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## ANNOUNCEMENT

### THE ELIHU ROOT PRIZE

The Elihu Root Prize is an annual award by the US Army War College for the best article (or articles) published in *Parameters* on any aspect of strategic landpower, contemporary or historical. The Quarterly's Editorial Board selects nominees from a given volume year (Spring-Winter); any article published on any theme related to strategic landpower is automatically considered. Winners are selected based on the analytical depth and rigor of their contributions. The prize(s) include an award certificate and honorarium. The Elihu Root Prize is made possible by the generous support of the US Army War College Foundation.

#### WINNERS FOR VOLUME YEAR 2015

##### **1st Place (\$3,000 Award)**

Michael Allen Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka

“Landpower and American Credibility”

*Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015-16): 17-26

##### **2nd Place (\$2,000 Award)**

Michael Evans

“The Case *against* Megacities”

*Parameters* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 33-43



## From the Editor

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Our Spring issue opens with a special commentary by Tami Biddle entitled, “Making Sense of the ‘Long Wars’ – Advice to the US Army.” Indeed, what should the US Army learn from its long campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan? Biddle tells us perhaps the most important lesson the Army can draw from this experience is to allow its officer education programs—or broadening opportunities—to work.

Our first forum, *US Leadership and NATO*, an overture to the July Summit in Warsaw, considers America’s role in European Security. Luis Simón’s “Balancing Priorities in America’s European Strategy” describes ways in which the United States can manage its regional and global priorities. Alexander Mattelaer’s “Revisiting the Principles of NATO Burden-Sharing” suggests the real issue lies deeper than defense spending; NATO members need to collaborate more with respect to military planning and come to an agreement on who should do what with regard to European security. John Deni’s “Modifying America’s Forward Presence in Eastern Europe” suggests Washington’s decision to send more US troops to reassure its NATO allies is an insufficient first step. What Eastern Europe needs are more capabilities designed to counter Moscow’s recent *modus operandi*. Magnus Petersson’s “The United States as the Reluctant Ally” argues America has been relegating NATO to an ever lower priority due to Washington’s rising commitments in the Middle East and the “Rebalance” to the Pacific. However, US leaders ought not to let this trend drift too far, lest a re-nationalization (fragmentation) of NATO’s security agenda occur.

The second forum, *Is Nation-Building a Myth?*, offers two articles which consider the feasibility of nation-building or state-building. Charles Sullivan’s “State-Building: America’s Foreign Policy Challenge” argues state-building is the primary, if not the only, way to counter the rise of what he calls radical-inspired states, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. The United States has no blue-print for such an enterprise, and it desperately needs one. In contrast, Chris Mason’s “Nation-Building is an Oxymoron” does not pull its punches; it argues, flatly, nation-building is a fool’s errand, and of the worst kind.

Our third forum, *Learning from Today’s Wars*, features three articles which draw lessons from contemporary conflicts. Ben Nimmo’s “Lessons from the Air Campaigns over Libya, Syria, and Yemen” argues air-power’s effectiveness diminishes over time partly because the targets eventually find countermeasures, thereby making civilian casualties unavoidable and post-conflict reconstruction an expensive but ineluctable necessity. Roger McDermott’s “Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?” maintains the famed Gerasimov article has been misread; nor does Moscow appear to have the capability to replicate what it did in Donbas anywhere else. Erik Goepner’s “Measuring the Effectiveness of America’s War on Terror” attempts to identify some metrics by which to gauge US efforts in the fight against terrorism; perhaps the most important observation in his article is how surprisingly little has been done, to date, to assess this long and costly war. ~AJE



## Making Sense of the “Long Wars” – Advice to the US Army

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Tami Davis Biddle

Most military institutions that experience success or failure in war will seek to understand their recent history so they can make sense of it, and learn intelligently from it. The process is never easy or straightforward; indeed, it is often fraught. Those inside the institution have positions and reputations to defend; those outside it—often anxious to level critiques—may not have enough knowledge to offer sophisticated and informed analyses, or may be so determined to build a good story around “goats” and “heroes” they miscast the events and offer far more heat than light. Analyses of the “long wars” in Afghanistan and Iraq have come in every possible form: journalists’ accounts were first on the scene, but they were followed quickly by those of think-tank analysts, academics, defense intellectuals, official historians, and memoir writers. Each of these has its own weaknesses and strengths. Many have echoed the frustration felt by the American people—frustration driven by a belief that while the US seemed to invest extraordinary amounts of time, blood, and treasure in these campaigns, we have little to show for them.

The US Army had the biggest investment—and thus the biggest stake—in the long wars. It is unsurprising, then, that the Army should be the service most buffeted by the experience and the institutional effort to make sense of it. After all, the senior leaders of the US Army must continue to hold the trust and confidence of the American people, and justify the resources invested in the organization. They must learn from and adapt to past experience even as they look forward to a future that arrives with unforgiving speed. They must fight ongoing budget battles, maintain force readiness, keep up with new technologies, plan for new weapons systems, and educate personnel even as they try to process and absorb the recent past. Adding to the difficulty of this task is the fact that, of all the services, the Army may have the greatest challenge when it comes to predicting the future and getting ready for it. In many ways, the Army is the utility infielder of the US military: because it can never be sure exactly what the nation will ask of it, it must be prepared to perform a wide range of tasks well. It must be able to transform itself from Retriever to Rottweiler, and back again, quickly and seamlessly.

As an institution, the Army is not averse to introspection and self-analysis. But like all institutions, it is susceptible to the pathologies that stem from cognitive bias and sensitivity to criticism. At one moment senior leaders may ignore that which is painful; the next moment they may over-react to it. Similarly, they may miss moments of success that deserve capture and amplification. At present, the Army seems to be in

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a phase not dissimilar to the one it entered after Vietnam: it does not study the hard problems and failures deeply enough, and it overlooks and forgets the things that deserve positive acknowledgment and reinforcement. As the Army works through its own analyses of the long wars, and responds to external critiques, it must discern which problems were internal, which were external, and which emerged due to frictions and pathologies along the ever-challenging civil-military fault line. While the Army must understand and take responsibility for the ways it contributed to unsatisfactory outcomes, its leaders must recognize these failings were located inside a broader national security framework that must be addressed comprehensively. Simply put, the Army operates within a civil-military system in which *both* parties are responsible for failure and success.

One can hardly argue, for instance, the flawed assumptions embedded in the Bush 43 decision for regime change in Iraq in 2003 stemmed principally from a failure of strategic thinking inside the Army. One can *and should* argue senior Army officers might have found more effective ways to ask probing questions about the direction of events, and about the theory of victory operative in the minds of those who were driving the decision for war. But it is not clear such questions, even if done energetically and fully within the bounds of civil-military norms, would have changed administration behavior. By virtue of the system of representative government in place in the United States, civilians have “a right to be wrong.”<sup>1</sup> Flawed assumptions always reveal themselves in war, though, and in this case the consequences landed in the lap of the Army. The institution had two obligations at that moment: 1) refrain from making things any worse, and 2) locate sound operating assumptions—or as Clausewitz counseled, figure out the kind of war you are actually fighting—to create a way forward.

With respect to the first point, the Army clearly failed to make a graceful transition from major combat operations to security operations. It’s painfully obvious now that knocking down doors and unnecessary roughness helped alienate the Iraqi civilian population.<sup>2</sup> Abandoning its own professional principles, the Army mistreated prisoners of war, and, in places like Abu Ghraib and Camp Bucca, generated resentments that helped fuel the early development of groups like ISIL. Pressure from outside institutions had much to do with this breakdown of norms, but many of the problems stemmed from a failure to anticipate fully and clearly the post-combat phases of the campaign. In this realm, the Army has some important things to answer for. With respect to the second point, one can legitimately argue it took the Army too long to see the situation for what it was, and then find a way forward. The institution ought to examine this crucial moment closely to determine what it reveals about its own organizational instincts, proclivities, culture, and vulnerabilities.

Following a civilian intervention in 2006-7, however, things began to change. A new field commander in Iraq, aided by a fresh assessment, opened a new avenue. While success stemmed centrally from a change

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1 This useful phrase was coined in Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

2 This is a key theme in Thomas Ricks’ penetrating critique, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003-2005* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

in the attitude of Sunni insurgents, progress was aided and abetted by senior Army leaders who now had a far clearer grasp of the situation, and were thus in a position to address it in an effective manner. In many ways Iraq was a brigade commanders' fight: the battle varied from location to location, and leadership varied from location to location. But it is hardly too much to say the Army pulled itself upward, and managed to help turn around a situation that by 2005-6 had become quite relentlessly grim.

Success rested in large part on enlightened and powerful civil-military cooperation in the form of the Petraeus-Crocker team. (One could hardly anticipate a good outcome in a situation so deeply political as Iraq except as a result of highly-functional civil-military interaction.) Success rested, too, on a heavy lift by the Army—an extraordinary effort realized by immense energy and sacrifice. Here the Army deserves both credit and respect. And here the Army ought to examine, closely, the ingredients of its success: To what degree did Army institutional culture facilitate progress, and to what degree did it inhibit it? How did solutions move from the field to higher headquarters? Is the Petraeus-Crocker model one that can be mimicked in other situations, or was it *sui generis*? If the former, how can a foundation be laid for it in future scenarios?

Once this fragile success was attained, however, it was not consolidated: US decision-makers failed to utilize fully the coercive leverage they had over the situation. And once Petraeus and Crocker departed the scene, momentum was lost, and Iraq fell into a kind of benign neglect that culminated in a too early-withdrawal of American influence and troops—a fact that allowed Nouri al-Maliki to create conditions that drove the Sunnis back into opposition, this time in an even more virulent way.

This fumbling of the ball on the two-yard line should not be laid at the feet of the Army. As was the case in 2002-3, one can and should ask why senior Army officers were not more aggressive in warning the second Bush 43 administration, and the new Obama administration, that the situation in Iraq was now back on a very dangerous path. But, here too, even if Army officers had done this—and even if they had executed it perfectly within acceptable civil-military norms—it is not clear they could have shifted either administration on to a different path.

One could walk through a similar analysis of the war in Afghanistan, but space precludes it here. The point is simply if the Army is to understand the long wars (and benefit from such an understanding), its leaders and educators must comprehend realms of authority and responsibility—in particular how they were shared by civilian and military decision makers. When critics charge that senior Army officers lack skills in strategic thinking, what they often mean is they lack skills in effective communication with civilian decision-makers. Army senior leaders (and those who educate them) must ask themselves: How do officers raise difficult and demanding questions without challenging civilian authority? How do they register dissenting views respectfully but persistently, and in ways that do not undermine civilian control? How do they know when to abandon a strategy (or simply a course of action) that is not working? How do senior officers craft clear-headed and sophisticated professional military advice, and pose options that convey what is feasible with the resources available, and what is not? And how do senior

officers prepare the Army to cope with what may ensue if their advice is declined or ignored?

Senior military leaders *and* senior civilian leaders have an obligation to develop a textured understanding of how, when, and why strategy goes awry—in particular within the context of civil-military communication. Within the Army this topic tends to be marginalized and given relatively short shrift in comparison to the attention given to tactical and operational issues. But quite a few recent analyses have told Army leaders their emphasis on tactics/operations is costly, particularly in the complex environment of the 21st century. The critique is beginning to take hold; in particular, the Army is recognizing that both education and broadening assignments are essential to the development of officers who will be comfortable working within the complicated US national security complex. And it recognizes its overriding emphasis on tactics creates narrow career paths that often preclude exactly the kind of educational and broadening experiences needed most by senior officers. But change on this front is non-trivial since it cuts against long-standing institutional behavior and culture.

That culture is not irrational. There are reasons why the contemporary US Army became tactically-oriented.<sup>3</sup> First, modern combined arms is a tremendously complex and difficult realm (indeed, only a handful of militaries in history have mastered it fully), and the Army is highly-resistant to taking risk in this realm. After all, tactical failure is obvious, embarrassing, and potentially very costly. Tactical proficiency also serves as something of a hedge against civilian dithering or underfunding—and also against the small size of the Army relative to the jobs it is sometimes handed. Senior officers realized once the United States abandoned the draft and then moved the Army to an all-volunteer status, second chances and do-overs would be rare in wartime. (This was in stark contrast, for instance, to the Second World War where serial setbacks on multiple fronts were made good by a wealth of resources, both human and material.)

The Army is, moreover, an institution that must make extensive and constant personnel choices. This drives it to look for skills and qualifications that can be readily measured. At the National Training Center, a young officer's tactical ability is made abundantly clear. Much less clear is that same officer's potential to function with high efficiency in a complicated COIN or hybrid war-fighting environment, or his/her ability to convey to civilian masters the strengths and limits of military force as a coercive instrument in a given situation. And, of course, once an institutional culture is established, it can be hard to alter. Senior officers, who control promotion processes, are naturally inclined to promote those who look most like themselves.

An army that is tactically weak is of no use to anyone. Thus, the US Army must find a way to maintain its tactical and operational prowess even as it strengthens and emphasizes strategic-level skills. The US Army War College (and indeed all US senior service colleges) are alive to this challenge and have taken steps to address pressing concerns about the

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3 It is also planning-oriented – and for good reason. To accomplish anything at all, an organization as complex as the Army must have expert planning skills. But planning should not dominate all else.

tactics-strategy imbalance. But the USAWC's resident program is only ten months long; its work must therefore be part of a broader, Army-wide commitment to encouraging all that is required for success at the strategic level, including highly-developed critical thinking skills, outstanding oral and written communications, and a sophisticated understanding of the outlook, proclivities, and behavior of senior civilian leaders.

This will require some cultural shifts, some breaking of old patterns, and some limited (and, I believe, short-term) risk. Opportunities for officer education outside the Army—especially for advanced degrees like MAs, MBAs, and PhDs from civilian universities—must *not* be seen as diversions from the “warrior path.” Instead, they should be regarded as welcome opportunities to enhance crucial skill sets and build comfort (and contacts) in the civilian world. Unconventional assignments—serving as a defense attaché, working with the UN, or teaching in a PME setting—ought not to be seen as career killers but as career enhancers. Right now the Army punishes people for doing the very things they need to do in order to acquire the abilities the Army is convinced it needs.

Mimicking a program the US Air Force has used successfully in the past, the Army should consistently rotate its brightest captains into the Pentagon for short but active tours that expose them to the Washington national security environment. Along with their work in the building, they should attend talks and conferences at think tanks, observe Congressional testimony, and study civil-military relations in crisis and war.

The Army should bolster its educational programs at the one-, two-, and three-star levels. Such programs need not be lengthy, but they should be intensely focused on the civil-military skills needed badly at those ranks. The Army ought to plunge its general officers into several week- or fortnight-long examinations of crucial case studies from the past record of strategic decision-making. Since they dive deeply into complex events, case studies led by scholars and policymakers can help students understand the kinds of environments they may face in the future, and enable students to hone their critical thinking skills by closely observing and critiquing *the actual language* of civil-military discourse.

Finally, the Army ought to leverage its highest ranking leaders fully when it comes to general officer education. This might include asking retired General Dempsey to talk about what it is like to testify before Congress; asking retired General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to talk together about how they managed to work as a team; and asking retired Generals McChrystal, McKiernan, and Barno to talk about their work in Afghanistan. Finally, the Army should bring in senior officers from other countries to talk frankly about the frustrations of dealing with Americans.

These steps, which are easy to implement, might well have an immediately beneficial impact—one disproportionate to what they would require in time and money.



## US LEADERSHIP AND NATO

# Balancing Priorities in America's European Strategy

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Luis Simón

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**ABSTRACT:** This article examines how regional and global priorities challenge America's evolving European strategy. The need to "re-assure" Eastern and Central European allies in the face of Russian assertiveness calls for greater US strategic engagement in Europe. Conversely, defense-budgetary pressures, the Asia "rebalance," and the willingness to avoid excessive escalation with Russia constitute ongoing limitations to a significant US military engagement in and around Europe. That is the essence of America's European dilemma—how to invest sufficient resources in Europe as to ensure credible deterrence while keeping enough military and diplomatic bandwidth to pursue other global geopolitical objectives

Russian revisionism compels the United States to up its game in Europe. However, current discussions about US strategy and force posture on that continent cannot be isolated from broader geopolitical considerations. After all, Washington remains intent on "rebalancing" its strategic focus towards the Asia-Pacific, and the "demand signal" for US military engagement in the Middle East is unlikely to recede any time soon. In an increasingly constrained resource environment, the United States must grapple with the ever-relevant question of how to prioritize different regions, competitors, and challenges—a question that often boils down to striking an appropriate balance between Europe, East Asia and the Middle East. Coming up with a satisfactory way to address that question is more complex than it already sounds, not least as there is an important degree of geopolitical crossover amongst those three vital regions.

During the Cold War, Washington understood the preservation of a balance of power in the Middle East was essential to ensuring the supply of oil for key allies in Europe and East Asia—and to the security and thriving of a US-led order in those vital regions. Today, the high dependence of China, Japan, and South Korea on Middle Eastern oil means US influence in the Middle East can constitute an important source of strategic leverage in the Asia-Pacific. In turn, Europe remains an important base of operations and source of diplomatic and operational support to America's initiatives in the Middle East. While US strategy in Europe will no doubt be largely driven by the evolving regional threat environment, it is nonetheless important to take heed of some of the ways in which global geopolitical considerations may affect or constrain America's strategic picture in Europe.

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This article examines how regional and global priorities may intersect in the context of Washington's evolving European strategy. On the one hand, the need to "reassure" Eastern and Central European allies in light of Russian revisionism constitutes a strong pressure for greater US strategic engagement in Europe. On the other hand, that pressure has been tempered by defense-budgetary constraints, the commitment to rebalance to Asia and a willingness to avoid excessive escalation with Russia. So far, these competing pressures have coalesced around a strategy of "reassurance through readiness," through an improvement of United States and NATO rapid-reaction capabilities and an enhanced pattern of rotational deployments, training, and exercises in Central and Eastern Europe. This has allowed Washington to address the concerns of its "frontline" allies while avoiding devoting too many resources to the European theatre of operations.

Russia's impending military modernization and its improving military-strategic position in north-eastern and south-eastern Europe beg the question of whether a "readiness-only" approach is likely to create lasting security in Europe. This is a question that appears to be gaining traction in US and NATO circles. Indeed, as the Alliance approaches its July 2016 Summit in Warsaw, the narrative shift from "reassurance" to "deterrence" signals a progressive "hardening" of US policy in Europe, and the intent to go beyond readiness and to emphasize the need for more presence. A good example of that is President Obama's request to quadruple the funds for the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) in fiscal year 2017, which is aimed at supporting a more persistent US military presence in Central and Eastern Europe through larger and longer rotational deployments and infrastructure development to support the pre-positioning of equipment.

### Putting Europe in Context

Russia's decision to annex Ukraine's Crimean peninsula by force in March 2014 constituted a frontal and unequivocal challenge to the security of a rules-based international system in Europe, which many had taken for granted for so long. Signs of Moscow's geopolitical push westwards have become increasingly visible. Besides having waged an open war in Eastern Ukraine for the past two years, Russia is engaging in regular "snap" exercises aimed at intimidating the Baltic states; it has repeatedly violated the air and maritime spaces of several NATO and non-NATO countries; devoted increasing resources to the buildup of its nuclear arsenal; undertaken a sustained effort to agitate Russian minorities living in Europe; and is engaged in a broader disinformation campaign aimed at undermining European and transatlantic cohesion.<sup>1</sup>

The prospect of state-on-state conflict in Europe and the reality of mounting regional geopolitical competition has sparked a debate about the future of US grand strategy. Some experts warn Washington may have taken Europe for granted, arguing nearly two decades of wars in the broader Middle East have taken too heavy a toll on US military presence

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1 For an excellent overview of Russian strategy in Eastern Europe, see Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2016): 175-195. See also Franklin C. Miller, "Adjusting NATO's Nuclear Policies: A Five Step Program," *NATOSource*, Atlantic Council, March 23, 2016.

in the old continent.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the so-called strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific could further compound US retrenchment in Europe, and lead to greater geopolitical instability on that continent. This is to be avoided. Russian revisionism poses a direct threat to the security of a number of US allies and partners in Eastern and Central Europe. Unless it is checked, it could undermine one of America's foremost geostrategic imperatives, the preservation of a Europe "whole, free and at peace."

Meanwhile, the threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and ongoing instability in the Middle East and North Africa underscore the value of European bases and diplomatic and operational support for US strategic objectives in those areas. Yet, defense-budgetary constraints and Washington's commitment to rebalance strategically towards the Asia-Pacific region seem to caution against too much involvement in either Europe or the Middle East. In this regard, some scholars argue current efforts to counter the Russian and ISIL threats should not lead Washington to take its eye off the ball that matters most, namely, ensuring China's geopolitical and strategic rise does not disrupt the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific, or beyond.<sup>3</sup>

Most US foreign and defense policy officials insist America can "walk and chew gum at the same time," and argue the Asia-Pacific rebalance should not come at the expense of US engagement in Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> However, and notwithstanding a very laudable public diplomacy commitment to address *all* threats and stand by *all* allies, there is a seeming need to establish geopolitical and strategic priorities. America cannot possibly give its *all* in *every theater* at any given time. Resources are scarce, and states are constantly faced with the need to establish priorities. This is perhaps particularly pressing at a time characterized by ongoing cuts in the US defense budget, and a concomitant increase in defense spending in China, Russia, and much of the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> If Europeans continue to disregard their own security responsibilities, it will likely affect Washington's cost-benefit analysis, and lead it to give other regions higher priorities.

The question of which threats (should) matter most to the United States at any given time is by no means a new one, and it is prone to trigger a wide variety of answers and perspectives. On September 10, 2014, barely a few days after NATO's fateful Summit in Wales, President Obama argued the greatest threats to the United States came from radical groups in the Middle East and North Africa—singling out ISIL.<sup>6</sup>

2 See, e.g., Julianne Smith and Jerry Hendrix, *Assured Resolve: Testing Possible Challenges to Baltic Security* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, April 2016); and John Deni, "Pivot to Europe," *The National Interest*, March 26, 2014.

3 See, e.g., Richard K. Betts, "Realism Is an Attitude, Not a Doctrine," *The National Interest* (September-October 2015); and Barry Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (London: Cornell University Press, 2014).

4 Multiple interviews with US officials in Washington, DC and Brussels, November 2015-April 2016.

5 For a comparative analysis, see *The Military Balance 2016* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2016), 19-26. Ever since the *2011 Budget Control Act* (BCA) set automatic cuts in all areas of federal spending, the US defense budget has suffered deep and systematic reductions. So far "sequestration" has amounted to nearly \$100 billion cuts in the US defense budget, from nearly \$740 billion in FY2011 to about \$649 billion in FY2015. For a recent overview of the impact of sequestration upon the US defense budget, see Todd Harrison, *Analysis of the FY2015 Defense Budget* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2014).

6 The White House, Statement by the President on ISIL, September 10, 2014.

Barely a year later, during his Senate Confirmation hearing, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford identified Russia as the “greatest threat” to US national security.<sup>7</sup> These two statements contrast with the Pentagon’s 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, which pointed to the Asia-Pacific as the main area of strategic priority for America over the long-term.<sup>8</sup>

For a global power like the United States, any discussion on which threats or theaters matter most opens up an equally relevant question: what kind of implications do US policies in one region have upon its interests and strategic position in other regions? Beyond the simpler problem of limited resources, strategic prioritization can have wider geopolitical and diplomatic ramifications. According to Michael Roskin, the United States simply cannot afford to treat both China and Russia as competitors; it should “pick the bigger long term threat” and “treat it firmly,” and it should treat the lesser evil “flexibly.” Statements like this evoke a perennial problem in international relations: to what extent must state A accommodate the demands of state B on a given issue or region in exchange for cooperation or concessions from state B on other issues or regions?<sup>9</sup> President Obama himself recently argued Ukraine is not a “core” American interest and it matters more to Moscow than it does to Washington.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, prominent scholars like Graham Allison or Henry Kissinger have warned humiliating Moscow over Ukraine could undermine the prospect of cooperation on issues more important to the United States, such as strategic arms reduction, countering global nuclear proliferation, and bringing stability to the Middle East.<sup>12</sup>

### Russia as a Partner? Think Again

Despite current events in Ukraine, arguments that Russia could play a constructive role in areas in which America has important interests have gained traction in US government circles and beyond. Policymakers and analysts focused on getting through the crisis of the day often portray Russia as a potential partner in the Middle East. Thus, Secretary of State John Kerry has repeatedly alluded to Moscow’s constructive role during the Iran nuclear deal, arguably the main foreign policy legacy of the Obama administration.<sup>13</sup> On a similar note, Kerry has also argued any viable peace process in Syria will require close cooperation between Russia and the United States.<sup>14</sup> In turn, those with their eye on future challenges often like to imagine Russia as a countervailing force against

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7 “Russia is greatest threat to the US, says Joint Chiefs chairman nominee Gen. Joseph Dunford,” *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2015.

8 US Department of Defense, “Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” January 2012.

9 Michael G. Roskin, “The New Cold War,” *Parameters* 44, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 5-9.

10 For a good discussion of this problem see Ernst B. Haas, “Why Collaborate? Issue-Linkage and International Regimes,” *World Politics* 32, No. 3 (1980): 357-405.

11 “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic’s Exclusive Report on the US President’s Hardest Foreign Policy Decisions*, *The Atlantic*, March 10, 2016.

12 Graham Allison, “US-Russia Relations: What Would Kissinger Do?” *The National Interest*, September 28, 2015; and Henry A. Kissinger, “Kissinger’s Vision for US-Russia Relations,” *The National Interest*, February 4, 2016.

13 US Department of State, “John Kerry Interview with PBS’s Charlie Rose,” New York City, April 5, 2016.

14 *Ibid.*

China's expansion in Central and East Asia, or even in the Arctic.<sup>15</sup> Richard Betts has summarized this line of thinking rather eloquently:

The rise of China is ultimately a more serious security challenge than Russian reassertion, and a united front of those two adversaries would weaken the West. In the 1970s, realists welcomed American rapprochement with Mao Zedong's China because it weakened the more formidable adversary, the Soviet Union. Today, the relative power positions of Russia and China are reversed, so realists should hope for a way to achieve a US rapprochement with Russia.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of a US-Russia rapprochement can be contested on several grounds. Perhaps most evidently, the very notion of a US-Russian rapprochement plays right into Putin's expectation that cooperation over Syria or the Middle East can lead to an accommodation to Russian priorities in Ukraine, or elsewhere in Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> One cannot help but wonder what that slippery slope of "big picture" geopolitical quid pro quo can mean for US strategy in Europe, let alone the security of US allies and partners. American officials often try to pre-empt any such discussion by pointing out Washington is not in the business of sacrificing its European allies and interests for the sake of vague and uncertain musings about "global cooperation" with a characteristically untrustworthy regime.<sup>18</sup> In fact, Washington has repeatedly turned down Moscow's proposals for a high-level NATO-Russia political dialogue centered on Syria. In this vein, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has insisted any dialogue between the Alliance and Russia should focus primarily on the crisis in and around Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk peace agreements.<sup>19</sup>

The security of US allies and interests in Europe is not the only thing standing in the way of a Russo-American geopolitical rapprochement. A number of officials and experts have actually challenged the very premise that the US and Russia have shared interests beyond Europe, arguing that Russian actions in the Middle East and Asia are in fact threatening US allies and interests in those regions. According to former Supreme Allied Commander of US Forces in Europe General Philip Breedlove, "Russia's military intervention in Syria has bolstered the regime of Bashar al-Assad, targeted US-supported opposition elements, and complicated US and Coalition operations against ISIL."<sup>20</sup> The ongoing crisis in Syria, Breedlove contends, is "destabilizing the entire region, and Russia's military intervention changed the dynamics of the conflict, which may lead to new or greater threats to the US and its Allies for years to come."<sup>21</sup> In this line, Baev has argued one of the main motivations for Russia in the Middle East is to thwart US policy objectives in the region.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Julie Smith and Jerry Hendrix accuse Russia

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15 Roskin, "The New Cold War."

16 Betts, "Realism Is an Attitude, Not a Doctrine."

17 See, e.g., Joseph S. Nye Jr., "The Russian Connection Between Syria and Ukraine," *The National Interest*, February 17, 2016.

18 Multiple interviews with US officials in Washington, DC and Brussels, November 2015-April 2016.

19 Statement by the Secretary General on NATO-Russia Council meeting, April 8, 2016.

20 General Philip Breedlove, *US European Command Posture Statement 2016*, February 25, 2016.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Pavel K. Baev, "Russia as Opportunist or Spoiler in the Middle East," *The International Spectator* 50, no. 2 (2015): 8-21.

of “weaponizing migration,” and argue, by helping Bashar al-Assad’s regime regain territory, Moscow is “deliberately flooding Europe with refugees with the hope that it will break European resolve.”<sup>23</sup>

Not everyone buys the idea there is some high-order geopolitical logic that compels the Washington and Moscow to work together to prevent the rise of China from upsetting the balance of power in Asia. The fact that the Sino-Russian relationship includes a good dose of mutual suspicion is no secret, but the jury is still out on whether the United States can exploit that for its own benefit and on its own terms. Beijing and Moscow would be foolish not to understand that turning on each other openly on a continental front would significantly reduce their strategic position and diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis Washington in those regions closest to their hearts, East Asia and Eastern Europe respectively. Rather than hope for the best and wait for Russia and China to turn on each other, Washington should probably plan for the worst and expect these two countries to endure real sacrifices to keep their bilateral relationship afloat.

The notion the United States will be the only actor able to play all sides in the Sino-Russian-American triangle is both naïve and dangerous. Moscow and Beijing have so far managed to keep their Central Asia issues from escalating. To be sure, the steady increase of Chinese trade and investment in Central Asia does represent a challenge to Russia’s long-term influence in the region—and Beijing’s vision of a pan-Eurasian trade and communications corridor may clash with Russia’s attempts to shut Europe out of Central Asian energy and trade. However, last year’s agreement between President Putin and General Secretary Xi to coordinate China’s One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union in Central Asia goes on to show the two countries are committed to working out their differences.<sup>24</sup>

Insofar as East Asia goes, the transfer of Russian weaponry and technology has proven to be an important asset for China’s military modernization, a process that could very well challenge US hegemony in the Western Pacific and upset the regional strategic balance.<sup>25</sup> Russia might not be giving China all it needs and at the time it needs it, and the weaponry and technology flow is likely to slow even more as China powers up. However, this is not an issue about which the United States should be complacent. Russia’s plans to deliver the long-range S-400 surface-to-air missile system to China is likely to represent a significant boost to Beijing’s Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, aimed precisely at constraining the deployment of US forces into the Asia-Pacific, and reducing their freedom of maneuver once in that theater.<sup>26</sup>

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23 Smith and Hendrix, *Assured Resolve*, 2.

24 Tao Wang and Rachel Yampolsky, “Will China and Russia’s Partnership in Central Asia Last?” *The Diplomat*, September 21, 2015.

25 See, e.g., Tai Ming Cheung, “The Chinese Defense Economy’s Long March from Imitation to Innovation,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 325-354.

26 See, e.g., Michelle Sevin-Coetzee and Axel Hellman, “How Russia Made America Pivot Back to Asia,” *The National Interest*, December 23, 2015. For a comprehensive overview of America’s A2/AD challenge in the Asia-Pacific, see Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: Norton, 2011).

It could be argued the main reason Russia behaves as a spoiler in the Middle East or East Asia is to leverage the United States into concessions in Eastern Europe. However, betting on the idea that rewarding a spoiler attitude would lead Russia to reverse course rather than double down on blackmail appears to be a risky proposition.

Arguably, Moscow's ongoing aggression in Eastern Ukraine and intimidation of US allies in Europe represents too significant a roadblock to the notion of US-Russia rapprochement. As Asia becomes an increasingly important referent in US global strategy, there is indeed a possibility Washington may eventually feel the temptation to look at Russia through a "what-can-you-do-for-me-in-Asia" lens. The more Europeans disregard their own security responsibilities and the heavier Washington's Eastern European burden becomes, the more likely it is such a feeling might turn into actionable policy.<sup>27</sup> In any event, with defense dollars running low and global geostrategic competition running high, discussions on geopolitical trade-offs across regions are as lively as ever in the realm of US grand strategy. These wider geopolitical dilemmas often translate into competing pressures at the military-strategic level, the nuts and bolts of US force posture and defense strategy in Europe.

### Getting Europe "Right"

Since the annexation of Crimea, most discussions about US strategy in Europe have revolved around determining an appropriate response to Russian revisionism. The threat posed by Russia is often portrayed as a "hybrid" one, in that Moscow resorts to a wide variety of military and non-military ways and means to weaken the resolve of NATO and non-NATO countries in Eastern Europe (and beyond), and to expand its own geopolitical clout westwards.<sup>28</sup> These methods include the leveraging of Russian ethnic minorities abroad; the use of special operations forces for destabilization purposes; the threat of cutting off gas supplies to Eastern and Central European countries (most of whom are almost completely dependent on imports from Russia); financial, political and cyber penetration across Europe; a sustained disinformation campaign aimed at fostering division and undermining intra-European and intra-Alliance cohesion; and so on.

Military force is a central component of Russian hybrid-warfare.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the very purpose of hybrid warfare is to ensure all the military and non-military instruments of state power work in synchronization—a principle as old as statehood itself. Russia's preservation of "local escalation dominance" (in the Baltics and Ukraine) is critical to cementing the narrative that certain NATO member states (most notably the Baltics) are "undefensible," and it would be prohibitively costly for the Alliance to try to retake them after a Russian seizure. This sort of narrative is aimed at undermining the credibility of NATO security guarantees in

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27 See, e.g., Luis Simón, "Europe, The Rise of Asia and the Future of the Transatlantic Relationship," *International Affairs* 91, no. 5 (2015): 269-289.

28 Lanoszka, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe." See also Dave Johnson, *Russia's Approach to Conflict – Implications for NATO's Defense and Deterrence*, NATO Defense College Research Paper No. 111 (Roma, Italy: NATO Defense College, April 2015).

29 Andrew Monaghan, "The 'War' in Russia's 'Hybrid Warfare,'" *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015-16): 65-74.

front-line member states, and could strengthen the voices of stakeholders who favor political accommodation of Russia. That, in turn, could “soften” resistance in front-line countries and make them more vulnerable to other (more subtle) means of penetration.

Discussions on how the United States should respond to Russian revisionism oscillate between focusing on the more subtle aspects of hybrid warfare (such as disinformation, cyber threats, energy blackmail, etc.) and on the fact that Moscow’s military modernization could soon upset the strategic balance in parts of Eastern Europe. In modulating its response, America must take heed of both the evolving threat environment in the east as well as a wide variety of strategic and political sensitivities within NATO.

While certainly concerned about all forms of Russian penetration, most Eastern and Central European allies worry “hybrid-hype” could lead the Alliance to get “hypnotized by complexity,” and overlook Russia’s improving conventional military capabilities and capacities.<sup>30</sup> These countries welcome economic sanctions against Russia as well as efforts aimed at diversifying Europe’s energy supply-base, increasing its cyber-resilience, and countering Russian disinformation; but for them security comes ultimately in the form of a permanent NATO (read US) military presence on their territories.

In contrast, most Western European allies worry about escalating tensions with Russia beyond a point of no return. These countries are often happy to portray Russia as a problem that has to be dealt with mainly through economic sanctions and diplomacy. This is not to say Western Europeans deny the existence of a security threat to their Eastern and Central European allies, as indeed illustrated by their commitment to NATO-wide reassurance initiatives in the East. However, caution and de-escalation feature prominently in Western European minds. In this regard, most Western European countries (and most notably Germany) insist on the need to respect the spirit of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, whereby the Alliance committed to “carry out its collective defense and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement *rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.*”<sup>31</sup>

In addition to addressing a wide variety of sensitivities within the Alliance, when crafting an appropriate response to Russian revisionism the United States must also calibrate how that response fits in with its other global priorities and overall global strategy. Russia’s attempts to expand its geopolitical influence westwards do indeed pose a direct and serious threat to US regional allies and interests—and that surely calls for greater American strategic engagement in Eastern Europe. However, excessive escalation could undermine US interests in at least two ways:

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30 This is in no way an exhaustive division. Some Eastern European allies like Bulgaria, Greece or Cyprus are much less worried about Russia than others, e.g., the Baltic States or Romania. In turn, some Western Europeans (like the United Kingdom) are much more engaged than others in NATO activities in the Eastern flank. Notwithstanding these exceptions and nuances, Eastern Europeans are generally more concerned than Western Europeans about the Russian threat. Central Europe is harder to fit into a general category, with Poland constituting a clear example of a country focused on the Russian threat, Hungary and the Czech Republic on the other end of the spectrum, and Germany somewhere in between.

31 NATO, *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation*, signed in Paris, France, May 27, 1997.

(1) by tying down too many resources to the European theatre and (2) by leading Russia to push back harder against American interests in other regions, such as the Middle East or even Asia.

*Reassurance Through Readiness: A Politico-Strategic Compromise?*

In trying to reconcile multiple political sensitivities within the Alliance and competing strategic pressures (Europe vs. global), the United States seems to have opted for a strategy that revolves around reassuring its Eastern and Central European allies (and partners) through increased readiness, and emphasized the need for more rotational deployments, exercises, training and capacity building in Eastern Europe. The vision of “reassurance through readiness” permeates through President Obama’s June 2014 European Reassurance Initiative—an Overseas Contingency Operations budgetary line aimed at supporting an increase in US exercises, training, and rotational presence in Central and Eastern Europe; supporting more persistent US naval deployments to the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean; building the defense capacities of frontline allies and partners (especially Ukraine and Georgia); and exploring infrastructure development to support the pre-positioning of equipment.<sup>32</sup> This same vision has also informed NATO policy, as perhaps best illustrated by the decisions adopted by Allied leaders at their September 2014 Summit in Wales. At the Wales Summit, NATO unveiled its so-called Readiness Action Plan (RAP), an initiative that revolves around a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) capable of deploying to the frontline at short notice by drawing on the existence of reception facilities, logistics, equipment and an appropriate Command and Control infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup>

The reassurance through readiness vision is indeed very much compatible with a US force posture paradigm that revolves around a light footprint approach to European security, and an emphasis on engagement (i.e. through training, exercises, rotational deployments or high-tech initiatives in areas like cyber-security or Ballistic Missile Defense) as opposed to a permanent and “heavy” US military presence on the continent.<sup>34</sup> However imperfect, reassurance through readiness seems to somehow tick every (US) box. For one thing, the continuous and increased flow of US force rotations into the Baltics, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria allows America to reassure frontline allies by claiming its military presence in Eastern Europe is permanent in all but name.<sup>35</sup> For another, the lack of a permanent presence *strictu sensu* respects the letter of the NATO-Russia founding act, which continues to constitute a “red line” for many Western European allies. It also helps substantiate Washington’s claims that its military measures are defensive in nature, as indeed illustrated by the absence of deep-strike weapons

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32 The White House, “European Reassurance Initiative and Other US Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners,” June 3, 2014.

33 See, e.g., John Deni, “NATO’s New Trajectories After the Wales Summit,” *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 57-65. On how EU-NATO cooperation on defense infrastructure development can improve readiness, see Daniel Fiott, “Modernising NATO’s Defence Infrastructure with EU funds,” *Survival* 58, no. 2 (2016): 77-94.

34 Luis Simón, “Understanding US Retrenchment in Europe,” *Survival* 57, no. 2 (2015): 157-172.

35 Multiple interviews with US and NATO officials in Washington DC and Brussels, November 2015-April 2016.

that could attack the Russian homeland.<sup>36</sup> This, in turn, fits the broader geostrategic purpose of avoiding an unnecessary escalation with Russia, which could tie down excessive resources and undermine US interests beyond Europe.

### *The Evolving Military-Strategic Imbalance and the Limits of Reassurance Through Readiness*

For all its possible virtues, Washington's light footprint approach and vision of reassurance through readiness might not be suitable for the evolving strategic reality in Eastern Europe. In fact, US military officers and NATO officials have begun to question the wisdom of a readiness-only approach given the speed of Russian military modernization.<sup>37</sup> In particular, the deployment of precision-guided anti-ship, anti-aircraft, land-attack, anti-satellite cruise and ballistic missiles in advanced locations in northeastern and southeastern Europe (such as Kaliningrad and Sevastopol respectively) presents NATO with an anti-access and area denial challenge.<sup>38</sup> These capabilities threaten to constrain the deployment of opposing forces into Eastern Europe, and reduce their freedom of maneuver once in that theater.

Russia's A2/AD capabilities pose a very concrete operational problem for NATO. Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow has warned that, in the case of a conflict or crisis, any allied aircraft and vessels that head into the frontline states are highly vulnerable to Russian surface-to-air, anti-ship, and land-attack missiles.<sup>39</sup> Against this backdrop, a more permanent, larger and heavier (US) military presence in Eastern Europe may well be the only way to offset Russia's A2/AD challenge and restore deterrence. In this regard, a recent RAND report estimates at least seven brigades (including three heavy armored ones adequately supported by airpower, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground) are needed to deter a potential Russian attack on the Baltics.<sup>40</sup> This could constitute the foundation of a strategy of "deterrence by denial," which would require greater efforts in key areas such as theater air and missile defense, antitank weapons, anti-infantry rockets, pre-target artillery, "flooding and channelling," land mines, as well as the development of standing irregular forces that can make the frontline states indigestible to Russia, and thus raise the costs of an invasion.<sup>41</sup>

As the Alliance approaches its July 2016 Summit in Warsaw, the narrative shift from "reassurance" to "deterrence" suggests a "hardening" of US and NATO policy.<sup>42</sup> President Obama's request to quadruple funding for ERI for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, from \$789 million in FY

36 Lisa Sawyer Samp and Mark F. Cancian, "The European Reassurance Initiative," Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 12, 2016.

37 See, e.g., Breedlove, *US European Command Posture Statement 2016*.

38 See Luis Simón, "The 'Third' US Offset Strategy and Europe's 'Anti-Access' Challenge," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2016), early view; and Stephan Frühling and Guillaume Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad Challenge," *Survival* 58, no. 2 (2016): 95-116.

39 Alexander Vershbow, "NATO Needs Strategy to Address Threats from the South and the East," *New Eastern Europe*, Issue 6 (XIV), November 8, 2015.

40 See David A. Schlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016).

41 See A. Wess Mitchell, "A Bold New Baltic Strategy for NATO," *The National Interest*, January 6, 2016.

42 Multiple interviews with US and NATO officials in Washington, DC and Brussels, November 2015-April 2016.

2016 to \$3.4 billion, constitutes a telling sign in this regard. The request represents a significant reinvestment in America's military presence in Europe. Critically, additional funds will serve to add an armoured brigade combat team (BCT) on permanent rotation and expand prepositioned sets of war-fighting equipment (known as Army Prepositioned Stock) in Central and Eastern Europe, thus further blurring the line between "continuous" and "permanent" presence.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusions

This article has explored how regional and global priorities intersect in the context of America's evolving European strategy. In light of Russia's revisionism and improving military position in Eastern Europe, considerations related to the evolution of the regional threat environment will undoubtedly drive discussions on US strategy in Europe. However, any such discussions must also take heed of broader geostrategic and political considerations.

