-sponsored flights. Not always do American security interests and humanitarian factors so neatly coincide. In this case, however they do.

As crises erupt across the globe, from the Senkaku Islands to Ukraine and across the Middle East, it can be tempting for the White House and State Department to put policy toward traditionally peripheral regions like the Western Sahara on autopilot. It would also be a mistake, as the status quo in the Sahel is no longer tenable.



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ISRAEL IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

Tom Wilson

In a region convulsed by the turmoil of civil wars, revolutions, and insurgencies, Israel stands out as an island of relative stability, one that has successfully weathered the multiple storms of the Islamist winter that abruptly followed the so-called “Arab Spring.” Yet in the summer of 2014, the calm in Israel was shattered by rockets, terrorists emerging from tunnels, and amphibious attacks along the country’s shoreline. The abrupt intrusion of terrorism back into Israeli domestic life—with all of the country’s major cities within reach of missiles fired by the Hamas terrorist group—was reminiscent of the second intifada, when suicide bombers from Hamas and other extremist factions entered Israel’s busy city centers and transformed them into war zones, paralyzing daily life.

During the height of the summer 2014 Gaza War, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu commented that Israel could not afford to give up control of the West Bank and risk the creation of “another 20 Gazas” there.¹ That remark resonated particularly strongly with many Israelis, not least because it came just months after a failed American-led effort to push for a peace agreement with the Palestinians—one that would have obliged Israel pull out of the vast majority of the West Bank. And whereas Netanyahu’s statement about the potential horrors of Palestinian terrorism appears to have been received approvingly by many in Israel, Secretary of State John Kerry’s peace-making efforts enjoyed far less popularity. Indeed, many sections of Israeli society came to resent the Obama administration’s focus on promoting a peace agreement, as did some in Israel’s political establishment.

That they did speaks volumes about just how much Washington’s diplomats, like their counterparts in Europe, have fundamentally failed to appreciate the changes that



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have taken place in Israel's calculus of risk over the preceding decade. Furthermore, they have failed to view Israel's predicament in its full regional context.

Rather, ever since Barack Obama took office, his administration has pressed unrelentingly for reconciliation between the Israelis and Palestinians. It has done so, moreover, as if the parties in question were still operating in the relative stability of the Middle East of the 1990s. Thus, Kerry's approach is reminiscent of the Clinton administration's hammering out of the Oslo Accords with Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, and its subsequent full-court press for a final agreement at Camp David between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat. But while it is true that the current Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, is a somewhat more preferable negotiating partner to Arafat, the similarities end there; the political landscape for a peace agreement today is more inhospitable than ever before.

This is so for two reasons. The first relates to the changing regional circumstances now confronting Israel. The second is tied to the fundamental transformation that has taken place in Palestinian society and politics.

Region on fire

Half-a-decade into the "Arab Spring," Israel faces numerous Islamist militant groups on its borders, from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria to Hamas in Gaza and al-Qaeda and Islamic State-aligned factions in the Sinai. The emergence of each of these groups has transformed Israel's security outlook and diminished hopes for securing a durable peace. Rather than an environment ripe for a *modus vivendi* with essentially pragmatic neighboring states, Israel now faces *jihadist* non-state actors, most of which are locked in power struggles with other militants as well as

with the nation-states whose territory they now operate from.

The spread of this regional turmoil has had a mixed impact on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. To some extent, the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen have made the mostly-cold confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians appear far less pressing and far less relevant. Whereas once the words "Middle East conflict" were shorthand for referring to the dispute between Israel and its Arab neighbours, now this expression is more likely to refer to the struggle between Sunni and Shi'a extremists, backed by the Gulf States and Iran, respectively.

It is particularly significant that many of these militant groups are now operating from territories that Israeli security forces have previously withdrawn from (the Sinai, Southern Lebanon, and Gaza) or are directly adjacent to strategically important territories that Israel has previously considered giving up (e.g., the Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley). This naturally has had a considerable impact on Israel's current willingness to make territorial concessions in return for peace agreements or international good will. From a strategic point of view, such moves have ultimately amounted to creating power vacuums that have eventually been filled by militants, so effectively moving a range of security threats ever closer to Israel's civilian population centers and core national infrastructure.

Take Hezbollah, Iran's most significant terrorist proxy. The Shi'ite militia represents one of the most formidable fighting forces in the Middle East, and is one of the greatest security challenges facing the Jewish state. Hezbollah and the Israeli military engaged in a deadly clash in 2006, one in which Israel's military failed to strike a truly decisive blow against the Shi'a militants. Since then, Hezbollah is understood to have dramatically increased its military capabilities,

and even with Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling air defense systems operational, it is likely that Hezbollah could still inflict considerable damage in the event of a future conflict, since most of Israel's territory is now well within Hezbollah's reach.

The other major threat to Israel's north has been the unfolding crisis in Syria. Stray projectiles from the fighting have impacted the Israeli-controlled parts of the Golan on numerous occasions, but it is the advance of Islamist groups close to the Syrian border that has caused the most alarm in Israel. For the moment, militants have been too absorbed with the fighting in Syria to direct their attention toward Israel. Nevertheless, the threat from chemical weapons and other capabilities falling into the hands of such groups must be taken seriously. Given that less than a decade ago, the Israeli government had contemplated a withdrawal from the Golan Heights—a territory that borders the Galilee, one of Israel's most vital fresh water sources—these developments have done nothing to win public support for the notion of making further territorial concessions for peace. To the contrary, they have demonstrated that while Israel might hand territory into the possession of one regime, there is no guarantee that that territory will remain secure, or that the regime in question will survive long after the signing of any such peace treaty.

That, in part, has been the Israeli experience in the Sinai as well. True, Egypt's short-lived Muslim Brotherhood government never officially revoked the peace treaty between the two countries, as many feared would happen after the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in 2011. Yet in Egypt—as in Lebanon and Syria—the threat to Israel has not come from the state itself, but rather from the weakness of those states and the prevalence of terrorist non-state actors moving into the resulting ungoverned and under-

governed territory. Today, groups loyal to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic State continue to operate in the Sinai Peninsula. And while Israel has now constructed a security barrier along its Egyptian border, and *jihadists* there are currently occupied with battling Egypt's military, the lawless nature of the peninsula represents a major security concern, among other things because of the way in which the Sinai has served as the primary channel through which weapons and weapons-related matériel have reached the Gaza Strip.

The one border from which Israel currently faces the least significant threat is the Jordanian one. Like other monarchies in the region, the Hashemite Kingdom has so far survived the ripple effects of the "Arab Spring" uprisings—but this may not remain the case indefinitely. The growing popularity of Salafism in Jordan² may well come to undermine stability in Jordan, creating a scenario that would almost certainly jeopardize Israel's security. Although it has been the case that some Jordanian Salafists have been drawn away from that country to join the fighting in Syria, it is also true that Jordan's proximity to both Iraq and Syria places it in a particularly fragile situation. Furthermore, the significant influx of refugees into Jordan from those conflicts may well have brought other extremists into the country. The resulting concerns about Jordan's long-term future have contributed to Israel's insistence that the Jordan Valley must remain its most eastern border, or at the very least that the Israeli military must be allowed to maintain a presence there.

The Islamization of Palestinian politics

Ever since the establishment of Hamas (The Islamic Resistance Movement) in 1987 at the outset of the first *intifada*, Islamist *jihadist* groups have

played an increasingly prominent part in Palestinian political life in general, and in particular as part of the Palestinian clash with Israel. Hamas had, of course, grown out of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was operating in the area even during the days of the British Mandate in Palestine.³ The group's founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, had led the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza since 1968, but Islamists had always played a minor role in Palestinian terrorist activities compared to the secular and Marxist guerrilla groups as represented by the PLO.

The past two decades, however, have seen a veritable explosion of Islamist politics in the Palestinian Territories. Drawing from the lessons of Hamas, Palestinian militants began to adopt the tactic of suicide bombing as a preferred method of attack. As they did, other Islamist groups (such as the smaller Palestinian Islamic Jihad) became increasingly prominent across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And, beginning in the mid-2000s, Salafist- and al-Qaeda-aligned groups began to proliferate in Gaza. Among them were small groups, such as Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam), Jaish al-Umma (Army of the Nation), and Fatah al-Islam (Islamic Conquest), all of whom began to make their presence felt in the Gaza Strip.⁴

The Islamist politics of the Gaza Strip have been far from harmonious. These factions were always fiercely critical of Hamas's failure to fully implement Islamic law, in particular following the group's takeover of the Strip in 2007, and have opposed the temporary cease-fires Hamas has agreed to with Israel from time to time. But while these groups certainly attracted some disaffected Hamas operatives,⁵ they did not appear to represent an immediate challenge to Hamas rule—at least for a time. More recently, however, some of these factions have sworn loyalty to the Islamic State, and clashes have broken out between

them and Hamas, which has found itself in the position of needing to eliminate more extreme Islamist elements to maintain its hold on power. At the same time, Fatah has been locked in a long-running struggle to prevent a takeover by Hamas Islamists in the West Bank, where it holds sway.

The heavy involvement of Islamists in the terror attacks of the second *intifada* was certainly an indication that radical Islam was playing an increasingly decisive role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nevertheless, few at that time predicted that Hamas would win a decisive victory when elections were held for the Palestinian national assembly in 2006. The group's subsequent seizure of power in Gaza by force in 2007, and the ousting of Fatah there, further cemented the process of radicalization sweeping Palestinian society.

Indications of what was happening should already have been apparent from the results of two surveys conducted in the mid-2000s. A 2004 survey by the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies found support for al-Qaeda to be noticeably higher among Palestinians than in neighboring Arab countries, with 70 percent describing al-Qaeda as a resistance movement as opposed to a terrorist organization.⁶ Similarly, a 2005 survey by the Norwegian group Fafo found 65 percent of Palestinians questioned supported al-Qaeda attacks against the West, and in Gaza that figure rose to 79 percent.⁷ European observers living in Palestinian society at the time noted this trend of popular extremism, with one European diplomat stating that Palestinian society was undergoing "an accelerated process of broad Islamization and radicalization."⁸

While the Palestinian Authority had itself noted the presence of Salafist evangelist preachers operating in the West Bank,⁹ Palestinian sympathies for violent extremism had still tended to be

expressed as support for nationalistic Islamist groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Indeed, by many estimations Hamas would have a strong chance of winning West Bank elections were they to be held again today. Although certain West Bank cities such as Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jericho have remained quite firmly under the control of Mahmoud Abbas's Palestinian Authority, there are other localities where Fatah has been severely weakened.

Abbas's approval rating had clearly plummeted by the time of the summer 2014 war in Gaza. An indication of where the sympathies of West Bank Palestinians lay came shortly before major hostilities erupted. At the time, Israel's security forces had undertaken a military operation to rescue three Israeli teenagers kidnapped by a Hamas cell based in Hebron in the southern West Bank. During that eleven-day operation, Israeli forces arrested some 350 militants, including almost all of Hamas's leadership in the West Bank. But while this operation received the backing of the Palestinian Authority and the cooperation of its security forces, widespread anger erupted into several nights of anti-Fatah rioting in Ramallah.

The Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014 appeared to give Hamas a significant boost with the Palestinian public, with many believing that the organization was doing far more than Fatah to lead "resistance" against Israel. Polling shortly after the war revealed that support for Hamas had doubled among West Bank Palestinians, rising from 23 percent in March to 46 percent in September.¹⁰ There are other indications to suggest that the pro-Hamas feelings that arose during last summer's war have not dissipated. Student elections across West Bank universities in the spring of 2015 witnessed a surge of support for Hamas and the Islamist bloc, with the two being tied at the Palestinian Polytechnic Uni-

versity in Hebron, while the Islamic bloc won outright at Birzeit University.¹¹

What Israel is now watching for are signs of whether or not sympathies for the Islamic State and its ideology are increasing among Palestinians. Unlike in Gaza, the security presence of the Israeli military throughout the West Bank will go some way to ensuring that IS militants are unable to establish fully operational cells in the West Bank. Nevertheless, there have been early indications of pockets of support for IS among West Bank Palestinians. Israel's intelligence services have already warned of a process of militants defecting from existing terror groups, primarily Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and swearing allegiance to IS.

This process may have been underway for some time now. At the time of Hamas' kidnapping of the three Israeli teenagers in June 2014, a previously unknown group claiming to be aligned with IS attempted to take responsibility for that action. And during the Gaza war that followed, the Islamic State's media wing, al-Battar, released a series of images depicting the Dome of the Rock and threatening Israel's Jews that the Islamic State was coming for them, and in August images appeared online showing an individual displaying the group's flag on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

In Gaza, the process of extremists shifting their allegiances to the Islamic State is far more advanced than in the West Bank. This is partly because in recent years violent Salafist groups have already been able to establish a foothold in Gaza, with some groups such as Suyuf al-Haq (Swords of Righteousness) launching IS-styled attacks against institutions and individuals accused of spreading Western influence. It had also become increasingly apparent that the military wing of The Popular Resistance Committees (Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades), the third-largest military group in Gaza, was displaying signs of radicalization,

placing it further to the extreme than either Hamas or Islamic Jihad. It is out of this milieu that support for the Islamic State appears to have arisen.

Early indications of the growing support for IS in Gaza began to emerge in the fall of 2014. At that time, a group calling itself “ISIS-Gaza Province” began to establish an online presence, with a video appearing on YouTube showing a group of armed militants claiming to be the Islamic State in Gaza, complete with IS flag. Indeed, by late 2014 ISIS flags had become an increasingly common sight in Gaza, with eyewitnesses reporting their appearance everywhere from football stadiums to car windshields to wedding invitations. On November 3rd, the Shura council of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in the Sinai, as well as the group’s leader, Abu Khattab, formally pledged loyalty to the Islamic State. This was a telling indication that not only individuals but also entire Salafist factions are defecting to IS—a trend that Israel will need to grapple with in the not-so-distant future.

Mind the gap

As the surrounding Middle East increasingly descends into turmoil, Israel for the most part has managed to maintain relative calm and stability over the territory under its control. This stability is not a naturally occurring state of affairs, but rather the result of the extensive efforts of Israel’s security forces to keep a multitude of surrounding threats at bay. Almost all of these threats stem in one way or another from violent Islamism, which refuses to be appeased by any number of Israeli concessions.

International policymakers, however, do not appear to have adjusted to this new reality. The failing has been particularly noticeable in the policies of the Obama administration, whose representatives still seem to regard the Israeli-Palestinian dispute as one of the most pressing and problematic concerns in the

region. In the early 2000s, at the height of the second *intifada* and prior to the second Gulf War, this may indeed have been true. Today, it is not. Yet American and European leaders continue to push for drastic changes in the current *status quo*, even at a time when much of the rest of the region is already in a state of extreme and unpredictable flux.

They are bound to be disappointed. Israel will naturally be reluctant to make any significant concessions while the surrounding region remains so unpredictable. It knows that the security and stability it enjoys has been hard fought and remains fragile. Under the present circumstances, a dramatic change in the existing *status quo* could begin a chain of events that would plunge Israel into one of the deepest security crises of its history, making it once again one of the region’s major flashpoints.

It is a reality that Israeli policymakers—and the Israeli public at large—understand well, even if officials in the West do not.



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ANTI-SEMITISM: ISLAMISM'S INDELIBLE MARKER

M. Zuhdi Jasser

Today, the United States and its allies are focused on the concept of “countering violent extremism” as a means of combatting the scourge of radical Islam. Yet violent extremism is but one manifestation of the Islamist ideology that threatens Western democracies and citizenry under its sway. Anti-Semitism is also a defining symptom of Islamism—and arguably a much more important one. For one can espouse radical Islamism and its totalitarian, supremacist goals of world domination without choosing violent means to do so. But it is far harder to endorse Islamist ideology without supporting anti-Semitism.

Thus, anti-Semitism is not just another “radical” symptom. In fact, if we can develop the understanding and national conviction to confront the anti-Semitism of global Islamist movements directly, we will hold the key to unraveling the very fabric and platform through which Islamist leaders spread their ideas.

The linkage is simple. Supremacists from within a particular faith community will create and exploit hatred toward another in order to rally their own followers against a common foe. Islamists utilize anti-Semitic imagery, profiling and demonization of Jews as a tool for their own ascension to power in Muslim majority communities and nations (or in Arabic, the *ummah*). Islamists often exploit both the Muslim *ummah* and the Jewish minority in order to create groupthink against the “other.” The Islamist demonization of Jews is a key feature of their worldview, because underneath that hatred lies a more global supremacism that threatens all minorities, both within and outside the faith.



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Today, Europe and the West are being directly impacted by the events that have transpired over the last half-decade of the Arab Awakening. With the tumult in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria, the ascent of Islamist movements has for the most part not brought a real spring but rather the empowerment of new autocrats who wield Islamist thought as a supremacist weapon.

The challenge before the world could not be clearer. The vacuum left by the region's long-serving dictators is a widening front in the battle for the soul of Islam: Will Muslim majority societies and Muslim leaders around the world heed the call for the rights of the individual? Will they defend the rights of the minority over the collective, the tribe, and the clerical oligarchs? Or will they ultimately just trade one autocracy for another? Here, the importance of the role played by anti-Semitism cannot be overstated.

