

The Journal of
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Security Affairs**

No. 27, Fall/Winter 2014

Allies, Adversaries... and in Between

Featuring articles by
Claudia Rosett and
Bill Gertz



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The Journal of
**International
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Editor's Note

From the Middle East to Asia, and from Europe to Africa, U.S. foreign policy is in profound flux as new threats test America's strategic priorities and partnerships. A reevaluation of our alliances, alignments and challenges therefore seems very much in order, and that is the focus of this issue of *The Journal*.

To assist in our analysis, we've enlisted a top-notch roster of authors and specialists. We kick off our coverage with two of today's leading experts on Russia, Janusz Bugajski of the Center for European Policy Analysis and the *Financial Times*' Charles Clover, who examine—respectively—the dynamics of Russia's current, aggressive foreign policy course and its ideological underpinnings. From there, we shift our focus to Asia, where the *Washington Free Beacon*'s Bill Gertz argues a rising China continues to challenge the United States politically, militarily and intellectually.

Next up, we address two of America's contemporary “frenemies”: Turkey and Qatar. Svante Cornell of Johns Hopkins University's Central Asia–Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program outlines just why the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara has become an increasingly unreliable partner for the West in recent years. Then, Daveed Gartenstein-Ross of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and Luke Lischin of the National War College take a probing look at Doha's growing links to Islamist actors, and what it means for America.

After that, we examine the most prominent rogue state threats facing the United States. Claudia Rosett of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies details precisely why North Korea remains a serious strategic problem for Washington—an argument made all the more pointed in recent weeks by the DPRK's hacking of Sony. Iran is also on the agenda, and the American Enterprise Institute's J. Matthew McInnis does an excellent job outlining the prerequisites for a “good” diplomatic deal with the Islamic Republic, and why we should be skeptical that the West can actually reach it.

We then review of a pair of America's most significant alliances: one longstanding, and one emerging. Israeli expert Gerald Steinberg takes a look at the current, frayed state of political ties between Washington and Jerusalem—and argues that the realities of the “special relationship” between Israel and the United States mean that the alliance will endure despite the current chill. Jeff Smith of the American Foreign Policy Council provides a comprehensive examination of the rise of what might just be America's most promising future strategic partner: India's BJP and its new leader, Narendra Modi. Finally, Katharine Gorka of the Council on Global Security takes a look at the unfolding ideological contest between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State—and outlines the true contours of the struggle, as far as the West is concerned.

Our “Perspective” feature is on hiatus this issue, but will return with our next edition. In the meantime, we have collected a trio of excellent “Dispatches” from Ukraine, Italy and Guatemala. And, as always, we conclude with reviews of three important new books covering Israel's political legitimacy, an unorthodox alternative to the “two-state solution,” and the political problems presented by Pakistan's military.

In all, we are pleased to present another issue chock full of fresh insights about the changing international system, and America's place in it. We hope you find it both interesting and illuminating.



Ilan Berman
Editor

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RUSSIA'S TRANSFORMATION

Janusz Bugajski

President Barack Obama's "reset" policy toward Russia has not only failed to create a strategic partnership with Moscow, it has also contributed to creating greater instability in Europe's east. Instead of rebuilding trust, forging new avenues of cooperation, and helping to transform Russia into a responsible and constructive partner, the long-term impact of the "reset" has been to further undermine bilateral relations. It encouraged Moscow to pursue its neo-imperial agenda in the post-Soviet neighborhood with the conviction that neither America nor Europe would oppose its strategic ambitions.

Western strategic errors

In the pursuit of its neo-imperial restoration, Russia has been encouraged by several international developments. First, as a by-product of the "reset," Washington reversed the Bush administration's policy of incorporating qualified European democracies into NATO and curtailed its campaign to secure the post-Soviet neighborhood within Western structures. This left neighboring states more vulnerable to Moscow's pressures and integrationist maneuvers, while Europe remained unwilling to take the lead in enlarging the Alliance. Under the Obama administration, Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia were no longer priority interests, but were often viewed as potential spoilers at a time when Washington sought to build cooperative relations with the Kremlin.

The net impact of the Obama approach was to convince Moscow that the U.S. was withdrawing from international commitments after the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and had neither the resources, political will, nor the public support to challenge Russia's reimperialization. In particular, a downgrading of strategic attention to Eastern



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Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia signaled to the Kremlin that it had a freer hand in redesigning these neighborhoods under Russian tutelage.

Second, the financial crunch and political stresses within the European Union in recent years have diminished Brussels' political and economic outreach toward the post-Soviet countries. This decreased the momentum of the Eastern Partnership initiative launched in May 2009 (designed to harmonize the post-Soviet states with EU standards). Moscow concluded that the EU was in disarray and decline and would be preoccupied with its internal convulsions for several years, if it did not fracture outright. In addition, there was visible disillusionment with both NATO and the EU in several post-Soviet capitals. They did not obtain the road map or commitment to full integration, unlike the vision and promise that was given to Central European and Western Balkan countries during the 1990s and 2000s. This encouraged corruption, state capture, and susceptibility to Kremlin manipulation.

And third, an assertive foreign policy under Vladimir Putin's renewed presidency contributed to distracting public attention within the Russian Federation from stagnant economic conditions by engineering a triumphalist foreign policy that promised to restore Russia's power and challenge America's global predominance. Putin's return has been presented as vital to Russia's national security in two ways. First, it would allegedly protect Russia from internal turmoil generated by public protests organized by a "fifth column" funded by Washington. Second, it held out the promise of rebuilding Russia as a Great Power and dispelling the purported humiliation of defeat and disintegration that had been experienced by Russians at the end of the Cold War.

Moscow's strategic objectives

The principal aim of Putin's foreign policy is to restore Russia as a major "pole of power" in a multipolar world, and to reverse the predominance of the U.S. within the broader Eurasian region. In pursuit of a dominant neo-imperial position in its former zone of control, Moscow is intent on constructing a Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), with economic and political components directed by Moscow. To achieve these goals, the Kremlin is prepared to redraw international borders and to challenge governmental legitimacy and territorial integrity in targeted countries along Russia's borders.

The net impact of the Obama approach was to convince Moscow that the U.S. was withdrawing from international commitments after the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and had neither the resources, political will, nor the public support to challenge Russia's reimperialization.

Instead of controlling the political and economic systems of its new satellites, as it did during the Soviet era, the Kremlin today primarily seeks to influence their foreign and security policies, so they will either remain neutral and passive players or actively support Russia's agenda. Despite its bellicose claims, Moscow's security is not threatened by the accession to NATO of nearby states. However, NATO nonetheless presents a threat to the Russian Federation because its security umbrella undermines Moscow's capabilities to dominate its post-Soviet neighbors.

While its plans are imperial, the Kremlin's ideologies and strategies are eclectic and pragmatic. Putinism as a

set of precepts consists of a blend of Russian statism, great-power chauvinism, Russian nationalism (with increasing ethnic ingredients), social conservatism, anti-liberalism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Westernism. In terms of strategies, the Kremlin employs flexible methods, including enticements, threats, and pressures, and is opportunistic and adaptable, preying on weakness and division among its Western adversaries. But Moscow also miscalculates on occasion, and its aggressiveness can propel some states toward a closer relationship with NATO or the EU as protection against the unacceptable pressures being exerted by Russian officials.

Although Putin's objective to create a strong Eurasia Union as a counterweight to the U.S. and the EU is unlikely to be fully successful, especially given Russia's escalating economic problems and the resistance of several neighboring capitals, attempts to create such a bloc can have a destabilizing effect on a broad region in Europe's East. As the largest target of the Kremlin, Ukraine serves as a pertinent example of the impact of Moscow's imperial aspirations. The open collision between Russia and Ukraine has challenged the post-Cold War *status quo* in Europe and unsettled regional security throughout the post-communist region.

A new strategic computation

Instead of contemplating some new "reset" with Moscow, Washington needs to reevaluate its understanding of Putin's strategic goals. Acknowledging Russia's revived imperial impulse gives NATO a reinvigorated mandate to fully protect the integrity of its newest members, including their eastern borders, and provide adequate deterrents against instability emanating from nearby states.

So far, however, the White House has confined itself largely to rhetoric.

In his June 4, 2014, address in Warsaw, President Barack Obama declared that the U.S. maintains an "unwavering commitment" to the security of its NATO allies and that the Central-East European (CEE) members "will never stand alone."¹ According to the president, these are "unbreakable commitments backed by the strongest alliance in the world and by the armed forces of the United States of America." Such stirring speeches are intended to provide a rationale for policy. They should not, however, become a substitute for strategy. Obama immediately came under criticism for promising more than Washington or most of its European allies were willing to deliver.

The White House seems unable to mobilize Western Europeans in substantially strengthening NATO capabilities or in pursuing an effective sanctions regime against Moscow for its attack on Ukraine. Thus far, most of America's European allies have proved weak, divided, and dependent on U.S. leadership. Such a posture serves as a potential invitation to Russia for future offensives. Even the CEE Visegrad Group has proved to be disunited, with Poland adopting a more assertive posture toward Moscow, while Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic remain more hesitant in imposing sanctions.

General Philip Breedlove, the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, described Moscow's conquest of Crimea as a "paradigm shift" that required a fundamental rethinking of where American forces are located and how they are trained. Thus far, Alliance commitments have proved limited. NATO added combat aircraft support to NATO's Baltic air policing mission, dispatched a dozen F-16 fighters to Poland, and sent AWAC reconnaissance aircraft to Poland and Romania. The U.S. deployed four airborne companies to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, an important symbolic step because—even though

they lack heavy weapons—their presence indicates a more concrete commitment to defending CEE allies.

Several West European states also made commitments to dispatching troops to the “frontline states.” The rotation of American and European units for air policing and other duties and upgrading CEE air defense capabilities must also be supplemented with periodic NATO training exercises that enhance local capabilities. For the frontline states bordering Russia, it is vital to have a year-round presence of U.S. and West European forces that will act as a potential tripwire to deter any prospect of a direct Russian assault.

General Breedlove has urged the U.S. Congress to reconsider previously planned reductions in the number of American troops in Europe. NATO defense ministers also agreed to develop a “Readiness Action Plan” to enable the pre-positioning of supplies and equipment in member states and improve military capabilities to help NATO speed up its reaction time to any direct military threat. Russia’s attack on Ukraine reinforced CEE plans to switch from an out-of-area orientation, in line with U.S. and NATO overseas missions, toward constructing more credible territorial defense forces. Each state must ensure that it has adequate capabilities to engage in conventional and unconventional warfare against foreign aggression. This will require such assets as ground-based missile defense systems and anti-tank weaponry, as well as the development of anti-subversion units, which Russia’s proxy war in eastern Ukraine has highlighted as a necessity.

Additional steps will be required if NATO is to deter aggression, and this must include the positioning of Alliance infrastructure along its eastern flank. Military bases may need to be moved from Western to Central Europe. NATO has military installations in Britain,

Spain, Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, Portugal, and Turkey, but little infrastructure in CEE.

The principal aim of Putin’s foreign policy is to restore Russia as a major “pole of power” in a multipolar world, and to reverse the predominance of the U.S. within the broader Eurasian region.

During his June 2014 visit to Warsaw, President Obama announced a \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative to increase the U.S. military presence in CEE.² Subsequently, at the NATO Summit on September 4-5, 2014, Alliance leaders did not endorse the positioning of permanent bases in CEE despite the urging of Warsaw and the three Baltic governments. However, they agreed to create a spearhead contingent within the existing NATO Response Force (NRF), called a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). This force, to include 4,000 troops trained to move on 48 hours’ notice, would be capable of deploying at short notice along NATO’s periphery and consist of land, air, maritime, and Special Operations Forces components. It will benefit from equipment and logistics facilities pre-positioned in CEE countries, but the troops will not be permanently stationed in the region.³ However, at this early stage in its planned deployment, it is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of a relatively small VJTF contingent in deterring either the subversion or outright invasion of a NATO member.

NATO also needs commitments by members to increase defense spending to 2 percent of GDP. Today, only four countries in the Alliance meet this mandated requirement. While Russia has raised its defense spending by 50 percent over the last five years, the Allies have cut theirs by a fifth. Since the start of the

Russia-Ukraine war, governments across the CEE region have pledged to boost their defense spending, but few Western European capitals are following suit. As former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates famously stated, the fundamental obstacle to long-term security is the prospect of “collective military irrelevance,” where political leaders and large sectors of the public remain averse to adequate defense spending and the deployment of military force.⁴

Acknowledging Russia's revived imperial impulse gives NATO a reinvigorated mandate to fully protect the integrity of its newest members, including their eastern borders, and provide adequate deterrents against instability emanating from nearby states.

The most effective way to counter Russia's aggressive and self-confident posture is to demonstrate NATO's relevance and vitality in defending current members. Membership invitations should also be issued for Montenegro and Macedonia, as both countries have met the requirements for entry and are eager to accede to the Alliance. Meanwhile, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Georgia need to obtain NATO Membership Action Plans (MAPs) to confirm that they will also join the Alliance at some future date. In addition, NATO needs to pursue closer military cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, and other countries bordering Russia that seek closer links with the West. Such steps will demonstrate to Russia that it cannot veto NATO decisions, and that collective security is the sovereign choice of each state.

Finally, to provide an additional buffer against Russia's onslaughts, all NATO partners (under the Partnership for Peace [PfP] initiative) facing potential

subversion need assistance in creating viable territorial defense forces, beginning with Ukraine. The most effective deterrent to potential Russian attack is adequate military preparedness and a political commitment to resistance. There is an urgent need for reorganizing and equipping all branches of the Ukrainian military, as Russia's subversion of eastern Ukraine shows little sign of abating. Unfortunately, the Allies have been reluctant to provide lethal weapons to Kyiv, contending that this will escalate the conflict with Russia. In reality, without adequate defensive weaponry that would be costly to any invasion force, the Ukrainian government will be unable to prevent Moscow from creating a “frozen conflict” in the Donbas region to paralyze Ukraine's reforms and its Western aspirations.

Confronting the adversary

Regardless of the frequent comparisons, the world has not entered another Cold War. The Cold War was a status quo that divided Europe for nearly fifty years, while the Eastern and Western blocs avoided direct military confrontation. The new epoch can be better defined as a Shadow War, in which Moscow no longer recognizes the independence or territorial integrity of neighboring states and the West and Russia compete for political and economic influence throughout the Wider Europe using a wide assortment of economic, political, informational, and military tools.⁵ Although Western leaders contend that there should be no zero-sum games, Russia's officials believe they are engaged in an existential struggle with only one possible winner.

Western leaders continue to debate on how to deal with a neo-imperial Kremlin that subverts the independence of its neighbors and is determined to curtail Western influence throughout Europe's east. While some have urged

targeted economic sanctions, others are willing to acquiesce to Russia's seizure of Crimea and attempts to partition mainland Ukraine, calculating that appeasement can satisfy the Kremlin's appetite. Unfortunately, neither strategy will resolve the problem of Vladimir Putin's neo-imperial Russia.⁶

Policies of reconciliation bring only temporary pauses in the expanding geo-strategic struggle. The West confronts two stark choices: either help facilitate the collapse of Putinism or face years of insecurity that will undermine both NATO and the EU and subvert the stability of Russia's numerous neighbors. Trying to alter Moscow's destructive international goals through negotiations is a forlorn hope. The Kremlin is determined to dominate its post-Soviet neighbors and Putin has staked his presidency on rebuilding an extensive "Russian world." Western powers therefore have a direct security interest to minimize future regional conflicts by constricting Moscow's ambitions and encouraging Russian society to replace the destructive Putinist system.

Taking a stand

In this new adversarial relationship, the West needs to focus on two messages. First, that the Russia-Ukraine war is part of a broader strategy of Kremlin subversion and expansion that needs to be thwarted. Second, that the pursuit of such an aggressive Kremlin policy will seriously backfire on Russia itself. In this stark reality, Russia's citizens also confront a clear choice: either tolerate the Putinist system and face growing national isolation, external conflict, and domestic repression, or replace the Kremlin cabal and rebuild Russia into a constructive international player.

There are three indicators of Russia's creeping state failure and they will be magnified in the coming years: economic decline, escalating repression, and reckless imperialism. Russia's economy

was deteriorating even before the limited Western sanctions were applied. GDP is contracting, industrial production is declining, capital outflow has reached alarming proportions, consumer demand is shrinking, and the country will soon enter a prolonged recession. The sanctions imposed by the EU in the oil, defense, technology, and banking sectors have restricted Russia's access to European capital markets and will further undermine economic performance.

The most effective way to counter Russia's aggressive and self-confident posture is to demonstrate NATO's relevance and vitality in defending current members.

For Russia's ruling clique, economic decline will necessitate political repression, because nationalist triumphalism over the seizure of Crimea, the alleged protection of ethnic Russians abroad, and opposition to the West can only distract temporarily. Although the Kremlin has imposed a legion of restrictions on human rights in recent years, Putin does not have the means to eradicate all domestic dissent. A palace coup against Putin cannot be discounted if a group of oligarchs and military chiefs conclude that their leader is pushing the country toward disaster.

The coming crisis of the hyper-centralized Putinist system should be welcomed by U.S. and EU leaders, rather than viewed as a destabilizing prospect. If Putin is indeed replaced by a more rabid nationalist, as some policymakers fear, then Russia will simply experience further decline and international ostracism that will rebound on its citizens. Moscow will not start a frontal war with the West because its military is simply no match for an American-led NATO and it can only operate against weaker and vulnerable neighbors.

The demise of Putinism as a system of internal rule and international imperialism can be hastened by a coordinated Western approach. Russia is vulnerable to sustained and extensive economic pressure but Europe will also need to bear the costs of economic disentanglement. Moscow's access to the European financial system can be fully blocked, investment in Russian industries curtailed, and anti-trust penalties on monopoly violations by Gazprom and other Russian state corporations strictly imposed. Ultimately, Russia's statist companies should be pushed out of Europe's energy market to deplete Kremlin export earnings and reduce its political influences. In turn, falling government revenues, a downturn in living standards, shortages of consumer goods, difficulties in traveling abroad, and rising unemployment can help fuel revolt against a regime that will become increasingly isolated and seen to be stumbling economically.

To thwart Russia's expansionism, external pressure must be combined with steps that undermine Putinism from within. Kremlin controls can be weakened by supporting genuine federalism, decentralization, minority rights, regional self-determination, and embryonic national independence movements throughout the Russian Federation. All such initiatives are consistent with broader campaigns for democracy and human rights in which both the U.S. and EU have long experience in CEE and elsewhere.

The West can itself conduct a "shadow war" against Putinism, just as it did against Soviet Communism throughout Eastern Europe, by aiding democratic initiatives and supporting sovereignty movements among numerous nationalities. More than a fifth of Russia's population is non-Russian, and many of these nations have been deprived of their elementary right to promote their indigenous languages, cultures, and identities. Russian federalism is simply a

cover for rigid authoritarianism in which the Kremlin appoints or approves local leaders in Russia's 85 federal units. An international campaign for genuine federalism inside Russia will be supported by many of Russia's regions, where a growing number of people increasingly resent Moscow's political controls and economic neglect.

If Putinism is not replaced with a non-imperial and democratic alternative, Russia will face a shrinking economy that will limit its military capabilities, restrict economic development, fuel social unrest, and compound ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts, culminating in potential territorial fracture. Without the prospect of a non-expansionist and quasi-democratic Russia, Putinism can also pull the West into further Ukrainian-type conflagrations, and a new, even more adversarial relationship than the one that prevails currently.



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2. White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners," June 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support/>.
3. "NATO Response Force, at the Centre of NATO Transformation," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, October 2, 2014, www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm.
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5. See Janusz Bugajski, "The Shadow War," Center for European Policy Analysis, May 9, 2014, <http://cepa.org/content/shadow-war>.
6. See Janusz Bugajski, "Russia's Choice: Putinism or Progress," *The American Interest*, September 1, 2014, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2014/09/01/russias-choice-putinism-or-progress/>.

IN MOSCOW, A NEW EURASIANISM

Charles Clover

Being a Kremlin mandarin has its perks. In addition to a walnut finished office in Moscow's Old Square which might have belonged to Brezhnev, or a bay windowed view of the Spassky Gate; in addition to being able to plow through rush hour traffic with a blue flashing *migalka* on top of your black chauffeured Audi; in addition to the palatial dacha, the bank of retro-looking *vertushki* phones within easy reach of your Chanel-clad secretary, there is also the fact that, whenever you get a bee in your bonnet about something, you can reserve an entire page in a Moscow newspaper for an absolutely scintillating 3,000-word Q&A about whatever you want to talk about, and they will print every last word.

Nikolai Patrushev, chairman of Russia's security council, had a lot on his mind sometime in the first week of May 2009 when he arranged for Elena Ovcharenko, the chief editor of *Izvestia*, a state-owned newspaper, to come over and record for posterity his thoughts on the subject of threats to Russian statehood. Ms. Ovcharenko was a veteran of such engagements; this was the fifth interview with Patrushev she had done for the paper. But by the middle of the tête-a-tête, things got a little weird.

"The history of the formation, development, unification and the collapse of European and Asian countries," Patrushev said, in response to a question about conflicts over natural resources, "suggests that the political climate here is mainly determined by the interests of the world's leading nations and peoples living in these territories." Nothing too controversial so far. But then he took a detour.

"This idea was briefly stated and substantiated by one of the leading political scientists of the twentieth century, Halford Mackinder, who wrote: 'Who controls east-



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ern Europe, rules the Heartland. Who controls the Heartland, he commands the 'World Island.' Who rules the 'World Island,' he rules the world," said Patrushev, according to a transcript of the conversation printed in *Izvestia*.

It was an odd thing for a director of national security to say. Patrushev was quoting some obscure academic named Mackinder saying something about world domination.

Ms. Ovcharenko, perhaps sensing that going further down the rabbit hole was discouraged, or perhaps having grown so inured to the wild conspiratorial musings of the new generation of Russian statesmen that she didn't even register the answer as newsworthy, quickly changed the subject to economic security, and the quote was buried in the article the next day.

But the piece caused a stir in certain circles, not because of the mention of world domination by one of the most powerful men in Russia, but because of the way that the obscure British geographer Halford Mackinder had found his way onto his desk. Patrushev's message was classic "dog whistle" politics, communicating a message to supporters which only they could hear. "Mackinder" and "heartland" were two code words which meant very little to the uninitiated. But to those who were familiar with conservative theories of nationalism which have made dramatic inroads into Russian politics since the end of the Cold war, it meant a great deal. For them, Mackinder is like a barium meal, a visible sign of the progress of these ideas through Russia's post-communist society, which Patrushev clearly wanted certain audiences to see.

Patrushev's words signaled to close observers of Russian politics that a new ideology had taken hold in the Kremlin among top decision makers: ideas which ten years before had been dismissed as completely barking mad were now

mainstream. Talk of controlling Eastern Europe would echo once again during the 2014 invasion of Crimea, when the former Soviet Union became a new battleground between the West and a revived, increasingly assertive and imperial-minded Russia. Patrushev's comments prefigured these events by five years, but showed to anyone who was paying attention that the ground was already being laid for conquest—for a new definition of Russia's national interest, based on geography, and on having as much of it as possible.

Back to empire

The Putin era has seen the emergence of this fringe strain of imperial nationalism as a shadow ideology in Russian politics. A shadow ideology is one that is not aimed at mass mobilization behind public slogans, as was the case in the Soviet period, but at consolidating an elite behind a set of understood if unspoken truths, deniably vague statements and opaque policies. It is not the subject of booming speeches, but one of whispered codes.

Prior to the collapse of communism, these ideas were only to be found in underground and exile movements which preserved Russian nationalism *in situ* during the years of Soviet Union, when "bourgeois nationalism" was anathema to the official ideology of scientific Marxism. But its rapid growth in intellectual and political circles after 1991 indicated that interest in the formerly obscure movement was driven by more than casual interest of readers. Indeed, it appears that it had some high-level help from the Russian army and its special services, who saw it as the least objectionable of a number of ideologies—among them liberal democracy and ethnic nationalism—competing for primacy in the aftermath of communism.

In this way, conservative theories of nationalism and empire seem to

have emerged with some form of official sanction. Writers who play to this audience have larger print runs, and their books are prominently displayed. Today, anyone can walk into Moscow bookstores such as Dom Knigi or Biblio Globus and find the section on “Geopolitics.” In the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of parliament, there is a geopolitics subcommittee. At Moscow State University, there is a chair of the geopolitics department. And while Russian government is constitutionally prohibited from espousing an official ideology, these ideas have been singled out for praise with dog whistle pronouncements similar to those of Patrushev.

And the man who had without a doubt put Mackinder on Patrushev’s tongue was an obscure right-wing pamphleteer and ideologist named Alexander Dugin, himself a former dissident, whose works have come into vogue following the arrival of Vladimir Putin in power in 2000. Among Dugin’s prolific output was a book dedicated to “Geopolitics” in which Mackinder was given a starring role—largely on the basis of a lecture the Englishman gave in 1904 to the Royal Geographical society on the coming struggle against Russia for mastery of the Eurasian landmass, which he dubbed the “heartland.”

The basic gist of geopolitics is oddly compelling. Stretching back to the Peloponnesian wars, geopoliticians argued, a majority of armed conflicts have always featured a country with a stronger navy against one with a stronger army. Sea power and land power, in other words, are fated to clash. The Cold War became the epitome of Mackinder’s teachings. The U.S., guarded on two sides by vast oceans, has inherited the UK’s mantle of global sea power, while Russia, whose vast steppes and harsh winters defeated Napoleon and Hitler, is all but impregnable behind a land fortress. Geography dictated that Russia would forever seek

to break out of continental isolation, seize warm water ports and build a world-beating navy, while the UK (and its successor, the U.S.) would seek to encroach landwards into Eastern Europe and inner Asia in an effort to contain Russia.

But Mackinder’s writings had fallen into obscurity. Arguably, he was ahead of his time; his 1904 lecture was devoted to the idea that Russia, and not Germany, was Britain’s greatest strategic opponent, and the timing of this prediction, on the eve of two world wars against Germany, could not have seemed more wrong. It wasn’t until a year before his death in 1947 that he was ultimately rehabilitated by the arrival of the Cold War. And now, thanks to Dugin, the theory seems to have pervaded Kremlin thinking.

“Eurasia” became the germ of a new ideology of power for the Kremlin under Putin, who has coopted the term, along with “geopolitics” and other buzzwords which captured the imaginations of the elite who came to power with him.

