

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 4 | FALL 2021

*in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

9/11: Past and Present



Stephen Blank on the International Order | **Walid Phares** on Threats from Jihadists | **Simon Henderson** on Saudi Arabia | **Harold Rhode** on Central Asia | **Steven Pomerantz** on U.S.-Israel Police Cooperation | **J. Michael Waller** on U.S. Security Strategy | **Lisa Schiffren** on Pakistan | **Shoshana Bryen** the Arab Spring's Aftermath | **Thomas Joscelyn** on The Long Afghan War | **Shoshana Bryen** reviews *Dictatorships and Double Standards*

Featuring an Interview with Mike Pompeo

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Sometimes you think you know where you're going; then life happens. Organizing this issue of *inFOCUS* Quarterly as a "9/11 + 20 Years" contribution to strategic thinking, we met the reality of August. Whether you wanted to stay in Afghanistan or believed we should leave, the Biden administration's hasty, ill-conceived pullout remains an ongoing and deadly disaster at many levels.

inFOCUS has shifted gears to look at the road ahead. It is rocky, and without doubt, if American leadership does not emerge with clear goals and commitments to friends, allies, and freedom of the seas, more 9-11s may emerge.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's concise encapsulation of America's strengths and weaknesses, friends and adversaries, is a "must read."

Stephen Blank and Harold Rhode assess great power moves, and Lisa Schiffren explains Pakistan. J. Michael Waller and Walid Phares assess America's response to 9-11, the policies and wars that followed, and what is likely to happen as America pulls back. More than twenty years of Saudi policy – and the American response

– is the purview of Simon Henderson. Shoshana Bryen addresses the failures of the Arab Spring that ultimately led to the Abraham Accords.

There hasn't been a major terrorist attack on the United States since 9-11, although there have been attempts. One reason, explains Steve Pomerantz, is U.S.-Israel homeland security cooperation. Intelligence, coordination, and cooperation from the local to the national level has improved security for Americans across the country.



inFOCUS Editor

Shoshana Bryen reviews Jeane J. Kirkpatrick's 1982 *Dictatorships & Double Standards*. Kirkpatrick's prescience will astound and frighten you.

If you appreciate what you've read, I encourage you to make a contribution to the Jewish Policy Center. As always, you can use our secure site: <http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/donate>

Sincerely,



Matthew Brooks,
Publisher

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The Present Anarchy

by **STEPHEN BLANK**

Today, the concept of a legitimate international order is under serious and constant attack from many quarters. Merely to recount these attacks gives readers a sense of the unrelenting assaults upon the very idea. The invasion and annexation of Crimea and the Donbas; poisonings and assassinations of Russian dissidents and ex-secret agents, as well as innocent foreign citizens abroad; global cyber campaigns against American and European elections, critical infrastructure, and governments. China's genocide in Xinjiang; encroachments on Japan and the littoral states of the South and East China Seas; suppression of democracy and violation of its treaty with the UK in Hong Kong. Civil wars, terrorist insurgencies, and failed states in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Ethiopia and in numerous Central African states. And autocratic dictatorships that bring countries to their knees as in Venezuela and Nicaragua. It is nowhere near a complete list of these attacks. Belarus recently forcibly intercepted a regular Lithuanian commercial flight, forced it down, kidnapped a dissident it wanted, and imprisoned him.

In all these cases we observe, as did the great dissident author, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the direct connection between state-sponsored mendacity and violence. Hence, the war on truth is now a constant feature of daily politics in America and across the globe. The common denominator in these phenomena, especially those conducted by states like Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran – which still proclaims its intention to destroy the state of Israel – is the aspiration to total power at home and foreign dominion for its own sake. These authoritarian states all feel themselves under

siege from without because of their own self-perceived lack of domestic legitimacy. Therefore, they respond by constantly intermingling violence and lies with increasing domestic repression, veering back toward the totalitarian model and archaic ideologies that merely mask the will to power. Whether that ideology is Shiite Islam, Juiche in North Korea, Beijing's cult of Maoism and the party, or a contemporary mélange of Nicolas I's Official Nationality and late Stalinism in Russia, the outcome is the same, namely, a ruling elite determined to hold power unmoored from any other values.

■ *Nihilism is not a Basis for Order*

But, as philosophers have long understood, unchecked power ruling for its own sake amounts to nihilism and can hardly serve as a basis for order let alone a legitimate international order. At least some observers of states like Russia and China have grasped this threat. Already in 2016-17, an Asian Survey analysis of

relations. Similarly, a Russian journalist, Alexander Skobov, notes that Putin is not aiming merely at subordinating Ukraine to himself and Russia but in forcing the West to recognize and acknowledge his right and power to do so, a recognition that would destroy the rule of order in the international system as such.

At the same time, as President Xi Jinping's and the government's recent statements indicate, China is equally truculent and aggressive.

The recourse to force, especially nuclear weapons, and the threat thereof is equally common. This is not merely a matter of North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs, menacing as those may be. China has just been revealed by American analyst Peter Huessy to be building 145 nuclear silos, presumably to hold several hundred new nuclear weapons intended to put U.S.-based ICBMs at risk. Russia too has produced or is producing 20-23 new nuclear weapons, including countervalue and counterforce weapons that are tailored for all con-

... unchecked power ruling for its own sake amounts to nihilism and can hardly serve as a basis for order let alone a legitimate international order.