Follow the numbers

According to Pew research surveys, "anti-Jewish sentiment" is endemic in the Muslim world. "In Lebanon, for example, all Muslims and 99 percent of Christians say they have a very unfavorable view of Jews. Similarly, 99 percent of Jordanians have a very unfavorable view of Jews. Large majorities of Moroccans, Indonesians, Pakistanis and six in ten Turks also view Jews unfavorably," a 2005 poll by the research center noted.¹

That outcome is hardly surprising. For generations, Arab dictators like Hosni Mubarak, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Saddam Hussein, Bashar Assad or King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, have harnessed and incubated anti-Semitism as a political tool, using their vast media machines to expand the reach and resonance of this corrosive idea. Thus, Egypt under Mubarak lionized the virulently anti-Semitic and czarist Russian forgery,

Protocols of the Elders of Zion, even as state media regularly denied the Holocaust while at the same time irrationally labeling Zionism as a "new Nazism." Saudi Arabian government media and academia are also rife with anti-Semitic imagery and the demonization of Jews, while the country's public schools teach that Jews "obey the devil" and are those whom "God has cursed and with whom He is so angry that He will never again be satisfied."² The list goes on.

The hate thereby created fueled a mass exodus of Jews. Since 1948, at Israel's founding, there have been over 1 million Jews expelled from Arab lands with only a few remaining.³ That exodus has carried over to the Christian community, where it is believed over two million Christians have fled the Middle Eastern Arab community in the last 20 years.⁴

Yet anti-Semitism is hardly the purview of secular tyrants alone. Rather, it serves as a primary nexus between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism.

Hating Jews... and Israel

The intellectual origins and underpinnings of Islamist anti-Semitism are diverse. But while our Islamic tradition certainly possesses, as the scholar Martin Kramer has described, "some sources on which Islamic anti-Semitism now feeds," it is not the only reason for it.⁵ In fact, if Islamist anti-Semitism is wholly confronted by modern Muslim reformers, there is hope that it can be marginalized and ultimately defeated, ending a force which can ultimately hold sway over a quarter of the world's population.⁶ The current reality, however, is that the *imams* (clerics), *ulema* (scholars), or activists with the courage to publicly take on the anti-Semitism of Islamist leaders are sadly few in number. And when they arise, they have neither the platforms, attention, nor the backing that Islamist-linked movements enjoy around the world.

Integral, and related, is the exploitation of Israel. As the scholar Martin Kramer has noted,

Islamists see Israel as a symptom of a larger conspiracy against them, either western or Jewish or a sinister combination of the two. Many Islamists today do not look at Israel or its policies as their irritant. They look beyond, either to America, symbol today of the power of the West or to the Jews, dispersed throughout the West where they exercise a malignant influence. These are deemed to be the real forces driving history.⁷

Kramer highlights in 1994 that Rashid al-Ghannushi, who now happens to be the leader of Tunisia's ruling Islamist Al-Nahda party, alleged "a Jewish-American plan encompassing the entire region, which would cleanse it of all resistance and open it to Jewish hegemony from Marrakesh to Kazakhstan."⁸ Likewise, when the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (previously the Organization of the Islamic Conference) met in Malaysia a dozen years ago, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told the crowd, "The Europeans killed 6 million Jews out of 12 million, but today the Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them."⁹ Both statements met not with widespread condemnation, but broad acceptance. Kramer thus concludes,

If these themes seem distressingly familiar it is quite likely because they are borrowings from the canon of Western religious and racial anti-Semitism. The anti-Semitism we see today in the Islamic world owes a crucial debt to the anti-Semitism of the West.¹⁰

The power of the pulpit

Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi is arguably the most influential Sunni cleric in the world. He escaped from Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt to Qatar in 1961, where he

has since authored more than 120 books, influenced a number of highly trafficked Islamist websites, and most notably hosts a weekly program on *Al-Jazeera Arabic* titled "Shariah and Life" that is viewed by an estimated 60 million people globally. Yet his sermons and public statements are a treasure trove of conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic diatribes.

Qaradawi's significance to Islamist anti-Semitism cannot be overstated. Despite being prohibited from travel to France, the United Kingdom and the United States, Qaradawi, who lives in Qatar, has long been President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). ECFR is notoriously known for being a Muslim Brotherhood legal arm in the West, giving hundreds of anti-Western separatist *fatwas* (legal opinions) targeted at western Muslims, and weaving conspiracy theories of Jewish global domination.¹¹

In 2011, Qaradawi returned to Egypt after more than a 30-year absence to lead a crowd of more than 200,000, leading scholars like Barry Rubin to remark that Egypt has gotten "its Khomeini."¹² Yet, surprisingly, the case against Qaradawi's hate-filled anti-Semitic speech is not so clear for many. Shadi Hamid of the Brookings Institution, who attended Qaradawi's return to Tahrir Square, stated at the time that

Qaradawi is very much in the mainstream of Egyptian society, he's in the religious mainstream, he's not offering something that's particularly distinctive or radical in the context of Egypt... He's an Islamist and he's part of the Brotherhood school of thought, but his appeal goes beyond the Islamist spectrum, and in that sense he's not just an Islamist figure, he's an Egyptian figure with a national profile.¹³

The threat that Qaradawi and his Islamist sympathizers pose is manifold.

While the arguments against his political Islamist ideas may be nuanced, to ignore his anti-Semitism (as so many around the world do) is to imperil world Jewry and the security of all minorities and our liberal democracies. One of the most revealing tests is to note the silence of many western Muslim leaders confronted with the anti-Semitism of the likes of Qaradawi or Malaysia's former Prime Minister Mahathir.

Understanding the linkage

One cannot help but connect the dots from Qaradawi's anti-Semitism to an inevitable neo-theocratic fascism that is now ascending in the Middle East under the rise of Islamism. Eventually, the world will have to come to terms with how clerics with toxic positions on Jews and Americans swim in the same pool with those who have similarly hateful positions against the Shi'a community (described as deviants), the Ahmadiyya (described as apostates), or the Baha'i (described as infidels) and so many other vulnerable religious minorities who will undoubtedly suffer, and are suffering, at the hands of Islamists when they are in power.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center recently listed the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian regime as the worst offenders of anti-Semitic rhetoric across the planet.¹⁴ We ignore the telltale signs of hate against Jews and what that portends for other minorities at the peril of all genuine democracies. One need look no further than Iran to see that an Islamist revolution, while using the democratic engine of electoral politics, will never herald real democracy until minorities have equal rights and anti-Semitism is defeated within the Islamic consciousness.

Here, what the Muslim world says—and learns—matters a great

deal. According to former CIA director R. James Woolsey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has spent nearly \$90 billion spreading its ideology around the globe since the 1970s. He describes the Saudi sponsoring of the dissemination of the extremist Wahhabi strain of Islam as “the soil in which Al-Qaeda and its sister terror organizations are flourishing.”¹⁵ According to scholars such as Gilles Kepel, Wahhabism gained considerable influence in the Islamic world following a tripling in the price of oil in the mid-1970s. The Saudi government thereafter began to spend tens of billions of dollars throughout the Islamic world to promote Wahhabism, a particularly virulent and militant version of supremacist Islamism.

All too often, this hate-filled ideology has led to violence and terror. For example, the deadly 2008 Mumbai attacks in India, which killed 164 and wounded 308 over the Thanksgiving weekend, including the Nariman Jewish Community Center known as the Mumbai Chabad House, were found to have been launched by members of Lashkar e-Taiba, a group that adheres to Saudi Arabia's austere Wahhabi creed.¹⁶ Other examples of Islamist-inspired anti-Semitism leading to terror against Jews are, sadly, too numerous to list here.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has long been at the forefront of monitoring the hatred disseminated in educational textbooks that originate in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. What it has found is horrifying. For example, a ninth grade textbook published by the Saudi Ministry of Education states that “the Jews and Christians are enemies of the believers and they cannot approve of Muslims.” An eighth-grade text similarly states, “The apes are the people of the Sabbath, the Jews; and the swine are infidels of the communion of Jesus and Christians.”¹⁷ As former USCIRF commissioner Nina Shea notes,

The kingdom is not just any country with problematic textbooks. As the controlling authority of the two holiest shrines of Islam, Saudi Arabia is able to disseminate its religious materials among the millions making the hajj to Mecca each year. Such teachings can, in this context, make a great impression. In addition, Saudi textbooks are also posted on the Saudi Education Ministry's website and are shipped and distributed by a vast Sunni infrastructure established with Saudi oil wealth to Muslim communities throughout the world. In his book, *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright asserts that while Saudis constitute only 1 percent of the world's Muslims, they pay "90 percent of the expenses of the entire faith, overriding other traditions of Islam."¹⁸

Shea adds that despite four years of pressure from the U.S., and despite pledges from Riyadh that it had cleaned up its textbooks, the reality is that they have not. To their credit, American publishing leaders have recently banded together to shed light on this important issue, stating that "hate speech is the precursor to genocide, first you get to hate, and then you kill."¹⁹

Canary in the coal mine

A better understanding of the link between anti-Semitism and Islamist movements and its supporters is just a first step. The next is to implement long-lasting solutions. These solutions will not only provide Europe and the West with a bulwark against the infiltration of anti-Semitic ideas from Islamist movements in the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia, but will also serve to better secure us against the threat of militant Islamism. For where anti-Semitism thrives, so too does the eventual threat against other faith minorities and the very foundations of democracy.

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CHINA'S GREAT MARITIME GAMBLE

Phillip Orchard

Two years ago, at high tide, Subi Reef in the South China Sea's Spratly Archipelago was little more than a coral crescent meekly sheltering an iridescent lagoon—a diver's paradise, if you could get there, but a weak foundation on which to stake one's voracious territorial claims. Today, China has dumped enough sand on the tiny atoll to give it more than two square kilometers of reclaimed land, sufficient for a four-story building, a radar station, an estimated 200 PLA troops and soon, judging by recent satellite photos, a lengthy runway.¹

Located nearly 600 nautical miles from China, but claimed also by the far more proximate Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan, the reef is one of seven in the Spratly Islands that China is building up out of the sea.² Nearby, for example, Fiery Cross Reef has a growing port facility, coastal artillery, a 200-person garrison and a 3.3-kilometer runway capable of handling most Chinese military aircraft, plus a parallel taxi that suggests that the new island will be suitable for high-tempo military operations.³ Further to the east, China is believed to be transforming the previously submerged Mischief Reef—which, at just 129 nautical miles from the Philippines, falls well within that country's UN-designated exclusive economic zone—into a forward naval station already capable of hosting a PLA-Navy frigate.⁴

Through its intentionally ambiguous “9-dash line” policy, China claims nearly 90 percent of the 1.4 million square miles in the South China Sea, the potentially oil-rich, seafood-packed body of water through which nearly \$5 trillion in trade flows each year. Its claims encompass nearly all of the Spratlys, including islets occupied and



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built on by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and even Taiwan, as well as the Vietnam-claimed Paracel archipelago, near which last summer CNOOC stationed an oil rig, sparking intense anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam.

The new islands are the physical embodiment of China's decisive pursuit of its historical ambitions and a concerted effort to change the status quo in the South China Sea and chip away at the maritime dominance of the United States. So far, China is succeeding, and without much of a fight. Considering the lack of U.S. appetite for conflict with China (the Pentagon's recently renewed interest in the South China Sea notwithstanding⁵), the frenzied pace of China's military modernization, and the maritime weaknesses of other South China Sea claimants, China's near-term strategic goals in the region are becoming a *fait accompli*. Yet this more aggressive posture in the sea will increase the risk of conflict over the long term, even if China itself has little reason to provide the spark.

China's calculus

The strategy being pursued by China in the East and South China Seas is grounded in the country's historic geographic vulnerabilities, and perceived security challenges now facing the PRC.

Throughout its history, China's weak maritime capabilities left the nation with little power beyond its own coastline and vulnerable to intrusions by potentially hostile forces that could also impede China's access to vital trade routes across the open oceans. Today, Chinese leaders remain concerned that the country's maritime access could be severed at choke points along the "First Island Chain" by another Pacific power, particularly the United States, which Beijing sees as pursuing a policy of containment against it while simultaneously emboldening Southeast Asian states to destabilize the region.

As a result, Beijing has long pursued a strategy of securing its buffer zones and asserting control of its claims in the Yellow, East China and South China seas, even ones encompassing seemingly little more than half-submerged rocks. And it has assumed the role of a revisionist power seeking to shape a new order, particularly by replacing the United States as the predominant power in the Western Pacific.

The new islands will support China's strategic imperatives by bolstering its surveillance and anti-area/access-denial capabilities, giving it the ability to harass or even blockade rival holdings, and—by changing the facts on the ground ahead of the 2016 decision in the case filed by the Philippines with a UN tribunal two years ago—preemptively weakening the influence of international law over what Beijing believes to be its core strategic imperatives. The island-building also enhances China's preferred tactic of using non-military assets, such as fishing fleets, oil rigs and commercial shipping vessels, to solidify its authority over its maritime claims. The reefs and atolls have few of the resources needed to sustain a large military presence, and they would be difficult to defend in the outbreak of an actual conflict with a power like the United States. Nonetheless, they will also allow China to project the level of military force needed for low-intensity standoffs with its weaker neighbors.

Ultimately, they strengthen China's de facto control over what is truly a critical region for the country. China's export-dominated economy relies heavily on the waters, through which also passes more than 75 percent of China's crude oil imports. The sea is an abundant source of seafood as well, and technological advances have made recoverable vast swathes of deep-sea oil and gas (though estimates about the region's hydrocarbon potential vary widely, in part because

seismic testing has been hindered by the region's unsettled disputes).

In one sense, China is replicating activities previously undertaken by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and even Taiwan during earlier historical periods—when China was focused too inwardly to project power far beyond its shores. Until recently, China was the only claimant country (besides Brunei) without an airstrip in the Spratlys. And Vietnam is reportedly conducting similar reclamation work on two islets it occupies. Beijing also asserts that the construction is primarily for scientific and humanitarian purposes, though it recently admitted its military intentions as well.

But the scale and speed of China's push into the South China Sea is setting off alarm bells around the region. Whereas Vietnam has reclaimed an estimated 60 acres of land since 2009, according to U.S. officials, China has reclaimed as much as 2,000 acres—including on reefs that were previously likely fully submerged at high tide. China's secrecy on the matter is further heightening regional concerns, as it has denied international access to the atolls and, for a long time, refused to comment on what activities were taking place there. And, of course, the fact that most of the Spratly atolls occupied by China are nearly 1,000 nautical miles from the Chinese mainland further belies its intentions.

Of late, China has become more overtly protective of its claims. This April, for example, the Chinese coast guard used water cannons to run off a group of Philippine fishermen at Scarborough Shoal, a reef north of the Spratlys, roughly 140 miles from the Philippines, where Chinese and Philippine forces engaged in a lengthy standoff in 2012. Then, in early May, China reportedly prevented a broken-down Vietnamese fishing boat from docking at the China-occupied Gaven Reef in the Spratlys. The

same week, the Philippine military said China had warned away Philippine surveillance planes from airspace over the Spratlys at least six times in the previous three months. The latter incidents have raised concerns that Beijing may be mulling establishing an Air Defense Identification Zone over the archipelago (the Chinese Foreign Ministry denies this) similar to the one it declared abruptly over waters contested with Japan in 2013. Most notably, the Pentagon released footage on May 22 of the PLA Navy issuing a warning from Fiery Cross Reef to an approaching U.S. surveillance plane.⁶

At the moment, however, Beijing appears to have little interest in triggering a conflict with any of its neighbors, much less the United States or its major treaty allies. After all, in order to secure its strategic imperatives and restore its regional leadership role, China needs to keep regional states from unifying against it. Why, then, is Beijing being so antagonistic?

Staring down a divided Southeast Asia

China thinks it can change the political reality of the region without sparking a major conflict by aggressively, yet incrementally, asserting its claims and building up its naval and coast guard presence in the region, while simultaneously strengthening its economic ties with regional states. Eventually, Beijing believes, Southeast Asian states will come to find accommodating China's authority over the South China Sea preferable to banding together in opposition to it. The PRC similarly thinks that its overwhelming economic and military strength will compel weaker regional states to settle their disputes with it in bilateral settings, leaving the international community out of the loop.

So far, this strategy has been successful. To date, China's push into the

South China Sea has been incremental enough to avoid sparking a major conflict or compelling Southeast Asian states to unify against it—or to put aside their suspicions of the United States in a lasting fashion. No individual reclaimed island is important enough to any of these countries to risk starting a confrontation with Beijing, particularly since all the other countries control their own reefs and could presumably counter China's moves with their own military build-ups. More problematic, Southeast Asian states are inherently divided, with differing levels of interest in opposing China, varying degrees of reliance on Chinese trade and investment, and disparate strategic calculations regarding the potential threat posed by China.

The lack of unity was on display at the recently concluded ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur, where the consensus-oriented 10-member bloc proved capable of issuing only a milquetoast statement of disapproval of China's ongoing land reclamation activities—albeit the strongest one to date issued by the bloc. The island-building is seen by most ASEAN members as a violation of the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Yet, the statement did not even mention China by name, though it provoked a denunciation from Beijing nonetheless.

Among the bloc's members, only Vietnam and the Philippines appear to have any appetite for confrontation with China. Brunei does not claim any of the disputed islands, and it is too small to forge an independent course on the matter anyway. Indonesia reportedly backed the push for a stronger statement at the ASEAN summit, and the country has been eager to play a more active role in maritime matters. Nonetheless, Indonesia's claims overlap with the “nine-dash line” only narrowly, around the Natuna Islands, and it has little reason to adopt a significantly more aggressive

posture unless Chinese provocations move further south. Malaysia, which occupies three reefs in the Spratlys, shares many of the more immediate concerns of Vietnam and the Philippines, and it has been pursuing a number of defense cooperation deals around the region. In early May, it conducted joint exercises with the U.S. Navy, and it recently endorsed the U.S. recommendation that ASEAN form a joint peacekeeping force—possibly with U.S. backing. However, among the claimants, Malaysia has the best (or at least the most cautious) relationship with China and has generally proved wary of making any moves that could harm these ties. The current government also does not want to risk upsetting the country's delicate Malay-Chinese ethnic balance.