Competing geopolitical and military-strategic priorities are intertwined in a number of ways. For one thing, defense-budgetary pressures, the "Asian rebalance," and the objective to "de-escalate" tensions with Russia would seem to suggest an austere US military footprint in and around Europe. Conversely, the need to "reassure" Eastern and Central European allies in light of Russian revisionism calls for greater US strategic engagement in Europe. The ideal synthesis appears to be a strategy of reassurance through readiness. That would allow the United States to continue pursuing a low-cost, light and small footprint approach to European security, and avoid devoting excessive resources, which may otherwise undermine broader geostrategic objectives, such as the Asia rebalance.

However, it is not clear to what extent that is possible in the light of Russia's improving military strategic position in northeastern and southeastern Europe. While devoting excessive resources is to be avoided, a "stingy" US approach to Europe could invite further Russian aggression and undermine the security of key regional allies and interests, which could, in turn, demand greater US attention and resources in the future. This appears to be the heart of America's European dilemma: how to invest enough so as to ensure credible deterrence while keeping enough military and diplomatic bandwidth to pursue other global geopolitical objectives. To this problem, we could add the "moral hazard" of encouraging allies to free-ride on this dilemma.

A fashionable way to try to square America's European circle is to suggest European allies should step up their games. In recent years, allied and partner capacity building have become mantras in US strategic jargon.<sup>44</sup> Some may think America's dream scenario would be to establish some sort of senior-junior division of labor, whereby Europeans would do the "manning" of the eastern flank and the United States would confine itself to "strategic cover" (by way of nuclear deterrence, missile, and cyber defense) and enabling functions, i.e. through the provision of ISR and Command and Control. Similar ideas have been floated around

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43 Samp and Mark F. Cancian, "The European Reassurance Initiative."

44 Ibid.

in a Middle East context, where US allies are supposed to do the bulk of the fighting in Syria and Iraq, and the United States can supposedly confine its role to support and mentoring, while concentrating on the more strategic “stuff,” such as missile defense and nuclear deterrence in the Persian Gulf.<sup>45</sup>

This sort of senior-junior type division of labor in Europe would indeed tick the box of “maximum influence under minimum presence.” However, it is unclear whether the European allies can deliver deterrence at the conventional level without substantial US engagement. This is indeed the sequel to the European contributions vs. US commitment debate, which goes back to the Cold War. The main difference is many of the allies in eastern and central Europe are not nearly as advanced economically and technologically as Western Europeans were during the Cold War—and this means, from a US perspective, the trade-off looks distinctly worse than during the Cold War.<sup>46</sup>

As already argued, most of the European allies situated alongside or nearby NATO’s Eastern flank (namely, the Baltics, Poland and Romania) consider a permanent US military presence on their soil their ultimate security guarantee. As Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka point out, forwardly deployed US soldiers and marines signal Washington has “skin in the game,” and are critical to the credibility of US security guarantees.<sup>47</sup> Contrary to conventional wisdom, those troops are wanted not because they can die (and can therefore trigger a US reaction) but because they can kill—punish, compel, and ultimately defeat an under-terred adversary.

Both military-strategic expediency and intra-alliance cohesion call for a broadly based US military engagement in and around Europe, one that goes beyond “strategic cover” and enabling functions and includes a forward permanent presence of American land, air, maritime and amphibious assets in Central and Eastern Europe. Judging by Obama’s request to quadruple the funds for the European Reassurance Initiative in FY2017, it appears this point is increasingly recognized in Washington. However, a constrained budgetary environment and the Pentagon’s commitment to the rebalance to Asia do call for strategic prioritization—and are likely to remain countervailing forces to a greater US engagement in Europe for years to come. In this regard, Washington will likely continue to pressure its regional allies and partners to do more (increase defense spending) and do better (concentrate on tasks and capabilities where they can add value). In this regard, getting the Western European allies to step up their contributions to the security of the eastern flank is likely to remain an important US political and strategic priority over the coming years.

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45 For a comprehensive overview of this debate, see Cordesman. For a critique, see David E. Johnson, “Fighting the “Islamic State:” The Case for US Ground Troops,” *Parameters*, 45, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 7-17.

46 I thank Alexander Mattelaer for this insightful observation.

47 Michael Allen Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka, “Landpower and American Credibility,” *Parameters* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2015-16): 17-26.

# US LEADERSHIP AND NATO

## Revisiting the Principles of NATO Burden-Sharing

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Alexander Mattelaer

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**ABSTRACT:** The debate over NATO burden-sharing needs to be reappraised continuously on both sides of the Atlantic. This re-look requires methodological rigor as well as an appreciation of the principles on which the Alliance was founded. While European allies have not been pulling their weight, additional funding will not constitute a panacea. The burden-sharing debate is ultimately not about defense accounting, but about military planning and agreeing who should do what for defending the European continent.

A widespread consensus has emerged in the United States that European allies fail to pay their fair share when it comes to defense. Although this debate is hardly new, the present intensity of naming-and-shaming allies is striking. Donald Trump, the leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination, had loudly argued that NATO is “costing us a fortune” that cannot be afforded anymore.<sup>1</sup> In a striking parallel, President Barack Obama has openly complained about “free riders” and forcefully argued that “Europe has been complacent about its own defense.”<sup>2</sup> While Democrats and Republicans may agree on little else, the debate on NATO proves bipartisanship still exists.

Transatlantic disagreement on how to split NATO’s bills is as old as the Alliance itself.<sup>3</sup> The fundamental bargain between US commitment to defending its allies and European contributions to NATO can be measured on the basis of many different parameters.<sup>4</sup> Spending a fixed share of gross domestic product on defense constitutes only a crude indicator of transatlantic commitment. To make matters worse, methodological nuances in measuring contributions often serve to obfuscate differences in political ambitions that nations seek to realize through their NATO membership. Put simply, European nations want to be allied with the United States when their policy preferences converge—as they are likely to do whenever their defense is concerned—but may not want to contribute to those US undertakings about which they have

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1 Philip Rucker and Robert Costa, “Trump Questions Need for NATO, Outlines Noninterventionist Foreign Policy,” *Washington Post*, March 21, 2016.

2 Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April 2016; and “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of Europe,” Hannover, Germany, April 25, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/04/25/remarks-president-obama-address-people-europe>.

3 For a short history, see Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, “Towards a ‘Post-American’ Alliance? NATO Burden-Sharing after Libya,” *International Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2012): 313–327; Alan Tonelson, “NATO Burden-Sharing: Promises, Promises,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23, no. 3 (2000): 29–58.

4 Charles A. Cooper and Benjamin Zycher, *Perceptions of NATO Burden-Sharing* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1989).

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strong reservations, such as further NATO enlargement, ballistic missile defense, or certain expeditionary operations. The transatlantic row over Iraq in 2003 constitutes a clear example thereof.

This article argues the discussion on burden-sharing needs to be continuously relearned on both sides of the Atlantic. On the one hand, this relearning requires methodological nuance and rigor. Depending on the metrics used, the picture that emerges looks very different. On the other hand, a careful appreciation of security trends is in order because these will eventually herald an evolution in terms of the military tasks that need to be distributed across the Alliance. NATO functions best when such a wide approach to burden-sharing is maintained. At its inception, the Alliance was organized around a set of principles that bridged these different dimensions. Given that NATO leaders declared 2014 to be a pivotal moment in Euro-Atlantic security, the Warsaw Summit would do well to reconnect proven ideas with future challenges.

This article proceeds in three parts. The first section traces the methodological discussion on burden-sharing parameters back to its historical origins, namely the list of defense planning principles codified in the early strategic concepts. These principles—with a remit far beyond financial metrics—highlight the delicate balancing act NATO defense planning typically entails. The second section takes stock of where European allies stand on pulling their weight. In financial terms, defense spending trends may well be turning around. Yet nations may be shifting course for their own reasons, and difficulties about how to share the burden are likely to persist even when European defense budgets are on the rise. The third section argues a collectively agreed plan on how to run NATO as a real alliance is more important than any set of detailed figures. Relearning the original defense planning principles and applying these to present circumstances and future challenges may therefore constitute a useful way forward.

### **From Burden-Sharing Metrics to Defense-Planning Principles**

A thousand different ways exist for evaluating Alliance burden-sharing. This has not only to do with methodology, but also with the tendency in all nations to discount the value of the efforts undertaken by others. Engaging in this debate, therefore, requires careful consideration of the available approaches and the broader purpose these serve. This section reviews the metrics currently in use and contrasts these with frequent criticisms and alternatives. It goes on to discuss their historical inspirations, which helps to transform a debate that tends to focus on defense accounting into one on military strategy. Commonly agreed principles of Alliance strategy are of greater importance than numeric details divorced from their historical and geographical context.

At present, NATO defense planners evaluate burden-sharing on the basis of eleven metrics that measure financial inputs as well as military outputs. The best known of these are the investment parameters, namely the percentage of GDP spent on defense expenditure and the percentage of overall defense expenditure spent on major equipment and Research & Development, currently set at 2 percent and 20 percent. With respect to military capabilities, NATO planners track the percentages of any ally's armed forces that are deployable and sustainable on expeditionary

operations. They also evaluate the extent to which every ally implements the national capability targets assigned under the NATO defense planning process.<sup>5</sup> An additional guideline in this regard is that no ally can be asked to provide more than 50 percent of any individual capability set during the apportionment of national targets. The underlying idea here is to wean the Alliance off its near-exclusive reliance on a single ally—read the United States—for certain capabilities. A third set of metrics concerns actual contributions: the percentages of deployable land forces, airframes, and vessels that are effectively deployed on operations, the extent to which an ally fills assigned staff positions in the NATO Command Structure and NATO Force Structure headquarters, and the contribution made to filling the requirements of the NATO Response Force.

Depending on what measurement parameters one prefers to look at, a different picture emerges. The share of GDP spent on defense often makes media headlines, but this metric draws frequent criticism on methodological grounds.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, it does not differentiate between defense spending for national and for Alliance purposes. It is no secret the United States—which scores the highest on this scale—also has significant national responsibilities that lie far beyond the remit of the Alliance, such as its security guarantees to South Korea and Japan. In some European capitals, it is a rhetorical question to ask whether the United States would spend a dollar less on its military if its allies were to spend more. In addition, alternative metrics are occasionally put forward. These would typically skew the balance in a particular direction. Measuring defense spending per square kilometer of national territory would constitute an extreme example of this kind. Last, but not least, there is the discussion on common funding. While small in size relative to overall defense spending, NATO's common budgets arguably constitute the purest expression of how the bills of the Alliance are split. The cost-sharing arrangement for the civil budget, the military budget, and the NATO security investment program follows an agreed formula based on Gross National Income.<sup>7</sup> One important exception to this formula is the United States, which assumes a 22.14 percent share of the total, whereas its economic weight within the Alliance accounts for more than 40 percent of the NATO total. Taking this discount into consideration, the largest proportional share of NATO common funding is thus borne by Germany (14.65 percent), the ally otherwise most notorious for not meeting investment targets.

It is easy to get lost in the jungle of data that these metrics generate. They also bear little direct relationship to the changing security environment the Alliance faces and the precise mix of military capabilities that is required for meeting future challenges. In other words, a focus on any particular parameter is akin to putting the cart before the horse. It is therefore well worth remembering that during the first decades of the Alliance's existence, successive strategic concepts articulated a list of general principles deemed fundamental to the organization of a

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5 For a short introduction to the NATO defense planning process, see Alexander Mattelaer, "Preparing NATO for the Next Defense-Planning Cycle," *RUSI Journal* 159, no. 3 (2014): 30-35.

6 Christian Mölling, *NATO's Two Percent Illusion: Germany Needs to Encourage Greater Efficiency within the Alliance*, Berlin: *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, SWP Comments 36, August 2014.

7 "Funding NATO," (Brussels: NATO), June 3, 2015. Available from: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_67655.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm) (accessed May 4, 2016).

common defense. As coined by the 1949 Strategic Concept, the list ran as follows (emphasis added):<sup>8</sup>

- (a) The main principle is common action in defense against armed attack through *self-help* and *mutual aid*. (...)
- (b) (...) each nation will contribute in the most effective form, consistent with its situation, responsibilities and resources, such aid as can *reasonably be expected of it*.
- (c) In developing their military strength consistent with overall strategic plans the participating nations should bear in mind that economic recovery and the attainment of *economic stability* constitute important elements of their security.
- (d) The armed forces of those nations so located as to permit mutual support in the event of aggression should be developed on a coordinated basis in order that they can operate most economically and efficiently in accordance with a *common strategic plan*.
- (e) A successful defense of the North Atlantic Treaty nations through *maximum efficiency* of their armed forces, with the *minimum necessary expenditures* of manpower, money and materials, is the goal of defense planning.
- (f) (...) each nation should undertake the task, or tasks, for which it is best suited. *Certain nations, because of the geographic location or because of their capabilities, will appropriate specific missions.*

Many of these principles strongly echo in today's debate. The NATO Defense Policy and Planning Committee still needs to juggle what constitutes a "reasonable challenge" when apportioning targets to individual nations. Such a decision gets taken according to the "consensus minus one" principle, meaning individual nations can be overruled. NATO planners also continue to take the relative wealth of individual allies and prevailing macroeconomic conditions into account.

At the same time, other principles have been all but forgotten. In recent months, the United States has had to remind some nations the Article V security guarantee does not absolve them from the responsibility to maintain their own self-defenses. More important is the notion that a common strategic plan goes hand in hand with a clear distribution of military roles and tasks in function of geography and available capabilities. From the early days of the Cold War, these principles guided a broad division of labor within the Alliance. Because of its possession of the atomic bomb, the United States would assume responsibility for strategic bombing. In turn, the continental European allies would provide the hard core of ground forces and the bulk of tactical air support and air defense, all of which were to be organized into regions and sectors in keeping with local geography. Last, but not least, the United Kingdom and the United States would be responsible for the oceanic lines of communication, while other nations would secure their harbor defenses and coastal approaches. Taken together, these principles enabled deep

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<sup>8</sup> Note by the Secretary to the North Atlantic Defense Committee, "The Strategic Concept for Defense of the North Atlantic Area, DC 6/1," (December 1, 1949) in *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*.

coherence between common defense plans and burden-sharing. If anything, this dimension is the one the present focus on metrics fails to illuminate.

### **Rising European Defense Spending: No Panacea**

With the above background in mind, we can turn to consider the present state of burden-sharing. In general, the Alliance has indeed become overly dependent on the United States and European allies collectively fail to pull their weight. This dependence may have more to do with the present helplessness of most European militaries to operate without United States assistance than with them not meeting any specific budgetary target. This nuance is important for several reasons. First, there are early indicators that the trend-line of European defense spending is about to turn. Yet, because of the long delay between financial input and military capability output, the burden-sharing debate will persist long after the European share of the financial burden has started growing. Second, individual allies tend to authorize additional defense outlays with their national priorities in mind. Additional inputs may, therefore, occasionally fail to translate into a broader basis for shouldering the burden. Third, the burden-sharing debate will ultimately be measured against what the Alliance wants and needs to accomplish. As this goal remains a politically defined moving target, the burden-sharing debate cannot help but morph into the realm of strategy. With respect to all three reasons, the old defense planning principles offer more guidance and orientation than any of the formal metrics used today.

The story about European allies not meeting the NATO defense investment targets is well known. In 2015, all but five allies (the United States, the United Kingdom, Poland, Greece, and Estonia) did not meet the 2 percent target, seven of them missing it by a wide margin and sinking below 1 percent.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, only eight allies meet the 20 percent target to be spent on major equipment and R&D, whereas six do not even achieve 10 percent, thus jeopardizing the sustainability of their force structure over time. These investment metrics are a notoriously poor guide to predicting actual contributions to Alliance operations. Some nations—Denmark being a prominent example—fail to meet either target, yet still manage to outperform most other allies in terms of capabilities and contributions. Similarly, there is little doubt more output could be generated from the 235 billion dollar total sum of European defense expenditure. The present degree of fragmentation in European defense markets and organizational structures virtually guarantees a poor return on investment, and yet this is a price European governments willingly pay for maintaining national decision-making flexibility.

The real drama resides not so much in the absolute figures, but in the degree of helplessness European nations find themselves in without US support. During the air campaign in Libya, all European allies ran desperately low on precision-guided ammunitions. Similarly, the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan highlighted shortfalls in helicopters, transport aircraft and ISTAR capabilities, leading then Secretary of Defense Bob Gates to complain about “the

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<sup>9</sup> For all data in full, see *Defense Expenditures of NATO Countries (2008-2015)*, Brussels: NATO HQ (Press Release 11), January 28, 2016.

very real possibility of collective military irrelevance.<sup>10</sup> This situation manifests itself even clearer during operations undertaken under national command. When France launched Operation Serval in Mali, it was critically dependent on the support of the United States and a handful of allies to lift its forces into theatre and sustain the operational tempo.<sup>11</sup> Following terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels, the Belgian government decided to deploy its army units on homeland operations. Being unprepared for such a large-scale deployment, it soon found it had to borrow even simple body armor kits from the United States.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the decade-long process of hollowing out their militaries in terms of numbers, equipment and readiness levels has led to a situation wherein many European nations are incapable of self-help in an increasingly wide range of contingencies.

In financial terms, it seems a turn of the tide is near. When looking at year-on-year changes in defense expenditures, the aggregated downward trend has all but stopped. Some allies—such as Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia—are increasing their defense outlays in double-digit percentages and many more are projecting increases in the years ahead.<sup>13</sup> This group includes some of the largest allies, such as France and Germany, which have each committed additional billions to their defense budgets. While it is not clear whether these increases will keep up with future growth of GDP, any budget growth by itself heralds the dawn of a new era for European defense planners. Important to note is the issue of stark regional variation: this turn of the tide is rolling over the European continent from the east to the west and from the north to the south.<sup>14</sup> However, some caution is warranted with regard to these future projections. These budgetary plans tend to be based on the assumption of slow economic growth and do not factor in the possibility of another recession hitting the global economy in the future.

Despite the improved outlook for European defense budgets—even if it were to beat all expectations—the burden-sharing debate is far from over. To start, defense investment does not immediately translate into ready-to-use military capabilities. This delay means the present level of European military dependency on the United States is likely to persist for many years to come: it is already “baked in the cake.” Furthermore, this effect will be significantly aggravated by the sorry state many European defense establishments find themselves in. Challenges in terms of personnel recruitment and maintaining adequate levels of investment in force modernization stand out as matters of grave concern for all too many European allies. Not unlike the United States itself, they now face a “bow wave” of future funding requirements simply for preserving their current force structures intact.<sup>15</sup> Years of reducing the defense

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10 Robert Gates, *Reflections on the Status and Future of the Transatlantic Alliance*, (Brussels: Security and Defense Agenda, June 10, 2011).

11 François Heisbourg, “A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali,” *Survival* 55, no. 2 (2013): 7-18.

12 Jimmy Stroobants, *Defensie Leent Kogelrijke Vesten Van Amerikaans Leger* (Brussels: Belgian Ministry of Defense, November 26, 2015).

13 For more data, see Alessandro Marrone, Olivier De France, and Daniele Fattibene, eds., *Defense Budgets and Cooperation in Europe: Developments, Trends and Drivers* (Rome: IAI, January 2016).

14 Cf. Olivier de France, *Defense Budgets in Europe: Downturn or U Turn* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies Issue Brief 12, May 15, 2015).

15 Cf. Todd Harrison, *Defense Modernization Plans Through the 2020s: Addressing the Bow Wave* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016).

budget while trying to maintain operational output in Afghanistan and elsewhere typically implied postponing the necessary modernization of equipment—a curse for force planners that at some point comes home to roost. As such, the foreseeable increases of defense spending will be partially offset by this hidden financial crater and fail to generate many extra capabilities for years to come.

In addition, it remains to be seen how future budget increases get spent. In conformity with their desire to improve self-help, several nations are considering investing in home defense forces. This relates not only to those nations fearful of Russian aggression and engaging in contingency planning for guerrilla-type resistance, but also to those nations hit by terrorist attacks. Yet, the idea of rebuilding non-deployable forces flies in the face of the burden-sharing discussion as it has unfolded in recent years. To a lesser extent, this issue replicates itself with other investments that are geared primarily towards territorial defense, as this touches upon the delicate balance between the three different core tasks of the Alliance.

Most fundamentally, burden-sharing must ultimately be measured against a moving target, namely the security context. No amount of defense spending constitutes a panacea for maintaining Alliance cohesion. The real issue for NATO is to do what is necessary for achieving the desired result and to have agreement on how to divide the tasks. The acute problem is not the lack of investment in an abstract sense, but the fact the military requirements for NATO's core task of collective defense are rapidly outpacing what can be delivered. As a military confrontation with Russia is no longer unthinkable, the force pool NATO requires must include much more high-end war-fighting capabilities than were needed for crisis management missions. While it is unclear what attrition rates could be expected in a scenario of major conflict, the combined NATO force pool may lack sufficient depth in terms of ready units to sustain operations beyond first contact. In that sense, the real burden-sharing discussion is no longer about financial targets, but about developing credible defense plans and determining which military tasks individual allies should commit to. Such a discussion involves money, but it also requires clear commitment to fight together. In retrospect, what is most remarkable is how the burden-sharing discussion over the past years has become increasingly dissociated from actual war plans and therefore tumbled into a strategic void.

### **One for All, All for One: Towards a Common Plan**

The days of non-committal Alliance membership are over. During the historical timeframe in which NATO re-oriented itself towards expeditionary crisis management and cooperative security outreach, allies had considerable discretion over the extent to which they subscribed to NATO operations and other endeavours. At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO leaders made it unambiguously clear that collective defense as per Article V of the Washington Treaty constitutes the greatest responsibility of the Alliance. This forces the organization to reconnect burden-sharing with planning for war, which has the side effect of greatly limiting political room for maneuver and buck-passing. As the Alliance searches for a new consensus on the best way to safeguard the territories and populations of all allies, it would do well to revisit the

idea of a division of labor. For burden-sharing to be politically sustainable, allies must understand their own role and responsibility within the Alliance as a whole.

It is important to realize how NATO's level of ambition has repeatedly but invisibly changed over the past decades. For many years, planners could implicitly assume NATO's ambition to conduct several crisis management operations simultaneously would suffice to meet the unlikely possibility of conflict with Russia or any other third party. For crisis management purposes, resources were collected ad hoc, i.e., on the basis of force generation conferences. This accustomed nations to the idea they could freely choose to what extent they would engage in any expeditionary operation.<sup>16</sup> Given many of them had reservations about the wisdom of such operations, the level of ambition withered *de facto*, if not on paper. Ever since the Russian annexation of Crimea—combined with growing concern that the security environment throughout the Alliance's southern neighborhood could spin dangerously out of control—this implicit level of ambition has started to grow again. Once planners realized high-intensity combat on NATO's borders could not be excluded, a dramatic adaptation of the required force mix started to unfold, with shortfalls in long-range artillery and ground-based air defense being detected and readiness requirements spiking upwards.<sup>17</sup>

At the Wales Summit, NATO leaders decided to shore up the defense of the eastern flank by creating a mobile tripwire force and relying on a system of swift reinforcement by follow-on forces.<sup>18</sup> The discussions on the upcoming Warsaw summit indicate a widespread recognition that an enhanced forward presence is required.<sup>19</sup> The deployment of a third brigade combat team to US Army Europe (on a rotational basis) as part of the European Reassurance Initiative constitutes an early indication thereof.<sup>20</sup> While the precise details of NATO's forward presence remain to be clarified, it can be assumed that all European allies are being asked to contribute to this effort—not only by the United States, but also by those allies most vulnerable geographically.

In the world of collective defense, operational planning and burden-sharing must go hand in hand. It is for this reason the old principles from 1949 acquire a new salience: they constitute critical connectors between these different discussions. Through self-help, the message is conveyed all allies are expected to contribute meaningful combat capabilities. The proportionality of national contributions—however difficult this is to measure—can be expected to feature prominently in the debate. Economic stability and relative wealth are justly regarded as important factors in the underlying analysis. And crucially, Alliance coordination

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16 In Afghanistan, for instance, troop contributions were typically based on the idea of “doing just enough to maintain solidarity with the United States,” as argued by Jo Coelmont, *End-State Afghanistan* (Brussels: Egmont Institute Egmont Paper 29, March 2009): 17.

17 Personal communication with various NATO officials, March–April 2016.

18 See Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe, *NATO Defense Planning Between Wales and Warsaw: Politico-Military Challenges of a Credible Assurance Against Russia*, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, January 2016.

19 Cf. e.g. Michal Baranowski and Bruno Lété, *NATO in a World of Disorder: Making the Alliance Ready for Warsaw* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 2016).

20 EUCOM, “EUCOM Announces European Reassurance Initiative Implementation Plan,” EUCOM Live Blog, <http://eucom.dodlive.mil/2016/03/eucom-announces-european-reassurance-initiative-implementation-plan/> (March 30, 2016).

assumes the development of common plans in which different allies take on different roles—namely those for which they are the most suited.

What could a new division of labor look like in the security environment of the 21st century? It can be safely assumed the allies most exposed to different threats will have to strengthen their local defenses, while those less exposed can be called upon for support. As different threats can emanate from various geographical vectors, a regional distribution of responsibilities may need to be put in place, in particular as far as land forces are concerned. At the same time, more functional approaches remain applicable to non-geographic threats such as terrorism. Taken together, this suggests a hub-and-spokes model for organizing European defense efforts, in which a western European core needs to support and reinforce the efforts undertaken by eastern, southern and northern spokes for securing Europe's external borders. Correspondingly, western European allies need to continue investing in rapidly deployable capabilities whereas others, by virtue of necessity, must harden their forces at the cost of reduced mobility.

Such regionalization raises important questions about the overall size and allocation of the force pool: how much capability should be allocated to specific regions and how much should be held in reserve, to be committed when and where needed? Answering such questions requires detailed modelling of how operational scenarios could unfold and what political risks to Alliance unity these may entail. One likely take-away is individual European allies will need to rebuild and modernize their force structures for dealing with an environment in which threats have come closer home and in which European helplessness becomes politically unaffordable. Under such a scheme the United States needs not provide the bulk of forward forces as long as it remains strategically engaged as the underwriter of the system, enabling its allies to defend themselves.

### **Looking Ahead**

If NATO is serious about recommitting to all its core tasks then the road ahead is a long one. The way in which the burden-sharing debate unfolded over the previous two decades offers little meaningful guidance in this regard, precisely because it was not a debate about the defense of the European continent. What is needed now is to revamp plans to defend all allies from the various threats they face and to distribute the military tasks this entails. Instead of trying to measure past contributions, NATO leaders would do well to look forward and craft a meaningful division of labor of what needs to be done in the years ahead. The principles that guided this debate in 1949 arguably constitute a better starting point for today than anything the Alliance has discussed since the end of the Cold War. In that sense, the discussion on burden-sharing truly needs to be relearned over and over again.



## Modifying America's Forward Presence in Eastern Europe

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John R. Deni

**ABSTRACT:** Starting in 2017, Washington plans to begin heel-to-toe rotations of an armored brigade from the United States to Eastern Europe. In some respects, this represents a significant improvement over the assurance and deterrence steps taken by the United States and several of its NATO allies over the last two years. Although the administration's plan is indeed a step in the right direction, it falls short of the hype ascribed by the media, not to mention Moscow. More broadly, the US approach to reassurance and deterrence still suffers from some strategic shortcomings.

Starting in 2017, Washington plans to begin “heel-to-toe” rotations of an armored brigade combat team from the United States to Eastern Europe, assuming the US Congress agrees to President Obama’s funding request. This decision represents a significant improvement over the assurance and deterrence steps taken by the United States and several of its NATO allies over the last two years.

The measures to date have included short-term rotational deployments of forces from North America and/or Western Europe for limited-duration exercises and other training events in Eastern Europe. From both temporal and qualitative perspectives such deployments leave much to be desired. For example, they lack the constancy of heel-to-toe rotations, essentially creating gaps of weeks or months, which Russia could exploit to achieve a *fait accompli*. Additionally, the deployments to date have not always include armored units, which puts alliance defenses at a disadvantage relative to Russian military power in the region. Deploying an armored brigade combat team on a rotational basis starting in early 2017 will directly address these shortcomings.

More broadly, the expanded European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) program signals a renewed American commitment to and leadership of the alliance. This is especially important at a time when Europeans have questioned whether and how their continent figures into Washington’s strategic priorities. As the United States deepens its involvement in Iraq and the fight against ISIL, continues to consolidate stability in Afghanistan, and rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region, European allies may have some reason to think Washington’s attention is focused elsewhere. The expansion of the ERI program—especially as seen through the media fanfare that greeted its announcement—should provide solace to those concerned about US leadership in NATO.

Despite these and other strengths of the ERI expansion though, the program and its centerpiece—a rotationally deployed armored

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brigade—have several shortcomings. Although the ERI expansion is a step in the right direction, it appears unlikely to effectively or thoroughly address the security challenges confronting vital American interests in Europe. This article will address how and why that is the case, and what might be done to augment the ERI expansion. Ultimately, these steps could help to strengthen the broader US response to Russia's upending of the European security environment with its invasion and dismembering of Ukraine.

### Rotational Deployments to Date

American forward-based military strength in Europe has dwindled dramatically in recent decades, both quantitatively and qualitatively. From roughly 122,000 soldiers in 1992, the US Army has seen its forward-based presence in Europe steadily decline to roughly 30,000 soldiers today. The largest American forward-based combat arms formations in Europe today include a Stryker cavalry regiment of roughly 5,000 troops and an airborne brigade of about 3,800 troops.

Qualitatively, US force structure in Europe has also been decimated by cuts over the last 20 years. The only remaining US combat aviation brigade in Europe has been reduced significantly in the last two years (ironically, since Russia's invasion of Ukraine) to a single attack battalion, about a dozen heavy-lift CH-47 Chinook helicopters, ten general support UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters, and a medical evacuation unit. Moreover, key enablers have been stripped from the forward-based US force structure in Europe, like artillery, cyber warfare, and electronic warfare capabilities. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of US heavy mechanized formations represents a major challenge, especially in light of recent Russian investments in armor.<sup>1</sup>

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its invasion of Ukraine's Donbas region exposed the shortsightedness of the force structure cuts, again from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. In an effort to make best use of the remaining American force structure in Europe to reassure allies and deter Russian aggression in northeastern Europe, the United States deployed four companies from the Italy-based 173rd airborne brigade, one each to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in April 2014. These units participated in exercises and other training events throughout the spring and summer of that year, and were a physical manifestation of the American commitment to allied solidarity.

That same summer in 2014, the Pentagon announced the European Reassurance Initiative, a nearly \$1 billion program to support rotational troop deployments from the United States, as well as other reassurance and deterrence measures.<sup>2</sup> Shortly thereafter—in October 2014—the Italy-based companies were replaced with companies from the 1st brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, based in Texas. This temporary rotational deployment lasted roughly two months and included armored equipment such as Abrams tanks and Bradley infantry fighting vehicles,

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1 Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January-February 2016): 36-37. For example, Moscow has dedicated a significant amount of development and procurement resources toward the innovative T-14 Armata tank.

2 The ERI has supported reassurance and deterrence efforts on the part of all services, including expansion of the US Air Force's aviation detachment in Poland, US Navy deployments in the Black Sea, and expanded efforts on part of the US Marine Corps' Black Sea Rotational Force.

thereby addressing some of the capability gaps in the US force structure in Europe.

Following the winter holiday break, the Germany-based US 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment deployed one company to each of the same four countries for roughly two and a half months. Thereafter, the United States followed a similar pattern for the remainder of 2015 and through 2016, exchanging CONUS-based companies and Europe-based companies to achieve a nearly continuous presence in northeastern Europe. These deployments were warmly welcomed by the receiving countries and, in conjunction with other US and allied reassurance measures, contributed to strengthening NATO's deterrent posture.

Nevertheless, some of the most nervous allies in Eastern Europe expressed concern that the steps taken by the United States and other allies were necessary but insufficient. Some allied governments argued rather vocally and publicly for a far more robust NATO response, one that would include *permanent* deployment of troops.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Poland's leaders characterized the alliance's unwillingness to do so as evidence that Poland and other allies in Central and Eastern Europe were being relegated to some sort of "buffer state" status.<sup>4</sup>

Assessments that are somewhat more objective, such as those available through war games and other analyses, have pointed to similar conclusions regarding the insufficiency of allied responses in northeastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, given the limited force posture of the alliance in northeastern Europe, NATO would find it difficult to defend or retake Baltic state territory in the face of any large-scale, determined Russian invasion.

Simultaneously, there appears to have been a growing sense within the US Department of Defense that the United States and its allies needed to think more strategically about the way forward, beyond the measures taken in 2014 immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. More specifically, the administration evidently saw the need for "a fundamental change" in its approach, from merely assurance to an equally strong emphasis on deterrence.<sup>6</sup>

For all of these reasons, the Obama administration proposed a dramatic increase in ERI funding in its 2017 budget proposal. Sent to Congress in February, the proposal increases funding from roughly \$789 million in fiscal year 2016 to just over \$3.4 billion for fiscal year 2017. Much of this more than four-fold increase in funding will be used to pay for the rotational deployment of an armored brigade combat team to Central and Eastern Europe, plus the prepositioning of enough US equipment for a so-called "fires" brigade (consisting of artillery, rockets, and so forth), a sustainment brigade, a division headquarters, and other

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3 Kjetil Malkenes Hovland, "Estonian President Calls for Permanent NATO Base in Country," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2014.

4 Henry Foy, "NATO Treats Poland Like a Buffer State, Says New President," *The Financial Times*, August 13, 2015.

5 Julia Ioffe, "The Pentagon Is Preparing New War Plans for a Baltic Battle Against Russia," *Foreign Policy*, September 18, 2015.

6 Email exchange with a civilian staff member at US Army Europe Headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany, February 19, 2016. See also, Philip Breedlove, "US European Command Posture Statement 2016," February 25, 2016, [www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35164/u-s-european-command-posture-statement-2016](http://www.eucom.mil/media-library/article/35164/u-s-european-command-posture-statement-2016).

enabling units. In sum, if the proposal is fully funded, the United States would have nearly a division's worth of capability in Europe for the first time in many years.

### Beefing Up?

Media accounts have somewhat breathlessly claimed the United States is “fortifying,” “beefing up,” and “significantly” increasing its military presence in Eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, adding a rotationally deployed armored brigade of 4,200 troops represents a major increase in the number of US soldiers on the ground in Europe at any given moment, at least in terms of percentage. The addition of a rotationally deployed heavy brigade is roughly a 50 percent increase in the number of combat soldiers in Europe.

Moreover, the rotationally deployed brigade brings with it capabilities that are not currently organic to the US brigades permanently forward-based in Europe—namely, armor. Over a decade ago, the Congressionally-mandated Overseas Basing Commission (OBC) cautioned against a plan by the President George W. Bush administration to remove all US armored units from Europe.<sup>8</sup> That plan went forward anyway, and today the OBC's concerns appear prescient.

Additionally, the plan to conduct heel-to-toe rotations represents an important improvement over current deployments of US forces to northeastern Europe. Gaps, or underlaps, between current deployments of US- and Europe-based American units potentially offer windows of opportunity for Russian adventurism in Eastern Europe. Turning discrete deployments into heel-to-toe rotations means the elimination of underlaps between returning and deploying units—as well as the elimination of months-long underlaps in the presence of armored units in northeastern Europe.

Finally, and more broadly, the increase in ERI funding and American military presence in Europe signals a growing understanding in Washington that the alliance needs to move toward a “new normal” in Eastern Europe and the United States must lead it there in close coordination with Berlin, Paris, and London. The Poles and the Baltic states in particular want to know the alliance has a mid-term plan beyond a mere tripwire and the Obama administration's ERI funding increase is an important step in that process.<sup>9</sup>

For all these reasons, the ERI funding increase and the force-structure moves that comprise it are a step in the right direction. However, the moves fall short of the dramatic headlines. Perhaps more importantly,

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7 Mark Landler and Helene Cooper, “US Fortifying Europe's East to Deter Putin,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2016; Lolita C. Baldor, “US to Beef Up Military Presence in Eastern Europe,” *The Associated Press*, March 30, 2016; and “USA Plans to Significantly Increase Military Presence in Eastern Europe,” *Baltic News Network*, February 2, 2016, [www.bnn-news.com/usa-plans-to-significantly-increase-military-presence-in-eastern-europe-137731](http://www.bnn-news.com/usa-plans-to-significantly-increase-military-presence-in-eastern-europe-137731).

8 *Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States* (Arlington, VA: Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure, May 9, 2005) also known as the *Overseas Basing Commission, Preliminary Report to the President and the US Congress*, <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/obc.pdf>.

9 Interview with a senior political appointee within the Polish Ministry of Defense, March 2, 2016.

the US approach to reassurance and deterrence still suffers from some strategic shortcomings as well.

### Necessary but Insufficient

As argued above, the ERI funding increase and the rotationally deployed forces it will pay for are necessary steps. However, for several reasons the plan outlined to date is not quite sufficient to achieve broader objectives necessary to safeguard Western interests. For starters, the size of the additional force—roughly 4,200 troops—is inadequate to deter the Russian military by denial. Moscow has shown it can muster tens of thousands of troops for its snap exercises, often without NATO having any advance warning.<sup>10</sup> Aided by interior lines of communication—as well as reduced Western capacity to detect and interpret warnings and indicators of Russian military movements and intentions—Moscow can quickly assemble a force orders of magnitude larger than a single armored brigade, thereby providing the Kremlin with the capacity to overrun the “beefed up” American presence easily.<sup>11</sup>

It is true other allies—specifically, the United Kingdom and Germany—also are planning to begin or are considering heel-to-toe rotations.<sup>12</sup> However, these additional force structure contributions will be relatively small—perhaps hundreds of troops each, at most. For this reason, the United States and its allies appear to be only strengthening their ability to deter by punishment—that is, adding to the tripwire of American and other allied forces in northeastern Europe.

Further frustrating efforts at deterrence-by-denial is the fact that the rotationally deployed US brigade will be split among six countries—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. This dispersed deployment will likely prevent the brigade from easily and quickly achieving mass and hence its full potential during a time of crisis. Dispersed deployment will also make it more expensive and more time consuming to assemble the brigade for the purpose of training in a single location.

More importantly, the dispersed deployment does not make sense geo-strategically. In short, it makes no sense to deploy parts of the brigade to Bulgaria and Romania when the challenge Russia poses on the ground is not particularly salient to either country. Admittedly, Russia does still maintain troops and an impressive arsenal of military ammunition and equipment in Transnistria, the breakaway region of Moldova. However, this is a miniscule personnel presence by Russia’s standards, amounting to roughly 1,500 troops.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the number of ethnic Russians in Tulcea, the Romanian county that borders Ukraine along the Black Sea, amounts to just 5 percent of the population there. Across all of Romania, ethnic Russians comprise about one tenth of one percent—the same is true in Bulgaria.

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10 Thomas Frear, “Anatomy of a Russian Exercise,” *European Leadership Network*, August 12, 2015, [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/anatomy-of-a-russian-exercise\\_2914.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/anatomy-of-a-russian-exercise_2914.html).

11 John Vandiver, “Breedlove Tells Congress US Must Rebuild Forces in Europe to Confront Newly Aggressive Russia,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 25, 2016, [www.stripes.com/news/breedlove-tells-congress-us-must-rebuild-forces-in-europe-to-confront-newly-aggressive-russia-1.396034](http://www.stripes.com/news/breedlove-tells-congress-us-must-rebuild-forces-in-europe-to-confront-newly-aggressive-russia-1.396034).

12 Callum Paton, “UK Commits to Long-Term Troop Deployment in Baltic States as NATO Checks Russian Aggression,” *International Business Times*, October 8, 2015.

13 *The Military Balance* (London: International Institute for Security Studies, 2016), 188.

In contrast, the challenges posed by Russia on the ground in northeastern Europe are far more acute. There, Russia can quickly amass thousands of troops just across the border from allied territory, and it could conceivably exploit the sizeable Russian minorities in Estonia (25 percent) and Latvia (26 percent) as a pretext for adventurism.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Baltic states lack strategic depth, complicating allied efforts to defend, reinforce, and/or counter covert or overt Russian actions. In sum, it is entirely unclear from a military perspective why *any* portion of the rotational brigade should be based in southeastern Europe. Instead, the alliance and its most at-risk members would be far better off if the *entire* brigade were based in the Baltic states.

In addition to being geographically misaligned, the ERI is also fiscally misaligned. Certainly, the ERI's \$3.4 billion is no small amount, but it is a funding line that resides in the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account, not the Department of Defense's base budget. This somewhat arcane distinction implies a lack of constancy in Washington's outlook, but more importantly it prevents DoD from programming the rotational brigade requirement into future year budget planning. Politically, it is probably safe to assume for now the ERI will retain the support it has had over the last two years, but the fact that ERI is *not* a program of record in the base budget puts it at greater risk. Moving the ERI into the base budget is not without its challenges though, not the least of which is figuring out what *other* priority requirement it should displace in an environment of tight service budgets.

The ERI initiative also suffers from command and control shortcomings. Its centerpiece—the heavy rotational brigade—as well as the other two US brigades permanently forward stationed in Europe, will lack a dedicated intermediate-level command and control element. In other words, there is no American divisional command based in Europe, again thanks to the deep, hasty drawdowns of the last 15 years. Instead, the 4th Infantry Division maintains a roughly 100-person “mission command element” in Germany, prepared to expand if and when necessary—assuming the facilities it relies upon in Baumholder are not vacated in yet another round of downsizing. At least one analysis has shown a division headquarters sent from the United States may not arrive in time to make a difference in the fate of the Baltic States.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to lacking sufficient command and control, the announcement of the rotational deployment lacked any multilateral framework. Given the cuts in force structure across the alliance since the end of the Cold War, NATO's operations and deployments have become increasingly multinational. Two generations ago, at the height of the Cold War, multinationality within NATO force structure essentially stopped at the corps level. A single generation ago, as NATO became heavily involved in peacekeeping operations in the Western Balkans, multinationality went as far as the division level. Today, multinationality within NATO operations extends beyond the brigade and occasionally to the battalion level or company level—for instance, a US infantry company served

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14 These figures come from the 2016 *CIA World Factbook*, which also estimates that ethnic Russians comprise 6 percent of Lithuania's population.

15 David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016).

within a Romanian battalion in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> However, the announced rotational deployment lacked any kind of multinational framework and is instead a series of bilateral efforts between the United States and several allies, even though it had been known for many months that Germany and the United Kingdom were considering or planning similar deployments. Reportedly, the US rotational brigade deployment will be cast as part of a broader allied plan announced at the July 2016 Warsaw Summit, so perhaps then this bilateral move will be placed within an appropriate multinational context that can be used to incentivize force contributions from other allies.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the ERI plan failed to include a moratorium—if only couched in ‘for the foreseeable future’ terms—on further US unit draw-downs and facility closures in Europe. As a practical matter, such a moratorium would admittedly have limited impact, given the dramatic cuts to US forward presence to date—in other words, there is not much left to cut. However, as a political and rhetorical matter, such an announcement would contribute to reversing European perceptions the Obama administration has been too preoccupied with rebalancing to Asia and/or fighting extremists in the Middle East. It would also counter the notion the ERI lacks constancy given its placement in the OCO account, as discussed above.