Russian foreign policy understood that "Putin has decided that his best tactic is to disrupt and reconfigure the international system rather than to rebuild it." More recently, Putin's press secretary, Dmitri Peskov, was reported in Tass to have admitted Putin's initiatives aim at overhauling the system of international

ceivable contingencies including short-range, intermediate range, and long-range strike. This program is part of a larger strategy of huge nuclear buildups.

Nuclear weapons remain the priority item for Russian procurement.

In December 2017, Bill Gertz reported, "Russia is aggressively building

up its nuclear forces and is expected to deploy a total force of 8,000 warheads by 2026...according to Pentagon officials. The 8,000 warheads will include both large strategic warheads and thousands of new, low-yield and very low-yield warheads to circumvent arms treaty limits and support Moscow's new doctrine of using nuclear arms early in any conflict." In August 2019, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Matters Rear Admiral (ret.) Peter Fanta stated, "The Russians are going to 8,000 plus warheads."

■ **Expanding Military Expenditures**

Moreover, this huge increase in defense spending, absent any economic reform, imposes an immense burden on an already stagnating economy that has been gravely afflicted by the current pandemic. The size of this spending also dwarfs previously misguided estimates as the British scholar Richard Connolly revealed in 2019:

While market exchange rate-based measures suggest that Russian military expenditure was \$61 billion in 2018, a purchasing power parity (PPP)-based estimate suggests expenditure was \$159 billion in the same year. Second, PPP-based estimates show that the rate of growth of Russian military expenditure was slower than that suggested by market exchange rate-based estimates. Market exchange rate-based estimates indicate that annual military expenditure grew by 125 percent between 2005 and 2018, but the PPP-based estimate reveals growth to have been closer to 90 percent. Third, the rate of growth in military expenditure since 2005 was also lower than in other "emerging" powers, such as China and India. This is partially because Russia started from a higher base, but it also reflects the fact that China, India, Saudi Arabia, and many other non-Western

powers have been engaged in a robust expansion of military spending. Fourth, after adjusting PPP-based estimates of total military expenditure for imported military equipment, Russia has held a steady position as the world's fourth largest military spender, behind the United States, China, and India.

Not surprisingly all these states believe themselves to be in a war with the U.S. in which the use of cyber, influence, information, and other allegedly non-military but actually quite dangerous actions proliferate. Russia is the most overt example of this but any serious inquiry into North Korean, Chinese, and Iranian policymaking will reveal a similar mentality. In Russia's case, Vladimir Putin has been at war with the U.S. and the West for over a decade. The nuclear

are threatened from without by an explicitly designated American enemy and is intent on mobilizing the country around the value system of nineteenth century conservatism. As the British analyst Mark Galeotti observed, this is a paranoid's charter.

■ **The Maritime Challenge**

While these states simultaneously challenge the U.S., its allies, and the very concept of international order, globally and in multiple domains, the extent to which they learn from and emulate each other has not been fully grasped. However, the maritime domain and freedom of the seas, an increasingly vital issue, illustrates this process.

Russia's provocation against a British warship conducting a perfectly legal freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) in the Black Sea on June 23,

Vladimir Putin has been at war with the U.S. and the West for over a decade.

weapons revival started already in 2004 – if not earlier. In January 2005, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the Academy of Military Sciences: "Let us face it, there is a war against Russia under way, and it has been going on for quite a few years. No one declared war on us. There is not one country that would be in a state of war with Russia. But there are people and organizations in various countries that take part in hostilities against the Russian Federation."

More recently, Dmitri Trenin, Director of the Moscow office of the Carnegie Endowment, observed that, for some time, "the Kremlin has been de facto operating in a war mode." Likewise, the July 2021 Russian national security strategy portrays an embattled Russia whose values and moral essence

2021, represented another Russian attempt to close the Black Sea and force everyone to recognize, *pace* Skobov, its rights there. The U.S. has also conducted many FONOPs in the South China Sea against China's long-running encroachments there. But what must be understood is that these seemingly unrelated incidents are precedent and emulation-setting actions by these and other governments.

Thus, Turkey in 2019 forcibly placed its ships in Cyprus's economic exclusion zone and started exploring for oil and/or gas to thwart Cypriot and other states' plans to explore in those waters and extract the gas and oil they have already found for purposes of marketing them abroad. Iran repeatedly threatens to close the Straits of Hormuz and China



Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden at a bilateral summit in Geneva in June 2021. (Photo: Kremlin.ru)

regularly threatens Japanese shipping in the East China Sea – apart from its encroachments in the South China Sea. Upon the UN awarding to Russia the Sea of Okhotsk in 2014, Moscow promptly closed it to foreign shipping to create a precedent for the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic (NSR). Moscow clearly wants to repeat this tactic should the UN grant its extravagant claims to the waters of the Arctic Ocean beyond its economic exclusion zone and charge tariffs upon any international shipping there. Paradoxically China publicly opposes this Russian plan even though it mirrors what China aims for in the South China Sea.