Geopolitics is not strictly speaking an ideology itself. It is, instead, a great leveler of ideologies, a rebuff to any claim to historical privilege or exceptionalism. Geopolitics teaches that states must be judged based on their behavior, not their principles, because principles are not part of the ontology of statecraft. Any claim to ideals is at best a self-delusion, at worst a calculated effort to camouflage real goals.

Ideology, according to geopoliticians, was simply window dressing on a more fundamental, and more permanent, conflict of geography. The Cold War pitted the world’s greatest maritime power against the world’s most inaccessible region by sea, whose vast landscape has defeated conqueror after conqueror.

This geographic opposition had predetermined the strategic and ideological confrontation of the Cold War, and most importantly, the geography wasn't about to change. While many predicted that the end of ideological confrontation would usher in an era of peace, Dugin and other hardliners saw the conflict with the West as a permanent condition.

Eurasia dreaming

Mr. Patrushev's assessment of Halford Mackinder as "one of the leading political scientists of the 20th century" was, as we can see, extremely generous to the man. However, in Russia, he has assumed the proportions described by Patrushev, thanks to Dugin. The Englishman was among a gallery of other thinkers profiled in his 1997 blockbuster book *The Foundations of Geopolitics*, including thinkers associated with the far right wing, most of whom you have never heard of, some quite mad ones and not a few Nazis.

In Dugin's capable hands, Mackinder was transformed from an obscure Edwardian curiosity who never got tenure at Oxford into a sort of Cardinal Richelieu of Whitehall, whose whispered counsels to the great men of state were the sure hand on the tiller of British strategic thinking for half a century, and whose ideas continue to be the strategic imperatives for a new generation of secret mandarins. Other "Atlantic" geopoliticians such as Nicholas Spykman and Alfred Thayer Mahan got similar treatment.

Then there were the opposing geopoliticians profiled by Dugin, mostly German, who argued from the same logic but in defense of continental land power. These included Friedrich Ratzel, a late nineteenth-century German geographer who coined the term *lebensraum*, or "living space," which later was coopted as an imperative by the Third Reich. The second generation of geopolitical writings

earned the theory a lingering association with Nazism. Mackinder's contemporary Karl Haushoffer was a German army general and strategic theorist who was a strong proponent of a three-way alliance between Berlin, Moscow, and Tokyo.

Dugin's main argument in *Foundations* was drawn straight from Haushoffer's pages: the need to thwart the conspiracy of "Atlanticism" led by the U.S. and NATO, which is aimed at containing Russia within successive geographic rings of newly independent states. The plan was simple: first put the Soviet Union back together, counseled Dugin, and then use clever alliance diplomacy focused on partnerships with Japan, Iran and Germany to eject the United States and its Atlanticist minions from the continent.

It didn't seem to matter that circa 1997 this idea seemed completely insane; Russia's GDP was smaller than that of the Netherlands, while the once formidable Red Army had just been defeated on the battlefield and forced into a humiliating peace by a ragtag group of Chechen insurgents. It was a period of Russian history when analogies to Weimar Germany were plentiful, and Dugin's book was evidence that the same dark forces radicalized by Germany's interwar collapse were on the ascent in Russia. It preached that the country's humiliation was the result of foreign conspiracies, its cover was emblazoned with a swastika-like runic symbol known in occult circles as the "star of chaos" and it favorably profiled several Nazis. If the parallels with the Third Reich weren't already plentiful enough, it called for the formation of a geopolitical "axis" which would include Germany and Japan.

Dugin's message found a wide audience. *Foundations* sold out in four editions, and continues to be assigned as a textbook to the general staff academy and other military universities in Russia. "There has probably not been

another book published in Russia during the post-communist period which has exerted a comparable influence on Russian military, police, and statist foreign policy elites,” writes historian John Dunlop, a specialist on the Russian right at the Hoover Institution.¹

One passage from *Foundations* in particular deserves attention, in light of recent events since the 2008 war in Georgia and the campaign in Crimea and eastern Ukraine:

“One absolute imperative of Russian geopolitics is the total and unfettered control of Moscow over the entire length of the Black Sea coast stretching from Ukrainian to Abkhazian territory. One can arbitrarily split up the whole zone on the basis of ethno-cultural, ethnic and confessional basis providing autonomy to Crimea, Ruthenia, Tatars, Cossacks, Abkhazians, Georgians, etc., but this only under the absolute control of Moscow over the military and political situation ... The north shore of the Black Sea should be exclusively Eurasian and centrally obey Moscow.”²

Dugin’s book also introduced a generation of Russians to the writings of a school of Russian imperial thought dreamt up by White Russian exiles in the 1920s, which was eventually to give its name to the new ideology of imperial power that would seep into the corridors of the Kremlin throughout the coming decade.

“Eurasianism” was at the time more of an intellectual curiosity, created in the interwar period by forgotten White Russian aristocrats and promoted during the perestroika era by popular Soviet historian Lev Gumilev. But in Dugin’s capable hands, it was transformed from kooky ethnography and apologia for Stalin—which was renounced almost immediately by its main creator, Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi—into the expression of a timeless identity and statehood for Russia that lay below the surface of the

Russian empire, the elusive Eurasian identity which was the counterweight to the Atlanticist effort at world domination.

“Eurasia” became the germ of a new ideology of power for the Kremlin under Putin, who has coopted the term, along with “geopolitics” and other buzzwords which captured the imaginations of the elite who came to power with him, and whose secret service backgrounds made them uniquely receptive to Dugin’s formulas. Naturally paranoid, they see western plots in all corners. But they also see confrontation with the west, the presence of an external enemy, as an extremely efficient way to organize the state—politics becomes less challenging when one’s opponents can be labeled foreign-backed saboteurs as they were in Stalin’s day.

Eurasianism promises the mobilizing power of nationalism, without the headache of separatism. It is an imperial ideology whose major strength is that it, unlike its main competitors (communism, ethnic nationalism, and liberalism), has not yet been tried and failed. The coming decade, therefore, is likely to see Eurasianism tried—with more expansion into the post-Soviet sphere, with a more confrontational line against the west, with the consolidation and expansion of Putin’s “Eurasian Union” scheduled to be launched formally in 2015.

Alarming appeal

Patrushev is not the only fan of Dugin among the top cadre of Putin’s friends. Vladimir Yakunin, Chairman of Russian Railways, the state railway monopoly, who is also a former KGB officer and owns a dacha in the same complex as Putin on the shores of lake Komsomolskoe, footnotes Dugin no fewer than eight times in his 2006 book *The Russian School of Geopolitics*, and is named as editor for two anthologies of Dugin’s writing published by his think tank, the Centre for Analysis of Problems and Public Governance.

Meanwhile, Igor Sechin, chairman of Rosneft, the state oil company, recently hired journalist and TV commentator Mikhail Leontiev as a vice president at Rosneft. Leontiev has long been a supporter of Dugin, and occupies a seat on the board of directors of Dugin's International Eurasianist Movement.

Putin's coterie of friends, high up in state corporations, in the national security bureaucracy, in political parties, have made "Eurasianism" a new faith, even if they don't announce it to the world.

Thus Putin's coterie of friends, high up in state corporations, in the national security bureaucracy, in political parties, have made "Eurasianism" a new faith, even if they don't announce it to the world. Collectively, they form a kind of deep state whose consensus on weighty matters reigns supreme.

The point of a shadow ideology is that it is deniable. Today, no government can afford to publicly espouse any system other than democracy, ethnic tolerance, self-determination, free trade, and universal human rights—even if its rulers do not practice these things. Speaking openly of conquest and subjugation of a neighbouring country is simply not acceptable in public anymore, as it was in the 19th century. But regimes have found ways to discuss these projects in public using a variety of dog whistles, double meanings, and fudges. "Sovereign democracy" is one way the Kremlin has found to talk about Russia's political system, in which only one party is allowed to win. "Traditional values" include national pride and respect for authority—values any authoritarian ruler would find easy to manipulate in cementing his authority. Conquest is out, while "integration" with former colonial subjects, which supposedly share

common values and culture (even if they are a different religion or ethnicity), is in.

"Eurasia" is perhaps the most extravagant double entendre the Kremlin has invented. On Oct 4, 2011, a week after Putin had announced his return to the Presidency for a third term, following four years as prime minister, readers of *Izvestia* found a full-page article by their once and future president, describing his vision for a "Eurasian Union" of former Soviet states.³

Putin insisted that the union was "not like other previous unions" and was simply a trade organization analogous to the EU. But U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton raised shouts of indignation in Moscow when, in December 2012, she accused the Kremlin of "a move to re-Sovietize the region."⁴

The accusation had considerable merit. On January 23, 2012, in an article on nationality policy in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Putin referred to Russia with a new word: "civilization state," adding that the nation of nation state, burdened as it was with connotations of liberalism, should be eliminated as inadequate for the Russian people. "I am deeply convinced," the Russian president wrote, "that the attempts to preach the idea of constructing a Russian 'national' monoethnic state directly contradict our thousand-year history."⁵

The phrasing barely raised an eyebrow, but that was precisely the point. With such dog whistle politics, people hear what they want to hear. The leader keeps a deniable distance while the esoteric meanings of his speeches are interpreted by successive layers of initiates, who act as a buffer from the profane masses.

In September 2013, Putin again referred to Russia again by the term "civilization state" in an address to the Valdai forum of journalists and Russia experts, and made his most specific comments yet about the scope for Eurasian integration. "The twenty-first century promises

to be the century of great change, the era of the formation of major continents of geopolitical, financial, economic, cultural, civilizational, political and military power,” he said. “And because of this, our absolute priority is the tight integration with our neighbors.”⁶

He described his proposed Eurasian Union not in strictly trade and economic terms, as he had in the past, but as “a project of the preservation of identity of peoples, of historical Eurasia in the new century and a new world. Eurasian integration is a chance for the former Soviet Union to become an independent center of global development, rather than the periphery of Europe or Asia.”

Putin’s words appear to indicate a Kremlin consensus that in the future world, in order to matter, you have to be big, that the future will belong to continent-sized super states. “Eurasia” appears to be the shortcut to one of these.



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THE CHINA THREAT, 2014 EDITION

Bill Gertz

The United States has underestimated the People's Republic of China, its strategy, intentions, capabilities, and the nature of its system for decades. From its rapidly expanding and increasingly lethal high-technology conventional and strategic military capabilities to its large-scale theft of government and corporate secrets through cyber espionage, China today poses what is perhaps the greatest long-term threat to U.S. security and interests. This, despite the fact that trade and economic relations between the United States and the world's most populous nation remain steadfast and interconnected.

Misjudgments about Chinese strategy, policies and activities abound in Washington, where a closed circle of China hands in government and academia have obfuscated about the nature of China's system as a way of preventing what they regard as the emergence of an overstated new threat from China. Culpable, too, are business leaders and former government officials-turned-commercial consultants who benefit directly from Chinese government largesse. With U.S. trade with China worth \$600 billion annually and mutual investments totaling around \$100 billion, the stakes are high for the business community to avoid antagonizing China.

But three decades of U.S. policies toward China that failed to fully grasp the main ideological character and motivations of the Chinese regime have produced a comprehensive challenge that today is being played out economically, diplomatically and politically—and eventually may be played out militarily as well, unless steps are taken to correct course. *The China Threat*, the title of my 2000 book, was a word play on a Chinese government propaganda slogan called “The China Threat Theory.” According to defectors from China, monitoring levels of those who regard China as a threat around



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the world remains one of the highest priorities for Chinese diplomats, intelligence personnel and state-run media representatives. Measuring the “China Threat Theory” abroad is used in calculations for the pace and scope of modernization policies that are used by the Communist Party of China to maintain its control over the country’s 1.3 billion people. It is also the basis of Beijing’s use of sophisticated influence and propaganda efforts to counter it.

China’s leaders insist that those who oppose CCP rule have trumped up the “China Threat Theory” based upon anti-communist impulses. They argue that China is being victimized by the West and unfairly tarred as an aggressive, hegemonistic future superpower aiming to regain the status it once held regionally. Yet the emerging Chinese empire of the 21st century will not be limited to merely controlling the Asia-Pacific. China today is seeking inroads and influence among the nations of Europe, Africa, and South America. China, along with Russia, also is taking aim at the vast untapped resources of the Arctic. And in Asia, Chinese expansionism, manifested in the military bullying of its neighbors and vast claims over others’ waters and territory, has exponentially increased the danger of a new regional conflict.

The political threat

President Obama came into office on a platform of opposing the Bush administration’s “war on terror” generally, and specifically the extension of that war to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. As a way of shifting focus, his administration adopted what came to be called the “Asia pivot”: a deliberate shift in focus and resources to Asia. But this effort has been repeatedly undermined in recent years on several fronts. The first has been the U.S. budget crisis, which has limited the ability of the U.S. military to move forces into the Asia-Pacific in a

significant way. The second is Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, namely the annexation of Crimea and ongoing covert destabilization in southern and eastern Ukraine. Last has been the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the ultra-violent al-Qaeda offshoot that re-emerged during the civil war in Syria and by mid-2014 had launched an invasion of Iraq that included the seizure of Mosul, the second-largest city in the country.

As a result, the White House has gravitated toward the notion of China as a benign regional actor. In November, Secretary of State John Kerry, in a major speech on China policy, followed the pattern of past senior officials by wishing away differences with China on maritime disputes, human rights and other areas by praising the number of summits and meetings of senior officials that have been held, despite the fact that the meetings and diplomacy have done little to bridge the fundamental differences. Kerry summed up his policy speech with the hope that “the United States and China—who are both blessed with great strength, with ample resources, with extraordinary people—can do important things now and can do them together.”¹

The Administration’s hopes, however, have done little to dissuade China’s actions or policies. Indeed, cooperation with China has not produced a more benign relationship. And, while some argue that China still lags behind the United States in its use of soft power, there is ample evidence that it is engaged in a type of unconventional, non-kinetic warfare against the United States already.

For instance, a Pentagon-sponsored study produced for the Office of the Secretary of Defense reveals that China is waging political warfare against the United States as part of its strategy of seeking to drive the United States out of the Asia-Pacific region. The study, entitled “China’s Three Warfares,” was produced for the Office of Net Assess-

ment. It outlines the employment of three types of warfare—legal, psychological and media—currently being used by Beijing as surrogates for conventional and nuclear warfare.²

“The Three Warfares is a dynamic three-dimensional war-fighting process that constitutes war by other means,” according to Cambridge University professor Stefan Halper, who directed the study. “It is China’s weapon of choice in the South China Sea.”³

There, China has imposed what it calls a “Nine-Dash Line” covering about 80 percent of the sea and has claimed the waters as its own territorial waters. The Chinese declaration includes the disputed Parcel Islands in the northern part of the sea, and the Spratlys in the southern area. China in late 2013 announced it was setting up a new legal authority to administer the area of the Nine-Dash Line, putting Beijing at odds with Vietnam and Philippines, which claim the Paracels and Spratlys as their islets.

China carried out one of its most provocative encounters with the United States on December 5, 2013. That’s when the U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser *USS Cowpens*, which was sailing in the northern South China Sea, encountered a Chinese navy amphibious ship that sailed in front of the *Cowpens* and stopped some 100 yards from a collision. The *Cowpens* veered sharply to avoid the collision and the Pentagon denounced the action as a dangerous maneuver.

Tensions were further heightened the following August, when a Chinese J-11 interceptor jet flew within 20 feet of a U.S. Navy P-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft over the South China Sea. The incident, which took place in international airspace, was denounced by the Pentagon as an “unsafe and unprofessional intercept, which posed a risk to the safety and the well-being of the air crew and was inconsistent with customary international law.”⁴ In response, China,

following its “Three Warfares” playbook, denounced the Pentagon, denied its pilot flew in a reckless manner, and falsely asserted that the Chinese pilot had operated professionally. But the provocation followed a pattern of increasingly aggressive aerial intercepts that began in late 2013 and involved other close calls with U.S. aircraft in March, April and May of 2014.⁵

Three decades of U.S. policies toward China that failed to fully grasp the main ideological character and motivations of the Chinese regime have produced a comprehensive challenge that today is being played out economically, diplomatically and politically—and eventually may be played out militarily as well, unless steps are taken to correct course.

China’s use of political warfare techniques is aimed at acquiring territory, resources and influence. “China’s Three Warfares [are] designed to counter U.S. power projection,” the Net Assessment report says. “The United States is one of four key audiences targeted by the campaign, as part of China’s broader military strategy of ‘anti-access/area denial’ in the South China Sea.”⁶ The goal of this political warfare is to create doubts about the legitimacy of the U.S. military presence in Asia, an important first step in China’s long-range objective of forcing the United States to remove its forces from the region and diminishing its relationship with other regional states.

The military threat

The term “Anti-Access/Area Denial” is the Pentagon’s buzz phrase for China’s high-technology weapons—offensive capabilities designed specifically to defeat U.S. and allied forces in a regional

conflict. They include an array of weapons and capabilities that pose asymmetric threats to strategic U.S. military advantages. Some of these weapons are widely known. Many others are in their late testing and development stages, and are closely guarded secrets.

The Chinese military threat is very different from the pattern of development used by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is not attempting to match the United States weapons system for weapons system. Rather, the Chinese approach is to develop asymmetric warfare means, dubbed "assassin's mace" weaponry.

The Chinese military threat is very different from the pattern of development used by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, when bomber gaps and missile gaps emphasized developing a balance of both conventional and strategic nuclear forces to maintain a geopolitical equilibrium. In the case of China, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is not attempting to match the United States weapons system for weapons system. Rather, the Chinese approach is to develop asymmetric warfare means, dubbed "assassin's mace" weaponry. The concept is derived from China's Warring States Era (roughly 475 BC to 221 BC), during which niche war-fighting capabilities were developed that allowed weaker states to defeat a more powerful and better-armed foe.

China has developed five key areas of "assassin's mace" weapons. They include anti-aircraft-carrier weapons; space and anti-satellite weapons; cyber warfare and cyber espionage capabilities; strategic nuclear forces; and anti-missile defense capabilities. In all five,

the Chinese military is either ahead of the United States or within close range of matching comparable U.S. military capabilities. This reality runs counter to the widespread notion that up until a few years ago had dismissed Chinese forces as essentially a "junkyard army" saddled with large ground forces equipped with obsolete weapons and lacking sufficient command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to wage modern, combined arms warfare. The new PLA, in other words, has gone largely underestimated. And because it has, a large segment of the U.S. government and military do not understand the nature of the contemporary threat from China.

To defeat American carriers, which represent the most important power projection capabilities for the United States in Asia, the Chinese are developing advanced attack submarines and a unique anti-ship ballistic missile—a space-transiting high-speed missile with enough accuracy to be able to attack an aircraft carrier at sea. Senior Navy officials have said that although the Dong Feng-21D or "East Wind" anti-ship ballistic missile has undergone limited testing it is considered in the early stages of what is called its initial operating capability.⁷ The DF-21D is a lethal weapon for which the U.S. Navy currently has limited defenses. Adm. Jonathan Greenert, the Chief of Naval Operations, has said the current strategy for countering the missile is to disrupt its "kill chain"—the string of sensors that are part of the long-range targeting mechanism.⁸

For space weaponry, China has developed a direct-ascent anti-satellite missile that has been tested several times, most notably in 2007, when one of the missiles blasted an aging weather satellite and produced tens of thousands of pieces of debris that continue to hit both manned and unmanned satellites. Other Chinese space weapons include

ground-fired lasers that can disrupt the optics of photographic reconnaissance satellites, and small, maneuvering satellites with robotic arms that can grab or smash orbiting satellites.

Chinese anti-satellite warfare was a key factor in the Pentagon's development, beginning in the mid-2000s, of a new battle concept called Air Sea Battle. Based on annual military exercises, the Air Force and Navy realized that with a salvo of 20 anti-satellite missiles targeting key U.S. military communications and intelligence satellites, military operations by high-tech U.S. forces could be stymied.

The Chinese cyber warfare threat has been present for nearly a decade but only gained public attention in the past several years, after a series of high-profile cyber espionage cases, notably the 2009 cyber attacks against Google and other U.S. corporations that were dubbed Operation Aurora. The forces that carried out the attack were revealed by security researchers in 2014 to be a group of government-linked cyber spies known as the Axiom Group, who conducted a massive and global campaign to steal both government and private sector secrets of benefit to the Chinese systems.⁹

On May 1, 2014, the Justice Department for the first time made public another element of the Chinese cyber threat when it indicted five PLA officers who are part the PLA's General Staff Third Department, the electronic intelligence agency known as 3PLA, and a Shanghai-based group called Unit 61398. The hackers, according to court documents in the case, worked as technology consultants to Chinese state-run industries. The Chinese firms were given the stolen U.S. trade secrets; the State Nuclear Power Technology Corp., for example, was the recipient of stolen data on Westinghouse's AP1000 reactor. The cyber espionage followed Westinghouse's deal with State Nuclear Power in May 2013.

These cyber attacks are part of China's comprehensive centralized modernization program. They are used by Chinese civilian and military intelligence services in a coordinated program to benefit Chinese industries and government agencies. In early 2014, the Pentagon's Defense Science Board was the first to disclose that secrets relating to the F-35 fighter project had been obtained by the Chinese through cyber espionage.¹⁰ U.S. officials said the Chinese successfully used its cyber spies to penetrate a British subcontractor for the F-35.

The nuclear threat

China's government regularly issues public pronouncements designed to portray the development of its military forces as non-threatening and strictly defensive in nature. However, on October 28, 2013, China's Communist Party-affiliated *Global Times* newspaper published an unprecedented article revealing PLA plans to conduct submarine-launched nuclear missile strikes on the United States.¹¹ Using maps of a nuclear strike zone and resulting radiation plumes over the Pacific Coast, the article stated that attacks on downtown Los Angeles and a nuclear debris plume spreading from the Pacific Northwest to Chicago would kill between 5 million and 12 million Americans. "In general, after a nuclear missile strikes a city, the radioactive dust produced by 20 warheads will be spread by the wind, forming a contaminated area for thousands of kilometers," the *Global Times* report said. "The survival probability for people outdoors in a 12,000 to 14,000 kilometer radius is basically zero. Based on the actual level of China's one million tons TNT equivalent small nuclear warhead technology, the 12 JL-2 nuclear missiles carried by one Type 094 nuclear submarine could cause the destruction of five million to 12 million people, forming a very clear deterrent effect."¹²

The Obama administration remained silent in response. Spokesmen for the White House, Pentagon and State Department would not comment. Then in November, Adm. Jonathan Greenert, the chief of naval operations, was asked about the Chinese nuclear attack threat and dismissed it as not being credible.¹³

China's strategic nuclear forces modernization is one of the most significant elements of its overall military buildup, and is being carried out in utmost secrecy—on the part of both of the Chinese military as well as the limited exposure of the problem by the U.S. government.

Yet China's strategic nuclear forces modernization is one of the most significant elements of China's overall military buildup, and is being carried out in utmost secrecy—on the part of both the Chinese military as well as the limited exposure of the problem by the U.S. government. The covert buildup of nuclear forces includes as many as five new strategic missile systems, most of them deployed on road-mobile launchers and missile submarines. To compound the problem, China's government and military have refused to engage in substantive discussions about the purpose, scope and capabilities being developed for use in a nuclear conflict. The Chinese believe that any discussion of its nuclear forces will undermine their deterrent value. For Chinese leaders, secrecy is a strategic weapon to be guarded closely, especially as it relates to what Beijing regards as its key adversary, the United States.

The exact number of Chinese nuclear warheads remains a subject of considerable debate. U.S. intelligence agencies estimate China has around 240 strategic nuclear warheads—that is, warheads capable of being used on

long-range missiles. But estimates by other private analysts put the number of warheads at higher levels, based on the growing size of China's missile forces and its fissile material production infrastructure. The former general in charge of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, Gen. Victor Yesin, has stated that the actual number of Chinese strategic warheads is closer to 1,000 and could be as many as 1,500—nearly six times the U.S. intelligence estimate.¹⁴ In December 2014, China conducted the first flight test of a new DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missile that U.S. defense officials say was outfitted for the first time with simulated multiple, independently targetable re-entry vehicles, or MIRVs. The use of multiple warheads represents a major leap in China's strategic nuclear forces.

Aside from warheads, perhaps the most significant development within China's strategic nuclear forces was put on display for U.S. intelligence agencies on January 9, 2014. On that day, China carried out the first test of a hypersonic glide vehicle, a strategic nuclear delivery system launched atop a ballistic missile but which flies along the edge of the atmosphere at hypersonic speeds—between 3,840 miles per hour and 7,680 miles per hour, also known as Mach 5 to Mach 10, respectively. The hypersonic vehicle, called the Wu-14, is part of Chinese strategic nuclear forces and is being designed specifically to defeat U.S. strategic missile defenses, which are currently not designed to knock out maneuvering, high-speed targets.

Misreading Beijing

The threat posed by the People's Republic of China is serious and has been misunderstood for decades. The problem has been made worse by a lack of American leadership and a failure to understand the character and objectives of the regime in China. Despite its impressive economic achievements, China remains

a nuclear-armed communist dictatorship and has shown few signs of initiating political reforms commensurate with the scope and breadth of economic changes it has undergone.

U.S. diplomacy toward China for the past decade has been dominated by summits among leaders and strategic dialogues at lower levels. Yet these meetings, for all of their optics, have produced little in the way of concrete steps that could mitigate the looming confrontation that may be in the offing, based on China's asserting its hegemony in Asia and elsewhere.



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UNDERSTANDING TURKEY'S TILT

Svante E. Cornell

Turkey has never been an easy ally for the United States. The U.S.-Turkish relationship is idealized in many quarters, with the golden age of the Turgut Özal era in the early 1990s often cited as an example. But it also has had numerous challenges: to mention only a few, several crises over Cyprus, controversy over Turkish military coups, human rights violations, and the perpetual brinkmanship over the Armenian genocide issue. During and immediately after the Cold War, Turkey was a stable and generally predictable ally, but the deficiencies of Cold War-era Turkey should not be forgotten: at its core, the Turkish republic had a schizophrenic attitude to the West. On the one hand, it was decidedly western and secular, and sought acceptance by the West of its European civilizational identity. On the other, the Turkish elite was deeply suspicious of and even occasionally hostile to western powers, which it blamed for having sought to dismantle Turkey through the 1920 Sèvres treaty. Ever since, suspicion has constantly surfaced that western powers covertly conspired with Turkey's enemies to keep the country weak and divided.