### Fit for Purpose?

If the administration had addressed each of the shortcomings outlined above, it still remains unclear whether a rotationally deployed armored brigade is really the right tool for the challenge Russia poses in northeastern Europe. A US armored brigade is best suited to counter the worst-case scenario of a Russian conventional attack against allied forces. A Russian attack on the Baltic States would certainly be catastrophic for European security, but it is highly unlikely. This is not just the perspective of various academic and think-tank analysts—it is also the view of US military commanders on the ground in northeastern Europe.<sup>18</sup> Even Russian President Vladimir Putin—in an interview with an Italian newspaper—claimed that only in a “mad person’s dream” could one imagine Russia would attack NATO.<sup>19</sup> Putin is certainly no paragon of honesty, so it is unclear whether this statement amounts to sufficient reassurance for the purposes of the Baltic States and Poland.

Therefore, a forward-based heavy brigade—or two, or three—is necessary as an insurance policy for the less likely, catastrophic case of a Russian invasion.

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16 Jerry Wilson, “1-4 Infantry Leaves Legacy of Team Work in Afghanistan,” *Army*, January 31, 2011, [www.army.mil/article/51087/1\\_4\\_Infantry\\_leaves\\_legacy\\_of\\_team\\_work\\_in\\_Afghanistan](http://www.army.mil/article/51087/1_4_Infantry_leaves_legacy_of_team_work_in_Afghanistan).

17 Julian Barnes and Anton Troianovski, “NATO Allies Preparing to Put Four Battalions at Eastern Border With Russia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 29, 2016.

18 See for example, Matthew Kroenig, “Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War,” *Survival* 57, no. 1 (2015): 49-70; Mark Kramer, “The New Russian Chill in the Baltic,” *Current History* 114, no. 770 (March 2015): 108-114; Robert Person, “6 Reasons Not to Worry about Russia Invading the Baltics,” *The Washington Post*, November 12, 2015; and Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., “Putin Won’t Blitz Baltic States—But NATO Has A Plan...,” *Breaking Defense*, March 2, 2015, [www.breakingdefense.com/2015/03/putin-wont-blitz-baltic-states-but-nato-has-a-plan/](http://www.breakingdefense.com/2015/03/putin-wont-blitz-baltic-states-but-nato-has-a-plan/).

19 Vladimir Putin, Interview with the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, July 7, 2015, [www.corriere.it/english/15\\_giugno\\_07/vladimir-putin-interview-to-the-italian-newspaper-corriere-sera-44c5a66c-0d12-11e5-8612-1eda5b996824.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/english/15_giugno_07/vladimir-putin-interview-to-the-italian-newspaper-corriere-sera-44c5a66c-0d12-11e5-8612-1eda5b996824.shtml).

What is more likely to emanate from the Kremlin, though, is a form of ambiguous or hybrid warfare—that is, operations and activities designed to help Moscow achieve political objectives in Europe without crossing the threshold that would trigger an Article 5 response on the part of NATO.<sup>20</sup> If so, a heavy brigade is unlikely to be of great utility to the West. For instance, a heavy brigade is probably not the best choice for building resilience within civil governance institutions, for enhancing military-civilian cooperation during a crisis, for augmenting border observation and control, for strengthening information operations capabilities, for conducting offensive and defensive cyber operations, or for engaging with adversaries across the entire electro-magnetic spectrum.

It is here—in managing the most likely challenges from Russia—that the ERI needs to be augmented with additional tools beyond a heavy brigade and tons of prepositioned equipment. Although the FY2017 ERI spending request includes \$20 million for increased intelligence analysis and \$24 million for additional State Partnership Program activities, these relatively small amounts of money are unlikely to address the array of most likely challenges facing American allies in northeastern Europe.

## Conclusion

The plan to expand the ERI program, with the rotationally deployed armor brigade as its centerpiece, is a step in the right direction. Along with the other elements of the ERI effort, the heavy brigade will address some of the shortcomings of the US and allied responses to date, such as the absence of a heel-to-toe armored presence. More broadly, it also signals to NATO allies, as well as to Russia, that European security remains a vital interest to the United States.

To think, though, that it alone is sufficient to safeguard vital US interests in Europe and those of America's allies is somewhat short-sighted. The ERI expansion plan suffers from several shortcomings, including its relatively small size in comparison to the conventional threat presented by Russia across the border, and the intention to disperse it across six countries in northeastern and southeastern Europe.

Even if these shortcomings are addressed, there remains the question of whether an armored brigade is really a useful tool given the most likely challenges posed by Russia. Certainly an armored brigade would be helpful—although by no means decisive—in the event of a conventional assault on the Baltic States by Russian forces. However, a direct Russian attack on allied territory remains unlikely. Instead, Russia seems far more likely to pursue its various objectives in Europe and Eurasia through a variety of less overt tactics. An armored brigade is a rather blunt instrument for countering less overt, more “ambiguous” tactics and operations. For this reason, the United States should employ the ERI to build resilience and asymmetric response capabilities across all the Baltic states and Poland. With a change in emphasis, Washington can ensure the ERI is both necessary and sufficient for the task at hand, strengthening its leadership of the alliance during what looks to be an era of fraught NATO-Russia relations.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see Mary Ellen Connell and Ryan Evans, Rapporteurs, *Russia's "Ambiguous Warfare" and Implications for the US Marine Corps* (Arlington: Center for Naval Analysis, May 2015), 13.

# US LEADERSHIP AND NATO

## The United States as the Reluctant Ally

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Magnus Petersson

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**ABSTRACT:** US leadership in NATO has been declining since the Cold War ended. From a European perspective, the United States looks more and more like a “reluctant ally.” A re-nationalization of European security could occur without strong US leadership. The United States should, therefore, reassert itself in European security affairs—not with costly troop contributions, but by facilitating European unity and the development of relevant force structures.

Since its creation in 1949, NATO has been the most important alliance for America. US engagement and leadership in NATO has, however, been declining since the Cold War ended; this has been especially true during the Obama administration and in particular since the Libya War in 2011. In general, Obama’s administration has engaged less in international security affairs; the strategic rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific has definitely moved the US focus from Europe to that region.<sup>1</sup>

Although the US government plans to send more troops to Europe during 2017 and takes Russian aggression seriously, military operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria have moved Washington’s focus from Ukraine and Russia to the Middle East. In addition, the appetite for supporting Europe among US politicians and the American public seems to have declined. From a European perspective, the United States looks more and more like a “reluctant ally,” a characterization normally used by Washington to describe some of NATO’s allies during the Cold War.<sup>2</sup>

How does this reluctance manifest itself? What might it lead to? How should the United States act to facilitate more security in the transatlantic region without increasing the costs for American taxpayers? A re-nationalization or division of European defense and security is likely to occur without strong US leadership, and that will probably lead to a stronger Russian influence in European affairs which is clearly not in Washington’s interest. The United States should, therefore, regain its leading role in European security affairs—not with massive troop contributions, as in the Cold War, but with strong and firm leadership that can facilitate European unity and help to create relevant force structures capable of defending Europe and contributing to its security.

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1 Jeffrey Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine,” *The Atlantic*, April 2016.

2 Janusz Bugajski, “The Reluctant Ally,” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 23 (2010): 101-104.

## NATO's Declining Role in US Grand Strategy

During the Cold War, Europe had a major role in US grand strategy and the United States led NATO with a firm hand. There was never any doubt the United States was the *primus inter pares* in European security affairs. To borrow Max Weber's concept, Washington led NATO in a charismatic way.<sup>3</sup>

That has changed however. Even the Ukraine Crisis failed to make Europe a major player in US grand strategy. For example, in his comprehensive speech about the US foreign policy agenda for 2016 at the National Defense University (NDU) in January 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry, used just one sentence to describe the situation in Europe, and in that sentence he mentioned NATO once.<sup>4</sup>

The demonstration of Europe's decreased importance in US security policy was not new. When Robert Gates gave his last major speech as Secretary of Defense he criticized NATO for being a two-tiered alliance, for having a "dim, if not dismal" future, and said future US political leaders "may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."<sup>5</sup> Gates' view of NATO meetings was they were "excruciatingly boring," and he had to do crossword puzzles to stay awake.<sup>6</sup>

The Obama administration's decline in interest in Europe compared to other regions and the reluctance to lead NATO in traditional ways have been demonstrated over and over again, especially since the Libyan War in 2011.<sup>7</sup> That war caused a comprehensive discussion in the United States about burden-sharing in NATO between the United States and Europe, and especially who should take the lead in such an operation. Secretary Gates and several other members of the cabinet—even Vice President Joe Biden—were against the war, and the Obama administration wanted NATO's European members to take the lead. In short, they saw the Libyan War as a way for NATO to revitalize itself and to move toward a more fair transatlantic burden-sharing.<sup>8</sup>

During the Libyan War, President Obama stated NATO would take command of the enforcement of the arms embargo and the no-fly zone, and the United States would play "a supporting role."<sup>9</sup> Later, in a speech to the United Nations at the end of September, the president said the United States "was proud" to play a decisive role in the early days

3 Weber quoted in Joshua Derman, "Max Weber and Charisma: A Transatlantic Affair," *New German Critique* 38, no. 2 (2011): 56.

4 John Kerry, "Remarks on the United States Foreign Policy Agenda for 2016," January 13, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/01/251177.htm> (accessed January 17, 2016).

5 Robert Gates, "The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO)," Speech, June 10, 2011, <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1581> (accessed September 18, 2011).

6 Robert Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 194.

7 The arguments and examples given in this article are to a large degree relying on the results in Magnus Pettersson, *The US NATO Debate: From Libya to Ukraine* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015). In the book, I systematically analyzed the US debate within Congress, the Obama administration, think tanks, and elite media from 2011 to 2014. Further examples can be found in the publication.

8 Gates, *Duty*, 518; and Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 370.

9 Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," March 28, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya>.

of the operation, and then in a supporting capacity.<sup>10</sup> Soon thereafter, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said the United States had merely “helped” NATO achieve its mission in Libya.<sup>11</sup> The message could not be clearer: the United States has willingly stepped back and relinquished its leadership role in the alliance.

Between the end of the Libyan War and the Ukraine Crisis, the Obama administration allowed NATO to “lead itself.” Secretary Panetta, for example, said in Munich (February 2012), that NATO had proven it could handle the security challenges of the 21st century, and moved closer to the vision for the Atlantic community articulated by President John F. Kennedy in 1962, namely, that the United States and Europe should cooperate on a basis of “full equality.”<sup>12</sup>

US and NATO reactions to the Ukraine Crisis in the spring and summer of 2014 were, in contrast, rapid, forceful, and substantial. President Obama took the lead, and it was welcome from a European point of view. Since the Ukraine Crisis, phrases like “leading from behind” or “taking a back seat” dropped from the vocabulary of the administration. The United States sent troops to Europe to bolster US military presence. President Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and Secretary of State John Kerry visited Europe several times, especially NATO’s most recent European members, and American and NATO forces were sent to reassure them NATO’s “Musketeer Paragraph”—“one for all and all for one”—Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty, was viable.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, Obama continued to make it quite clear, that leading together also meant sharing the burdens together.<sup>14</sup> After the spring and summer of 2014, the US security debate again turned away from Europe, preferring to cover the military operation against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, later to be known as Operation Inherent Resolve.<sup>15</sup> In August 2014, the *The New York Times* published 252 articles on Ukraine, 277 on Syria, and 360 on Iraq; in January 2015, it published 125 articles on Ukraine, 200 on Syria, and 272 on Iraq; in January 2016, it published 60 articles on Ukraine, 248 on Syria, and 280 on Iraq. The pattern is the same in the *The Washington Post*: 525 articles on Ukraine, 667 on Syria, and 1,125 on Iraq in August 2014; 206 on Ukraine, 479 on Syria, and 740 on Iraq in January 2015; and 111 on Ukraine, 623 on Syria, and 693 on Iraq in January 2016.

The United States has built a large coalition of more than 60 countries to defeat ISIS with political, economic, and military means in the summer of 2014. NATO was not a part of the coalition against ISIS;

10 Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama at High-Level Meeting on Libya,” Speech, September 20, 2011, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/20/remarks-president-obama-high-level-meeting-libya> (accessed February 20, 2013).

11 Leon E. Panetta, “Lee H. Hamilton Lecture,” Speech, October 11, 2011, <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1620> (accessed January 24, 2013).

12 Leon E. Panetta, 48th Munich Security Conference, February 4, 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/panetta-clintons-remarks-munich-security-conference-germany/p27293>.

13 Magnus Petersson, “The US and the Wales Summit: Washington is Back, and NATO Is Back to Basics,” *ELN*, September 11, 2014, [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org) (accessed July 1, 2015).

14 See, for example, Barack Obama, “Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Renzi of Italy in Joint Press Conference,” Speech, March 27, 2014, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-renzi-italy-joint-press-confe> (accessed July 1, 2014).

15 Lawrence Freedman, “Ukraine and the Art of Exhaustion,” *Survival* 57, no. 5 (October–November 2015): 77–106.

nor did it lead the military operation. In fact, the United States several times made it clear the coalition against ISIS was not a NATO operation. For example, when Secretary Kerry made a statement at NATO Headquarters, in the beginning of December 2014, in connection with a meeting of the participants in the coalition against ISIS, he demonstratively began the meeting by stressing that “despite the location, this is not a NATO event.”<sup>16</sup>

During 2015 and 2016, the pattern was the same. Seven of Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter’s speeches and remarks during 2015 were focused on countering ISIL; only one focused on the situation in Europe.<sup>17</sup> The additional \$3.4 billion requested in the FY 2017 budget for strengthening US military presence in Europe (a quadrupling of the request for FY 2016) is clearly an increase, but it must be compared to the request for \$7.5 billion to counter ISIL, and that is not a change in the long-term trend.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, the US government has not been willing to lead NATO in a “charismatic way” since the Libyan War. With the exception of the spring and summer of 2014, the Obama administration has instead pointed to NATO’s European allies to step up, take more responsibility, and share the burdens within the alliance. That burden-sharing debate is not new—it has been going on since NATO’s creation. But what is new is the US government’s minimalist view of American engagement within and leadership of NATO. The question is what might it lead to?

### Consequences for European and Transatlantic Security

The decreased US interest in Europe is well documented.<sup>19</sup> According to several experts, NATO has transformed to a “post-American” alliance. NATO and Europe are no longer the first strategic priority for the United States. Its major role in American grand strategy has thereby disappeared. Several experts have suggested Washington might expect the European security challenges to be handled primarily by NATO’s European allies in a new transatlantic burden-sharing model, and the US role, therefore, should be principally “Article V-focused.”<sup>20</sup> What that means is Europe and NATO should be a more traditional military alliance in US security thinking, comparable to what NATO was before

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16 John Kerry, “Remarks at the Counter-ISIL Meeting,” December 3, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/12/234624.htm> (accessed January 6, 2015).

17 See Secretary of Defense Speeches, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches>.

18 Ash Carter, “Submitted Statement – House Appropriations Committee-Defense (FY 2017 Budget Request),” February 25, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/672855/submitted-statement-house-appropriations-committee-defense-fy-2017-budget-request> (accessed March 3, 2016); and “Opening Statement – House Appropriations Committee-Defense (FY 2017 Budget Request),” February 25, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/673093/opening-statement-house-appropriations-committee-defense-fy-2017-budget-request> (accessed, March 3, 2016).

19 Ellen Hallams, “Between Hope and Realism: The United States, NATO and a Transatlantic Bargain for the 21st Century,” in *NATO Beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance*, ed. Ellen Hallams, Luca Ratti, and Benjamin Zyla (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 218.

20 Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, “Towards a ‘Post-American’ Alliance? NATO Burden-Sharing after Libya,” *International Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2012): 313–327.

the Korean War, with mutual security guarantees but without common permanent military command structures.<sup>21</sup>

In theory, that is a perfectly fair argument, however, what might happen if the United States continues to pay less attention to European security? The risk is re-nationalization of security and defense issues, the generation of individual national security thinking and solutions rather than collective ones. That will lead to less cohesion and more friction between European states and thereby decrease the security in Europe. Second, it will generate less security and cooperation between European states, which means less military power and thereby less security in Europe. Third, it will create a bi-lateralization of security issues between European states, between single European states and Russia, and between single European states and the United States.

As has been shown several times, the European Union (EU) is not an alternative to NATO and the transatlantic security community. The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) is largely a failure. As the Libyan crisis showed "precisely the type of mission for which the EU, via CSDP, had been preparing" could not be handled by the European Union.<sup>22</sup> A similar failure occurred in 2008 when the United Nations requested EU military support for the mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).<sup>23</sup> In fact, the EU battle groups that have been fully operational since 2007, have never been used.

Russia would almost certainly welcome a re-nationalization of security and defense issues in Europe. In such a situation Russia could always be an equal partner among the regional great powers in Europe (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) and could play one against the other. The small states will, in turn, be squeezed between the regional great powers and dependent on their power plays. The United States will also be dragged into them, directly or indirectly, in addition to dealing with its own complicated bilateral relationships with 26 European NATO members and 22 NATO partners. That would be an extremely difficult situation with 48 European states competing with each other for US attention and support. The effect would be more friction and less security in Europe.

Fourth, re-nationalization would mean less security for the United States. If Washington leaves the permanent command structures, the capability gap between NATO's European members will increase even more and the degree of interoperability between American and European forces—which actually is relatively high after 25 years of joint operations—will decline. That will leave the United States with fewer possibilities and less flexibility when it wants to use force for political purposes.

21 Sean Kay, "No More Free-Riding: The Political Economy of Military Power and the Transatlantic Relationship," in *NATO's European Allies: Military Capability and Political Will*, ed. Janne Haaland Matlary and Magnus Petersson (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). See also Barry R. Posen, "Pull Back: The Case for a Less Activist Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January/February 2013) and Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

22 Jolyon Howorth, "European Defense Policy Needs Recalibration," *foreignpolicy.com*, June 29, 2012, (accessed March 3, 2016).

23 Ludovica Marchi Balossi-Restelli, "Fit for what? Towards explaining Battlegroup Inaction," *European Security* 20, no. 2 (2011): 155.

Finally, a transatlantic drift in combination with a re-nationalization of European security and defense will have ideological and cultural implications: Western ideas, values, norms, and rules will not set powerful global standards as they do today, and that will lead to less security not only for the West, but globally. So what should the United States do?

## Conclusion

The Obama administration's interest in European security affairs has been moderate to low. Nothing indicates the next administration—even if Hillary Clinton is elected, the least isolationist candidate—will be more interested. On the contrary, the rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific will continue with the view that China is the only global challenge for the United States. But Russia has recently shown it can create real problems for the United States in Europe and in the Middle East. If America continues to disengage from Europe, things could get much worse. Recently, the US government recognized this possibility, and the United States seems more interested in leading again, which offers some hope.<sup>24</sup>

Europeans realize the United States is not coming back to Europe with massive military power and economic resources as it did during the Cold War; at its peak in 1953, the United States had 450,000 troops in Europe.<sup>25</sup> Those numbers are not necessary either, since Europe's economy equals the US economy at present, and since NATO's European states—although there are always complaints about defense spending in Europe—spend three times as much on defense as Russia (around \$230 billion dollars compared to Russia's \$80 billion dollars) to defend a territory four times smaller. Russia's GDP is ten times smaller than Europe's and smaller than the French, German, and UK economies individually.

The balance within NATO must shift so Europe's NATO forces can take care of European defense with American forces acting largely as force enablers. To achieve that, what Europe needs is not US resources and military power, but US leadership, engagement, and advice in security and defense issues.

Leadership is the most important contribution because it creates cohesion and confidence, and avoids a re-nationalization of defense and security in Europe. The United States should therefore demonstrate its will to lead NATO in a traditional way, as a *primus inter pares*, and lead Europe through NATO; it must not bilateralize its relations with NATO members and partners. A strong and trusted leader of NATO will restore confidence in NATO and Article V.

The United States should also lead the way in creating larger forces. Most NATO members are too small to operate above battalion size, and they have so few units they cannot operate over time (sustainability), nor do two things at the same time (flexibility). In addition, the staffs and commanders have lost their competence in leading larger formations.

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24 Ash Carter, "Submitted Statement – Senate Appropriations Committee-Defense (FY 2017 Budget Request)," April 27, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/744066/submitted-statement-senate-appropriations-committee-defense-fy-2017-budget-requ> (accessed April 30, 2016).

25 Luke Coffey, "The Future of US Bases in Europe: A View from America," Lecture #1233 on National Security and Defense, July 15, 2013, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/07/the-future-of-us-bases-in-europe-a-view-from-america> (accessed January 9, 2015).

Joint force generation has been tried in NATO for a long time; the latest example is the “Very High Reaction Joint Task Force” (VJTTF) that would be able to deploy a multinational brigade (5,000 troops) within days, supported by air, maritime, and special forces.<sup>26</sup> But joint force generation is not the basic principle of force generation in Europe, and with US leadership and experience in building and leading larger forces that could be changed.

America should also lead the Europeans by encouraging a higher degree of interoperability. As John Deni has argued, ISAF forced the NATO countries to develop an “unprecedented depth of operational and tactical interoperability.”<sup>27</sup> But this high level of interoperability will go down if it is not maintained. Deni suggests the United States should use its forward-based troops to exercise and train with European forces. That is a good suggestion, and the degree of interoperability could increase even more if it also includes the technical level; common procurement of weapons systems. The United States should take the lead in such procurement programs within NATO.

The United States should also take the lead in facilitating the establishment of European forces that have a higher degree of mobility. Reinforcing Eastern or Southern Europe’s (including Turkey’s) defense in a crisis from the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, or Spain requires expeditionary capacity, which the Europeans do not have. Creating forces that can move fast and securely over long distances has for a long time been a US specialty and it could be used to lead such a program. In addition, this could benefit the United States in other ways should it need European partners in other parts of the world.

American engagement in Europe is also important because it guarantees a continued transatlantic security community on a political and strategic level. “The West” is under pressure in several ways, not just strategically but also politically and culturally. The Western world order, created after World War II, is being challenged, and alternative visions of order are emerging on different levels and in different regions.<sup>28</sup> The United States should, therefore, continue to engage in European affairs for its own sake.

The United States knows how to create the best military forces in the world, and it can offer valuable advice in creating a European military force that is capable of defending Europe, shaping the security environment around Europe, and operating—when necessary—with the US Armed Forces. As Constanze Stelzenmüller argued recently, the focus should be moved from how much to spend (the input) to how much to get (the output): “the United States should help Europe figure out how to develop its capabilities, use its budgets more intelligently,

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26 Martin Zapfe, “NATO’s Spearhead Force,” *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, no. 174 (May 2015); NATO “Fact Sheet,” March 9, 2015, [www.aco.nato.int](http://www.aco.nato.int) (accessed December 29, 2015).

27 John R. Deni, “Maintaining Transatlantic Strategic, Operational and Tactical Interoperability in an Era of Austerity,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2014): 583-600.

28 Trine Flockhart, “An Agenda for NATO’s 2016 Warsaw Summit: Back to Basics or Just Backwards?” *DIIS Policy Brief*, August 2015, [http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/246614/PB\\_NATO\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](http://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/246614/PB_NATO_FINAL_WEB.pdf) (accessed March 2, 2016).

and create more common European assets and forces (rather than use bilateral relationships to foster divisions).”<sup>29</sup>

NATO will survive. But if it wants to be a relevant and effective instrument for creating European, transatlantic, and—in a wider sense—global security, it must be led firmly and strongly by an engaged United States. Unfortunately, there are few signs of that when looking at the low importance Europe and NATO are given in US grand strategy. But there is hope; if the United States could lead more, engage more, and advise more in Europe—which is not costly—it could be the foundation of a fairer burden-sharing and a more stable transatlantic security community.

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<sup>29</sup> Constanze Stelzenmüller, “Europe to Planet America: Stay With Us, But Don’t Stampede Us,” *German Marshall Fund Policy Brief*, September 2015, 4.

# IS NATION-BUILDING A MYTH?

## State-Building: America's Foreign Policy Challenge

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Charles J. Sullivan

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**ABSTRACT:** This article provides an overview of the domestic security environments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria today and discusses the danger new radical-inspired states pose to the United States and the international community. Ultimately, state-building remains the primary strategic means to address this new challenge. However, the world should prepare for the rise of radical-inspired states if state-building proves to be impossible.

Washington is not ready to dispense with the Global War on Terror. The scourge of radical Islam still constitutes a serious threat to the stability of the international system. Recently, the world has witnessed a series of terrorist attacks take place in the West, while the governments of countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and others, struggle to quell insurgent forces and terrorist groups. Four countries in particular merit America's close attention over the span of the next several years: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. All represent a new type of menace. They resemble "failed" or "collapsed" states in form.<sup>1</sup> Yet they are inherently precarious because new radical-inspired states (or "terror" states) are developing within their borders.<sup>2</sup> This past decade, the conventional academic wisdom argued certain failed states undermined global stability because terrorists could operate with impunity from inside such countries.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays this threat is undergoing a stunning metamorphosis, with insurgent-based movements transforming into new states and challenging the host governments of these four countries for supremacy.

Today, the Afghan, Iraqi, Libyan, and Syrian governments are all fighting for their very survival, and America has the ability to play a role in determining whether they ultimately endure or perish. Surely, some

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1 For definitions of "failed" and "collapsed" states, see Robert I. Rotberg, "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-10.

2 In formulating this phrase, I drew upon the following works: Tim Arango, "ISIS Transforming into Functioning State that Uses Terror as Tool," *New York Times*, July 21, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/22/world/middleeast/isis-transforming-into-functioning-state-that-uses-terror-as-tool.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/22/world/middleeast/isis-transforming-into-functioning-state-that-uses-terror-as-tool.html?_r=0); Audrey K. Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (March/April 2015): 87-98.

3 Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States in a World of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (July/August 2002): 127-140. For a discussion on this topic, see also Michael J. Mazarr, "The Rise and Fall of the Failed State Paradigm," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 1 (January/February 2014): 113-121.

policymakers and scholars believe the protracted conflicts raging within these countries are not (or no longer) America's primary concern, that such wars can only be resolved by local political actors, and that the United States should not be bestowing foreign aid upon politically inept governments led by corrupt utilitarian-minded elites or rushing to the defense of human rights and international law every time some beleaguered autocrat clinging to power violates the rules of war. While such views hold merit, the domestic security environments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria are seemingly becoming more hazardous by the day. Hence, the United States risks a great deal in terms of its national security interests if it decides to turn away from these countries.

In Iraq and Syria, terrorists fighting under the banner of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have murdered US citizens, massacred and enslaved ethnic and religious minorities, and looted and pillaged centers containing historical and cultural artifacts.<sup>4</sup> In Libya, the country has descended into anarchy since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. Rival militias fight for control over stretches of territory, while ISIL-affiliated and other terrorist groups infiltrate the country due to the lack of a central government. In Afghanistan, a recent deadly wave of terrorist attacks has called into question whether the Afghan government could survive should the remaining US military forces depart.<sup>5</sup> Overall, if America decided to disengage from these countries, radical Islamists could capture greater swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria, Libya may devolve into a terrorist haven, and Afghan cities may soon start falling to the Taliban. Can anything be done to prevent these scenarios from happening?

This article describes the deteriorating domestic security environments in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. It then discusses the options available to the United States in terms of addressing these concerns. Thereafter, it analyzes the nature of the new threat facing the United States in the Global War on Terror.

Washington has decided to confront the rise of this new menace, primarily by striving to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIL in western Iraq and northern and eastern Syria.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the US government will likely try to block the expansion of ISIL's self-proclaimed caliphate to include portions of Libya as well as prevent the conversion of the Taliban into a new state in Afghanistan. State-building though remains the primary strategic means to address this challenge. Unfortunately, however, America's track record in terms of prosecuting such ventures has not been very impressive, and whether an ISIL and/or Taliban-led

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4 For an overview of this terrorist organization, see W. Andrew Terrill, "Understanding the Strengths and Vulnerabilities of ISIS," *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 13-23. The US Government has publicly stated ISIL has committed genocide against a variety of minority groups across the Middle East. See Carol Morello and William Branigan, "Kerry Declares Islamic State Has Committed Genocide," *Washington Post*, March 17, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/kerry-declares-islamic-state-has-committed-genocide/2016/03/17/35eaa5e6-ec3e-11e5-a6f3-21ccdbc5f74e\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/kerry-declares-islamic-state-has-committed-genocide/2016/03/17/35eaa5e6-ec3e-11e5-a6f3-21ccdbc5f74e_story.html).

5 US President Barack Obama has stated that several thousand US military forces will remain in Afghanistan post-2016. See Matthew Rosenberg and Michael D. Shear, "In Reversal, Obama Says US Soldiers Will Stay in Afghanistan to 2017," *New York Times*, October 15, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?_r=0).

6 Tanya Somanader, "President Obama Provides an Update on Our Strategy to Degrade and Destroy ISIL," The White House, July 6, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2015/07/06/president-obama-provides-update-our-strategy-degrade-and-destroy-isil>.

state can be beaten back largely depends upon Washington's desire to remain engaged in a series of protracted conflicts.

### America and Enduring Wars

Why are acts of political violence so pervasive in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria today? The hard truth is the contemporary problems which torment these four countries are at least partially due to America's actions (or inactions). In Afghanistan, the origins of this country's troubles date back to the days of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) when the United States and other foreign states supported the *mujabedeens* against the invading USSR and its Afghan communist-led puppet government. After the departure of Soviet troops America turned away from Afghanistan, leaving the *mujabedeens* factions to fight one another, which set the stage for the Afghan state's implosion.<sup>7</sup> Since the onset of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, the United States and its coalition partners have sought to rebuild a broken country. But the Afghan state remains largely propped up by the US government, and the Taliban do not appear to be interested in engaging in formal negotiations.<sup>8</sup>

In Iraq, the mistakes of the US-led military occupation are well-known now. A series of fateful policy decisions gravely undermined domestic order and spawned the rise of an insurgency.<sup>9</sup> In time, and with much effort and sacrifice, the US military largely suppressed the Iraqi insurgency by adhering to an innovative strategy grounded in counter-insurgency principles.<sup>10</sup> But a premature withdrawal in 2011, followed by the application of exclusivist governing practices by local politicians during Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's tenure, reawakened sectarian hostilities across the country and aggressively undermined the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of many Iraqi citizens.<sup>11</sup> In 2014, Baghdad surrendered a significant portion of its territory along with several major cities to ISIL. To further complicate matters, reports now indicate Shiite militias and fighters affiliated with the *Hezbollah* terrorist organization are battling against ISIL in Iraq.<sup>12</sup> It is unclear whether the Iraqi military will be able to mount a successful counteroffensive to retake cities such as Mosul from ISIL and hold them.

7 Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 238-260. For a discussion on US involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 50-186.

8 For a discussion on this issue, see Charles J. Sullivan, "The Coming Fall of Kabul," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo 386, George Washington University (September 2015), [http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/PePM386\\_Sullivan\\_Sept2015.pdf](http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/PePM386_Sullivan_Sept2015.pdf).

9 For a discussion on this issue, see Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, reprint ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2007). See also Larry Diamond, "What Went Wrong in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 34-56.

10 See Andrew F. Krepinevich, "How to Win in Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (September/October 2005): 87-104; and Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq*, reprint ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

11 Joel Rayburn, "The Coming Disintegration of Iraq," *Washington Post*, August 15, 2014, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-coming-disintegration-of-iraq/2014/08/15/2b3efd80-2300-11e4-958c-268a320a60ce\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-coming-disintegration-of-iraq/2014/08/15/2b3efd80-2300-11e4-958c-268a320a60ce_story.html). See also Ned Parker, "The Iraq We Left Behind," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March/April 2012): 94-110; Kenneth M. Pollack and Barbara F. Walter, "Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 36.

12 Liz Sly and Suzan Haidamous, "Lebanon's Hezbollah Acknowledges Battling the Islamic State in Iraq," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-acknowledges-battling-the-islamic-state-in-iraq/2015/02/16/4448b21a-b619-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-hezbollah-acknowledges-battling-the-islamic-state-in-iraq/2015/02/16/4448b21a-b619-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html).

In Libya, NATO went to war against the Gaddafi regime in 2011 in response to the late autocrat's determination to institute a bloody crackdown so as to stave off rebellion. But the NATO-led military intervention accomplished very little (other than the overthrow and slaying of Gaddafi, which in turn led to the opening of a security vacuum in his regime's wake).<sup>13</sup> Today, the situation on the ground clearly reveals the inherent shortsightedness of the international community in not deploying a multinational peacekeeping force to Libya in the early days of the post-Gaddafi era. On account of domestic political considerations in Western capitals, however, the decision was made to only conduct an air war in the hopes of avoiding becoming too heavily involved. The absence of a united central government in Libya sparked a major political crisis involving rival governing coalitions laying claim to power, as well as opened the door to the possibility that Libya could become a "satellite" of ISIL.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, the situation in Syria is catastrophic. Political order disintegrated into a full-scale civil war when President Bashar al-Assad instituted his own crackdown in 2011 in response to mass protests calling for his ouster. Although the United States has publicly called for Assad's departure and threatened military action in response to the Syrian government's purported usage of chemical weapons, no military campaign has been initiated against the Assad regime.<sup>15</sup> Instead, with the exception of the battle for the city of Kobane (which Kurdish forces, with the assistance of US airpower, successfully defended from an ISIL advance this past year), Washington has been reluctant to enter the fray. Recently, there has been some talk about the United States and Turkey creating a "buffer zone" in Syria along the Turkish border, but it is unclear as to how it would be managed.<sup>16</sup> As of now, in addition to enhancing its airpower capabilities at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, the White House has decided to deploy a small contingent of US Special Operations Forces to Syria to provide "advice and assistance" to "local forces" battling against ISIL.<sup>17</sup>

The United States seeks to bring about endings to all of these prolonged conflicts that are suitable to US interests and definitive in

13 Tony Karon, "'Mission Accomplished' in Libya? Not So Fast," *Time*, January 30, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/01/30/mission-accomplished-in-libya-not-so-fast/>. For an analysis of the oversights and policy blunders associated with the NATO-led military intervention in Libya, see Alan J. Kuperman, "A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing NATO's Libya Campaign," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 105-136.

14 The Editorial Board, "What Libya's Unraveling Means," *New York Times*, February 14, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/opinion/sunday/what-libyas-unraveling-means.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/opinion/sunday/what-libyas-unraveling-means.html?_r=0).

15 For an overview of the allegations of the Syrian government's usage of chemical weapons in the Syrian civil war, see Hugh Naylor, "Report: Syria Using Chemical Weapons in Growing Number of Attacks," *Washington Post*, June 3, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/report-syria-using-chemical-weapons-in-growing-number-of-attacks/2015/06/03/0ed16e26-0a0e-11e5-951e-8e15090d64ae\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/report-syria-using-chemical-weapons-in-growing-number-of-attacks/2015/06/03/0ed16e26-0a0e-11e5-951e-8e15090d64ae_story.html). For an overview of the US government's overt program to train Syrian rebels to fight against ISIL, see Eric Schmitt and Ben Hubbard, "US Revamping Rebel Force Fighting ISIS in Syria," *New York Times*, September 6, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/07/world/middleeast/us-to-revamp-training-program-to-fight-isis.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/07/world/middleeast/us-to-revamp-training-program-to-fight-isis.html?_r=0).

16 Erin Cunningham, "US, Turkey Aim to Create Buffer Zone on Syrian Border. Nobody Knows How," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/us-said-it-will-create-a-safe-zone-on-syrian-border-but-nobody-knows-how/2015/08/12/4c7d0baa-37e4-11e5-ab7b-6416d97c73c2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/us-said-it-will-create-a-safe-zone-on-syrian-border-but-nobody-knows-how/2015/08/12/4c7d0baa-37e4-11e5-ab7b-6416d97c73c2_story.html).

17 Peter Baker, Helene Cooper, and David E. Sanger, "Obama Sends Special Operations Forces to Help Fight ISIS in Syria," *New York Times*, October 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/31/world/obama-will-send-forces-to-syria-to-help-fight-the-islamic-state.html>.

nature. In Afghanistan, Washington is working to ensure the survival of the Afghan government and prevent the return of the Taliban to power. In Iraq, America is assisting the Iraqi government in an effort to evict ISIL from its strongholds and reassert Baghdad's authority over newly reconquered territories. In Libya, the United States is committed to helping broker a political solution to resolve the current governing crisis through the United Nations. In Syria, Washington aspires to neutralize ISIL and pressure Assad to leave power. The main problem, however, is none of these objectives are readily realizable on account of how the designated host governments exercise authority within these four countries.

### A Failed-State Syndrome

All four countries are embroiled in civil wars that show no signs of winding down. The Taliban are poised to mount a challenge to the Afghan government. The Iraqi government recently reasserted its control over the city of Ramadi, but it remains unknown as to when (or if) Mosul will be liberated from ISIL's rule. Libya's political deadlock cannot be resolved solely through dialogue and compromise. And Assad is not about to relinquish his authority in Syria. Instead, the Russian Federation has decided to deploy "military assistance" to Damascus, presumably in the hopes of ensuring the Assad regime's survival.<sup>18</sup> Moscow's military intervention in Syria is problematic for the United States because the presence of Russian forces lessens the possibility Assad can be dislodged from power. The Kremlin's strategy thus appears to consist of bombing US-backed anti-Assad forces to shore up the Syrian government, while using Syria as a "testing ground" to display Russia's military capabilities.<sup>19</sup>

While the security situations in these countries are all unique, the respective political systems are afflicted by the same syndrome: state failure. The host governments in question all suffer from crises of legitimacy on account of their inability to assert political authority and to provide social services to their own citizens.<sup>20</sup> As such, basic issues of legitimacy and authority will continue to vex these troubled political systems, and if such matters are left unresolved, acts of political violence will unfortunately remain an endemic feature of these societies. A variety of academic studies claim ineffective governance and

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18 Nathan Hodge, "Russia to Continue Military Support to Assad Government, Says Vladimir Putin," *Wall Street Journal*, September 16, 2015.

19 Adam Entous, "US Sees Russian Drive Against CIA-Backed Rebels in Syria," *Wall Street Journal*, October 5, 2015; Steven Lee Myers and Eric Schmitt, "Russian Military Uses Syria as Proving Ground, and West Takes Notice," *New York Times*, October 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/15/world/middleeast/russian-military-uses-syria-as-proving-ground-and-west-takes-notice.html>. Yet, President Vladimir Putin has recently ordered Russian military forces to withdraw from Syria, presumably because a negotiated political settlement of some sort between Damascus and certain rebel groups is within Russia's best interest. For a more nuanced discussion, see Max Fisher, "Putin Withdrawing Russian Forces from Syria: Why Now and Why It Matters," *Vox*, March 14, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/3/14/11224544/putin-syria-russia-withdraw>.

20 For a discussion on the concept of state failure and its defining characteristics, see Jack Goldstone, "Pathways to State Failure," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25 (2008): 285-296.

exclusionary rule are the key drivers of state failure and internecine conflict.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the ruling elites of failing states, for the most part, do not seem to want to take such findings to heart.

Washington has stressed to Kabul and Baghdad that local governing officials need to demonstrate a credible commitment to democracy by respecting the institutional foundations of their political systems. They have failed to do so.<sup>22</sup> In Libya and Syria, political order has deteriorated to such an extent the only way to stabilize these countries likely entails the insertion of a disciplined and resource-laden military force for an indefinite period. In brief, there are few options from which the United States can select to address the security challenges posed by these countries. In Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States has fought two long and expensive wars. In Libya and Syria, America is noticeably more gun-shy. And in all of these countries even the most powerful local political actors cannot enforce their rule and cultivate much legitimacy.<sup>23</sup>

### The New Challenge in the Global War on Terror

In the early post-9/11 era, Islamic terrorism represented the paramount security concern facing the United States. In confronting this threat, the US government began adhering to a new and ambitious foreign policy doctrine, consisting of capturing and killing terrorists, working with other state actors to undermine the capabilities of such groups to carry out attacks, and forcefully uprooting rogue states and replacing them with new democratic-oriented political systems. Now, after the expenditure of much blood and treasure, the United States seeks to avoid becoming entangled in any more protracted conflicts in the Middle East. But a strict adherence to this aim could prove to be rather costly if insurgent-based movements convert themselves into new states.

Insurgencies differ from states in terms of their respective organizational structure and functionality. According to some scholars, insurgencies are “characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerilla warfare from rural base areas.”<sup>24</sup> States, by contrast, are “coercion-wielding organizations” capable of waging war against other states and providing social services to people on account of their ability to project authority through the amassing of resources.<sup>25</sup> Bearing this in mind, ISIL is in the midst of converting itself from an insurgent force

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21 As an example, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75-90; Barbara F. Walter, “Why Bad Governance Leads to Repeat Civil War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2014): 1-31; Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min, “Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis,” *World Politics* 62, no. 1 (January 2010): 87-119. See also Kenneth M. Pollack and Barbara F. Walter, “Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 41.

22 Freedom House evaluates Afghanistan and Iraq as “not free” and awards both a “freedom rating” of “6” out of “7.” See “Freedom in the World 2015,” Freedom House (2015), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2015#.VeqnJhGqqkp>.

23 For a discussion on the indicators of state failure in all of these countries, see “Fragile States Index 2015,” Fund for Peace (2015), <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/>. According to the index rankings, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria are currently listed as being on “High Alert” whereas Libya is on “Alert.”

24 Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 75.

25 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990-1992* (Malden: Blackwell, 1992), 1, 96. See also Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-191.

into a new state. In terms of its functions, ISIL behaves very much like a state by combating other states, eradicating threats to its own authority within its self-proclaimed caliphate, providing social services to those who live under ISIL's rule, as well as extracting resources in return.<sup>26</sup> ISIL has also captured military equipment and vehicles, welcomed foreigners into its ranks, and created an internal security force to impose its rule (which permits the organization to maintain its writ over an expanse of territory). ISIL though more closely resembles a type of "phantom state" that engages in "hybrid warfare."<sup>27</sup> Governing entities like ISIL can develop inside politically unstable countries. And it is through the various "pathways" by which states come to fail that such aspiring actors are able to arise.<sup>28</sup>

Can aspiring state actors like ISIL be defeated? So far, the United States has opted to confront ISIL in Iraq and Syria, albeit to a lesser degree in the latter. That said, there are several major concerns with the current US strategy. To begin, Washington has no desire to reengage fully in Iraq by deploying large numbers of American soldiers. Instead, the US government is betting on the notion the Iraqi army will be able to replicate the success of the aforementioned US counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq. Yet judging by the state of the Iraqi army's professionalism (or lack thereof), vulnerability to sectarianism, and likely inability to broker deals with the Sunni tribes in the northern and western regions of the country, it will be very difficult to repeat history. American forces are thus arguably needed to help evict ISIL, hold territory, foster lasting political arrangements with the Sunni tribes, and monitor Baghdad's governing practices.<sup>29</sup> To date, Iraqi forces have experienced some success on the battlefield (such as with the retaking of the Baiji oil refinery in 2015), but it appears US air support and assistance from Shiite militias were necessary.<sup>30</sup> It is also noteworthy to not overlook the fact that ISIL is headquartered within the city of Raqqa in neighboring Syria. So, even if ISIL's forces were to be expelled from all the major cities and surrounding areas currently under its control in Iraq, the group could

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26 See Arango, "ISIS Transforming into Functioning State that Uses Terror as Tool." See also Ben Hubbard, "Offering Services, ISIS Digs In Deeper in Seized Territories," *New York Times*, June 16, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/world/middleeast/offering-services-isis-ensconces-itself-in-seized-territories.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/17/world/middleeast/offering-services-isis-ensconces-itself-in-seized-territories.html?_r=0). For a discussion on state-building measures in a general sense as discussed here, see Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 181; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, 96. For a discussion on ISIL's sources of income, see Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group."