All these states are emulating each other and the success of these gambits in undermining freedom of the sea and UN-sponsored resolutions and treaties is extremely dangerous.

If the existence of historic title, either in principle or in specific application, becomes a contentious issue for international politics, we may expect the

formation of communities of interest among like-minded states to take shape as coordinated policy or operations. These juxtaposed communities of interest might tenaciously bind claimants to the Arctic and China, their counterpart in the South China Sea. The United States, EU, Japan, South Korea, and India are likely to oppose this grouping, given that history has been legally upended, and the scope of navigational freedoms curtailed. In this way, the South China Sea Arbitration may have potentially reconfigured international relations with respect to maritime law and policy.

■ Conclusion

The recent FONOP in the Black Sea, Russia's national security doctrine, China's "wolf warrior" diplomacy and truculent party line, its genocide in Xinjiang and repression of Hong Kong, and the attacks on America's and other countries' critical infrastructure show

that the attacks on the principle of international law, order, and legitimacy continue uninterrupted. They will continue until they encounter forms of resistance that impose disproportionate costs upon these malefactors. Under the circumstances, the rhetoric in Europe and here about mutual interests with these states, whether about climate change or other issues, is simply not credible. If China, Russia, Iran, or North Korea truly want a rapprochement with the U.S., they need to undertake tangible actions beyond saying so. Ultimately, countries founded on the nexus joining mendacity, autocracy, and violence behave like international criminals and often, e.g. in Russia's case, the state resembles a criminal syndicate.

Like it or not, in international affairs as elsewhere, defunding and denuding the police only invites more crime, not peace.

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Two Jihadi Threats: How U.S. Policy Failed to Stop Them

by WALID PHARES

The eight years of the Obama administration and the less than a year of the Biden White House have clearly shown that U.S. national security and the larger international security structure of the free world have gone into decline because of a strategic double miss. Between 2009 and 2021, even to a certain degree under Trump bureaucrats, the United States failed to contain and reverse the two most direct threats against America, its allies, and the population of the Middle East, namely the Iranian regime on the one hand and the Islamist network on the other hand.

For over thirty years, since the end of the Cold War and the fading of the Soviet menace, two well-organized, well-funded, and strategically determined forces – originally emerging from the Greater Middle East – have challenged Washington, resisted it, maneuvered it, disoriented it and, despite constant American military superiority in the battlefield, and though not great nor superpowers themselves, have constantly eluded American containment. The two hostile powers have been able – with strategic patience and effective lobbying – to defeat the most powerful democracy on earth.

But the most sensational of these two terror achievements was the reality that both networks have succeeded, despite ground setbacks, to use the soft power of U.S. democracy to score political victories slice by slice despite the “lightyear” advances of the country of Uncle Sam. It was, in fact, Americans who made it possible for the two forces

to eventually win the three-decade-long contest. It was lobbying in Washington and influence in the American classroom that interdicted American wins against the two networks. Mighty American efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Gulf, and even vis a vis Iran itself, were undermined by mollification of U.S. national decision-making to complete the campaigns politically, diplomatically, and psychologically.

■ *Cold War Understanding*

During the cold war, a firm American determination to confront the

Baltic republics – and eventually even the tired Russian society – to reject the legacy of Bolshevism, Stalinism, and the Soviet police state and force *glasnost* and *perestroika* on Moscow. The Soviet Communist Party collapsed, and the world changed in 1991.

But as soon as one global threat collapsed, the next threat immediately emerged, forcefully and devastatingly. The Iran regime and the global Jihadists – with their wide panoply of movements, regimes, networked organizations, and even lone wolves – struggled for twenty years to weaken, wound, and

[In the Cold War]...it was American determination and unwavering discourse that unleashed the moral and psychological powers of the oppressed populations...

Soviet Union and strong messaging for decades reassured the peoples behind the Iron Curtain that there was a Free World waiting for them and committed to their liberties. These were the pillars with which the U.S. won the contest against the Soviet bloc. The U.S. deployed its best resources worldwide to contain the Red Empire, but it was American determination and unwavering discourse that unleashed the moral and psychological powers of the oppressed populations in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia to rise and encourage the peoples of Romania, East Germany, Bulgaria, the

eventually topple American power not only in the greater Middle East, but also in its homeland.

■ *Attacks Against America*

Hence, from a geopolitical perspective and via national security and foreign policy lenses, fundamental questions must now be asked after the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. We have had benchmark after benchmark changed the story of the war on terror: From the first attack on New York in 1993, to the double attack on our embassies in East Africa in 1998, to the



U.S. President Reagan meeting with Afghan mujahideen at the White House in 1983. (Photo: Reagan Presidential Library)

USS Cole attack in 2000 in Aden, to the close to 50 Jihadi attacks on U.S. soil before the 2001 culmination; from the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to multiple counterterrorism operations in the region and worldwide, to the war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. And then there was the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover. In the parallel jihadi realm, however, even more questions remain unanswered, from the U.S. confrontation with Iran and its militias in the Middle East (from Iraq to Syria, Lebanon, Yemen).