It is important to keep this background in mind when considering the trajectory of the Turkish-American alliance. Under the increasingly autocratic rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey is once again a troublesome ally. Especially in the Middle East, Turkey is increasingly acting in ways that diverge from American interests. Its antagonism toward Israel is pronounced, and its policies after the Arab upheavals of 2011 went against U.S. interest, endorsing the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt supporting radical *jihadi* groups in the Syrian civil war. President Erdoğan, once among President Obama's five preferred world leaders, has also increasingly sharpened his rhetoric against the United States.



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The key question for American policymakers, then, is whether dealing with Turkey today is fundamentally different than it has been in the past. And on that score, there is significant reason to argue that Turkey has indeed changed in ways that have caused irreparable harm to the U.S.-Turkish alliance.

Divergent interests

In the past decade, the trajectory of Turkey's foreign policy has been relatively stable. Since the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, came to power, the Turkish government has focused on developing Turkey's influence in the Middle East. This represented an important break with the past; dating back to Atatürk's days, the foreign policy run by the secular center-right parties in conjunction with the military and bureaucratic elites saw the Middle East primarily as a source of problems, and a region to be avoided. This policy was rooted in equal parts in a sense of betrayal by the Arabs against the Ottoman state, and the conviction that the Middle East could only cause problems for Turkey. Instead, these elites concluded that Turkey was now modern and European, and therefore focused its foreign policy on its relationship with the western alliance.

The AKP, by contrast, saw the Middle East as a zone of opportunity, one that constituted Turkey's natural area of influence. In some ways, this realignment was pragmatic, focusing on promoting economic ties and increasing Turkey's influence. In this sense, there were parallels to Turkey's efforts in the 1990s to develop ties with the newly independent Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union. In both cases, the ambition was to develop a new "vector" of Turkish foreign policy to complement the main, western one.

Yet there are two major differences. First, the opening to the east of the 1990s was grounded in Turkey's linguistic

and cultural links with the newly independent states, and based on a strong demand for partnership emanating from these countries. By contrast, the opening to the south under Erdoğan was based on religious, not national identity. Moreover, it was not preceded by a particularly burning interest on the part of Turkey's Middle Eastern neighbors in such engagement. The initiative, so to speak, was supply-side foreign policy.

Secondly, the old opening to the east developed in full harmony with Turkey's western orientation. Turkey's initiatives were well-coordinated with the U.S., and rested on a commonly defined interest in supporting the sovereignty and independence of the former Soviet states in the Caucasus and Central Asia. While Turkey and its western partners differed on some issues, such as relations with Armenia, such differences were never allowed to cause harm to the U.S.-Turkish alliance.

By contrast, Turkey's contemporary policies in the Middle East have been dissociated from its western alliance, and often stand in direct contradiction to U.S. interests. Initially, Ankara sought to portray its activities as serving western interests as well, emphasizing its potential to act as a mediator between the West and rogue regimes in the Middle East such as Iran and Syria. But, as time has passed, Turkey's ambitions to mediate have been replaced by an ever more apparent tendency to take sides, support favorites, and undermine adversaries.

The most consistent and symptomatic example of this transformation is Israel. While the Turkish-Israeli relationship did not collapse until the 2008 war in Gaza, the AKP early on entertained ties with Hamas, and welcomed its election in 2006. In fact, Fatah representatives have long complained that Turkey has been biased in favor of Hamas and against Fatah in intra-Palestinian politics. Anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic themes

also crept into the mainstream Turkish media, particularly in television shows and in the reporting of the AKP's mouthpiece newspaper, *Yeni Şafak*. After the war in Gaza, Ankara abandoned all efforts at balance, going much further even than most Arab leaders in its condemnations of Israel. Ankara also helped launch the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla to Gaza in 2009, which finally led the relationship to collapse following the Israeli boarding of the ship. Soon enough, Erdoğan and other AKP leaders took to outright anti-Semitic rhetoric. In 2011, he accused the *Economist* of being controlled by Israel; and in 2013, following the Gezi Park controversy, he blamed the widespread protests against his government on the global "interest rate lobby." If the shorthand was not clear enough, one of his closest advisors spelled out that the global Jewish diaspora was behind it. Erdoğan's anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic rhetoric has proven a key sore point in the U.S.-Turkish relationship.

The Arab upheavals are another critical area of divergence. Early on, Erdoğan developed close relations with Syria's Bashar al-Assad and sought an opening to Iran, in a pragmatic move to expand relations with Middle Eastern countries. But Turkey's calculus changed in 2011, as the Arab upheavals provided a historic opportunity. Ankara soon became the chief sponsor of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, supporting its various branches in their efforts to ascend to power. In Egypt, Erdoğan took the initiative among international leaders in urging Hosni Mubarak to leave office, and once the Brotherhood gained power in Cairo, the AKP became the chief sponsor of the short-lived regime of Mohamed Morsi. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu explained at the time that "Egypt would become the focus of Turkish efforts, as an older American-backed order, buttressed by Israel, Saudi Arabia and, to a lesser extent, prerevo-

lutionary Egypt, begins to crumble."¹ As part of this effort, Turkey pledged \$2 billion in aid to Egypt in 2012, and endorsed the controversial constitution that Morsi pushed through that December to strengthen his power—and did so at a time when western powers were highly critical of this power grab.

Erdoğan also endorsed the vision of a Brotherhood-ruled Syria, despite the movement's weakness in Syrian politics. As Turkish writer Kadri Gürsel has put it, Turkey aimed for "the Muslim Brotherhood to fully and absolutely dominate the entirety of Syria."² When that strategy failed and the Free Syrian Army proved unable to make a lasting impact on the battlefield, Turkish leaders came to facilitate and support more forceful, and more radical, Islamist groups. Turkey has been credibly tied to various domestic *jihadi* groups, as well as the al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra front.³ In spite of strong western pressure, including a direct warning from President Obama in 2013, Turkey continues to implement very lax policies on its border with Syria. As a result, it continues to be the main transshipment point of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq, now mainly joining the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

The rise of ISIS, more than anything, has put the spotlight on the troubling inconsistencies of Turkish foreign policy, and the divergence between Turkish and American interests. As the U.S. sought to assemble a coalition against ISIS, Turkey proved among the most recalcitrant regional powers. To Ankara, the main problem in the region was not ISIS but the Assad regime, which Turkey had battled hard to overthrow. Erdoğan demanded, as a precondition for Turkish participation, that any military action against ISIS target Assad as well. At minimum, Ankara demanded a no-fly zone that would deny Damascus the advantage of controlling Syrian airspace. Matters came to a head with the

battle of Kobani, a Syrian Kurdish settlement on the Turkish border. As the town was encircled on three sides by ISIS, the Turkish border was the only source of help. Yet Turkey, weary of the power of the Syrian Kurds, long refused to allow any assistance through. The crisis over Kobani worsened as Turkey's considerable Kurdish population rioted against the government's stance, leading to close to 50 deaths. By late October, Ankara allowed a small contingent of Kurdish fighters to transit into Kobani, defusing the crisis somewhat. But Turkey's Kurds appear convinced that Ankara has actually supported ISIS, and even some ISIS fighters appear to share that view.

The implication of these developments is, as several observers have already noted, that Turkey is increasingly coming to resemble Pakistan of the 1990s. Having used and abetted *jihadi* groups across the border for instrumental purposes, it is now beginning to see the blowback of that strategy.⁴ And in the process, the prospects of Turkey serving as a reliable ally of the United States are dwindling. In the not too distant future, Turkey could prove not just a troublesome ally, but a problem in its own right.

Instrumentalism and ideology

How did it come to this? How is it that NATO ally Turkey has gained notoriety for its condemnations of Israel, now supports *jihadi* groups in Syria, and is even suspected of abetting ISIS forces across its border?

Western observers have had a tendency of blaming each other for Turkey's alienation from the West under Erdoğan. Americans like to point to the French and German handling of Turkey's EU membership aspirations—not least the damaging statements by the likes of France's Nicolas Sarkozy and Germany's Angela Merkel that Turkey is not a European

state. Europeans, meanwhile, prefer to point to the Bush administration's war in Iraq as a key milestone in the distancing of Turkey from the West. There is some truth to both points of view, but they miss one key aspect. Their validity rests upon an assumption that Erdoğan's partnership with the West, and his intention to integrate into the EU, was genuine to begin with. Yet the evolution of Turkey's domestic politics does not provide support for this thesis.

Western leaders have accepted at face value the transformation of Turkey's Islamist movement in a democratic direction in the early 2000s. The AKP emerged from the orthodox Islamist *Milli Görüş* tradition, launched by Necmettin Erbakan in the 1960s. Erbakan's movement was heavily anti-Western, anti-Zionist, and anti-Semitic. With an origin in the highly conservative Naqshbandi order, this political movement essentially rested on two pillars: Ottoman nostalgia and the modern global ideology of political Islam, especially that of the Muslim Brotherhood. For starters, the movement considered Atatürk's abolition of the Caliphate in 1924 as a major disaster, and denounced the Turkish Republic's break with its religious and civilizational identity in favor of seeking acceptance into the European world. But whereas Turkish political Islam had traditionally had what one scholar terms "nationalist-local leanings," it was now infused with "'global' currents of Islamic thought"—particularly via its connection to the Egyptian Brotherhood.⁵ These aspects formed the main rift separating the movement from Turkey's center-right parties, which tended to respect religion, but also uphold secularism and argue for a European orientation and commitment to the alliance with America.

The AKP's founders split from the *Milli Görüş* movement in 2000, pledging now to be a post-Islamist party. Gone was their aversion to secularism, capital-

ism and Europe. Cloaking their policies in rhetoric about human rights, they now pledged only to redefine secularism in a manner more consistent with individual liberties. They accepted globalized markets and pledged reforms to bring Turkey closer to the EU. And in the AKP's first term, the government indeed stuck largely to this rhetoric, and implemented far-reaching reforms of European harmonization—steps which were eagerly supported by Turkey's liberals.

As is now patently obvious, however, Erdoğan and the AKP have abandoned those principles. Both their domestic and foreign policies appear to hold much more in common with their ideological origin than with the post-Islamist party of 2000-2005. The reasons behind this backtracking have only little to do with western policies. Rather, they have much more to do with the fact that the party's commitment to western values served an immediate, instrumental purpose: subjugating the old semi-authoritarian system of tutelage. From the introduction of multi-party democracy in the 1950s, Turkish elected officials had not been the masters of their realm. They had had to contend with the supervisory structures set up by the top brass of the army and the high courts, which served to keep elected power-holders in check. Thus, over five decades, the Turkish army intervened to depose governments four times, and the courts regularly banned political parties and policed acceptable political speech. It was this system that the Islamist movement, on its own, proved unable to take on.

The transformation of the AKP was not spontaneous. It was a direct result of the 1997 military intervention, which removed Erbakan from his position as leader of a coalition government. Up until that moment, Erdoğan—then Mayor of Istanbul—and his associates had viewed the EU only as a Christian club. But in 1997, they realized that they could actually turn European institutions to their

advantage. Seeing western outrage at the military intervention, they aligned themselves with EU demands for the civilian control of the armed forces and cloaked their demands in the rhetoric of human rights and democracy, appealing to European institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Simply put, the younger guard of Islamists who created the AKP realized that they could turn the west into a lever in their struggle against the establishment. Meanwhile, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, were advantageous, making the U.S. now eager for alliances with “moderate Muslims” around the world. Erdoğan and the AKP volunteered in this role, ensuring that they were now enjoying the implicit backing of both the EU and the United States.

By 2008, the AKP had managed to stare down the military's half-hearted efforts to rein it in, and had its candidate elected to the presidency. By 2010, Erdoğan succeeded through a referendum to take control over the judicial system. By that time, he had also confined a great number of dissidents, including senior military officers, to jail on largely trumped-up charges of coup plotting. It was also at this point that Erdoğan's remaining inhibitions against displaying his Islamist and authoritarian tendencies began to disappear. Once the AKP had consolidated power, adherence to western norms and values were no longer necessary as a lever against the establishment, and the AKP reverted to ignoring them in practice while occasionally paying lip service to them.

The Ikhwan worldview

How, then, should the United States deal with Turkey, and what could American policy-makers expect from their counterparts in Ankara on pressing international issues?

A first imperative is to see through what is left of the AKP's smokescreen and

view the party for what it is: a Turkish version of the Muslim Brotherhood, strongly anchored in the *Ikhwan* worldview. This has become all the more apparent since the appointment of Ahmet Davutoğlu as Turkish Prime Minister following Erdoğan's election to the presidency. Davutoğlu, who served first as Erdoğan's foreign policy advisor and since 2009 as Foreign Minister, is the intellectual architect of Turkey's foreign policy. He is the only member of Erdoğan's inner circle to be an accomplished intellectual, and is—by all accounts—the only person in Erdoğan's entourage for whom the President actually has a modicum of respect. Thus, Davutoğlu's many writings, in which he expresses a well-defined worldview, should be read very carefully. In these, he minces no words, and implicitly concurs with Rudyard Kipling's old adage that "east is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet." Specifically, Davutoğlu emphasizes the differences between Islam and the West, and squarely announces the former's superiority over the latter. Because the Enlightenment rejects divine revelation and instead emphasizes reason and experience as sources of knowledge, he believes, the West is experiencing an "acute civilizational crisis," making the gulf between Islamic countries and the West unbridgeable. And he concludes that the failure of the Soviet system, rather than a victory for the West, was only the first step in the collapse of European domination of the world, to be followed by the collapse of Western capitalism.⁶

Based on this logic, Davutoğlu developed his own foreign policy doctrine for Turkey: that of "strategic depth," predicated on the notion that Turkey's strength lies in its civilizational identity as a key Muslim state. Davutoğlu is therefore implementing what amounts to a "Pan-Islamist" foreign policy, according to one leading expert.⁷ Indeed, Davutoğlu decries the

post-1918 divisions of the Middle East into nation-states, supporting instead the unity of the Muslim *ummah* as a potential, and in his view more natural, geopolitical structure. His prescriptions borrow heavily from pre-1945 European geopolitical theorists as well as anti-colonialist thought, and emphasize the need for Turkey to build alternative alliances to the West, in effect to counterbalance it. In the final analysis, as one American observer noted after an interview with Davutoğlu, he considers Turkey to be the natural heir to the Ottoman Empire that once unified the Muslim world and therefore has the potential to become a transregional power that helps to once again unify and lead the Muslim world.⁸

Thus, it should come as no surprise that Turkey seized on the 2011 Arab uprisings as a historic opportunity. After all, they coincided exactly with Davutoğlu's thinking, appearing to herald the end of the western-imposed political order in the Middle East—one that it was now up to Turkey to help remake. So far, however, things have not gone as planned. Turkey has experienced numerous setbacks, from its failure to oust Assad to the removal of the Brotherhood in Egypt. Yet Erdoğan and Davutoğlu have seen no reason to change course: Turkey's regional isolation is explained as "precious loneliness," and the culprits increasingly identified as foreign conspirators, primarily Jews and Americans, more often than not acting in cahoots.

Difficult way forward

But even if Turkey's government is as ideologically motivated as the foregoing suggests, it can nonetheless cooperate with the United States. Ideology and pragmatism are not necessarily contradictory, and the Turkish leadership knows that it is in a vulnerable geopolitical position and is now to some extent dependent on American support

for its security. Bluntly put, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu want to have their cake and eat it too. On the one hand, they want to pursue their sectarian, ideologically-driven policy to remake the Middle East. On the other, they want to benefit from membership in NATO, maintain cordial relations with Washington, deter the U.S. from countering their objectives, while remaining fearful of alienating the U.S. to such an extent that America begins moving against Turkey.

For U.S. policy makers, this means that Turkey should be treated in a transactional way rather than as an ally with which America shares common values, and that Turkish leaders should be made to understand they cannot have it both ways. There are no common values underpinning the relationship. Any agreement with Turkey must be based on a cold calculation of interests, in turn based on a thorough understanding of what Turkey's actual objectives are. It also means that American policy makers would do well to reduce their dependence on Turkey, in military as well as political terms—something that would, in turn, help America put pressure on Turkish leaders.

Turkey's geographic position will undoubtedly mean that Washington will need a working relationship with Ankara in many crises yet to come. But in Turkey, there is a strong sense that America needs it more than the opposite is true. The U.S. should therefore begin exploring options to every contingency in which it is dependent on Turkish support, and review what possibilities exist to reduce or replace that dependency through the strengthening of relations with other regional allies—ranging from Romania in the west, Georgia and Azerbaijan in the east, to the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq and Jordan in the south.

Beyond that, the U.S. will need to develop a more muscular policy deal-

ing with Turkey itself. Erdoğan's regime is increasingly Islamist and autocratic, and the President himself increasingly disrespectful in public of the United States. So far, the U.S. has failed to consider strategies to roll back these tendencies. Unless it does, America may face a situation in which a key NATO ally is at best a "frenemy."



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DOHA'S DANGEROUS DALLIANCE

— Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Luke Lischin —

Qatari support for Islamist non-state actors has been an escalating source of tension for the monarchy in some of its vital relationships. Qatar's relationship with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries saw a variety of escalations during the course of 2014, including in March, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors due to the emirate's sponsorship of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. In addition to Qatar's support for the Brotherhood, a growing body of evidence also suggests that Qatari institutions may be supporting *jihadi* violent non-state actors (VNSAs). The sum total of Qatar's policies provides reason for concern—as well as reason to question the currently dominant Western academic work on Qatar, which tends to explain the country's policy decisions without reference to ideological affinity with the non-state actors the emirate has chosen to support.

Qatar's support for Islamist groups has damaged the country diplomatically, even apart from the aforementioned rupture with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain. Many of the emirate's policies that appeared to put the country in an advantageous position at the start of 2013—including sponsoring Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, becoming deeply involved in Libya, and backing rebels seeking to overthrow Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria—now look like losing bets. There is a stark contrast, for example, between the gratitude Libyans felt for Qatar when rebels first captured Muammar Qadhafi's Tripoli palace, and hoisted Qatar's flag before any other, and the hostility Qatar engendered

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a mere two years later, when protesters burnt its flag in Benghazi.

Doha's logic

If suspicions about Qatar's support for *jihadi* VNSAs prove to be generally accurate, this would not be the first time that its state institutions have been used to bolster these actors. In the 1990s, both the Qatar Charitable Society and Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani, the country's minister of religious endowments and Islamic affairs, are known to have supported al-Qaeda. But after the 9/11 attacks, due in no small part to U.S. pressure, Qatar instituted financial controls over the country's charitable institutions that reduced support for Salafi *jihadi* groups (although open Qatari support for Hamas continued). But, once the Arab Uprisings began, Qatar strongly supported both Islamist political parties and VNSAs affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood—and there is growing evidence that it supported *jihadi* VNSAs as well.

Why has Qatar supported Islamists during the Arab Uprisings? The majority of Western analysts of Gulf affairs describe Qatar's foreign policy decisions as pragmatic. Analysts have provided several reasons that Qatar may have chosen to support Islamists. First, the emirate may be trying to side with eventual winners in order to magnify its influence and reach. According to this hypothesis, Qatar's support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or of Tunisia's *Ennahda* party, or of various Libyan and Syrian Islamist factions, is based on the probability that these factions will eventually triumph electorally or militarily.¹

A second, related explanation is that Qatar is eager to build its brand. Mehran Kamrava, a political scientist at Georgetown University who directs its Center for International and Regional Studies in Doha, writes that the emirate's

broader branding campaign is “meant to give international recognition to the small country as an international educational, sporting, and cultural hub and a good global citizen.”² Shadi Hamid, a researcher at the Brookings Institution who directed its Doha Center until January 2014, explains that having a distinctive foreign policy can also be seen as a means of building Qatar's brand.³ This tendency seems to be particularly true of the country's larger-than-life former foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassim (popularly known as “HBJ”), who was primarily responsible for Qatar's hyper-activist policies under the country's then-*emir*, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

A third possible reason for Qatar's support of Islamists is that the state is more familiar with these actors. As Hamid notes, Doha has long hosted exiled Islamists, and thus when the Arab Spring hit, those were the actors whom Qatar already knew. “You can't build something from scratch,” Hamid said of Qatar positioning itself politically in the post-Arab Spring environment, “and say, ‘Well, who are the Egyptian liberals? How do we establish a relationship with them?’”⁴

There is clear merit to all three of these explanations. However, a fourth possibility also deserves consideration: that Qatar's support for Islamists is in part ideologically driven. The argument for ideology's relevance relates to the specific personalities that may shape state policy. Qatar's small size—only about 250,000 citizens—means the country's foreign policy bureaucracy is vanishingly small, and hence its foreign policy is highly centralized, with the *emir* and foreign minister having extraordinary leeway to shape or change the country's policies. Hence, a key question about the role that ideological affinity with Islamist groups may play is that of who influences the paradigms and decisions of the *emir* and foreign minister.

Qatar's historical support for jihadism

The most prominent case of Qatari support for al-Qaeda prior to the 9/11 attacks involved Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the mastermind of those attacks. KSM and his family moved to Qatar in 1992 at the invitation of the country's then-minister of Islamic affairs, Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani.⁵

From 1992 to 1996, KSM served as a project engineer for Qatar's ministry of electricity and water, and used this position to facilitate his travels worldwide. While working for the government, KSM became involved in several international terrorist plots. His first known connection to a major plot during this period was his relatively minor involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. KSM wired \$660 to Mohammed Salameh, a co-conspirator of attack mastermind Ramzi Yousef (KSM's cousin), from a Qatari bank account. After that, KSM assisted Yousef's operations in the Philippines, including the bombing of a movie theater and a transpacific flight from Manila, as well as the Bojinka plot that aspired to blow up a dozen commercial airliners over the Pacific using liquid explosives. (The attack template from Bojinka would resurface in 2006, in al-Qaeda's foiled transatlantic air plot that sought to simultaneously blow up a number of Britain-U.S. flights.) After the Bojinka plot failed, Philippines authorities began to close in on KSM and Yousef's Manila cell, but not before KSM retreated back to the safety of his government post in Qatar.⁶

From 1994 to 1996, KSM traveled from Qatar to such countries as Brazil, Malaysia, Sudan, and Yemen, though the details of his visits are unknown. He also cultivated a network of wealthy patrons who supported al-Qaeda operations.⁷ By

1996, KSM's terrorist activities caught the attention of U.S. authorities—first the CIA and later the FBI. A CIA case officer in Doha sought to keep KSM under surveillance. Though several U.S. government officials reportedly advocated for a scheme to abduct him, the case officer and National Security Council officials believed that any such plans could run into trouble because “if the United States officially asked for the assistance of the Qatar government, Mr. Mohammed would be tipped off, since it appeared that he was living in Doha under the government's protection.”⁸

KSM's major government patron was the aforementioned Sheikh Abdallah, who “allowed Arab extremists who had fought in Afghanistan to live on his farm.”⁹ Given Sheikh Abdallah's apparent *jihadist* sympathies, as well as suspicions that he was not the only one with such leanings in the Qatari government, the CIA and Department of Defense devised an operation that could capture KSM without alerting Qatari authorities. Ultimately, though, the CIA determined that it lacked the required assets in Qatar to conduct an extraordinary rendition.¹⁰

With the prospect of a covert mission dashed, the task of apprehending KSM fell to the FBI and U.S. ambassador to Qatar Patrick Theros.¹¹ FBI director Louis J. Freeh filed a request with Qatari officials asking for permission to apprehend KSM. The request was met with delaying tactics. In January 1996, the monarchy finally agreed that the U.S. could carry out the operation, but the CIA's fears that KSM might be warned about an operation proved well-founded: a Qatari official tipped KSM off about his impending arrest. The terrorist mastermind fled the country in a government-owned executive jet just hours before the U.S. was set to apprehend him.¹² Though it is widely believed that the tip came from Sheikh Abdallah, a former CIA official later told ABC News that “there

were others in the Qatari royal family who were sympathetic and provided safe havens for al-Qaeda.”¹³ Though he was briefly placed under house arrest after aiding KSM’s escape, Sheikh Abdallah retained his position as minister of Islamic affairs; and later, in 2001, he was promoted to become Qatar’s interior minister, a post he retained until 2013.¹⁴

KSM’s time in Qatar was not the only instance of the emirate’s support for al-Qaeda prior to the September 11 attacks. As evidence submitted by the U.S. government in a criminal trial noted, in 1993 Osama bin Laden named the Qatar Charitable Society (currently Qatar Charity) as one of several organizations that financed al-Qaeda’s overseas operations. In 1995, the charity’s funds were used to support an assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.¹⁵ Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl, an al-Qaeda operative who defected to the United States, implicated the Qatar Charitable Society’s then-director in these activities, describing him as “a fellow member of al-Qaeda.”¹⁶

Following the 9/11 attacks, Qatar came under U.S. pressure, and implemented terrorist financing reforms. Though these reforms contain steps that could be viewed as important if Qatar intended to truly provide oversight of the country’s charities, observers are concerned that Qatari charitable funds are still reaching militant organizations, and that the emirate may not be interested in stopping this flow. The new anti-money laundering regime governing the oversight of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Qatar is founded primarily upon Law No. 13 of 2004, dealing with private institutions and associations. Law 13 created several categories of civil society associations, of which “licensed charitable associations” is a subcategory. To become licensed, charitable associations must submit an application to the ministry of civil service and housing affairs

with a clear statement of purpose. After a charitable association is licensed by the ministry, all aspects of its activities, from the holding of meetings to the execution of financial transactions, are subject to oversight. Further, Law 13 requires that charitable associations maintain records for all financial transactions for a period of fifteen years, and institutions are required to report suspicious activities observed in such transactions to the Qatar Financial Intelligence Unit (QFIU).¹⁷

Once the Arab Uprisings began, Qatar strongly supported both Islamist political parties and violent non-state actors affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood—and there is growing evidence that it supported jihadist ones as well.

This legal regime is positive in the abstract, although flaws in Laws 13 and 14 prevented the inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force (FATF) from giving Qatar a rating of “fully compliant.”¹⁸ These flaws concerned the established ability of Qatar’s emir to exempt any NPO from oversight (an authority that is not known to have been invoked since its inception), and the possible lack of an oversight mechanism for charitable trusts.

But the most important critique is that observers believe some of Qatar’s charities continue to support *jihadist* VNSAs. On several occasions in recent years, the U.S. has identified and sanctioned suspected Qatari terrorist financiers, only to have requests for detainment or further investigation rebuffed by the Qatari government. Indeed, in March 2014 U.S. Department of the Treasury Undersecretary David Cohen described Qatar as a “permissive jurisdiction” for terrorist financing.¹⁹

Qatari support for both Islamist and *jihadi* VNSAs became a particular area of concern as the Arab Uprisings brought rapid and chaotic change.