27 For an overview of the concept of a "phantom state," see Daniel L. Byman and Charles King, "The Phantom Menace," *New York Times*, August 15, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/16/opinion/the-phantom-menace.html>; Daniel Byman and Charles King, "The Mystery of Phantom States," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 43-57. Cronin (2015) uses the term "pseudo-state" to describe ISIL. See Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group;" for a discussion on the concept of "hybrid warfare," see Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2009): 34-39.

28 For a discussion on the various "pathways" that failed states follow, see Goldstone, "Pathways to State Failure," 288.

29 Max Boot, "Should the US Send Ground Troops To Fight ISIS? Yes. Uproot the Enemy," *Time* 185, no. 8 (2015): 32. On the current state of the Iraqi Army, see Barry Posen, "The Iraqi Army No Longer Exists," *Defense One*, June 7, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/06/iraqi-army-no-longer-exists/114607/>.

30 Michael R. Gordon, "Iraqi Forces and Shiite Militias Retake Oil Refinery from ISIS," *New York Times*, October 16, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/17/world/middleeast/iraqi-forces-and-shiite-militias-retake-oil-refinery-from-isis.html>.

still remain a functioning entity within Syria and retain the capability to wage an insurgency in Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

At present, the US government and the international community lack the political will to confront ISIL directly on Syrian soil because of the sheer complexity involved in terms of trying to pacify the country.<sup>32</sup> By targeting ISIL, the United States seems to believe it is possible to deny the organization the ability to function as a state. According to such thinking, without a sound economic base and politically astute leadership, ISIL will not be able to project its authority. But it remains unknown as to what governing entity could ultimately supersede ISIL. It is utopian to think the Free Syrian Army could establish authority over the northern and eastern regions of the country, since it lacks the capability to vanquish ISIL on the battlefield.<sup>33</sup> In light of these circumstances, reconstructing the Syrian state to its pre-civil war composition (and without the Assad regime in control of any territory) may be an impossibility. As such, the world may only be able to hope for the formation of a grouping of new states now.

In Afghanistan and Libya, by working to prevent the return of the Taliban and the establishment of a new ISIL outpost the United States seems to be pursuing a similar strategy grounded in denying the Taliban and ISIL affiliates the opportunity to acquire the capacity to function as new states.<sup>34</sup> US foreign policy in North Africa and Southwest Asia is therefore coming to be based around inhibiting these actors from acquiring access to the financial, human, and military resources necessary for them to challenge the host governments in place.<sup>35</sup> To stem the acquisition of such resources, the United States is likely taking precautions towards protecting urban centers and weapons caches from falling into enemy hands and foiling foreign recruits from joining up. Still, despite America's efforts the possibility exists that the world may soon have to contend with a resolute ISIL-led state in Iraq and Syria that wields power over portions of Libya and a rejuvenated Taliban-led state in control of stretches of Afghan territory.

### So, Is State-Building the Solution?

Nowadays, America is confronted with the shortcomings of its military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the unforeseen consequences of NATO's brief campaign in Libya and Washington's decision to refrain from doing more in Syria to prevent domestic order from disintegrating in the early stages of the outbreak of violence. To

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31 For a similar point, see Kenneth M. Pollack and Barbara F. Walter, "Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East," 39.

32 For a discussion on the various difficulties hindering any effort to bring the Syrian civil war to a definitive ending, see Kenneth M. Pollack and Barbara F. Walter, "Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East," 38.

33 Erin Banco, "Four Years Later, The Free Syrian Army Has Collapsed," *International Business Times*, March 14, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/four-years-later-free-syrian-army-has-collapsed-1847116>.

34 For a discussion on how ISIL is attempting to function as a state in Libya today, see David D. Kirkpatrick, Ben Hubbard, and Eric Schmitt, "ISIS' Grip on Libyan City Gives It a Fallback Option," *New York Times*, November 28, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/middleeast/isis-grip-on-libyan-city-gives-it-a-fallback-option.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/middleeast/isis-grip-on-libyan-city-gives-it-a-fallback-option.html?_r=0).

35 On the types of resources insurgents need to sustain their campaigns (and would most likely need to convert themselves into states), see Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," 80.

make matters worse, the world is also bearing witness to a vulgar type of state-building taking place in Iraq and Syria. In the event ISIL evolves into a consolidated state, America would have virtually no other option but to try to “contain” its further expansion.<sup>36</sup> As of recently, ISIL is allegedly straining to provide social services to people residing within its self-proclaimed caliphate on account of sustained airstrikes from coalition forces and fighting on the ground.<sup>37</sup> But the group’s defeat is far from imminent, and the latest spate of deadly terrorist attacks in Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, France, Belgium, and elsewhere indicates that ISIL and its affiliate organizations possess an international reach.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the international community should expect acts of terrorism to occur on a frequent basis as long as ISIL and its affiliates persist.

Accordingly, adhering to a militaristic foreign policy agenda is arguably the only way for America to combat the rise of new radical-inspired states. But even if the United States subscribes to a new guiding doctrine grounded in trying to block the consolidation of such entities, building up new states or revising those already in place will prove to be extremely difficult. In the early post-9/11 era, the United States fashioned state-building into serving as the cornerstone of its foreign policy in troubled regions of the world. In spite of all its drawbacks, state-building seemingly still holds the key to addressing such concerns today, be it in the form of reconstituting failed states or raising new ones.

By this logic, to stifle the rise of new radical-inspired states America and its partners would have to work to build durable and capable governing entities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. History, though, indicates fashioning new states is not so simple and straightforward. Based upon the United States’ experiences in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars alongside the findings of a variety of academic studies, military intervening in such conflicts is not a panacea for resolving them or replacing authoritarian governments with durable democratic regimes.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, rebuilding failed states is tremendously time-consuming, and the success of any foreign assistance program largely depends upon whether local political actors are willing to play by a new set of rules promulgated from afar and govern effectively.<sup>40</sup> Still, the United States cannot categorically admit its democracy-promoting ventures in

36 Stephen M. Walt, “What Should We Do If the Islamic State Wins?” *Foreign Policy*, June 10, 2015. See also Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group?” Posen, “The Iraqi Army No Longer Exists.”

37 Ben Hubbard, “ISIS Promise of Statehood Falling Far Short, Ex-Residents Say,” *New York Times*, December 1, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/world/middleeast/isis-promise-of-statehood-falling-far-short-ex-residents-say.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/world/middleeast/isis-promise-of-statehood-falling-far-short-ex-residents-say.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1).

38 Karen Yourish, Derek Watkins, and Tom Giratikanon, “Where ISIS Has Directed and Inspired Attacks Around the World,” *New York Times*, March 22, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/17/world/middleeast/map-isis-attacks-around-the-world.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/17/world/middleeast/map-isis-attacks-around-the-world.html?_r=0).

39 See Edward N. Luttwak, “Give War A Chance,” *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July/August 1999): 36-44; David E. Cunningham, “Blocking Resolution: How External States Can Prolong Civil Wars,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 115-127; Eva Bellin, “The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (Winter 2004-2005): 595-608; and Alexander B. Downes and Jonathan Monten, “Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization,” *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 90-131.

40 Mazarr, “The Rise and Fall of the Failed State Paradigm.” For a discussion on the various difficulties facing the United States in relying on local actors to help wage counterinsurgency efforts, see Daniel L. Byman, “Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 79-115.

Afghanistan and Iraq have failed; nor can it turn a blind eye towards Libya and Syria. As such, Washington could plausibly reestablish state-building as the centerpiece of its foreign policy to address the security threats posed by all of these countries.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States' superimposition of democratic institutions on top of existing social structures characterized by ethnic, tribal, and sectarian rivalries has arguably discredited democracy as a popularly acceptable form of governance in both of these countries. Internecine animosities aside, the other major reason why state consolidation has not taken place is because security was never firmly established in Afghanistan or Iraq. Reason thus dictates acts of political violence (ranging from assassinations and terrorist attacks to armed clashes among rival forces and retribution killings) will continue to define Afghan and Iraqi politics as long as the domestic security environments remain fragile.<sup>41</sup> As bad as the situations are in Afghanistan and Iraq, things are debatably worse in Libya and Syria. At present, ISIL appears to be shifting its resources to Libya so the group can operate from an "alternative base" in the city of Surt.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, the international community is observing a *de facto* partition of Syria taking place along ethno-sectarian and tribal lines, and the results do not look promising.<sup>43</sup> So, can the United States engage in state-building?

America has invested heavily (and therefore has much to lose) in Afghanistan and Iraq. In general, if the domestic security environments there take a turn for the worse, then America's regional interests in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf will be at stake. Bearing this in mind, the United States is currently focusing its efforts on reestablishing Baghdad and Kabul's authoritative writ and preventing the loss of control over any other major urban centers.<sup>44</sup> Yet any state-building effort would also necessitate overseeing a revived US-led democratic-oriented reconstruction effort. Jettisoning the feeble democratic institutions in place will not serve to alleviate Afghanistan or Iraq's political troubles, for the main problems lay not with the institutional arrangements of these systems but with the degree to which said institutions are respected by local political actors. Taking this into consideration, the United States would need to employ its resources to convince the Afghan and Iraqi ruling elites to change their ways. Change would entail local political actors empowering democratic institutions through: abiding by and accepting the outcomes of free and fair electoral processes, permitting political parties to compete fairly for representation within the governments, upholding the rule of law, providing social services to citizens, and establishing secure environments for the economies to flourish.

In addition, Washington would have to refrain from falling again into the trap of providing military assistance to the benefit of

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41 For a discussion on how retribution killings are becoming a major concern in Iraq, see Michael Weiss and Michael Pregent, "The US is Providing Air Cover for Ethnic Cleansing in Iraq," *Foreign Policy*, March 28, 2015.

42 Kirkpatrick, Hubbard, and Schmitt, "ISIS' Grip on Libyan City Gives It a Fallback Option."

43 Samia Nakhoul, "Syria is Breaking Up into Fiefdoms," *Business Insider*, June 29, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-syrian-insurgents-carve-out-fiefdoms-in-de-facto-partition-2015-6>.

44 The Afghan government temporarily lost control over the city of Kunduz during the fall of 2015 to the Taliban but thereafter reasserted its authority with the help of US military assistance. See Rod Nordland, "Taliban End Takeover of Kunduz After 15 Days," *New York Times*, October 13, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/world/asia/taliban-afghanistan-kunduz.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/world/asia/taliban-afghanistan-kunduz.html?_r=0).

inclusive-minded leaders. In trying to prevent this outcome, the United States would need to insist on Afghan and Iraqi forces taking the lead in these fights, since their host governments must learn the means by which authority comes to be perceived as legitimate. Taken together, these facets could embody the spirit of a renewed US-led democratic-oriented state-building endeavor in Afghanistan and Iraq. Of course, this would require Washington believing (a) it is within America's interests to continue devoting a considerable amount of time and energy to reconstructing Afghanistan and Iraq, and (b) local political actors have seen the error of their ways and are now up to the task. It is also unclear as to whether the United States can succeed outright since neighboring states such as Pakistan and Iran will continue to advance their own respective interests in Afghanistan and Iraq. America thus needs to engage in some deep soul-searching, for in renewing its efforts in these two countries the United States would find itself striving to counter various forces pressing for the fragmentation of the Afghan and Iraqi states.

In Libya and Syria, the situations on the ground are even more difficult to rectify and US interests are not nearly as apparent. Democracy promotion efforts within these countries would serve no purpose at the moment, since no governing entities exist which the United States can count on to further any state-building endeavor. As such, pending the United States believes that it is worth devoting a tremendous amount of time and energy to these countries, Washington literally would have to start from scratch in terms of amassing the coercive powers of new governing entities and assisting in military campaigns to neutralize other local political actors which do not share the same visions for the future. Such a strategy is also quite imperialist in nature and (assuming that the United States was to intervene more directly) could lead to a repeat of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Finally, by sanctioning a hasty military intervention in Libya, stepping back from the brink of war with Syria, and failing to respond to the deteriorating security environments in both of these countries in a timely manner, the Obama administration has expended much of America's political-military credibility already. Today, the international community seeks to help broker ceasefires in both Libya and Syria, sponsor talks between certain warring parties, and oversee the creation of new governments. Although the United States is playing a leading role by working through international channels, such efforts may ultimately not amount to much if the local actors on the ground wish to keep on fighting.<sup>45</sup>

### A Way Forward

Overall, the main problem with adhering to a state-building approach is the United States lacks a workable blueprint for how to go about rebuilding failed states successfully. Since the onset of the Global

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45 On the international community's most recent efforts to broker ceasefires between the warring parties in Libya and Syria, see The Associated Press, "Libyans Urged to Accept Cease-Fire, Embrace UN Unity Plan," *New York Times*, December 13, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/12/13/world/europe/ap-eu-libya.html>; Somini Sengupta and David E. Sanger, "After Years of War in Syria, U.N. Passes Resolution on Talks," *New York Times*, December 18, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/19/world/middleeast/syria-talks-isis.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/19/world/middleeast/syria-talks-isis.html?_r=0); and Anne Barnard, Maher Samaan, and Derek Watkins, "Signs of Hope Five Years After Start of Syria's War," *New York Times*, March 12, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/13/world/middleeast/syria-control-isis-maps-cease-fire-civil-war-five-years.html>.

War on Terror, America has spent a significant amount of blood and treasure in trying to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq. However, the fact is Washington has not succeeded in stabilizing either. This is clearly evident in the fact that, after the US military withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, the Iraqi government and its military forces showed themselves to be completely incapable of halting ISIL's takeover of large portions of territory. The same can be assumed about Afghanistan, for Washington's decision to remain military engaged in this country post 2016 signals that the United States harbors serious doubts as to whether or not the Afghan government and its military forces can withstand a Taliban offensive without sustained US military support. The historical record reveals America has rebuilt states following the cessation of armed conflict, most notably in Germany and Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War. But the United States is currently trying to rebuild failed (not functional) states in war-torn, ethnically diverse societies which have been historically defined by an absence of democracy, economic underdevelopment, and patrimonial-based rule.<sup>46</sup> As such, any US blueprint based upon the state-building successes of post-war Germany and post-war Japan is rather useless in terms of its ability to serve as a guide for state rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and/or Syria.

So, how should America proceed? In its war against ISIL the United States has sought to obstruct the group's own state-building efforts by authorizing raids led by Special Operations Forces on targets, inserting a small contingent of expeditionary units into Iraq and Syria to assist local forces, and waging war from the skies.<sup>47</sup> While there are considerable virtues to this strategy, Iraqi forces are still not able to expel ISIL from all of its major strongholds, and no Sunni Arab force exists in Syria which could possibly defeat the terrorist group on the ground.<sup>48</sup> Any further US military involvement should thus coincide with the founding and fitting of a professionally trained local military force that is capable of asserting legitimate authority and providing security over liberated areas once ISIL has been forcefully evicted. Conceivably, the same model could also be replicated in Afghanistan and Libya to some degree, provided that the United States is able to find local partners on the ground and establish productive channels of cooperation with neighboring states. In Afghanistan and Iraq, Washington should continue to work with the national armies along with any supportive units that have received a proper vetting. In Libya and Syria, locating, training, equipping, and organizing new professional military forces will prove to be a much more arduous task, namely, because local actors may prefer to fight against their respective host governments (or may not

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46 See Bellin, "The Iraqi Intervention and Democracy in Comparative Historical Perspective." See also Downes and Montan, "Forced to Be Free? Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Rarely Leads to Democratization."

47 For an overview of US strategy against ISIL, see W.J. Hennigan, "US to Send about 200 More Special Operations Troops to Iraq to Fight Islamic State," *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-fg-carter-special-operations-20151201-story.html>.

48 Rukmini Callimachi, "US Seeks to Avoid Ground War Welcomed By Islamic State," *New York Times*, December 7, 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/08/world/middleeast/us-strategy-seeks-to-avoid-isis-prophecy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/08/world/middleeast/us-strategy-seeks-to-avoid-isis-prophecy.html?_r=0).

wish to work together).<sup>49</sup> That said, the amassing of professional military forces in Libya and Syria is absolutely necessary since they are needed to vanquish ISIL and its affiliates. In brief, the absence of such forces at present inhibits the founding of political order within these fractured societies. By working towards the peaceful resolutions of these armed conflicts in the United Nations the international community can assist with the building of such forces over time.

Thereafter, the United States would need to concentrate its efforts on orchestrating economic recoveries and providing social services within these countries as hostile forces are eradicated, for no new state can come to acquire legitimacy if ordinary people under its rule sparsely trust one another and remain hopelessly unable to earn a decent living.<sup>50</sup> Economic development, social reconciliation, and the revival of ordinary life would thus need to follow closely behind the cessation of major combat operations. Lastly, it would likely be necessary for the United States and/or other member states of the international community to maintain an indefinite yet nominal military presence within some (or possibly all) of these countries so as to provide new states with the opportunity to consolidate as inexperienced leaders learn how to properly enforce their rule and cultivate genuine legitimacy. Of course, however, this blueprint for rebuilding failed states is quite vague. What then should be done to kick-start state-building efforts within these countries?

In Afghanistan, if Washington seeks to stabilize this country, the United States will need to retain a sizeable military presence there for well into the foreseeable future, for state-building arguably cannot continue without a sustained US military presence. To realize a state-building aim, one of the primary objectives of the US government should be to get the Taliban leadership to engage in negotiations with the Afghan government (in regards to resolving this armed conflict), but with America's adversary negotiating from a position of weakness. Negotiations should not take place until it appears the Afghan government possesses the capability to stand on its own volition. Yet herein lays the other problem facing the United States in Afghanistan: America cannot help build a legitimate and durable political system if it remains sitting atop an extremely unstable economic foundation. The main weakness of the Afghan government is the Afghan economy. For as long as the opium industry remains consistently intact, the legitimacy and capacity of the Afghan government will remain weak. To achieve a lasting peace in Afghanistan, the drug trade needs to be undermined effectively. Combatting the drug trade may well sound irrational, but it is necessary. To move forward, the United States will have to take a few steps backward in Afghanistan first.

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49 Regrettably, the Obama administration has halted plans to amass such a military force in Syria owing to the lackluster results of this program to date. On why the program to build a professional military force consisting of Syrian fighters has failed thus far, see Michael D. Shear, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt, "Obama Administration Ends Effort to Train Syrians to Combat ISIS," *New York Times*, October 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/10/world/middleeast/pentagon-program-islamic-state-syria.html>.

50 On the importance of ensuring the delivery of social services, overseeing the recovery of economic activities, and building "trust" in post-conflict societies, see Jennifer A. Widner, "Building Effective Trust in the Aftermath of Severe Conflict," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 222-236.

Iraq appears to be on the precipice of breaking apart along ethno-sectarian lines. To counteract this dangerous trend, the United States should continue to assist the Iraqi army in reasserting control over territories captured by ISIL. In adhering to such a strategy with Iraqi forces in the lead, it is essential that the Iraqi government come to govern in a more accountable manner. Assuming that ISIL is eventually dislodged from its remaining strongholds, Baghdad will need to reacquire its legitimate authority over these population centers. This can only be achieved if local elites refrain from implementing discriminatory policies. By now, ISIL's blitz across the western deserts of Iraq and capture of multiple cities has hopefully sent a message to Iraq's elites: the practice of exclusionary politics in the present only courts disaster in the future.

Libya is not as vital to the United States in terms of national security interests at the moment. Nevertheless, the Libyan state has imploded since Gaddafi's overthrow and Libya harbors the potential to become a collapsed state on par with Somalia circa the 1990s should the international community not lend a helping hand in this moment of need. Bearing this in mind, the path to stabilizing Libya must begin at the political level. If a political solution can be brokered with the aid of the United Nations, then Libya can initiate the process of constructing a professional military force to establish governmental authority within its borders. In time, the Libyan government (with foreign assistance) could theoretically eliminate the terrorist sanctuaries within its borders. Maintaining a lasting peace, however, may prove to be more difficult, and thus might necessitate Libya's acceptance of a (multinational) peace-keeping force.

Syria is the most vexing of the four countries as Assad remains firmly in control over a portion of the country. The United States government and the Syrian government currently fight against a common enemy (ISIL). But the legitimacy of the Assad regime is hollow, thereby making it a poor choice to lead any state-building effort. What remains unclear, however, concerns whether the Russian Federation may prove amenable to forcing Assad into accepting some type of power-sharing agreement with other local actors. As previously stated, the amassing of a professional military force in Syria is necessary in order for peace to prevail. It appears that the Syrian government (with Russia's backing) possesses the capacity to endure indefinitely. Still, the United States knows that governmental legitimacy must accompany the application of political authority in order for stability to arise. Based upon this assessment, perhaps Washington and Moscow should start focusing their efforts on trying to find some common ground in Syria. In the final analysis, the forces working against the rebuilding of Syria may prove to be too powerful to overcome. But we will only know this to a certainty when all of the other options available to the international community have been thoroughly exhausted.

Obviously, refashioning failed states into more effective and stable governing entities is an extremely long and laborious process filled with many potential pitfalls and setbacks. Nevertheless, as things seemingly stand now, state-building provides a way for America to address the mounting security concerns which exist in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

## Conclusion

The United States currently finds itself at a crossroads. If America decides to cut its losses and adopt the position that rebuilding failed states is too costly, then the United States and the free world should brace for the (likely) rise of radical-inspired states. Since such an outcome is perceived by many within the corridors of power in Washington as an unacceptable risk, America's war against radical Islam continues today. Assuming the United States wishes to keep on fighting the Global War on Terror by striving to neutralize terrorist organizations and quell insurgencies across the greater Middle East, Washington needs to (re) evaluate whether the current tactics being employed at its discretion to further its respective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategies are beneficial to US interests in the long run. In addition, the United States should consider placing some time, spatial, and resource limitations upon its involvement in the Global War on Terror, for continuing along the current course of waging multiple wars arguably amounts to an imprudent and tiring foreign policy doctrine with potentially dire consequences. Finally, the United States needs to define clearly what constitutes an American victory in the Global War on Terror, and create a set of reliable metrics to gauge America's progress to date.

The Global War on Terror largely persists due to ineffective governance across the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. If the United States seeks to bring about definitive endings to the wars raging within Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria that are beneficial to America's interests, then Washington appears to have little choice but to become more involved in these countries. State-building stands as the best option available. However, the inherent danger in America becoming militarily engaged in multiple theaters throughout the greater Middle East lays with the hard fact that the United States cannot eliminate the enemies it faces unless they come to be replaced by new states that are capable of governing more effectively. Erecting resilient states out of the remnants of failed ones is no easy task. As a result of this unfortunate state of affairs, avoiding defeat in these protracted conflicts would therefore necessitate that Washington keep waging an uphill struggle for well into the foreseeable future.



# IS NATION-BUILDING A MYTH?

## Nation-Building is an Oxymoron

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M. Chris Mason

ABSTRACT: Nations are not built. They form almost imperceptibly from within over long spans of historical time. Since the end of World War II, no country that was not a nation has ever won a counterinsurgency or suppressed a civil war. *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* is wrong because it is premised on the false assumption that support for an existing government can be increased during a civil war/insurgency as a result of the counterinsurgents' actions. There is no historical evidence to support this assumption.

Four times since 1963, in Vietnam, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military has been sent to do what was literally impossible. A total of 64,969 American military personnel have died so far in these Quixotic misadventures. Adding to the tragedy of these failures is the sense of futility that the fundamental lesson has not been learned. Arguments continue about tactics in these wars, and debates go on about how success was possible if we had done this or that; if we had just sent in more troops, for example, or kept them there longer, or local corruption had been reduced, or there had been less restrictive rules of engagement (ROE). But the United States did not lose these wars because the tactics were wrong, though they were, but because in each case, the United States was attempting to do something impossible: build a nation. To make an analogy, US political and military engagement in these conflicts was like polishing the hubcaps on an old junk car with a broken frame and no engine rotting into the ground at a scrapyard, and thinking the result would be reliable transportation if one just added some mud flaps (i.e., 50,000 more troops) or a chrome tailpipe (i.e., different rules of engagement). In fact, the dead hulk was never going to run, and which polish was used or which accessories were bolted on would not have changed the laws of physics. This essay is an effort to lay out those basic laws of political science before this kind of magical thinking is attempted again.

A nation is a country or a territory in which the great majority of the inhabitants center their personal identities at a national level.<sup>1</sup> For example, "I am German," or "I am Kurdish." This sense of personal identity as a member of a homogenous group in a defined area may be derived in a number of ways. For example, it may be derived ethni-

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1 The author would like to thank Dr. Kalev Sepp at the Naval Postgraduate School, Dr. Tom Marks at the National Defense University, and Dr. Paul Pillar of Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies for their work and intellectual contributions to the writing of this article. The common dictionary definition is "a large aggregate of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory." *The Merriam Webster Dictionary*.

cally or linguistically, or both. In some cases historically it has derived from religious or sectarian origins. The Sikh empire of South Asia in the 18th and 19th centuries is one example of a nation derived from a religion in the modern era. France and Germany are examples of nations whose inhabitants are genetically similar but whose national identity is primarily derived linguistically and culturally. One group of people says “I am French,” and the other says “I am German,” yet the people of both nations are primarily of Celtic, Germanic, Frank and Gallo-Roman origins. On the other hand, a nation may also be derived ethnically in spite of a common language and a common religion. The languages Uzbek and Turkmen are about 90 percent mutually-intelligible, about the same degree of mutual understanding that typical men from Maine and Georgia had in the United States in 1860, but the Uzbek and Turkmen peoples consider themselves to be separate and distinct nations based on ethnic differences.<sup>2</sup> The key point is this: Without historical exception, however this sense of nationhood is derived, a nation is formed by a slow, evolutionary social process in which a group of people coalesce around a shared national identity within defined geographical borders over a period of centuries.

“Nation-building” is, therefore, an oxymoron. No nation has ever been “built” in recorded history in the sense of this social evolution being accelerated by a political process, much less created at gunpoint by an occupying power, as was attempted, for example, at the end of the 20th century in Vietnam and Somalia, and at beginning of this century in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is because nations are not “built”: they accrete, like stalagmites. Without historical exception, the development of nations has been, and remains, an evolutionary process which occurs over the span of many, many human generations. This is not semantics, or pedantry. This is *the* fundamental underlying law of international political science. It is the one, often-ignored but essential truth of foreign policy, and it should be the cardinal rule determining the nature of US military engagement anywhere on earth, because it will predict negative outcomes with 100 percent accuracy. We may call this fundamental principle of political science—that nations are not built but accrete over historical time—the Nation Rule.

The First Corollary of the Nation Rule is that no country in world history which was not a nation has ever become a successful democracy. When a country is a nation, democracy becomes possible and *may* become that nation’s system of government—if a number of other necessary social preconditions are met. Obviously, democracy is not an inevitable outcome of being a nation. Cuba and China, for example, are modern nations (again, a country or territory in which the great majority of the people self-identify at the level of the nation, whether it is recognized as a country or not) but they are dictatorships. The other precursors of democracy, in addition to nationhood, include, but are not limited to, a level of basic universal literacy, a functioning and reasonably fair, uncorrupt, and prompt justice system, a set of universally-acknowledged social values which prioritize and protect individual legal and civil rights over those of a collective, a shared sense of social fairness, and basic trust in

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2 Robert Lindsay, “Mutual Intelligibility Among the Turkic Languages,” *Beyond Highbrow*, January 4, 2010, <https://robertlindsay.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/mutual-intelligibility-among-the-turkic-languages>.

one's fellow citizens. A country whose families live within walled forts and post armed guards at night against their neighbors, for example, self-evidently lacks the basic social trust which is an essential precursor of democracy. Even in a society which has all of these things, democracy may still fail, as it did spectacularly in Weimar Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s, for example. Like nation formation, democracy, too, is a long and winding evolutionary road with many possible detours to ruin.

The other basic elements of democracy may exist to somewhat greater or somewhat lesser extents, but the inescapable central truth of this corollary is that without the existence of a nation upon which to build, these other precursors cannot grow and evolve into the fabric of society which can be a democracy. Nationhood is literally the foundation of democracy, the *sine qua non* upon which the complex socioeconomic building blocks of sustainable representative government are gradually built over a period of centuries. Historically, there are no exceptions. The rejection of history and the vast body of empirical evidence derived from centuries of human experience in favor of another opinion is the dictionary definition of magical thinking—"the belief that... one's thought, words, or actions can achieve specific physical effects in a manner not governed by the principles of ordinary transmission of energy or information."<sup>3</sup> In layman's terms, magical thinking is the belief that wanting something to be possible makes it possible, or that wanting a thing to happen can make it happen, in violation of fundamental principles of political science or a unanimity of historical experience which proves it to be impossible. Unfortunately, it is practiced all too frequently by politicians, military leaders and diplomats.

In seeking to find an exception to the timespan of the Nation Rule, one is tempted to put forward the United States as an example of a multiethnic and multilingual country which became a nation in the space of only a century or so. However, the United States was formed *before* diversity of languages and ethnicities reached a statistically significant level. At the time of the founding of the United States in the 1770s, the white population of North America on the eastern seaboard was predominantly Anglo-Saxon in ethnic origin, and the use of English was nearly universal, despite pockets of (largely bilingual) Dutch and German settlers. All of the delegates to the Continental Congress of 1776, for example, were native English speakers. The Americans of 1776 were in fact largely transplanted Englishmen, by no means all of whom wanted independence, who arrived as products of the same long line of political evolution which flowed through the Magna Carta, the Enlightenment, and English common law. And the United States of course suffered through a terrible civil war before a true national sense of identity emerged.

So the United States is not an exception to the lengthy timeline of nation formation, although in formulating foreign policy we often project a cultural assumption to the contrary and imagine that if we Americans can all get along, other countries can too. Once formed, nations can and do continue to evolve and mature politically and often become more multiethnic—although as the current influx of Syrian

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<sup>3</sup> Leonard Zusne and Warren H. Jones, *Anomalous Psychology: A Study of Magical Thinking* (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum, 1989), 13.

refugees into Europe clearly shows, this is frequently a contested process. In rare cases, independent nations with their own constitutions and common interests may join to form a federation, such as Switzerland, for example, where politically-independent and self-governing French, Italian and German-speaking nations have evolved a sense of loyalty to the Swiss Federation and identify as Swiss.<sup>4</sup> This process occurred over nearly a millennium.

The term “nation-building” is often carelessly misused to mean the process of encouraging broader respect for civil rights and enhancing democracy within a young, existing nation, which is properly called state building. Unlike nation-building, which is impossible, state building is not only possible but usually beneficial to the collective world community of democratic nations. As has been often pointed out, democracies rarely go to war with one another. When a country is a nation, and all the necessary precursors of democracy are present, it is possible for foreign powers to encourage a fledgling democracy with an array of support for the democratic process, from providing election observers and monitors, to financial support to educational programs designed to enhance understanding of the political process, to incentives and pressure for inclusiveness, protection of minorities and observance of civil rights.

Not understanding the Nation Rule and its First Corollary have led the United States into tragedy on several occasions since the end of World War II, most notably in Vietnam and again in the 21st century in Iraq and Afghanistan. Neither Iraq nor Afghanistan are nations, and in both countries only a tiny handful of western-educated politicians claim otherwise, too often as a vehicle for pushing their personal agendas. Unfortunately, these citizen outliers are usually the only Iraqis and Afghans with whom US leaders ever come into contact, which can create a very erroneous sense of those countries. In fact, there was never any chance of establishing a sustainable liberal democracy in either Iraq or Afghanistan because of the Nation Rule and its First Corollary. Only a profound ignorance of those countries or magical thinking could have led anyone to think that democracy would be sustainable in either. Not only are Iraq and Afghanistan patently not nations, they also both lack virtually all of the other precursors of a democratic society.

### **The Nation Rule and Counterinsurgency**

This brings us to the subject of “counterinsurgency,” which is what a government in power calls a civil war. The dictionary definition of a civil war is simply “a war between citizens of the same country.” If a country is a nation, one of those groups will be small, but even small groups can wage civil wars which are bloody and protracted. The civil wars in Nepal and in India (against the Naxalite movement) are good examples of this. The government in power typically refers to a rebellion by some of its citizens as an “insurgency,” and to the rebels as “bandits.” If the United States government supports the government of that country, it uses the same terminology. If the United States supports the rebels, however, it calls the conflict a civil war. The current conflict in Syria, for example, is referred to by the US government as a civil war, because

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<sup>4</sup> Norman Berdichevsky, *Nations, Language and Citizenship* (London: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2004), 92.

the United States does not support the Bashar al-Assad regime and does not want al-Assad to win the conflict and remain in power. Conversely, the United States supports the current government of Afghanistan, and refers to its current civil war with the Taliban as an “insurgency.” But both the Taliban and the people fighting them in Afghanistan are inarguably “citizens of the same country,” so there is no possible way that Afghanistan today does not meet the dictionary definition of a civil war. Semantics employing words with deeply embedded meaning forms an integral part of the strategic messaging intended to create and frame the discourse within which US foreign policy is conducted.

“Counterinsurgency” is not a hoary principle of warfare whose origins are lost in the mists of time. The first use of the word counterinsurgency in the English language was in 1962.<sup>5</sup> The term is in fact a creation of Kennedy administration wordsmiths seeking to put a trendy and politically-palatable name to the fight against the communist nationalists led by Ho Chi Minh in the civil war then taking place within South Vietnam. On the other side of that civil war at that time were US-backed South Vietnam and those loyal to South Vietnamese dictator Ngo Dinh Diem. The Kennedy administration supported the government of South Vietnam and invented the word counterinsurgency to represent its doctrine of defense support to both South Vietnam and Laos. The doctrine itself may have been shaped by the Eisenhower administration in the eighteen months before Kennedy took office, as historian R.B. Smith suggests, but the word itself was first used in 1962, and it is therefore a child of the Kennedy administration.<sup>6</sup> Counterinsurgency is not a strategy, it is a bundle of political-military tactics used by the government in power and its international supporters to try to win a civil war.

Few topics have generated more discussion, more debate, and more publications within security policy circles in the past ten years than this word counterinsurgency and its accompanying doctrine. Scholars and practitioners have weighed in with books and articles both praising the *US Army Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency* and inveighing against it. It is a large body of literature. Virtually all of it, however, misses the fundamental strategic fact: No “counterinsurgency,” or suppression of a civil war, has succeeded since the end of World War II in a country which was not a nation. The Vietnam War is included in this analysis, since citizens in South Vietnam fought against each other. Vietnam was of course a larger nation divided north and south, and thus also in that sense a civil war. Success in this case is defined as “the ruling power at the beginning of the conflict remained the ruling power, or shared some power after the end of armed hostilities.” This is the Second Corollary of the Nation Rule: Wars can be won by countries which are not democracies, but they are not won by countries which are not nations. (The Iraq–Iran War of 1980–1988, which cost the lives of nearly a half a million people, does not qualify as an exception to the Second Corollary because it ended in a stalemate.)

The Third Corollary of the Nation Rule, and for a discussion of counterinsurgency the most important, is that since World War II, no

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<sup>5</sup> “Counterinsurgency,” *Merriam-Webster*, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/counterinsurgency>.

<sup>6</sup> R.B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1983), 185.

country which was not a nation, and no nation with a government perceived by less than 85 to 90 percent of its population to be the sole legitimate ruling authority has *ever* won a civil war/counterinsurgency. Ever. If the goal of counterinsurgency doctrine is to increase the level of legitimacy or support for the ruling government, then it is an abject failure. That has never happened. No counterinsurgency in history has ever resulted in an increase in legitimacy for the national government. There is no historical evidence of this, and mountains of historical evidence demonstrating that both the legitimacy of central governments and the willingness of the people to absorb the costs of the war decline during a civil war.<sup>7</sup> To paraphrase former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, “you go to war with the government you have.”<sup>8</sup>

Invariably, government actions to defeat the rebelling group erode allegiance to the state, reduce support for the war, and decrease the legitimacy of the government. Curtailed civil liberties, the inconveniences, stress and dangers of heightened security, the hardships of periodic or continuing shortages of goods, services and utilities such as water and electricity, the higher taxes usually imposed to pay for the war, conscription of youth, casualties to relatives serving in the forces of both sides, and the destruction of homes and property all degrade acceptance of government authority and damage its legitimacy. No one living in a war zone being pummeled by these inevitable side effects of war increases their support for their government because of the delivery of a school or a well. Rebel atrocities may cause a temporary spike in popular support for the war, but the trend line is always downward. You start with the allegiance you have: It can go down as a result of poor policies and inept security measures, but it never goes up. And historically, every nation which has had the allegiance of less than 85 to 90 percent of its population at the outbreak of a civil conflict has lost the war. Having 85 percent support or better does not *ensure* success. It is possible to have that much support and lose. As Martin van Creveld notes, “attempts by post-1945 armed forces to suppress guerrillas...have constituted a long, almost unbroken record of failure.”<sup>9</sup> However, without nationhood and legitimacy, the insurgents will always win.

Empirical data proves this: When a country is not a nation, the government loses. When a country is a nation and the government is not perceived as legitimate and worth dying for by 85 to 90 percent of the population, the government loses. Empirical data also proves that counterinsurgency tactics intended to increase support for a country’s government, such as the “clear, hold and build” tactics intended to increase support for the Afghan government, for example, are a total

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7 For an excellent survey of this large body of literature, see Bethany Lacina, *Public Support for Domestic Counterinsurgency: Evidence from Thailand* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2015), [http://harris.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/Lacina\\_CivilWarCasualties\\_Spring2015\\_1.pdf](http://harris.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/Lacina_CivilWarCasualties_Spring2015_1.pdf).

8 “Rumsfeld: You Go to War with the Army You Have,” YouTube Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jPgIjRvzQw>.

9 Martin van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Combat from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Presidio Press, 2008), 219.

failure, and that tactics based on “sweeping operations” don’t work at all.<sup>10</sup>

When a country is a nation, and its government is perceived as legitimate by the great majority of its people, what works in counterinsurgency are two things: First, isolating the people from the guerillas and vice versa by stationing a small garrison in every village to reinforce and support a village militia, like the Marine Corps’ Combined Action Program (CAP) in Vietnam. This is a static, defensive mission which atomizes most battalions into squads and results in a war run by squad leaders. For this reason, the US Army hates it, but it works. No village protected by a CAP element in Vietnam was ever retaken by the Viet Cong. Second, regular and aggressive patrolling around villages and towns by military forces (not by weak and poorly armed police) in order to prevent guerillas from massing in numbers which could threaten local defenses, and thus provide a dynamic ring of security around civilians. This was never done in Afghanistan, where the US military preferred instead a Groundhog Day loop of ineffectual battalion-sized “sweeping operations.” The Taliban simply attrited US forces during these operations with improvised explosive devices, mines, and snipers, and flowed back into the “swept” areas as soon as US forces left. Local forces left behind were simply too weak or too corrupt to resist in Afghanistan, as they also were in Vietnam. The only thing which battalion-scale sweeping operations accomplished was demonstrating tactical proficiency in maneuvering a battalion.

A common error in the analysis of civil war/insurgency is the conflation of “popular support” and “legitimacy of governance,” a mistake made, for example, by the Rand Corporation study authored by Seth Jones in 2008.<sup>11</sup> Much of the literature of counterinsurgency is a discussion of “popular support.” However, popular support as such, which is further often reduced to “popularity,” and measured by opinion polls, is actually irrelevant. What matters is a much more subtle attribute: the extent to which a government is believed to have the legitimate authority to rule and be obeyed. They are quite different things. For example, let’s say I am a poor citizen of a country which is not a nation and which is experimenting with democracy. In an election, I vote for a candidate, but another candidate from another ethnic group commits massive fraud, steals the election, and takes power (as happened in Afghanistan in 2014, for example).<sup>12</sup> I do not perceive that person as having legitimate authority over me, or to be the legitimate government of my country. If that person then gives me \$1,000, I may briefly have a better opinion of him. He may briefly be more popular with me. However, and this is critical, it will *not* make him more legitimate in my eyes, or increase the likelihood of me joining his army, or increase even slightly my willingness to fight and die to keep him in power. Popularity may be measured with

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10 Dr. Jennifer Brick, *The Political Economy of Customary Village Organizations in Rural Afghanistan* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008), <https://www.bu.edu/aiaas/brick.pdf>. Statistical survey conducted by University of Pittsburgh led by Dr. Jennifer Brick, discussion with Dr. Brick 2011, “Afghanistan: USAID ‘Stability’ Programs Increased Support For Taliban,” *Breitbart News*, November 2, 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/11/02/afghanistan-usaid-stability-programs-increased-support-taliban>.

11 Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND\\_MG595.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf).

12 Chris Mason, “Fraud and Folly in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy*, September 23, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/23/fraud-and-folly-in-afghanistan>.

polling; legitimacy may not. Opinion polling in counterinsurgency is thus worthless, even if fear and cultural norms do not prevent people from answering honestly.