Over the two last decades, the two battlefields may have had major differences in appearance, but both also had a common trait: The United States won every military contest against the enemy, yet in the end lost the political contest to both. This year's tragic withdrawal from Afghanistan and the American return to the Iran deal are just two major illustrations of why and how Washington lost these conflicts.

■ *The Conflict with the Jihadists*

The strikes of 9/11 were not the beginning of a war but a bloody signature by the Jihadists that they were open and unrepenting about a war they have been waging against the power they deemed the most dangerous to their very old project: the reestablishment of a fighting Caliphate across the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed, al-Qaeda and its later offshoots, such as ISIS, were themselves born out of multi-layered Islamist ideologies and movements harkening back to, at least, the early 20th century. The global Salafists who surfaced in Arab, Middle Eastern, and Asian politics after the collapse of the Ottoman empire (the last official Caliphate after WWI) vehemently called for the return of the “empire.” They cannot see a world without a Khilafa, and they reject the norms and essence of international law as the highest set of legal authority in the world. Among their ideological families were the Egypt-born

Muslim Brotherhood which rose in the mid-1920s. The Ikhwan movement was urban, disciplined, and ideologically intense. Though the goal is the rise of a Caliphate, the strategies can be very malleable, adopting all tactics and camouflage needed to seize power within countries – or controlling the ground to control governments.

The “Islamists,” the political root of the “Jihadists,” have operated in two forms. One is political, such as the tactics of the Ikhwan in the Middle East and the Deobandis in south Asia. The other is military, or terrorist, and operates under al-Qaeda and the various Salafi combat groups.

During the Cold War, the larger web of Islamists-Jihadists considered the Soviet Union and the Communists to be the highest priority for elimination. They accepted an interim partnership with the United States across the region and in Afghanistan. The Muslim Brotherhood, Salafists, and Jihadists even cooperated with Washington,

seen as the lesser “Kafir” (infidel) danger. With the collapse of the USSR, at the Khartoum conference of 1991-1992, the Islamist web split in two. One bloc aimed to seize Arab Muslim governments while the other chose to hit U.S. targets directly, starting with the 1993 New York terror act, the East Africa embassy bombings, the USS Cole attack,

movement – just as the first fundamentalist Jihadi regime was established by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The second declaration of war in 1998 was in the form of a public announcement by bin Laden aired by al Jazeera, based in Qatar. In that declaration, Osama bin Laden threatened direct attacks on American soil if the United

school curriculum.

One failure of American efforts was the refusal by the Obama bureaucracies (due to Muslim Brotherhood lobbying) to unleash an ideological response in society, thus prolonging the war. The Trump administration’s short term did not allow such a war of ideas to be successful despite constant military domination of the enemy.

The U.S. campaign in Iraq against al-Qaeda and its ilk, since 2003, was also militarily successful, but as in Afghanistan, the outreach to the Sunni community failed because of the lack of counter-Jihadi educational strategies under the Obama administration. Then add the withdrawal in 2011 that transferred power to pro-Iran militias and eventually reopened the country to an ISIS blitz in 2014. American military efforts under Obama to contain ISIS, and the greater efforts under Trump starting in 2017, eventually crumbled Daesh. But again, intense lobbying by Iran and the Ikhwan limited U.S. action to tactical operations against the Jihadists.

One failure of American efforts was the refusal by the Obama bureaucracies (due to Muslim Brotherhood lobbying) to unleash an ideological response...

and then the 9/11 al-Qaeda massacre of thousands of citizens and visitors in New York, DC, and Pennsylvania.

During the two decades of the American “War on Terror,” the Islamist-Jihadi cartels widened their operations and campaigns against the United States and its allies. During the 2000s, the Jihadists multiplied their terror acts on U.S. soil and against Western countries and other allies. In 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to seize multiple countries during the so-called “Arab Spring,” opening spaces for Jihadi activities in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. In 2014, ISIS (an offshoot of al-Qaeda) grabbed large swaths of Iraq and Syria, prompting a US military return to the region.

■ *Declarations of War*

The international Jihadist movement, represented since the early 1990s by al-Qaeda, had issued two declarations of war against the United States. The first in 1996 was issued by Osama Bin Laden after the Taliban takeover of Kabul. In it, AQ announced it was waging war “against the infidels, the United States and the Jews.” For the first time, America was openly and clearly named an enemy by the global Jihadist

State did not withdraw its troops “from Muslim lands.”

Both declarations were ignored by the Clinton administration. It was only after 9/11 that the U.S. responded when President Bush announced an American led war on terror in Congress on October 7.

■ *Afghanistan and Iraq*

The American liberation of Afghanistan from the Taliban and the dismantling of al-Qaeda in the fall of 2001 opened a long phase of occupation which, beyond the removal of the Taliban from power, aimed at empowering the Afghan people, army, and government to confront and contain the Jihadists. It took two decades for such construction of the state to produce a fledgling yet still operational Afghan democracy despite corruption and slow advances. Strategically, multiple administrations committed to helping rebuild an Afghanistan that would be part of the anti-Jihadi alliance. One of the major solutions for helping societies threatened by Jihadist terror was to deradicalize the sectors of the population that might be indoctrinated by the Islamists and thus allow for a survival of the Jihadist movements. The core of such a process is the

■ *The Conflict with Iran*

The direct confrontation between the United States and the Iran regime is older than the clash with the Jihadists. Going back to the “Islamic revolution” takeover of Iran in 1979, the U.S. embassy hostage crisis, and the subsequent Hezbollah hostage situations in Lebanon during the 1980s, Tehran’s ruling establishment has been very clear in framing America as a “major devil” that needs to be decisively defeated and removed from the region. Its ideologues defined the United States as “evil in its essence,” hence elevating the conflict to an irreversible ideological battle.