The front lines: The Philippines and Vietnam

The Philippines and Vietnam have the most to lose from Chinese assertiveness, and possibly the most incentives to force the issue before China's military modernization and economic growth make it even more dominant. At this point, however, neither country can afford to become too confrontational. With Vietnam, the main constraints are political, economic and strategic. Politically, decision-making in Vietnam prioritizes consensus, and the senior leadership in Hanoi is split on China. The CNOOC oil rig standoff in 2014, in combination with China's land reclamation activities, has unified the prevailing strategic outlook somewhat, as evidenced by its recent outreach to Washington. Still, high-level splits will hinder decisive Vietnamese action absent an unprecedented Chinese provocation. Vietnam's long-term strategy of balancing outside powers against each other—along with pressure from Russia, still Vietnam's foremost security patron—will ultimately limit its ties with the United States.

Moreover, Vietnam's overwhelming reliance on Chinese investment and trade means that powerful stakeholders in Hanoi will be wary of taking decisive action against China. Low-priced raw materials and machinery from China are critical to Vietnamese exports. Vietnam is diversifying its economy, as evidenced by its recent lucrative trade deal with South Korea, and the country would reap a windfall from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. But Vietnam cannot yet afford to isolate itself from Chinese markets and suppliers.

With the Philippines, the main constraints are economic and military weakness, as well as deep internal fractures. The archipelagic nation forms the eastern wall of the South China Sea and serves as a gateway to the Pacific, so China cannot afford to see the country become openly hostile to Chinese interests. But the country's maritime capabilities have long been neglected in favor of combating its myriad domestic insurgencies (recent spending increases and the May 4th announcement of a new naval base to be built 100 miles from the Spratlys notwithstanding). Moreover, Manila has remained ambivalent about strengthening relations with the U.S. military too much ever since the Philippine parliament voted to expel the United States from the Subic Bay Naval Base in 1991, despite signing the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement with the United States in 2014 (which nonetheless stops short of allowing a permanent U.S. military presence).⁷ Beijing thus has less to fear than it may seem. At the same time, considering the Philippines' military weakness, China would have no need in the event of a conflict to employ the levels of force that would compel the United States to intervene on behalf of its treaty partner, thereby limiting the likelihood of a major escalation.

Furthermore, the Philippines relies heavily on Chinese trade and invest-

ment, albeit considerably less so than other Southeast Asian states. In 2013, it received the second-lowest total of Chinese investment among ASEAN members, and China was only its third-largest trading partner. But this nevertheless gives China ample room to strengthen ties whenever needed to defuse a conflict, particularly in light of the Philippines' persistent economic isolation. Manila, which eagerly joined the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, is unlikely to turn down Chinese offers of trade and investment that require modest security concessions.

The beginnings of a backlash

Nevertheless, Southeast Asia is more unified on the issue of the South China Sea than its actions and statements may suggest. ASEAN itself may never serve as a vehicle for countering Chinese assertiveness, but China's continued provocations in the region are spurring member states to strengthen military ties both with each other and with outside powers, namely the United States, Japan, and even India. In fact, as the details of China's island-construction efforts have come into focus over the past several months, the pace of balancing activity appears to have accelerated.

Since the start of this year, a number of bilateral security ventures have been announced among various Southeast Asian states in the region—primarily involving Vietnam and the Philippines, but encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore as well. Moreover, and perhaps paradoxically, by antagonizing Vietnam and the Philippines the most, China is compelling the two states that could threaten it the most by strengthening military ties with the United States to actually do so, within the aforementioned limits. Vietnam—which sees itself locked in a thousand-year rivalry with China and

is the only one of the littoral states to also share a border with the Asian giant—is also modernizing its naval capabilities via its enduring relationship with Russia. Washington and Manila are still implementing their 2014 defense agreement, and the U.S. Navy is likely to end up with greater access to Subic Bay. In April, the United States held its largest exercises with the Philippines in 15 years. With Vietnam, Washington partially lifted its 40-year ban on lethal arms sales to the country in October 2014, and the Communist Party of Vietnam general secretary, Nguyen Phu Trong, is expected to make a historic visit to Washington later this year.

China is also compelling these countries to invest more heavily in their own maritime capabilities, to varying degrees, creating a more militarized—and thus more explosive—South China Sea. According to recently released data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), defense spending across ASEAN has increased by more than 44 percent on average since 2010, including even among poorer states with long-neglected militaries.⁸ Vietnam's buildup has been particularly pronounced, with overall defense spending increasing by nearly 60 percent between 2010 and 2014. Here, its enduring defense relationship with Russia has proved especially valuable; in recent years, the Russians sold Vietnam no fewer than six kilo-class submarines and four *Gepard*-class frigates.

Chinese assertiveness is also drawing into the region outside powers such as Japan and India. Japan's economy would be crippled by a cutoff of oil and gas flows through the South China Sea, and Tokyo is concerned about China's ability to hinder shipping traffic and overflight privileges in the contested waters. As a result, Tokyo has begun to turn its gaze southward. In the first two weeks of May, for example, Japan held

drills with the Vietnamese coast guard and the Philippine navy. The push into Southeast Asia comes at a time when Japan is slowly shedding its self-imposed post-WWII military constraints and seeking to develop independent capabilities sufficient to balance China's rise, even in areas outside of Japanese territorial claims. Its recently launched helicopter destroyer and new fleet of V-22 Ospreys, for example, may be ideal for amphibious combat operations. For its part, India is wary of China's push to develop a blue-water navy and its increasing activity in the Indian Ocean basin. As a result, India has sought to gain leverage against China by eagerly strengthening defense and energy ties with Vietnam and Indonesia and voicing its concerns over freedom of navigation in the waters.

Overall, a more crowded, more heavily armed South China Sea is likely to result. For example, the greater availability of cheap, but sophisticated diesel submarines means the South China Sea is expected to be home to more than 100 electric diesel subs by 2025, according to the Singaporean military.⁹ And particularly in Hanoi and Manila, U.S. backing could increase the tolerance for risk in a way that makes small confrontations more likely.

Implications for the United States

For the United States, the emerging environment in the South China Sea will pose new challenges. The land reclamation activities themselves do not pose a serious threat to the current military balance. The new islands could host Chinese long-range radars and missile technologies and, by supporting helicopter operations, could boost Chinese long-range anti-submarine warfare capabilities, thus helping counter one of the few remaining areas of overwhelming U.S. superiority.

Overall, however, the islands will

give China relatively few advantages that its breakneck military modernization drive and burgeoning domestic arms industry would not already. In fact, if China continues to compel regional states toward more robust partnerships with the United States, then its South China Sea provocations would seem to be counterproductive, particularly considering Beijing's longer-term strategic aim of replacing the United States as the predominant power in the East and South China seas. The United States may soon find itself with more capable allies who are more willing to provide logistical support, access to bases, intelligence sharing and so forth. Moreover, the boosted maritime capabilities of these countries will reduce the burden that the United States currently shoulders overwhelmingly in fighting piracy and other non-state threats in regional waters.

Nonetheless, the increased likelihood of more-frequent small-scale confrontations will threaten to draw the United States into an escalated conflict—one that goes against broader U.S. strategic interests, but which Washington deems necessary to preserve its already-weakened credibility in the region. This will force the United States to prepare for more complicated worst-case scenarios, likely requiring a diversion of attention and assets from elsewhere. Considering the pace of China's naval modernization, the United States could easily find itself in a costly arms race against an opponent with more political will to fund it—and one whose anti-access/area-denial strategy requires far less resources than does the U.S. Navy's global commitments.

Moreover, any measures to impose costs on China's activities are likely to further strain U.S.-China relations, as would strengthened cooperation with regional states. The United States is likely to continue deploying U.S. military aircraft and ships to waters near the reclaimed islands to prevent China from

gaining *de facto*, uncontested control of the region and reassure U.S. allies in the region. Chinese political imperatives will compel the PLA to respond, even if largely for show. Such moves are likely to harden the positions of both countries. The United States and China may be destined for a more confrontational relationship, considering mutual suspicions about each other's intentions and overlapping imperatives. But the United States and China still have myriad areas of mutual interest that call for bilateral cooperation, such as North Korea, and there still reason to believe that the two countries can avoid falling into the "Thucydides Trap."¹⁰

Overall, the abilities of China, the United States and Southeast Asian countries to prevent minor incidents from escalating will soon be put to tests of increasing complexity. With the Philippines, small-scale conflicts triggered by run-ins between Philippine activists or fishermen and Chinese forces in the Spratlys appear inevitable. In such a situation, Manila may see an opportunity to gauge the strength of its newly minted U.S. security guarantees. With Vietnam, another attempt by China to drill for oil in Vietnamese waters is possible—one that again sparks anti-Chinese riots like those that followed the 2014 oil rig stand-off, and which pressure Hanoi to put its new submarines to work.

These sorts of incidents—and worse—have happened repeatedly over the past decade, and have yet to escalate into a major confrontation. And all of the Southeast Asian claimants would prefer to play China off against the United States rather than attempting to go toe-to-toe with their powerful northern neighbor. But the historical *status quo*, in which Southeast Asian states preferred the path of least resistance to peace by leaving each other's overlapping claims largely unresolved is no longer viable. Going forward, with more Chinese forces

in the South China Sea, with claimants increasingly militarizing and aligning with outside powers, and, ultimately, with the resource demands of each party growing, regional leaders will be forced to navigate far more turbulent waters.



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THE WAR FOR UKRAINE

Herman Pirchner, Jr.

Ukraine is at war. Since the spring of 2014, Vladimir Putin's Russia has waged a concerted campaign of aggression against its smaller western neighbor. Moscow's "hybrid warfare" in support of separatist enclaves in Ukraine's Donbass region has included the insertion of military forces to augment pro-Russian insurgents, large-scale deliveries of military matériel to these fighters, and the widespread use of propaganda. The Kremlin's efforts have met with political and economic pressure from the West, in the form of multilateral sanctions imposed by the Obama administration and the European Union. However, the strongly negative effects of this pressure on the Russian economy have not caused the Kremlin to change course in any meaningful way.

Why does Russia covet Ukraine? And why has Moscow persisted in its offensive there, despite the mounting political and economic costs? The answers to those questions can be found in the bloody shared history of the two countries. So, too, can a sense of what the next steps in this crisis might be.

A bloody history

Without the proper historical context, it is impossible to understand the current struggle between Russia (and its supporters in Ukraine) and Ukraine itself. Much of the current conflict is rooted in Moscow's long-standing imperialist ideology, which denies the very existence of an independent Ukrainian state. President Putin himself admitted as much when he stated that Russians "always saw the Russians and Ukrainians as single people. I still think this way now."¹



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History, however, tells us otherwise. The beginnings of the Ukrainian nation can be traced to the arrival of Slavic tribes in the territory of present day central and eastern Ukraine in the 6th century. By the 11th century, the state of Kievan Rus' (which was founded in 862) was geographically the largest state in Europe. The 13th century, however, saw much of it destroyed by Mongol raiders.

Over the following 100 years, in the wake of the Mongol retreat, the Poland-Lithuanian commonwealth annexed most of the territory of Ukraine. By the mid-17th century, an increasingly powerful Russia gained sovereignty over much of the land, with the remainder staying under Polish rule until the second and third partitions of Poland (1793 and 1795) ended Poland's status as an independent country. From that time until its 1991 independence, most of today's Ukraine was ruled by Czarist Russia and subsequently its successor, the USSR.

Russia's dominion came at a high price. During the 124 years of Tsarist rule (1793 to 1917), repeated efforts were made to suppress all vestiges of Ukrainian culture. Publishing in the Ukrainian language, teaching in the Ukrainian language, and survival of independent churches not under control of the Russian Orthodox Church were all severely curtailed.

Between 1917 and 1920, there was a brief period of declared Ukrainian independence from Moscow. By the early 1920s, however, the Soviets gained control and began their consolidation of power. This effort took three major forms.

The first was the horror of the man-made famine known as the "Holodomor." Today, a large museum in Kyiv documents the estimated 2,000,000 Ukrainians that were intentionally starved to death by the communists in the early 1930s. This tragedy unfolded in brutal fashion; Ukrainian-speaking villages were surrounded by Bolshevik forces,

which removed the village's food supply and then let no one in or out—simply allowing the residents to die slow deaths from starvation.

That policy was followed by the widespread imprisonment and assassination of Ukrainian opposition forces. Outright murders, show trials, and sentences to hard labor in "Gulag" camps further crushed the resistance of Ukrainian nationalists and anti-communists. An estimated 80 percent of Ukraine's cultural elite were killed or sent to the camps during the decade of the 1930s alone.²

With resistance thereby minimized, Moscow turned its attention to cultural repression, most significantly the suppression of the Ukrainian language. As late as 1933, 88 percent of all students in Soviet Ukraine were receiving instruction in Ukrainian.³ By 1938, however, the study of Russian had become mandatory in all schools. The effects of this policy were far-reaching; by 1988, Ukrainian remained the language of instruction for only 48 percent of students. Nevertheless widespread opposition remained; shortly before Ukraine's independence in 1989, an estimated 65 percent of Ukraine's citizens still spoke Ukrainian as their first language.⁴

Promises not kept

Ukraine's 1991 independence came about as the result of a vote in which every Ukrainian oblast (the equivalent of a U.S. state) opted in favor of a break with Moscow. Yet soon thereafter, a chorus of prominent voices in Moscow—including the famed anti-communist historian Alexandr Solzhenitsyn and Dmitri Rogozin, currently Russia's Deputy Prime Minister—began calling for the reabsorption of Ukraine and other former Soviet territories.

One of the main obstacles to neo-imperialist Russian ambitions was the fact that independent Ukraine was a nuclear state. That status, however, was removed by diplomatic means. In the

1994 Budapest Memorandum, Russia, the United Kingdom, Ukraine and the United States all agreed to “guarantee” the territorial integrity of Ukraine if it agreed to give up its nuclear arsenal.⁵ Thereafter, Kyiv did so.

Yet, formal guarantees notwithstanding, Moscow soon began taking steps to make its expansionist aspirations a reality. In 2001, the Russian Duma enacted a law outlining the procedure for the expansion of the territory of the Russian Federation.⁶ (That law, whose compatibility with international law was later endorsed by the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission, would become the template for the annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula some thirteen years later, in the spring of 2014). Thereafter, in 2003, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov advanced a strategic doctrine that authorized the use of Russian force to protect Russian citizens living beyond the borders of Russia.⁷ Subsequently, in 2004, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov’s government made it easier for Russians living in other countries (including those in Ukraine) to obtain Russian citizenship.⁸ The same year, Russia launched a movement to form a single economic space with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.⁹

Moscow’s meddling was soon felt in Ukraine. In the country’s 2004 presidential election, Russia strongly promoted the candidacy of pro-Kremlin politician Viktor Yanukovich, who used massive amounts of fraud to “win” the poll. The Ukrainian public’s reaction to the electoral fraud ushered in the popular unrest known as the “Orange Revolution.” The subsequent revote brought pro-Western advocate Viktor Yushchenko to power in January of 2005. But the next half-decade of poor government and graft took their toll, and five years later Yanukovich again won the Ukrainian presidency—this time in elections that were generally regarded as fair.

Disorder followed. In the years since, the well-documented graft and theft of assets perpetrated by Yanukovich and his inner circle practically bankrupted the country. Less well documented during the same period was the Yanukovich regime’s denigration of the Ukrainian military and security services, as well as its promotion of those with questionable loyalty to the Ukrainian state. The Yanukovich years also saw creeping Russian influence in the form of activities launched through Russia’s five Ukrainian-based consular operations in the country—institutions that worked in parallel with the Russian intelligence services. Their ample budget was used to employ and/or organize Russian nationalists, mafia figures, and the marginally ideological unemployed as a collective asset to be used at the proper moment. That moment came in the Fall of 2013.

The Maidan, and after

In the Fall of 2013, Ukraine faced a transformative choice. Preceding months had seen the Yanukovich government, by then in dire need of an economic bailout, begin serious consultations with the European Union over the possibility of an Association Agreement that would decisively hitch Ukraine’s economy to the Euro-Atlantic sphere. For Russia, this represented an alarming development, and Moscow employed tremendous economic leverage and political clout to sway the Yanukovich government back into its orbit.

The ploy worked, but at a high cost. In November of 2013, Yanukovich reversed course, opting for a deeper partnership with Russia in lieu of increased commerce with Europe. But Yanukovich’s retreat from his pledges to build Ukraine’s economic relationship with Europe led to protests in Ukraine’s Maidan Square, an open area in the center of Kyiv. The escalating protests, which grew to encompass

other Ukrainian cities as well, led to the toppling of the Yanukovich government in early 2014.

The subsequent turmoil, however, provided a new opening for Moscow. The power vacuum that followed Yanukovich's ouster in Kyiv gave the Kremlin fresh opportunities to expand its influence, and it seized the moment, stage-managing the infiltration of masked, armed, and unidentified Russian forces into Ukraine. Through bullying tactics, they took control of Crimea and staged a fraudulent March 2014 political referendum that led to that territory's subsequent annexation by Russia.