Another common but false cultural assumption is that legitimacy of governance only comes from democracy. Because the United States has always been a democracy, few of us can conceive of a legitimate government being derived any other way. But as Max Weber wrote a century ago, the legal basis for legitimacy of governance (of which democracy is one form) is only one of a number of ways in which governmental authority may be derived and respected. Legitimacy may also come from religious leadership, for example, or from a line of kings. The Emperor of Japan in the late nineteenth century had absolute legitimacy of governance. His right to rule Japan was literally unquestioned, and to fight and die for the emperor was the highest honor to which a citizen could ever aspire. Today in communist China, the legitimate authority of the communist party is virtually unchallenged apart from a very small number of political dissenters, and few Chinese would ever think of disobeying the edicts of the party, or hesitate to fight in the military, or refuse to follow orders leading to death in battle. Neither the Japanese Army or the Chinese Army suffers from mass attrition, or mass desertions, or mass cowardice in battle, something which is almost universally true historically of the armies of nations, however their legitimacy is derived. But democracy is not an essential element for success in a civil war/counterinsurgency, nor is the popularity of the government, but both being a nation, and the perception of 85 to 90 percent of the population that their government has legitimate authority over them and is worth fighting for are essential elements of success. Again, there are no exceptions. This chart of a number of post-World War II examples illustrates this point:

CONFLICT	NATION?	LEGITIMACY	OUTCOME
Malaya	Yes	90%	Gov't Won
Afghanistan 79-89	No	10%	Gov't Lost
Afghanistan 01-15	No	30%	Gov't Lost
Northern Ireland*	Yes	91-99%	Gov't Won
Iraq 2003-15	No	40%	Gov't Lost
Peru 1980-2000	Yes	95%	Gov't Won
Vietnam 1964-1975	Yes	50%	Gov't Lost
Columbia vs FMLN	Yes	98%	Gov't Won
Nepal vs Maoists	Yes	95%	Gov't Won
Sudan	No	50%	Gov't Lost

This chart illustrates the relationship between nationhood, legitimate government and the outcome of civil wars.\* The civil war in Northern Ireland is not covered in the article text due to space limitations. However, Ireland is certainly a nation, as defined for this article. Support for the IRA is also difficult to gauge, but in the 1987 Irish general election the IRA won only 1.7 percent of the vote. As recently as 2011, the political wing of the IRA, *Sinn Fein*, still only won 9.9 percent of the vote in the Irish general election.

A strategic overview of these civil wars examining the Nation Rule and its corollaries will be instructive. A good first example is the civil war which was fought in Nepal from 1996 to 2006. Nepal is a nation—a country in which the great majority of the people self-identify at the national level. The Communist Party of Nepal fought a Maoist “people’s war” and sought to create a communist government. The Maoists had the support of a small minority of the Nepali people, certainly less than 10 percent,<sup>13</sup> and the government, while not entirely popular, was considered legitimate by a large majority. In the end, Nepal did not become communist, or become two countries. It stayed together as one country, changes were made to the system of government, popular representation was improved, grievances were addressed, and to the enormous credit of the Nepali people, that nation is putting those terrible years behind it.

Another example of a civil war brought to a successful conclusion in a nation was the war against the *Sendero Luminoso*, or Shining Path, in Peru from 1980 to roughly 2000. The rebellion was (and it still exists in minimal form) initially a “charismatic leader” guerilla movement with a Maoist communist ideology which, like the Maoist movement in Nepal, claimed to struggle for the poor and dispossessed. The movement’s first leader was Abimael Guzmán. At its peak, the *Sendero Luminoso* did not have more than 15 percent popular support.<sup>14</sup> Peru is a nation, and its government is perceived by the majority as legitimate. As a result, despite the use of some poor government tactics which eroded support in several provinces, the government was able to suppress the movement, and it caught a lucky break when it captured Abimael Guzmán in 1992 and his successor, Óscar Ramírez in 1999, effectively decimating the threat.

The Marxist rebellion in Colombia, which grew out of *la violencia* and the socialist movements of the 1930s, is a good example of how even a small number of guerillas can keep fighting for decades, only to be defeated by demographics. Colombia also meets the Nation Rule, and the FARC, which emerged as the predominant rebel group in Colombia around 1964, only had and has the support of about two percent of the Colombian population.<sup>15</sup> It also was initially able to maintain a small but steady flow of recruits from the rural areas with a Marxist message of land reform in a country where 50 percent of the arable land is owned by less than one percent of the population.<sup>16</sup> The war has gone on for more than half a century, claiming the lives of some 220,000 Colombians.<sup>17</sup> Successive Colombian governments were either unwilling or unable to

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13 Actual support for the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) movement, abbreviated as CPN(M), is difficult to calculate, but a Nepalese government report released in 2003 stated a strength of 31,500 combatants, 48,000 militia, 150,500 active cadres and 100,000 sympathizers, a total of some 300,000 Nepalese. Even allowing this report to be wrong by a factor of ten still yields only 3,000,000 supporters, or 11 percent of a total population of around 27 million. The actual figure at the height of the conflict was probably no more than five percent.

14 Charles D. Kenney, *Fujimori's Coup and the Breakdown of Democracy in Latin America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2004).

15 Alfredo Rangel, “The FARC’s Escalating Demands; Ongoing Attacks and Intransigence Demonstrate that It Doesn’t Really Want Peace,” *Americas Quarterly*, Fall 2013, <http://www.americas-quarterly.org/content/farcs-escalating-demands-ongoing-attacks-and-intransigence-demonstrate-it-doesnt-really>.

16 Teo Ballvé, “Colombia’s Chance for Peace,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/24/opinion/colombias-chance-for-peace.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/24/opinion/colombias-chance-for-peace.html?_r=0).

17 *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (The National Center for Historical Memory), <http://www.centrodememorialhistorica.gov.co/en/about-the-national-center-about-the-national-center>.

dismantle the power of Colombia's tiny clique of wealthy landowning families and implement real agrarian reforms which would undercut the FARC's peasant appeal. However, over the last half-century, the bulk of Colombia's population has shifted from the rural areas (which the government could not control) to the urban areas (which it can). The percentage of the population living in urban areas doubled from 31 percent in 1937 to 62 percent in 1972 to nearly 80 percent today, and the FARC has virtually no support in the urban areas of Colombia.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the slow death of the FARC is not so much a result of military action as it is an accident of changing urban demographics combined with a half a century of sustained investment in health care and education in the rural areas.

A textbook proof of the Nation Rule and its corollaries is the Malayan Emergency, the term used for the civil war which took place inside the British colony of Malaya in the 1950s (The insurance company Lloyds of London would not have covered the insured losses of the British plantation owners in the colony if it had been called a "war," so it was called an "emergency" instead). The British army today loves to cite its success in suppressing the civil war there as an example of how it "knows how to do counterinsurgency," and attribute its success to its tactics. In fact, this civil war was like a game of Monopoly in which one player starts the game owning every property on the Monopoly game board and has two hotels on every property, and the other player starts the game owning one utility, such as the Electric Company. The outcome was predetermined, if the British did not foul it up too badly. In the event, they nearly did.

In the first place, Malaya was a British colony. There was no "host government" to deal with, as there was in Saigon, Baghdad, and Kabul. It would be like the United States combatting a civil war in Puerto Rico. The British not only controlled every aspect of military and political policy in the territory, they could relieve anyone in any position at any time, make any law, and enforce any regulation they wished to. They *were* the government. The Ministry of Defense was not in a foreign country, in Kabul or Saigon, it was in London. The enormous advantage which this conveyed to the British is almost incalculable. Second, the colony of Malaya was (and still is, as the nation of Malaysia today), a territory in which approximately 90 percent of the inhabitants are ethnically Malay and speak the Malay language, and 10 percent are ethnically Chinese and speak Chinese.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Malaya was a nation. Almost without a single exception, the guerillas seeking to overthrow British colonial rule were from the 10 percent ethnic Chinese minority. They were disliked by virtually all the ethnic Malays (and frequently discriminated against by them, which led to some legitimate grievances). However, under no circumstances did the ethnic Malays want to be ruled by the Chinese minority, and they virtually unanimously supported British rule.

The British essentially guaranteed this loyalty by promising independence to the colony with an ethnically-Malay ruling government

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18 Carmen Elisa and Elssy Bonilla, "The Demographic Transition in Colombia," United Nations University, <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu10we/uu10we09.htm>; and United Nations, Population Division, "World Population Prospects," <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp>.

19 T. Dugdale-Pointon, "The Malayan Emergency (1947-1960)," August 26, 2007, [http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars\\_malaya.html](http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_malaya.html).

as soon as the “emergency” was over. So all the Malays had to do to gain their independence was defeat the minority Chinese guerillas they hated. Thus the British began their suppression of this insurgency/civil war with the absolute loyalty and active assistance of 90 percent of the population, *and* the capability of the rawest new British Army arrival from Liverpool to visually identify anyone who could possibly be a guerilla from his facial features at a distance of 30 yards, as Chinese and Malays have very different physiognomies. Furthermore, the Chinese population of the colony was confined to very small, very well-known, and very ethnically homogenous rural areas, and they had no support outside these areas. In short, the British had every conceivable military and political advantage—the entire Monopoly game board—before the war started. And it was still a hard fight which lasted 12 years and cost the lives of some 10,000 people.<sup>20</sup> The notion that because of this experience the British “know how to do counterinsurgency” is inane.

In stark contrast to the successful outcomes in Peru, Nepal, Colombia, and Malaya (from the government point of view) are the failed US efforts in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Vietnam was a nation divided in half, and Iraq and Afghanistan have never been and probably never will be nations. In all three cases, civil wars were temporarily stalemated militarily by powerful American forces at enormous cost; however, in all cases, the central government lacked legitimacy and neither the government in Saigon, Baghdad, or Kabul ever came anywhere near the 85 to 90 percent legitimacy threshold. The Afghan government, on its best day in the last 14 years, has had the support of perhaps 30 percent of the population. Today it is less than 20 percent.<sup>21</sup> Support for the South Vietnamese governments of the emperor Bo Dai, then President Diem, and then his various military successors after 1963 similarly never exceeded 50 percent of the total population, and it steadily declined between 1960 and 1975. The Sunnis, Shi’a, Kurds, and other minority groups of Iraq today can scarcely agree on what time of day it is, much less a government, and it was only Saddam Hussein’s brutal totalitarian dictatorship which kept that country together within its British colonial-era boundaries.<sup>22</sup> Forests have been cleared to make the paper for books and articles about which tactics worked and did not work in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, but at the strategic level of war, all three were lost politically before they began because (1) the countries did not meet the Nation Rule, and (2) they did not have governments perceived as legitimate by 85 to 90 percent of their citizens.

Another example of a failed counterinsurgency or unsuccessful civil war is the conflict which raged in the Sudan, the so-called Second Sudanese Civil War, from 1983 to 2005 (which was essentially a continuation of the First Sudanese Civil War fought from 1955 to 1972). Like so many of the world’s trouble spots today, Sudan, formerly Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, was another 19th-century creation of European colonial mapmakers. It became independent in 1956, but it was never a nation. The southern

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20 Indeed, the war flared up again in the 1960s, again waged by Chinese guerillas, and last another 22 years before being suppressed again.

21 Chris Mason, *The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Press, 2015), 66.

22 “With Iraq Mired in Turmoil, Some Call for Partitioning the Country,” *New York Times*, April 28, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/29/world/middleeast/with-iraq-mired-in-turmoil-some-call-for-partitioning-the-country.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/29/world/middleeast/with-iraq-mired-in-turmoil-some-call-for-partitioning-the-country.html?_r=0).

part of the country (today South Sudan) was predominantly Christian and animist, and is ethnically and linguistically African. The northern part of the country (today North Sudan) was predominantly Muslim and ethnically Arab. Because the bureaucrats at the United Nations and the US State Department effectively consider the re-drawing of world maps to be institutional failure, enormous diplomatic efforts were expended to keep these two nations together in one country as the civil war raged, and it resulted in the deaths of some two million people.<sup>23</sup> If the world powers which approached the problem from the standpoint of keeping that country together at all costs had instead simply recognized that it was in fact two separate nations, much of this tragedy could have been prevented. As it was, the unsuccessful “counterinsurgency” failed because Sudan as it was created in 1956 was not a nation. Now it is two nations, a historical wrong caused by British colonialism has been righted, and both nations may now begin the aching slow process of state-building essentially from ground zero.

### Conclusion

Nation-building is impossible. Nations are not built. They form almost imperceptibly from inside over long spans of historical time. All of the civil wars, or “insurgencies,” which have been fought since the end of World War II can be analyzed and fully understood using the Nation Rule and its corollaries. *Field Manual 3-24* is wrong. It makes the false assumption that support for an existing government can be increased during a civil war/insurgency as a result of the counterinsurgents’ actions and activities. There is no historical evidence or empirical data of any kind to support such an assumption. Two exhaustive studies of the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, for example, show there was, in one study, statistically zero increase in support for the national government after the delivery of “clear, hold, and build” efforts such as schools, roads, and clinics. In the second study, the increase in support where it occurred was so small as to be statistically irrelevant, and in a greater number of cases, the “delivery of government services” actually led to an increase in instability and a loss government legitimacy by upending preexisting village political economies.

The lesson from these principles is obvious:

(A) if a country is a nation, and...

(B) the government of that nation is perceived by 85 to 90 percent of its population to have the legitimate authority to rule over them and inspire, coerce or compel obedience, then...

it is *possible* for the national government to win a civil war if:

(1) it makes most of the right political moves to prevent excessive erosion of legitimacy, and...

(2) it separates the people from the guerillas and does not make many military mistakes, such as massacres of civilians, habitat destruction, or the always unpopular mass relocation of villagers, and...

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23 “US Committee for Refugees, 2001,” Archived December 10, 2004 on the *Internet Archive*.

(3) it gets a couple lucky breaks in the fog of war—an important rebel leader being captured at a routine traffic stop, for example, or a raid on a low-level guerilla cell finding high-level intelligence materials. (The war in Peru against the *Sendero Luminoso* turned on just such a chance event.)<sup>24</sup>

If both A and B are not true at the beginning of the conflict, then government failure is certain. If A *and* B are true, and the government does (1) and (2), above, and gets a lucky break or two, success in the conflict is possible. But the notion of “winning hearts and minds” with such tactics as “clear, hold, and build” is dead wrong. There are no historical cases of a government increasing its legitimacy during a civil war, much less increasing it from a sub-critical mass below 85 to 90 percent to above critical mass. “Nation-building” and “counterinsurgency” in Vietnam, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq were tragic, multi-trillion dollar failures because the Nation Rule and its three immutable Corollaries were not respected. More damning for the US military is that failed tactics were repeated over and over again in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, long after it was clear they did not work, and it stubbornly clung to doctrine long after it was clear it was wrong.

Before elected leaders commit US military forces to war in a foreign country, military leaders need to make an objective determination whether the country is a nation, and if so, whether its government is accepted as legitimate by 85 to 90 percent of its citizens, and if so, whether all of the other precursors of democracy are present. If not, the military must have a viable plan for getting back out of the failed-state quagmire which will inevitably follow. Installing a government which we conjured into being and then proclaimed to be legitimate when none of those things was true in Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan was the dictionary definition of magical thinking. The determination of a country’s social capital cannot be obtained from the likes of Ngô Đình Diem, Ahmed Chalabi and Hamid Karzai and their coteries, or from first-generation Americans with their own axes to grind. It cannot be obtained from political appointees with policy agendas to pursue. Nor can it be obtained from the State Department, whose institutional dogma holds that history and culture are irrelevant and that every country can be a democracy within its existing borders after the magic spell of an election is cast. Rather, such determinations must be derived from the consensus of the men and women who have spent their professional lives studying the country in question. In Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, those men and women were not simply disregarded, they were literally deliberately barred from policy discussions because their views did not agree with what policy-makers wanted to do.<sup>25</sup> Too many Americans in the last half-century have paid with their lives for the folly of disregarding the Nation Rule.

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24 The leader of the *Sendero Luminoso*, Abimael Guzman, was captured in 1992 after a government agent found an empty tube of psoriasis medicine in a trash dumpster outside a ballet studio. Guzman was known to suffer from psoriasis. The ensuing capture of Guzman and several other rebel leaders decimated the charismatic leader movement.

25 Mason, *The Strategic Lessons Unlearned from Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan*, 193-196.



## Lessons from the Air Campaigns over Libya, Syria, and Yemen

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Ben Nimmo

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**ABSTRACT:** The international air campaigns over Libya, Syria, and Yemen offer lessons for the planning of future interventions. Planners and politicians must acknowledge hostile targets will evolve over time, and it is impossible to prevent civilian casualties entirely. They should accept the likelihood every action will be filmed and posted online, and they should plan for post-conflict reconstruction as rigorously as they plan for conflict.

The past five years have seen four major air campaigns conducted by foreign powers in the Middle East: The NATO-led mission over Libya, the US-led mission against ISIL over Iraq and Syria, the Russian mission to support President Assad in Syria, and the Saudi-led campaign over Yemen.

While these interventions differ significantly in their focus, conduct, and participation, they offer a number of lessons for the political and military leadership of the United States and other Western nations. These lessons are particularly important to the political preparation of military operations and to the sustainment of political support over the long term. As such, it is vital for the military to factor them into planning and to communicate them to political leaders. The five key lessons are:

1. The likelihood of “target creep,” in which air strikes expand to an ever-growing list of target types;
2. The likelihood of “force evolution,” in which new types of assets are brought into theater to accelerate an apparently slow-moving campaign;
3. The inevitability of civilian casualties;
4. The new information environment created by observers on the ground equipped with smartphones, cameras and satellite imagery; and
5. The need for a coherent post-conflict reconstruction plan focused on providing immediate civilian services—“shoes on the ground” to accompany “boots on the ground.”

### Target Creep

The international campaign over Libya began on March 19, 2011. Its authority was United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorized UN members “to take all necessary measures...to protect

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civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack.”<sup>1</sup> For the first 12 days, the operation, dubbed “Odyssey Dawn” (OOD), was conducted by a coalition of the willing, led and enabled by the United States, together with Britain and France; from March 31 onwards, NATO took over the command of the operation, renamed “Unified Protector” (OUP). The operation formally concluded on October 31, 2011. The author of this article was a NATO press officer throughout the operation.

Militarily, the conflict can be divided into four phases. The first week of Operation Odyssey Dawn was marked by the rapid destruction of Gaddafi regime armored columns by high-tempo air and cruise-missile strikes, lifting the immediate threat to the key rebel stronghold of Benghazi.<sup>2</sup> The assumption of command by NATO and the launch of OUP coincided with a prolonged period of predominantly urban fighting along relatively static front lines; during this period, NATO was accused of having fallen into a stalemate.<sup>3</sup> This second phase endured until late July when the forces opposed to Gaddafi broke out of their strongholds and advanced on the capital, Tripoli, with a speed that surprised OUP’s commander.<sup>4</sup> Following the fall of Tripoli, the final phase was marked by a gradual reduction in the tempo of combat, until by October, OUP was conducting only half as many sorties per day as it had in April—approximately 80 per day, against a peak of almost 150.

OUP units clearly possessed overwhelming technological superiority over Gaddafi forces: in seven months of operations, not one Operation Unified Protector casualty was caused by enemy action. It was, moreover, unprecedentedly precise: Out of more than 6,000 air-strikes, five were confirmed as having resulted in civilian casualties (a subject to which we shall return). It is, therefore, worth asking how Gaddafi’s forces managed to keep their own campaign going so long.

They did so by adapting their tactics, improvising weapons systems and supply points, and hiding among the civilians whom OUP was intended to protect. One very early adaptation was the decision to disperse tank formations and instead mount heavy weapons on pick-up trucks—known as “technicals”—which were largely indistinguishable from civilian and rebel vehicles, which were easier to conceal in urban areas. According to NATO Chief of Allied Operations Brigadier General Mark Van Uhm at a press conference on April 5, 2011:

They more and more are using trucks, light vehicles, to move the operational to the front line and (...) they are keeping, as we military call it, their

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1 For full text of resolution, see “Security Council Approves ‘No-Fly Zone’ over Libya, Authorizing ‘All Necessary Measures’ to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions,” UN Press Release, March 17, 2011, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10200.doc.htm>.

2 For a more detailed overview, see Christopher S. Chivvis, “Strategic and Political Overview of the Intervention,” *Precision and Purpose: Airpower in the Libyan Civil War* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 23.

3 See Shashank Joshi, “Stalemate in Libya: Will Advisers and Drones Tip the Balance?” April 23, 2011, *RUSI Commentary*, <https://rusi.org/commentary/stalemate-libya-will-advisers-and-drones-tip-balance>.

4 See comments made by COM OUP Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard to the Atlantic Council of the United States, February 14, 2012, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/coalition-building-and-the-future-of-nato-operations-2-14-2012-transcript>.

more heavy equipment, like tanks and other stuff, armored vehicles, in their second echelon.<sup>5</sup>

The effect of this adaptation was exacerbated by NATO's own capability limitations. In the early days of OUP, intelligence, surveillance, targeting acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) assets were limited both in number and in the amount of time they could spend over Libya, rendering an already complex problem even more challenging:

Target development was difficult. Previous analysis on the country was out of date (some targets were ten years old or more) and there were few dedicated ISTAR assets in the air over the country, which meant that there was little to develop target packages from. (...) This lack of intelligence and real-time dedicated ISTAR feeds, more than the lack of combat or tanking assets, was a limiting factor for NATO forces wishing to attack targets, owing to difficulties in distinguishing between loyalist and rebel forces on the front line.<sup>6</sup>

Simultaneously, Gaddafi's forces dispersed their supply lines. At the start of the conflict, their logistics had been based on hardened bunkers; these were readily identified by aerial reconnaissance. In reaction to this, Gaddafi's forces increasingly moved their supplies to civilian buildings, making them harder to locate and to strike, and increasing the danger to civilians.

The result of these tactical shifts was to force what could be called "target creep" on OUP's targeteers: As the supply of first-choice targets dwindled, either because they had been destroyed or because they had been relocated to areas where it would be risky to strike them, the OUP commander was forced to shift the air strikes to other target types in order to generate a continued effect. For example, in April OUP destroyed more than twice as many tanks as technicals: 62 tanks, 24 technicals. By June, the Gaddafi forces' tactical shift meant this ratio was reversed: Technicals accounted for 115 hits over the course of the month, more than double the 53 tanks struck.<sup>7</sup>

Other targeting figures tell a similar story. In April, the brunt of OUP's firepower was directed at the Gaddafi forces' ammunition dumps: 351 were hit that month. But the regime forces' rapid adaptation, together with OUP's own initial success, meant the ensuing months saw drastic drops in the number of ammunition stores struck—just 44 hits in June. To maintain the pressure, OUP's targeting switched to vehicle storage facilities: having struck just five in April, air strikes hit 75 in May, severely degrading the Gaddafi forces' ability to operate their vehicle fleet. Soon, however, vehicle storage facilities, too, grew harder to find: In June, only 20 were struck. Instead, the focus turned to command and control. Command and control facilities accounted for just 11 strikes in April, 56 in May, and 57 in June. Throughout the campaign, indeed, OUP shifted the focus of its targeting repeatedly—partly because of

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5 For the full transcript, see "Press Briefing on Libya," NATO Press Office, April 6, 2011, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_72027.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_72027.htm?selectedLocale=en).

6 Elizabeth Quintana, "The War from the Air," in *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libyan Campaign* (London: RUSI Whitehall Report, 2012), 36, [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201203\\_whr\\_short\\_war\\_long\\_shadow\\_0.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201203_whr_short_war_long_shadow_0.pdf).

7 All figures for NATO operations are based on NATO's operational media updates, archived at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_71994.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_71994.htm).

its own early success, but partly because of the Gaddafi forces' tactical changes.

Political demands also played a role. The apparent lack of progress in the campaign created both tension and frustration in NATO capitals, with the UK government being "particularly open in pushing for an expansion of the target list to include more of Gaddafi's military and civilian infrastructure."<sup>8</sup> OUP's targeting creep was, thus, the outcome of tensions between the political imperative to protect civilians, and the political imperative to show quick results.

The same is true of the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) in Iraq and Syria, though it is a conflict of a different nature. OUP was pitted against a national army, with all the logistical and command and control structures that implies: OIR is pitted against the terrorist group ISIL, which is much more fluid and fast-moving, and holds less in the way of heavy armor and artillery. However, the campaign has seen a comparable target creep. As in Libya, the initial early successes proved difficult to sustain: Two months after fighting began, the Department of Defense issued a statement explaining why its momentum had slowed. Entitled "Airstrikes Causing ISIL to Change Tactics," and quoting then-Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby, it described a situation familiar to all those who had followed the Libyan campaign:

Not surprisingly, they have gotten better at concealment. Before the airstrikes...they pretty much had free rein. They don't have that free rein anymore, because they know we're watching from the air.<sup>9</sup>

The United States struck; ISIL adapted; the United States adapted too. Throughout 2015, OIR showed a pattern of target creep, shifting the focus of its strikes to compensate for ISIL tactical changes. By December 2015, Kirby, now a State Department spokesman, was able to characterize the progress:

When we first started flying airstrikes, what were we hitting? Convoys—right—vehicles, artillery positions, defensive positions, then they changed the way they operated. They're more in the cities, they're not out there as much, and so we changed and started hitting more urban targets that we could—that we knew we could be precise at, and now there's a focus on this oil smuggling. But they have adapted the way they operate, the way they finance themselves; we have to keep adapting as well.<sup>10</sup>

The targeting creep continued into 2016 as the United States stepped up the pressure, especially after the ISIL terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. By February 2016, the United States had "slowly built up its airpower to the point where it can play a role in attacking (ISIL) at every level from its top leadership to its forces in the field and fundraising activities in the rear."<sup>11</sup> As we shall see, this progressive build-up of air power is itself an important lesson of the campaigns over Libya and

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8 See Chivvis, p. 33.

9 "Airstrikes Causing ISIL to Change Tactics," DOD Press Release, October 3, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123337>.

10 State Department Daily Press Briefing, December 7, 2015.

11 Anthony H. Cordesman, "Creeping Incrementalism: US Forces and Strategy in Iraq and Syria from 2011 to 2016: An Update," CSIS, February 1, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/creeping-incrementalism-us-forces-and-strategy-iraq-and-syria-2011-2016-update>.

Syria. However, it also demonstrates the extent to which the target list progressively crept outwards to take in a wider range of ISIL targets.

Thus, both the Libyan and Syrian experiences show target creep is an integral part of air campaigning. It can be driven by the opponent's adaptation and domestic political considerations; it can be the result of initial successes in depleting a given target category. It is not, of itself, a negative phenomenon. It can prove so if it exposes friendly forces or civilians to greater risk; but it is an inherent component of air-to-ground warfare. Political and military planners who envisage any future air interventions would do well to bear that in mind as they plan, and communicate, their campaigns.

### Force Evolution

A related phenomenon in these campaigns has been that of “force evolution,” in which new weapon platforms and forces are brought into action to accelerate apparently slow-moving campaigns.

Both the Libyan and Syrian campaigns bear witness to this tendency. In Libya, for example, the bulk of the initial air strikes were carried out by cruise missiles and high-flying, fixed-wing aircraft deploying explosive precision munitions. However, even before Operation Odyssey Dawn handed on the command to Operation Unified Protector, the United States added A-10 Thunderbolts and AC-130 Spectre gunships “to further enhance coalition capabilities against regime forces on the ground.”<sup>12</sup>

Additional shifts followed the handover to Operation Unified Protector. First, in late April, NATO aircraft began dropping non-explosive concrete bombs—allowing aircraft to strike armored vehicles in densely built-up areas while minimizing the risk to civilians.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, the United States agreed to provide two Predator drones for strike missions (they had conducted strikes during Operation Odyssey Dawn, but returned to a surveillance role under Operation Unified Protector.)<sup>14</sup> A month later, Britain and France deployed attack helicopters, with Bouchard explaining they could “pinpoint exactly these vehicles that are much more difficult to see from high altitude.”<sup>15</sup> The deployment was “perceived by some to be a ‘game changing’ development, not only because of the precision it could deliver ashore, but also because of the way in which its operation appeared to have a coercive effect on Libyan forces disproportionate to its actual capability.”<sup>16</sup> In August, meanwhile, Operation Unified Protector's warships—primarily deployed to conduct the UN-mandated arms embargo—moved inshore to deliver naval gunfire against regime positions.<sup>17</sup> In each case, adding a

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12 See Chivvis, p. 23.

13 See, for example, “France Dropping Concrete Bombs in Libya,” *Defense Tech*, April 29, 2011, <http://www.defensetech.org/2011/04/29/france-using-concrete-bombs-in-libya/>.

14 See Chivvis, p. 31.

15 From “Press Briefing on Libya,” NATO Press Office, May 27, 2011, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_74826.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_74826.htm?selectedLocale=en).

16 See Lee Willett, “Don't Forget About the Ships,” in *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libyan Campaign*, 45.

17 See “Press Briefing on Libya,” NATO Press Office, August 9, 2011, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_77137.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_77137.htm?selectedLocale=en).

new capability was intended to break a perceived deadlock, and accelerate the progress of the campaign.

Operation Inherent Resolve has seen a similar pattern. The operation opened fire on August 8, 2014 when US F/A-18s dropped 500-pound laser-guided bombs near Erbil in Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Initial strikes, again, were largely from fixed-wing aircraft and drones. Once ISIL adapted and became better at concealment, the decision was taken to adapt the US force posture in reply; as Kirby put it, “Everybody paints them as this great adaptive, capable, agile enemy. We’re pretty adaptive, capable and agile ourselves.” Sure enough, two days later the mission saw its first combat deployment of attack helicopters.<sup>19</sup>

Since then, OIR’s forces have steadily evolved. In mid-November 2014, A-10 Thunderbolts joined the operation; in August 2015, Marine Corps Harriers joined; in the fall of 2015, A-10s and F-15s were deployed to Turkey to support Kurdish and Arab fighters; in April 2016, B-52 Stratofortresses were deployed to the region, with US Central Command saying the deployment “demonstrates our continued resolve to apply persistent pressure on (ISIL) and defend the region in any future contingency.”<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, OIR had seen a steady increase in the number of US personnel on the ground. Initially billed as a “no boots on the ground” operation, it grew steadily from the original estimated 450 troops, with 130 “assessors” ordered to Iraq in mid-August 2014, 475 troops added on September 10, 2014, an authorization to deploy up to 1,500 more troops on November 7, 2014, an authorization to deploy a “modest” 450 in June 2015, and a warning from General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in March 2016 that he and Carter “both believe that there will be an increase to the US forces in Iraq in the coming weeks.”<sup>21</sup> As the troop numbers grew, so their role expanded, from “assessors” at the beginning of operations, to the revelation in March 2016 that US Marines had established a fire base near Makhmour in Iraq—a deployment that was only revealed when

18 See “US Aircraft Conduct Targeted Airstrike in Northern Iraq,” DOD Press Release, August 8, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122879>.

19 See “Isis Air Strikes: US Brings in Apache Helicopters as British Jets Target Militants in Iraq,” *The Independent*, October 8, 2014, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-air-strikes-british-jets-carry-out-latest-attack-on-militants-in-iraq-9777284.html>.

20 See “A-10 Performing 11 Percent of Anti-ISIS Sorties,” *Defense News*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/01/19/a10-strikes-isis-11-percent/21875911/>; “Essex Amphibious Ready Group and 15th MEU Support Operation Inherent Resolve with Harrier Strikes,” US Navy Press Release, August 18, 2015, [http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=90661](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=90661); Anthony H. Cordesman, “Creeping Incrementalism: US Strategy in Iraq and Syria from 2011 to 2015,” CSIS, November 9, 2015, [http://csis.org/files/publication/151109\\_Cordesman\\_Incrementalism\\_iraq\\_syria.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/151109_Cordesman_Incrementalism_iraq_syria.pdf); and “B-52 Stratofortress Joins Coalition Team,” US Central Command Public Affairs Office, <http://www.af.mil/News/ArticleDisplay/tabid/223/Article/717091/b-52-stratofortress-joins-coalition-team.aspx>.

21 “President Sends More Assessors to Iraq,” DOD Press Release, August 13, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122911>; “US Sending 475 More Service Members to Iraq,” DOD Press Release, September 10, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123127>; “President Authorizes Additional Troops for Counter-ISIL Effort,” DOD Press Release, November 7, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=123595>; “US to Deploy Modest Increase in US Troops to Iraq,” DOD Press Release, June 10, 2015, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129019>; and “Dunford: More US Troops May be Needed in Iraq to Support Counter-ISIL Forces,” DOD Press Release, March 25, 2016, <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/705517/dunford-more-us-troops-may-be-needed-in-iraq-to-support-counter-isis-forces>.

they suffered their first casualties.<sup>22</sup> This pattern of force evolution and extension is expected to continue.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout this process, the question has been raised whether such incremental deployments constitute “mission creep” (a term the Pentagon has taken pains to rebut); however, it is rather a form of evolution.<sup>24</sup> Conflict is not a static process, but a dynamic one: offensive measures inspire defensive countermeasures, which trigger offensive counters in their turn. The decision to introduce new weapon systems or new forces into the theater of operations is a militarily rational one designed to break an apparent deadlock; it can be politically necessary to generate more rapid progress and to sustain democratic support. However, it is a phenomenon that is seldom accorded the attention it deserves in the political build-up to the launch of operations. Politicians who call for future military interventions need to accept that force evolution will be an integral part of any campaign; it falls to the military to communicate this to them.

### The Certainty of Civilian Casualties

Planners must also consider the issue of civilian casualties ahead of time. The lesson of the air campaigns in Libya, Syria, and Yemen is that claims of such casualties are not only likely, but *inevitable*—especially when the campaign is against an enemy who makes a policy of hiding forces in civilian areas.

OUP faced such claims from the outset. As soon as the campaign began, the Gaddafi regime started accusing NATO of causing massive civilian deaths. The great majority of these claims were disproven after the conflict was over, and NATO was credited with a “demonstrable determination” to protect civilians:

The target engagement approval process was constructed so as to minimize civilian risk. This required that the target be positively identified, that it met the rules of engagement and legal criteria, and that the envisaged collateral damage was acceptable. This last factor tended toward the use of smaller weapons with a smaller blast effect. More than 80 percent of the air-launched weapons used by the coalition were in the 500-pound class or less. The lethal radius of a 500-pound weapon is less than half that of a 1,000-pound class bomb.<sup>25</sup>

Despite all this care, however, the UN-mandated inquiry identified five OUP strikes that caused civilian deaths while hitting targets that appeared to have been mis-identified as command and control and staging areas.<sup>26</sup> This outcome is especially significant, because the mis-

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22 For a discussion of the military imperative behind the deployment, see Mark F. Cancian, “Helping the Kurds in the Recapture of Mosul,” CSIS, April 5, 2016, <http://csis.org/publication/helping-kurds-recapture-mosul>.

23 Kenneth M. Pollack, “Iraq Situation Report, Part I: The Military Campaign Against ISIS,” Brookings Institution, March 28, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/03/28-military-campaign-against-isis-pollack>.

24 See “Kirby: Mosul Dam Operation Not ‘Mission Creep,’” DOD Press Release, August 19, 2014, <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122963>.

25 See report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya, March 2, 2012, para. 85, [https://archive.org/stream/324151-bengali-un-libya/324151-bengali-un-libya\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/324151-bengali-un-libya/324151-bengali-un-libya_djvu.txt); ICIL Report, Executive Summary; and Douglas Barrie, “Libya’s Lessons: The Air Campaign,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* December 2012-January 2013 54, no. 6 (December 1, 2012), 63.

26 ICIL Report, paras. 86 and 88.

identification appears to have been, in itself, a result of the Gaddafi forces' tactical decision to relocate to civilian areas: Thus, the same tactical changes which forced target creep on OUP also forced it into targeting choices that placed civilians at greater risk. Meanwhile, on June 19, 2011, a precision-guided weapon appeared to malfunction and killed a number of civilians.<sup>27</sup> These incidents mean that roughly one strike for every 1,000 resulted in civilian deaths; a better record than any campaign in recent history achieved, but still not enough to prevent civilian deaths altogether.

In Syria and Iraq, too, the coalition's actions have caused a number of civilian deaths. For example, in November 2014, an air strike killed two children near Harim city in Syria; another in mid-2015 killed four civilians at an ISIL checkpoint.<sup>28</sup> Other sources have put the death rate far higher. In late November 2015, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that the coalition campaign had killed 250 civilians.<sup>29</sup> As with OUP, these cases concern a tiny proportion of the total number of strikes conducted; but just as in OUP, all the coalition's care has been insufficient to prevent them completely.

This is especially important, because Western tolerance of civilian casualties is lower than it ever has been: During the Libyan operation, for example, it was observed that "Nothing could have derailed the operation so quickly in the minds of a non-committal public at home, and of Libyans themselves, than civilian casualties among those the operation was explicitly mandated to help."<sup>30</sup>

The implications of this refusal to accept civilian deaths become clear from the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen. The campaign, which began in March 2015, has come at a high diplomatic cost for the Saudi government, largely due to the toll it has taken on civilian lives. The campaign has been punctuated by credible and well-researched reports of civilian deaths: Amnesty International enumerating 110 deaths in October 2015; the United Nations reporting another 62 in December 2015; a single strike in March 2016 killing over 100 civilians at a market.<sup>31</sup> The profligacy has led to a chorus of condemnation in the West, with the Saudi-led campaign being described by mainstream media as "savage," and "a

27 See "Press Briefing on Libya," NATO Press Office, June 21, 2011, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_75652.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_75652.htm?selectedLocale=en).

28 "Syria Crisis: 'Children Died' in US Air Strike," *BBC News*, May 22, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-32840132>; and "Centcom Investigation: 4 Civilians Killed at ISIL Checkpoint," DOD Press Release, November 20, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/630801/centcom-investigation-4-civilians-killed-at-isil-checkpoint>.

29 "US Coalition Strikes in Syria 'Killed 250 Civilians,'" *Al Jazeera*, November 25, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/coalition-strikes-syria-killed-250-civilians-151124075241069.html>.

30 Michael Clarke, "The Making of Britain's Libya Strategy," in *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libyan Campaign*, 10.

31 "Yemen: 'Bombs Fall From the Sky Day and Night:' Civilians Under Fire in Northern Yemen," Amnesty International, October 7, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde31/2548/2015/en/>; "Yemen: Civilian Casualties Top 8,100 as Airstrikes and Shelling Continues, UN Reports," UN News Center, January 5, 2016, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52938#.VxAD4Mdl8c>; and "Saudi-Led Coalition to Investigate Yemen Air Strikes," *Al Jazeera*, March 16, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/saudi-led-coalition-investigate-yemen-air-strikes-160316071229274.html>.

fundamentalist dictatorship that's bombing and killing civilians."<sup>32</sup> As early as April 2015, a senior Obama administration official described the diplomatic fallout as Saudi Arabia "getting a black eye internationally;" a year on, the campaign has come to be seen as "a humanitarian catastrophe and a boon to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula."<sup>33</sup> The UK government has come under pressure to justify its arms sales to Saudi Arabia, amidst accusations that it is abetting war crimes, and to review its entire relationship with the kingdom.<sup>34</sup>

Amidst this welter of criticism, it is instructive to note, according to a statement made by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on March 18, 2016, the Saudi-led coalition is responsible for two-thirds of the roughly 3,200 civilian deaths since the Yemeni war began.<sup>35</sup> This equates to roughly 2,000 civilian casualties over the course of a year. This means the rate of civilian casualties caused by the Saudi-led campaign over Yemen is, in fact, on par with, or slightly below, that of the NATO operation over Kosovo in 1999 (an estimated 500 civilian deaths over two and a half months of bombing).<sup>36</sup> This is not to trivialize the extent of the suffering; any civilian death in combat is a tragedy. It does, however, indicate the extent to which Western tolerance for civilian casualties has receded over the past two decades.

In terms of the lessons to be applied from these campaigns, the first, and most important, is clearly all possible steps must be taken to prevent civilian casualties, even when the legal mandate is not specifically couched in terms of protecting civilians. The laws of war dictate it, humanitarian principles demand it, and public opinion expects it. However, the harsh reality of these campaigns is no countermeasures have ever been enough to prevent civilian deaths completely. As such, other responses are also necessary.

First, the military must make clear to its political leaders and to the public from the outset that civilian casualties cannot be avoided, despite all efforts to prevent them. Second, the military should enumerate the principles it will follow to limit the danger to civilians. Here, operational security will have to be taken into account, but this should not be exaggerated. A statement, for example, that all targeting is to be based on the principle of "zero expectation of civilian casualties" and all munitions will be selected based on the principle of "lowest yield needed to achieve the effect" will not give the opponent an insuperable advantage, or endanger the lives of friendly personnel. Third, procedures should be

32 "Yemen War: Saudi Arabia's Savage Air Strikes End, But the Crisis Remains," *The Independent*, March 17, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-war-saudi-arabias-savage-air-strikes-end-but-the-crisis-remains-a6937466.html>; and "Britain is at War with Yemen. So Why Does Nobody Know About It?" *The Guardian*, January 28, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/28/britain-war-yemen-saudi-arabia-military-advisers>.

33 Quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, "US Pressed Saudis to End Yemen Airstrikes," April 22, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/houthis-advance-in-yemen-as-saudis-turn-to-negotiations-1429708217>; and Bruce Riedel, "What the Yemen ceasefire means for the Gulf, the anti-ISIS campaign, and U.S. security," Brookings Institution, 12 April 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/04/12-yemen-ceasefire-us-security-riedel>.

34 "Britain is at War with Yemen. So Why Does Nobody Know About It?" *The Guardian*, January 28, 2016.

35 "Zeid Condemns Repeated Killing of Civilians in Yemen Air Strikes," UNOHCHR Press Release, March 18, 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17251&LangID=E>.

36 See Human Rights Watch, "Civilian Deaths in the NATO Air Campaign," February 2000, [https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/Natbm200.htm#P39\\_994](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/nato/Natbm200.htm#P39_994).

put in place in advance to verify claims of civilian casualties, and to draw the lessons from any incidents in which they are caused. And fourth, compensation mechanisms for the victims and their families should be established in advance.

In short, no efforts, and no technology, are sufficient to prevent civilian deaths completely. The military should acknowledge that, and plan and communicate accordingly.

### From Smart Bombs to Smartphones

Target creep and force evolution are not, of themselves, new phenomena. By contrast, the fourth lesson of the air campaigns in the Middle East—the presence of civilian observers with smartphones, laptops, and access to satellite imagery—is revolutionary.

The importance of this factor cannot be overstated. Whereas in the past, detailed information from the combat area generally only emerged slowly, the communications revolution means it can surface within minutes of a strike.

The presence of camera-enabled smartphones means any action—from an air strike to a simple equipment move—not only *can*, but almost certainly *will*, be filmed and posted online in near real time, probably with its exact GPS coordinates.

The implications for military planning and communication are enormous. At the basic level, soldiers who have their own smartphones can compromise operational security and become a potential diplomatic liability by posting indiscreet pictures of themselves online. Indeed, one of the first indications Russia was planning action in Syria was a set of social-media posts from members of the 810th Marine Division showing them traveling to and posing in Syria in early September 2015.<sup>37</sup> The risk to security becomes particularly acute when the telephone camera in question is GPS-enabled. The coordinates are then embedded in the photo file, allowing viewers to identify where the picture was taken almost to the square yard.<sup>38</sup>

Even if the troops on the ground can be persuaded not to post selfies—in itself a challenge—anyone else with a camera and internet access can quickly betray their presence. For example, as part of the campaign against ISIL, the arrival in Libya of a team of 20 US commandos was revealed as soon as it reached the country when the Libyan Air Force posted pictures of them on its Facebook page.<sup>39</sup> Video footage taken by civilians, meanwhile, has emerged as one of the main sources of

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37 Ruslan Leviev, “Are There Russian Troops in Syria?” September 5, 2015, <http://ruslanleviev.livejournal.com/38649.html>.