During the 1990s, Washington responded with several measures but excluded efforts at removing the Khomeinists from power.

Iran linked with Syria’s Bashar Assad and helped Hezbollah control Lebanon and mass across the border from Israel. After the 2003 U.S.

invasion of Iraq, Iran and Assad waged a sustained terror campaign against U.S. forces until the Obama administration decided to pull out of Iraq, allowing Iran-backed militias to seize the country. That in turn provoked an ISIS war in Iraq and Syria, leading to a U.S. return to Iraq and a presence in East Syria.

During these clashes, under the Obama White House, discussions with Iranian assets were pursued in the hope of a possible partnership with Tehran. The regime took advantage of U.S. rap-

With the election of Joe Biden as President, U.S. policy in the Middle East changed again. The new administration readopted the Obama policy and suspended the policies of the Trump White House. The Biden team rejoined the JCPOA negotiations in Vienna, removed some sanctions, and delisted the Houthis as a terror group in Yemen. But this concession failed to moderate Tehran, which simply insisted on greater U.S. concessions. The return to the deal frustrated Israel and our Arab allies as

the region, the Gulf, Israel, Europe, and the United States.

■ *U.S. Posture in the Region*

Washington has changed its strategic policies toward the two threats three times in the last 20 years. The Obama team changed posture from the Bush administration by engaging the Iran regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. The Trump administration ended the Iran Deal and the ISIS Caliphate. The Biden administration is back to the Iran Deal and has implemented a Taliban deal. The Bush “Coalition of the Willing” crushed the terror forces in two countries. The Obama partnership with the Islamists and the Khomeinists facilitated the rise of an axis of Islamists. Trump reversed direction but was deprived of a second term to consolidate. And Biden is rushing back to the Obama agendas. U.S. posture in the region is now shaky because of these dizzying U-turns.

Two significant achievements are at great risk. One is the historic anti-terrorist Arab Coalition assembled in Riyadh in May 2017, now deeply challenged by the two American deals with Iran and the Islamists. Second is the historic Abraham Accords that brought more Arab countries to the Peace Process with Israel but is now equally threatened by an invigorated Iran and a Taliban on steroids.

■ *Strategic Conclusion*

If the Biden administration maintains its direction in favor of the Iran Deal, it will run the risk of witnessing a major confrontation in the region between Iran and U.S. allies. And if it commits to the Taliban deal, it would be providing a sanctuary in Afghanistan for global Jihadi organizations that would in turn threaten the region, NATO countries, and eventually, again, the U.S. homeland.

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...the Biden team agreed on an Obama approach: to allow the Taliban to seize power and negotiate relations with them after.

prochement with the Ayatollahs to expand all azimuths in the region. Seizing on the several civil wars as of 2011, Iran unleashed its militias in Iraq and Syria, backed Hezbollah’s control of Lebanon, and supported the Houthis in Yemen, practically encircling Israel and the Gulf States.

■ *The Iran Deal*

The Obama administration negotiated the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA, or “the Iran Deal”], an agreement fully to the advantage of the regime, costing Washington its special relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. The deal de facto recognized Tehran’s domination of four Arab countries and provided financial relief. It was a strategic mistake in American foreign policy that lasted from its signing in 2014 until 2019 when the Trump administration canceled the agreement and put pressure on the Iranian militias in the region. That in turn encouraged civil societies in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon to revolt against the Iranian diktat in the region throughout the fall of 2019. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic of 2020 put an end to the revolutions.

well as the Iranian opposition. A full return to the deal will not only empower the Iranian regime but also further minimize the chances for democratic uprisings in the region.

■ *The Taliban Deal*

President Obama called for an historic deal between the U.S. and the Islamists in his speech in Cairo in 2009, and that became the genesis of various partnerships between his administration and the Muslim Brotherhood across the region. Early talks with the Taliban based in Qatar were the foundation of what became the Taliban Deal, a parallel to the Iran Deal. The Trump bureaucracy negotiated with the Taliban a deal that would see a disarming of the militia and a national unity government, which was unlikely because of the unwillingness of the Jihadists to demilitarize. But the Biden team agreed on an Obama approach: to allow the Taliban to seize power and negotiate relations with them after. The exit from Afghanistan, like the exit from Iraq, brought a radical Jihadi regime to power in Kabul – a direct threat to the Afghan population,

Saudi Arabia: What Has Changed, What Hasn't

by **SIMON HENDERSON**

What a difference 20 years makes. Or does it? Saudi Arabia seems by most counts to be the leading contender for most changed country in the Middle East, but one crucial factor has not altered. The kingdom retains an air of mystery, which can confound even the most experienced experts. What has really changed?