Libya

Qatar's first set of policies designed to back VNSAs during the Arab Uprisings was aimed at toppling Muammar Qadhafi's regime in Libya. The Libyan rebels' first state backer, Qatar is said to have spent approximately \$400 million on the rebellion, and shipped 20,000 tons of weapons, ranging from small arms to anti-tank missiles.²⁰ Qatar also played an operational role, taking the lead among Arab countries who joined NATO's mission and deploying special forces to train rebels in the use of heavy weaponry. And Qatari special forces were seemingly even more involved than that: as the *Guardian* has reported, "In the final assault on Qaddafi's Bab al-Aziziya compound in Tripoli in late August, Qatari special forces were seen on the frontline."²¹

In its support of anti-Qadhafi rebels, Qatar favored Islamists at the expense of more secular factions. Regardless, the monarchy's Libya gamble initially seemed to pay off. As previously noted, the rebels felt so much gratitude that the first flag they hoisted after capturing Qadhafi's Tripoli palace was Qatar's. The leaders of militia groups backed by Qatar went on to prominent roles in Libyan politics and society after Qadhafi's ouster. One such group is *Hizb al-Watan*, or the "Homeland Party." *Al-Watan* is led by Ali al-Sallabi, a Salafist cleric who lived in Qatar prior to the Libyan revolution, and who reportedly played a pivotal role in coordinating the distribution of arms from Qatar to Islamist militias.

One fighter who received Qatari support was Abdelhakim Belhadj, a former commander in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Though Belhadj had a number of connections to al-Qaeda,

he was part of the jailed LIFG faction that released a series of "revisions" while incarcerated that rejected any allegiance to al-Qaeda.²² However, there is reason to question the sincerity of these pledges made under the duress of the Qadhafi regime by LIFG's jailed leaders, as those same leaders quickly abandoned another pledge they had made as part of the revisions, that they would end their fight against Qadhafi's regime. According to regional press reports, Belhadj now has a very close relationship with the Salafi *jihadi* group *Ansar al-Sharia* in Tunisia, which has been named a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity by the U.S. Treasury Department, with regional sources claiming that Belhadj shelters its exiled leadership and provides training to its members.²³

After the fight against Qadhafi's government ended, Qatar continued to "arm and fund various militia groups," specifically favoring Islamist militias.²⁴ Many Libyans began to resent what they saw as Qatar's meddling in the country's domestic affairs. General officer Khalifa Hiftar, who would later lead a push against Libya's powerful Islamist militias, said in early 2012, "If aid comes through the front door, we like Qatar, but if it comes through the window to certain people [and] bypassing official channels, we don't want Qatar."²⁵

There were also other visible signs of discontent with Qatar's role. Three legislators were sued for libel after accusing members of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Justice and Construction Party of taking money from Qatar, illustrating how politicians are hesitant to be seen as associated with the emirate.²⁶ Residents of Benghazi burned Qatari flags in the summer of 2013. Discontent with Qatar also apparently prompted an armed group to seize control of an air traffic control tower at Tripoli International Airport in August 2013 to prevent a Qatar Airways flight from landing.²⁷

Against the backdrop of massively growing violence in Libya, much of it perpetrated by Islamist groups, Gen. Hiftar launched Operation Dignity in May 2014 with the express purpose of “cleansing” Benghazi of its Islamist militias.²⁸ Since then, the country has been locked in a conflict that places Hiftar’s coalition aligned with Libya’s elected parliament against an Islamist coalition that includes such powerful VNSAs as *Ansar al-Sharia*. (There are several dimensions to this conflict other than Islamist vs. anti-Islamist—but that is one of the important fault lines and Qatar has, predictably, ended up backing the Islamist side.) Several outside states have become involved in this competition: Operation Dignity has received support from both Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, while there are credible reports of Qatar supporting the Islamist factions. After Islamist militias pushed the democratically-elected government out of the capital of Tripoli in the fall of 2014, the *Telegraph* noted the role played by Qatari arms:

Western officials have tracked the Qatari arms flights as they land in the city of Misrata, about 100 miles east of Tripoli, where the Islamist militias have their stronghold. Even after the fall of the capital and the removal of Libya’s government, Qatar is “still flying in weapons straight to Misrata airport,” said a senior Western official.²⁹

Syria

Before civil unrest hit Syria, the Assad regime’s relationship with Qatar was cordial. One factor contributing to this warmth was the fact that Qatar had a less hostile relationship with Syria’s close ally Iran than any other Gulf Cooperation Council state, save for Oman (although the Qatar-Iran relationship was still fraught with tension). As violence escalated in Syria, Qatar initially

approached the situation with trepidation, imploring Assad to reach a peaceful resolution with demonstrators while simultaneously decrying the regime’s slaughter of civilians. Qatari entreaties did little good, and in July 2011 Qatar shut its embassy in Damascus.

Qatar has stood at the forefront of the Arab League’s growing challenge to Assad’s regime.

From that point on, Qatar stood at the forefront of the Arab League’s growing challenge to Assad’s regime. In August 2011, Saudi Arabia announced its open support for the Syrian rebels, and in January 2012 Sheikh Hamad urged that Arab troops should intervene in Syria. Though this proposal was quixotic, it signaled Qatar’s deepening focus on the conflict in Syria.

It’s difficult to pinpoint precisely when Qatar began to arm the Syrian rebels. Syria’s state media claims that Qatar had been arming rebels even before the *emir’s* bold pronouncement favoring an Arab intervention, arguing that Qatar had armed rebels “since the start of this crisis.”³⁰ HBJ denied these allegations.³¹ But regardless of when Qatari arms began to flow to rebels, it is clear that Qatar has heavily backed them in recent years. Hugh Griffiths, an arms researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, observed that 90 Qatari military air cargo flights left the joint U.S.-Qatar owned Al-Udeid airfield for Turkey from January 2012 through April 2013.³² These shipments contained assault rifles (primarily AK-47s) and RPGs. In total, Qatar has shipped somewhere between \$1 billion and \$3 billion in assistance to elements of the Syrian opposition.³³

The big question with respect to Qatar’s Syria policy is whether its support deliberately reached the worst of the

worst, such as al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate *Jabhat al-Nusra*. Hard evidence had long been sparse in open-source reporting, although many suspicions existed about which factions Qatar had chosen to support. The *Telegraph's* investigation into Qatar's support for militant groups found that the emirate had deliberately sent arms and money to *Ahrar al-Sham*—a group that Qatar's foreign minister openly praised. Yet *Ahrar al-Sham* was anything but a moderating force in Syria. The *Telegraph* notes that *Ahrar al-Sham's* fighters worked with *Jabhat al-Nusra*, and that *Ahrar al-Sham* helped the Islamic state to run the city of Raqqa before the two groups had a falling out.³⁴ There are other signs as well. Abu Khalid al-Suri, al-Qaeda's top operative in Syria, had been one of *Ahrar al-Sham's* founders and served as one of its senior leaders until his death in February 2014.³⁵ And following the death of *Ahrar al-Sham's* political chief Hassan Abboud in September 2014, a well-connected *jihadist* claimed on social media that Abboud had been in contact with al-Qaeda *emir* Ayman al-Zawahiri.³⁶

Qatar's engagement in the Horn of Africa, through its relationship with Eritrea, is problematic.

Thus, newer information about the Syrian factions whom Qatar has aided supports the fears expressed by many analysts. However, during field research for this article performed in the late summer of 2013, in-country analysts still emphasized limitations to what was known about Qatar's policies toward Syria, yet had some concerns about what Doha was doing. One analyst, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, said he was concerned that Qatar had "started to lose its marbles," countenancing the idea of supporting even *Nusra*, particularly as

Assad appeared more likely to survive. This analyst believed Qatar had contacts with *Nusra*, and considered supporting the group, but that the emirate's actual support for *Nusra* was somewhat limited and deniable in its execution. "Did Qatar turn a blind eye to groups which defected to *Jabhat al-Nusra* or to ISIS? Sort of," the analyst said. "Did they know that some handoffs they made might make their way to these groups? Yes. Was it plausibly deniable? Yes."³⁷

Another Doha-based researcher said he believes Qatar does support *jihadist* groups—but, rather than doing so for ideological reasons, it likely backs *jihadist* factions because of their effectiveness as fighters.³⁸ And Mehran Kamrava, speaking from his Doha office, argued that due to its lack of a foreign-policy bureaucracy, Qatar's support to Syrian rebel factions could be reaching hard-line groups as an unintended consequence.³⁹

The Horn of Africa

Qatar's engagement in the Horn of Africa, through its relationship with Eritrea, is problematic. Relations between countries of the Horn—namely Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea—have long been volatile, even escalating into border skirmishes between national militaries and proxy fights through VNSAs. One of the core conflicts is between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

After decades of bloody insurgency, Eritrea achieved independence from Ethiopia in 1993. By 1998, border disputes between the two countries escalated into a two-year conventional war that claimed 70,000 to 100,000 lives. Though a cease-fire was attained in 2000, tensions remained high. Both countries financed separatist and dissident groups within each other's borders. But proxy wars spilled out beyond the borders of the two states and into other parts of the Horn of Africa, most notably Somalia.

Somalia's UN-recognized govern-

ment has been battling an Islamist insurgency for the better part of a decade, receiving support from Ethiopia and the African Union. Ethiopia has supported this government out of concern that successful Islamist groups would violently push to make Somali-majority areas of Ethiopia independent. This in fact happened to Ethiopia when an Islamic Group called *Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya* (AIAI)—a predecessor to al-Shabaab—came to control the town of Luuq near the border with Ethiopia and Kenya in the mid-1990s.⁴⁰ In response, Ethiopian forces intervened in Luuq.

When another Islamist group called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) captured Mogadishu in June 2006, Ethiopia was extremely concerned because the ICU was a successor to AIAI. In December 2006, Ethiopia intervened militarily to push back the ICU's countrywide advances. The Eritrean government sponsored the insurgency against Ethiopia in a variety of ways, even openly hosting an opposition conference in September 2007. Illustrating the depth of international concern about Eritrean support for insurgents in Somalia, in December 2009 the UN Security Council "imposed sanctions on Eritrea for supporting insurgents trying to topple the government in nearby Somalia."⁴¹ The Security Council imposed additional sanctions in 2011.

Due to concerns about Eritrean support for VNSAs in Somalia and beyond, Qatar's close ties with Eritrea trouble other Horn of Africa countries. Ethiopia severed diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2008, citing Qatar's relationship with Eritrea and its alleged support for Ogaden separatists.⁴² Somali president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed expressed similar umbrage over Qatar's relationship with Eritrea to U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson at a July 2009 African Union summit in Sirte, Libya. Sheikh Sharif also alleged that Doha was directly supporting al-Sha-

baab. Similarly, a 2011 report by the UN monitoring group on Somalia and Eritrea observed that "Qatar is perhaps Eritrea's most important economic partner at the moment," providing "significant, direct financial support" to the government, much of it "in the form of cash."⁴³

It is premature to declare a genuine transformation in Qatari policy. Qatar's support for Islamist and jihadist violent non-state actors has been forged by years of practice.

The fact that Qatari aid came in the form of bulk cash transfers raises obvious issues pertaining to oversight of aid. Of the many forms that support for violent actors can take, cash transactions are among the most difficult to trace. Unless a transaction is physically witnessed, there might be no way for observers to keep track of where currency is delivered, and in what quantity.⁴⁴ While Qatar's dealings with Eritrea raise clear concerns, the UN's report concluded that the emirate did not violate the sanctions regime through its provision of aid.⁴⁵

Although Qatar continues to maintain close relations with Eritrea, it managed to restore its relationship with Ethiopia in 2012, and recently pledged \$18 million in support to Somalia.⁴⁶ There is obviously much to criticize about Qatar's policies toward Eritrea and the Horn of Africa, but Qatar's engagement has also yielded some positive results. Most notably, Qatar's offer to mediate the Eritrea-Djibouti border conflict resulted in a cease-fire between the states, and negotiations that continue to this day.⁴⁷

A complicated affair

What conclusions can be drawn about Qatari support for Islamist and *jihadist* VNSAs? Relative to other states, Qatari officials and charities rather heavily backed such actors in the 1990s,

when an ideologically-driven Sheikh Abdallah sponsored KSM and al-Qaeda took advantage of the Qatar Charitable Society's largesse. The emirate's support for violent Islamists declined following the 9/11 attacks, although it's unclear to what extent Qatar simply passed laws that were never really enforced—for example, in its terrorist-financing regime.⁴⁸ However, Qatari support for Islamist and *jihadist* VNSAs then rose markedly with the advent of the Arab Uprisings. There remains ambiguity about both the level and intent of Qatari support for *jihadists* during this latter period, but the fact that the emirate's support has reached Islamist and *jihadist* VNSAs is established.

The shadowy nature of much of the evidence about Qatar's policies toward these VNSAs makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the parameters, level, and intentions of this support. But it is worth asking: why has Qatar shown a preference for supporting Islamist non-state actors, including violent ones? The various pragmatic explanations for Qatar's foreign policy beg the question of why, if Doha's aid to militant factions is based solely on picking likely winners, it seems to conclude that Islamists will be the winners every single time. It also does not answer the question why terrorist financiers not only continue to operate freely in the country, but also seem to possess significant political influence. The bottom line is that ideology should not be written off *a priori* as an influence, as is now the case in major Western scholarly works about Qatar. Indeed, the marginalization of religious ideology as a causal force is rather consistent in both political science and international relations.

Most recently, following its ostracism by other GCC states, Qatar announced its support for Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's regime in Egypt. Qatar's announcement in this regard appears to

fit well with Doha's efforts to normalize its relations with GCC members through much of 2014.⁴⁹ But it is premature to declare this to be a genuine transformation in Qatari policy. Qatar's support for Islamist and *jihadist* VNSAs has been forged by years of practice. And while Qatar and Egypt may succeed in developing somewhat warmer relations, the fact remains that both countries support rival factions in the ongoing Libyan civil war. It is worth watching for genuinely significant shifts in Qatar's policies, but it's not clear this is it.



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OUR NAGGING NORTH KOREA PROBLEM

Claudia Rosett

When North Korea's young tyrant Kim Jong Un inherited power upon the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, in late 2011, there were hopes in some quarters that the new ruler might take his country in a less malign direction. Unlike his father, or his grandfather, North Korea's founding tyrant Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Un had studied in the West, at a boarding school in Switzerland. He had a pretty wife. And he liked Walt Disney cartoon characters so much that in July 2012 he appeared on North Korean television with actors dressed as Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Surely, some speculated, in totalitarian North Korea this augured a turn for the better.

It has not worked out that way. Not only does North Korea still qualify as one of the most dangerous countries on the planet, but as the country heads into its fourth year under the rule of Kim Jong Un, the dangers emanating from Pyongyang have continued to grow. Indeed, the threats have been expanding in such dazzling variety and abundance that it might help to sort them into three rough categories. There are the weapons programs themselves, including conventional, chemical, biological and nuclear, as well as an increasingly adept program for cyber warfare. There are the precedents—corrosive to any civilized 21st century world order—that North Korea's regime sets for other rogue states, most notably Iran, by grossly abusing and exploiting both its own people and international rules and norms, and demonstrating that with enough threats, weapons and lies, it is possible to get away with it. And then there are North Korea's global networks for illicit trafficking, through which the Pyongyang regime sustains itself and in some cases makes common cause with other despotisms that double as business partners, including Iran, Syria, China, Cuba and, increasingly in recent times, Pyong-



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yang's old patron, Russia. Put together, all this amounts to a menace that extends far beyond Northeast Asia.

From bad to worse

When Kim Jong Un arrived in power, North Korea under his late father's regime had already racked up a long record of developing missiles and nuclear bombs, proliferating missile and nuclear technology to the Middle East, practicing nuclear extortion, abetting terrorism, and brutalizing its own people. Young Kim has further advanced this family business. He has presided over a multitude of missile tests, including North Korea's most successful long-range missile launch yet—which Pyongyang dressed up as a satellite launch—in December 2012. In February 2013, under Kim Jong Un, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, following those carried out under Kim Jong Il in 2006 and 2009.

In March 2014, North Korea threatened to conduct a fourth nuclear test, which according to Pyongyang's Korean Central News Agency would take an unspecified "new form."¹ As of this writing, North Korea had not yet carried out this threatened test, though satellite photos in early 2014 showed that preparations had been made at the same Punggye-ri site where North Korea performed its first three. There has been widespread speculation that the new test, whenever it comes, might involve a uranium-based bomb. That could be neatly compatible with the uranium enrichment program of one of North Korea's longtime allies and missile clients, Iran, which has already borrowed a few pages from North Korea's venerable playbook on how to exploit nuclear negotiations as byways to the bomb. As of December 2014, Iran was heading into a second lengthy extension of nuclear talks with the U.S. and five other world powers, in which the negotiating—initially envisioned as lasting six months—

has already dragged on for more than a year. One way Tehran might attempt an end run around this process, while still enjoying the related easing of sanctions, would be to outsource its bomb development and testing to North Korea.

Pyongyang, for its part, has been working energetically in recent years to shore up its supply of both uranium and plutonium for nuclear bomb fuel. Since unveiling a uranium enrichment plant in 2010 (after having previously denied any such program), North Korea has expanded its illicit uranium enrichment facilities. It has also restarted its plutonium-producing nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, which was mothballed as part of a 2007 denuclearization deal on which North Korea cheated and from which it finally walked away at the end of 2008.

Summarizing this trajectory, U.S. Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper testified in January 2014 to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that "North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs pose a serious threat to the United States and to the security environment in East Asia."

Clapper's further testimony is worth quoting at some length, because he threw in a few profoundly alarming details. He added that "North Korea's export of ballistic missiles and associated materials to several countries, including Iran and Syria, and its assistance to Syria's construction of a nuclear reactor, destroyed in 2007, illustrate the reach of its proliferation activities." He also warned that "North Korea might again export nuclear technology." Finally, citing North Korea's public display at military parades in 2012 and 2013 of KN-08 road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles, Clapper assessed that "North Korea has already taken steps toward fielding this system, although it remains untested."²

In other words, North Korea is homing in on the ability to strike the U.S. with nuclear weapons. Even if

North Korea has no intention of actually launching what would be a suicidal nuclear strike on America—thereby inviting devastating retaliation—the ability to credibly threaten such a move could be a serious boost to North Korea’s long-running nuclear extortion racket. That’s a package Pyongyang might sell to others as well, or so Clapper implied in his next comment: that North Korea’s “efforts to produce and market ballistic missiles raise broader regional and global security concerns.”

In October 2014, the top commander of U.S. Forces in Korea and the Combined Forces Command, General Curtis Scaparrotti, took this warning a step further. Speaking at a Pentagon press conference, Scaparrotti said he believes that North Korea by now has the capability to miniaturize a nuclear warhead and fit it for delivery on a ballistic missile, something North Korea itself claims it has already done: “They’ve had the right connections, and so I believe have the capacity to have a miniaturized device at this point, and they have the technology to potentially actually deliver what they say they have.” Scaparrotti was at pains to add that he did not know if North Korea had actually done this. But asked to identify the “right connections” that could have put the assembly of a nuclear-tipped missile within North Korea’s reach, he replied “they have proliferation relationships with other countries, Iran and Pakistan in particular.”³

That raises the specter of Pakistan’s old AQ Khan nuclear proliferation network, officially rolled up more than a decade ago, which included as clients, among others, both Iran and North Korea. North Korea sold missiles to Pakistan, from which it received nuclear technology. Oil-rich Iran, and its terror-sponsoring sidekick Syria, were clients of both. Pakistan already has nuclear-tipped missiles. If North Korea now has the ability to produce a nuclear warhead

small and light enough to be delivered with a ballistic missile, and is marketing its products, would Iran or its terrorist proxies say no? The implications of North Korea proliferating its increasingly sophisticated arsenal are dire, not only for South Korea and the U.S., but potentially for Europe and even more so for the Middle East, especially for Israel.

It gets worse. In a lecture delivered in November 2014 in Seoul to the Association of the Republic of Korea Army, Scaparrotti raised additional disturbing points about recent developments in North Korea. Describing Kim Jong Un as “overconfident and unpredictable,” Scaparrotti said that Kim realizes he cannot win a conventional war, so he has focused his military efforts on “asymmetric capability,” and “the North Korean military is making progress in those areas.” South Korea’s Yonhap News Agency, reporting on Scaparrotti’s remarks, elaborated that “Asymmetric capabilities refer to nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, biochemical weapons and submarines that can be used to carry out a surprise attack and lead to mass destruction.”⁴

In testimony in March 2014 to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Scaparrotti also included in a description of North Korea’s asymmetric arsenal, “the world’s largest special operations forces, and an active cyber warfare capability.”⁵ In late 2014, Americans got a front row seat for one of North Korea’s cyber forays. Hackers carried out a massive attack on a Hollywood filmmaker, Sony Pictures Entertainment, and issued terrorist threats (“Remember the 11th of September 2001”) against Americans who might go see Sony’s new film, “The Interview,” a comedy in which two American TV tabloid journalists are asked by the CIA to assassinate North Korean tyrant Kim Jong Un. On December 19, U.S. authorities publicly blamed the government of North Korea for the cyber attack and threats on U.S. turf.

UN-repentant

North Korea has also been making greater use of its seat at the UN, where it is a pernicious influence—recently wielding the threat of a fourth nuclear test to try to deflect penalties for its barbaric human rights record. North Korea's methods of internal control are so monstrous that after decades in which evidence kept piling up about horrifying abuses, including politically-targeted famine, politically-driven infanticide and the now notorious labor camps for entire families of any individual deemed disloyal to the regime, the United Nations finally bestirred itself to conduct an in-depth inquiry. In February 2014, the UN investigators issued their report, accusing North Korea's leadership of crimes against humanity. They urged that those responsible be brought to justice, either before the International Criminal Court or via the establishment by the UN of an ad hoc tribunal.

The report of this UN Commission of Inquiry included an open letter from the commission's chair, Australian jurist Michael Kirby, addressed directly to "His Excellency Mr. Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader, Democratic People's Republic of Korea."⁶ In the letter, Kirby informed Kim that even if he had not been directly involved in crimes against humanity, he could be held accountable for such crimes committed under his command.

At the UN, the European Union and Japan began the process of shepherding a nonbinding resolution through the General Assembly, urging the Security Council to refer North Korea's leadership to the International Criminal Court. That evidently set off big alarms within the North Korean regime, for which the prime imperative is the protection and preservation of the all-wise and all-powerful supreme leader, who serves as the core figure of North Korea's totalitarian ideology. North Korea's envoys initially embarked on a so-called charm

offensive to thwart any attempt to hold Kim to account. North Korea issued its own report on its human rights situation, declaring in Orwellian terms that North Korea had no human rights abuses, and that its "Juche" ideology provides North Korea's people with "a worthwhile and happy life without any social and political uncertainty," all under "the wise leadership of the respected Marshal Kim Jong Un."⁷

North Korea's diplomats at the UN in New York emerged from their usually cloistered rounds to speak with reporters about their country's virtues. And though the U.S. has no diplomatic relations with North Korea, one of North Korea's UN envoys, Jang Il Hun, who serves as de facto emissary to the U.S., made a highly unusual appearance as main speaker at a roundtable at the New York offices of the Council on Foreign Relations. Jang touted as examples of North Korea's commitment to human rights a list of luxuries reserved for the ruling party elite—including the building of "ski resort, horse track" and "pleasure parks all over the country."⁸ He included, in his smiling and polite presentation, the pointed message that North Korea did not want its leadership referred to the international criminal justice system.

On November 18, the draft UN resolution, including the recommendation of referral to the ICC, came before the General Assembly's main committee dealing with human rights, known as the Third Committee. In the debate just before the vote, North Korea's delegate, Choe Myongnam, took the gloves off. Denouncing the resolution as a plot against North Korea, he threatened, in slightly fractured English, that the UN actions were "compelling us not to refrain any further from conducting nuclear test."⁹

This was an extraordinary threat for a diplomat to utter on UN turf, publicly invoking North Korea's nuclear program as a shield for the brutal repression

back home with which the regime keeps its grip on power. It was also the second time in 2014 that North Korea—which is under UN sanctions for its rogue nuclear program—made use of UN premises to tout its next nuclear test. The earlier occasion was a press conference, held on April 4 in the UN press room, at which yet another North Korean envoy, Ri Tong Il, confirmed that his government was planning a new test. Asked what form it might take, he said “Wait and see.”¹⁰

Whatever else North Korea’s regime might hope to accomplish with this sort of nuclear bullying within the chambers of the UN, there’s a sly element to these threats that bears noting. North Korea wants to be recognized as a nuclear-armed state. When its diplomats threaten nuclear tests while speaking on UN turf, they are *de facto* pushing toward that goal—a way of exploiting even a debate meant to address the depravities of the Pyongyang regime.

To that extent, North Korea got away with it. The UN imposed no penalty on North Korea for using its auspices to threaten another nuclear test. To the committee’s credit, its members went ahead despite North Korea’s threat, and passed the resolution by a vote of 111 to 19, with 55 abstentions. Whether that will ever result in Kim facing the ICC is a big question, however. As of this writing, the resolution had been passed by the General Assembly, but looks likely to languish on the agenda of the Security Council, where Russia and China wield vetoes, and in a December 22 debate effectively threatened to use them. Beyond that, even indictment by the ICC, a problematic institution in its own right, is no guarantee of justice. In 2008, Sudan’s President, Omar Bashir, was indicted by the ICC for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. He remains at large, and is still president of Sudan.

The UN vote, including the 18 countries that excused North Korea’s

atrocities in order to vote with Pyongyang against the resolution, does serve the useful function of highlighting the roster of some of North Korea’s best friends and business partners around the globe. This is a rising axis, or network, of states hostile in various ways to American democracy and U.S. interests. Along with such major powers as China (North Korea’s chief patron) and Russia (which, while increasingly defying the West, has been warming to Kim), the list includes Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Venezuela, Cuba, Belarus, Burma and Zimbabwe. These are countries rife with alarming records, which, in various permutations, span the spectrum from histories of rogue nuclear proliferation, to murderous dictatorship, terrorist sponsorship and ties—and in the case of Syria’s regime, the recent use of chemical weapons on its own people. (According to former senior defense intelligence analyst Bruce Bechtol, North Korea has been a “cradle to grave” participant in Syria’s chemical weapons program, selling supplies, and helping build facilities and train and advise troops.¹¹)

In sum, while the U.S. and its allies seek to contain and manage North Korea, the Kim regime, despite sanctions and censure, is neither contained nor alone. Pyongyang continues to cultivate its own network of business partners and allies. There may be little love lost among this collection of thug regimes, but they do help sustain and even embolden each other.