This proved to be just the beginning. By the Spring of 2014, Russia's attention had already turned to other parts of Ukraine. Moves toward independence by pro-Russian forces appeared in the provinces of Odessa and Dnipropetrovsk, but were successfully subdued by the fledgling government of Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv. In the Eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, however, those efforts proved more resilient—and more dangerous.

There, demonstrators, backed by Russian interests, began to appear demanding union with Russia. Soon, there were armed men taking over cities and villages. In April of 2014, separatist forces in the Donetsk region attempted to solidify their political status through the creation of an independent Donetsk People's Republic. Later the same month, pro-Russian forces in Luhansk did the same. And weeks later, the two upstart enclaves signed an agreement forming a confederation. All of these moves were backed by Moscow, which lionized the separatists on state media and which, later, would dispatch both arms and manpower in the guise of "humanitarian convoys" to reinforce the rebels.

By now, however, the new Ukrainian government was determined to fight. So were several grassroots militias

formed from Ukrainian reservists and volunteers. After initially losing territory, these forces began a successful counter-offensive in mid-July 2014 and looked poised to regain full control of Luhansk and Donetsk. That is, until the Russian government decided to raise the stakes in late August 2014, sending Russian soldiers with advanced equipment into the fray. Predictably, the poorly trained and equipped Ukrainian forces took heavy casualties and lost much of the territory they had previously regained.

This tug-of-war eventually led to the first Minsk Agreement, a provisional cease-fire that was signed on September 5, 2014. But this deal did not hold, and Russian-led troops took additional territory, prompting another agreement, colloquially known as Minsk II, to be signed on February 11, 2015. As of this writing, that agreement as well is being routinely violated, with ongoing casualties on both sides and international observers not being permitted promised access to Russian-controlled areas. Further, an estimated 50,000 Russian troops are currently massed on its border with Ukraine, and an additional 50,000 are located in Crimea.¹⁰ Based on a maps and statistics provided by the Ukrainian government, it is possible to estimate that roughly a third of the combined territories of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts are today under Russian control. This, however, only constitutes approximately three percent of the territory of Ukraine – far less than the mainstream media, and Russian propaganda, would have us believe.

Moscow's risky game

Most of the fighters that make up the pro-Russian forces were born on the territory of present day Ukraine. These fighters, trained, supplied and directed by Moscow, can be divided into three basic categories (although no one knows definitively how many fall into each). The first

contingent is made up of those who really wish to be a part of the Russian Federation, and are fighting for that cause. The second is composed of mafia types who have been promised riches when property is confiscated from conquered Ukrainian territory. Finally, there are those who are engaged in the fighting simply because they need the money that is being paid to separatist forces by Russia.

However, as noted above, there are a significant number of Russian troops (recently estimated at 12,000¹¹) and irregulars fighting in Ukraine—all of them under Moscow's direct command. These Russians direct the military campaign and have provided all those fighting against Ukraine with weapons far more advanced than anything possessed by the Ukrainian side.¹² Russian-based fighters can also be divided into three categories, each again of unknown size. The first contingent is made up of Russian nationalists drawn from various branches of the Russian armed forces, including officers directing combat activities. The second encompasses "volunteers" from the Russian army, who are heavily encouraged by Moscow to take part in the hostilities. The final group is composed of Chechens, some of whom were released from Russian jails and are paid to fight.¹³

For Russia, the current state of affairs is far less favorable than it appears at first glance. The Kremlin is being forced to lie to its own people about the presence of Russian soldiers in Ukraine, and their deaths there. Numerous news stories about the surreptitious burials of soldiers killed in the fighting in Ukraine¹⁴ underscore the fact that the deaths of Russian soldiers on the Ukrainian battlefield have become an inconvenient truth, and one Russian authorities are taking great pains to cover up. Nevertheless, the number of Russian casualties has been great enough that there are now the beginnings of a movement of military

mothers, who have begun to trade information and demonstrate against government lies.¹⁵

This state of affairs is not new. A similar movement emerged during the time of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. Over time, it had a significant effect on Soviet policy, and contributed to the Kremlin's decision in 1989 to cut its losses and withdraw from that country. This suggests that the continued flow of body bags back to Russia, or any increase in Russian casualties, will create political problems for Russian President Vladimir Putin. In the electronic age, it has become harder to lie to your own people.

Opposition is also showing its face among the elite that form Putin's power base. Former Prime Minister and FSB chief Yevgeny Primakov recently remarked that it was time to cut a deal over Ukraine, because Russia could not afford to become isolated in the world.¹⁶ It is unlikely that Primakov, a savvy long-time operator in the cutthroat power politics of the Kremlin, would have made such a public remark while enjoying significant support within the security services that are the true masters of Russia.

Opposition is also beginning to build from the country's oligarchs and local elites. Massive government projects, such as a dam system to stop the annual floods in the Russian Far East, have been postponed or cancelled as a result of the costs associated with Russia's war effort in Ukraine. The economic fortunes of Russia's wealthy have also declined noticeably. In just one example, well-off Russians are now finding it difficult to unload expensive real estate at even a quarter of its previous value, because everyone else with enough money to buy premium properties is also trying to get their cash and families out of the country. These stakeholders have little faith in Russia's future—especially its short-term future, as the country's economy is not expected to recover anytime soon.

Getting Crimea was great, goes the line, but is Eastern Ukraine worth the cost?

Nevertheless, Putin and his inner circle believe they can up the ante and expand their holdings and influence at the expense of Ukraine and other countries. Their confidence rests on the fact that they are masters of propaganda in the West (which they expect to divide by muddying various policy debates with bad information) and within Russia itself. Domestically, they are convinced that the Russian public will believe what it is told, and that therefore Russians will support Putin no matter the cost. Prevalent, too, is the belief that Putin has an iron will—one that will ultimately cause the materialistic, divided West to surrender.

Ukraine's struggle

The picture on the Ukrainian side is equally complex. Years of misrule under Yanukovich left Ukraine's army in horrible condition, with an unreliable officer corps and questionable loyalties among its commanding officers. This state of affairs has changed substantially over the past year, as many of the officers of the Yanukovich era have been progressively dismissed by the new government in Kyiv.

The army is not alone, however. Independently led and financed militias (many guess up to 30 fighting on the Ukrainian side) have played a large role in the fighting to date. Funded by oligarchs, public fundraisers, and by individual soldiers (who have to buy their own equipment when joining a militia), these highly motivated—if ill-trained (volunteers go through a week of training before seeing combat)¹⁷—soldiers have been effective and should be increasingly so as they are fully integrated into the Ukrainian Army.¹⁸

Nevertheless, problems abound. For example, some militia units and their civilian supporters have been tied to far right ideologies, fueling Russian propaganda of fascist politics in Ukraine.

Yet, as recent polling documents, these extremists represent a smaller percent of the population in Ukraine than in many Western European countries. In the 2014 presidential election, Ukraine's two right-wing parties, the Radical Party and Svoboda, received 8 percent and 1.16 percent of the vote respectively.¹⁹ In France's 2012 presidential election, by contrast, Marine Le Pen secured 17.9 percent for her ultra conservative party.²⁰

Though the Russian public has not been told of their soldiers dying in the war, Ukraine's population is acutely aware of the thousands of casualties they have suffered to date—and are prepared to suffer more in order to regain their territory. Russia is viewed as the aggressor in a way that will preclude normal Russian-Ukrainian relations for a long time.

Ukrainians are motivated not only by the natural desire to defend themselves against an invasion, but also by memories of the past and a vision for the future. Many of those running Ukraine today are the relatives of the 2,000,000 starved to death by Moscow in the "Holodomor" of the 1930s, or of the countless others sent to the Gulag. They know their churches were repressed during both the Tsarist and Soviet periods. It is not lost on the Ukrainian leadership that these barbaric acts were carried out by Stalin's KGB or its successor organizations—governmental entities that not only dominate the government of Putin's Russia but are increasingly trying to restore the image of Stalin. Moreover, Ukrainians are presently learning how Crimea and occupied Donetsk and Luhansk are being run, and they don't want the same to happen to them.²¹

Recent economic history also counts. Ukrainians know that a quarter-century ago, Ukrainians and Poles were roughly comparable in terms of economic status and standard of living. Yet today, the per capita income of Poles is three times

higher than that of Ukrainians. This and other examples of prosperity among the Western-oriented countries of Eastern Europe have bred a desire for European freedoms and economic advantages among ordinary Ukrainians. These are advantages they know they will not obtain if they become an expanded Russian state.

The leadership in Kyiv understands as well that economic and legal reforms are necessary if Ukraine is to be a prosperous and independent state. It is not yet clear if these efforts will be successful, but great progress has already been made in at least one area: energy diversification. Two years ago, Ukraine received 95 percent of its natural gas from Russia, and was continually subjected to Moscow's economic blackmail. Today, perhaps as little as 40 percent of Ukrainian gas comes from Russia.²²

Additional gains are being made in the training of Ukrainian troops sent to the front. In the past, militia troops were sent to the front lines with little or no training. Ukraine's defense minister estimated that only about 6,000 out of 130,000 troops were prepared for combat when the war began a year ago.²³ This is no longer the case; a growing number of military troops now engaged in combat against Russian and pro-Russian forces are battle tested, and have received some measure of training from foreign specialists. In April, 300 U.S. troops joined those of other countries who train Ukrainian forces in basic military tactics.²⁴ Modern military equipment also remains in short supply, though the situation is marginally less dire than it was. At the beginning of the war, 99 percent of equipment being used had been manufactured over a decade ago, and only one in 100 soldiers had a bullet-proof vest.²⁵

There are also now the beginnings of a Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian military alliance and a modest amount of arms have begun to flow to Ukraine

from its new partners. However, as of this writing, the Obama administration has yet to send defensive weapons to Ukraine in spite of the authorization passed, by large bipartisan votes, in both Houses of Congress.

The situation on the ground, meanwhile, continues to deteriorate. Since the signing of the most recent Minsk accords, attacks by the separatists, in violation of the original Minsk agreement, have increased the net area under Russia-backed rebel control by roughly 500 square kilometers. Here, the timing is telling; separatists took Debaltseve three days after Minsk II was signed.²⁶ Moreover, OSCE peacekeepers have not been given the agreed-upon access to areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists—including 90 percent of the artillery withdrawal zone, informed estimates say.²⁷

Western intelligence likewise has reported that heavy artillery and tanks have been moved into Ukraine territory by Russia, including T-72B3 and T-90 tanks, Dozor armored vehicles, Pantsir-S1 air defense systems, and Grad-K rocket systems, and Buk missile systems.²⁸ According to a study conducted by Dr. Phillip Karber of the Potomac Foundation, roughly 890 Russian heavy weapons were introduced into the Donbas between October and December.²⁹

Defense Secretary Ash Carter has summarized the current state of play as follows: "What's clear is that sanctions are working on the Russian economy... what is not apparent is how that effect on his economy is deterring Putin from following the course that was evidenced in Crimea last year." That, according to the U.S. defense chief, represents a teachable moment. "There are other things we need to be doing in recognition of the fact that... Putin does not seem to be reversing course," he told reporters in early June.³⁰ So far, however, American action has not matched this rhetoric.

What comes next?

The conflict still is far from over. Russia possesses the military capability to take still greater swathes of Ukrainian territory. The cities of Kharkiv, Mariupol, and Odessa are among the most-mentioned potential targets of Russian aggression. If the Kremlin chooses to advance militarily, however, it will most certainly face a range of adverse conditions, from greater sanctions and isolation from the international community to an insurgency in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia and its proxies to a steady flow of Russian soldiers who have been killed in action. All of the above would threaten Vladimir Putin's rule at home, and dictate an increasingly repressive rule in both the occupied territories he now controls and within Russia itself.

A second potential scenario is the invasion of Latvia, a NATO member nation too small to put up much resistance to Russian troops. In this case, Russian nationalists would have carried the day in Moscow—no doubt arguing that the Atlantic Alliance would never respond to the provocation and, when it in fact didn't, that Western security guarantees could no longer be believed. That would lead to still further Russian expansionism, to which Europe would need to accommodate itself.

Other futures, of course, are possible as well. Russia's current course could well take its political toll, with Putin falling from power. Should that happen, a new Russian leadership might be willing to make a political settlement. However, the opposite result is also possible: a new Russian ruler who governs even more recklessly. Of course, Putin could maintain his current hold on power, drawing out the occupation of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk and using that base to destabilize other parts of Ukraine. In fact, this seems to be the dominant strategy being pursued

by Moscow today, in which the economic instability associated with continued unrest in Ukraine leads to one of two outcomes desired by the Kremlin: either a counterrevolution that brings to power a more pliable, Russia-friendly government in Kyiv, or a political settlement by which Ukraine adopts a "federalist" solution granting greater autonomy to the country's east—and thereby codifying Moscow's sway there.

American options

Amid all of this uncertainty, how is the U.S. to respond? In addition to financial assistance, the arming of Ukraine is imperative. We should do so because of the commitments we gave under the Budapest Memorandum. If we do not honor that commitment, it will incentivize transnational movements and other nations who wish to move against American interests. Additionally, if the fight against Russian aggression is not made by Ukrainians in Ukraine, Americans and other NATO members may be the ones having to fight a Russian invasion of Latvia or another NATO member in the not-too-distant future.

But what type of help should we give? Former NATO Commander and Democratic Presidential candidate Gen. Wesley Clark has proffered a list of military equipment that the West should send, ranging from anti-armor weapons to night vision goggles.³¹ This seems like a good start. After all, as Clark himself has pointed out, arming Ukraine may be destabilizing—but not to do so has already proved to be destabilizing, and will likely continue to be so.

His comments hint at a larger truth. Russia, which has long sought to subjugate Ukraine, sees the country's current military weakness—and the lack of attention being paid by the West—as an opportunity. And because it does, more aggression is possible. Whatever the particulars, the United States and its allies

need to begin reversing that perception. After more than a year-and-a-half of instability stemming from Moscow's actions, there's no time to lose.



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DETECTING RUSSIA: HAS NATO SUCCEEDED?

Leo Michel

At the much-publicized Wales Summit last September, the leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attempted to send two resolute messages to Moscow. The first—which, in truth, was also intended to reassure Russia’s worried neighbors—was that the Alliance remains “strong, ready, robust, and responsive” and able to fulfill its Article 5 treaty commitment of collective defense in the face of any aggression. To underscore the point, the twenty-eight leaders agreed to a number of near- and long-term measures to strengthen NATO’s military posture and capabilities.

The second message focused on reversing Russia’s “escalating and illegal military intervention” in Ukraine. To this end, NATO “demanded” that Moscow take “concrete action” to comply with its international obligations, “end its illegitimate occupation of Crimea,” and stop its support of pro-Russian separatists who had proclaimed “peoples’ republics” in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine. As the Summit’s concluding communiqué noted, NATO “stands with Ukraine” in the face of Russian aggression. Still, this was a necessarily ambiguous formulation, since Ukraine is not an Ally—despite the promise of NATO leaders at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine and Georgia “will become members of NATO.”¹

Plan of action

Overall, NATO’s near-term measures, known as the “Readiness Action Plan,” have had the desired effect of assuring Allies most directly concerned by Russia—thanks, in large part, to their visibility, scope, and multinational character. For example, NATO has increased (from four to sixteen) the number of fighter aircraft dedicated to the air-



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policing mission over Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It has started regular Airborne Warning and Control System reconnaissance flights over Poland and Romania. And it has stepped up regular maritime patrols in the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Mediterranean. NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, meanwhile, is receiving more capabilities and upgrading its readiness to serve as a hub for regional cooperation.

In parallel with these activities, NATO has conducted several important land, air, and maritime exercises. The ALLIED SHIELD training series in June involved some 15,000 military personnel from nineteen alliance members and three partner nations. The series includes another test of NATO's interim Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), a "spearhead force" of around 5,000 troops (with air, maritime, and special forces "enablers") able to begin moving within two to three days at the first warnings of a potential threat. NATO Force Integration Units composed of small multinational teams are being set up in the Baltic States, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria to assist those countries with their Host Nation Support activities, including the logistical networks and infrastructure required to receive the VJTF deployments.

NATO's higher profile in the region has been welcomed by Partner countries Finland and Sweden, and for good reason. In recent months, both nations have had to scramble air and coastal defense forces to respond to provocative Russian military flights and naval activities (including, most probably, submarines) near or within their national airspace and territorial waters. Not surprisingly, both Helsinki and Stockholm are now seized with the potential for Russian hostility—and as a result are stepping up their militaries' participation in NATO exercises in the region.

A few Allies have taken additional steps on a national basis that complement NATO's moves. Over the past year, company-size U.S. units (approximately 160 soldiers each) with armored vehicles have been rotating through the Baltic States, Poland, and Romania, where they train with local forces. This "persistent presence," which is expected to continue at least through 2016, draws upon the two U.S. Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) permanently stationed in Europe, as well as rotations of troops from a third U.S.-based BCT that is earmarked for Europe. In addition, the Obama Administration recently decided to pre-position a "European Activity Set" in the Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania.² This set of equipment would consist of over a thousand vehicles—including some 250 Abrams main battle tanks, plus hundreds of Bradley fighting vehicles and mobile Howitzer artillery—to be used by the rotating U.S. personnel or, if necessary, by a full U.S.-based BCT that could be airlifted to Europe in a crisis. Other Allies, too, have stepped up their game. France, for example, recently deployed 15 main battle tanks and 300 soldiers to Poland for a six-week exercise.