In the weeks after the 9/11 attacks, newly arrived American ambassador Robert Jordan went to see the Governor of Riyadh Province, Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. Jordan later told Fareed Zakaria on CNN that the prince said: "This had to be an Israeli plot. The Mossad must have done this." Jordan got the same response from the hardline Interior Minister Prince Nayef, Salman's full brother, which was more than just outrageous. According to a briefing I received, Nayef, along with another brother, Defense Minister Prince Sultan, had been paying off Osama bin Laden so the al-Qaeda leader would direct his energies to targets outside the kingdom.

Nayef and Sultan are dead, but Salman is now king and the ultimate authority in the kingdom, although, de facto, Saudi Arabia is run by his favorite son, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, known as MbS, who, at 36, is one of the youngest rulers in the world. Quite where the line between their roles is drawn is subject to debate. The kingdom has not joined the now year-old Abraham Accords between Israel and the Gulf states of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, but Riyadh clearly approved of the diplomatic breakthroughs. After all, there are now direct daily flights through Saudi airspace between Tel Aviv and

both Bahrain and the UAE. But a fiction blurs the achievement: the flights detour through Jordanian airspace, lending ambiguity to the meaning of "direct."

Is Salman, now 85 and ailing, aware of all this? It is not clear. But he is certainly the brake on more formal ties, apparently because Palestine remains

activity is a decline in influence of the religious leadership, which seems to have accepted a downgrading of its status and influence, even though the king retains the formal title of "Guardian of the Two Holy Places," meaning Mecca and Medina.

But despite an energetic public

...the idea of Vision 2030 is to transition the kingdom away from oil and into a non-hydrocarbon future. But to fund that investment in future technologies, the kingdom needs its oil revenues as much as ever.

an important issue to him, and, in particular, Muslim control of Jerusalem. Under Benjamin Netanyahu, it seemed as though there was momentum towards a breakthrough, but this has slowed, if not halted. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has too many other issues on his plate perhaps. However, the intelligence and security cooperation, which has expanded in recent years because of shared concerns of Iran, no doubt continues. There is also a growing amount of trade, although no Saudi has yet spotted a "Made in Israel" label in their local supermarket.

■ *The Role of MbS*

It is clear that Saudi Arabia has been transformed in the last 20 years, particularly under the influence of MbS who only emerged as a significant player in 2015 when his father became king, and he was appointed defense minister. MbS is the architect of Vision 2030, an ambitious plan to transform the country, both socially and economically. A parallel

relations campaign, MbS's activities have also had a reputational cost, in particular the murder and dismemberment of the dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate-general in Istanbul in 2018. The incarceration and financial shakedown of several hundred prominent Saudi businessmen and princes in the Riyadh Ritz-Carlton in 2017 has been – and, to an extent, still is – a red flag to some foreign investors. The transformation is certainly not towards any form of democracy. The kingdom remains an autocracy. The expansion of civil rights is a gift from the ruler rather than any response to pressure. Women activists who campaigned for the right to drive ended up in prison.

So, a school report on Saudi Arabia in the last 20 years could contain the following notes.

■ *Relations with the United States*

Considering that 15 of the 19 9/11

hijackers were Saudi, relations between the governments in Washington and Riyadh weathered the initial crisis well. There appeared to be a view in Washington that, because of oil, it was vital to maintain a working relationship. Perhaps like many, our leaders were incredulous that the Saudi leadership might allow, even perhaps encourage, such an outrage. By contrast, public attitudes have been more cautious. Memories of the 9/11 attacks remain vivid for many and there is huge skepticism of Saudi denials of government involvement or knowledge. The 9/11 civil law case against the kingdom, a legal breakthrough overwhelmingly supported by Congress, proceeds slowly. Whether it produces compensation for victims or their relatives is yet to become clear. Even if the case is won, the willingness of Riyadh to pay out on a settlement is doubtful. Khashoggi is another challenge. The Biden White House is keeping MbS at a distance, letting the relationship be handled by MbS's notional counterpart, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

■ **Oil Policy**

Ironically, the idea of Vision 2030 is to transition the kingdom away from oil and into a non-hydrocarbon future. But to fund that investment in future technologies, the kingdom needs its oil revenues as much as ever. Hence continuing relatively high Saudi production and its push for maximum prices. This September, Riyadh led OPEC and other non-OPEC suppliers in restraining output, a decision designed to squeeze price increases. Even so, oil revenues are not enough to balance the Saudi budget. Saudi officials privately admit that "Vision 2040" may prove to be a better label but for the present, the fiction continues. A new twist, picking up public concern about the climate, has energized copy writers in Saudi Arabia spinning the optimism of MbS's line. A *Financial Times* story in August provided a more skeptical and probably more accurate take. "Saudi Arabia's grandiose climate

plans struggle to take off" read the headline, with the sub-head "Skeptics question whether kingdom's pledge to lead 'next green era' will be matched by tangible action." Not much of a progress report for the "green initiative" announced in March 2021 by MbS. He had promised that 50 percent of power generation would be via renewables by 2030, with the rest coming via natural gas (rather than oil). He also said the kingdom would plant 10 billion trees in the next decades.