This is a growing problem, as the U.S. under Obama retreats from its role as world cop. With Obama’s “red line” over chemical weapons erased in 2013 in Syria, with Russia rolling into Ukraine in 2014, with Iran stipulating at the nuclear bargaining table an “inalienable right” to enrich uranium, with the ISIS beheadings of U.S. hostages on video, the message, increasingly, is that the rules of the current world order are up for grabs.

Still a cipher

While Kim is reading that message, the U.S. is having difficulty reading Kim. Parsing the internal intrigues of North Korea's regime has long been a murky business. The reign of Kim Jong Un, overconfident and unpredictable, presents even more than the usual difficulties. There has been considerable debate at times among North Korea watchers over such basic matters as whether he is really in charge, and whether some of his more curious or ruthless moves are the result of guile or fumbling inexperience. Writing in November for *Al-Jazeera*, veteran North Korea analyst Andrei Lankov argued that Kim, with the aim of rescuing North Korea's disastrous economy, has quietly embarked on China-style economic reforms, most of which are still in the planning stages, but which nonetheless mark a "seismic shift."¹² In a paper published the same month, titled "*Dependencia, North Korea Style*," American Enterprise Institute Scholar Nicholas Eberstadt and his associate, Alex Coblin, argue that the Kim regime is fed up with China, and is likely to try to bolster North Korea's warped and dysfunctional economy through Pyongyang's more traditional tactics of extracting "aid and other benefits politically, from foreign governments, either through peaceable negotiations or military menace."¹³

Fattened and coiffed to resemble his despotic grandfather, Kim makes the customary North Korean tyrant's rounds of farms and factories, captured on camera issuing "field guidance" with the usual entourage of grinning senior officials. He has played affable host to an eclectic set of American visitors, ranging from Google Chairman Eric Schmidt to basketball talent Dennis Rodman, whose capers in Pyongyang ended with a public apology to his fellow Americans and a trip to rehab.

These scenes have been offset with episodes reminiscent of Caligula's court.

In December, 2013, Kim presided over the denunciation and execution of his uncle by marriage, Jang Song Thaek—once a close crony of his father, long perceived as a staple figure of the Kim regime and major handler of Pyongyang's dealings with China. There have been reports of a continuing purge. This past September, Kim himself vanished from public view for weeks, prompting questions abroad about whether he was still in charge, or even alive. He then reappeared, walking with a cane. (According to remarks about that time by Scaparrotti, whose troops have skin in the game, "He's clearly in control of the country."¹⁴)

Desperately seeking a strategy

Confronted with the Kim regime's threats and volatility, the Obama administration has responded with an approach dubbed "strategic patience," which some have suggested might more accurately be called strategic neglect¹⁵—though it is hard at this stage to discern any strategy at all. About the best that can be said for U.S. policy toward North Korea is that the Obama administration has largely steered clear of the nuclear bargaining table, where the Pyongyang regime has a long record of negotiating in bad faith, collecting aid and diplomatic concessions, cheating and walking away to continue enhancing its arsenal. On February 29, 2012, shortly after Kim Jong Un took power, the U.S. tried striking a deal with Pyongyang—the so-called leap day agreement—offering food aid in exchange for such items as a moratorium on uranium enrichment and missile testing. That collapsed with a North Korean long-range missile test just a few weeks later.

But neither has the U.S. developed any effective policy to stop North Korea's pursuit of increasingly dangerous weapons. Back in April 2009, less than three

months into the Obama presidency, North Korea tested a long-range missile in violation of UN sanctions, claiming it had launched a satellite. President Obama responded with a public statement that “Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something.”¹⁶ The North Koreans read this, correctly, as meaning pretty much nothing. The following month, in May 2009, Pyongyang conducted a nuclear test, its second since 2006. The U.S. and UN responded by slapping additional sanctions on North Korea.

Neither those sanctions nor subsequent rounds of sanctions have deterred North Korea from continuing its nuclear program and missile tests. Part of the problem is that as the U.S. has relied chiefly on sanctions as a tool of coping with rogue states, North Korea has become adept at evading them—a process in which it helps to border, as North Korea does, on China and Russia. Both are countries with records of doing brisk business in enabling, and profiting from, the lucrative business of sanctions evasion. It was a Chinese company that sold North Korea the vehicles for the road-mobile ICBM system it is now working on, with the excuse that they did not know the end-use to which the vehicles would be put. In March 2014, a report by the UN Panel of Experts on North Korea sanctions noted that North Korea “makes increasing use of multiple and tiered circumvention techniques.”¹⁷ This is a game in which it is hard for U.S. enforcers to keep up, especially if North Korea’s friends and patrons somehow fail to cooperate.

There are halfway measures the U.S. can try, or try again: more sanctions; more energetic opprobrium; far more energetic measures to help refugees trying to escape North Korea. The U.S. could try walking back some of its reputation as a chump by restoring North Korea to the State Department’s list of

terror-sponsoring states (from which it was removed as a concession under the failed 2007 Six-Party nuclear deal). The U.S. could take far more energetic measures to exile North Korea diplomatically, such as mounting a major campaign to expel it from the UN (to which it was admitted in 1991, in undeserving tandem with South Korea).

But the fundamental problem here is that until the Kim regime is gone, North Korea will continue to pose a grave and growing danger to U.S. interests. To date, North Korea has pioneered the precedent that in the 21st century, a brutal and ruthless regime can build and test nuclear weapons, hone the missiles to deliver them, and not only will it be allowed to survive, but these weapons of mass destruction will help to preserve it in power. The increasingly urgent question for the U.S. is how to prove Pyongyang wrong.



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HIGH STAKES WITH TEHRAN

J. Matthew McInnis

The international community's search for a diplomatic solution to the impasse over Iran's nuclear program has been an exercise in frustration. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China (the so-called P5+1) want an agreement that can assure the world that Iran is not and cannot pursue a nuclear weapon. Iran denies any such intention, but desperately wants relief from the crippling energy, financial and import sanctions the United Nations, the European Union and the United States have imposed over the past eight years. Since Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's election in June 2013, Washington and Tehran have conducted an unprecedented direct dialogue regarding the nuclear issue. On November 24, 2013, the parties met in Geneva to announce the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA), an initial step toward a potential final resolution of the nuclear issue.

This momentum has not been sufficient to overcome the serious obstacles to a deal on both sides however. The first JPOA deadline to complete an agreement passed on July 20, 2014, without a breakthrough. The parties agreed to keep talking until November 24, 2014, but still no success. Very significant impediments remain on limiting Iran's uranium enrichment capacity, the sequencing of any sanctions removal, the duration of a new monitoring regime and compliance with outstanding concerns of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about the possible military dimensions and weaponization of Iran's program. As a result, the P5+1 and Iran have agreed to extend negotiations a further seven months, until July 2015. However, there are few signs of movement on Iran's part that would be sufficient to satisfy Western demands of a reversal of Tehran's nuclear capabilities.



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Yet the eagerness for a deal on the part of the U.S. and its allies has not dimmed. The Obama administration's keenness for a compromise has unsettled both domestic observers and many foreign allies. Congressional skeptics and U.S. partners in the Middle East have expressed fears that reaching an agreement in itself might take precedence over the objective to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon. This would be a recipe for a bad deal.

Parameters of an acceptable deal

What would be the components of a good agreement, one that is truly in the interests of the U.S. and its allies? At their core, the parameters of an acceptable deal are quite simple: a reasonably verifiable regime administered by the IAEA that ensures Iran cannot pursue a nuclear weapon, with a clear mechanism to reimpose sanctions for non-compliance. Breaking it down further, the main components of a final agreement the U.S. should be insisting on include:

- Extending the amount of time that Iran would need to produce weapons-grade uranium with existing stockpiles sufficient for one nuclear bomb (i.e., breakout) to between six and twelve months. With Iran's existing technology, this has arguably meant reducing (by dismantling, rather than simply unplugging) the number of Iran's existing centrifuges from their current total of approximately 19,000 installed devices to at least below 5,000, and ideally to below 2,000. But given that Iran's centrifuge efficiency will improve as its infrastructure modernizes, we likely need to think in different metrics to ensure sufficient warning time for a breakout.
- Reducing and capping Iran's existing stockpiles of natural uranium

and enriched uranium, especially those at 20 percent enrichment.

- Ensuring that Iran has addressed all of the International Atomic Energy Agency's concerns about the possible military dimensions of its nuclear program prior to lifting all nuclear-related sanctions.
- Guaranteeing that a plutonium pathway to a nuclear bomb is not feasible.
- Maintaining and enforcing measures to block Iran's illicit acquisition of nuclear and missile delivery technologies.
- Ensuring that monitoring and compliance regimes for a final agreement are robust and have a long duration, ideally for 15-20 years.
- Preventing nuclear-related sanctions relief from undermining terrorism and human rights-related sanctions on Iran.
- Confirming to the greatest degree possible that restrictions imposed on Iran's nuclear program are not easily reversible.

Iran's calculus

All of these objectives should be easily achievable while preserving a civilian nuclear program more than adequate for Iran's energy, medical and research needs if Tehran is sincere that it has no intention to pursue a nuclear weapon. However, the Islamic Republic has continued to blatantly resist the IAEA's efforts to bring it into full compliance with United Nations resolutions and address substantial questions about the program's likely weapons research-related activities.

Washington's greatest concern during the negotiations should be that

Tehran has not actually changed its core nuclear program policies. Certainly since the election of President Rouhani last year, the Iranian regime has demonstrated its desire to find a way out from under the economically crippling sanctions and de-escalate the confrontation with the West over the nuclear issue. Iran, in other words, has made the strategic decision to seriously talk to the United States. It has not, however, made the strategic decision to normalize its nuclear effort to reflect what a purely civilian program would look like. Otherwise, for example, rather than stonewalling the IAEA, Tehran would be welcoming the agency's inspectors to visit the Parchin Military Complex outside Tehran as well as other sites widely suspected of being involved in nuclear weapons-related research.

This is also why there are few, if any, useful analogies to compare the current negotiations with Iran to earlier diplomatic resolutions of nuclear programs in countries like Libya and South Africa. In those two instances, the respective regimes had made clear breaks in their national policies toward nuclear acquisition. This is not the case today with Iran. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the rest of the Iranian leadership have made it very clear that the regime will not fundamentally reverse the achievements of Iran's program, that they are committed to the Islamic Republic ultimately becoming a nuclear state, and that they will continue to advance their regime's technological capabilities.

Whether the parties to the current negotiations ultimately reach a good deal, a bad one, or none at all, it is useful to consider why Iran decided to come to the table in the first place. Understanding these drivers is essential as we evaluate potential next steps in the process and anticipate Tehran's next moves.

Though President Rouhani's 2013 campaign platform was largely based on seeking a less confrontational relation-

ship with the West and obtaining relief from economic sanctions, it surprised many observers that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, largely agreed with him on the need for direct talks with the United States. Why was Khamenei ready to seriously engage the West?

Several reasons for Khamenei's support are discernible. The first was the economic pressures resulting from the harsh sanctions imposed by Western powers a year earlier (the European oil embargo, for example). The second was that Khamenei and Rouhani had a long association over the management of and diplomacy for Iran's nuclear program during the Presidencies of Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami. The Supreme Leader had learned to trust the new president and had faith in him following his previous role as a lead Iranian negotiator. Third, Iran's leaders had realized long before the breakout of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) that rising Sunni extremism and the deepening sectarian conflict emanating from Syria were becoming an even more urgent priority for their regime than was the need for a potential nuclear deterrent against the United States and Israel. Defending against the growing regional instability would require greater focus and resources—resources Iran would not have if its economy continued to languish under sanctions.

Fourth, the Iranian leadership perceived President Obama's strong desire to break the impasse on the nuclear program, including his willingness to move away from demands for zero uranium enrichment. Fifth, the relative strategic value of a possible nuclear weapon declined for Iran as its conventional deterrence capabilities improved, especially as Iran's maritime defenses and ballistic missiles were progressively enhanced and upgraded. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the nuclear negotiations themselves, Iran's nuclear program had

finally reached a level of technical competency that could no longer be reversed.

As a result of these factors, Iran found itself with negotiating room. As long as the Islamic Republic is able to produce easily and rapidly more highly enriched uranium, it can give up some of its supply with relative ease.

This is also why the negotiations continue to hit major obstacles. Real reversals in the nuclear program's capability to produce enriched uranium would undermine one of the main motives of the Iranian regime to engage in talks. But reducing Iran's capability to produce enriched uranium is exactly what the U.S. and other P5+1 countries have been seeking as the best way to ensure Iran cannot break out undetected.

When the talks under the JPoA hit their initial July 20, 2014 deadline, the decision to extend negotiations into November was an easy one for Iran. All the incentives remained in place for Iran to work toward a deal, and the Supreme Leader consequently has continued to express his support for Rouhani's efforts. Above all, Tehran did not want to go backward in the process and face the return of full sanctions.

Since July, we have arguably seen increasing anxiousness on the part of the Iranians to get a deal, even if Tehran has yet to make real concessions. The recent substantial drop in oil prices may have convinced Rouhani and the rest of Iran's senior leadership that their critical domestic economic reform programs are potentially in serious jeopardy if sanctions relief does not happen soon. The conflict with ISIS and the ongoing chaos in Syria continues to bleed valuable Iranian resources. Fears of the Israelis starting a covert campaign against Iran's nuclear facilities also may have recently spooked the regime's leaders.

Today, Iran is still publicly defiant about making any meaningful concessions over its "rights" or technical capa-

bilities to enrich uranium. The regime remains unified in its support of the talks, with the Supreme Leader expressing his endorsement of the latest extension, just he has done since the start of negotiations in 2013. The threats of new sanctions from the incoming U.S. Congress could create some diplomatic backlash, but are unlikely to change Tehran's fundamental desire for a deal, especially as economic and security pressures continue to mount. However, Iran is unlikely to make significant compromises on the technological progress of its nuclear program. Prospects for a good deal remain slim, but neither party will want to return to the pre-JPoA status.

The dangers of a bad deal

What if we get a bad deal, one that removes the most important sanctions but does not extend Iran's breakout scenario to at least six months; that does not address the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear work; that does not allow for rigorous monitoring and transparency; that places only short duration constraints that are easily reversible; and that unravels sanctions against Iran's support for terrorism and gross human rights violations as well?

Most critically, a bad deal leaves everyone in the region uncertain about Iran's intentions and potential nuclear weapons capabilities. Our commitment to effectively detect, respond to and deter Tehran should they secretly pursue a nuclear weapon will also be more suspect to our partners. Uncertainty and insecurity will breed potentially dangerous decisions by our allies, including the pursuit of nuclear weapons by Saudi Arabia and Turkey or new security relationships that could oppose our interests, such as the Gulf States making strategic accommodation with Iran.

A bad deal will also leave Iran flush with cash to pursue its objectives in Iraq, the Levant, Yemen, Afghanistan, Africa

and elsewhere—objectives which in the long-term almost always oppose ours. We will have much reduced leverage to push back against these activities.

In the worst-case scenario, we could eventually face a nuclear Iran, for whom classic containment and deterrence approaches are unlikely to be effective. Such a strategy would require the U.S. to sustain a much larger security posture in the region than at present—a difficult proposition under foreseeable budgetary constraints. The U.S. would also need to deter and contain Iran's militant and terrorist proxies throughout the region, and simultaneously be capable of thwarting its conventional military forces. Such a complex approach would require an unprecedented level of consistent and sophisticated policy development and coordination within the U.S. government and between the United States and our regional allies.

Getting to yes... prudently

Aside from ensuring the United States actually gets a good deal, how can the Administration and Congress avoid a bad deal? We should:

- *Recognize that Iran needs this deal far more than we do, and act like it.* Western negotiators should be playing tough, understanding that they, rather than the Iranians, have had the stronger position all along.
- *Communicate clearly that any deal containing significant suspension or removal of sanctions should have 'snap back' penalties if Iran violates the agreement.* The U.S. should reinforce Iran's fears of returning to the *status quo ante*, prior to the JPoA, with full sanctions and even a credible military option on the table.
- *Discuss thoroughly and publicly what sanctions will remain on Iran if a nuclear deal is fully implemented.*

In particular, too liberal relief of the nuclear-related financial sanctions could provide an unwanted boon to the regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its paramilitary arm, the Quds Force. Congress and the Administration should also reinforce that any relaxation of sanctions against Iran for its support for terrorism and gross human rights violations are dependent on separate measurable changes in those areas and will not be connected to a potential nuclear deal.

- *Diligently reassure our allies that we are committed to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, lest we trigger a dangerous realignment of security relationships in the region and a potential nuclear arms race.*
- *Work to ensure our diplomatic missions, foreign partners and intelligence community will be able to provide a robust monitoring capability if a new agreement is implemented.* Ongoing, intensive verification of Iran's nuclear activities and compliance is the only way that an agreement will hold.

Finally, U.S. policymakers and negotiators need to have a sober understanding that Iran is only demonstrating it wants to de-escalate its confrontation with the West by coming to the table over the nuclear issue and engaging tactically on issues like the Islamic State because it benefits Tehran's own near-term interests. Iran has shown no signs of an actual strategic shift in its core ideology away from opposing U.S. interests in the region. President Rouhani is still a creature of the Islamic Republic and, so far at least, pursues policies intended to preserve the regime rather than fundamentally change it. The Revolution is not over.



RIDING OUT THE STORM

Gerald M. Steinberg

For the past four decades, Israel and the U.S. have had a close and cooperative strategic and diplomatic relationship, albeit one that has been punctuated by short and occasionally intense disagreement. The foundation of this alliance includes a history of shared democratic values and threat perceptions, as well as similar understandings of international politics in general, and in the Middle East in particular, based on Hobbesian realism. The differences reflect occasional conflicting interests in the region, and competing perceptions, particularly on the prospects for success of peace negotiations.

The shared foundation has led to collaboration in a number of dimensions, including strategic intelligence, the development of advanced military technology (most notably, missile defense systems such as the Arrow and Iron Dome), and in efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons (through such methods as the Stuxnet computer worm). Diplomatically, and despite differences on the Palestinian issue, the U.S. has generally supported Israel at the United Nations and other international fora, often vetoing hostile resolutions in the Security Council and opposing political warfare and false allegations, such as the Goldstone report on the 2008-9 Gaza conflict presented to the UN Human Rights Council. The safety net provided by American support, in turn, has allowed Israel to take risks and avoid some actions that would otherwise have been necessary to ensure vital security interests.

However, this special relationship has been shaken in recent years by America's strategic retreat from the Middle East, exemplified by the accelerated withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq, inaction in Syria (including the last-minute decision not to use force following the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime), the policy



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of “leading from behind” in Libya, contradictory approaches to Egypt, and so forth. When President Obama has used force, as in the recent air strikes against ISIL, he has acted as a reluctant warrior, reducing America’s deterrence image and thereby also weakening U.S. allies—particularly Israel.

Under the Obama administration, the realist-based aspect of U.S. foreign and defense policy has been overshadowed by a more idealistic or Kantian approach, based on the view that international law and institutions such as the United Nations are useful and can reduce or even eliminate the need for military force. Engagement and negotiations as the basis for resolving conflicts, particularly regarding the Iranian nuclear weapons program, have taken center stage in U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the Middle East. Obama’s first major foreign policy initiative, beginning with a carefully orchestrated speech in Cairo, embodied this overall approach to international relations and conflict.

For Israel, this emphasis on international institutions and engagement, as well as declining U.S. military involvement in the region and a much weakened deterrence image, is a major concern. For many years, Israeli deterrence has been boosted by American strength and, as in the case of Iraq in 1991 and again in 2003, direct military intervention. Repeated U.S. pledges to defend Israel against attack were important in providing reassurance and stability—in high threat situations, Israel could afford to wait, based on the assurances received from Washington.

Not so now. Although President Obama and other U.S. officials continue to intone that “America’s got your back” and “you are not alone,” these words have lost a great deal of credibility among Israelis. For instance, in the effort to force Iran to halt its drive toward nuclear weapons, the absence of a cred-

ible U.S. military threat has removed a very important source of pressure on the regime. In addition, the Obama administration’s emphasis on engagement and negotiations with foes, including Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and its abandonment of old allies, such as Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, has exacerbated the friction with Israel.

These tensions are not new. They have characterized the relationship for the past six years, coinciding with the terms of the Obama presidency and the Netanyahu coalition government. The personal animosity between the two leaders (notwithstanding similar traits) and the intense political warfare that has replaced the bipartisan tradition in U.S. policy toward Israel, has only contributed to the friction. What’s more, the same pattern can be expected to continue for the remainder of President Obama’s term in office—although the recent U.S. midterm elections, in which the Republicans won control of the Senate, might help mitigate the White House’s policy on key issues such as Iran or Israel-Palestinian relations.

The Iranian nuclear conundrum

Iran, and particularly its illicit nuclear program, has been at the top of the Israeli strategic agenda for two decades, and continues to be a source of both shared concerns and friction during the Obama-Netanyahu era. Frequent meetings and public exchanges between the two leaders and various government officials have highlighted these issues.

In terms of official policy objectives, Washington and Jerusalem have generally agreed that the Iranian effort to acquire nuclear weapons violates the NPT, poses a fundamental and unacceptable threat, and must be halted. And in many ways, successive Israeli leaders built their policies of contain-

ing Iran around the assumption and repeated promises of close coordination with Washington.

This carefully nurtured Israeli policy collapsed following the Iranian presidential elections of 2013, the Obama administration's subsequent embrace of Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, the opening of direct talks between the U.S. and Iran, and the partial lifting of sanctions. The differences, which go far beyond the personal disagreements between Netanyahu and Obama, are consistent with the wider decline of U.S. involvement internationally, as well as contrasting threat perceptions. Most Israeli officials view the Iranian leadership as seriously committed to "wiping Israel off the map," and therefore believe that a nuclear capability in the hands of Iran's ayatollahs will constitute an existential threat. The reported comment made by former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (considered by some to be a moderate and pragmatist in Iranian terms) characterizing Israel as a small target that could be destroyed by a single nuclear weapon is often cited as proof of Iranian objectives. Holocaust denial and repeated genocidal threats against Israel, including a November 2014 publication of a "nine-step program towards the elimination of Israel," only serve to reinforce this analysis.

Israeli policymakers, both military and civilian and from across the political spectrum, also see Iran as a triumphalist revolutionary power, seeking to expand its influence while taking major (although not always conscious) risks. Following the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq in 2003, the Islamic Republic has gradually gained power in the region—a process that has accelerated with the decline of Egypt and other Sunni powers. Simultaneously, Iran's support for—and coordination with—proxies such as Hezbollah is continuous, and includes the supply of tens

of thousands of rockets and missiles to both. These arsenals, and miscalculations regarding Israeli responses, have helped to trigger wars in 2006 (Lebanon), 2008, 2012, and 2014 (Gaza).

While the Obama administration has repeatedly declared its opposition to Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, its willingness to compromise and avoid confrontation reflects the strategic view that, for the U.S., the threat can be contained and deterred. After the U.S. (reluctantly) learned to live with a North Korean and Pakistani bomb, the same would be true for a nuclear Iran. Indeed, compared to Pyongyang and Islamabad, the Iranian regime is considered stable and cautious. The American emphasis on engagement and avoiding military confrontation increased significantly following the carefully controlled Iranian elections in June 2013, in which Rouhani was elected president. The Obama administration welcomed him as a "reformer" representing an Iranian political faction seeking rapprochement with the U.S.

In sharp contrast, the dominant Israeli analysis views Rouhani as a core member of the regime, and as someone who played a central role in building the illicit nuclear program, cleverly leading "negotiations" with the Europeans between 2003 and 2005 without yielding significant concessions. The embrace of Rouhani as a reformer was dismissed in Jerusalem as naïve and wishful thinking—a justification to again avoid difficult policies, including further sanctions, or ordering military action against the nuclear facilities.

This strategic dispute sharpened in October 2013, when Israel was apparently surprised by a highly publicized resumption of negotiations between Iran and the "P5+1" (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany). Netanyahu and other Israelis were deeply disturbed by America's acceptance of the

reduction in financial and economic pressure on Iran in exchange for simply entering negotiations (which were in any case in the Iranian interest). From the Israeli perspective, the Obama administration acquiesced in the dismantling of the only significant leverage on Tehran—leverage that had been painstakingly built up over many years, including by Europe, Russia and even China. Instead of translating the resulting pressure into significant changes in Iranian behavior, however, the major trade and financial limitations were relaxed simply in exchange for opening negotiations.

In efforts to maintain some pressure on Iran (and on the Obama administration), members of the U.S. Congress (primarily but not exclusively Republican) introduced legislation that would have restored and increased the economic sanctions in the likely event of failure in the negotiations. This was consistent with Israeli concerns and policy, thereby adding even more to the friction with Obama.

In Jerusalem, the Netanyahu government predicted that, as in 2003, Rouhani would simply use the negotiations to gain more time in expanding Iran's nuclear weapons technology and capability. Indeed, following the expiration of the initial six-month deadline for agreement, the negotiations were extended—and, in November 2014, were extended yet again, all while Iran continues to develop its nuclear capabilities.

Friction over military action

For many years, beginning in the George W. Bush administration and prior to the election of Netanyahu, Israeli officials planned, prepared and presented options for limited military action targeting Iranian nuclear production and test facilities. The options included unilateral Israeli airstrikes, a U.S.-led operation, and joint action. For Netan-

yahu, and Israeli Defense Ministers Ehud Barak (who held the position for six years until 2012) and Moshe Ya'alon, the threat of military action was seen as the key source of pressure on Tehran's top officials. Some analysts argued that this threat was at least as important as the impact of economic sanctions in bringing Rouhani into negotiations.

In contrast, while U.S. officials periodically stated that "all options are on the table" in dealing with Iran, in practice they signaled a distinct reluctance for military force, thereby undermining the credibility of the Israeli strategy. This difference added considerably to the friction between the U.S. and Israel. In December 2007, during the final year of the Bush administration, a publicly-released summary of a U.S. national intelligence assessment claimed that Iran had ended work on a military nuclear option in 2003. This was quickly shown to be wrong, but was explained as part of an effort by U.S. defense officials to block any possibility that President Bush would order a military strike against Iran. This review reportedly surprised the Israeli government, and severely undermined the credibility of American assurances to coordinate with and guarantee Israeli security interests.