However, when it comes to the long-term measures pledged at Wales, the picture is mixed. NATO has struggled for more than a decade to find ways to reverse the trend of declining defense budgets, to use available funds more effectively, and to find a more equitable sharing of costs and responsibilities. The topic is one of vital significance to the Alliance. As then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned the Allies in a June 2011 speech: "(If) current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders—those for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me—may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."³

The language agreed at Wales—notably, that Allied nations will “aim to move toward the 2 percent (of GDP) guideline (for defense expenditures) within a decade”—is, of course, far from a guarantee. And NATO’s less-than-brilliant record in generating quick capabilities improvements through increased multinational cooperation can leave one a bit skeptical. But there are signs, at least, that the proverbial NATO aircraft carrier has begun to change course.

Currently, only four Allies—the United States, United Kingdom, Estonia, and Greece—meet the 2 percent guideline.⁴ Over the past year, France and Germany have announced modest defense budget increases. So, too, have Poland (which will come close to the 2 percent mark), Norway, the Netherlands, Spain, Lithuania, and Latvia. (Sweden also has announced an increase, and its fellow Partner Finland is expected to do so in the near future.) Of course, some of these countries are starting from very low spending levels and, in the case of France and Spain, security concerns along NATO’s southern flank—not concerns about Russia—are the primary motivation for the increases.

True, the United Kingdom’s recently announced 1.5 percent cut in defense spending for 2015 is a disappointment—even if, as defense ministry officials have claimed, it does not bring Britain below 2 percent this year nor impact manpower numbers or current operations. Still, Britain’s longer-term trend in defense spending might not be clear until the new Conservative government completes its Strategic Defense and Security Review in late 2015 or early 2016. And Italy and Belgium also have announced cuts in their already low military spending since Wales.

On the capabilities front, the Wales summit endorsed a new “framework nations concept” intended to facilitate multinational cooperation. It will take

some time to evaluate if, in practice, this initiative will generate more results than NATO’s “Smart Defense” and “Connected Forces Initiative” approaches. Nevertheless, NATO’s Allied Command Transformation can point to promising activities since Wales to improve Allied and Partner interoperability; these involve, for example, the more efficient management of air-to-ground precision guided munitions, better integration of new off-the-shelf technologies into military systems, and innovative ways to deliver professional military education and training to NATO and Partner forces. And at long last, the first of five Global Hawk remotely piloted aircraft for the NATO-owned and -operated Alliance Ground Surveillance system rolled off the production line in June.

Regarding Ukraine, practical assistance from the Alliance seems modest relative to the situation on the ground. NATO has sent advisors to Kyiv to work with government officials in areas such as military organizational reform, defense education, cyber defense, command, control, and communications, logistics, and military career transition. NATO is also working to establish additional “trust funds” to finance such support.

More substantive—albeit still restrained—assistance to Ukraine has come through bilateral channels. So far, the United States has committed close to \$200 million in security-related aid, including body armor, night and thermal vision devices, heavy engineering equipment, radios, patrol boats, rations, tents, medical supplies, counter-mortar radars, and other related items.⁵ In addition, the first shipments of 230 Humvees promised to Ukraine have been delivered. And some 300 U.S. troops based in Italy deployed to western Ukraine in mid-April to begin a six-month mission of training Ukrainian National Guard forces. Some 75 British soldiers have provided similar training since March.

To date, however, the Allies have not acted on Ukrainian entreaties to provide lethal weapons. NATO as an organization does not provide weapons to anyone, leaving such important decisions to national authorities. And despite mounting calls in the U.S. Congress to do just that, President Obama has not moved beyond his statement last February that offering lethal arms was only one of the options under consideration “if, in fact, diplomacy fails.”⁶

Ends and means

So has NATO successfully deterred Russia? The answer is not so straightforward.

On the one hand, Moscow’s muscle-flexing of late has been reminiscent of Cold War days. For example, Russia recently conducted large military exercises in the Baltic and Arctic regions, and asserted its “right” to deploy nuclear weapons “anywhere on Russian territory, including on the Crimea Peninsula.”⁷ Last March, the Russian ambassador to Denmark warned that “Danish warships will be targets for Russian nuclear missiles” if the Danes contribute ship-borne radars to NATO’s missile defense system.⁸ Meanwhile, Russia’s propaganda machine is churning away to convince its citizens that NATO is hell-bent on regime change within the Russian Federation. In a clear sign of the times, back in May, Rossiya 1, a leading television channel, broadcast a documentary alleging that the Red Army and its Warsaw Pact allies invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968 to “prevent NATO from overthrowing the legitimate government in Prague.”⁹

On the other hand, Russia so far has not crossed NATO’s “red line” that would lead an Ally to invoke Article 5.¹⁰ Maybe, as some argue, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not that big a risk-taker, in which case NATO’s strengthened military posture and capabilities were not necessary to deter him. But given

the many other surprises that Russia’s leader has delivered of late, it is hard to argue that NATO’s actions, underscored by declarations by U.S. President Barack Obama and other Allied heads of state and government, have not been prudent and useful.¹¹ At a minimum, the Alliance has given Moscow more reasons not to test its will when it comes to defending one of its members.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for Ukraine. Since Wales, Russia has continued and, in some areas, increased its military, economic, and propaganda support for the separatists in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian officials and some outside analysts believe this is a prelude to an offensive aimed at establishing a land bridge between Russia and the illegally annexed peninsula of Crimea.¹²

At this juncture, the best available deterrent against Russia is the combination of European Union and American sanctions. President Obama sketched out the effects of these sanctions during the June 2015 meeting in Germany of the G-7, the West’s leading industrialized democracies. According to the President:

The Russian economy has been seriously weakened. The ruble and foreign investment are down; inflation is up. The Russian central bank has lost more than \$150 billion in reserves. Russian banks and firms are virtually locked out of the international markets. Russian energy companies are struggling to import the services and technologies they need for complex energy projects. Russian defense firms have been cut off from key technologies. Russia is in deep recession. So Russia’s actions in Ukraine are hurting Russia and hurting the Russian people.¹³

True, Europe’s support for the sanctions regime showed signs of wavering over this past spring; in March, for example, Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni publicly favored a relaxation

of sanctions against the Kremlin.¹⁴ And one can expect, of course, that Russian President Vladimir Putin will continue his lobbying in various capitals on the Continent for a lifting of sanctions.¹⁵ However, the G-7 seems to be holding the line, declaring: “We recall that the duration of sanctions should be clearly linked to Russia’s complete implementation of the Minsk agreements and respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty. They can be rolled back when Russia meets these commitments. However, we also stand ready to take further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia should its actions so require.”¹⁶

Given the foregoing, it appears possible—indeed, likely—that Ukraine will take its place among the misnamed “frozen conflicts” that have descended upon Georgia and Moldova over the past two decades. Such a state of affairs would significantly increase the latent instability on Europe’s periphery.

Interconnected parts

NATO, meanwhile, faces yet another challenge: balancing competing priorities. The understandable focus at Wales on reaffirming the deterrence and collective defense aspects of the Alliance risks overshadowing its other “core tasks”—crisis management and cooperative security. Yet the continuing, complex, and violent conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and parts of northern Africa (especially Libya and the Sahel) will pose an array of dangers for, and demands upon, the Transatlantic Alliance for years, possibly decades, to come. And simmering tensions elsewhere—arising from the Israel-Palestinian impasse and unsolved Iranian nuclear dossier, to cite only two examples—could reach a boiling point with little advance warning.

But responding to those real and potential dangers is not unrelated to the problem of deterring Russia from potentially dangerous behavior. For if

the Allies fail to follow through on their commitments to defend their interests and values outside Europe, Russian leaders might rationally conclude that at least some of those Allies would be willing to shrug off their responsibilities within Europe, as well.

“Our Alliance remains an essential source of stability in this unpredictable world,” the Wales declaration reminded us. Left unsaid—but just as true—is that the gap between acknowledging that fact and mobilizing our national and collective resources and political will to project “stability” is still alarmingly wide.



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THE CHANGING FACE OF CYBER CONFLICT

Paul Rosenzweig

Much of what the U.S. military is doing to prepare for conflict in cyberspace is misguided. We are, in effect, preparing to fight the last war against the last enemy. We conceive of the conflict as involving a contest between peer nation-states—the U.S. and China, for example. What we are systematically missing is something we can characterize as the democratization of conflict in cyberspace. We are seeing a sea-change in the capability of non-state actors, ad hoc groups and even individuals, allowing them to compete on an almost level playing field with nation-states, and to do significant damage to our national security interests. If we do not re-conceptualize how we think about cyber security, policy, and conflict, we are in danger of missing the boat.

Snowden, and after

Consider the following question: what or who has been the most significant cause of damage (through cyber means) to the national security in recent years? By any absolute measure, one suspects that the most likely answer is: Edward Snowden, a single individual who, through his own activities, or perhaps with a small cadre of a few fellow travelers, caused immense damage to American national security interests. Think of what has happened since 2013 by virtue of Snowden's activities. We have suffered major diplomatic difficulties. There is a significant amount of anger at the United States among our allies and friends in Europe at what they perceive to be American spying against their own national security interests. They knew that we did it, but now that it is out in the open, they can no longer deny it, and they are annoyed.



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Even worse, the disclosures have given China and Russia the opportunity to create a perception of false equivalence, if you will, between the nature of what they are doing, which is widespread rampant economic espionage, and what the United States has been engaged in, which by and large has been more traditional national security intelligence activities. Edward Snowden's actions have also disclosed intelligence sources and methods, to the detriment of the United States. As result, we have already seen terrorist groups and other governments change their communication activities, so that we are no longer as readily able to intercept their communications and understand their plans. China, for example, was alerted to a particularly significant penetration of one of their cyber systems as a result of the Snowden leaks—a penetration that, presumably, has since been terminated. That amounts to major damage to the national security interests of the United States.

And then, of course, there is the domestic political uproar. Last year, an amendment to completely defund portions of the NSA's intelligence activity programs failed by only 12 votes in the House of Representatives just before the August recess; the vote was 217 to 205. Just a few weeks ago, Congress passed—and the President signed into law—the *USA Freedom Act*, significantly curtailing the intelligence collection activities of the NSA. When, in the course of American history, has a vote to essentially close down a portion of our national security apparatus come that close to success, much less succeeded?

The foregoing highlights the scope of the damage that Snowden has done, and done as essentially an independent actor. Indeed, in a rather unguarded moment, Snowden admitted that he actually took the job at Booz Allen Hamilton for the purpose of collecting classified information with an eye toward eventually dis-

closing it.¹ That demonstrates the damage to national security interests that a single individual, or a small group of actors, can do. They are not affiliated with any nation-state, except perhaps after the fact. They have no sovereign interest that we can address or talk to. They are, in essence, a combination of political activism, ideology, criminality, and an adherence to some form of an anarcho-libertarianism—combined with what appears to be a great deal of narcissism.

Thus, when we look at cyber conflict and threats to national security, we should not focus exclusively on other national opponents. Rather, our cyber strategy needs to account for the “democratization” of conflict, because the tools and weapons of attack are now widely available throughout the globe and the use of force (since information is a tool of force) is no longer the exclusive province of nation-states.

Wiki-War

In this light, I would argue that we are in the midst of what Thomas Kuhn would call a paradigm shift.² It is a shift that is empowering individuals to act with force in ways that were beyond our conception a few short years ago. To see one example of that paradigm shift in practice, it is useful to reflect on what we might call the “WikiLeaks War” from 2010.

With the disclosure of classified information from American sources like Chelsea Manning, information clearinghouse WikiLeaks appeared to be launching an assault on state authority (and more particularly, on that of the United States, although other governments were also identified). Confronted with WikiLeaks' anti-sovereign slant, the institutions of traditional commerce soon responded. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the governments affected ordered any actions, but the combination of governmental displeasure and clear public disdain for Wikileaks founder

Julian Assange soon led a number of major Western corporations (MasterCard, PayPal, and Amazon, to name three) to withhold their services from the organization. Amazon reclaimed rented server space that WikiLeaks had used and the two financial institutions stopped processing donations made to the group.

What followed might well be described as the first cyber battle between non-state actors. Supporters of WikiLeaks, loosely organized in a group under the name “Anonymous” (naturally), began a series of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on the websites of those major corporations they thought had taken an anti-WikiLeaks stand, in order to flood and prevent legitimate access to them. The website of the Swedish prosecuting authority (which was seeking Mr. Assange’s extradition to Sweden to face criminal charges) was also hacked. Some of the coordination for the DDoS attacks was done through social media, such as Facebook or Twitter. Meanwhile, other supporters created hundreds of mirror sites, replicating WikiLeaks content, so that it effectively could not be shut down. The hackers even adopted a military-style nomenclature, dubbing their efforts “Operation Payback.”

When Anonymous attacked, the other side fought back. The major sites used defensive cyber protocols to oppose Anonymous. Most attacks were relatively unsuccessful. The announced attack on Amazon, for example, was abandoned shortly after it began because the assault was ineffective. Perhaps even more tellingly, someone (no group has, to my knowledge, publicly claimed credit) began an offensive cyber operation against Anonymous itself. Anonymous ran its operations through a website, AnonOps.net, and that website was subject to DDoS counterattacks that took it offline for a number of hours. In short, a conflict readily recognizable as a battle between competing forces took place in

cyberspace, waged almost exclusively between non-state actors.

The failure of Anonymous to effectively target corporate websites and its relative vulnerability to counterattack are, likely, only temporary circumstances. Anonymous (and its opponents) will learn from this battle and approach the next one with a greater degree of skill and a better perspective on how to achieve their ends. Indeed, many of their more recent attacks—such as the effort to shut down the Vatican website—show a great deal of additional sophistication and effectiveness.

Moreover, Anonymous has demonstrated that, even with its limited capacity, it can do significant damage to individuals and companies. When Aaron Barr, the corporate head of a security firm, HB Gary, announced that his firm was investigating the identity of Anonymous participants, the group retaliated. Its members hacked the HB Gary network (itself a significantly embarrassing development for a cybersecurity company) and took possession of internal emails that, in turn, suggested that HB Gary was engaged in some questionable business practices. As a result, Barr was forced to resign his post—exactly the type of individual consequence that is sure to deter an effective counterinsurgent response.

More to the point, Anonymous has made quite clear that it intends to continue to prosecute the cyberwar against, among others, the United States. “It’s a guerrilla cyberwar—that’s what I call it,” according to Barrett Brown, a self-described senior strategist and “propagandist” for Anonymous. “It’s sort of an unconventional asymmetrical act of warfare that we’re involved in, and we didn’t necessarily start it. I mean, this fire has been burning.”³ Or, consider the manifesto posted by Anonymous, declaring cyberspace independence from world governments: “I declare the global social

space we are building together to be naturally independent of the tyrannies and injustices you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any real methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear.”⁴ In February 2012, Anonymous went still further, formally declaring “war” against the United States and calling on its citizens to rise and revolt.

Indeed, in many ways, Anonymous conducts itself in the same manner that an opposing military organization might. Also in February 2012, for example, it was disclosed that Anonymous had hacked into a telephone conversation between the FBI and Scotland Yard, the subject of which was the development of a legal case against the group. That sort of tactic—intercepting the enemy’s communications—is exactly the type of tactic an insurgency might use. And by disclosing the capability, Anonymous has successfully sown uncertainty about how much else it might be intercepting.

In advancing their agenda, the members of Anonymous look somewhat like the anarchists who led movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, albeit anarchists with a vastly greater network and far more ability to advance their nihilistic agenda through individual action. And, like the anarchists of old, they have their own internal disputes. In 2011 another group called “Black Hat” effectively declared war on Anonymous because it disagreed with the Anonymous agenda. But even more, Anonymous and its imitators look like the non-state insurgencies we have faced in Iraq and Afghanistan—small groups of non-state actors using asymmetric means of warfare to destabilize and disrupt existing political authority.

The Sony hack

The late 2014 attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment provides an instructive case for testing the limits of our

understanding of the new nature of cyber conflict, and for demonstrating that military means are not the only ones of addressing cyber intrusions.⁵ Recall that the hack, conducted by a group identified as the “Guardians of Peace,” exfiltrated terabytes of data from Sony. Some of that data involved unreleased films; other data included embarrassing internal emails and proprietary information. Beyond the damage resulting from the release of confidential information, the hackers also demanded that Sony withhold from release *The Interview*, a movie depicting the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un. After delaying the release for several days, Sony eventually made the movie available through several alternate outlets. The FBI (relying in part on information provided by the NSA) attributed the intrusion to North Korean government agents. Estimates of damage to Sony’s financial interests range upward of \$100 million (though, of course, Sony isn’t saying).⁶

Here we have a group probably affiliated with a minor state actor, North Korea, using cyber means to degrade the economic interests of the citizens of another nation, the U.S. (Some experts, incidentally, doubt the attribution to North Korea, but for now let us provisionally accept it.) How shall we characterize this action? It had no kinetic effects, nor did it significantly affect the American economy. No matter how we view it, Sony is not really considered part of the “critical infrastructure” of the United States (although, oddly enough, in law it is characterized as such). And, so, this was not an “armed attack” triggering the laws of armed conflict. Nor was it even an act of espionage. But calling this a state-sponsored criminal act seems to trivialize its geopolitical context.