Afghanistan has thrown all the previous assumptions up in the air... the degree of support which a Gulf country can expect from Washington is being questioned.

■ **Leadership of the Islamic World**

Along with its status in the Middle East and its reputation as the largest exporter of oil, the kingdom has cherished the fact that its territory includes the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, the two principal pilgrim destinations for Muslims. Of the three, the religious role is said to be the most important to most Saudis, at least in the past. The COVID era has led to drastic cutbacks in the number of pilgrims allowed, but the authorities take pride in the smoothness of the arrangements they have had to introduce. Those details are handled by the ulema, the clerical leadership, who were 20 years ago essentially partners, albeit junior ones, in coalition with the House of Saud governing the kingdom. But that has changed; their power is much diminished, as is the power of the wider House of Saud. Essentially, the kingdom is ruled by the King Salman/MbS duopoly, with a significant junior role being played by deputy defense minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, aka Kbs, a younger brother of the crown prince.

■ **Domestic Social Policy**

Foreign visitors to Riyadh are sometimes almost ecstatic about the relaxation of previous mores that they observe. Some women continue to wear hijab but some wear western garb. Unrelated members of the sexes mingle in coffee shops. The once-feared religious police are nowhere to be seen. Because women now drive, if you order the local equivalent of an Uber, the driver may well be a woman. But that's in Riyadh and other major cities where at least the upper middle class

and their offspring are fully "wired," even westernized. What is happening in smaller, more traditional, provincial towns? The reporting is sketchier.

■ **Domestic Economic Policy**

The transformation of the Saudi economy is a work in progress. There is still reliance on a huge foreign labor force although there are regular reports of illegal workers being arrested and deported. Saudi domestic reporting on the changes seems to be full of "happy talk." Young people want jobs and relish the opportunity to go and find them. The reality is probably more nuanced. Prices are increasing, subsidies are being reduced. People need jobs in order to maintain their less than royal standard of living. Saudi per capita income has always been among the lowest of the Gulf Cooperation Council member states. Perhaps worryingly, the clearest evidence of economic transformation are the plans to build Neom, the \$500 billion futuristic city, a high-tech hub, in the north-west of the kingdom, abutting the Red Sea coast. Currently little more than an airport and new palaces for the king, MbS, and a few other royals, the project



Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, skyline at night. (Photo: Hany Musallam)

invites incredulity because of its ambition and the apparent belief that people would actually want to live and work there.

■ *Relations with Israel*

The late King Abdullah reportedly told a U.S. president that Saudi Arabia will be the last Arab state to recognize Israel. The latest spin on this is that the kingdom will not be the last to do so. Intelligence liaison has existed for years, dating back even before 1977 when the long-serving intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal began his term of office. More recently, the British used to facilitate long dinners for both sides at a London hotel. Trade has been a fundamental element in the relationship. Security has been a growing dimension. The reported provision of Israeli spyware, used reportedly to monitor associates of Jamal Khashoggi, has combined both elements. But the relationship has yet to be consummated. King Salman is judged to be the obstacle. The idea that Israel should bequeath some of Jordan's current rights in Jerusalem is often suggested as the bait MbS wants, even though it could have a possibly devastating effect on Jordan, domestically and regionally.

■ *Regional Relations*

A year ago, when the Abraham Accords were signed between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain, the dividing lines in the region seemed clear. The “moderate” countries were listed as being the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel. They were up against Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood. Turkey and Qatar did not deserve the moderate label but were also not quite in the camp of Iran and the MB. But in January, to the apparent irritation of the UAE and Bahrain, MbS led a reconciliation with Qatar, which had been ostracized for nearly four years. And with the new incumbent in the White House, it slowly dawned on the Gulf states that the degree of support they could expect from the U.S. was likely to be less than under President Trump. In the last couple of months, Saudi Arabia has been reaching out to both Iran and Turkey. There have even been contacts between the UAE and Qatar.

Afghanistan has thrown all the previous assumptions up in the air. Once again, the degree of support a Gulf country can expect from Washington is being

questioned. In the last few months of the Trump administration, there were dozens of high-level visits to, for example, Bahrain. Under Biden, there have been, at least until the end of August, none. And Saudi Arabia has seemingly abandoned its traditional role as leader of the Gulf states, effectively allowing little Qatar to take the most credit for tricky diplomacy with the Taliban and temporarily hosting evacuees. Riyadh has been “missing in action,” offering zero explanation for not handling a single evacuation flight. Was MbS waiting to be asked, as one former senior Saudi official suggested to me? Or did Riyadh want to just keep its distance from the whole mess?

If it is the latter, this suggests that the kingdom is more nervous about its standing in the region and the Islamic world than its advances of the last six-plus years may have implied. Perhaps progress, however defined, is not linear but retains at least some circular aspects.

SIMON HENDERSON is Baker Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy and director, Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy.

Is Central Asia Up for Grabs?

by HAROLD RHODE

Are China, Russia, and Turkey locked in a battle for control over Central Asia, historic Turkestan? Are there prospects for one – or any combination of two against the other – to win? How much should this matter to the United States and the West?