In parallel, Israel continued to periodically signal preparations for a unilateral strike, including large-scale air exercises and the test-firing of ballistic missiles. And for a number of years, the fear of Israeli unilateral action served as a form of pressure on the American side. It is possible that U.S.-Israeli cooperation in planting the Stuxnet computer virus in Iranian nuclear facilities, among other activities, was facilitated by Obama's fear of unilateral Israeli military action. (The results of this action are unclear—most likely, the virus caused a setback of some months to a year, but after that, the difficulties were clearly surmounted.) More broadly, however, the Obama administra-

tion's emphasis on engagement, negotiation, compromise and conflict avoidance, coupled with the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and a reluctance to engage in other military actions, undermined the deterrent impact of military threats against Iran.

Beyond Iran, regional chaos

For decades, the dictatorial military regimes and monarchies that dominated the Arab world provided a modicum of stability to regional politics. But beginning in 2011, the misnamed "Arab Spring" caused a fundamental change in the region, negatively impacting both Israeli security and American interests. The intense conflicts between Sunni and Shi'a forces and their allies, such as the Assad regime in Syria, were in large part an unanticipated consequence of the ouster of Saddam Hussein and the U.S. war in Iraq. In other states, such as Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, the combatants include the Muslim Brotherhood and seek to impose their version of Islam on the wider societies.

For the most part, Israel has avoided involvement in these internal conflicts, recognizing that whatever radical *ihadists* might eventually emerge as the new rulers of these countries, they would constitute renewed threats. Friction with the U.S. erupted when the Obama administration supported the ouster of Egypt's military regime and its long-standing strongman Hosni Mubarak, accepting the Muslim Brotherhood under Mohamed Morsi as a legitimate, "democratically elected" government in its stead. From the perspective of Jerusalem, policymakers in Washington were either naively unaware of or indifferent to the terrorist threat posed by a Muslim Brotherhood government, including its close alliance with Hamas in Gaza and the *ihadist* bases in Sinai. One year later, following

mass demonstrations that led to Morsi's overthrow and the restoration of military rule, the U.S. response, including a short-lived cutoff in military assistance to Egypt, further highlighted the disconnect between Washington and Jerusalem.

American paralysis in the region was further emphasized in the case of Syria, where rhetoric demanding the ouster of Bashar al-Assad was not backed by concrete steps on the part of the White House. Furthermore, in August 2012, President Obama issued a public warning (a "red line") of dire consequences for Assad if the Syrian army were to use chemical weapons. When such attacks in fact took place, Obama prepared for military action to enforce his warning, but then backed down at the last minute, instead accepting a Russian government proposal based on implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention. Over the months that followed, large parts of the Syrian chemical arsenal were indeed removed, but at least some were retained by Assad's forces. The overall result was a further erosion of America's deterrence, and an enhancement of Assad's standing.

Similarly, Israel viewed the weak and hesitant American response to the sudden and dramatic appearance of the Islamic State (variously known as ISIL and ISIS) in Iraq and Syria as a further sign of decline. As the group marched through and captured significant parts of Syria and Iraq in the first part of 2014, massacring non-Sunni groups (and those Sunnis that refused to join it), the Obama administration agonized over policy options. Finally, after a series of televised beheadings and the impassioned pleas from the remnants of the surrounded Yazidi minority, President Obama announced that the U.S. would lead an aerial bombing campaign against the forces of the Islamic state, but would not put any American "boots on the ground" in harm's way in order to protect Yazidis, Kurds, Christians or others.

In addition, the U.S. began to consider cooperation with the Iranian regime in opposing the Islamic State. In contrast to the U.S., Iran and Hezbollah (the Lebanon-based Shiite force and terror organization), had boots on the ground in Iraq and Syria. This potential for cooperation further undermined American influence in the nuclear negotiations with Iran, adding to the existing Israeli concerns regarding the credibility of American security guarantees.

The perennial peace process

The issue of the post-1967 “occupied territories” and Israeli “settlements” in those areas has been a source of disagreement between Jerusalem and Washington for most of the past 47 years, occurring with greater or lesser intensity depending on the specific circumstances. In the absence of a peace agreement, all Israeli governments as well as the country’s High Court have rejected efforts to label the movement of Jews into the territories, including Jerusalem, as a violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. But U.S. governments have generally disagreed, in part based on the different interpretations, but also in efforts to appease Arab allies and oil producers (particularly Saudi Arabia).

The violent failure of the “Oslo process” that began in 1993 increased the difference in perceptions and policy. American presidents—including Bill Clinton and now Barack Obama—pressed for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and confidence-building measures. However, for Israelis, the decline of American influence and the growing instability in the region have weakened the impact of U.S. carrots and sticks. In Israel, public opinion polls, election returns, and other indicators show that a substantial majority of the population supports a two-state agreement, but lacks confidence that the existing Palestinian leadership can

deliver such an outcome—or that the U.S. can guarantee Israeli security in the face of the basic risks inherent in territorial withdrawal.

Furthermore, in contrast to the enthusiasm of President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, influential pundits such as the *New York Times*’ Tom Friedman, and others, most Israelis do not see evidence that the conditions necessary for a stable agreement exist, among them a Palestinian renunciation of what they refer to as “a right of return” for refugees and their descendants, as well as recognition of Jewish historical rights in Jerusalem. Israelis are highly cognizant of the strength of Hamas, which took over Gaza in a violent coup in 2007, and could potentially do the same in the West Bank in the event of an Israeli withdrawal.

From the beginning of his presidency in 2009, and in the context of his Cairo speech and attendant effort to reshape America’s image in the Middle East, President Obama placed major emphasis on renewed peace negotiations, pressing Netanyahu to publicly accept the goal of a two-state solution and a nine-month settlement freeze. Obama adopted the power-gap interpretation of failed peace efforts, meaning that Israel, as the perceived dominant power, needed to make the concessions and take the risks. The Palestinians, as weak victims, could not be expected to compromise on key issues, such as refugee claims, that Israelis needed as reassurance.

In contrast, for Netanyahu and many other Israelis, the approach to peace based on the theory of “power equalization” is a dangerous illusion. The assessment of power is changeable and subjective (Palestinian terror as well as the Palestinian Authority’s Arab allies theoretically offset Israeli’s conventional military advantage) as well as irrelevant in the face of intense religious and identity-based conflict sources. Israelis see

Palestinian behavior as zero-sum, and lacking in movement toward a compromise in which the vital interests of both sides can be satisfied. As a result, they believe that Palestinian society, regardless of its leaders, is not ripe for the type of compromise necessary for a stable peace. From the Israeli perspective, and notwithstanding tactical changes, the ultimate goal of wiping Israel off the map is essentially unchanged since the Arab rejection of partition in 1947.

In addition, while the Palestinians—and, to a significant degree, the U.S.—emphasize borders based on the armistice lines at the end of the 1948 war, Israel has focused on security, including maintaining long-term control of the Jordan Valley (the long border area along the Jordan river) as a vital buffer zone. The American side has pressed for creative solutions, including the stationing of international forces in this area, while for Israelis such forces are seen as largely symbolic and unreliable.

As a result, when the initial Obama peace effort ended without a *quid pro quo* from Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, Netanyahu rejected the U.S. demand for an extension in the unilateral Israeli building freeze. A diplomatic stalemate followed, and Netanyahu moved further in implementing a program of economic development and cooperation for the West Bank.

In 2013, however, Obama's newly appointed Secretary of State, John Kerry, reopened formal Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a nine-month deadline. And as regional chaos increased and the U.S. sought cooperation from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and others, the standard arguments were repeated, particularly linking pressure on Israel to this virtual coalition. Regardless of his motivations, Kerry invested heavily in this process, repeatedly invoking the need to develop trust and confidence between Israelis and Palestinians—terms which do not resonate and

seem entirely disconnected from Middle Eastern realities of intense religious and ethno-national hatreds and violence.

It is likely that Netanyahu and the Israeli leadership will seek to manage the conflicts with the Obama administration on Iran and the Palestinians, while maintaining or even strengthening cooperation on other areas, such as strategic intelligence, counter-terrorism, regional instability and advanced weapons development.

The appointment of Martin Indyk as Kerry's deputy only added to the tension between Washington and Jerusalem. Indyk was deeply involved in the Clinton administration's failed policies to promote an agreement, including as Ambassador to Israel (during which time he became entangled in Israeli domestic politics, supporting losing candidate Shimon Peres over Netanyahu in the 1996 elections.) The Kerry-Indyk team was therefore seen by many Israelis, including government officials, as messianic and unwilling to take Israeli security requirements seriously.

Although expressing skepticism, Netanyahu and his government agreed to participate in the U.S.-driven process, hoping to prevent more friction with Washington. This entailed the release of still more Palestinian terrorists, again without any Palestinian *quid pro quo*. However, once more, no progress was made. The negotiations ended and terror resumed in June 2014, when three Israeli teens were kidnapped and murdered by Hamas members in an aborted effort to exchange them for more jailed Palestinian terrorists, touching off a cycle of violence that resulted in large-scale conflict between Israel and Hamas.

This conflict was accompanied by pronounced and highly visible disagreement between the U.S. and Israeli governments. Influenced by distorted media coverage which focused on allegations of disproportionate civilian casualties in Gaza, Kerry and other U.S. officials made disparaging comments regarding the Israeli military response and its unprecedented efforts to avoid civilian deaths. At one point, the media reported a halt in the delivery of some American weapons that were scheduled for transfer to Israel. (Later, however, the head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, would publicly praise the Israeli military for avoiding collateral damage to civilians.) There were also reports of angry telephone conversations between officials in Washington and Jerusalem.

Following the war and the failed peace negotiations, the direct clashes increased, particularly over allegations of new Israeli construction over the pre-1967 “green line,” including in Jerusalem. A series of Israeli announcements regarding approval for new construction, although only in areas defined as “consensus blocks” near the Green Line which are to be retained by Israel in any conceivable agreement, were greeted in Washington by denunciation of “settlement construction” and as being “counter-productive” to peace. This time, however, the U.S. demarches seemed to have little impact on Prime Minister Netanyahu and other officials in his coalition, and did not appear to weaken his standing in terms of domestic public opinion.

Looking forward

After six years of the Obama presidency and the Netanyahu government, the prospects for significant change on any of these issues, or in the differences regarding the general perception of Middle Eastern conflict, are quite low—at least for the next two years. In Israel, Netanyahu remains the most likely leader

for the immediate future, and even if he were to be replaced by someone else, the policies that he has pursued would probably continue.

As a result, it is likely that Netanyahu and the Israeli leadership will seek to manage the conflicts with the Obama administration on Iran and the Palestinians, while maintaining or even strengthening cooperation on other areas, such as strategic intelligence, counterterrorism, regional instability and advanced weapons development.

As has generally been the case until now, the conflicts over settlements and peace efforts can continue to be compartmentalized and separated from the other issues. Although the U.S. under Obama might seek to leverage Israeli dependence on American weapons platforms (aircraft, advanced missiles, and other technologies) to increase pressure for changes in Israeli policies, this leverage will be limited. As noted, the decline in Washington’s influence and direct regional involvement has also reduced its impact on decision makers in Jerusalem. In addition, Republican control of Congress will also be a factor in countering the intensity of any future confrontations between the Obama administration and the Israeli government.

Looking beyond 2016 to the post-Obama context (and perhaps also the post-Netanyahu one), it is possible that the points of friction will decline, reflecting a different approach to regional threats and realities. Shared strategic interests and threat perceptions could well reassert their dominance, strengthening the pattern of close cooperation, while also resuming the policy of “agreeing to disagree” on the definition of defensible borders, arrangements in Jerusalem and other issues related to peace efforts with the Palestinians.



NEW DELHI'S NEW GROOVE

Jeff M. Smith

Is India an ally, an adversary, or something in between? It's a prescient question as America confronts an array of increasingly contentious security challenges across the Indo-Pacific, and Indian foreign policy undergoes its own major evolution under the country's most powerful and transformative prime minister in decades. The standard-bearer of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Narendra Modi, is already leaving an indelible imprint on Indian foreign policy and its relations with the United States. But before examining the state of Indo-U.S. relations under Modi, it's worth revisiting how we got here.

For the vast majority of the 20th century, when presented with the question above, many Americans likely would have chosen "something in between." Others still would have found India's close relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War grounds for an "adversary" label.

That may be unfair, since the U.S. has long misinterpreted the Indo-Soviet Cold War relationship. While those ties were both real and intimate, it was less a strategic embrace than a tactical partnership to suit an era of balance-of-power politics. It's all too easily forgotten that India's first break from its infamous non-alignment policy was during the 1962 China-India border war, when Delhi successfully appealed to Washington for aid against the advancing People's Liberation Army. Many also forget that for several years after Indian independence, America was the largest foreign aid donor to India. It was only following America's close embrace of Pakistan and Washington's rapprochement with Beijing that India sought the patronage of Moscow at the dawn of the Third Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. Even then, the Indo-Soviet relation-



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ship was largely transactional in nature: lucrative Russian arms contracts at a sharp discount in exchange for periodic diplomatic support.

It is safe to say, then, that for several tumultuous decades of the Cold War, to America India was indeed “something in between.” And there it remained in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, as Delhi struggled throughout the 1990s to confront the loss of its superpower patron and a paradigm-shifting financial crisis that opened its economy to liberal market reforms. Both dynamics ultimately contributed to a new willingness to engage with the West in general and America in particular. And yet, with decades of Cold War acrimony to overcome, it still required several major political and geopolitical developments for Delhi and Washington to arrive at where they are today.

One of those developments was a transformation of India’s domestic political landscape; namely, the end of the Congress Party’s nearly uncontested dominance of post-independence politics in India and the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP’s rise alone would have been insufficient had it not been accompanied by other developments like India’s 1998 nuclear test, the election of U.S. President George W. Bush in 2000, and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. To be sure, the Congress Party government that ruled India from 2004-2014 ultimately embraced the U.S. with nearly as much vigor as the BJP. Nevertheless, it was the BJP that pioneered the initial opening to the U.S. at the turn of the century, and it is the BJP that is now positioned to take the Indo-U.S. relationship to the next level.

Rise of the BJP

The BJP is the direct descendant of the Jana Sangh, a political party formed in 1951 on a conservative domestic agenda promoting a uniform civil code

and statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. The party won three seats in parliament that year, but struggled against the Congress juggernaut to gain national credibility over the following two decades.

The Jana Sangh’s first major opportunity came in the wake of the 1975-1977 National Emergency which saw the suspension of democracy under Congress Party Prime Minister Indira Gandhi—a time that is considered even by many Congress supporters today to be the darkest period in India’s democratic history. In 1977, the Jana Sangh joined a coalition of mostly conservative parties to form the Janata Alliance that went on to unseat the deeply unpopular Gandhi.

After two-and-a-half years in power, this government under Morarji Desai fell and the grand coalition, as well as the Jana Sangh itself, dissolved due to infighting. The bulk of the party’s rank and file went on to form the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. However, a wave of sympathy for the Gandhi family in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi propelled Congress to victory in the 1984 elections and relegated the new party to just two seats in parliament.

The BJP responded by shifting rightward, promoting conservative Lal Krishnan Advani to party president and leveraging a rise in social conservatism across India. This was evident in surging support for a panoply of Hindu nationalist groups, including the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, and, most important, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the powerful cultural and ideological patron and kingmaker behind the BJP.

What accounted for this sociopolitical phenomenon? In part it was the product of the Congress Party’s failures. Internal party divisions, corruption scandals, and concerns over authoritarian tendencies, particularly after the National Emergency, began to erode public confidence in the party by the 1980s. And

as its luster began to dull, so too did the untouchable ideology of secularism that the party so assiduously promoted.

Researcher Shaila Seshia has argued that the loss of confidence in Congress and its secular/socialist ideology left a vacuum in which the “redefinition of values [became] eminently possible,” creating “new forms of political identification that challeng[ed] the nationalism forged in the independence movement.”¹ In this context, the BJP’s appeals to Hindu nationalism, “value-based politics,” and a perception of incorruptibility found growing traction among an Indian electorate thirsty for change.

A seminal moment in the BJP’s rise to national prominence occurred in 1990. Following through on a campaign pledge, party president L.K. Advani led a controversial march on Ayodhya, where Hindu nationalists had been campaigning for the destruction of a 16th century mosque reportedly built atop an old Hindu temple to Rama. Advani was arrested en route to Ayodhya but the march galvanized Hindu nationalists and the BJP was awarded its greatest electoral victory in the 1991 general elections, winning 120 seats.

In the elections to follow in 1996, the BJP became the largest party in the Lok Sabha (lower house), raising its parliamentary delegation to 161 and accumulating victories in statewide elections. However, it was unable to form a government and was forced to concede, followed by two unwieldy coalitions under Deve Gowda and then I.K. Gujral.

When early elections were again held in 1998, the BJP continued to expand its electoral base with 181 seats. However, the government formed under Atal Bihari Vajpayee proved short-lived, collapsing only a few months later when a regional party withdrew its support. A narrowly lost no-confidence vote prompted yet another election in 1999.

The BJP assiduously courted a coalition of over 20 right wing and

regional parties under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance. The coalition earned a resounding 299 parliamentary seats, including 182 for the BJP. In the process, it ended years of political instability, cemented a rightward shift in Indian politics that had been building for over a decade, and earned the BJP the first stable, full-term, non-Congress government in post-independence history.

Over the course of its five-plus years in power (1998, 1999-2004), the BJP infused new life into liberal economic reforms and privatization, signaled a greater willingness to engage with the West and the U.S. in particular, and sought to add strategic weight to the previous government’s “Look East” policy. Ultimately, however, the most consequential foreign policy initiative pursued by the Vajpayee government may have been one of its first. That was the order to carry out of a series of nuclear weapons tests in May 1998, India’s first since 1974. The international backlash against the tests was swift, but not particularly deep. India was already considered by most of the world to be a de facto nuclear power, even if it was derided as a nuclear pariah for failing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Pivot points

What no one predicted at the time was the degree to which the nuclear test would serve as a catalyst for the most substantive diplomatic engagement between the United States and India in decades. A dialogue following the nuclear tests between the Vajpayee and Clinton governments found unexpected traction, resulting in 14 rounds of talks spanning two-and-a-half years and a trip to India by President Bill Clinton in 2000 (the first by a U.S. president in 22 years). A year earlier, in another sign of an impending thaw, the Clinton administration took a relatively favorable position toward India during the Kargil War, a departure from

Washington's approach to the previous three Indo-Pakistan wars.

Two developments in 2001 accelerated the pace of change in bilateral relations and raised the ceiling of opportunities. The first was the election of George W. Bush as President. Just as India elected a BJP government more favorably disposed toward engagement with the U.S., Bush entered office with a small foreign policy team ideologically committed to strengthening relations with India.

Their inclination to transform the Indo-U.S. relationship was only reinforced by the second development: the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (followed only two months later by a brazen attack on the Indian parliament building by Pakistani-backed terrorists). Much as India was struggling to shape a new paradigm for the 21st century, the attacks prompted a fundamental reorientation of U.S. foreign policy.

America's new priorities—counterterrorism and confronting radical Islamism, particularly in Pakistan; the promotion of democracy and stability in Afghanistan; stifling nuclear proliferation; preventing Chinese aggression and expansionism; and a new commitment to maritime security—were surprisingly congruous with the BJP's own security priorities.

While reinforcing India's commitment to strategic autonomy, more than any other post-independence government the BJP was unashamed of publicly advocating for a stronger strategic partnership with the U.S. By insider accounts, the Vajpayee government only narrowly decided against sending a sizable Indian contingent to assist the U.S. coalition in Iraq. Through cautious public optimism and vigorous backdoor diplomacy, the BJP laid the foundation for a strategic partnership that would come to fruition after its departure from government.

Despite a solid economic record and generally favorable approval rat-

ings, in India's 2004 elections the BJP suffered a narrow but unexpected defeat at the hands of the Congress Party, winning 138 seats to Congress' 145. With a more robust team of coalition allies, Congress was able to secure a majority in parliament under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The contemporary perception of the Singh government as left-leaning, corruption-ridden, and ineffective in domestic policy tends to obscure the fact that it largely adopted the foreign policy template set out by the BJP government. Most notably, in the summer of 2005 it finished what the BJP started, institutionalizing the strategic partnership with the U.S. by signing a ten-year defense partnership agreement and, more significantly, a historic civilian nuclear deal.

The Singh government approved measures to liberalize the economy, albeit at a modest pace; levied unilateral energy sanctions on Iran; dramatically increased U.S.-India defense trade; approved aggressive increases in defense spending; further developed defense and intelligence cooperation with Israel; approved massive civilian and military infrastructure upgrades at the Chinese border; engaged in controversial energy exploration off Vietnam's coast in waters claimed by China; joined the U.S. and Japan in regular, multilateral naval military exercises; and proved more assertive on issues related to Tibet, including dropping support for Beijing's "One China" policy until China recognized Indian sovereignty over Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh.

In totality, the Singh government's foreign policy looked a lot more like the BJP's than that of any previous Congress government. However, Indian politics hinge on domestic and economic performance, and on that front the Congress government, particularly in its second iteration from 2009 to 2014, amassed a miserable track record and was voted out of office in 2014, setting the stage for the

rise of Narendra Modi and the return of the BJP.

The U.S. and India under Modi

Modi, a former tea-seller of humble beginnings who rose through the party ranks to become a three-term chief minister of the state of Gujarat, gave little insight into his thinking on foreign policy or the United States during his time in Gujarat or while on the national campaign trail. The BJP election manifesto was similarly devoid of details on foreign policy. In the months since the election, neither Modi nor his External Affairs Minister has articulated anything resembling a coherent foreign policy doctrine. Yet it is still possible to glean some insights into Modi's view on, and approach to, the U.S. and the Indo-U.S. partnership.

Suffice it to say, Modi and the U.S. got off to a rocky start. Responding to pressure from human rights groups and members of Congress, the State Department in 2005 denied Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, a visa to visit the United States—a ban that continued pro forma until the Obama administration signaled that Modi would be welcomed in the United States shortly after he became prime minister.

Modi sent numerous signals during his campaign that the he would not let the visa snub interfere with the affairs of state, and went so far as to call the U.S. and India “natural allies” during a pre-election interview. Since then, he has given every indication that he intends to pursue the course set by his recent predecessors and prioritize the Indo-U.S. relationship.

In July and August 2014, his government hosted back-to-back visits by the U.S. Secretaries of Defense and State. Then, in September, Modi made a path-breaking trip to Washington, DC and New York, during which he reached a substantive deal with the U.S. on, among

other things, visa liberalization, and was showered with affection by the growing and increasingly influential Indian-American community. More recently, Modi made a symbolically important invitation to President Obama to be his guest of honor at India's premier Republic Day ceremony in January 2015. It was the first time a U.S. president had ever received this invitation.

To be sure, the two sides still have hurdles to overcome. Despite the meteoric expansion of the bilateral economic relationship (with trade in goods up 400 percent over the past decade, and trade in services and U.S. investment in India both up 600 percent during the same period), in recent years the temperature on trade, investment, and intellectual property disputes has risen, with disaffected American industries pressing an increasingly effective lobbying campaign on Capitol Hill. This dimension of the relationship holds the potential to upset progress on the political and strategic agenda if not addressed more robustly by both sides. Meanwhile, policy differences on global trade and climate change talks, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the operationalization of the U.S.-India nuclear deal will have to be finessed.

But all in all, the tailwinds remain much stronger than the headwinds, and the geopolitical forces that brought the U.S. and India into closer alignment at the turn of the century are only gaining momentum. The strength of the bilateral bond on counterterrorism issues has only grown stronger, and Washington has welcomed forceful statements by Modi on the need to confront the Islamic State terror group wherever it operates. “All countries that believe in humanity,” he told an audience in New York, “have to come together to fight this 21st century challenge.”²²

Shared concerns about the rise of China likewise have only grown deeper, as China has pursued an increasingly aggressive approach to its territorial disputes. This was driven home to India

rather saliently when, at the outset of Chinese President Xi Jinping's inaugural visit to India this Fall, the People's Liberation Army crossed the disputed Line of Actual Control that serves as the de facto China-India border, prompting a weeks-long faceoff with the Indian military. One of Modi's premier initiatives at home has been to accelerate plans to improve civilian and military infrastructure along that border, addressing an ever-growing disadvantage there vis-à-vis China.

In the end, India may never be an "ally" of the U.S. in the formal sense. Delhi's ideological attachment to Non-Alignment (now dubbed "strategic autonomy") and its profound distaste for dependence on larger powers will almost certainly preclude such an arrangement. But that is unlikely to prevent the world's oldest democracy from engaging in more robust cooperation, including in the security and intelligence arenas, with the world's largest democracy than it does with many of its formal allies.

In addition, the Modi administration has no doubt watched with concern reports that Chinese nuclear submarines have begun operating regularly in the Indian Ocean over the past year. And under his rule, India has become an even more vocal advocate of the need for "freedom of navigation" in the South China Sea, a not-so-subtle signal of opposition to Chinese hegemony there. Finally, Modi's government has welcomed overtures by Vietnam to have Indian energy companies expand energy exploration projects in contested waters off its coast, a measure opposed by Beijing.

On Pakistan, Delhi remains, as it always has, concerned about generous

U.S. diplomatic and military assistance to Islamabad. But the gap between the two countries on this issue is growing narrower as the U.S. has gradually adopted a much more favorable position on the Kashmir dispute and as India has recognized that many in Washington are now as outraged at Pakistan's support for Islamist militant proxies as Delhi has been for decades.

Modi has also made it a priority to strengthen relations with U.S. allies in East Asia, a move long encouraged by Washington. His enthusiasm for stronger Indo-Japan ties is shared in equal measure by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has vigorously supported India's rise as a counterweight to China and who long ago floated the concept of a "democratic security diamond" composed of India, Japan, Australia and Hawaii to "safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific."³

That closeness is visible in other ways as well. Despite a failure to sign a civilian nuclear deal, Modi's visit to Japan in August was received with great fanfare. With a massive business delegation in tow, the Indian leader left with deals on clean coal technology and transportation, secured a massive \$35-billion-dollar pledge of Japanese investment over five years, and got six Indian space and defense entities removed from a Japanese export control list.