In the end, the Sony intrusion seems to reflect a new category of conflict—a quasi-instrumental action by a nation-state (or its non-state actor surrogates)

that has significant non-kinetic effects on a target nation. Responses will not follow traditional military patterns. The United States, for example, has publicly announced financial sanctions against North Korea, and may very well have taken other, quiet actions in response.

Cyber counterinsurgency

What are the implications of this paradigm shift for cyber military strategy? They are profound. From Russia and China, we can expect some form of rationality in action. We can understand their motivations. For example, we know why the Chinese are stealing intellectual property: to jump-start their economy. We likewise can make some judgments about what would annoy them and what would not.

In the end they are rational actors, just as the Russians were during the decades of the Cold War. But in the cyber domain, the motivations of the actors are as diverse as the number of people who are there. There are indeed many actors, with many different motivations. Yet we can characterize them as irrational chaotic actors, unified by a disrespect for authority, for hierarchy, for structure, a dislike of it and an effort to work outside of it. In this structure, they look much more like insurgents than national military.

That means we need a new strategy for cyber counterinsurgency.⁷ Three factors that should guide our cyber strategy—elements that should form the basic assumptions of a new COIN program in cyberspace. The first is that asymmetric conflict is here to stay. Non-state actors with near equal power to governmental actors are going to be the rule, not the exception, going forward. They can serve as proxies for nation-states, but they are not nation-states themselves.

Second, current non-state actor capabilities are limited. They cannot

take down the electric grid in the United States currently. But that will not remain the case for very long. We have five years, ten years at the outside, before the capabilities of non-state actors become almost equivalent to those of nation-states. We have a window of opportunity to get our strategy right now, and we need to take it.

Third, attribution is the hardest part of the game. Knowing who the other side is and what their motivations are represents the most difficult challenge. Identifying actors and their motivations is not something we can fix technologically—although we can improve our “situational awareness.”

Instead of technical fixes, we need to develop cyber counterinsurgency law and policy that uses all of the techniques in our arsenal to fight this kind of new opponent. It will require not big disruptive military activity, but methods such as integrating military and civilian activities, collecting intelligence, building host nation security, and so on. It is an effort in which all the elements of national power will come into play.

Organizing to face the new threat

Cyberspace is the most distributed, dynamic domain that we know of. There are more than two-and-a-half billion people and more than a trillion things connected to the network across the globe. It changes on an hourly or daily basis. The advanced, persistent threats that are intruding on the Pentagon’s .mil computers today did not exist six months or a year ago. They are newly built for that purpose. The last thing we need is a centralized, top-down hierarchy to face a diverse, multifaceted, morphing opponent in a battle space that changes every day.

Yet that is exactly what we are doing. The “big military” complex does a lot of things well, but one of the things it does not is to turn quickly. Thus we are in the

process of building, at the United States Cyber Command, a new “big cyber” to go with our “Big Army.” It is currently a sub-unified command that reports to United States Strategic Command (STRATCOM), and there are already proposals to turn it into an independent command of its own. Doing so would lock us into the old Pentagon structure of a hierarchy with lots of rules, formal reporting, acquisition requirements, and staff judge advocates who will enforce rules across the length and breadth of the organization.

In this conflict space, however, a model based on “Big Army” is the wrong one. Instead, we need a cyber force that is far more akin to those used in special operations: something that is lean, quick to react, flexible, with a flat administrative structure and elite skills.

Just look at the cyber aspects of some of the current conflicts we face. The Obama administration is currently in the midst of rethinking its strategy against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. But what will ISIS’s cyber response be? What might be that of the Syrian regime? The Syrian Electronic Army has already put the United States on notice that it will counterattack if U.S. troops enter Syria, while ISIS has threatened to disrupt the American economy.

Can they do so? We simply do not know. Nor do we know their likely targets. We need to—just as we need targeted weapons that can find the ISIS or Syrian Electronic Army command-and-control servers and take them out without taking offline the entire Syrian and Iraqi electric grids. None of these tools and capabilities will come about as a result of a new unified command.

We are facing a brave new world. Anonymous and their ilk are a harbinger of things to come. Power and force are being democratized, and we are not ready for it. We are in the midst of a paradigm shift from a period when nation states

have a monopoly on the use of significant force to one in which the destructive potential of cyberspace is being increasingly democratized. Unless we adapt and respond, we are setting ourselves up for catastrophic failure.



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3. Michael Isikoff, “Hacker Group Vows ‘Cyber-War’ on U.S. Government, Business,” *MSNBC.com*, March 8, 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41972190/ns/technology_and_science-security.
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6. Estimates vary on the actual losses, ranging from a low of \$15 million, to a high of over \$100 million. Compare Ceclia Kang, “Sony Pictures Hack Cost the Movie Studio at Least \$15 Million,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 4, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2015/02/04/sony-pictures-hack-cost-the-movie-studio-at-least-15-million/> with Lisa Richwine, “Sony’s Hacking Scandal Could Cost the Company \$100 Million,” *Reuters*, Dec. 9, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/sonys-hacking-scandal-could-cost-the-company-100-million-2014-12>.
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FINDING THE ISLAMIC STATE'S WEAK SPOT

Celina B. Realuyo

Since the end of the Cold War, we live in an increasingly interconnected and thriving world. For the most part, what has come to be known as globalization has positively transformed our lives, facilitating the free flow of goods, services, capital, ideas and technology. At the same time however, these drivers of globalization have also empowered illicit networks of terrorists, criminals and their facilitators that threaten the security and prosperity of the global community. These illicit actors, like al-Qaeda and Mexican cartels, actively capitalize on weak governance, socioeconomic vulnerabilities and corruption to conduct terrorism and crime throughout the world.

Over the past year, the dramatic rise of ISIL (the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) has emerged as the most compelling illustration of the convergence of terrorism and crime destabilizing the Middle East. Illicit networks require critical enablers, in particular illicit activities and financing, to carry out their violent agendas. ISIL derives its ideological, economic, and military strength from these enablers, and financing is the most critical of these enablers. Therefore, in order to degrade and defeat ISIL, the U.S. and its allies must enhance their efforts to attack ISIL's funding streams.

Mapping the network

At their core, illicit networks threaten the four key missions of government: (1) to guarantee the nation's security and sovereignty, (2) to promote economic prosperity, (3) to safeguard society and the rule of law and (4) to ensure that the government represents the political will of the people. Through their illegal activities, terrorists, criminals and their facilitators exploit the global marketplace to promote their own



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interests—and do so at the expense of the national security of the United States and its allies.

Herein lies a crucial difference. While rogue nation-states and terrorist groups tend to be motivated by ideology, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are driven primarily by greed. The transnational trafficking of drugs, arms, people, and counterfeit goods and the money laundering that accompanies these illicit activities compromises the safety of consumers, robs inventors of their intellectual property, denies governments significant tax revenues, and undermines our economies.

These illicit networks require several critical enablers in order to sustain their activities and realize their political or revenue objectives:

- *Leadership.* Illicit networks need leadership that directs and manages resources to achieve their mission of political objectives or maximizing profits. Their leadership can be organized in hierarchies or, more likely, as loose networks of affiliates that diversify the “key man risk” associated with relying on a sole leader for command and control.
- *Personnel.* Illicit networks must recruit and maintain personnel to support all aspects of their activities.
- *Illicit activities.* Illicit networks can engage in a broad spectrum of illegal revenue-generating activities including trafficking in narcotics, arms, humans, exotic wildlife, and contraband, as well as money laundering, cybercrime, extortion, and kidnapping for ransom.
- *Logistics and supply chains.* Illicit networks rely on global supply chains, commercial transportation, resources and other logistical sup-

port to move matériel, personnel, services and funding from supply to demand points of their enterprises.

- *Weapons.* Illicit networks use force or the threat of force to dominate their operating areas; access to weapons, the ability to deploy them, and a lack of concern for collateral damage are what make illicit networks so violent and lethal.
- *Technology and communications.* Illicit networks diligently adopt new technology and communications methods to avoid detection by security forces, and monitor and adapt to changes in their areas of operation.
- *Corruption.* Illicit networks prefer operating in ungoverned or weakly governed spaces, where state control and oversight are lacking or can be compromised. While they may not necessarily aspire to topple and replace governments, they seek out officials vulnerable to corruption who can facilitate illicit activities in certain geographic areas.
- *Financing.* Illicit networks consider revenue as both a key objective in case of crime and an essential enabler for terrorism. Financing serves as the lifeblood for these networks and their illicit endeavors; they derive power from their wealth and use it to corrupt and co-opt rivals, facilitators, and/or government and security officials.¹

Combating the network

That last element, financing, is perhaps the most vital enabler of illicit networks, as all the other critical enablers require funding. Consequently, financial intelligence and investigative tools are essential to better understanding, detecting, disrupting and dismantling terrorism, crime and corruption. Track-

ing how terrorists and criminals raise, move, store and use money has been instrumental in degrading and defeating groups such as al-Qaeda “core,” Sri Lanka’s Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and the FARC in Colombia.

Money serves as the oxygen for any activity, licit or illicit. In a globalized world, we have grown to appreciate how “following the money trail” can enhance our efforts to counter illicit networks. Since the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, the U.S. and other governments have incorporated the financial instrument of national power in their efforts to combat terrorism and crime. They have done this through intelligence and law enforcement operations, like the Iraq and Afghan threat finance cells, to pursue terrorist financiers and money launderers; public designations, sanctions and asset freezes and seizure; and domestic and international capacity-building in the counter-threat finance discipline in the public and private sectors.

In the main, these measures have proven effective. Enhanced anti-money laundering and counterterrorism finance measures have significantly damaged illicit networks. Over the past decade, al-Qaeda operatives and affiliates from Iraq to Afghanistan have complained about increased difficulty in funding terrorist operations and supporting their networks. Similarly, transnational criminal organizations in the Western Hemisphere, like the various cartels operating in Mexico, realized that greater oversight of international banking and offshore accounts after September 11th complicated their ability to launder profits through the formal banking sector. Following the money trail and the surveillance of facilitators, like the bankers and lawyers moving and sheltering money for terrorist and criminal groups, produced critical financial intelligence that has led to the weakening of key illicit actors.

The convergence of terrorism and crime

Terrorism, crime and corruption have existed since the beginning of human civilization, and traditionally were addressed as local security issues. Now they have gone “global.” In an age of globalization, the magnitude and velocity of terrorism and crime, driven by interconnected economies and advances in communications and technology, have resulted in unprecedented profits and record levels of violence. In many cases, terrorist groups, international drug cartels, mafias, and gangs are better armed, funded, and trained than the government security forces charged with confronting them.

In recent years, terrorist groups have become increasingly reliant on criminal activities in order to sustain themselves as state sponsorships and donor support have evaporated. Insurgent movements, like the FARC in Colombia and Peru’s Shining Path, are examples of this evolution in Latin America, as these terrorists have become increasingly involved in the cocaine and other illicit trade. Meanwhile, some criminal organizations have adopted ideological agendas and act more like terrorists, using violence against innocents. This is the case with the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which was once considered a criminal mafia controlling supply routes. In 2012, it was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. due to several high-profile insurgent attacks on U.S. and other foreign personnel in Afghanistan, including the assault on the U.S. Embassy in Kabul in 2011.²

We are now witnessing a disturbing trend: the dangerous convergence of terrorism and crime that is becoming a formidable threat to sovereignty. Convergence is defined as “the process of coming together and having one interest, purpose, or goal.” In the case of terrorists, that purpose is a political end

state and in the case of criminals, it is maximizing profits. What terrorists and criminals have in common and how they converge is in the threat they pose to national security and sovereignty. Such is the case with the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan, the FARC in Colombia, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Hezbollah's global networks and now ISIL, all of which have leveraged illicit activities to realize their terrorist agendas.³

All eyes on ISIL

ISIL has dominated the news since last summer with the brutal beheadings of Western hostages, remarkable military offensives in Iraq and Syria, the persecution of religious minorities and a compelling foreign fighter recruitment campaign. As a result, the group has been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. and United Nations. But ISIL also represents a formidable example of the convergence of illicit networks, combining the ideological aspirations of a terrorist group and the profit-seeking objectives of a criminal organization.

In addition to the world headlines reporting their vicious acts of violence against non-believers, ISIL is widely characterized as being the "richest" terrorist group in the world. To conduct its ambitious military operations, recruit and support its fighters and maintain control of its "caliphate," ISIL requires significant financing and is engaged in a broad spectrum of criminal activities.

The group's principal source of finances is derived from its control and sale of oil, estimated at bringing in \$1 million a day, according to recent U.S. Treasury Department assessments.⁴ The group is estimated to produce forty-four thousand barrels a day from Syrian wells and four thousand barrels a day from Iraqi ones, although the Coalition air campaign is impacting these production levels. The group then sells the crude to

truckers and middlemen. By selling well below market price, traders are incentivized to take on the risk of such black-market deals. The oil-starved Assad regime, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurds—all apparent enemies of ISIL—are rumored to be among its customers.⁵

Additional funding comes from extortion networks, kidnap for ransom, criminal activities like stolen antiquities and human trafficking, and some donations from external individuals.⁶ Ransom payments provided ISIL upward of \$20 million in 2014, including large sums for kidnapped European journalists and other captives, according to the U.S. Treasury.⁷ ISIL is also believed to extort businesses in Mosul, netting upward of \$8 million a month.⁸ Christians who have not fled the city face an additional tax levied on religious minorities. Protection rackets bring in revenue while building the allegiance of some tribesmen. Exploitation of natural resources and trafficking in antiquities also contribute to the ISIL's coffers.⁹

This diversified portfolio makes ISIL a challenging adversary. Accordingly, the financial front has once again become an indispensable aspect of combating terrorist groups like ISIL by attacking their financing abilities.

Pushing back

The dramatic rise of ISIL, and its ability to conduct terrorist atrocities, occupy territory in Iraq and Syria, attract ideological support, recruit foreign fighters, and harness economic resources has refocused counterterrorism efforts worldwide. In September of 2014, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2178, underscoring the need to prevent the "recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of individuals who travel for the purpose of the perpetration, planning of, or participation in terrorist acts, associated with the Islamic State in Iraq and

the Levant (ISIL), Al-Nusra Front (ANL) and other affiliates or splinter groups of Al-Qaida.”¹⁰

The United States, for its part, has built a global coalition of some 60 nations with the aim of degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL. The White House has set forward a comprehensive strategy featuring the following nine lines of effort to counter ISIL, ranging from denying the group safe haven to expanded intelligence collection.¹¹ But it is the disruption of ISIL's finances that arguably represents the most critical initiative being undertaken.

The U.S. strategy to counter ISIL financing is focused on disrupting the group's revenue streams, restricting ISIL's access to the international financial system, and targeting its leaders, facilitators and supporters with sanctions. The U.S. is also collaborating with international partners on this issue; in March 2015, for example, the U.S., Italy and Saudi Arabia formally established the Counter-ISIL Finance Group.¹²

Likewise, the coalition has been conducting a military air campaign against the group since August 2014. “Operation Inherent Resolve,” now underway, conducts targeted airstrikes of Iraq and Syria, at least some of which have been directed at ISIL-linked oil infrastructure and supply networks in Syria and Iraq. According to U.S. Central Command, 152 oil infrastructure targets have been damaged or destroyed as of May 8, 2015.¹³ Mobile refineries have been specifically targeted to reduce the availability of refined oil products, and their successful destruction has impacted—but not destroyed—ISIL's illegal oil sales.

On May 16, 2015, U.S. Special Forces operators conducted a daring raid in Syria against Abu Sayyaf, a senior leader considered the Chief Financial Officer of ISIL. Although the high-value target was killed rather than captured, his wife was detained for interrogation,

and a treasure trove of mobile phones, computers and documents were collected at the safe house. This operation illustrates the growing importance of targeting ISIL's financial infrastructure and the value of financial intelligence in better understanding and undermining ISIL. Due to the diversified sources of its income, the campaign against ISIL's financing will require perseverance and a multi-pronged approach across agencies and jurisdictions.

The way forward

Over the past decade, the U.S. and other governments have increased their efforts to detect the financing of terrorism and crime, impose economic sanctions, and raise awareness of how the international financial system can be abused to fund the infrastructure, members, and operations of these illicit actors. To effectively counter ISIL, the financial instrument of national power must be leveraged to the fullest extent possible at the national, regional and international levels. The goal is simple: to starve the group of financing. Going after the funds that are its lifeblood is a critical component of the overall mission to defeat the terrorist group.

Here, the track record is decidedly mixed. The international coalition against ISIL has not proven very effective to date. Since August 2014, the U.S.-led mission, “Operation Inherent Resolve,” has conducted over 3,400 air strikes over Iraq and Syria at a reported cost of over \$2.5 billion.¹⁴ Yet in May 2015, ISIL made significant military gains by seizing control of Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province in Iraq, and the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an activist monitoring group, ISIL is now in control of 50 percent of Syria. As ISIL advances militarily, it enriches itself by plundering their newly conquered territories and extorting their new subjects.¹⁵ It is feared

that Palmyra, an historic city founded over 2,000 years ago and designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, will be destroyed by ISIL or be pillaged to sell looted antiquities on the black market, as it has previously done with the 9th century Assyrian palace in Nimrud, Iraq.

To better attack ISIL on the financial front, the coalition should establish a specialized counter-ISIL threat finance cell to collect, analyze, and exploit financial intelligence to better understand ISIL's networks, operations, and vulnerabilities. It should also develop specific target sets to disrupt and destroy the financial infrastructure of ISIL. By attacking its funding sources, the coalition can deprive ISIL of its most critical enabler.