38 The seminal example of this technology in action remains the case of Bato Dambayev, a Russian soldier deployed to Ukraine in February 2014. His selfie odyssey was chronicled by Atlantic Council analysts in the report “Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin’s War in Ukraine,” May 2015, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/hiding-in-plain-sight-putin-s-war-in-ukraine-and-boris-nemtsov-s-putin-war>; the locations of his selfies were given so accurately journalist Simon Ostrovsky was able to follow Dambayev’s traces and photo himself in exactly the same locations. See Simon Ostrovsky, “Russia Denies That Its Soldiers Are in Ukraine, but We Tracked One There Using His Selfies,” Vice News, June 16, 2015, <https://news.vice.com/article/russia-denies-that-its-soldiers-are-in-ukraine-but-we-tracked-one-there-using-his-selfies>.

39 “Secret US Mission in Libya Revealed After Air Force Posted Pictures,” *The Guardian*, December 17, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/17/secret-us-mission-in-libya-revealed-after-air-force-posted-pictures>.

evidence for claims the Russian air force used banned cluster munitions in Syria—leading to accusations of war crimes.<sup>40</sup>

Social-media posts have also become a key source of information on events in Yemen. On January 6, 2016, for example, residents of the al-Thiaba district in the capital Sana'a posted on Facebook a number of images purporting to show cluster munitions which had been dropped on the district; Human Rights Watch included it in a report on the use of cluster munitions in the conflict.<sup>41</sup> Western journalists have also turned to social-media posts, with photographs and videos attributed to social-media users being used as evidence in reports.<sup>42</sup>

Even officially produced video imagery can have serious consequences for the conduct of the military campaign, and the political process above it. The classic example of this is the series of cockpit camera videos released by the Russian Defense Ministry between September 30 and October 12, 2015, at the very beginning of the Russian air campaign in Syria. In all, 43 videos were released over this period, detailing what the Ministry claimed was a series of precision strikes on ISIL forces. However, a team of investigative journalists compared the Ministry's footage with freely-available satellite images of the terrain in Syria, and pinpointed the genuine locations of the strikes. They concluded that the Ministry's claims betrayed "inaccuracy on a grand scale: Russian officials described thirty of these videos as air strikes on (ISIL) positions, but in only one example was the area struck, in fact under the control of (ISIL)."<sup>43</sup> Open-source evidence, thus, rapidly disproved the Russian claim it was focusing its strikes on ISIL, and was at least a contributing factor in the failure of Russia's diplomatic push to be recognized as a partner in the fight against ISIL.

The implications for military planning are complex, because such social-media posts are very much a double-edged sword. They can reveal priceless information about an opponent's location, readiness and assets; they can betray information about one's own forces to the opponent. The security implications can only realistically be mitigated by a long-term campaign of awareness raising, aimed at creating a culture in which soldiers on active duty view their phones (if they carry them at all) as a liability to be managed. Similarly, the information-gathering potential of social media will require large-scale investment into monitoring and analysis if it is to be realized.

However, one factor can, and should, immediately be brought into the military planning process, and that is the question of how, and to what extent, combat camera footage should be made public. So much

40 See "Russia/Syria: Extensive Recent Use of Cluster Munitions," Human Rights Watch, December 20, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/20/russia/syria-extensive-recent-use-cluster-munitions>.

41 The original post is online at [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=867989619986503&id=100003264197140](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=867989619986503&id=100003264197140); and "Yemen: Coalition Drops Cluster Bombs in Capital," Human Rights Watch Press Release, January 7, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/07/yemen-coalition-drops-cluster-bombs-capital-0>.

42 See, for example, "Intense Clashes in Yemen Endanger Prospects of Humanitarian Cease-fire," *Washington Post*, May 11, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/yemen-rebels-claim-tribal-allies-downed-moroccan-warplane/2015/05/11/27e895c4-f7df-11e4-a13c-193b1241d51a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/yemen-rebels-claim-tribal-allies-downed-moroccan-warplane/2015/05/11/27e895c4-f7df-11e4-a13c-193b1241d51a_story.html).

43 See Maks Czuperski, Eliot Higgins, et. al., "Distract, Deceive, Destroy: Putin at War in Syria," Atlantic Council of the United States, April 5, 2016, <http://publications.atlanticcouncil.org/distract-deceive-destroy/>. The author of this article contributed to the report.

information can now be gleaned from imagery that future operations will have no option but to frame an overall policy on its release. Such a policy should answer three questions: 1) Should cockpit camera footage be released at all? 2) If so, how will it be vetted before release, so it does not inadvertently breach operational security requirements? 3) If not, how will the inevitable public and media criticism be mitigated?

This is such a new field, and the technology itself is evolving so fast, there are no easy answers. However, the experience of the Syrian campaign in particular shows the problems are only going to become more complex, not less. As such, the smartphone problem must be included in future planning—at the very least, to raise awareness that such a problem exists at all.

### Shoes (and Boots) on the Ground

The final lesson, and in many ways the most important, concerns the period immediately after the end of hostilities—what could be termed the “outbreak of peace.” This somewhat overly dramatic term is used deliberately, because the lesson of the Libyan campaign is the initial days after an air campaign are as crucial to long-term success as are the initial days of the campaign itself. Western practice over the past two decades has been to go into conflict with a massive weight of firepower designed to overwhelm an opponent’s defenses and to destroy his ability to conduct set-piece battles; the West needs to understand post-conflict situations require a similarly massive effort—not just of boots on the ground, but of shoes on the ground.

Libya is, in fact, a template of how not to conclude an intervention. In purely military terms, the air campaign was a success: it delivered effects on the ground with a very low rate of civilian casualties and almost no casualties among its own personnel. The follow-up to the campaign, however, was catastrophic—indeed, President Obama subsequently said “failing to plan for the day after” was probably the worst mistake of his eight years in office.<sup>44</sup> In a dizzying span of four and a half years, Libya saw “a burst of political activity with the discovery of newfound freedoms; a growing period of divisiveness over the pursuit of political power and the spoils of war; an inability to form a cohesive government to establish basic security and provide economic well-being for a resource-rich country; the outbreak of civil war; and the ensuing political chaos that gave space for Salafi jihadists and ultimately the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) to gain influence across the country’s vast territory.”<sup>45</sup>

The experiences of Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq show there is a very narrow window of opportunity between the end of a campaign and the beginning of a descent into chaos, a window that can be measured in months, if not weeks. Initially, the end of large-scale combat leads to euphoria and optimism; but that quickly crumbles under more basic questions of governance, service and security—especially if the end of

44 “President Obama: Libya Aftermath ‘Worst Mistake’ of Presidency”, *BBC News*, April 11, 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-36013703>.

45 Ben Fishman, “Could Libya’s Decline Have Been Predicted?” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 57, no. 5, (September 22, 2015): 199-208, <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/survival/sections/2015-1e95/survival-global-politics-and-strategy-october-november-2015-3ec2/57-5-14-fishman-re-9997>.

large-scale combat is followed by smaller skirmishes between armed groups who have, perhaps, an interest in preventing the outbreak of peace. In the words of Libya historian Dirk Vandewalle, “In Libya, the ability to shape the political landscape and fill (the power) vacuum was a race against time: a window of opportunity to restructure and refashion political and social institutions before the disintegrative, centrifugal forces of subnational or supra-national loyalties—whether tribal or geographical, linked to circles of patronage to Islamic movements—could assert and consolidate themselves.”<sup>46</sup>

The practical challenges of rebuilding a functioning state, and building from scratch a more or less representative form of government, after a conflict are enormous and immediate: They require everything from the development of a constitution to the delivery of basic services such as water supplies, sanitation, law enforcement, justice, and security. It is no coincidence that ISIL’s propaganda has made much of its supposed ability to provide services in the cities it has taken:

When ISIL takes over new territory, its first priority is restoring security and basic services (primarily water and electricity) as quickly as possible. In some areas, ISIL has even taken over bread factories to provide free or subsidized food. Syrians I have interviewed in Turkey say that ISIL police and courts initially try to build goodwill with the population by cracking down on ordinary crime—thieves, murderers, drug dealers, and rapists are the primary targets.<sup>47</sup>

The West has been lamentably slow in appreciating this fact; indeed, in this area, the extremists appear to have learned faster. In Afghanistan, for example, the Taliban profited significantly from the perception that they were more capable of providing basic local services than was the remote and apparently disengaged (not to say corrupt and ineffective) central government in Kabul.<sup>48</sup> It took almost a decade for the West to acknowledge the need for improved local governance, and to introduce its own strategy of “government in a box.”<sup>49</sup> There are already warnings that the errors of the past look likely to be repeated in present-day Syria and Iraq:

Defeating ISIS will do little to bring regional security and stability if it is not tied to efforts to deal with the broader sectarian and ethnic tensions in Iraq and Syria, and to efforts to help the leaders in both states make reforms in politics, governance, and economics that can bring recovery and broader development (...) So far, however, the Obama administration has not even articulated a clear set of options for helping Iraq and Syria deal with their broader problems.<sup>50</sup>

The lesson must be applied. As repeated conflicts have shown, the effort devoted to military campaigns needs to be matched in scale

46 Quoted in Fishman, pp. 203-204.

47 Mara Revkin, in “Experts Weigh In: Is ISIS Good at Governing?” Markaz Blog on Middle East Politics and Policy, Brookings Institution, November 20, 2015. <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/11/20-experts-weigh-in-isis-governance-revkin-mccants>.

48 Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Najumi, “Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability,” *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2010), <http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/bringing-more-effective-governance-afghanistan-10-pathways-stability>.

49 Dexter Filkins, “Afghan Offensive is New War Model,” *New York Times*, February 12, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/13/world/asia/13kabul.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/13/world/asia/13kabul.html?_r=0).

50 Cordesman, November 2015, pp. 27-28.

and sustainment by the effort to rebuild the provision of basic services afterwards. Any future conflict intervention should include, from the beginning, a plan for a post-conflict intervention aimed at providing and sustaining basic services in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, while a new national administration can be stood up. In most cases, it is likely at least part of this post-conflict intervention will have to be carried out by the military through a policy of “boots on the ground;” security is the necessary foundation for reconstruction, and there are many circumstances under which only the military can realistically provide it. But this should not be construed as meaning the job can or should be left to the soldiers alone. The post-conflict intervention will most probably need boots on the ground; but it will definitely also need shoes on the ground. To be given the greatest chance of success, a post-conflict intervention will need to plan for *both*—and how they will interact.

An integral part of any plan which includes an element of “shoes on the ground” must also be an attempt to answer the question of who will fill those shoes. Which local institutions, officials or groups will be able to take on the burden of restoring governance to ungoverned spaces, and how will civil peace be maintained in a post-civil-war situation? For all the West’s failings in Libya, the country’s descent into civil war was primarily driven by domestic factors: “The specific traits of the Libyan people; their collective history under an impulsive and brutal 42-year regime; and the scrum for power that Gaddafi’s demise unleashed in a society that suppressed freedoms, ambitions, and even tribal and religious identities for decades.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts are deeply rooted in local antipathies which will have to be managed if a further round of bloodshed is to be rendered less likely: “Even decisive military success against (ISIL) is likely to prove ephemeral if there is no plan (nor any effort to implement such a plan) to create a political context where tactical military victories can be translated into enduring, political achievements.”<sup>52</sup>

On a rhetorical level, at least, that message has begun to penetrate. Speaking at the Manama Dialogue on security in October 2015, US Deputy National Security Advisor Anthony Blinken underlined the need for shoes on the ground, and for agreement on who should fill them:

Ultimately, however, lasting peace and stability for the region cannot be imposed from above, from the outside, or by force. They need to be built from within by governments that are inclusive, accountable to their citizens, and interconnected with the world. Security assistance alone cannot get governments there. It requires political accommodation to ensure the freedom, dignity, and security for all citizens.<sup>53</sup>

Implementing the rhetoric, however, will require overcoming formidable obstacles; indeed, the “government in a box” strategy itself met with, at best, mixed success in Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup> An international post-conflict intervention would be costly and lengthy; it would be dependent

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51 Fishman, p. 200.

52 See Pollack, n. 32 above.

53 See the transcript of his remarks provided by the State Department at <http://www.state.gov/s/d/2015/249031.htm>.

54 See, for example, Shashank Joshi, “The Afghan Endgame: Retrospect and Prospect,” RUSI Commentary, July 2, 2010, <https://rusi.org/commentary/afghan-endgame-retrospect-and-prospect>.

on local support and political goodwill, and upon the ability of local actors to accept a power-sharing arrangement; it would depend for its success on close cooperation between the military and a wide variety of civilian actors, both local and international. It would have to rely very largely on local bureaucracies and service provision, which would in all probability demand a significant and sustained training effort; it would have to reflect and respect local cultural norms, even when they differ from Western ones; it would have to aim, as its ultimate goal, at the creation of a cadre of local leaders and administrators capable of providing basic services. These are immense challenges, and the West's record of success in this area is low.

However, the first step towards addressing such challenges is to acknowledge they exist, and must be planned for at an early stage—ideally, at the same time as military intervention is being considered. This is a task in which the civilian and military leadership will have to work together. They should consider, as early as possible, how basic law enforcement, security and governance could be provided from the day peace breaks out; they should consider what funding and assets may be needed to ensure the delivery of basic humanitarian services such as water, sanitation, food and healthcare; they should begin discussing, and working towards, the legal framework for a post-conflict reconstruction project; they should begin analyzing the regional pattern of relationships, in order to work towards regional support for the stricken country; they should discuss how to train, recruit and retain local service providers, so that any international reconstruction project can hand over to local services. In brief, the civilian and military leadership should work together on both the conflict and the post-conflict plans.

None of this will be easy, cheap, or quick; but the lesson of recent interventions is it is necessary. Libya, in particular, is an object lesson in how easy it is to win the war and then lose the peace. The ultimate goal of the next intervention should be to win the peace as well.



## Does Russia Have a Gerasimov Doctrine?

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Roger N. McDermott

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**ABSTRACT:** This article questions the hasty rush to label Moscow's actions in Ukraine and Donbas as proof of an alleged adoption of "hybrid warfare," and raises issues concerning Russia's capacity to replicate such approaches in future conflict.

For two years, commentators, experts, and politicians alike have expressed a myriad of views concerning Russia's involvement in separatist activities in southeastern Ukraine. Opinions and perspectives have emerged especially in non-Russian commentary on the Donbas conflict that either complicate or mislead discussions concerning Moscow's actions or the nature of the challenge Russia represents in NATO's north-eastern and eastern flanks. Among these untested and certainly unproven assertions are the ideas that Moscow has developed a doctrine and operational strategy referred to as "hybrid warfare," or that its operations in Ukraine can be explained by reference to new and evolving defense and security capabilities.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, hybrid warfare is an alien concept in Russian military theory and in its approach to modern warfare; almost all Russian military analyses of the concept ascribe its existence and parameters to Western states.<sup>2</sup> In order to understand the actual nature of Russia's involvement in Donbas or the challenges it poses to European security, it is necessary to re-examine Russia's actual defense capabilities, the traditions, training, and hallmarks of its military and how Moscow views its strategic threat environment.

### Russia's General Staff and the Utility of Operational Models

All militaries have their own distinctive culture and seek to preserve their traditions. Likewise, Russia's armed forces despite undergoing reform, modernization, and force transformation in recent years have retained their distinctive approaches, traditions, and uniqueness. In assessing developments in the Russian military, force structure, training,

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1 One of the earliest examples of this in Western media was authored by two individuals with no background in Russian military analysis and worked for Georgia's president, Mikheil Saakashvili, and his national security advisor prior to and following the 2008 Russia-Georgia War. Molly K. McKew, Gregory A. Maniatis, "Playing by Putin's Tactics," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2014.

2 The European Union, announcing its framework strategy to counter hybrid threats, defines hybrid warfare as follows: "Hybrid threats refer to mixture of activities often combining conventional and unconventional methods that can be used in a coordinated manner by state and non-state actors while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare. The objective is not only to cause direct damage and exploit vulnerabilities, but also to destabilise societies and create ambiguity to hinder decision-making." EU Press Release, Brussels, April 6, 2016.

exercises or perspectives on strategic issues, it is necessary to contextualize such analyses and eschew reading into the Russian experience Western approaches or assumptions. For example, the term sergeant is common to NATO and Russian militaries, but used very differently in Russia; even in the post-reformed Russian armed forces, the non-commissioned officer is not akin to his western counterpart who plays a critical role in the training of subordinates—a task still mainly in the domain of Russian officers.<sup>3</sup>

Equally, there are a number of additional distinctive features of the Russian armed forces and the way they conduct military operations that are unique to the system. Two examples illustrate the point: the Russian armed forces historically avoid entering into conflict without careful and thorough preparation of the battlefield, which means conducting an analysis of the operational environment and making tangible efforts to shape it according to the requirements of the mission; part of that process avoids the use of “models” of warfare to allow for the differences inherent in each new conflict. General Staff officers are equally well versed in examining historical examples of military conflict to glean lessons relevant to present-day operations, while the top brass retains some level of interest in future warfare, building on how well versed they are in the history of the Great Patriotic War (1941-45), strong interest in the events of June 1941 and drawing on a more recent tradition going back to Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov (1917-1994, Chief of the General Staff of the USSR 1977-84) and the Revolution in Military Affairs.<sup>4</sup>

Western advocates of the theory that Moscow devised, adopted, and used a hybrid warfare methodology in its operations in Ukraine, tend to root their arguments to a critical article in the Russian military press. In February 2013, Russia's Chief of the General Staff Army-General Valeriy Gerasimov, authored an article in *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kur'yer*, “The Value of Science is in Foresight.”<sup>5</sup> It dealt with Russian military perspectives on the future of warfare and the nature of its implications for military science. Gerasimov intended the article to serve as a rallying call to the military scientific community in Russia to refocus on the challenges of future conflict at a practical and meaningful level.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it was rooted in the military historical framework of the Great Patriotic War and the need to avoid repeating the shock of invasion in June 1941.

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3 Mikhail Tsypkin, “The Challenge of Understanding the Russian Navy,” *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*, ed. Stephen J. Blank and Richard Weitz (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, May 2010): 331-357; Carolina Vendil, *Russian Military Reform: A Failed Exercise in Defense Decision Making* (London: Routledge, 2009); and Dale R. Herspring, *Soldiers, Commissars, and Chaplains: Civil-Military Relations Since Cromwell* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

4 Colonel (Ret.) V. V. Zhikhaskiy, “On the Issue of Wars of the Future,” *Voyennaya Mysl*, no. 4 (July-August 2000); Army-General Makhmut Gareev, “For the Army of the 21st Century: A Local War Is First of All a War,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, October 31, 2000; Vladimir I. Slipchenko, “*Voyna Budushchego [Future War]*,” *Scientific Reports* no. 88 (Moscow: Social Science Foundation, 1999).

5 Valeriy Gerasimov, “Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii,” *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kur'yer*, February 26, 2013, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

6 This interest in focusing the work of the leading military theorists towards the means and methods of future warfare was hardly new. Daniel Goure, “Moscow's Visions of Future War: So Many Conflict Scenarios So Little Time, Money and Forces,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, no. 1 (January-March 2014): 63-100; and Jacob W. Kipp, “Smart Defense from New Threats: Future War from a Russian Perspective: Back to the Future After the War on Terror,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, no. 1 (January-March 2014): 36-62.

Gerasimov's military intellectual antecedents can be traced to Soviet general staff officers and their specialist output both before and after June 1941. It was directed at an initial target audience of the members of the Academy of Military Sciences, and lends itself to familiar features of the intellectual framework of Russian military theorists. Gerasimov's theme reflects a long-standing interest within Russian military theory in seeking to utilize military science to gain foresight (*predvidenie*) in terms of future conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Gerasimov understood "ideas can not be ordered," and wanted to challenge the existing approaches among Russia's leading military theorists, and in turn to suggest the political leadership needs to be more open to innovative ideas to meet future security challenges. Instead, he called for the encouragement of "new ideas," or "unconventional approaches," laced with repeated reference to "forms and methods." Gerasimov recognized Russia must avoid the economically dangerous exercise of trying to play "catch up" with other powers, but commended an approach to produce adequate countermeasures to expose potential enemy vulnerabilities. Moreover, he appealed to the uniqueness of every conflict, which requires an understanding of the special logic involved in individual wars, drawing on the celebrated Soviet military scientist Aleksandr Svechin (1878-1938) who famously noted war is "difficult to predict."<sup>8</sup>

However, following Russia's seizure of Crimea in February-March 2014, Gerasimov's article became the subject of multiple Western analyses alleging it represented a holy grail to explain anything and everything about Russia's mix and use of hard and soft power.<sup>9</sup> Even Gerasimov's mention of soft power was nothing new, as Russian military theory certainly acknowledges its role. The article's novelty lay in identifying color revolution as a threat to the Russian state, while suggesting the means to counter it. Western analyses soon transmogrified the article into supporting the theory that Gerasimov was discussing Russia's adoption of hybrid warfare as a new tool at the state's disposal.

Thus, the myth of Russian hybrid warfare capability became embedded in Western commentary and political discussion on how to strengthen defense capabilities vis-à-vis Russia.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the article had little to do with hybrid warfare as such, let alone forming the basis of a Russian variant of the approach.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, reflecting the attitudinal and cultural approach of the general staff, Gerasimov had clearly asserted the very absence of an underlying model to support Russian military

7 Jacob Kipp, *The Methodology of Foresight and Forecasting in Soviet Military Affairs* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Soviet Army Studies Office, 1988), <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a196677.pdf>; and N. V. Ogarkov, Ed., *Military Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1983), 585.

8 Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii."

9 Among studies dismissing the single theory explanation: Charles K. Bartles and Roger N. McDermott, "Russia's Military Operation in Crimea: Road-Testing Rapid Reaction Capabilities," *Problems of Post-Communism* 61, no. 6 (November-December 2014): 45-63; and Mikhail Barabanov, "Prinuzhdeniye k miru-2: blizhayshey perspektiva Rossii na Ukraine," *Odnako* (December-January 2014-15), <http://periscope2.ru/2015/01/19/8298>.

10 Ruslan Puhkov, "The Myth of Hybrid Warfare," *Nezavisimaya Voennoye Obozreniye*, May 29, 2015, [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-05-29/1\\_war.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2015-05-29/1_war.html).

11 The most convincing analysis of Gerasimov's article and effort to show its lack of connection to the development of a Russian hybrid warfare capability is by Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January/February 2016): 30-38.

operations: "Each war represents an isolated case, requiring an understanding of its own particular logic, its own unique character."<sup>12</sup>

Context is also important to understand what Gerasimov was trying to set in motion by publishing the article. In 2013, Russia's political-military leadership was assessing changes in the international security environment including the implications of NATO exiting Afghanistan and the long-term impact of the Arab Spring and its destabilizing effect on the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, only a few months earlier, President Vladimir Putin had changed the defense leadership tandem in Moscow by removing the Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov in the midst of a corruption scandal and the Chief of the General Staff, Army-General Nikolai Makarov. The Serdyukov-Makarov tandem had been given *carte blanche* by Medvedev and Putin in autumn 2008 to launch a root-and-branch reform of Russia's Armed Forces, marking the most radical period of change in the military since World War II.<sup>13</sup>

Gerasimov was keen to establish himself as a reforming general supportive of the new Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu who was eager to continue such efforts albeit in modified form. Consequently, he chose to return to the theme of Russian views of future warfare. But in so doing, he also wanted to repair the damage reform had inflicted on relations between the officer corps and the defense ministry leadership following massive cuts in staffing levels and the alleged mishandling of numerous reform initiatives.<sup>14</sup> Part of this process, as a careful reading of the article implies, was to calibrate appeals to officers and military scientists within their intellectual frameworks, and that meant once again appealing to the widely shared and deeply felt sense of pervasive shock stemming from Germany's sudden attack on the USSR in June 1941: the Soviet/Russian system is consequently highly sensitive to the possibility of a repeat of such an attack.<sup>15</sup> It is also important to note, as part of that process, Gerasimov selected *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer* as his publishing platform for an innately military-scientific analysis of interest more to Russian military theorists, rather than publishing in a journal such as *Voyennaya Mysl'*, which would have widened the article's readership.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, testing the evidence for the alleged existence of a Russian version of hybrid warfare falls down on recalling the main witness for the prosecution. Indeed, no less an authority on whether Russia had devised a hybrid warfare doctrine and operational approach to conflict is General Gerasimov himself. By March 2016, though aware of the extent of Western speculation in this regard, it appears Gerasimov was

12 Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii."

13 Daniel Gouré, "Moscow's Visions of Future War: So Many Conflict Scenarios So Little Time, Money and Forces," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, No. 1 (January-March 2014): 63-100; and Jacob W. Kipp, "Smart Defense From New Threats: Future War From a Russian Perspective: Back to the Future After the War on Terror," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, No. 1 (January-March 2014): 36-62.

14 Anatoliy Tsyganok, "Plastic Surgery: Triumphant Reports about the Success of the Formation of the Army's New Look Are Far From Reality," *Vremya Novostey*, December 3, 2009, <http://www.vremya.ru/2009/218/4/242452.html>; and Viktor Baranets, "The Army Will Be Getting the Latest Weapons and Lodgings and Will Be Rid of Hazing: Dmitry Medvedev Has Formulated Five Principles of Development of the Armed Forces," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, October 1, 2008.

15 For a detailed examination of some of the historical antecedents of the Gerasimov article see: Steven J. Main, "You Cannot Generate Ideas by Orders: The Continuing Importance of Studying Soviet Military History—G. S. Isserson and Russia's Current Geo-Political Stance," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, No. 1 (2016): 48-72.

16 Gerasimov, "Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii."

oblivious to its actual existence. Gerasimov's more recent piece entirely contradicts the widely held interpretation of his February 2013 article and implies his earlier article was being misread and misinterpreted outside Russia. His latest contribution to this controversy stemmed from his speech prepared for the Academy of Military Science's annual conference in Moscow.<sup>17</sup>

Gerasimov's article "Based on the Experience of Syria," again published in *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, examines hybrid warfare in connection with high-technology weaponry, and assesses hybrid approaches as a foreign rather than a Russian, tool which he in turn connects to the threat to the Russian state posed by "color revolution.

In essence, among other things, Gerasimov argues Russia may need some form of hybrid tool in future to counter the threat adequately. Gerasimov again outlined the linkage between Western hybrid warfare and efforts to destabilize legitimate governments, which he likened to events in the Arab Spring and more recently in Ukraine in early 2014. In his view, this presents challenges for the Russian state, and will have implications for how defense policy and force structure evolves in future:

Nowadays we need a scientific development of the forms and methods of applying joint institutional groups, the sequence of action of the military and non-military component of territorial defense considering the potential for crisis situations to emerge within a few days and even hours. This, in its turn, requires the practically immediate reaction of the country's leadership by activating not only the Armed Forces, but also the resources of almost all ministries and institutions. The adjustment of the strict centralized governance with the components of the military organization of the state is of primary importance to ensure the consolidation of the efforts of the federal organs of the executive authority.<sup>18</sup>

Again, Gerasimov appeals to Russian military scientists to advance fresh ideas in the context of recent military experience. On this occasion he highlighted the experience gained by Russian forces during operations in Syria: "We must focus on the new perspective vectors of military research, the evolution of the new forms of strategic activities of the Armed Forces, space and information warfare, and the development of requirements for the prospective armaments and command and control systems."

The article in a sense contains the paradoxical idea that if Russia's potential adversaries possess a "hybrid" capability and these may seek to destabilize Russia through promoting a color-type revolution, then Moscow needs its own form of hybrid capability to counteract this threat.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore highly unlikely the Russian state approached operations in Donbas according to the adoption of any single model of warfare, let alone the purported Russian hybrid version, as these approaches would be entirely contrary to General Staff culture and traditions.

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17 Valeriy Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii," *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, March 8, 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>.

18 Gerasimov, "Po opytu Sirii."

19 Michael Kofman, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Other Dark Arts," *War on the Rocks*, March 11, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/03/russian-hybrid-warfare-and-other-dark-arts>.

## Donbas: Lessons Identified and Lessons Learned

On the other hand, Russia's political-military leadership places great emphasis on the capacity of the general staff to assess and detect the most valuable lessons from the involvement of the country's armed forces and security structures in conflict and to recommend how best to apply these lessons. This, of course, remains a largely secretive and highly classified process.<sup>20</sup> However, from Russian military media, expert commentary, subsequent military exercises, and patterns in Russian operations in Syria it is possible to glean the likely nature of at least some of these lessons identified and lessons learned; the distinction is that the latter will directly influence subsequent Russian operations.<sup>21</sup> In terms of the main lessons identified and learned from Donbas, these may be briefly outlined:

- Establishing and retaining command and control over proxy forces;
- Formulating and publicly articulating key strategic objectives;
- Prioritizing and discarding when needed differing types of warfare, political, information, unconventional, conventional, or various mixtures;
- The utility of modern weapons and hardware systems and their potential as force multipliers;
- Designing, implementing and managing a train-and-equip program for proxy forces;
- How to retain conflict escalation control in future crises/conflicts;
- Inhibitors in the path of developing an integrated battlespace to maximize use of C4ISR;
- Lessons pertaining to the use of electronic weapons, information warfare, and air defense systems with particular implications for Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD);
- Progress or weaknesses in manpower and experimental weapons systems as force multipliers;
- Identifying intra-agency problems in achieving integration during operations;
- Planning implications in relation to framing an exit strategy.<sup>22</sup>

There is no single uniting factor to help guide the analyst in how the Russian state identifies and acts on lessons from its experience in Donbas, and certainly little room for introducing a hybrid-warfare model

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20 Per Enerud, "Can the Kremlin Control the Cossacks?" RUFBS Briefing No. 18, FOI Swedish Defense Research Agency, <http://www.foi.se/Global/V%c3%a5r%20kunskap/S%c3%a4kerhetspolitiska%20studier/Ryssland/%c3%96vriga%20filer/RUFBS%20Briefing%20No.%2018%20.pdf>, March 2013; Rimma Akhmirova, 'Kto iz Rossii voyuet protiv Kiev a ha yugo-vostoke Ukrainy,' *Sobesednik.ru*, <http://sobesednik.ru/rassledovanie/20140716-kto-iz-rossii-i-pochemu-voyuet-protiv-kieva-na-yugo-vostoke>, 16 July 2014; Ilya Barabanov, 'Samovooruzhennia respublika,' *Kommersant Vlast*, 2 June 2014; Oleg Falichev, 'Spetsnaz byl i ostaetsa elitoi', *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, No. 7, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/19280>, 26 February 2014.

21 See: Roger N McDermott, "Brothers Disunited: Russia's Use of Military Power in Ukraine," *FMSO*, [http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/McDermott/Brotherhood\\_McDermott\\_2015.pdf](http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/international/McDermott/Brotherhood_McDermott_2015.pdf), April 2015.

22 Based on a review of Russian and Western analyses of the conflict and discussions with defense specialists.

of analysis.<sup>23</sup> Russia's plausible denial renders public discussions concerning lessons from the conflict largely closed. The most outstanding features, however, of advances in Russia's application of military power during its subsequent operations in Syria relate to the success of training proxy forces, in this case mainly the Syrian Arab Army, introducing new or advanced systems in these operations and supporting operations adequately through predominantly air and sea lines of communication.<sup>24</sup>

The Russian state is rapidly learning by its experience of recent conflict how to multiply its forces by exploiting local proxies, and this is manifesting itself in the extent to which its military advisers can coordinate and implement an effective train-and-equip program during the course of a conflict. These advances, while not necessarily innovative, combined with progress in military modernization and increased military capability places a more useable set of tools at the disposal of the Russian state.

### Dangers of Assuming a 'Donbas' Model

By assuming Russia's general staff had, in fact, devised and implemented an operational model in Donbas, rather than using various types of force mixtures and pressures, as well improvisation and conventional combined-arms operations at key movements in the conflict, its existence would closely correspond to the course of events. If the actual model in use was hybrid warfare again it would be possible to detect aspects of the conflict conforming to the structure of the model applied.<sup>25</sup>

There are also sets of underlying assumptions involved in much Western analysis and discussion of Russia's approaches to warfare in Donbas that would render any operational assessment nearly impossible. These assumptions include: belief the general staff constructs its plans based upon an application of theoretical models of conflict; that the model used by the Russian state during operations in Donbas would or could be used or replicated in other future conflicts; that the distinctive features of the operational environment played only a secondary role in shaping the Russian operations in south-eastern Ukraine.

The political, economic, cultural, linguistic, historical, and governmental specific attributes of the Ukrainian state gave rise to how operations were, in fact, shaped and implemented. That is to say, Moscow shaped its operations in Ukraine not on the basis of any presumed "model," but upon careful analysis of the operational environment. These operations reflected political constraints and restraints from the leadership in Moscow. For instance, given the many weaknesses of the Ukrainian armed forces and its security structures, Moscow could

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23 *The Economist*, "Control of Donbas," <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2014/10/daily-chart>, October 1, 2014; Vladimir Socor, "Moscow Encourages Centrifugal Forces in South-Eastern Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11, no. 36, <http://www.jamestown.org/?id=70>, February 25, 2014; Vladimir Mukhin, "Rossia gotovitsa k mashtabnoi mirotvorcheskoi operatsii," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, [http://www.ng.ru/armies/2014-08-25/1\\_peacemakers.html](http://www.ng.ru/armies/2014-08-25/1_peacemakers.html), August 25, 2014; "Spetsnaz DNR zachvatil raketnye vojska 29.06.2014," June 29, 2014, *YouTube*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_oAIKlkmfng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oAIKlkmfng).

24 Aleksei Ramm, "Pervyye pobedy rossiyskikh instruktorov — chast' I," *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/28995>, February 3, 2016; Aleksei Ramm, "Pervyye pobedy rossiyskikh instruktorov — chast' II," *Voyenno Promyshlennyy Kuryer*, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29213>, February 17, 2016.

25 Puhkov, "The Myth of Hybrid Warfare."

clearly have broken resistance with a fuller deployment of forces fairly quickly. However, Putin wanted to avoid the all-out use of force, and thus operations were kept at a minimal level to apply enough pressure to force Kyiv to talks. Equally, there were inconsistencies and even setbacks for Moscow's strategy in Donbas, such as the rise and fall of public rhetoric about establishing "Novorossiia."<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, as the conflict ebbed and flowed, the Russian application of hard and soft power appeared to reflect improvisation and frequent indecisiveness in the political aims and strategic goals of the Kremlin. Yet, if this represents the actual model of interventionist capability, then the Russian general staff has effectively created a disposable one-time-use only approach. It would seem rather odd, to say the least, for the general staff to invest manpower and time in researching a new Russian hybrid warfare capability that can only be applied in Ukraine. And yet, this is precisely what the proponents of Russian hybrid war in Donbas expect Western governments, NATO, and other multilateral organizations to accept.

The extent to which Moscow could facilitate, let alone control, the destabilization of south-eastern Ukraine depended on a number of factors unique to the operational environment. These included close historical ties between the countries, a large part of the local population sympathetic to the separatist cause (Donbas was Yanukovich's power base in the country), corruption within the Ukrainian state system and the defense and security structures, intelligence penetration, the difficulty of ensuring control over the border, the limited combat capability of its armed forces, the political crisis that swept the existing regime from power and brought the fledgling government to office struggling to establish its own legitimacy across the entire country, among other factors.<sup>27</sup> In short, the broad factors that served to facilitate the relatively rapid and peaceful seizure of territory—such as the location of Russia's largest foreign military base, or the relative ease with which Russia could deploy additional forces without causing undue alarm—are not only unique in Ukraine, but would be extremely difficult to replicate beyond this single example.

If, on the other hand, the events in Donbas are to be viewed as a Russian experiment in modelling hybrid war, then there are additional difficulties in accepting this interpretation. By August 2014 Kyiv's anti-terrorist operation (ATO) against the Donbas separatists brought the latter very close to collapse. Indeed, the decisive battle of Ilovaysk in August 2014 required a traditional application of power using battalion tactical groups to conduct a Russian conventional combined-arms operation to rout the ATO forces.<sup>28</sup> Again, during and after the Minsk II talks a similar approach was needed to ensure a local separatist victory in Debaltseve in February 2015.<sup>29</sup> The key achievements of the conflict,

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26 Mikhail Barabanov, 'Prinuzhdeniye k miru-2: blizhayshaya perspektiva Rossii na Ukraine,' *Odnako*, <http://periscope2.ru/2015/01/19/8298/>, December-January, 2014-15.

27 Author discussions with international defense experts, Rome, September 2014.

28 "Pod Ilovaiskom pogib 241 ukrainskii patriot – genprokuror," *Interfax Ukraina*, December 11, 2014.

29 Andrey Vinokurov, "Donbass zhdet prikaz," *Gazeta.ru*, [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/25\\_a\\_6614465.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/03/25_a_6614465.shtml), March 25, 2015.

from a Russian perspective, were the result of combined-arms operations rather than the use of any allegedly new approach to warfare.

The policy differences between Moscow and NATO have long been known and explicitly contained in Russia's public security documents.<sup>30</sup> However, since the onset of the Ukraine crisis, analysts and Western governments have largely sought to understand Russia's political-military leadership and its motives, as well as how Russia conducts war, through their own historical, cultural, psychological and institutional prism, and thus essentially mirror imaged an interpretation of Moscow's actions. It may well mark a modern example of blue assessing red, and seeing a reflection of blue.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of the current chasm that divides Russia and NATO is the mythical interpretation that Moscow has devised a lethal and new hybrid warfare doctrine. If this is, in fact, in error, then NATO and its governments eventually will have to correct it.

In the long term, US Army commands must endeavour to understand the nuances and evolution of Russia's defense and security policies, strategic posture and, equally important, its military thinking and capability, rather than relying upon convenient labels to encapsulate Russia's use of military power. Such an effort to understand better these internal Russian military dynamics at strategic, operational and tactical levels would involve, in some measure, constituting analytical capabilities displaced after the end of the Cold War.

However, if Gerasimov's recent article presages a version of a hybrid warfare capability to counter the threat of a color revolution, then, paradoxically, Moscow will be complicit in forcing this correction to occur, as the actual future capability will surely differ from whatever it is that NATO and the EU are currently planning to counter.

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30 National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>, December 31, 2015; Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, Kremlin.ru, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>, December 26, 2014.



## LEARNING FROM TODAY'S WARS

# Measuring the Effectiveness of America's War on Terror

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Erik W. Goepner

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**ABSTRACT:** America's efforts in the war on terror have been substantial and sustained, with more than four trillion dollars spent, two and a half million military members sent into harm's way, and nearly 7,000 service members losing their lives over the past 15 years. To date, however, few studies have sought to measure the effectiveness of those efforts. This study empirically assesses the extent to which US efforts in the war on terror have achieved the government's objectives and concludes those endeavors have been largely ineffective.

Whether seeking the defeat of al-Qaeda or, more recently, that of the Islamic State, the United States government has been prosecuting a war on terror for nearly 15 years. Tangible costs to the United States include 6,874 service members killed, 2.5 million Americans sent to fight, and an estimated \$4.4 trillion dollars spent.<sup>1</sup> Despite such significant costs, little attention has been focused on what has been achieved. How effective have US efforts been in the war on terror?

Determining an answer to this question is complicated by the inherently political environment in which the terror attacks of 9/11 and US responses took place. Terrorism is, itself, inherently a political act. Moreover, US leaders faced reelections as they attempted to balance varying constituent perspectives domestically and alliance interests globally. Significant national debates have occurred, and many continue, over the decision to invade Iraq, the closing of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, the use of drones, Syria, Libya, the Islamic State, et cetera. The stated objectives of President Bush and President Obama, however, remain a crucial component of any assessment by any side of the debate. Are Americans safer today? To what extent have al-Qaeda and terror groups of global reach been defeated?

This question of effectiveness can be carved out as a technical exercise. This paper attempts to measure the government's effectiveness in achieving its stated objectives. Its focus is on US efforts outside the homeland, rather than on domestic efforts to protect against attacks. The first section briefly outlines US objectives in the war on terror. An

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1 Neta Crawford, *US Costs of 2014: \$4.4 Trillion and Counting: Summary of Costs for the US Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan* (Boston: Boston University, 2014), 4; Nese DeBruyne and Anne Leland, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015); and Chris Adams, "Millions Went to War in Iraq, Afghanistan, Leaving Many with Lifelong Scars," McClatchyDC, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/03/14/185880/millions-went-to-war-in-iraq-afghanistan.html>; <http://icasualties.org/>.

overview on measuring policy effectiveness in general and the war on terror, in particular, follows. The data are analyzed in section three and then a theoretical explanation for the results follows.

## US Objectives for the War on Terror

America's stated objectives have remained consistent over time. As outlined in various strategy documents published by the White House, they include protecting Americans, preventing terror attacks, defeating specific terror groups, and diminishing the conditions that fuel terrorism through promoting democracy. Less than two weeks after the attacks of 9/11, President Bush articulated the defeat of al-Qaeda and all terrorist groups with global reach as a US goal. President Obama has echoed that objective and added the Islamic State to the list. Both administrations pursued a broad objective of preventing terror attacks worldwide and a narrower one of protecting Americans and the homeland. Both administrations also sought the additional goals of diminishing the underlying conditions that facilitate terrorism by promoting democracy.<sup>2</sup>

## Measuring Policy Effectiveness

Significant gaps exist in the scholarly research regarding the measurement of government effectiveness. The literature focuses more on how effectiveness could be measured, rather than on actually measuring it. The war on terror is no exception.

In war, measuring effectiveness is typically difficult absent a total victory. War inflames human passions and is, inevitably, subject to psychological biases. Additionally, accurate data are often unavailable in conflict-affected states. Some scholars note that attempts to measure effectiveness in prosecuting a war, without one side surrendering, will be controversial and fraught with uncertainty.<sup>3</sup>

The myriad political and other non-technical factors provide scholars various vantage points from which to analyze the US government's effectiveness in the war on terror. One approach could focus solely on whether another 9/11 was prevented in an attempt to eliminate all of the complexities, political and otherwise. The scale of 9/11 and the uncertainty and fear it produced can make this perspective attractive.<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, another perspective might broaden the aperture to account for political elites' policy preferences both within and beyond the war on terror, the tradeoffs created when those policies are pursued concurrently, and the constraints faced by policymakers. This would

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2 The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2002), 21; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2003), 11, 22-24; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), 1; The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2011), 1, 8-9; and *The Telegraph*, "9/11 Anniversary: Al-Qaeda Nearing Total Defeat, Says Barack Obama," September 8, 2011.

3 Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5, 24-25.

4 Recognition, though not necessarily endorsement, of this approach can be seen in Michael O'Hanlon, *US Defense Strategy and the Defense Budget* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2015), 6; Daniel Benjamin et. al; *Five Years After 9/11: Accomplishments and Continuing Challenges* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), 3; Ronald K. Noble, "Preventing the Next 9/11," *New York Times*, September 5, 2011; and "Senators: Obama Must Defeat Islamic State to Prevent Another 9/11-Scale Attack," *Washington Times*, September 4, 2014.

enlarge the scope to include other, potentially competing priorities (e.g., the economy, health care, and reelection), while also accounting for the degree of difficulty inherent in achieving each objective.