Nor has India's new premier made a secret of his affinity for the East Asia "development model" or his belief that East Asia will be the focal point of economic development and geopolitical activity in the 21st century. When External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visited Vietnam in August, she announced that India's "Look East" policy would become an "Act East" policy under the Modi government.⁴

This has been received in some circles as evidence of Modi prioritizing the East and Japan over the West and the United

States. However, it should be a welcome development from Washington's perspective. It was almost exactly three years earlier when then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced during a speech in India: "We encourage India not just to 'Look East' but to 'Engage East' and 'Act East'."⁵ Ironically, this "Act East" policy comes at the same time America is itself "pivoting" to East Asia. And as the two countries turn their strategic focus to the Western Pacific, their shared interests there will assume greater salience and likely provide new avenues for cooperation.

Against this geopolitical backdrop, the two sides have taken several smaller, more pragmatic steps to inch the relationship closer to the classification of "ally." The defense relationship has grown exponentially in recent years, from zero dollars one decade ago to over \$14 billion today. Washington welcomed an early move by the Modi administration to raise the cap on investment in India's defense sector to 49 percent, and is excited by recent talk of Delhi raising that ceiling further to 74 percent. Meanwhile, one of the pioneers of the defense partnership within the U.S. bureaucracy, then-Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, was recently chosen by President Obama to be America's next Secretary of Defense. That doubtless bodes well for the bilateral defense relationship, as does the departure of India's notoriously ineffective Defense Minister, A.K. Antony.

Bright horizons

In the end, India may never be an "ally" of the U.S. in the formal sense. Delhi's ideological attachment to Non-Alignment (now dubbed "strategic autonomy") and its profound distaste for dependence on larger powers will almost certainly preclude such an arrangement. But that is unlikely to prevent the world's oldest democracy from engaging in more robust cooperation, including in the security and intelligence arenas, with the world's largest democracy than it does

with many of its formal allies. After all, the U.S. already conducts more military exercises with India than any other country in the world.

Modi may so far have avoided enunciating any coherent foreign policy doctrine but, as Indian analyst Brahma Chellaney notes: "One trademark of Modi's foreign policy is that it is shorn of ideology, with pragmatism being the hallmark. The policy's overriding objective appears to be to enhance the country's economic and military security as rapidly as possible."⁶ And it is clear that, like his predecessors before him, India's new leader sees a strong and vibrant partnership with the U.S. as the critical pillar in enhancing his country's economic and military security. For Washington and Delhi, that should be enough.



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AN ISLAMIST CIVIL WAR... AND AMERICA'S RESPONSE

Katharine Cornell Gorka

When Osama bin Laden appeared in propaganda films or photos, he typically wore an M-65 field jacket, the U.S. Army's combat jacket throughout the Cold War, with an AK-74—the weapon of the elite Russian forces who fought in Afghanistan—leaning against the wall behind him. He presented himself as a military leader, one who was so successful that he was outfitted with the spoils of his enemies. By contrast, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi broadcast the creation of the Islamic State from the *minbar*, or pulpit, of Mosul's largest mosque, wearing a black clerical robe and turban. He took out a *mithwak*, a twig, before he spoke and cleaned his teeth, as the prophet Mohammed is said to have done. He took the name Abu Bakr, referencing the father-in-law of Mohammed and the first Caliph after Mohammed's death. And since Allah's approval is signified by victory in battle, he based his claim to legitimacy on those victories.¹

But al-Baghdadi is no mere commander, like bin Laden. He is not fighting for some small corner of Afghanistan, striking occasional blows against the far enemy. Rather, the Islamic State's leader is the self-declared Caliph. He has reestablished that which had been lost to the Muslim world for nearly a century, since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1924: namely, the Islamic Caliphate. And he is putting his vision into practice.

Under al-Baghdadi's direction, the Islamic State has conquered nearly half of Iraq and Syria in recent months, and done so in the face of Iraqi, Kurdish and even American armed opposition. Yet its vision is broader still; the group has tweeted out a map of the coming caliphate that stretches from Spain through the Middle East, through half of China, down to sub-Saharan Africa.



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On the march

Since 9/11, the Islamist ascent has continued nearly unabated, in spite of extensive Western efforts to stop it. While “Al-Qaeda Central” may have been weakened in the more-than-thirteen years since the attacks on New York and Washington, its brand has grown exponentially across the globe, with offshoots and affiliates now active in numerous countries. The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has gone even further with its conquest of a vast swath of territory, its masterful exploitation of social media, and its extensive financial resources.

The operative question is why the United States, indeed all the forces for moderation, have failed to gain a definitive victory against the ever-growing strength of the global *jihadi* movement. America’s military superiority, after all, remains unchallenged. But our tactical successes, even at their most spectacular, are not bringing strategic victory.

While many factors are involved, including several that are specific to a given country or locale, one can point to two overarching reasons which arguably trump all local circumstances: The enemy has been too narrowly defined, and the resulting strategy is therefore the wrong one.

The enemy, mistakenly, has been identified as only those Islamists who use force. President Obama’s 2010 National Security Strategy identified the enemy simply as al-Qaeda and its affiliates.² The 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review* likewise defined the enemy in the very limited terms of “violent extremists and terrorist threats.”³ The focus was and continues to be on those who use violence. America’s current approach focuses on the several thousand who take up arms or strap on suicide vests, but it ignores the tens of thousands who celebrate suicide martyrs as heroes, who send their tithes to the widows and orphans of those heroes, who encourage

their sons and daughters to serve in the cause of *jihād*, and the many who offer what Osama bin Laden called “cooperation in piety.”⁴

The strategy that logically results is one based on force. It ignores those who actively use non-military methods to assault America and treats the threat as purely kinetic, one whose defeat can be achieved on the battlefield.

That represents a critical error. If the enemy is only those who populate the battlefield, then of course the battlefield should be the locus of operations. But it is not. Rather, the conflict is far broader, and both ideological and informational in nature. And because those actors and dimensions of the struggle remain unaddressed, the *jihadi* enterprise continues to grow.

With the launch of U.S.-led military engagement against ISIS, particularly in light of the fact that victory is not coming easily, these shortcomings are starting to show. A growing number of experts have stated that military force alone will not win this fight. For example, General (USAF, ret.) Michael Hayden, the former director of the CIA and the NSA, has remarked that it will not be enough to focus solely on the “close fight”—those people who are already committed to killing us. Rather, according to him, we also have to think about the “deep fight”—those who will eventually join the war.⁵ General Jonathan Shaw, the former Commander of British forces in Iraq, echoed that assessment when he said recently that the war against ISIS will not be won militarily.⁶

But the Obama administration is not engaging the Islamists in the ideological struggle. White House officials and advisors have refused to truly wade into the “battle of ideas” against *jihadi* groups, seeing themselves as constrained both politically and legally from doing so.⁷

That the United States is failing to engage in the war of ideas leaves us

facing enemy forces that are ever replenishing. For every *jihadist* who falls, another ten will be ready to take his place, and another one hundred or even a thousand will be willing to celebrate them and support them.

Staying out of the war of ideas has another price as well: it leaves us with a lack of clarity over whom we are in fact fighting. Implicit in such terms as “The War on Terror” or “Countering Violent Extremism” is the idea that we are only trying to defeat people who use terrorism. Or, to put it another way, we only target those whose extremism becomes violent. It keeps us away from the very important question of what it is about their extremism, aside from its violence, to which we object. Hence the profoundly contradictory policy of fighting ISIS and AQ in one place, but in another supporting similarly extreme groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. These groups are distinguished, above all, by their use of tactics. But if al-Qaeda’s and ISIS’s explicit hatred of the United States and Israel is objectionable, should not that of ostensibly non-violent groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood be as well?

Additionally, as General Shaw suggests, focusing only on those who use violence means we do not address the sources of the violence; we do not tackle the incubators of the violent mind-set, whether it be particular mosques, or preachers, or ideologues. Every *jihadist* undergoes a period of radicalization, during which the ideas that inspire him to fight take root. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood play a critical role in moving people from mere discontent to activism to violent *jihad*. Yet the West has hardly begun to acknowledge this fact.

Finally, the failure to engage in the war of ideas is self-defeating because we thereby deprive ourselves of the essential requirement to fully know the enemy. So much is to be learned from the details around bin Laden’s and

Baghdadi’s public pronouncements, how they present themselves, what they say. All the evidence suggests that these events are not fully mined for their intelligence potential. Are there, for example, intellectual weaknesses that we can exploit, thereby saving ourselves the far more costly losses incurred in physical battle? And is anyone seriously seeking to identify these vulnerabilities? Such questions are not currently being explored, because belief is out of bounds and intelligence about our adversaries has become the domain of sociologists and anthropologists.

A “reset” for the war on terror

Engaging our adversaries in the arena of ideas over why they fight, not merely on the battlefield where they fight, starts with definitions. Our enemy is not, as the Bush and Obama administrations have tried to say, simply al-Qaeda, or violent extremists, or even the Islamic State. Nor is it anyone who simply opposes the ideas enshrined in the American Constitution. Rather, it is those who declare themselves our enemies and who are willing to take action against the national interest of the United States, its people, or its Constitution. From that perspective, the enemy we are discussing here is best described as the broad spectrum of groups and individuals that constitute the global *jihadist* movement. Al-Qaeda has long been the most conspicuous representative of that movement, but now it faces an ideological challenge from the Islamic State. Yet each is just one of hundreds of similarly minded organizations, all of which are driven by the idea of restoring glory and prominence to Muslim populations by returning to a pure form of Islam, which demands the casting off of man-made laws and constitutions and bringing their lands under the rule of *sharia*.⁸

The next imperative is to identify the ideas that animate and inform this enemy. According to Osama bin Laden himself, at its inception in 1979 al-Qaeda was initially driven by the twin motivations of self-defense and *da'wa* (proselytization).⁹ Under this view, the fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was claimed to be a *jihad* of self-defense. But its ideological foundation was in fact much broader, and contained all the elements that to this day shape global *jihad*. This ideological foundation was first laid out by a little-known ideologue named Abdullah Azzam.

Born into a Palestinian family who had to flee the West Bank after the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War, Azzam became a disciple of the Muslim Brotherhood, studying the works of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb during his formative years. He studied in Syria and Egypt, and taught in Saudi Arabia. In each of these places, he was close to the leading Islamist movements of the day. As a result, he was able to bring their disparate intellectual threads together into a cohesive doctrine, which he published in 1984 under the title *Defense of Muslim Lands*. That book became the foundational work for the global *jihad*, because it contained the key elements at the heart of every *jihadist* enterprise: the humiliation of all Muslims at the hands of impure regimes and colonial powers, the threat that Islam would suffer ultimate defeat if Muslims did not take on *jihad* as a personal obligation, and the reestablishment of the Caliphate as the ultimate goal.

Azzam thus created the ideological framework for global *jihad*. Osama bin Laden executed it. He was able to turn a theological construct into a military operation, in no small part because he was able to fund it. By his own reckoning, bin Laden's support for various groups engaged in the "Islamic awakening" extended to 13 different countries.¹⁰ Muslim fighters began to flock to the

cause of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan. Emboldened by success, bin Laden became more ambitious in his goals. By 1990, he had set his sights far beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan. He derided the Saudi monarchy for having betrayed Islam and for serving their own interests. He identified 1990 as a pivotal year, when Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait brought American troops into what he termed the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, Mecca and Medina. He also identified the suffering of Muslims in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, for which he blamed Americans, as the source of his ire.¹¹

If the enemy is only those who populate the battlefield, then of course the battlefield should be the locus of operations. But it is not. Rather, the conflict is far broader, and both ideological and informational in nature. And because those actors and dimensions of the struggle remain unaddressed, the *jihadist* enterprise continues to grow.

Bin Laden's declaration of *jihad* against the Americans, issued on September 2, 1996, elaborated further. It decried the "injustice, repression, and aggression that have befallen Muslims through the alliance of Jews, Christians, and their agents."¹² In it, he listed at length the failings of the Saudi state, including corruption, failure to pay its debts, and overcrowded prisons, but ultimately he blamed the "Jewish-Crusade alliance" for "exhausting and aborting" any potential reform movements in Saudi Arabia. He indicted the Saudi monarchs for failing to reclaim for Islam the Al-Aqsa Mosque, located in Jerusalem. Importantly, with this *fatwa*, bin Laden called for the use of guerrilla tactics to expel the enemy

from occupied lands because of the lack of parity in forces. Driving the Christians and Jews from the Arabian Peninsula and reclaiming Palestine thus became the primary concerns for bin Laden.

Engaging our adversaries in the arena of ideas over why they fight, not merely on the battlefield where they fight, starts with definitions.

In January 2001, bin Laden's ideology evolved one step further. He had started with defensive *jihad* of lands occupied by non-Muslims. It had matured into offensive *jihad* against the enemies of Islam. Now, he sought to make Islam victorious over all, with all Muslim countries of the world merged into one, "where men do not rule men."¹³ The result, bin Laden envisioned, would be called the Global Muslim State, with one currency, a common defense, and the Koran as its constitution.¹⁴ But the time had not yet arrived. Bin Laden pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban and Emir of the Faithful. As bin Laden described it, Mullah Omar was the only man in the world leading an Islamic state.¹⁵ Mullah Omar was not a Caliph, and the land he ruled was not a Caliphate, but one can clearly see planted there the idea that eventually bore fruit with ISIS' declaration of the Caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

The roots of rage

Many Western analysts treat bin Laden's litany of grievances as though they were grounded in both reality and reason, and therefore attribute al-Qaeda's success to them. It is far more likely, however, that the organization's success stemmed from two other factors: the millions of dollars that flowed in from bin Laden and others to support *jihadists*, and the personal experience many young Muslims had gained in fighting

jihad in places such as Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, the Palestinian territories, and elsewhere. One such acolyte was a Jordanian named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who had met Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in late 1999. Bin Laden is said to have disliked Zarqawi intensely, but eventually agreed to give him the resources to set up a training camp in Herat, Afghanistan.

The roots of ISIS are here, and with them the major fault lines between ISIS and al-Qaeda, which were, and remain, two different styles of leadership, two different personalities. Bin Laden was more refined, educated, and elite, and his successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was cut from similar cloth. Zawahiri came from an upper-class Egyptian family of wealthy doctors and scholars. Indeed, his grandfather had been the grand imam of Cairo's famed Al-Azhar University.

Zarqawi, on the other hand, was a criminal and a thug. He is reported to have had 37 run-ins with police prior to his career as a terrorist.¹⁶ Zarqawi and bin Laden clashed famously. Zarqawi called for the execution of all Shi'ites, in keeping with Salafist Islamic teachings.¹⁷ Bin Laden, on the other hand, was more tolerant of the Shi'a because his own mother, Alia Hamida al-Attas, was an Alawite from Syria, and bin Laden had spent many of his summers as a boy in Latakia, an Alawite stronghold.

Zarqawi and bin Laden also differed on the nature of the enemy. Bin Laden, of course, was focused on the far enemy: Israel and the United States. Zarqawi's first interest was to overthrow the Jordanian regime, but then he broadened his focus to include Al-Sham. Geographically, al-Sham, or the Levant, refers to an area that includes Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the territory of Palestine. Theologically it has great significance in Islamic eschatology: when the end times arrive, it is believed that Jesus will descend near a white minaret in Damascus and kill the

anti-Christ, after which all Christians will convert to Islam.¹⁸ Thus the final battle at the end of time will take place in al-Sham, which is why some call the Syrian conflict a “one-way ticket to *ji*had.” By going there, they will get to see Islam’s final victory—an idea that makes for a very powerful recruiting tool.

While still in Afghanistan, Zarqawi formed the organization *Jund al-Sham* (Soldiers of Al-Sham) and he called himself the *Emir* of Sham.¹⁹ In December 2001, Zarqawi left Afghanistan and moved his operations to Iran and Iraq. Eventually he found his way to Iraq, where he conducted countless terrorist attacks and bombings and helped fuel an insurgency. It is worth noting that it was Zarqawi who initiated the spectacle of beheading American hostages dressed in the orange jumpsuits of the Guantánamo Bay prison, the practice that has been so famously continued by ISIS.

Both bin Laden and Zarqawi were killed by the United States, but their organizations carry on. Zarqawi was killed on June 7, 2006, and nine days later, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made a public statement about Zarqawi’s death, claiming it “a great loss” and in so doing identifying himself as the heir apparent. While the subsequent U.S. “surge” managed to greatly weaken the insurgency and push its leaders underground, when U.S. troops left Iraq in 2011 the organization began to regain strength and found new life when it expanded into Syria in 2013.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which had by then evolved into the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), was publicly disavowed by al-Qaeda in February 2013. But the latter had internally expressed concerns much earlier than that. Papers found in the 2011 raid of bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad contained warnings that AQI might have a negative impact on al-Qaeda.²⁰ But it was really a concern about control. Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden’s successor as the leader of al-Qaeda,

famously ordered AQI to leave Syria alone and to focus on Iraq, but Baghdadi ignored him. So al-Qaeda kicked them out of the larger organization. This, however, did not have a weakening effect: on June 10, 2014, the new ISIS swept in and took control of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. And on June 29, 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the established of the Caliphate.

Regaining the offensive

This conflict has now been underway for thirteen years (or twenty-one years if one recognizes the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center as its opening salvo), and the United States is playing a constant game of catch-up. As a victory is achieved in one corner of the battlefield, the enemy pops up stronger than ever in another. U.S. strategy is reactive and defensive. We rush to wherever the enemy flares up, much as we did throughout the Cold War—at least until the Reagan era, when the United States moved from defense to offense.

While vulnerabilities do indeed exist at the micro level of rivalries between groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, and these can be exploited to weaken one or both, this will only ever amount to skirmishes in the bigger fight against the global *ji*hadist movement, which will never be defeated until the United States develops a comprehensive strategy to do so.

In his day, President Jimmy Carter treated the Soviet Union as if it were too big to fail, and therefore could only be contained at best. By contrast, his successor, Ronald Reagan, would accept nothing less than its total defeat. President Carter focused largely on the Soviet

Union's nuclear arsenal, much as we focus today on the enemy's use of terrorist tactics. Reagan took a much deeper view. "While America's military strength is important," Reagan said on March 8, 1983, "... I've always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith."²¹

With that understanding of the nature of the threat, Reagan laid out a comprehensive strategy in *National Security Decision Directive 75* (NSDD-75). As scholar John Lenczowski describes it, NSDD-75 "prescribed the necessity of 'an ideological thrust which clearly affirms the superiority of U.S. and Western values of individual dignity and freedom, a free press, free trade unions, free enterprise, and political democracy over the repressive features of Soviet Communism.'"²²

What might a similar strategy look like for today's enemy? While vulnerabilities do indeed exist at the micro level of rivalries between groups such as ISIS and al-Qaeda, and these can be exploited to weaken one or both, this will only ever amount to skirmishes in the bigger fight against the global *jihadi* movement. The latter will never be defeated until the United States develops a comprehensive strategy to do so. Such an approach would, by necessity, include: explicitly and publicly identify the ideology of our enemies as evil and in contravention of the universal truths upon which our Republic was founded; supporting those within the Arab and Muslim world who are prepared to resist the global *jihadi* movement and reform their societies; engaging in the full range of information operations to counter *jihadi* propaganda and generating our own countervailing message; and disrupting the financial support networks which facilitate the propagation of these groups and their ideology.

American leaders have shied away from bearing moral witness to the truth in the face of the Islamist threat. Their silence, in turn, has paved the way for defeat upon defeat at the hands of the *jihadists*. Robert Reilly, who served both under Reagan and during the second Iraq War, frames the challenge this way:

War's practical objective is to cause the enemy to give up the ideas that animate his struggle, either by demonstrating the illegitimacy of his ideas or crushing those who hold them—or more likely a combination of the two. It is also to convince the enemy that further pursuit of his ideas is futile, or just no longer worth the effort... It cannot be stressed enough that this is not a matter of messaging. It consists of putting into words what one really does live and die for.²³

Once we fully understand the seriousness of this threat, and that moment is nearly upon us, the United States will have to engage in this war in an entirely new way. Only then will we be able to provide what Lenczowski has called the "contagious moral witness to truth."



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DISPATCHES

Ukraine's New Promise

George Logush

KYIV—As paradoxical as it may sound, the situation in Ukraine is better than it has been for some time. Better not only since the turmoil began in November of 2013, and the subsequent start of the Russo-Ukrainian war with the occupation of Crimea at the end of February in 2014, but also better since the ascendancy of the pro-Kremlin regime of Viktor Yanukovich. Perhaps also, one may risk saying, better than at any time since the country gained independence in 1991.

With the combined impact of Western sanctions and the collapse of petroleum prices, the Russian Federation has blinked in its confrontation with Ukraine and the West, and Ukraine is inching toward quiet on the eastern front. The latest cease-fire is holding better than the previous one, and the Kremlin has not dared to launch its offensive to secure the overland route to the beleaguered and isolated Crimean peninsula, where the population's unrest appears to be mounting. Nor is there any movement, or even feint, to capture the Ukrainian Black Sea coast between Transdnister and the land bridge to Crimea, in part perhaps because of the disappointing outcome (for Russia) of the Moldovan election.

Russia has apparently seriously miscalculated in its Ukraine strategy. It forgot that an entirely new generation of Ukrainians has emerged during the period of independence, progressively more assertive and self-assured as a result of three Maidans (1990, 2004, and 2014). This is not the Ukraine of the Soviet era, or even that of the end of the czarist period. The carefully executed destruction of the country's military capability during the Yanukovich presidency was unexpectedly offset by the same civil society activism that produced the most recent uprising. Ordinary citizens displayed extraordinary



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tenacity and courage on the streets of Kyiv, took up arms, rushed to the Donbas, and stopped the Russian advance—actions somewhat reminiscent of the Kozak self-defense phenomenon of the 16th and 17th centuries. This allowed the armed forces to regroup and, together with civilian battalions, to push back the amalgam of separatists, Russian “volunteers,” and regular army units. As a result, Ukraine may now be closer to peace than at any time since the warfare began. And Western support has been bolstered by the results of the mid-term elections in the U.S., and a growing sentiment in favor of supporting Ukraine on Capitol Hill.

Of course, challenges remain. The Ukrainian economy is in difficulty, but the magnitude of the downturn is within the bounds of three previous post-Soviet economic crises in Ukraine—crises that Kyiv weathered successfully. Ukrainians are inured to hardships; in the first post-independence depression, GDP had dropped by approximately 70 percent by 1997 and 15 percent in the post 2008 recession. The current GDP decline of 7 percent for 2014 is smaller and largely localized to the Donbas region. In glaring surrealism, Kyiv suffers from traffic jams and packed restaurants and entertainment venues. Soldiers and volunteers returning from the front are stunned by the contrast with the violence, death and destruction of the front lines and in occupied Donbas.

Devaluation is repeating the pattern of the post-1998 and post-2008 periods, running at about 100 percent, and nowhere near the 100,000-fold devaluation of 1992-1995. While there is concern about potential default, international support of Ukraine is stronger than at any time in the past, and the international community appears to be intent on preventing a catastrophic scenario. True, inflation is running at about 20 percent and banks are underwater, serious obstacles to stabilizing the decline and ultimate recovery. But, on the positive side of the ledger, we have witnessed the end to the plutocracy that has been in the ascendancy since the early 1990s, and a fresh start for the economy.

The key to economic recovery is the completion of the transition and transformation of the centrally planned economy to a reformed market economy. Early transformational reforms of the 1990s, with a few fits and starts, had stalled and then regressed between 2010 and 2013. The pro-European revolution of last year had a strong reformist vector, much more powerful than that of 2004. The new Rada now has a constitutional majority coalition of reform-minded forces of the Maidan. To avoid conflict, the parties hammered out a coalition agreement and approved a new government of young new faces with an admixture of quickly naturalized foreign nationals for the Finance, Economics, and Health portfolios. The first-stage reform agenda of the government has been approved by the Rada, the 2015 budget is being prepared, and new reform legislation is to follow. The reform plan is to include horizontal economy-wide and vertical sectorial reforms. Planned reforms will cut across all sectors and industries, and are intended to liberate long-constrained drivers of the economy.

On the diplomatic and political fronts, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and President Petro Poroshenko have been very skillful in building Western support. This has been effective in marshaling sanctions against Russia, mobilizing Western financial support, and nurturing Western expectations of radical economic and political reforms. If political unity is preserved, the combined forces of a hyperactive civil society and determined business community will drive the Ukrainian government and parliament along the road to reform.

In short, if all goes as hoped, Ukraine may soon be open to the world for business and moving more assertively into world markets. Ukraine, and conservative inward- and eastward-looking Ukrainian business, need to quickly adapt to the enormous opportunities offered by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (and Association Agreement) with the European Union, and by other world markets beyond the restrictive Russian one to which Ukraine has been tethered for so long.

If they do, a new, reformed Ukraine could become the best investment opportunity in Europe. The world is supportive. It is now all up to the Ukrainians.



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Europe's Foreign Fighter Problem

Lorenzo Vidino

MILAN—The mobilization of European *jihadists* for foreign battlefields is not a new phenomenon. It dates back to the 1980s (Afghanistan), continued throughout the 1990s (Bosnia and Chechnya) and surged in the 2000s (Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia). Even so, the number of European-based fighters who have reached Syria and Iraq since 2011 is unprecedented in its scope. In September 2014, the EU's anti-terrorism coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, estimated that figure to be in excess of 3,000, but many believe it to be higher. Larger countries like France and the United Kingdom have contributed the lion's share of the fighters (some 1,000 and 800, respectively), but even smaller ones have seen large numbers of their residents (and, in most cases, citizens) travel to Syria to fight.

The vast majority of these European volunteers join *jihadist* groups, in particular the Islamic State. European authorities are understandably concerned about the implications; French Interior Minister Manuel Valls has called the possibility of these individuals returning to France as hardened *jihadists* “the biggest threat that the country faces in the coming years.” Hans-Peter Friedrich, Germany's former Minister of Interior, has similarly stated that returnees from Syria trained in “deadly handwork” will be “ticking time bombs.”

To be clear, not all foreign fighters will pose a threat upon returning to Europe (and some will never return at all, either because they will die on the battlefield or because they will continue their militancy in Syria/Iraq or elsewhere). But it seems inevitable that at least some of those who do will attempt to carry out attacks against targets in their own or other European countries.

Evidence supporting these fears has been piling up. Intelligence agencies have long believed that “Islamic extremist groups in Syria with ties to Al Qaeda are trying to identify, recruit and train Americans and other Westerners who have traveled there to get them to carry out attacks when they return home,” as a January 2014 *New York Times* article put it. And over the last few months, many of these fears have begun to materialize, as authorities throughout Europe have detected various attacks with roots that can be traced back to Syria.