Going forward, the United States and its allies will need to halt the political, ideological, and military advance of ISIL, and actually reclaim control of territories occupied by the group in both Iraq and Syria. This daunting mission will require a comprehensive and proactive strategy—and one that, above all, targets the group's financial lifeblood.



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PERSPECTIVE

The Danger of Incorrect Assumptions An Interview with The Honorable Douglas J. Feith

The Honorable Douglas J. Feith is one of America's best known national security practitioners. A lawyer by training, he began his career in the office of Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson in the mid-1970s, going on to serve on the staff of the National Security Council and at the Pentagon during the Reagan administration. He left government service in the late 1980s to go into private law practice, but rejoined the government in July of 2001 to serve as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the administration of President George W. Bush—a position he held until August of 2005. Thereafter, he taught at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and was associated with Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Stanford's Hoover Institution. He currently serves as a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, where he directs the Institute's Center for National Security Strategies.

On May 26, 2015, Secretary Feith spoke with *Journal* editor Ilan Berman regarding the threat posed by the Islamic State, the Obama administration's efforts to hammer out a nuclear deal with Iran, and the tragic course of the Syrian civil war. What follows is an edited transcript of his remarks.

Over the past year, the terrorist group known as the Islamic State has erupted onto the international scene. Its battlefield successes in Iraq and Syria, and its radical, absolutist worldview, have resonated in many corners of the Muslim World, to the point that it has now surpassed al-Qaeda in terms of both prominence and reach. How grave is the threat it poses to American national security?

It's a serious threat. I view it as part of the broader Islamist attack on the United States and on the West in general. The Islamic State is a particularly worrisome part of that picture because it's shown an interest in moving beyond simply being an ideological movement and terrorist group. It now controls substantial territory, population, and

economic resources, and functions in the real world, claiming to be the universal caliphate. That's part of the reason it's excited so many people across the Muslim World, and is doing so well in recruitment.

If the Islamic State succeeds in taking either Baghdad or Damascus, two venerated Arab capitals that each served as the capitals of caliphates, it would enormously excite a lot of young people throughout the Muslim world and increase its strength and capabilities greatly. For this reason, the Islamic State is very much worth worrying about. The group has the economic resources, the political will and hostility, and an increasing capability to assert its revolution and do great harm to its enemies. And the Islamic State considers the United States an enemy.

This brings us to Iraq. The recent advances made there by the Islamic State have made clear that the Iraq policy pursued by the Obama administration to date is woefully deficient. Yet new approaches—either military or diplomatic—are in short supply. What can Washington in fact do to help secure the Iraqi state?

The Obama administration has blamed Iraq for failing to confront the Islamic State successfully. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter recently said that Iraqi forces performed so poorly in the field because they lacked the will to fight. There may be something to that analysis, but the U.S. administration bears some responsibility too for the Iraqi government's failure.

The Obama administration helped create this problem through its passivity, and now justifies further passivity by saying that it doesn't have any good options. In Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, if we had been more farsighted and active early on, we might have been able to improve the situation through relatively minor actions. Now, in order to improve matters, we need to take major actions. U.S. officials who weren't inclined to take minor steps can't now be expected to take major actions. So these problems are metastasizing.

If we stick with the premises of the Obama national security doctrine, there's almost nothing that can be done. The only way the United States can begin to remedy the situation in the Middle East, and elsewhere, is to adopt a comprehensively different approach to national security affairs. A complete overhaul is required.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has emerged as one of the most prominent players in today's fight against the Islamic State. What are Iran's priorities in the campaign it is currently waging in Iraq? And is cooperation with Tehran on this issue in fact possible?

In the Middle East today, we have a number of large strategic concerns. One of them is something we have already discussed: the Islamic State. But Iranian revolutionary activity is also a major challenge for the United States. Iran is deeply hostile to the United States for ideological reasons. It thinks of itself as a revolutionary government, and wants to dominate its region and exert influence beyond it.

Iran is a strategic problem, and not—as the Obama administration seems to think—a strategic partner and a strategic opportunity. We should oppose Iran at the same time that we are opposing the Islamic State. The fact that we have some interests that overlap with Iranian interests doesn't make Iran a sensible partner for us.

The Obama administration has made the conclusion of some sort of agreement over Iran's nuclear program a centerpiece of its second-term foreign policy agenda. By all indications, the United States—together with the other P5+1 powers—is now closing in on that goal. But how durable an agreement is this deal likely to be? And what are its implications for America's other priorities and equities in the Middle East?

Something durable is not what's intended. What the Obama administration intends is for this deal to somehow handle the political problems posed by Iranian nuclear ambitions. Its perspective is short term. Its approach will be as ineffective in constraining the Iranians as arms control agreements of this type have been in limiting actions and capabilities of non-democratic regimes over the last century. I don't know if it would be possible to coerce this Iranian regime to stop developing nuclear weapons, but I don't believe it's possible to get Iran to do so by means of a deal that relies on the Iranian regime's voluntary cooperation.

Iran has defied a large part of the world in developing and pursuing its nuclear program. This agreement absolves their efforts of sin. It suggests that Iran has successfully stared down the international community. Many medium-sized powers will conclude that the era when nuclear weapons were in the hands of only a small number of large powers is over. That will convince countries like Egypt, Turkey, and the Gulf States that they need nuclear capabilities of their own. The proliferation effect will extend beyond the Middle East. In a few years, we may see an explosion, so to speak, in the number of nuclear powers.

We have lived for 70 years since the end of World War II without any wars involving nuclear detonations. Non-proliferation policy has been an astonishing success. The pending deal with Iran undermines that success and, by making proliferation far more likely, will make nuclear war far more likely. It is grimly ironic that a U.S. president who championed “global zero”—the notion that the world can rid itself of nuclear weapons—is determined to make a deal with Iran that will have the effect of destroying the world's non-proliferation architecture. That will be the deal's effect even if Iran complies with its promises and even if it behaves moderately after acquiring nuclear weapons. And I don't believe that either of those “ifs” is realistic.

Syria's brutal civil war is now nearly four-and-a-half years old, but contrary to the expectations of most Western observers, the regime of Bashar al-Assad still remains ensconced in Damascus. How stable is Assad's rule, really? And what—if anything—should the United States do to shape the contours of that conflict?

What got us into this situation in the first place is that the Obama administration did not want to see Syria as an element of the Iran problem. Here, too, Administration thinking is driven by the idea that Iran is a strategic partner and a strategic opportunity for the United States. So the White House wasn't inclined to see the Syrian civil war, where Assad was fighting brutally to preserve his dictatorship and doing so with heavy assistance from Iran, as Iran-related. U.S. officials looked at the war as a free-standing problem with no broader strategic context. They assumed that Assad wouldn't be able to remain in power.

Early on in the anti-Assad revolt, a small amount of encouragement and military support from the United States to the rebels opposing Assad might have led to consolidation of the rebel forces. It might have closed off the option for other states to arm extremist Islamist groups entering the fray. And it might have encouraged Syrians on the political fence to join the rebels before the civil war became large scale. That might have given rise to a non-extremist rebel coalition that could have swept away Assad early on. I don't know if that would have happened, but it was never tried. Instead, President Obama chose *laissez-faire*. In the absence of American engagement, support for Islamist extremist groups came in from around the region. That altered the nature of the revolt against Assad.

Now we're at a point where Assad's victory would be damaging for the United States, and a great strategic victory for Iran, but Assad's defeat could be a major success for the Islamic State. Our options are worse than they appeared to be a few years ago. The U.S. government has maneuvered itself into a corner. Almost nothing that happens there will be good for the Syrian people, or for American interests.



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DISPATCHES

Finland's Balancing Act

Charly Salonijs-Pasternak

HELSINKI—Today, the chorus of voices concerned about the increased instability of the Baltic Sea region can be heard clearly in Finland. According to recent polling, the percentage of Finns concerned about Russia has increased from 42 percent to 75 percent during the past year, largely as a function of Moscow's aggressive foreign policy toward Ukraine. Yet on the whole, Finnish officials—and Finnish society at large—are not as alarmed about Russia's actions as their neighbors.

For a country that is geographically located next to two of Russia's strategically important areas (St. Petersburg and adjacent energy export facilities, and the Koala Peninsula/Murmansk), which shares a 1,300-kilometer border with the revanchist state, and which fought Russia twice during World War II, Finland's official attitude may seem strange. However, it reflects a quiet confidence that the country is today well positioned to withstand potential Russian threats.

Like many other countries, over the past two decades Finland has hoped that Russia would continue on its own path toward some kind of liberal democracy. Even in early 2014, when Russia launched its "hybrid war" against Ukraine, many in the political establishment in Helsinki still hoped that backsliding would turn out to be temporary, or at least that its impacts on Russian foreign policy and its neighbors would be limited. By summer 2014, however, Finnish politicians were forced to acknowledge that Russia's aggressive foreign policy and military behavior had become the new normal.

This new normal, entailing the illegal annexation of Crimea and continuing war in parts of Eastern Ukraine, has also forced Finland to break new ground in its foreign



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policy, especially vis-à-vis Russia. In stark contrast to its neutrality during the Cold War, Finland now finds itself an active player in an unfolding regional power struggle.

To appreciate Finnish views regarding Russia, it is necessary to understand that for most Finns, there is no problem holding two seemingly contradictory thoughts in one's head. First, that Russia is and will remain a neighbor with whom it is worthwhile to trade, deepen cultural, athletic, societal, tourist-travel ties. Second, that Russia is the only potential existential threat to Finland and the Finnish people.

Economically Russia is one of Finland's top three trading partners (along with Sweden and Germany). Interaction in the tourism and service industries is particularly robust, with millions of Russian tourists visiting annually. Moreover, Finland imports all of its natural gas and over 90 percent of its oil and coal from Russia, meaning that around half of the country's energy use is dependent on Russia. Nevertheless, domestic reserves and the availability of foreign suppliers help limit Russia's energy leverage over the Finnish polity.

Militarily, meanwhile, Russia's improved strategic capabilities—and its growing willingness to consider military means as an element of its foreign policy—have jump-started Finnish efforts to fix specific weaknesses in an otherwise historically robust defense. With strong political backing and popular support, the Finnish Defense Forces continue to concentrate on training and equipping a large reservist-based military, recently downsized to a wartime strength of 230,000 soldiers. This “old-fashioned” conscript to reserve model enables Finland to better address the modern Russian approach to warfare; for example, hundreds of top cyber professionals can simply be ordered to report to duty in the event of a crisis. Meanwhile, an air force using American F/A-18 jets with state of the art weapons, including the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM), and a small but very modern navy combine to form a not-insignificant deterrent.

The fundamental reason for the lack of alarmism in Finland, however, is trust in the concept of comprehensive societal security. Finland has continued to invest in security of supply, with the private and public sectors cooperating extensively to ensure that everything from drugs to food to energy continues to be available even during extended crises. More profoundly, Finland's universal literacy, economic equality, freedom of the press, multi-party democracy and trust in the rule of law provide a generally inhospitable environment for anyone seeking to foment violent uprisings or cause fear. This “deep security” ultimately makes Finland quite resilient against—although not immune to—Russian threats.

This general confidence does not mean that Finnish officials or the population at large do not take the increasing aggressiveness and unpredictability of Russia seriously. Finns have first-hand experience of how life changes when revolutions and war envelop Russia. In recent polls, nearly half of the Finns think the military situation in general is more threatening (46 percent in 2014, as compared to 21 percent in 2013), and 63 percent think Russia's recent actions have negatively impacted Finnish security. Perhaps most ominously, the percentage of citizens who think Finland is likely to be threatened militarily during the next decade has increased from 7 percent to 21 percent in one year.

The axiom that “if you want peace, prepare for war” is one that is now taken very seriously, precisely because of Russia’s potential to threaten Finland. As always, the ultimate decision regarding war will not be made in Helsinki. Yet today’s Finns—like their forbears—believe their country is worth defending. But, like previous generations, they hope that that day will never come.



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China's Changing Foreign Policy Priorities

Da Wei and Sun Chenghao

BEIJING—For almost two decades, the question of whether China should focus primarily on its immediate neighborhood or on the world's major powers (particularly the U.S.) has been a hotly debated topic among the country's foreign policy elite. In the 1990s, the answer seemed clear; the China-U.S. relationship was viewed as a "priority among priorities." During the first decade of this century, the two directions became more equal when President Hu Jintao made regional diplomacy a "priority" of his government, while ties with major powers simultaneously became "key." Now, neighborhood diplomacy has gained more prominence still in the strategy of Chinese President Xi Jinping.

One signal of this shift emerged during the Chinese Foreign Ministry's November 2014 Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs. At that event, President Xi stressed that China "should promote neighborhood diplomacy, turn... neighborhood areas into a community of common destiny, continue to follow the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness in conducting neighborhood diplomacy." By contrast, when he elaborated on the issue of how to deal with "major countries," Xi merely said that "we should manage well relations with other major countries, build a sound and stable framework of major-country relations." The emphasis on the former over the latter was clear.

This has proved to be more than mere rhetoric. Over the past several years, Beijing has worked extensively to deepen its economic links with neighboring countries. Thus, China proposed the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" (collectively known as "the Belt and Road Initiative") during President Xi's Fall 2013 visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. More recently, China has proposed the creation of an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to build basic infrastructure in the region. In these efforts, and others, China's goal is the promotion of economic prosperity and greater integration in the region.

This reorientation has a security dimension as well. At the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which took place in Shanghai in May of 2014, President Xi proposed a new security concept for China, and called for the establishment of a new framework for regional security cooperation. In addition, the possible expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to include countries such as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and even Turkey will provide another cooperative mechanism for building the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and conducting regional diplomacy.

Like it or not, the adjustment of China's foreign policy priorities is natural. For most of the world's countries, their immediate neighborhood represents a natural priority.



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This is most certainly the case in Asia, home to the most robust and promising economies in the world, where 1/3 of the world's population lives, and where four countries (Russia, India, Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) currently possess nuclear weapons. The Obama administration has already engaged in a "pivot" of its strategic priorities to Asia-Pacific. Why, then, should we be surprised when China emphasizes the importance of its neighborhood?

China's shift in foreign policy priorities is not necessarily bad news for the United States. After all, China's leadership has been very clear in its view that the U.S. will remain the leading power in the world for the foreseeable future. Beijing believes that America can play a role helping China achieve its "Chinese Dream" of modernization, if the bilateral relationship remains constructive. It can also hinder or even undermine China's rise, should relations deteriorate. For these reasons, the U.S. remains a critical country for China. It is also why China has proposed to build a "new model of major country relationship" with America. As President Xi has outlined, such a relationship would mean no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation in a number of spheres. The goal is to achieve a long-term framework with the United States within which both countries can coexist peacefully via constructive cooperation and healthy competition.

There are other benefits as well. Given the fact that the U.S. is rebalancing its foreign policy resources to Asia-Pacific, China's shift may decrease the risk of strategic collision between the two countries. The "Belt and Road" will go westward and southward from China, toward Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and beyond. This approach means that China and the U.S., which is now focusing on East Asia and the West Pacific, may face fewer divergences and disputes. Indeed, the "Belt and Road Initiative" could actually create opportunities for China and the United States to cooperate economically, since both Washington and Beijing have a shared interest in the stability and development of Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Asia and Central Asia.

Thus, while it may not seem like it at first blush, China's shift of foreign policy priorities away from America and toward its neighborhood may actually be good news for the bilateral relationship in the long run.



Needed: A New Counterterrorism Alliance in North Africa

José María Gil Garre

MADRID—Relations between Spain, France and Morocco are increasingly central to the security and development of the Maghreb. Global terrorism is evolving, and throughout North Africa its various manifestations—most recently in the form of the Islamic State and its various franchises in Libya and the Sahara—have added to the complexity of the regional environment, and to the potential dangers it holds for Europe and the United States.

This evolution requires a more comprehensive, networked and effective response than exists to date. Here, a new security axis encompassing Paris, Madrid and Rabat could serve an important—and beneficial—purpose.

Recall that each of the three countries, by virtue of their geographic position (Spain), role in the Muslim world (Morocco) and involvement in African security (France) has emerged as a notable target for extremist forces. This shared status creates a common interest for reliable intelligence, and military and legal cooperation that could help ameliorate the threat. In turn, such an integrated system of intelligence collection and analysis and strategic coordination could rebound to the security of the larger European community, and of the United States.

To be sure, practical hurdles to this type of coordination remain. Among the most significant is the question of the Western Sahara, the current, uncertain territorial status of which has allowed threats to proliferate. That is an unfortunate state of affairs, given that a workable solution was put forth some time ago by Morocco, in the form of a proposal for “advanced regionalization” and autonomy under Moroccan rule. But, without a firm international consensus on the status of the region, local threats have evolved—and exploited the territory’s uncertain status. Most notable among these is the Polisario Front, a rebel group created, promoted and financed by Algeria, which has used the Western Sahara as a conduit for criminal activities, as well as for its long-running fight against the Moroccan state.

This represents a dangerous state of affairs. As recent experience has clearly shown, situations of this sort—regardless of their nature—present an attractive target and an arena in which jihadist groups can proliferate. The clearest examples of this phenomenon can be seen in the nearby cases of Libya and Mali, but the rule also pertains to the more high-profile conflict now raging in Syria.