This study pursues a middle path that encompasses the most critical objectives in the war on terror as identified by the Bush and Obama administrations. Assessments of effectiveness may vary depending on the scope of the analysis being conducted and the emphasis placed on different outcomes (money spent, lives lost, terrorists killed, etc.). But, no matter what definition one chooses, no assessment of the effectiveness of the war on terror can be complete without answering the central question of whether the United States has reduced the threat from terrorism since 9/11. Beyond that, a crucial role for policy analysis is to ascertain whether a government has met the goals it sets for itself. Thus, in a very real sense, Presidents Bush and Obama have determined the definition of success used in this paper through their public articulation of the aim of the war on terrorism. In light of these considerations, this study should help provide a useful anchor for future research.

Moreover, this research attempts to help address an existing gap in the literature by measuring effectiveness through empirical and quantitative analysis. This work adopts one of Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney's recommended forms of score-keeping: the degree to which an actor has achieved her "core aims." The goal is to measure the success of the strategy employed: how has the agent achieved "gains" with respect to the proposed "aims."<sup>5</sup> The primary sources for identifying US objectives will be national strategy documents, such as the National Security Strategy and the more narrowly focused National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (later renamed the National Strategy for Counterterrorism). Secondary sources will include statements made by the president and key administration officials.

Regarding the war on terror, a Government Accounting Office report observed the US government did not include performance measures in any of its seven strategy documents that identified counter-terror goals.<sup>6</sup> Instead, the strategy documents struck an optimistic tone evidently intended to "keep American hearts and minds committed to the fight."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in the 9/11 Commission's report, the section entitled "Measuring Success" neither highlighted any measures currently in use by the government nor did it propose any. Six years after Secretary Rumsfeld stated, "Today, we lack metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror," a study from the Royal United Services Institute observed the quote remained equally accurate.<sup>8</sup>

As Raphael Perl noted in a Congressional Research Service report, the Government Performance and Results Act mandates all agencies establish performance objectives and measure progress in meeting those objectives. Anti-terror efforts are not exempt from this requirement. However, the few government attempts at measuring progress in the

5 Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 5-6, 24-27, 33.

6 Randall Yim, "Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism" (Washington DC: US Government Accountability Office, 2004).

7 Johnson and Tierney, *Failing to Win*, 242.

8 Alex Schmid and Rashmi Singh, "Measuring Success and Failure in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: US Government Metrics of the Global War on Terror," in *After the War on Terror: Regional and Multilateral Perspectives on Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (London: RUSI, 2009), 34.

war on terror are filled with statements rather than quantitative data. For example, the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism states the government has become “much more effective” in fighting terrorism, referring to a list of countries and capabilities enjoined in the fight against al-Qaeda as the “critical measure of this success.”<sup>9</sup> This implies a large number of allies, together with military force of various kinds, are themselves indicators of success, and no further explanation is offered as to what “success” might be.

The few attempts at measuring the success of anti-terror efforts have also been disjointed. The 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism highlights the killing of al-Qaeda leaders and, absent any further explanation, equates those deaths with a significant degradation in al-Qaeda’s capabilities. No connection is made between the loss of leaders and how it has or will degrade the organization’s operational capacity. Often, assessments of the war devolve into flattery without substance. When listing successes and challenges in 2006, the White House reported that Afghanistan is now “a full partner in the War on Terror” and Iraq is a “new War on Terror ally in the heart of the Middle East.”<sup>10</sup> No attempt was made either to define what a “full partner” or “ally” is or to show how Afghanistan and Iraq met those standards.

One review of 34 years of research noted only 1.5 percent of scholarly articles empirically assessed counterterror responses. Of the thousands of studies examined, only seven contained “moderately rigorous” evaluations of counterterrorism programs.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the paucity of studies, inappropriate measures are frequently used. For example, a Congressional Research Service report noted that increased spending is commonly misinterpreted as a sign of progress.<sup>12</sup> And, as indicated earlier, White House strategy documents present commendations and disjointed claims as measures of success.

## Data Analysis

This paper measures the effectiveness of US efforts in the war on terror by investigating two questions. First, have US efforts had a significant impact on terrorism over the past 15 years? Second, to what extent has the US achieved its objectives in the war on terror?

More than 100 definitions exist for terrorism. The Department of Defense, in its dictionary of military terms, defines terrorism as, “The unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political.” The Department of Defense’s definition contains the main elements present in a majority of the other definitions for terrorism: (1) the use of unlawful violence to (2) instill fear in order to (3) achieve political goals. As terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman explains, terrorism is inherently political and power focused.<sup>13</sup>

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9 The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 19.

10 The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 3.

11 Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy, and Alison Sherley, *The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies* (Oslo: The Campbell Collaboration, 2006), 3, 13.

12 Raphael Perl, *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005), 3.

13 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 2, 33.

To date, little quantitative analysis has been conducted regarding what US efforts have achieved in the war on terror. To that end, the first question—have US efforts had a significant impact on terrorism over the past 15 years?—will be tested in two different settings. In the first, the amount of money spent by the US government fighting the war on terror and the number of military members sent to fight will be compared to the number of terror attacks worldwide since 9/11. Then, a broader analysis will look at the impact of both US efforts and other variables thought to affect terrorism such as gross domestic product per capita, education, etc. The second question—to what extent has the US achieved its objectives in the war on terror?—will be examined by one or more measures for each of the government's critical and enduring war on terror objectives.

*Have US efforts had a significant impact on terrorism over the past 15 years?*

The data strongly suggest US efforts have had a significant and negative impact on terrorism over the past 15 years. Increased US efforts are correlated with a worsening of the overall terror situation. Statistical modeling indicates for every additional billion dollars spent and 1,000 American troops sent to fight the war on terror, the number of terror attacks worldwide increased by 19 (data available from the author). Furthermore, the model finds up to 80 percent of the variation in the number of worldwide terror attacks since 9/11 can be explained by just those two variables—US money spent and military members sent to fight the war on terror. The data for both money spent and troops deployed come from the Congressional Research Service publication, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* by Amy Belasco. The number of terror attacks is from the Global Terrorism Database, hosted by the University of Maryland.

A broader analysis which examines both the impact of US efforts and other factors thought to affect terrorism, such as gross domestic product per capita and education levels, also strongly suggests US efforts have had a significant and negative relationship with terrorism. The data show countries the US invaded had 143 more terror attacks per year than countries the US did not invade. Similarly, countries in which the US conducted drone strikes were home to 395 more terror attacks per year than those where the US did not. Of note, the model's explanatory power was greatest when drone strikes conducted in year one were compared with terror attacks in year three. Other variations were also investigated, such as comparing drone strikes and terror attacks in the same year and leading drone strikes by a year, but none yielded results as significant. This may mean US drone strikes are having the unintended effect of inciting more terror attacks.

The results were derived from a multiple regression statistical model (data available from the author). The intent was to design a fully specified model that included independent variables frequently used to explain the causes for terrorism, variables designed to capture US efforts in the war on terror (e.g., drone strikes, nations invaded), and variables that proxy for the destabilizing effects frequently observed in heavily traumatized societies. Twenty countries were randomly selected from the universe of countries: 10 from the 51 Muslim-majority states and 10 from non-Muslim-majority states. Certain countries were automatically

included because of their relevance to the study. Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, and Yemen were included because the United States either invaded or conducted drone strikes in each of them. The model includes data from 1994 through 2013.

The results from both models strongly suggest US efforts in the war on terror have had a significant impact on terrorism worldwide. Potentially, up to 80 percent of the variation in terror attack numbers from 2001 to 2013 can be attributed to how much money the United States spent fighting terror and how many military members were deployed to fight the war. Unfortunately, the results indicate US efforts have been correlated with a worsening of the terror situation.

*To what extent has the US achieved its objectives in the war on terror?*

America's critical and enduring objectives have been the protection of Americans and the homeland, defeating al-Qaeda and other terror groups of global reach, and promoting democracy to diminish the underlying conditions favoring terrorism. A review of the seven national strategy documents related to the war on terror strongly suggests protecting Americans and the homeland has been the number one priority.<sup>14</sup> Bush and Obama administration strategy documents further indicate that defeating al-Qaeda and other terror groups of global reach has been the second most important objective. Five of the strategies either list it second after protecting the homeland and US citizens or place it first (as a means to protect Americans and the homeland).<sup>15</sup>

It is less clear whether promoting democracy was the third most important objective for the US government in the war on terror. In the first strategy to combat terrorism promulgated by the Bush administration, diminishing the underlying conditions, which included democracy promotion, was referred to as the "third component" of the strategy. Elsewhere, the promotion of democracy was identified as "the long term solution" in the fight against terror and the "best way" to achieve enduring security for America.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of protecting Americans and the homeland, data from the Global Terrorism Database indicate an average of 65 Americans were killed each year by terrorists for the 12-year period following 9/11, as compared to 57 annually in the 12 years before 9/11. In the past 30 years, 2001 notwithstanding, more Americans were killed in 2012 than in any other year. Moreover, while the overall number of terror attacks in the United States decreased during the post-9/11 period, the subset of Islamist-inspired attacks increased. From 1987 to 2000, five

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14 The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2002), n.p.; The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2006), 12; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1; The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2010), 17; The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 8; and The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2015), 7.

15 The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2002, 5; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 1, 15; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 2006, 9, 11; The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 8; and The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, 2010, 19-20.

16 The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 2003, 22; The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, 1; The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 2006, 9, 11; and The White House, *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, 8.

Islamist-inspired attacks took place within the homeland, but in an equal period of time since 2001, the number of Islamist-inspired attacks rose to seven.

Looking at the war on terror more broadly, the indicators worsen. In 2001, some 1,880 terror attacks occurred. By 2014, the number had risen to 16,818. Over the past four decades, the fewest number of terror attacks worldwide occurred in 1998 and that trend continued into the early years of the war on terror. However, 2005 signaled a break out, as terror attacks nearly doubled from the previous year and then continued climbing rapidly.

Globally, fatalities caused by terror attacks have increased to unprecedented levels. The average number of deaths rose 72 percent for the 13 year period after 9/11 as compared to the 13 years prior. In 2014, a record 43,512 people were killed by terrorism, a staggering 297 percent increase from the worst year in the pre-9/11 period which was 1997.

Effectiveness in defeating al-Qaeda and other terror groups of global reach has been similarly bleak. In terms of recruitment, terrorist organizations appear to have taken advantage of America's response to 9/11. Annual reports from the Department of State and data from the Mapping Militant Organizations at Stanford University indicate there were an estimated 32,200 fighters in Islamist-inspired foreign terrorist organizations in 2000. By 2013, that number had more than tripled to more than 110,000. Additionally, the number of Islamist-inspired groups listed by the Department of State as foreign terrorist organizations has likewise increased dramatically. In 2001, there were 13 such groups and by 2013 that number had swelled to 37. The war on terror has been associated with a dramatic increase in both the amount of Islamist-inspired terror groups and the number of fighters comprising them.

The final area regarding effectiveness has to do with the promotion of democracy. Democracy indicators across the 51 Muslim-majority countries have marginally improved since 2001. Data from Freedom House indicates the average political rights and civil liberties scores for Muslim-majority states have improved by 5.7 percent during the war on terror. In the dozen years prior to 9/11, the average score was 5.25, which improved to 4.96 for the 12 years following the attacks (lower scores are better, with 1 representing "most free" and 7 reflecting "least free").

For Afghanistan and Iraq, the Polity IV Project offers another governance measure. Researchers have assessed Afghanistan as "moderately fragmented" ever since 2001, which is defined as 10 to 25 percent of the country being ruled by authorities unconnected to the central government. However, their assessment of Iraq has changed rather dramatically. In the decade prior to the US invasion, Iraq was assessed as extremely autocratic. Beginning in 2003 and holding for the next six years, the assessment was "seriously fragmented," defined as between 25 and 50 percent of the country being ruled by authorities that were not connected to the central government. From 2010 to 2013, however, Iraq was listed as slightly democratic. The data indicates Muslim-majority countries are modestly freer now than they were prior to the war on terror and a degree of democracy has taken hold in Iraq.

## Theory

This section reviews the potential causes of, and factors associated with, terrorism, and outlines how terrorist groups end. The majority of the section then focuses on potential theoretical explanations for the results outlined in the previous section.

### *Causes of—and factors associated with—terrorism*

The causes of terrorism and the factors associated with it are complex, varied, and often contested. Typically, terrorists seek to change the status quo or preserve something they value highly, and they are willing to employ violence to achieve those aims.<sup>17</sup> Walter Reich describes terrorists as rational actors making rational choices.<sup>18</sup> Martha Crenshaw further refines the terrorist-as-rational-actor literature by asserting a collective rationality exists at the group level, which addresses the free rider problem otherwise present when the unit of measure is the individual.<sup>19</sup> Bruce Hoffman makes similar points with a splash of provocative language (e.g., terrorist as “altruist” and “intellectual”) to highlight terrorists typically have an underlying logic and they are not necessarily self-serving.<sup>20</sup> Crenshaw concludes that the most common characteristic among terrorists is their normality.<sup>21</sup> The scholarly research does not support the popular claim that terrorists suffer from a mental illness or other pathology.

The causes of terrorism are unresolved, and the factors associated with it are often contested. For causes, the desire to correct a perceived grievance is commonly cited.<sup>22</sup> Grievances have frequently resulted from ethnic fractionalization, colonialism, and religious persecution, among others.<sup>23</sup> In addition to perceived grievances, an inability to participate in the political process also plays an important role in motivating people to terrorism.<sup>24</sup> In terms of environmental considerations, Crenshaw suggests a precondition for terrorism is a government that is either unwilling or unable to prevent it.<sup>25</sup> Bolstering Crenshaw’s point, James Piazza found that states experiencing failure are likely to experience more terror attacks and to have their citizens conduct more transnational strikes.<sup>26</sup> This feasibility argument—that where the opportunity exists, it will more be likely to occur—has also been used to explain civil war onset.<sup>27</sup>

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17 Martha Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice,” in *Origins of Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 10.

18 Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 2-3.

19 Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice.”

20 Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 37-38.

21 Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes, and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 44.

22 *Ibid.*, 5, 37.

23 Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 43, 62, 129.

24 Crenshaw, *Explaining Terrorism*, 38.

25 *Ibid.*, 37.

26 James Piazza, “Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 481.

27 Paul Collier, Anke Hoefler, and Dominic Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 61, no. 1 (2009): 1-27.

Robert Pape and James Feldman, referring primarily to suicide terrorism, identify foreign occupation as a key cause. They argue US military presence and efforts to transform Iraq and Afghanistan have inadvertently increased the risk of another 9/11.<sup>28</sup> Jones and Libicki note similar concerns and caution that force often alienates the citizenry and provides significant recruiting opportunities for the terrorists.<sup>29</sup> In terms of the fight against al-Qaeda, they conclude no US military footprint or a light one should be used going forward because of legitimacy issues and terror recruiting opportunities.<sup>30</sup>

Among the contested variables thought to associate with terrorism, poverty and polity stand out. Quantitative studies have found poverty to be statistically insignificant, statistically significant, and both positively and negatively associated with terrorism.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, democracy was thought to be associated with a higher rate of terror groups and terror attacks. However, more recent studies suggest that when democracy is measured with greater granularity (e.g., considering both democracy participation and government constraints), democracy may actually be associated with a reduction in terror attacks.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, terrorism can overlap with other forms of conflict, such as civil war. Early in the war on terror, Bruce Hoffman argued the United States was fighting an insurgency rather than terrorism.<sup>33</sup> More recently, scholars such as Audrey Kurth Cronin have suggested the fight may have evolved even further and now be against a “pseudo-state” led by a conventional army (i.e., the Islamic State).<sup>34</sup> As with terrorism, the causes of insurgency are often conceived of in terms of motivation and feasibility.<sup>35</sup> Motivation includes grievances; the Sunni-Shia fractionalization in Iraq would be one example. Motivation also encompasses greed, as evident with the criminal groups in Afghanistan exploiting the conflict to profit from the poppy trade. Feasibility refers to those factors that increase the opportunity for terrorism. States with ineffective or non-existent security forces make terrorism more feasible, as do states with low opportunity costs for rebel recruitment.

### *How terrorism ends*

Important work on how terror groups end has been done by scholars such as Audrey Kurth Cronin, Seth Jones, and Martin Libicki. Kurth Cronin identifies six possible ends for terror groups, ranging

28 Robert Pape and James Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 326-331.

29 Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2008), xvii.

30 *Ibid.*, 83, 122-123.

31 Alan Krueger and Jitka Malečková, “Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2003): 121; Piazza, “Incubators of Terror,” 482; and Edward Newman, “Exploring the ‘Root Causes’ of Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (2006): 751.

32 Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, *The Political Economy of Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 34, 36; Q. Li, “Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (2005): 287, 294.

33 Council on Global Terrorism, *State of the Struggle: Report on the Battle against Global Terrorism*, ed. Lee Hamilton and Justine Rosenthal (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 88.

34 Audrey Kurth Cronin, “ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (March/April 2015): 88.

35 Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance.”

from entry into the existing political process to elimination by brute force, whereas Jones and Libicki offer five.<sup>36</sup> The categories employed in the two works both parallel and diverge in important ways. Broadly, both research efforts include groupings that account for terror groups ending by entering the political process, achieving their goals, or being defeated. However, where Kurth Cronin includes a category for “defeat and elimination by brute force,” Jones and Libicki outline one for “policing” and another for “military force.” Additionally, Kurth Cronin has a classification for the decapitation of group leaders, which Jones and Libicki subsume under either policing, military force, or elsewhere as appropriate.<sup>37</sup>

Their findings also parallel and diverge from each other. All agree, for instance, few terror groups end by fully achieving their goals or by being defeated through military force.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Jones and Libicki assert the least likely end for a terror group—seven percent of the time—is defeat by military force.<sup>39</sup> However, different conclusions are arrived at with respect to the most likely end of a terror group. Jones and Libicki conclude most terror groups end by entering the political process (i.e., 43 percent) or as the result of successful policing efforts against them (i.e., 40 percent), whereas Kurth Cronin finds most groups end in failure by imploding or being marginalized (no equivalent category exists in Jones and Libicki’s work).<sup>40</sup>

### *Theoretical explanation*

US efforts to fight terrorism since 9/11 have been immense. Between \$1.7 and \$4 trillion dollars have been spent and more than two-and-a-half million military members have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup> America has invaded two Muslim-majority states and conducted military operations in an additional five (i.e., Syria, Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia). Despite these efforts, the data indicate primary objectives have gone unmet and some areas have worsened (e.g., the number and strength of Islamist-inspired terror groups). Potentially, US efforts may have inadvertently exacerbated conditions important for terrorist activity, conditions that increased the motivation to join terror organizations and the opportunity to carry out terrorist acts. Pape, Feldman and Crenshaw highlight the relevance of these conditions. They assert foreign occupation and an inability to participate in the political process increase grievances. Additionally, they point out governments which are either unwilling or unable to prevent terrorism make future attacks more feasible.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the amount of pre-existing traumatization

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36 Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8; Jones and Libicki, “How Terrorist Groups End,” xiii, 142.

37 Jones and Libicki, “How Terrorist Groups End,” 10; Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 8.

38 Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 81, 92, 142; Jones and Libicki, “How Terrorist Groups End,” 30, 32, 124.

39 Jones and Libicki, “How Terrorist Groups End,” 9, 19.

40 Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 183, 203; and Jones and Libicki, “How Terrorist Groups End,” 18, 35, 124.

41 Crawford, “US Costs of Wars...”; and Ernesto Londoño, “Study: Iraq, Afghan War Costs to Top \$4 Trillion,” *Washington Post*, March 28, 2013.

42 Pape and Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse*, 326–31; and Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1, 1981): 382–384.

among the Afghan and Iraqi populations may have amplified the grievances and made terrorism more feasible.

The failure of the US government to achieve its objectives in the war on terror may be the result of implementing policies that motivated people to join terror groups and made terrorism more feasible. First, US actions increased the motivation, both in terms of grievance and greed, for people to join the terrorists' ranks and for the terrorists to step up the pace of attacks. Once the United States removed Saddam's regime and then failed to ensure a monopoly on the use of force, the Sunni-Shia rift was given opportunity to express itself violently. The disbanding of the Iraqi army and the de-Baathification of the government left hundreds of thousands unemployed and humiliated at being unable to provide for their families. The status quo political power arrangements were upended and largely reversed. The massive American military presence in these Muslim lands gave terror recruiters an enduring grievance to manipulate. A tsunami of US dollars incentivized corruption and criminal elements inside and outside the government. Moreover, ineffective and corrupt state security forces provided a permissive environment for organizations engaged in criminal and terror activity.

Second, America's push to democratize Afghanistan and Iraq may have made terrorism and insurgency more feasible. Well before 2001, eminent governance scholars had noted that key democracy enablers, such as liberal institutions and culture, were absent in Muslim-majority countries, making successful democracy unlikely.<sup>43</sup> The research further indicated higher levels of political violence were associated with intermediate forms of government, such as infant democracies.<sup>44</sup> An ineffective government may make terrorism more feasible, particularly if the state security force is ineffective or non-existent.

Finally, attempts to replace autocracies in Afghanistan and Iraq with representative governments were unlikely to succeed due to the negative effects from decades of trauma. At the time of the US invasions, Afghanistan had been at war for more than 20 consecutive years and Iraq had been at war for 16 of the previous 20.<sup>45</sup> As United Nations data show, both countries already had high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons for many years. Moreover, Iraqis and Afghans endured extremely high rates of political violence and terror well before 9/11. Both populations were suffering the negative effects of substantial and enduring trauma.

A meta-analysis of conflict-affected refugee populations published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests PTSD rates among the Iraqi and Afghan populations may have been between 35 and 50 percent *before* the US initiated military operations. The meta-analysis

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43 Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address," *American Sociological Review* 59, no. 1 (February 1, 1994): 6, 17; Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October 2000): 47; and Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997), 35.

44 Håvard Hegre, "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992," *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (March 2001): 42; and Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008), 158-159.

45 Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Whelon Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816-2007* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010).

also indicates over 40 percent of Iraqis and Afghans likely met the criterion for Major Depressive Disorder.<sup>46</sup> An array of destabilizing behaviors and negative changes to cognitive processes generally accompany mental disorders such as PTSD and depression. These include increased substance abuse, self-harm, and harming of others, as well as decreased initiative, trust levels, and ability to concentrate.<sup>47</sup> These behavioral and cognitive changes would likely inhibit a state's ability to move away from autocracy. Simply put, a large proportion of Iraqis and Afghans lacked the characteristics needed of citizens in a representative democracy where the population must actively participate in its own governance and the government must be responsive to its people.

### Implications for US Defense Policy

American efforts in the war on terror have been associated with a worsening of the situation. This relationship may be a function of US policies unwittingly making first terrorism then insurgency more feasible by 1) creating power vacuums after invading and 2) failing to assure a monopoly on the use of force. Additionally, US policies likely increased grievances that fuel terror recruiting by deploying hundreds of thousands of military personnel into Muslim-majority states and upending political power relationships. If the foregoing analysis is correct, then US Defense policy should be substantially restrained going forward. A reduction, even possibly a cessation, of American military operations in Muslim-majority countries could help stabilize and, over time, diminish the terror situation by eroding the narrative that Islam is under attack from the West.

If the United States reduces or ceases military operations in countries such as Syria and Iraq, stabilization might result as terror recruiting efforts become strained. Both Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri have highlighted the narrative power of US military presence. For example, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, Bin Laden criticized Saudi requests for American protection as an humiliation to the Muslim community. In 2005, Zawahiri reminded Abu Musab al Zarqawi, leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, that public support would only continue if he fought an "outside occupying enemy, especially if the enemy is firstly Jewish, and secondly American."<sup>48</sup> The message has been consistent and effective: Islam is under attack from the infidel Americans and the West. The

46 Steel Z, et al., "Association of Torture and Other Potentially Traumatic Events with Mental Health Outcomes among Populations Exposed to Mass Conflict and Displacement: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *JAMA* 302, no. 5 (August 5, 2009): 543.

47 See, for example, Rangaswamy Srinivasa Murthy, et. al., "The World Health Report 2001 – Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope," WHO, 2001, <http://www.who.int/whr/2001/en/>; American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Edition, DSM Library* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013); Deborah Schofield, et. al., "The Personal and National Costs of Mental Health Conditions: Impacts on Income, Taxes, Government Support Payments Due to Lost Labour Force Participation," *BMC Psychiatry* 11, no. 1 (2011): 72; Stephen Stansfeld, Rebecca Fuhrer, and Jenny Head, "Impact of Common Mental Disorders on Sickness Absence in an Occupational Cohort Study," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 68, no. 6 (June 1, 2011): 408-13; E. Fuller Torrey, "Violent Behavior by Individuals with Serious Mental Illness," *Psychiatric Services* 45, no. 7 (July 1, 1994): 653-662; Jeffrey Swanson, et. al., "Violence and Severe Mental Disorder in Clinical and Community Populations: The Effects of Psychotic Symptoms, Comorbidity, and Lack of Treatment," *Psychiatry* 60, no. 1 (1997): 1-22; and Terrance Wade and David Pevalin, "Marital Transitions and Mental Health," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 45, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): 155-70.

48 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Zawahiri Letter to Zarqawi (English translation)," 2005, 4, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/zawahiris-letter-to-zarqawi-english-translation-2>.

US invasion of two Muslim-majority nations and execution of military operations in another five feeds that narrative, particularly as the military forces of neighboring Muslim countries remain on the sidelines.

Additionally, the United States should reduce military operations because, as presidents Bush and Obama have noted, the problems ultimately require political solutions which must be led by those directly involved, not outsiders.<sup>49</sup> In both Iraq and Afghanistan, Americans provided herculean levels of assistance for more than a decade, but as the current situation suggests, the will of host governments continues to falter. Moreover, neighboring states in the region continue to be only fractionally involved despite being better positioned to provide assistance.

### Further Research

A number of areas would benefit from additional research. First, as this research represents one of only a few attempts to assess quantitatively the effectiveness of US efforts in the war on terror, more studies are needed. Prior to that, these findings should be viewed as tentative. Second, future research should address questions of efficiency rather than just effectiveness. As military-scholars have previously noted, America's debt is a national security concern, with Admiral Mullen referring to it as the "most significant threat to our national security."<sup>50</sup> Research focused on measuring efficiency would account for the cost of implementing Defense counter-terror policies. Potentially, research on efficiency metrics could yield a cost per unit of safety. Finally, quantitative and qualitative research could be combined to measure the effectiveness of US efforts in light of American values. Though complex, this line of research requires attention as America's values are an enduring part of its culture, and they remain important to domestic politics and America's soft power abroad.

In the interim, US Defense policy should avoid expanding offensive operations. In particular, America should not deploy additional ground troops to either Iraq or Syria in response to the Islamic State. Instead, Defense policy should focus on measures to defend the homeland, such as the military's exquisite intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.

### Conclusion

The data suggest US efforts in the war on terror have been largely ineffective in achieving the stated objectives. More Americans have been killed by terrorist acts since 9/11 than before. While still a very small number, the number of Islamist-inspired terror attacks in the homeland has also increased. Additionally, al-Qaeda and terror groups of global reach have not been defeated and destroyed. Rather, the number of

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49 Jim Acosta, Kevin Liptak, and Josh Levs, "Obama, Kerry: No US Troops Will Be Sent into Combat against ISIS in Iraq, Syria," CNN, September 17, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/17/politics/obama-isis/>; "Bush: US Shifting Tactics in Iraq War – CNN.com," CNN, October 26, 2006, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/10/25/bush.transcript/>; and Barack Obama, "Only a Political Solution for Iraq," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25, no. 2, (Spring 2008), 54-57.

50 Mr. Y, *A National Security Narrative* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2011); and CNN Wire Staff, "Mullen: Debt Is Top National Security Threat – CNN.com," CNN, August 27, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/08/27/debt.security.mullen/>.

such organizations and fighters supporting them has risen substantially since 2001. However, efforts to democratize Iraq, Afghanistan, and the broader region have achieved a modest degree of success. Freedom, as measured by civil liberties and political rights, have improved marginally, and Iraq is more democratic today than it was before the US invaded.

Interpretations of effectiveness can differ depending on the framework used. One perspective is that since another 9/11—the *sine qua non* measure—has not occurred, the war on terror has been a success. Another viewpoint asserts while many factors have deteriorated, absent the muscular US response, the situation would be worse today. To date, those claims have not been supported empirically.

Finally, policy-makers should substantially curtail America's offensive military operations. Instead, US Defense policy should focus on capabilities, such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, to support homeland security efforts. Finally, additional research is needed regarding the effectiveness of US efforts in the war on terror to augment the few quantitative studies that have been done. Other areas for future research include measuring the efficiency of American efforts and incorporating American values as a variable for investigation.

## Commentary and Reply

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### On “The Centurion Mindset and the Army’s Strategic Leader Paradigm”

Allan R. Millett

*This commentary is in response to Jason W. Warren’s article “The Centurion Mindset and the Army’s Strategic Leader Paradigm” published in the Autumn 2015 issue of Parameters (vol. 45, no. 3).*

In Major Jason Warren’s thoughtful article on what he perceives as the lack of strategic vision in today’s Army general officers, I found an assertion that needs a bullet. Major Warren says the lack of combat experience or even service in France in World War I deprived World War II’s generals of an essential professional experience. The author’s precise claim is clear enough: “In 1943 the majority of the Army’s ‘elite’ senior leadership lacked combat experience prior to that conflict.” They had missed the 1918 campaign in France.

Assuming that assertion is true, I still wonder why fighting a war at the battalion level or below shapes fighting a war at the division, corps, and army level. The calculations at the strategic level are considerably different and shaped by factors far from battlefield operations.

If combat experience was so important for senior leadership, then the United States was blessed, for its wartime army, 1941-1945, had a wide number of officers in high command who had seen war at its worst in 1918. Contrary to Major Warren’s claim of inexperience—a specious claim advanced by British officers and newsmen—the wartime Army of the United States had a majority of former AEF officers directing America’s ground forces and filling the senior ranks of the USAAF.

Irritated once more by the erroneous claim about the lack of combat experience, I made a cursory study of the careers of officers who might qualify as “elite” Army leaders. I defined “elite” as officers in the rank of general and lieutenant general who exercised command responsibilities or high level staff billets at the War Department-Army Staff level and the theater, army group, army, and corps level. In my pool of “elite” generals I included major generals who commanded divisions and then moved to corps or higher levels or staff positions at the theater, army group, and army level. I have included some corps commanders who were relieved. I believe my criteria for selection, data, and analysis are appropriate. My numbers show that few of the Army’s elite missed World War I. Whether that experience made them better World War II commanders is a question of a different order and has no statistical answer. I suspect it did influence command styles, but had little or nothing to do with strategy.

The “elite” officers who missed service in the American Expeditionary Forces or those forces sent to Italy and Russia are easy to find. Certainly some can claim “elite” status as Army-influential

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leaders during and after World War II: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar N. Bradley, Matthew B. Ridgway, H. H. Arnold, Jacob L. Devers, and J. Lawton Collins. I would add Simon B. Buckner, Jr. (KIA on Okinawa), Geoffrey Keyes, Lucian K. Truscott, Ernest J. Muller, and Ira B. Eaker. Timing is everything. It is virtually impossible for anyone commissioned after June, 1918 to have been in France that fall. Most of the AEF officers went into combat in May to November, 1918, not before. Some “elite” officers, like James M. Gavin, were too young (at least in the career sense) to have served in the AEF. Although I may have excluded someone by not including them as “elite” or by not yet finding biographical data, I think this list of non-combat veterans is complete enough for initial, tentative analysis.

With a few exceptions I have counted only officers commissioned in the cavalry, artillery, and infantry, though a few officers of coast artillery, the signal corps, and the Corps of Engineers found themselves in combat. Officers of the Air Service came from many sources. The dominant source for all generals was graduation from the US Military Academy at West Point.

Second, in compiling a list of AEF veterans who became “elite” Army officers in World War II, I included not just senior commanders, but officers who held senior staff positions at the theater, army group, and army level. I did not include corps or division staff officers. Almost all of my “elite” generals ended the war at the rank of lieutenant general (even if temporary) and then served in the postwar army at that rank or higher, even if they retired in the permanent rank of major general. As for the service in the AEF, it might be tempting to exclude those who held division, corps, army, and AEF senior staff positions, but the duties of AEF staff officers certainly exposed them to danger and the pressures of decision-making under fire within the context of limited time and information. Would anyone argue that George C. Marshall did not see combat in France, though he never held a field command?

I also took care to include officers as “elite” who served in the four major theaters in the war with Japan. I have observed over time senior officers of the Army who served in that war are overlooked in accounting for service in World Wars I and II. I do not mean, of course, Douglas MacArthur or Joseph Stilwell (both AEF veterans), but officers like Stephen J. Chamberlin (USMA, 1912) who did not go to France because he managed the Hoboken, New Jersey port-of-embarkation, 1917-1918, for which he received a Distinguished Service Medal (DSM). Chamberlin served as the G-4, G-3, and Deputy C/S of the Southwest Pacific Theater, 1942-1945 (Navy Cross, three DSMs), then commanded the Fifth Army before his retirement as a lieutenant general in 1948. Yet he is not mentioned in the same breath as Generals Walter Bedell Smith (an AEF veteran) or Joseph T. McNarney (an AEF veteran).

My research to date has produced this set of statistics that correlates overseas service in World War I with “elite” Army status in World War II.

	Elite World War II Service	World War I Service Abroad
Zone of the Interior (U.S.)	4	4
United States Army Air Forces	9	4
Mediterranean Theater	11	9
European Theater	30	23
War With Japan	13	11

In assigning generals to a theater, I have credited them to the theater where their service confirmed their “elite” status (e.g. Eisenhower, Bradley, Smith, and Patton to the ETO) or in case of division commanders who became corps commanders (e.g. Truscott, Ridgway) to the theater where they assumed corps command.

At the end of the war in Europe, Eisenhower asked Bradley to compile a list of ground officers whose performance proved they were competent to command in the continuing war with Japan. Of the thirty names Bradley sent to Ike, only nine had not served in the American Expeditionary Forces, and four of these generals were too young and not yet commissioned to serve in France. The only generals who might have gone to France and did not were Collins, Eaker, Devers, and Ridgway.

Even though I will reevaluate what is an “elite” general and review the nature of a general’s World War I service, the statistics above confirm that World War I service abroad was the common experience of World War II senior general officers, not the absence of such service as asserted by Major Warren and many others. Just what effect that service had is another question that counting and categorizing cannot answer.

## The Author Replies

Jason W. Warren

I am encouraged by the number of thoughtful and positive responses that my article has inspired on Tom Ricks’ *Best Defense* blog and elsewhere, further identifying the lack of education and broadening for Army leaders. The Army has recently initiated a number of programs to produce better educated leaders, but the results are mixed. For instance, a number of colonels at the War College with PhD’s or in PhD programs have been identified for separation from the service with the ongoing force reduction. This is counterproductive and makes little sense given the renewed push to create better educated officers. Creating more officers with PhD’s is only one aspect of improving strategic development, however. The industrial-aged personnel system still mindlessly moves officers every three years regardless of individual talents, desires, or potential (and creates unnecessary expenses in an era of limited budgets). This hamstringing the broadening aspect of strategic development. Yet

no senior leader has successfully taken on the personnel bureaucracy to demand improvement.

Moreover, the Army has just cut deeply into its talent pool of combat experienced officers (a 60 percent promotion rate to lieutenant colonel this year, along with the continued separation of senior field grade officers), not only indicating the Army "value" of Loyalty is but a catchphrase, but also hampering any headquarters' ability to perform. This was a self-inflicted wound; the Army's leadership decided to break ranks with those who sacrificed much during the Long War, to maintain a chimera of more ready Brigade Combat Teams, whose readiness evaporates mere months after combat center rotations, when not employed. Along with reduced retirement and GI Bill benefits and stagnated income adjusted for inflation, an officer retention and recruitment crisis is looming on the not-so-distant horizon.

I also commend the esteemed military historian Allan Millett's excellent analysis of "elite" US Army leaders' combat experience in WWII. We are in agreement many WWII Army officers had some overseas experience and direct combat experience was not an indicator of future successful strategic leadership. I argue this point throughout the article and in the sentence immediately preceding the line Millett highlights: "The cases of Ike, Bradley, and Fredendall indicate that combat experience and pre-war training may be desirable, *but are unnecessary for adequate performance.*" The majority of "elite" Army leaders in 1943 did not have *direct* WWI combat experience. I concur with Professor Millett: many WWII generals had valuable service overseas and on the homefront during WWI; however, today, these men would not be promoted to general for failing to command in their respective maneuver branches in combat. This is another obvious shortcoming of the current Army personnel system.

Further, WWI on the Western Front was a classic linear campaign, where, unlike contemporary wars, senior headquarters and training facilities in the rear were far removed from enemy salvos and assassination attempts. There was really no appreciable difference in terms of stationing in France away from the front, and say, Fort Dix, NJ, in the United States. I referred to Walter Millis' study from early 1943 which determined only seven of 17 senior Army leaders had experienced *direct* combat in the Great War. I have expanded Millis' survey (including some officers mentioned in Millett's rejoinder) in the table below, examining senior staff, theater, army, corps, and division commanders' WWI direct combat experience. I chose to examine the year 1943 because historians widely acknowledge it as the turning point of the conflict against the Axis powers, as Millett himself argues in his monumental *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, "The period between May 1942 and July 1943 witnessed a major shift in the fortunes of war" (303). I focused on ground combat as opposed to air combat in the Army Air Corps, as my article is concerned with ground operations and today's Army leadership. A majority of the US Army's senior leaders participating in this shift of fortunes had no direct WWI ground combat experience, and Professor Millett and I agree this did not negatively affect Allied strategic outcomes in 1943.

General	Key Staff Positions and Combat Commands 1943	Yes Direct WWI Combat Experience	No Direct WWI Combat Experience; *AEF/Corps Staff Planner; **Rear Training/School Duty France; ***Siberian Expedition
George Marshall	War Dept	Yes	
Thomas Handy	War Dept	Yes	
Lesley McNair	War Dept		No*
Albert Wedemeyer	War Dept/CBO		No
Brehon Somervell	War Dept	Yes	
Lucius Clay	War Dept		No
Frank Andrews	ETO		No
Jacob Devers	ETO		No
Dwight D. Eisenhower	North Africa		No
Mark Clark	Italy	Yes	
Douglas MacArthur	Southwest Pacific	Yes	
Robert Eichelberger	Southwest Pacific		No***
Walter Krueger	Southwest Pacific	Yes	
Stephen Chamberlain	Southwest Pacific		No
Joseph Stillwell	CBO		No*
Simon Buckner	Alaska Defense		No
Robert Richardson	Hawaii Defense	Yes	
John DeWitt	Western Defense	Yes	
Walter Smith	North Africa	Yes	
Ben Lear	2nd Army	Yes	
Alfred Greunther	5th Army CoS		No
Walter Muller	7th Army G4		No
George Patton	I Armored Corps/7th Army	Yes	
Omar Bradley	II Corps		No
Lloyd Fredendall	II Corps		No**
John Lucas	II Corps	Yes	
Geoffrey Keys	II Corps		No
John Millikin	III Corps		No**
Leonard Gerow	V Corps		No**
Earnest Dawley	VI Corps		No*
Gilbert Cook	XII Corps	Yes	
Alvin Gillem	XIII Corps		No***
Oscar Griswold	XIV Corps		No

Alexander Patch	XIV Corps	Yes	
Wade Haislip	XV Corps		No*
Frank Milburn	XXI Corps		No
John Hodge	XXIV Corps	Yes	
James Gavin	ADC 82nd		No
Terry Allen	1st Div	Yes	
Lucian Truscott	3rd Div		No
Charles Corlett	7th Div		No*
Manton Eddy	9th Div	Yes	
J. Lawton Collins	25th Div		No
William Gill	32nd Div	Yes	
Charles Ryder	34th Div	Yes	
Robert Beightler	37th Div	Yes	
Horace Fuller	41st Div	Yes	
John Hester	43rd Div		No
Matthew Ridgway	82nd Div		No
John Hodge	Americal Div	Counted above	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>

**Sources:** Shelby L. Stanton, *Order of Battle: US Army, World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1984); Robert H. Berlin, *US Army World War II Corps Commanders – A Composite Biography* (Leavenworth, KA: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1989); Ed Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000); Mark T. Calhoun, *General Lesley J. McNair: Unsung Architect of the US Army* (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2015); other biographies.

# Book Reviews

## INTELLIGENCE AND ESPIONAGE

### Why Spy? The Art of Intelligence

By Brian Stewart and Samantha Newbery

Reviewed by Adrian Wolfberg, PhD, Chair of Defense Intelligence, School of Strategic Landpower, US Army War College

Stewart's book, *Why Spy?*, is written for the British public and its intelligence practitioners and scholars. Few British intelligence practitioners have shared their experiences, and Stewart's book adds richness to the limited genre.

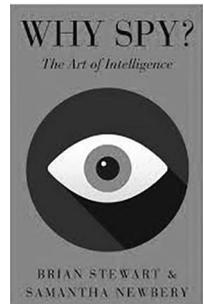
Americans, on the other hand, are familiar with the litany of articles and books about national security intelligence; American practitioners have authored many of these, its scholars too. The American public had its eyes opened to intelligence in the aftermath of Watergate and the Church and Pike Committees of the 1970s. Even Kent and Kendall, practitioners of intelligence, talked openly about the intelligence domain in 1949, and from then to the present, American practitioners and scholars have had a continued conversation about it.

The relative openness about intelligence that Americans take for granted is only a fairly recent phenomenon in the United Kingdom. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that the existence of MI5 (the Security Service focused on foreign threats inside the United Kingdom), MI6 (the Secret Intelligence Service focused on foreign threats outside the United Kingdom), and the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ), the equivalent of America's National Security Agency, were acknowledged by British officials.

American intelligence practitioners and scholars should appreciate this contextual divide between the relative well-established public treatment of intelligence in the United States and the relative new treatment in the United Kingdom in order to find new and interesting value in *Why Spy?* American consumers of intelligence—civilian and military decision makers—will find this very readable book of considerable value.

Stewart was an intelligence analyst in Britain's MI6, who rose to chair the United Kingdom's Joint Intelligence Committee from 1968-1972, and who retired in 1978. Stewart, who died in 2015, was the primary author of *Why Spy?* written just prior to his death at the age of 93. He spent 50 years working in the intelligence field.

Stewart presents two key areas, not typically addressed by American authors, but of potential interest to all audiences. First, using his personal experiences serving in Malaya in the late 1940s and early 1950s, in Vietnam in the 1960s, and in China on and off from the 1940s to the 1980s, he convincingly argues that living in the country for which one is responsible produces much better quality analysis than without such experience. He identifies the lack of truly understanding the nuances and complexities of a culture as a central problem of Western intelligence agencies.