The first such incident was thwarted in England in the fall of 2013, when British authorities arrested a number of Syrian returnees allegedly planning to conduct Mumbai-style attacks in London. Since then, attacks with Syrian links have reportedly been headed off in Sweden, Belgium, France, Switzerland and Great Britain (again). Many of these were just in the planning stages, and it is unclear whether the planners were acting independently or under some form of command from various groups operating in Syria and Iraq.



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European authorities have reacted in a variety of ways. Many initiatives have focused on preventing European Muslims from traveling to Syria in the first place. While the approaches vary from country to country, most employ a mix of hard and soft measures to do so. When possible, authorities seek to arrest and criminally prosecute individuals seeking to leave. And while no country criminalizes traveling to Syria or any other conflict area per se (although proposals to do so are currently being discussed), many have statutes under which individuals seeking to make the journey can be charged with training for terrorist purposes, providing support to a terrorist organization or similar offenses.

Obviously, in order to do so, authorities need to be in possession of solid evidence that can be produced in court, something that is not easy to obtain when seeking to prosecute individuals who are simply planning terrorism-related activities. This often leads to frustrating situations in which authorities have to watch individuals leave for Syria with what can be quite reasonably assumed to be the intention of joining *jihadi* groups but are unable to arrest them for lack of adequate evidence. In many instances European authorities resort to alternative, but arguably not very effective, measures such as the confiscation of travel documents or, in the case of minors, judicial custody.

Authorities face similarly significant challenges when dealing with individuals who have returned from Syria. Those seeking to prosecute returnees are faced with the challenge of proving through evidence admissible in court that a given individual committed specific crimes—a daunting task given the difficulty in obtaining reliable evidence from the Syrian and Iraqi battlefields.

Many European countries have also been employing various measures to reintegrate returnees. Countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands have had a counter-radicalization structure in place for almost ten years, and are now using many of their resources to diffuse the potential threat posed by returnees. In many countries, such efforts take the form of psychological counseling and coaching from trusted mentors. At the same time, authorities seek to monitor the returnees' activities and assess the dangerousness of each.

Overall, however, these measures seem inadequate to stem the steady flow of foreign fighters now migrating to the Levant—or prevent the return of at least some of these holy warriors home, with the intention of carrying out attacks. Europe's struggles in confronting this emerging threat demonstrate all too clearly that liberal democracies face significant—and perhaps ultimately insurmountable—barriers to their ability to defend against this new trend in transnational terrorism.



Islamist Inroads in the Americas

Pedro Trujillo Álvarez

GUATEMALA CITY—For most experts on Islamic terrorism, Latin America is something of an afterthought. Likewise, the same holds true for many Latin American security and defense experts, who view radical Islam as a foreign concept, with little relevance to their region. This state of affairs prevails at an official level as well, with most Latin American governments failing to incorporate counterterrorism measures into their national security strategies, thereby creating the necessary political space for Islamic extremism to expand throughout the region.

Over the last decade, the high-profile relationship between the late Venezuelan *caudillo* Hugo Chávez and his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad raised the profile of Islamic extremism in the Americas. As time has gone on, however, it has become apparent that Venezuela represents only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the presence of radical Islamic terrorist groups in the region. Today, a variety of Islamic extremist movements and actors are broadening their activities in the region, from Mexico down to Argentina.

The Caribbean is of particular note in this regard. The offshore islands, which have long been a haven for criminal enterprise, are being exploited by terrorist franchises that take advantage of the lax oversight and weak institutions within the Caribbean states.

Over the last decade, several high-profile cases have shed light on this emerging synergy, particularly in Trinidad and Tobago off the Caribbean coast of Venezuela. In 2004, it was revealed that *Jamaat Al-Muslimeen* (JAM), a Sunni organization that attempted a coup d'état in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990, was linked to Hamas and several jihadist websites from Afghanistan. JAM was reported to have been recruiting and proselytizing from within Trinidad and Tobago, introducing many of its citizens to radical Islam over the course of several decades. Two years later, in May of 2006, this proselytization proved effective when two citizens of Trinidad and Tobago (Barry Adams and Wali Muhammad) were detained and jailed in Canada for their involvement in acts of terrorism. A year after that, a larger terrorist plot was uncovered involving Kareem Ibrahim, an Islamic leader in Trinidad and Tobago, who, along with former Guyanese parliamentarian Abdul Kadir, planned to bomb John F. Kennedy airport in New York. Both were arrested, convicted and sentenced to life in prison in 2007 for an attack that—if successful—could have rivaled those of 9/11 in scope.

Jamaica is another hub of Islamist activity. According to WikiLeaks, Jamaican-born Islamic cleric Sheikh Addullah el-Faisal (also known as al-Jamaikee) was responsible for establishing multiple terrorist cells on the island over the course of the past two decades. He was arrested by British authorities in the mid-2000s for his role in soliciting murder and fueling racial hatred. Tellingly, one of the perpetrators of the 2005



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attempted bombing of the London metro, Germaine Lindsay Maurice, was also born in Jamaica and supposedly had been influenced by Sheikh Addulah el-Faisal.

While proselytization has become a concern in the Caribbean, a larger concern is the complicity of these countries in illicit immigration schemes linked to the Middle East. Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are all known to have produced travel documents for Iran's operatives and proxy agents, namely Lebanese Hezbollah. For instance, in July of 2008, it was disclosed that the Islamic Republic signed an agreement with Dominica allowing its citizens to obtain a second citizenship and passport from the island, thereby providing Iranians with easy access to Great Britain, since Dominica is a part of the commonwealth of the United Kingdom.

But while Iran and Hezbollah have made inroads in the Caribbean, their largest presence is arguably in South America. The largest country on the continent, Brazil, is also home to Latin America's largest Islamic population (estimated at one million). Hezbollah has increasingly used this population to conceal its operatives and provide cover for illicit activities. Most recently, on November 9, 2014, the leading Brazilian newspaper *O'Globo* reported close ties between Lebanese Hezbollah and the largest criminal gang in Brazil—First Capital Command (*Primero Comando da Capital*, or PCC). This relationship involved the provision of weapons to the PCC in exchange for the protection of Hezbollah operatives incarcerated in Brazilian prisons. In the last few years, several prominent Hezbollah members have been jailed in Brazil for criminal racketeering—including Hamzi Ahmad Barakat, the brother of the infamous Assad Ahmad Barakat, who, according to the U.S. Treasury, is considered one of Hezbollah's most “prominent and influential members.”

At the same time, the threat has increasingly migrated northward, toward the U.S. border. Mexican intelligence, known as *Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional* (CISEN), admitted in September 2011 that it “cannot discount the risk that a possible presence of Islamic terrorism is present in our territory.” The statement was prescient; the following month, evidence surfaced of a failed effort to bomb the U.S. Embassy in the Distrito Federal (Mexico City) by the Somali Islamist group *Al-Shabaab*. A year later, an American citizen from San Francisco, Rafic Labboun, was arrested in Merida, Mexico, for smuggling Hezbollah operatives through Mexico into the United States using forged Belizean identification documents.

The growing network of Islamists throughout Latin America is supported and financed by the powerful *narco* industry that is prevalent throughout the region. Mexico is ground zero for this drug activity. In 2011, the extent of this crime-terror nexus was revealed when U.S. authorities arrested Lebanese drug-trafficker Ayman Joumaa for trafficking several tons of cocaine from Colombia through Mexico and laundering vast sums of money for Lebanese Hezbollah. The court documents in the case revealed close ties between Hezbollah and Mexico's powerful *Los Zetas* drug cartel.

Yet while local law enforcement authorities and intelligence agencies throughout Latin America know that Islamic terrorists operate in tandem with transnational organized crime, most national governments in the region refuse to acknowledge the gravity of this threat. As the events of recent years have made clear, they do so at their own peril.





BOOK REVIEWS

The Moral High Ground, Usurped

Elan Journo

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK, *Making David into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel* (New York: Encounter Books, 2014), 296 pp. \$25.99.

When Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, the international reaction was predictably vociferous. In London, Paris, and other capitals, thousands of people marched in rallies to decry Israel's retaliation against Hamas-controlled Gaza. In editorials and op-eds, in the proclamations of academics, and in UN statements, Israel was accused of "war crimes"—a term given prominence after the Nuremberg trials. What distinguished this chorus of denunciation was its shopworn familiarity.

Rewind to 1967, when Israel faced off against neighboring Arab states. In London, Paris, and other capitals people

took to the streets to endorse Israel. Editorials in *The Times of London*, *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *Time* magazine aligned with Israel. So did notable intellectuals and academics; one group even took out an ad spelling out its rationale in the *Washington Post*.

What happened since then to bring about this sea change? *In Making David Into Goliath*, scholar Joshua Muravchik presents a finely textured history that tells how international opinion turned so sharply against Israel.

The book's account lays stress on two key developments, one political, the other intellectual.

The political shift unfolded after Israel's humiliating defeat of the Arabs in the Six-Day War of 1967. Unable to win on the battlefield, the militant, autocratic Arab regimes moved to foster a Palestinian movement, which portrayed



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itself as part of the “progressive” camp. Superficially at least, Israel was recast as the powerful Goliath, whereas the Arab side, fronted by Palestinians, became the quintessential David.

Underpinning this reversal, the other pivotal development was moral-ideological: the rise of a “new paradigm of progressive thought.” Born of the New Left, in this outlook the central drama of world history was no longer the Marxist model of proletarians versus bourgeoisie, but rather “the third world against the West, or of people of color against the white man.” The Palestinians, in this theory, stand on the side of virtue; Israel, on the side of villainy.

At times working in league, at times fighting each other, the Arab regimes and the Palestinians took the fight against Israel beyond the battlefield. Palestinians gained worldwide notoriety for hijacking jetliners with breathtaking audacity. During one particularly energetic week in September 1970, Palestinian terrorists hijacked four planes simultaneously—and then, to extort the release of one of their crew who had just been captured, they took a fifth jet. Members of Palestinian terrorist groups bombed jetliners, murdered Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, and massacred schoolchildren in a grisly campaign of expanding scope and barbarity.

Perhaps what had an even greater impact on world opinion of Israel, however, was the shift that took place at the United Nations. Over the decade of the 1970s, the Arabs and the growing Third World bloc (sometimes allied with the Communists) took over the organization. As a result, Muravchik explains, the UN became “the principal instrument to legitimize and solemnize the advantages that the Arabs had gained since 1967 by bringing Palestinian national claims to the fore and by intimidating others through terrorism and the oil embargo.” A legacy of that diplomatic

coup is the long-standing UN practice of overlooking pervasive violations of rights in Muslim regimes and across the world, but endlessly rebuking Israel on trumped-up charges.

Making David into Goliath retraces the fascinating history of how the Palestinian cause usurped the moral high ground from Israel. Initially that battle was fought in the halls of academia. In Muravchik’s telling, the chief enabler was a professor at Columbia University, Edward Said. In his major work *Orientalism* and a later tract *The Question of Palestine*, Said supplied the intellectual means for reinterpreting the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Muravchik notes that Said’s dodgy, arguably dishonest, scholarship led to the unwarranted equation of Arabs and Muslims with blacks living under apartheid. Hence the common trope that Israel is an “apartheid” state. Revered in academia, Said’s work jelled into an orthodoxy that embraced the Palestinians as righteous victims, despite the rampant terrorism perpetrated in their cause and by their number. Adding to that reframing of the conflict was a group of Israeli revisionist “new historians,” whose writings alleged that the founding of Israel was rife with “ethnic cleansing” and colonial-imperialist ambition.

Muravchik’s analysis details how a new narrative thereby took hold: that of Israel as the predator; the Palestinians as the supposedly powerless victims. All of this spilled out of scholarly books and seminars, and onto the agenda of international institutions, mainstream NGOs, the Israeli press, and the international media. You can see it on the streets as well, in the banners and chanted slogans at rallies in European capitals reviling Israel’s self-defense against Hamas.

The greatest strength of *Making David into Goliath* lies in Muravchik’s adroit telling of a riveting story that urgently needs to be told. Muravchik’s

aim is not primarily to lambaste the intellectuals, political leaders, and activists who contrived to reshape the international view of Israel, but the historical account of their malice and duplicity amply convicts them.

In Muravchik's causal explanation for the shift on Israel, the intellectual reframing of the conflict appears to have been the more potent factor. The other causal thread he emphasizes—the power and influence of Arab-Muslim regimes—clearly mattered too, but less than the New Left/progressive paradigm. There is one issue the book could have spent more time examining, namely how the apostles of that paradigm and their backers were able to succeed in defiance of the actual facts about Israel. We are left to wonder what impact the better scholars and political leaders had in resisting the anti-Israel trend, and what role wider intellectual currents, particularly moral-philosophical forces, played in the turn-about of world opinion.

Notwithstanding, Muravchik deserves praise for illuminating how Israel's antagonists contrived to recast that beleaguered state as an international pariah. And how they succeeded in doing so, leaving Israel much the worse for wear.



Rethinking the Israeli-Palestinian Equation

Lawrence J. Haas

CAROLINE GLICK, *The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Crown Forum, 2014), 352 pp. \$25.00.

Want to raise some eyebrows in a hurry? Mention that you don't support a two-state solution to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In Washington and New York, London and Paris, even parts of Tel Aviv and Haifa, you'll be tagged on the left as a Jewish religious zealot with dreams of a "Greater Israel" and on the right as a Palestinian apologist with dreams of wiping out Israel.

Indeed, the two-state solution—or, as proponents invariably describe it, "two states living side by side in peace"—is what unites liberals and conservatives at a time when, in the United States and across the West, they agree on little else. But the logic behind two-state-ism and the evidence to support it melts away upon close inspection.

Now, some officials and pundits are beginning to chip away at the two-state consensus. Naftali Bennett, Israel's Minister of the Economy and leader of its Jewish Home Party, launched a frontal assault on the two-state solution recently, suggesting in a *New York Times* op-ed that Israel will be more secure and Palestinians can be more prosperous if Israel retains control of the West Bank.

A longer, more comprehensive, and ultimately more satisfying assault comes, however, in the form of *The Israeli Solution*, the new book from the sharp-penned

Jerusalem Post columnist Caroline Glick. By focusing clearly on both regional history and contemporary events, she delivers a devastating critique that should leave two-state proponents in desperate search of new ammunition.

"Ironically," Glick writes in the early pages of her searing treatise, "the two-state solution is among the most irrational, unsuccessful policies the United States has ever adopted. For the past ninety years, the two-state solution has been tried more than a dozen times, and every time it has failed, abysmally." In fact, the United States has been so eager to pursue it that it rescued the Palestine Liberation Organization from abandonment by the Arab world and elevated the Palestinian Authority as a regional player.

For the United States, she argues, the cost of such a fruitless strategy is greater than simply lost time. Persistent failure makes America look increasingly weak in the Muslim world, and the same U.S. thinking that stresses the primacy of the Israeli-Palestinian issue clouds America's judgment about far more important regional challenges.

In the place of what, she predicts, will only be more failure if Washington continues to pursue this approach, Glick proposes "a one-state plan for peace in the Middle East," with Israel extending its own law to the West Bank—or, as she notes, the land known throughout most of history as Judea and Samaria. Israel would replace the authoritarian, corrupt, rights-abusing Palestinian Authority and



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grant permanent Israeli residency status to West Bank Palestinians and enable them to apply for Israeli citizenship. Gaza, over which the terrorist group Hamas rules, would not be included.

Glick's proposal is provocative and compelling, and one can only imagine the hysterical reaction among Palestinian leaders, U.S. officials, European parliamentarians, and global opinion leaders were Israel to pursue it. Anticipating such a reaction, Glick argues that she has history and legality on her side and that many Palestinians would welcome the move because, as they've increasingly come to see, they'd enjoy far more freedom and prosperity under rule by Israel than by the Palestinian Authority.

The real value of this book, however, is less in what Glick proposes for the long run than how she gets there. She first shreds the foundation for the two-state solution in devastating fashion, leaving readers to surely wonder why successive American administrations have pushed for it in the face of such failure, or why no administration has grappled seriously with the reasons behind that failure.

Take, for instance, the rationale for two states. In successive U.S. administrations and across America's foreign policy establishment, Glick notes, all-too-many "experts" believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict holds the key to regional nirvana. Primed by Arab leaders who'd rather steer attention to the conflict than address their own nations' problems, America's opinion leaders believe that Israeli-Palestinian conflict fuels anti-Israeli and anti-American terrorism far beyond its borders and dissuades Arab nations from engaging in a broader regional peace with Israel.

With a two-state solution, the experts argue, Washington would be better placed to address such regional issues as Afghanistan's uncertain future, Syria's civil war, and Iran's nuclear pursuit. That is, Arab leaders have been

hoodwinking generations of naïve U.S. leaders to this way of thinking, though there's no reason to believe that Afghanistan's Taliban, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, or anyone else of note in the region cares about the Palestinians.

Or take the urgency for two states. Western leaders, lawmakers, and pundits alike cite demographic data that purport to show that, at some point, Palestinians will outnumber Jews in the land that Israel controls. When that happens, they argue, Israel's leaders will either have to opt for an apartheid-like approach toward the Palestinians to retain Israel's Jewish character or let democracy run its course and cost Israel that character. But as Glick shows, the "studies" on which that demographic fatalism rests are deeply, purposefully flawed—and, if anything, Israel will likely build its Jewish majority in the coming years rather than lose it.

Or take the foundation for two states. U.S. and Western leaders presume the right combination of concessions by Israel on Palestinian refugees, Jerusalem's status, and other issues will bring the land-for-peace formula successfully to fruition. But true peace—in which both sides respect each other's existence and borders—derives less from the deal-making of diplomats than from the hearts of populations. And, as Glick shows in great detail, the Palestinian people and their leaders have never really accepted the premise of Israel's long-term existence. Their leaders continue to advocate for its destruction (though so-called "moderates" eschew such language for gullible Western audiences) while its people absorb the Jew-hating filth that spews forth from Palestinian mosques and schoolbooks.

If you read this book, as you should, then you, too, may wonder why you had supported the two-state solution as the one true path to peace.



Islamabad's Military Myopia

Aaron Mannes

C. CHRISTINE FAIR, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 368pp. \$34.95.

Beset by violent ethnic and sectarian tensions (including a radical Islamist rebellion), increasing environmental degradation, and severe economic crises, nuclear-armed Pakistan is nothing short of an international security nightmare. Yet, despite this plethora of difficulties, the real authority in the state, the Pakistani Army, does little to ameliorate these challenges and instead focuses its efforts on an all-consuming, Sisyphean strategic rivalry with its far more powerful neighbor India.

Concerned about Pakistan's future, the United States and its allies have sought to induce the Pakistani military to re-focus its effort by offering assistance with the country's legitimate security needs. But, in her thorough and compelling study of the Pakistani army's strategic culture, *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*, C. Christine Fair explains that such efforts are ultimately fruitless because Pakistan is what George Washington University professor Charles Glaser calls a "greedy state" that is "fundamentally dissatisfied with the status quo."

Fair, a professor at Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service and a seasoned observer of South Asian politics, divines Pakistan's strategic culture, the "lens

through which the Pakistani army understands its security environment and its role," by studying the nation's defense literature, supplemented by the memoirs of top officers, as well as her own extensive fieldwork in Pakistan. In the process, she deflates a number of myths about Pakistani history—myths which Pakistan itself has propagated to advance its cause.

The central question surrounding Pakistan's strategic culture is why its military continues to make security decisions that result in failures. Since the state's founding in 1947-48, Pakistan has initiated a series of wars against India, all of which have left it in a weaker position than before the start of hostilities. It has also engaged in other policies, such as supporting *jihadi* groups against India that have, in many cases, ended up rebounding to its detriment. The siphoning of the nation's wealth for a fruitless arms race with India, meanwhile, has impoverished the Pakistani people and left the state with inadequate institutions or infrastructure. Pakistan's nuclear program and its support for terrorist groups has also engendered considerable blowback, bringing sanctions down on the state—a dangerous situation for a nation so dependent on foreign aid and IMF bailouts.

Finally, there is little prospect for any improvement in Pakistan's strategic situation. India, which is far larger than Pakistan, has also outpaced Pakistan economically, enabling extensive qualitative



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military improvements to a military that already possesses a significant quantitative advantage. At the same time, India's rise as a market and global power allows it to forge important new alliances, particularly with the United States and Israel, that give it greater access to military hardware and training, economic opportunities, and an improved diplomatic position internationally.

Rationally, Pakistan should reach an accommodation with India before its situation deteriorates further, in order to refocus resources on the difficult task of repairing its decrepit physical and social infrastructure. But, as Fair shows, Pakistan simply cannot take this path because opposing India's rise—as opposed to defending Pakistan—is at the core of Pakistan's strategic culture. The loss of the ability to act against India is tantamount to surrender.

Pakistan's fixation with India is inextricably tied to the founding of the nation itself. When the British Raj was partitioned into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan (a process that was accompanied by communal violence that took hundreds of thousands of lives and created over 10 million refugees), Pakistan felt it was cheated of Muslim-majority territories such as Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Muslim-ruled princely states such as Hyderabad. Pakistan initially consisted of two parts, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan, which were separated from each other by India, leaving the new state, in the words of its founder and first president Mohammed Ali Jinnah, "moth-eaten and truncated." Critically, Pakistan did not receive its share of military stores and assets, placing it at a fundamental disadvantage and giving rise to the notion that Hindu India wanted Muslim Pakistan to fail.

Pakistan, established as the nation for India's Muslims, embraced Islam as an ideology to unify its multiple ethnicities. Generally, Pakistan's turn toward

Islamism is blamed on General Zia, who served as the country's military dictator during the 1980s. But Fair points out that the first Pakistani armed forces chief (and later President) General Ayub, while personally secular, exploited Islam to unite the nation and motivate the army. So the situation remains; believing that without a commitment to this ideology the state will fail, Pakistan's army has been the major engine in the nation's embrace of Islamism. The commitment to an Islamic ideology dovetails neatly with the widespread belief that India continues to seek Pakistan's demise.

This belief has by now become canon. Pakistan's military literature extolling Islam is accompanied by extensive descriptions of Indian Hindus as cowardly and scheming. The classic Pakistani Army text entitled *India: A Study in Profile* discusses the "Hindu psyche" and, according to Fair, is replete with "patently Orientalist, if not outright racist, concepts." A continuing theme in Pakistani military literature is that Hindus are weak and unmotivated to fight, as opposed to Pakistani soldiers who, infused with Islamic instruction, can prevail even against India's numerical superiority. At the same time, Hindu India is striving to become the regional hegemon and a global power, and only Pakistan can prevent its ascension.

Pakistani military literature likewise blames Pakistan's endemic internal violence on Hindu conspiracies. There is an irony to this particular accusation, as Pakistan has long sponsored terrorism and proxy violence in India. The traditional narrative holds that Pakistan first began using Islamist proxies in collaboration with the U.S. against the Soviets in Afghanistan. But in fact, after reviewing decades of Pakistani military literature, Fair finds tremendous interest in guerilla war, infiltration and the use of non-state actors from the very foundation of the Pakistani state. Indeed, the 1947 war

with India was sparked when Pakistan sent Pashtun tribal militias into Jammu and Kashmir to seize control of those territories. In much the same way, Pakistan used tribal militia proxies in Afghanistan in the 1950s, and the 1965 war with India started when Pakistan sent *mujahideen* into Jammu and Kashmir.

Nuclear weapons have allowed Pakistan to continue and expand its risky strategies to counter India, certain that India will limit its retaliation to avoid a potential nuclear crisis. This was highlighted in the 2002 standoff, when, after Pakistani terrorists attacked India's parliament, India mobilized its forces but ultimately found itself with limited options, knowing the conflict could become nuclear. Pakistan's nuclear weapons also guarantee international attention, as foreign powers will intervene and attempt to resolve a crisis rather than allow war to break out and potentially become nuclear. Fair conducts a quantitative study and determines that, under its nuclear umbrella, Pakistan has been far more likely to engage in risky behavior such as provoking crises with India. In the face of Pakistan's deteriorating position, nuclear weapons, perhaps more than any other factor, have allowed Pakistan to continue its regional rivalry.

In her penultimate chapter, Fair examines possibilities for change in Pakistan's strategic culture. Her conclusions are not encouraging. The military is an unlikely source for reform, especially because its ideological commitment to countering India gives the military priority in claims on the state's resources. Fair touches on this important point, and other analysts—such as Ayesha Siddiqi in her book *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*—have shown how military officers have materially benefited from their *de facto* (and sometimes *de jure*) control of the state.

Other sources, both within and without Pakistan, are equally unlikely to

foster needed change. While democratic governance has expanded since General Pervez Musharraf stepped down as president in 2008, the army has successfully transmitted its strategic culture to Pakistani civil society. A strong Pakistani civilian government may be willing to seek better relations with India, but vast and influential segments of Pakistani society (if not an outright majority of it) today embrace the military's worldview. Conspiracy theories involving India, the United States, and Israel are regular features in Pakistan's media. Fair notes that Pakistani civil society includes many illiberal elements. For example, the lawyers' movement, which led the national protests that brought down Musharraf, is closely linked to a number of radical Islamist parties and supported Pakistan's monstrous blasphemy laws.

The international community has limited tools to change Pakistan's strategic culture. If the 1971 defeat by India (in which Pakistan lost half of the country) was insufficient to persuade Pakistan's generals to pursue a different course, it is difficult to imagine a military defeat that could. The United States attempted to invest in Pakistani institutions with the 2009 Kerry-Lugar-Berman congressional aid package, but this effort has been resisted at every point by the Pakistani military.

In her final chapter, Fair concludes that Pakistan is a pure "greedy state" seeking fundamental change to the international order. Past policies toward Pakistan have been attempts to address the country's legitimate security needs. But, Fair writes, "If Pakistan is a purely greedy state, driven by ideological motives, then appeasement is in fact the more dangerous course of policy prescription." Fair calls for "sober realism" and argues that "the United States and its partners should seriously consider what it means to contain the threats that emanate from Pakistan..."

This is the only element missing from an impressive work. Having proposed a containment strategy of Pakistan, a discussion of policy options would be welcome. To be sure, such an approach will not be easy. The available tools have consequences. Financial sanctions will harm the already impoverished Pakistani masses. Military options against a nuclear-armed state are limited. As a prominent Muslim nation, isolating Pakistan diplomatically may prove difficult. Unfortunately, Fair has convincingly demonstrated that the Pakistani military has chosen a course that leaves the United States and its allies no other options.