Despite this and other problems, however, broader regional cooperation is feasible—and necessary. Effective international military action requires information-sharing, prompt



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intelligence analysis, and a “fusion” of these functions among involved parties. The same is true in the case of counterterrorism. And with regional threats from North Africa increasingly migrating to threaten the Eurozone, the frontline states of Morocco, Spain and France are uniquely positioned to serve as a buffer.

Institutionalizing a more durable counterterrorism partnership among the three requires moving beyond existing bilateral cooperation treaties on security and legal matters into a more consolidated, and effective, framework. Doing so faces many practical challenges (not least the unique bilateral politics between Morocco and its two one-time colonial powers, France and Spain). But this shared history is precisely what makes a tripartite counterterrorism partnership so feasible—and so potentially effective. Put simply, all three know each other well, and—putting other political issues aside—have a shared interest in deeper and more effective coordination against the Islamist threat.

Recent events in Libya, and the growing salience of the Islamic State beyond the Middle East, necessitates this type of thinking. North African security stands at a vital crossroads, and it is clear that, in the face of the metastasizing threat of global terrorism, there is considerable strength in numbers.



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BOOK REVIEWS

Russia's Manufactured Reality

Jason Czerwiec

PETER POMERANTSEV, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 256 pp. \$25.99.

In October of 1939, Winston Churchill gave a speech that contained what, in the latter half of the twentieth century, would become the prevailing description of Russian society. Russia, Churchill said, “is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key.” That key was Russian national interest, and while at the time Churchill was speaking in purely geopolitical terms, his rule has been taken to heart in the years since by scores of Western analysts hoping to peel back the layers of the Russian enigma.

Peter Pomerantsev turns this concept on its head. In *Nothing is True and*

Everything is Possible, he takes us inside a “new” Russia that is both plagued by doubt and sure of its destiny. This anxiety and destiny have come to be encapsulated, through a symbiosis of state and media, in the person of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Pomerantsev’s book speaks to the reader about the post-Soviet psyche. It provides glimpses of the mechanisms of power that the Kremlin exercises through a carefully constructed media monopoly and through a totalizing vertical integration of coercive control. The stories he tells are brief forays into the heart of that machine.

Beyond these raw insights, there is not much in the way of strategic thinking in this book. We never do get a clear handle on what makes Russia tick. Perhaps the author believes this feat is unattainable. But what *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* lacks in strategy



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and prescriptions, it makes up for in its human approach and insider perspective. From these elements, we can begin to piece together a larger picture, one that is as grotesque as it is wildly entertaining.

The book is organized into three thematic parts. *Reality Show Russia* starts the reader off at the beginning of Pomerantsev's career, moves through Siberia, Kaliningrad and back to Moscow as it introduces gangsters, development consultants and the "political technologists" responsible for molding media reality, along the way. *Cracks in the Kremlin Matrix* provides a morbid introduction into the Russian criminal justice system and the practice of "reiding," which has become endemic in post-Soviet Russia. "Reiding" is a form of corporate takeover, whereby the head of a company is arrested and, while imprisoned, relieved of his or her business assets. It is a practice that has been applied across Russian society, from the very top (in the form of ousted Yukos tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky) down to local furniture stores. *Forms of Delirium*, the final chapter, could be the beginnings of another book in and of itself. Here Pomerantsev hones in on the debilitating denial which accompanies working within the "Kremlin matrix." He reflects on his parents' decision to leave Russia and ends up emigrating back to London himself. He ends the book with a glimpse of the Russian system's impact on the financial poles of the world.

Each chapter is formed by the consolidation of biopic vignettes strung together against the backdrop of the author's experience as a reality television producer looking to get to the heart of Russian new post-Cold War society. The evidence is largely anecdotal, encapsulated in stories of gangsters-turned-movie moguls, of the kept mistresses of rich and unaccountable oligarchs, and of gullible Russians seduced by surreal personal improvement cults and extreme ideologies. But it is through this approach

that we can grasp the exigency of what is wrong within Russia. In *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible*, the personal becomes the political.

In his work at London's Legatum Institute, Mr. Pomerantsev focuses more specifically on the role of propaganda in Russia's global strategy, arguing that the regime in Russia uses its assets of energy, corruption and propaganda to asymmetrically confront the West and its perceived values. It is this very state of constant confrontation, he contends, which has come to define Russia. And in order to combat it, the West will have to learn its methods of confrontation—and understand just how far we need to adapt our own institutions to deal with them. That means first grasping what Russia is, and what it is not.

The Russia in *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* is one that possesses all the glitz and glamour of a Western democracy without, any of the substance. By masking chaos in a cloak of materialism, the government of Vladimir Putin is able to obscure objective truth, and both subvert and pervert Western values, even as it professes to espouse them.

As the images churned out of the Russian propaganda machine become more Western in their aesthetic and more anti-Western in their message, it useful to look back at the origins of Putin's propaganda strategy. The setting of this book, the first decade of the 21st century, is a good place to start. As Mr. Pomerantsev describes it, Putin is waging a war with the West that is far subtler than prior strains. By using every tool at his disposal, tools which Pomerantsev shows us in his description of life in post-Soviet Russia, Putin is slowly bringing Russia's national interests into line with those of his inner circle—and molding Russia's future in his own image.



The High Cost of Doing Business in Russia

Samuel Bendett

WILLIAM BROWDER, *Red Notice: A True Story of High Finance, Murder, and One Man's Fight for Justice* (Simon & Schuster, 2015), 416pp. \$28.00.

An ambitious young American businessman seeks to make his fortune on the newly open financial markets of the Russian Federation following the Soviet collapse. He doesn't know much about the country he wants to invest in, but—guided by his tenacious personality and top-notch experience in some of the best financial institutions around the world—he decides to go all in. Along the way, he acquires a talented and dedicated staff of Russian nationals who help guide him through the bureaucratic uncertainties and byzantine rules and processes that helped privatize the majority of Russian economy in the early 1990s.

Bill Browder, who grew up in a family of devout American communists, prides himself of choosing a capitalist path in a country that just shed its communist past. So starts *Red Notice*, which reads as part biography, part political thriller, and part case study of what happens when American optimism and respect for the rule of law meets the Russian version of the “free market.”

Mr. Browder's insistence that the country he knows very little about start acting according to the principles that he best understands, rather than the shady, rough and tumble ways of Russia's new capitalism, predictably ends in a tragedy.

First, he finds himself barred from entering Russia after carrying out successful campaigns publicizing corrupt Russian oligarchs and the crooked way in which they did business. Then, one of his lawyers, a gentle man by the name of Sergei Magnitsky, uncovers massive tax fraud to the tune of \$230 million, for which Browder's company is ultimately blamed. As he decides to take this case public in the Russian and then international press, Russian authorities make Magnitsky the scapegoat, arresting and torturing him before finally becoming complicit in his murder in November 2009.

Red Notice is broadly divided into two parts. The first reads like a step-by-step instruction manual of how an American businessman with no experience in post-Communist Russia can make a fortune, provided he happens to be in the right place at the right time. Browder's tenacity, commitment and work ethic helped him to surmount numerous obstacles (including lack of information, the lack of a Western-style financial system, the lack of financial experts, and so on). His gamble paid off. He bet big, and won—becoming one of the very first major foreign investors in the new Russia.

But, over time, Browder became a crusader. He saw firsthand how Russia's massive, uncontrolled privatization resulted in the enrichment of a small cadre of Russian officials, who became what is commonly known today as oligarchs. He decided to fight back against



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the crooked business that typified the age, and—using the tool of media exposure unfamiliar to most Russians at that time—took these companies to task, making his investors rich in the process. He proceeded despite growing warnings that his meddling could have consequences, not quite believing that he would suffer the consequences. In the end, it was Sergei Magnitsky—and not Bill Browder—that ended up paying the ultimate price.

Of course, Browder cannot be blamed for Magnitsky's death. It was the crooked Russian state that proverbially ate one of its best children. But Browder feels personally responsible for Sergei's ordeal, and the second half of *Red Notice* is devoted to chronicling the campaign to first free Magnitsky and then, following his death, to punish the Russian government. One cannot help but be impressed with Browder's dedication to ensure that Magnitsky doesn't become yet another unfortunate Russian statistic. He utilizes his vast network of American and European investors, influencers, well-wishers and politicians to push through a piece of legislation in the U.S. Congress that comes to be known as the "Magnitsky Act": a measure imposing sanctions on a select number of Russian officials connected to Sergei's death.

That the act was passed is in and of itself a major accomplishment, as Browder acknowledges. What remains to be seen is whether or not it had its desired effect on the crooked Russian politicians that it sought to punish. *Red Notice* is silent on that score, and—while the Magnitsky Act is indeed a significant achievement—the reader is left wondering if this story has truly drawn to a close. Indeed, today, in light of Russia's policy toward Ukraine, the question of whether such measures can truly impact the Russian state's ability to impose its will on those who dare challenge it is as relevant as ever.

Ultimately, *Red Notice* is nothing if not a cautionary tale. Browder engaged in the very type of "cowboy capitalism" that many Russians grew to resent in the 1990s and downright despise today. It was therefore inevitable that his quest for wealth would ruffle some feathers among Russia's powerful—and ruthless—leadership. It is thus required reading for anyone aspiring to become an investment capitalist in societies in transition, or those that operate at the intersection of business, nationalism and politics.

But his book is also much more. It is the story of a crusade against just one incident of egregious injustice, and an effort to bring to heel the larger, unaccountable authoritarian system that made it possible. That is a tale worth telling.



The Indispensable Factor in Intelligence

Malcolm Forbes

STEPHEN GREY, *The New Spymasters: Inside the Modern World of Espionage from the Cold War to Global Terror* (St. Martin's Press, 2015). 384 pp. \$27.99.

At the beginning of Stephen Grey's impressive book, one of the author's many anonymous sources, an "old-time CIA spymaster," tells him that the agency was unable to prevent the 9/11 attacks because they didn't have a spy in place within al-Qaeda's inner circle. "If only," he says, "we'd had a man on the rock beside Osama bin Laden, learning his thoughts, learning his plans."

While Grey's book is, as its title suggests, a chronological history of modern espionage, it is at the same time a rigorous analysis of what Graham Greene called "the human factor"—that "man on the rock" tasked with gathering human intelligence. Grey sets out to explore how twenty-first-century spying differs from that of the twentieth, and whether, in this digital age of far-reaching intercepts and surveillance, there is still a role for the spy on the ground.

Grey, a British journalist and author best known for his shattering revelations of the CIA's extraordinary rendition program in his 2006 book *Ghost Plane*, opens with a section that takes us back to the Cold War and covers the origins of the modern secret service. But the derring-do of swashbuckling, adventure-seeking soldier-spies gives way to the later, murkier realm of cloak-and-dagger

intrigue and manipulations at the hands of less glamorous and less principled agents. A sharply focused chapter on Kim Philby and the rest of the so-called "Cambridge Five" charts the means and scope of their betrayal; a subsequent chapter deals with British intelligence operations in Northern Ireland and their successful infiltration of the IRA.

To counterbalance the somewhat lopsided bias towards matters British, Grey routinely branches off to regale us with KGB and CIA recruitment methods and instances of one-upmanship, and to spin the tale of how officers in the East German foreign intelligence service infiltrated the West German government and helped destroy the career of Chancellor Willy Brandt. But despite the many game-changing coups and elaborate countermoves of the Cold War, Grey explains, for all parties concerned human intelligence became an increasingly frustrating business—"a resource-hungry, time-consuming, and usually fruitless pursuit at constant risk of backfiring."

This became all too apparent after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Grey cites former CIA Director James Woolsey's famous warning of nascent post-Cold War dangers: "We have slain a large dragon, but we now live in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes. And in many ways, the dragon was easier to keep track of." Making sense of this new jungle with its new threats required new spies, and a new



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game plan. One new strategy adopted by both the CIA and Britain's SIS was to fight fire with fire: if the emerging enemies were diffuse, non-state organizations like crime syndicates and terrorist cells then there was no alternative but to recruit members—criminals—from such groups.

Grey uses this rationale to explain how a gangster became a useful informant for the British, and how a Moroccan spy who underwent training in Afghanistan aided the French. Along the way, he points out one of the dangers of attempting to get into the enemy's mind: "If you draw close to that dividing line between friend and foe and begin to think like your opponent, you risk slipping over."

For the book's penultimate section, Grey draws on his reporting on the war in Afghanistan in 2008 to catalog the various fruitful attempts made by spies to penetrate and combat al-Qaeda. Here, he saves the best for last: describing the myths and facts behind the hunt for Osama bin Laden—what the commander of that operation, Admiral William McRaven, described as "one of the great intelligence operations in the history of intelligence organizations."

As in-depth a survey as *The New Spymasters* is, it is by no means comprehensive. But Grey acknowledges this at the outset, admitting that the work is based solely on his dealings with security services in the western hemisphere and across the Middle East and South Asia. More jarring is Grey's lack of faith in his reader, which leads him to unnecessary and pedantic explanations of the concepts and principles of spycraft.

Yet these are minor flaws in what is on the whole an informative and engaging tour through a century of spying. Grey's many short case-studies, such as that of the Pakistani suicide bomber who developed second thoughts, unfold like the tense, scene-setting opening chapter of a thriller. The nuts and bolts of espio-

nage are interspersed with accounts of triumphs and failures, a close scrutiny of thorny issues (the "standard dilemma" for an agent inside a terror group: how far to go?) and a fascinating look at the many different reasons why men and women sign up for an erratic life of secrecy, treachery and high stakes. In his final, illuminating section, Grey gives a detailed prognosis and evaluation of what form spying will take in this twenty-first-century world of globalized threats and border-transcending interests.

Throughout, *The New Spymasters* stays true to its remit, prioritizing and analyzing the human factor involved in intelligence gathering. Ultimately, Grey argues, for all the advances of and reliance upon technology, the man on the rock is as relevant as ever. Human intelligence is not the dying art it has been reckoned by some to be. For as long as the age-old motivations that fuel them endure, there will continue to be both a need and a role for the secret agent.



America's Path to Power

Todd Johnson

DEREK S. REVERON, NIKOLAS K. GVOSDEV AND MACKUBIN T. OWENS, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy: The Evolution of an Incidental Superpower* (Georgetown University Press), 262 pp. \$29.95.

In today's world, it is sometimes difficult to imagine a time when America hasn't had a preeminent place on the world stage. Since 1945, the United States has grown from a regional power into a hegemonic, global superpower that currently boasts the largest economy in the world and arguably possesses one of the most capable militaries the world has ever seen. But this transformation didn't happen overnight, and it didn't occur without mistakes being made along the way.

Along these lines, some in the international affairs community believe that the rise of the United States has been the result of a nation responding to radical changes in the international system that occurred in the wake of World War II. It is this thesis, of the U.S. as an "incidental superpower," that forms the central argument of *U.S. Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy*.

Published by Georgetown Press and written by a trio of prominent national security affairs experts (Derek Reveron, Nikolas Gvosdev and Mackubin Owens), the book "explains how the United States became a superpower, examines the formation of the national security establishment, and explores the inter-relationship

between foreign policy, defense strategy, and commercial interests." Designed to serve as a supplemental textbook for international affairs students, this readable, accessible tome makes a cogent argument that the emergence of the United States as a superpower following World War II wasn't necessarily planned or anticipated.

The term "superpower" first emerged in the early 1940s, when it was coined by geo-strategist Nicholas Spykman. From that time on, it has been used to describe nations that have both global reach and global commitments. To be sure, many books have been written since then about America as a superpower, and its resulting predominant role in global events (and the responsibilities and authorities that accompany it). But *U.S. Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy* differs from most writings on the subject, because its authors illustrate how the creation of a stable national security establishment, enduring national interests and a vast network of international powers have led the United States to occupy the position of prominence that it enjoys today.

The chapters follow a systematic approach, with the authors covering the "American Way" of organizing for defense, of conducting civil-military relations, of warfare, of peace and of finance. One of the more interesting chapters is the one on civil-military relations in the United States and how they have changed over time. As a serving military officer,



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the book's analysis of the topic struck me as being both insightful and balanced. It is doubly significant because it tackles some of the most pressing contemporary policy issues relating to the subject. To wit, with the advent of combatant commanders and the vast resources attached to their commands, some have come to believe that U.S. foreign policy has been quietly militarized. The authors address this issue by acknowledging that the traditional paradigm of civil-military relations "is in flux" and may need to be renegotiated by those in power.

If there is one criticism of the book, it is that it doesn't devote enough space in its conclusion to the topic of cyber security and the threat of cyberterrorism. These issues have grown exponentially in the last decade, and—whether in the guise of an individual (Eric Snowden), a group (world-wide hacking network

Anonymous) or a nation-state (China)—now have far-reaching effects on foreign and defense policy. By not fully exploring the issue, the authors missed an opportunity to demonstrate the very real linkage that has emerged between the cyber domain and U.S. commercial interests.

This deficiency aside, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy* is even-handed in its analysis and rigorous in its methodology. It also provides an important glimpse into how America attained its current place in the world, and just what it will entail if we hope to keep it. That makes it a valuable resource for students of international affairs and American history, as well as for those who are involved in the shaping of U.S. security policy today, both today and tomorrow.



LEARNING TO SPEAK NETWORK STATUS QUO

yesterdaze (n.)

an outmoded and costly mindset associated with a status quo IP network

obsessive compulsive reorder (n.)

the need to buy expensive IP networking gear again and again

ignormous (adj.)

the amount of money unknowingly lost due to a status quo IP network

The first thing you should master when learning to speak network status quo is how to say goodbye to your status quo IP network. The second thing you should do is say hello to the agility and efficiency of Brocade.

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