London, UK: Hurst & Company, 2015

216 pages

\$29.95

Second, Stewart calls attention to the distinction between intelligence and covert action. He carefully defines intelligence as "...the business of collecting information, analyzing it, assessing it, and presenting it to those known as customers to assist their policymaking and decisions," an activity not purely practiced within the domain of government but in business as well. He juxtaposes intelligence with covert actions as activities "not concerned with intelligence gathering or assessment... but to affect events." Stewart raises the question of whether intelligence agencies should carry out covert action, or whether other parts of government, like the military, should. He does not advocate the military, rather, he observes it is an easy target to pin this policy-effecting activity on, and that democracies should open the debate of who should own covert action capability. Implicitly, Stewart is asking whether covert action is intelligence, or something else. He comes down on the side of the latter.

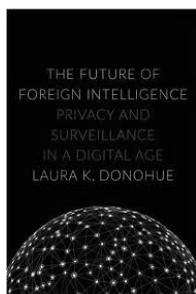
Stewart's insider view of the United Kingdom's foreign intelligence service highlights four topics that will be of interest to a British audience. These topics, well documented in American literature on intelligence, are not especially new or insightful. However, Stewart discusses these topics in a very accessible and personalized way that will be of interest to the combat arms military professional. First, he outlines the relationship between analyst and customer—the policymaker and the operational military commander—and their responsibilities: the analyst to ensure the customer takes notice of what is presented, and the customer for not ignoring or rejecting inconvenient information. Second, he identifies common cognitive limitations of analysts, including mirror imaging, groupthink, over-reliance on the importance of numbers, wishful thinking, and thinking the adversary is better equipped and prepared. Third, Stewart talks about the moral aspects of intelligence, primarily with regard to torture and interrogation. Fourth, he reviews intelligence failures surrounding Pearl Harbor in the 1940s, Cuba in the 1960s, and Iraq in the early 2000s. These reviews were not based on Stewart's personal experiences and were not particularly well documented in terms of references.

*Why Spy?* is a great introduction to the intelligence field, especially for American consumers of intelligence: the policymaker and the military decision maker.

## The Future of Foreign Intelligence: Privacy and Surveillance in a Digital Age

By Laura K. Donohue

Reviewed by Richard H. Immerman, Francis W. DeSerio Chair in Strategic Intelligence, US Army War College, and Edward J. Buthusiem Distinguished Faculty Fellow in History, Temple University



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224 pages

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A synthesis of history, constitutional law, and political theory, *The Future of Foreign Intelligence* powerfully explores the tension between security and civil liberties that has pervaded America since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. This tension has waxed and waned throughout the course of US history. We think of the Alien

and Sedition Acts; Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus; the Palmer Raids; the internment of Japanese-Americans; McCarthyism; and the catalysts for the Church Committee Hearings; enactment of the Hughes-Ryan and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Acts; and establishment of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. That list is far from complete. But it is sufficient to suggest although America's pendulum historically swung back and forth, US citizens could count on the restoration of a proper balance.

In this slim book, Laura K. Donohue explains why she fears restoring this balance may no longer be possible, and why American's civil liberties will be the loser. The new technologies so central to contemporary life have served as game changers in terms of defining a "search" and a "reasonable expectation of privacy" and of distinguishing between what is foreign and what is domestic. Frequently, but not always, following the recommendations of the intelligence agencies, the White House, Congress, and the courts have progressively institutionalized the erosion of the Fourth Amendment. Donohue, a professor of law at Georgetown University whom the US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) appointed to serve as an *amicus curiae*, does not evaluate what damage Edward Snowden's revelations about National Security Agency (NSA) programs may have caused America's security. But she does highlight the evidence they provide about the damage these and attendant programs have done to the core values of America's Constitution. She recommends some reforms, but they do not seem sufficient.

Though short and lightly footnoted, this book is not easy to read. Donohue writes coherently and fluidly, but the nature of her subject requires employing legalese to drill down deeply into case law. Still, she succeeds in making intelligible the evolution of the legal framework put in place since the 1970s to guide the collection of intelligence, especially foreign intelligence. Donohue pays particular attention to the protections afforded US citizens, and it is in this area the definitions of "search" and a "reasonable expectation of privacy" emerge as so salient. She argues persuasively the legislation and executive orders implemented during the administrations of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan manifested bipartisan agreement on the "need to provide heightened protections for US citizens." (11) Even after the Oklahoma bombings and rise of al-Qaeda in the 1990s, these protections remained largely intact. Then came 9/11. Arguing that in an instant everything changed, Donohue is again persuasive. The Intelligence Community proposed Congress and the Bush administration roll back the pre-existing protections, and the new technologies provided instruments to achieve that end.

Donohue also makes explicit her judgment these changes have not been for the better. Put bluntly, she assesses the post-9/11 surveillance programs as legally problematic and unwarranted. She implies, and here the reader would have benefited from deeper analysis and fuller development, the legal framework created in the 1970s, and amended in the 1980s and 1990s, could have adequately provided security for Americans citizens without violating their constitutional rights and American values. But the tragedy of 9/11 generated a political culture that allowed the government to act precipitously, surreptitiously, and, from Donohue's point of view, recklessly. Beginning with STELLAR

WIND, the NSA program launched before the end of 2001, Donohue uses the Patriot Act, the 2008 FISA Amendments Act, the FISC's authorization of PRISM and upstream collection, and parallel initiatives to construct her case. These legal, constitutional, and technological details are often overwhelming. She introduces the reader to "pen registers" and "trap-and-trace devices," and she devotes entire chapters to "metadata," and "content." She also interrupts the narrative to present a history of the Fourth Amendment and the prohibition against general warrants that dates back to England's Magna Carta in the 13th century. The arc of her story, nevertheless, is unmistakable: A founding precept of the United States was the "positive right to secure in one's person, home, papers, and effects, against unreasonable search and seizure." (84-85) This positive right was inviolate—until 9/11.

The America Donohue portrays is an America far different than what the Founding Fathers imagined. She implores Americans to ask themselves if this is the America they want.

## HUMANS AND WAR

**Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology**

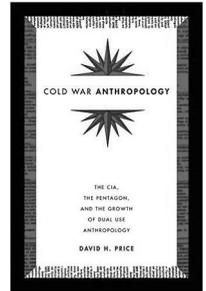
By David H. Price

Reviewed by Janeen Klinger, Department of National Security and Strategy, US Army War College

David Price provides the reader with a descriptive narrative of the relationship that grew between the US government and anthropologists during the Cold War, and that was anchored to funding provided for anthropological research by various government agencies. Price's concern is this relationship distorted anthropology to the extent its practitioners became thralls of the US military and the CIA. Indeed, Price spends three chapters describing the controversy and divisive impact such ties had on the internal workings of anthropology's flagship organization, the American Anthropological Association. Therefore, this book may be of greater interest to anthropologists wishing to learn about the evolution of their discipline. Other readers might find much of the narrative to be a tedious laundry list of who produced work for which US agency.

Price recognizes that ties with the government between anthropologists and other social scientists emerged during World War II in such organizations as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Office of War Information (OWI). Continuing these ties after the war was a logical extension of this earlier work. However necessary the wartime collaborations may have been, Price questions the ethics of these collaborations for what he sees as the less noble post-war objective of maintaining the American empire. On this point, anthropologists may well be more sensitive concerning the ethics of ties to the government than other social scientists because some anthropological work in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was used by the colonial powers to maintain their imperial control. Moreover, the discipline was shaken by charges made by noted anthropologist Franz Boas in 1919 that four anthropologists had "prostituted" their science by using it as a cover for spying in World War I. American policy." Yet that game plan is contained in NSC-68 as written by Paul Nitze, whose ideas varied from those of Kennan. Inaccurately stating the context of Cold War strategy in this way is especially damaging for Price because he criticizes anthropologists who fail to include recognition of the broader political context in their works.

Given the themes of this book, it can be located as part of that literature from the political left critical of American Cold War foreign policy. As such, the book suffers from two of that literature's flaws. First, like other critical examinations of American Cold War foreign policy—especially those dealing with developing countries—the author is surprised, and perhaps even offended, the United States pursued goals of national interest rather than humanitarian ones. This tendency is repeated throughout contemporary evaluations of Cold War modernization theory where scholars seem equally surprised the purpose the theory served was not humanitarian but strategic. Such views do not



Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016  
452 pages  
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take into account the fact that at the heart of a realist foreign policy that pursues strategic national interest lies a profoundly ethical concern. Hans Morgenthau, the father of the American realist school, illustrated this ethical concern when he asserted national survival is itself a moral principle with prudence as the supreme virtue in international politics. He went on to admonish those seeking moral crusades in foreign policy:

The lighthearted equations between a particular nationalism and the counsils of Providence is morally indefensible, for it is that very sin of pride against which the Greek tragedians and the Biblical prophets have warned rulers and ruled. That equation is also politically pernicious, for it is liable to engender the distortion in judgment which in the blindness of crusading frenzy, destroys nations and civilizations, in the name of moral principle, ideal or God himself.<sup>1</sup>

A second flaw in this book relates to factual oversights and simplifications concerning Cold War American policy. One factual oversight is the misstatement concerning the relationship between Project Troy and the creation of MIT's Center for International Studies (CENIS). Project Troy led to the establishment of CENIS, not the reverse as the author suggests. The author's simplification relates to his view that it was George Kennan's "Cold War game plan that aggressively guided

Perhaps it is appropriate to observe in this era of intense polarization in American politics that both the right and the left are guilty of tarnishing the American government. From the right, we hear the Reaganesque view that the most frightening words in the English language are "I'm from the government and I'm here to help" that suggests a certain illegitimacy of domestic government activity. From the left—as this book illustrates—we come away with the idea that pursuit of the national interest is an illegitimate basis for foreign policy. Both views contribute to the impoverishment of the very notion of governance and political responsibility.

## Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers

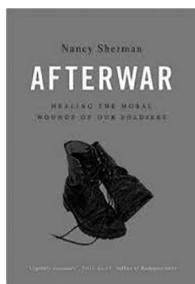
By Nancy Sherman

Reviewed by COL C. Anthony Pfaff, Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary, US Department of State

Nancy Sherman's book *Afterwar* makes an important contribution to what it means for a nation to go to war in the twenty-first century. It emphasizes soldiers' struggles to reintegrate into society after returning from war and provides clear messages to multiple audiences in the critical areas of individual and collective responsibility, civil-military relations, and leadership. The book also has important lessons for individual soldiers, the public they serve, and the commanders and supervisors who have the best opportunity—and the greatest responsibility—to ensure the moral wounds associated with warfare are given the opportunity to heal.

Sherman builds on her previous works concerning how the "traditional" stoic ethos the military instills in its personnel prepares them well

1 Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations, 5th Edition Revised* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 11.



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\$24.95

for fighting in war, but at the expense of living well in peace. Stoicism's detachment from personal desire and its emphasis on responsibility has bred combatants who willfully accept extreme hardship and who are prepared to hold themselves accountable for events that may be beyond their control. While great for warfighting, these traits can interfere with their ability to handle the moral wounds with which they return.

Sherman describes a marine sergeant who was racked with guilt over the loss of two other marines in Afghanistan and, as a result, developed symptoms associated with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In both cases, the sergeant pointed to an act he could have performed but did not think of at the time. Here Sherman makes an important contribution to understanding moral injury in war. Generally speaking, moral injury occurs in the presence of grievous moral transgressions, whether committed by oneself or others, that "overwhelm one's sense of goodness and humanity." However, the striking thing about war is moral injury can occur even when the transgression is relatively trivial or, as in other cases Sherman describes, when one has done nothing wrong. This point suggests military leaders need to rethink what "command responsibility" means so soldiers can fight effectively without causing needless harm to themselves or those they lead.

Such injuries, Sherman argues, can also be exacerbated by soldiers' sense of justice for the cause for which they fight. Psychologically, it is easier to bear loss when tangible good results. In this regard, Sherman has a message for the public these soldiers nominally defend. In her excellent chapter, "Don't Just Tell Me Thank You," she discusses the gap in civil-military relations that has inexplicably widened even after more than a decade of war. Noting that less than one percent of the US population serves, Sherman aptly describes how well-intentioned expressions of gratitude by many of the 99 percent who do not serve creates resentment. This resentment arises because civilians are largely distanced from the cost of war and, as a result, the ubiquitous "thank you for your service" can seem too cheap to count as sharing any part of the burden. This distance further contributes to confusion among soldiers and civilians alike about why exactly we are at war. If civilians are not invested in the cause, we have only our leaders' words that it is both just and worthwhile. In today's cynical society, that word is often not enough.

Sherman's point is not that civilians should not express gratitude. As members of the public, they share enough responsibility for the war that they owe those who fight more than "thank you," if their sentiment is to be judged genuine. While Sherman offers a number of ways civilians can constructively bear this burden, she boils it down to this: "assurance from civilian and military leaders and, collectively, from a nation, that they (soldiers) are never just forces, never just an asset to be used (or preserved) instrumentally as a part of military necessity in achieving missions (and continuing the fight)." Civilians should be invested enough in the war effort to make their voices heard by electing leaders who will fight the right wars in the right ways, and who are held accountable when they do not.

Sherman also relates stories of women in combat zones who raised concerns to their commanding officers regarding sexual harassment.

Sherman's point is leaders should be especially sensitive where issues closely associated with identity—like sexuality—are involved.

The most important contribution of *Afterwar* is the lesson that the effective transition of soldiers back to society has to begin before the war starts. We need to pay attention to what we teach soldiers about responsibility, civilians about their duties, and leaders about how to build trust and hope in their subordinates to ensure they will be resilient in the face of adversity. While moral injury may be as unavoidable in war as physical injury, we have much to do before we fully realize our responsibilities to address it.

## TECHNOLOGY AND WAR

## Technology Security and National Power: Winners and Losers

By Stephen D. Bryen

Reviewed by Juliana Geran Pilon, Senior Fellow at the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization

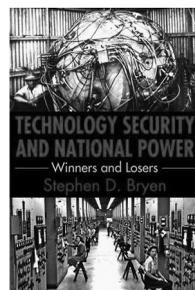
Lost in the cacophony of twitter-friendly bluster that passes for a pre-electoral conversation on national security is the cold reality of an America unprepared for technological attacks—whether by cyber, chemical and biological, or a slew of nuclear devices. This is not news; however the vast majority of Americans do not fully appreciate how the current threats fit into a larger context, what means are at our disposal to address them, and how the nation’s much-vaunted *uberpowers* status is not quite all it is cracked up to be. In no small measure, this unpreparedness is because we have managed to squander our enormous advantages by naively, myopically, or incompetently, failing to protect them.

For this problem and more, there is now a fascinating new book, *Technology Security and National Power*, by leading technology security expert Stephen D. Bryen. A former political science professor, his vast experience ranges from leading the Pentagon’s technology policy efforts during the Reagan years, serving on the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and vastly increasing the assets of a large aerospace and defense and high-technology company when he served as president of its North American branch.

Yet this is no “techy” tome; Bryen’s clear and lucid prose renders even highly technical material accessible to the general reader. The narrative begins with the Bible and underscores the critical, if not decisive, effect of technological superiority in determining “winners vs. losers,” with particular emphasis on the recent past—and the American experience in particular.

History, unsurprisingly, turns out to have been far more contingent than it appears in hindsight, and in ways that are still, stubbornly, relevant. For example, though most people know Germany’s atomic program had been very advanced in the 1940s, often neglected are Japan’s efforts, which consisted of two programs—one of which belonged to the Japanese army and was based on Japan’s mainland, while the other was run by Japan’s navy in what is now...North Korea. Bryen concludes that “Russia’s hurried late entry in the war against Japan and occupation of part of Korea, should be seen for what it most likely was: an effort to stop Japan from getting a bomb.” The rest is not just history; it is now.

The story of chemical and biological weapons is of particular interest, considering how easy they are to obtain and to use, and how many companies (Bryen estimates, “countless”) worldwide are willing to sell precursor material and specialized manufacturing equipment to facilitate the production of such weapons. Though all but useless against modern armies equipped with protective gear and antidotes against nerve gases and anthrax, their deployment against civilians is



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327 pages

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worrisome enough as instruments of terror, with great potential for blackmail and just plain mindless destruction.

Added to the continued danger from al-Qaeda, whose demise has been greatly exaggerated, are ongoing threats, notably from unstable Pakistan—which may have already acquired tactical nuclear weapons in addition to the uranium bomb—and Iran, which may decide to start supplying its surrogates, Hamas and Hezbollah, with chemical and biological weapons currently at its disposal. Argues Bryen: “Anyone today who believes that Iran is following only one path to make a bomb would be naive. No country exposed to Iran’s growing nuclear capability can afford to bet that Iran will abide by restrictions imposed by outsiders.” Naivety is a luxury that few outside the United States can afford.

But of all threats, perhaps the most likely—and most dangerous—in the near future is cyberwar. Though everyone knows the United States no longer has any control over the proliferation of electronic technology, the fact that even the Pentagon has turned to commercial off-the-shelf technology means it faces a huge set of vulnerabilities. Bryen points to an obvious, though under-reported, fallout from the infamous leaks by Edward Snowden: they undermined confidence in all security products from the United States. “Today American encryption products are under suspicion both at home and especially abroad.”

While the topics with contemporary relevance are more urgent, *Technology Security and National Power* is especially enjoyable for its richly detailed historical case studies which give it the flair of a detective story. For though we mostly know the ending, who won and who lost, the closeness of the outcome in too many cases should serve as a warning that happy endings are mostly made in Hollywood. Hoping to outsmart our enemies is proving increasingly difficult. This book will go a long way toward remedying that problem.

## A Theory of the Drone

By Grégoire Chamayou; translated by Janet Lloyd

Reviewed by LTC Philip W. Reynolds, PhD Candidate, University of Hawaii-Manoa

Grégoire Chamayou’s *A Theory of the Drone* delves into the ethical and moral effects raised by the United States’ position as a dominant state, its hyperbolic capabilities, the use of drones, and the increasing commonality of signature strikes. The technology has become basic: drones were hypothesized as far back as the 1930s with their usefulness quickly converted to the battlefield. The theory of armed drones has hybridized police and army functions into what Chamayou calls a “conceptual monstrosity” (33). Their use is predicated on the legal justification of the needs of armed conflict, and the laws of war, in their ancient sense, were the codification of morality. Change the definitional underpinnings of armed conflict and one frees oneself from legal restriction. Chamayou (57) explains this causal juxtaposition, by which the threats that need pre-empting are everywhere, in turn requiring a new understanding of the geography of killing in which the combatant on the



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304 pages  
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battlefield has been flipped so that the battlefield is the combatant. This new foundational premise fundamentally changes war.

Clausewitz described war as a duel between protagonists when explaining his principles of battle. Instead of armies and battlefronts, to Chamayou drone warfare is a manhunt. Instead of combatants confronting each other, one is the hunter, and the other is the prey who flees and hides. This transition war from what we knew to a war of the hunt. The changing relationship between what the state offers and what the citizen demands requires a change in the imposition of security. Anti-terrorism has as its tactic the elimination of the emerging threats. Chamayou's calculus is killing breeds more terrorists, an assumption buttressed by a program and its statistics of success which are misleadingly simple. The positive reinforcement of the tactics of pre-emption leads to more killing in an amaranthine loop. Military professionals are familiar with the *ne plus ultra* of irregular war where the hunter must kill to win, while the hunted simply has to avoid death to win. War has become hunting and combat has become assassination.

The seduction of the drone has been the promised inevitable invulnerability. In its current form, airpower is the new mythical hero, the latest in a line stretching back to Achilles, Ajax, Isfenidiyar and Baldur. Like the giants of old, the technologization of warfare reveals the built-in weakness that invulnerability has—the valuation of human life, specifically Americans. Previously expected to close with and destroy the enemy, drones are the answer to America's allergic reaction to the fate of combat (77). As the ability to preempt casualties has increased to the point of pondering riskless wars, the death threshold—that level at which America is willing to sustain deaths for a cause—has dropped precipitously. Only 18 dead in Mogadishu was enough to force a retreat. The subsequent death tolls in Iraq and Afghanistan—some 4,495 and 2,380 respectively—has seen a correlative increase in drone strikes. The Obama administration's campaign promises of ending those wars saw an increase of some 700 percent, expanding from Pakistan to Somalia and Yemen.<sup>1</sup>

Political expediency will continue to drive the automation of drone warfare. In an effort to avoid the odium of war and potential charges of public responsibility, increasingly complex algorithms will match behavior to predetermined guilt. The desire to kill from a distance is not new, indeed it is the goal of all commanders. Chamayou dismisses this important facet of the discussion of drone wars in his goal to maximize his argument and minimize those to whom a drone is, literally, the difference between life and death. Technological supremacy gives giant advantage to one side or the other, with spectacular results: General Lord Kitchener's machine guns mowing down 10,000 Mahdi at Omdurman at only the cost of 50 British. The implication is there is a disguised element of racism in the use of untouchable technologically advanced weapons against tribes not far removed from witchcraft and magic.

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1 Scott Shane, "Drone Strikes Reveal Uncomfortable Truth: US is Often Unsure About Who Will Die," *New York Times*, April 23, 2015.

Chamayou's most important contribution to the philosophy of war is life at both ends of killing demands a pause, an acceptance that combat is a most unfortunate option and to reject the idea of riskless war. The lesson of *A Theory of the Drone* is that it is not *recherché* to kill the defenseless, even one intent on murder.

## REGIONAL THREATS

**The al-Qaeda Franchise: The Expansion of al-Qaeda and Its Consequences**

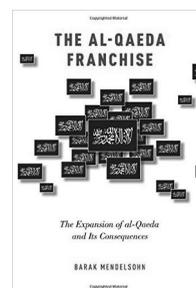
By Barak Mendelsohn

Reviewed by W. Andrew Terrill, PhD, Research Professor, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

Barak Mendelsohn has written a comprehensive and well-considered study of why al-Qaeda chose to associate itself with a number of largely autonomous, often uncontrollable, and geographically distant terrorist organizations under a “branching out” strategy widely known as “franchising.” Mendelsohn examines a number of important questions about al-Qaeda’s franchising effort, including a consideration of how well it has succeeded in advancing al-Qaeda’s interests. Throughout much of the work, he considers the potential gains and even higher risks of a franchising strategy, which have led al-Qaeda to accept various terrorist organizations as autonomous parts of their organization. He further asks why some franchises are more effective and loyal to the core organization than others and under what circumstances does franchising appear to be an attractive strategy.

Mendelsohn explains al-Qaeda did not begin its franchising strategy until 2003 rather than when the organization was at the height of its power and prestige immediately after the 9/11 strikes. He argues the franchising effort was al-Qaeda’s response to its rapidly declining fortunes following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan but prior to what he identifies as a jihadist renewal following the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Mendelsohn further maintains al-Qaeda’s inflated views of its own importance after 9/11 required it to prove its ability to continue the struggle in the face of aggressive counter-terrorism measures. Unfortunately for bin Laden, al-Qaeda lacked sufficient capabilities to send its own members to establish multiple branches in new geographical arenas by 2003. Franchising existing terrorist organizations became the easy, cheap, but also risky response to this problem.

The al-Qaeda strategy of franchising has been organized as a two-tier structure with a central command (often called “al-Qaeda central” by both organization leaders and the media) and various subordinate branches, each of which is responsible for a particular geographical region. The central organization is formally responsible for high-level strategy and direction, while the franchises conduct daily operations often including local target selection, propaganda, recruitment, and coordination with potentially friendly organizations and individuals. Establishing franchises with local terrorist organizations also lowered al-Qaeda’s start-up costs by providing a pre-existing infrastructure and presenting the possibility of an immediate operational impact with local resources. An existing terrorist infrastructure usually includes operatives, support personnel, media, and logistical assets such as safe houses and access to weapons and money. Conversely, a central problem with franchises is that they are often extremely difficult to control. Franchises often provide late and incomplete information to their parent



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organization, making it more difficult for the leadership to employ the group effectively as part of a larger strategy. Whether or not the franchise follows the parent group's instructions to any serious extent often depends on the affiliate's reservoir of good will and if the group depends on the parent organization financially.

There have also been different kinds of al-Qaeda franchises. In Iraq, Algeria, and Somalia, that organization merged with existing radical groups by mutual agreement. In Yemen and Saudi Arabia, they used their own members to establish and organize the franchise. Under these circumstances, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), operating first out of Saudi Arabia and then Yemen, became al-Qaeda's most loyal supporter. Unsurprisingly, other affiliates without a history of cooperation have showed much less loyalty and sometimes embarrassed al-Qaeda by their undisciplined and counterproductive actions. In the case of Somalia, for example, the merger with the local terrorist group al-Shabab became a major problem. In this instance, al-Qaeda partnered with a self-destructive group, with an authoritarian and paranoid leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, who weakened his organization through internal purges and even killed foreign volunteers. In this environment, some al-Shabab members chose to surrender to the government rather than die at the hands of Godane's executioners. Elsewhere, Algeria's Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (French abbreviation: GSPC), became al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) after long and detailed negotiations with bin Laden. This group appeared to have a great deal of potential, but it never played out in the way the al-Qaeda leadership had expected. Instead, AQIM basically operated as a criminal and smuggling group and showed no capacity to strike at Europe as bin Laden had hoped. Still, once foreign terrorist groups had become part of al-Qaeda, bin Laden and his deputy and eventual successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, remained reluctant to renounce undisciplined affiliates. Some members of al-Qaeda central advocated that their organization sever ties with rogue branches, but bin Laden believed these actions would have required an unacceptable level of public disclosure about severe internal differences within al-Qaeda.

Despite significant difficulties in Somalia and Algeria, the most serious franchise problems for al-Qaeda clearly came from Iraq where bin Laden sought and obtained an affiliation with Tawhid wal-Jihad (TWJ), led by the deeply problematic and untrustworthy Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. TWJ, which had been operating in Iraq since before the war, agreed to affiliate with al-Qaeda and became al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers (often shortened to al-Qaeda in Iraq or AQI). The merger allowed al-Qaeda to maintain that it was fighting in the central battle against US forces in the Middle East, but TWJ demanded as a condition for union that they be allowed to continue prioritizing fighting against Iraq's Shi'a Muslims, whom Zarqawi hated. The al-Qaeda leadership requested that Zarqawi place his war against the Shi'as on the backburner, but both he and his later successors were unwilling to do so. Under pressure to show relevance, al-Qaeda accepted the union of the two organizations on Zarqawi's terms, and terrorism against Iraqi Shi'a continued unabated. By late 2006 (shortly after Zarqawi's death), AQI merged with several smaller terrorist organizations to form the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), making these moves without bothering to consult the

al-Qaeda leadership. ISI later expanded into Syria and changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to reflect the organization's operations in both theaters. When Zawahiri (by then the head of al-Qaeda) ordered ISIS to focus its activities on Iraq and allow al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate the Nusra Front to lead the jihadist efforts there he was met with open ISIS defiance.

The ISIS rebellion against al-Qaeda's authority after bin Laden's death exposed the new al-Qaeda leader's inability to control its affiliates. While it was easier for ISIS to rebel against Zawahiri than bin Laden, Mendelsohn maintains that the rebellion was probably inevitable in any event. In ISIS, al-Qaeda faced a franchise that turned dramatically against them rather than simply an affiliate that tarnished the organization's reputation. In response to this hostility, on February 2, 2014, al-Qaeda issued a statement announcing that it had severed its ties with ISIS and no longer considered the group to be one of its branches. At this point, it was clear Zawahiri had been deftly outmaneuvered by a strong and power-hungry competitor which successfully replaced al-Qaeda as the leading force in the global jihadist movement. Not long after these events, a number of al-Qaeda members in a variety of its franchises defected from the organization and pledged loyalty to ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was eventually to rename his organization the Islamic State.

In his conclusion, Mendelsohn maintains al-Qaeda's franchising effort was a failure driven by the need to maintain leadership of the jihadist movement rather than a serious cost/benefit analysis of the wisdom of affiliating with various radical groups. Currently, al-Qaeda's relevance has been almost completely displaced by the Islamic State, which even under heavy coalition bombing remains the most important organization within the jihadist movement. In contrast, Mendelsohn assesses al-Qaeda to be weaker than any time since it claimed the leadership of global jihadism. Perhaps its only franchise that continues to matter is AQAP, which has gradually been replacing al-Qaeda central by assuming greater responsibility for the future of the organization. Mendelsohn maintains there is almost no chance for al-Qaeda to recover its former status while Zawahiri is at the helm, and it has few accomplishments to show its constituency and financial supporters as the memory of 9/11 has faded. Under these circumstances, it is fully possible that the Islamic State will replace al-Qaeda in its few remaining sanctuaries such as Yemen and Pakistan, and that al-Qaeda will continue to recede into insignificance.

## Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America

Edited by Joseph M. Humire and Ilan Berman

Reviewed by Dr. José de Arimatéia da Cruz, Visiting Research Professor at the US Army War College and Professor of International Relations and Comparative Politics at Armstrong State University, Savannah, GA

Iran's influence in Latin America and its national security implications have finally caught the attention of US policy makers in Washington. This greater interaction would go unnoticed were it not for the partnerships established between Iran and some of the Latin American countries.

IRAN'S STRATEGIC  
PENETRATION OF  
LATIN AMERICA

EDITED BY  
JOSEPH M. HUMIRE AND ILAN BERMAN

FOREWORD BY  
MARTA LUCIA RAMIREZ, FORMER  
NATIONAL DEFENSE AND FOREIGN TRADE  
MINISTER OF COLOMBIA

Lanham, MD: Lexington  
Books, 2014

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Ahmadinejad's political goal was to establish a policy toward Latin America that was anti-American. As he has publicly stated, "Tehran is pursuing a strategy that promotes its own ideology and influence in Latin America at Washington's expense." This foreign policy posture creates what the late Hugo Chavez referred to as "the axis of unity" foreign policy against the United States' "imperialist" foreign policy. In one of Ahmadinejad's many trips to Latin America in 2009, Chavez referred to him as a "gladiator of anti-imperialist struggles." In *Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America*, Joseph M. Humire and Ilan Berman call our attention to what they consider to be the most complex security challenge in the Western Hemisphere today, which is how deeply the Islamic Republic of Iran has penetrated the internal affairs of Latin America and what it means from a foreign policy perspective to the United States.

The book is divided into fourteen chapters, each addressing Iran's relations with a specific country in Latin America. Within the book the authors focus on the organization known as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) founded by the late Hugo Chavez. Humire and Berman argue Iran's expansion into areas not traditionally associated with its sphere of influence requires a global response since it represents an imminent threat to the rest of the world. America should play particular attention to Iran's expanding influence since most of Iran's diplomatic meddling is taking place in the US's backyard.

Iran's Latin American partners are part of the so-called "pink tide" that came to power between the years of 1998 and 2009. The "pink tide" nations are united by their strong contempt of Washington's policies and anti-American sentiment. Despite the fact that the "pink tide" did not have a clear-cut ideology, they were united in opposition to the Washington Consensus, a laundry list of demands imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its economic policy toward the region. An alliance between the "pink tide" nations of Latin America and Iran represents an alternative to the United States and its intrusive foreign policy dictates. The book highlights how Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Colombia have become pawns in the Iranian chess game in its attempt to find an alternative to its economic and diplomatic isolation imposed by the United States resulting from the passage of the *Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act of 2012*. Berman argues in the chapter "*What Iran Wants in the Americas*," Iran's goal in Latin America is to build support in the Americas for its diplomatic isolation as a rogue nation by establishing a presence in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Iran is also expanding its economic ties with the region by signing close to 500 cooperative agreements. Latin America provides Iran with an alternative for its quest for strategic resources. Again, Berman points out that, "since the mid-2000s Iran has become a major speculator in Latin America's resource wealth." (4) He also claims Iran's Quds Force are deeply involved in Latin America "stationing operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well-established Shia Diaspora." (5)

Iran's penetration of Latin America has also been facilitated by a marriage of radical ideologies. This marriage involves the union of radical

Islam with the radical left that has come to power with the rise of the “pink tide.” ALBA, according to Joel Hirst, is a revolutionary organization which challenges the Western world’s rule of law and representative democracy and seeks to replace it with a new authoritarian model of governance (21). Iran’s association with ALBA increases Iran’s diplomatic allies in the region, allows for engagement in economic trade while bypassing US economic sanctions, and allows Iran to further increase its participation in criminal activity such as supporting Hezbollah’s activities in the Tri-Border Area (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) and recruiting, indoctrinating and proselytizing Latin American citizens (27). The union of Iran with the ALBA axis represents “Washington’s greatest challenge in the Hemisphere” (30). Secretary of State Kerry’s Fall 2013 announcement that the “Era of Monroe Doctrine is Over” in a speech before the Organization of American States caused some Latin American leaders to believe the United States does not care about the region. The perception is Latin America will once again be a traditional “benign neglect” problem to be dealt with only when necessary.

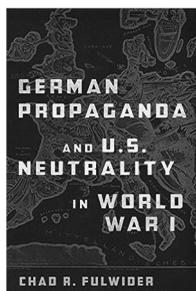
Students at the US Army War College and future military leaders will greatly benefit from reading *Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America*. Whether we agree with the authors’ overall assessment of Iran’s role in the region, one thing is for sure: Iran’s penetration of Latin America in such a short period of time presents a serious challenge to US national security interests in the Western Hemisphere. The US government and its army can ignore Iran’s influence and meddling in the region or cautiously begin to assess what implications it will present in the future of US-Latin American relations in the post-hegemonic American era of the twenty-first century.

## MILITARY HISTORY

**German Propaganda and US Neutrality in World War I**

By Chad R. Fulwider

Reviewed by Dr. Jan Lemnitzer, Fixed Term Fellow in History, Pembroke College, University of Cambridge



Columbus, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2016

274 pages

\$60.00

It is often forgotten just how “German” the United States was when the First World War broke out: the German-American community produced hundreds of German-language newspapers, the use of German in Lutheran church services was widespread, and the “German vote” mattered in many regional or state elections. Reaching out to this community to influence public opinion in the United States made perfect sense for the German leadership, and it is to the great credit of Chad Fulwider’s book that he explores these attempts in detail for the first time. He begins with one of Britain’s first actions of the war—the cutting of the submarine cables that denied Berlin the swift communications with the other side of the Atlantic that London continued to enjoy. He then examines the activities of official propaganda units such as the German Information Office in New York as well as self-motivated activists and academics. The story Fulwider narrates is dominated by misunderstandings: the first one was the idea that all German speakers in the United States belonged to one coherent community that fully supported Kaiser Wilhelm II and the German war effort. Yet, many had emigrated before Germany had even been unified, and they saw Germany primarily as a “*Kulturnation*,” a national community defined by language, culture and religion. Wilhelmitarian militarism and aggressive imperialism had only become pervasive in German society after most German-Americans had left.

The second problem was that much of this propaganda was published in German. While some of the largest newspapers such as the New Yorker *Staatszeitung* realized the need to publish English translations of their leading articles, many continued to engage in what Fulwider describes as “preaching to the choir.” But reaching out to mainstream America was vital as Britain had successfully pioneered the use of “atrocities propaganda” by defining the violation of Belgian neutrality as the “Rape of Belgium,” with a strong focus on allegations of widespread sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> Given that many of these allegations proved to be wrong, German propaganda should have had a chance to counter that narrative, but Fulwider argues there was a conscious decision not to lower the tone and engage with what were perceived as yellow press methods. Instead, German propaganda relied on a sober and factual tone that to non-Germans seemed ponderous and boring. Moreover, articles often highlighted the fact that they came straight from the Imperial government to exploit the traditional German deference to state authority. Against the British propaganda machine in Wellington House, so adept

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1 Nicoletta F. Gullace, “Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 3 (June 1997): 714-747.

at focusing on catchy narratives and hiding the state-funded nature of its message, this very German approach stood little chance.

These inadequacies have hidden the fact that the German case in the early months of the war was better than is often assumed: the British blockade had extremely shaky legal foundations and openly interfered with US export interests not only to Germany, but also to neighboring countries such as the Netherlands. Woodrow Wilson worried that Britain might provoke the spirit of 1812 and America's identity as the proud defender of neutral rights and the freedom of the seas, and some of the best German propaganda efforts attempted to tap into this narrative while ridiculing pro-British voices as pining for the days of King George III. So effective were some of the articles written by Harvard psychologist Hugo Münsterberg that a London businessman offered a \$10 million donation if the professor was sacked—Harvard refused. Yet Münsterberg and his fellow German professors in the United States, such as Moritz Julius Bonn or Eugen Kühnemann, failed to prevent the establishment of an alternative narrative that saw Britain and the United States united in their respect for law and civilization and in their disgust for German brutality. German propaganda never recovered from the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, and Fulwider describes the increasingly desperate attempts by the US-based diplomats to explain to the Berlin government just how offensive these sinkings were to the US public. Therefore, the German propaganda effort lost battle after battle, whether it was about the decision not to ban the export of arms and munitions, the lifting of the ban on raising war loans in New York, or the eventual decision allowing British customers to buy much-needed supplies on credit. Taken together, these decisions had an enormous impact on the allied war effort.

At this point, Fulwider's book shifts focus and looks at the German sabotage efforts on US and Canadian soil. Some of these were quite ingenious, especially a clever attempt to corner the market for vital specialist equipment and raw materials for munitions production by secretly setting up a German-run munitions factory that never planned to deliver on the large orders it took from Britain. Still, it is telling that the German government ran the propaganda and sabotage programs as one coordinated effort, despite the obvious problems for Germany's public image when the latter became public, as it inevitably did. Military attaché Franz von Papen was expelled from the country, with charges relating to arson at munitions factories only dropped after he became German chancellor in 1932.

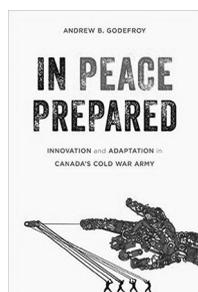
Once the German high command had decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare, German propaganda attempts on American soil were doomed, and the book effectively ends in 1916. This is justifiable, but it is disappointing that the author has failed to consult any books published after he was awarded his PhD in 2008. Many recent works on US neutrality, German-Americans or indeed German First World War propaganda have been missed, and that omission leaves the task of putting Fulwider's results into the context of recent research

to the reader.<sup>2</sup> They do fit in rather well though, confirming a global pattern of well-funded, but improvised propaganda efforts marred by an unwillingness to learn from, and adapt to, Britain's innovations.

## In Peace Prepared: Innovation and Adaptation in Canada's Cold War Army

By Andrew B. Godefroy

Reviewed by Major H. Christian Breede, CD PhD, Assistant Professor of Political Science, The Royal Military College of Canada and Deputy Director of the Centre for International Defence Policy, Queen's University



Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2016

292 pages

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Appendices, those extra pages of graphs, charts, and tangential explanatory material found at the end of academic works, are at the best of times glanced at and more often ignored. Doing so in Andrew Godefroy's *In Peace Prepared* would be a shame. In particular, nestled before an extensive set of notes and a comprehensive bibliography, this book's fourth appendix presents a chilling and compelling narrative the likes of which Harry Turtledove would have approved. The passage recounts what the employment of a battlefield nuclear weapon would have looked like for the soldiers of a rifle company from the 11th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group occupying a non-descript piece of ground somewhere in central Europe in the late 1950s or early 1960s. The passage is horrifying and illuminating.

Although a reproduction of an original piece that appeared in a 1959 Canadian Army training manual, the passage grippingly underlines a key theme in Godefroy's book, namely, that combat development (known more conventionally today as force development or how we think about how we fight) is indeed an important process. Put simply, force development during the 1950s—the dawn of the Cold War—had led the militaries of the newly minted North Atlantic Treaty Organization to conceive of operational plans that included the employment of nuclear weapons at the tactical level. This plan was known as MC-48 and was the blueprint for the defense of Europe until the 1960s.

That this plan persisted for as long as it did is as equally terrifying as the naïve view that one could actually fight in such an irradiated environment (to say nothing of the strategic error of seeing such nuclear exchanges as limited to the field of battle in question). Only with the introduction of the strategic concept of “flexible response” and the recognition of many senior political and military leaders who, as Godefroy states, saw “tactical nuclear war as folly” and something that “should be

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2 Ryan Floyd, *Abandoning American Neutrality: Woodrow Wilson and the Beginning of the Great War, August 1914-December 1915* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Robert W. Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America's Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2007); Lars Maischak, *German Merchants in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Mischa Honeck, *We Are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011); David Welch, *Germany and Propaganda in World War I: Pacifism, Mobilization and Total War* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2014); Troy R.E. Paddock (ed.), *World War I and Propaganda* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg/Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf 'An die Kulturwelt': Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt a. M. 2013); Alexander Will, *Kein Griff nach der Weltmacht Geheime Dienste und Propaganda im deutsch-österreichisch-türkischen Bündnis 1914-1918* (Cologne, 2012); and Anne Schmidt, *Belebrung – Propaganda - Vertrauensarbeit: Zum Wandel amtlicher Kommunikationspolitik in Deutschland 1914-1918* (Essen, 2006).

avoided at all costs,” was the inevitable and unavoidable strategic nature of nuclear weapons fully recognized. As a result, NATO began urging member-states to modernize and expand their forces to meet the Soviet threat conventionally. The process of force development played a large part in bringing about this change and how this happened is one of the major themes in *In Peace Prepared*.

Godefroy’s book, in tracing this Cold War history of force development in Canada (specifically Canada’s Army), provides a detailed and unique contribution not just to the existing body of Cold War history (as he ably points out in his first chapter), but also to the broader discussions of civil-military relations in Canada which no doubt will resonate elsewhere, too. Indeed, his discussion on the tension between political expediency and military necessity that seemed to hamper force development during the 1950s and 1960s is not unique to that period. His story of the ill-fated Bobcat armored personnel carrier as well as his discussion on the unification of the armed forces in Canada (the removal of individual elemental identities and the formation of one Canadian Forces) are two examples of a long history of this tension. Particularly in the Canadian context, examinations of Canada’s decades-long efforts to replace its aging maritime helicopters or the recent cancellation of the close-combat vehicle are modern examples of this same tension at play.

What is interesting to note, and not mentioned in Godefroy’s book, is that this tension is unavoidable as political and military interests—especially in peacetime—will often diverge. This recognition, while unpleasant, does help explain a key challenge to force development not just in Canada’s military but in others as well. A rigorous, overt, and replicable force development process—the history of which Godefroy cleanly and clearly presents in his book—is still simply a tool with which to make a recommendation for a decision. This decision is not made by those in uniform, rather it is made by elected officials, and it is here where the divergent interests lie. When the political and military interests align, the process is clear and worthwhile, however, when these interests diverge, political interest will win the day and the military will make do. Godefroy’s book shows this clearly with his discussion on the creation of Mobile Command in the 1960s—effectively an organization that needed to find a role for itself after it was created.

*In Peace Prepared* is a great read. It is clean and jargon-free and written by that rare combination of a soldier (Godefroy is a serving officer in Canada’s Army) and a scholar (he holds a doctorate in War Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada). Although a clear contribution to early Cold War history, this book is also a valuable insight into the civil-military relations of the time and reveals that although the context may have changed, the challenges facing militaries as they think, prepare, and fight perhaps has not.



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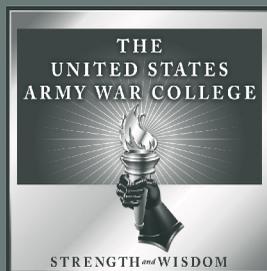
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