Historically, Central Asia formed one cultural unit, but wrote in two languages: Cagatay, also known as Turki, a Turkic language closely related to the Turkish of Turkey; and Farsi, today called Tajik or Dari, almost 100 percent intelligible to Persian-speakers.

The two most important centers of civilization and trade were Samarkand and Bukhara in today's Uzbekistan, and Khotan and Kashgar in today's Xinjiang province of China. Both the Soviets and Chinese, in their attempt to divide and conquer the locals, created myriad so-called "national languages" based on local dialects spoken by these people. The goal was to divide people so those living in the Soviet Union would look to Moscow, while those living in China were expected to look toward Beijing.

Outwardly, those living in the Soviet Union were "linguistically Russianized" but not assimilated. There was – and still is – almost no intermarriage between the Soviet Slavic non-Muslim rulers and the Muslim Turkic-speaking and Persian/Tajik-speaking subjects. The same is even more true in China.

After World War I, Turkey's rulers abandoned the connections their Ottoman predecessors had cultivated with Central Asia and did their best to cultivate connections with Europe and the U.S. But Turkey's intellectual class

studied their long-ago Central Asian ancestors and adopted many Central Asian Turkic words – long forgotten by or unknown to their immediate Turkish Central Asian descendants – in place of Arabic or Persian words which had so thoroughly penetrated the Ottoman Turkish language.

All of this set the stage for contemporary developments, and helps put into context the policies that the Chinese, Turks, and Russians have developed for historic Turkestan.

■ Turkey

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the creation of Turkic states in Central Asia [*Ed. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan in the southern Caucasus*], the Turkish elite "rediscovered" the descendants of their Central Asian ancestors and thought they would be natural

Asia still used most of those loan words. They could not understand each other.

In 1993, Turkish President/PM Turgut Ozal took a trip to Central Asia. It seemed promising at first, but the schism was already apparent. Uzbekistan's dictator, Islam Karimov, summarized the differences when he toasted Ozal saying, "We sent you out of here with slanted eyes, and you come back with rounded eyes." I.e., we were the same but now are different.

Further complicating was the fact that the Central Turkic people had lived under dictatorial Soviet rule while Turkey by that time had experienced some form of "guided democracy" for almost 60 years. The Central Asian rulers were much more connected and familiar with their Russian overlords than with the then-alien political culture of Turkey.

In the meantime, the Turks realized that their dream of a common Turk bond

The Central Asian rulers were much more connected and familiar with their Russian overlords than with the then-alien political culture of Turkey.

allies with whom they could easily communicate. They were wrong. Even the words Turkish and Turkic – part of the 19th-century divide-and-conquer policy of Russia and the West – were irrelevant. The Turkish elites had worked hard to remove the Arabic and Persian vocabulary from Turkish, but their cousins in Central

Asia was not enough to meld Central Asia and Turkey into one cultural unit. However, there was another, much stronger, bond that united the people, if not the leaders: Islamic culture. Turkish Islamic-oriented businessmen, in the footsteps of their ancient Silk Road ancestors, began to travel throughout Central Asia and to



Anti-China protest outside White House. (Photo: Malcolm Brown)

Xinjiang. These newly formed Central Asian states and China established direct flights between Istanbul and the Central Asian states, and non-stop flights between Istanbul and Urumqi, the capital of Chinese Xinjiang.

This quiet re-Islamification project gained momentum when, in 2002, the Islamist Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took over Turkey. He and his aides worked behind the scenes to “re-Islamize” former Soviet Central Asia. Very quickly, the former Soviet Central Asian rulers understood that this could be a serious source of trouble for their regimes. Turkish educational institutions mushroomed all over, focusing on the young people, but the rulers of these republics have since done their best to blunt Turkish influence.

■ *China & The Uyghurs*

Is China an option for the Central Asians? Central Asians are deeply suspicious of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, fearing that Beijing could bear-hug them economically, and then slowly make them vassals. The memory of how the Russians treated them as colonies from the 19th century onward is deeply etched in their psyches.

In no way do they want to trade Russian domination for Chinese

domination.

These land-locked countries do see China as an economic necessity to help them connect with the outside world. The only other bridge would be via Iran. But as long as Iran is ruled by radical Islamists, Central Asian access to the outside world remains blocked. As such, both Iran and Turkey remain serious obstacles to Central Asian progress. If regime change took place in Iran, the Central Asian Republics would have another access point, empowering them to be more independent from China and Russia. But not yet.

At the same time, China seems not to have taken Turkey’s “re-Islamification” policy very seriously at first, much to its detriment. In Xinjiang, which the Uyghurs call “East Turkestan,” things worked somewhat differently than in the independent countries. The above-mentioned Turkish businessmen, encouraged by Erdoğan and his cohorts, distributed Islamic materials in Turkish inside China. The Turkish language of Turkey – which is about 60% intelligible to Uyghurs, began to be understood by more and more people. Young Uyghurs easily picked up what is, in essence, a dialect of their own language. Moreover, the Uyghurs and Uzbeks of Central Asia

– both highly settled people – also share a bond. All in all, the young Uyghurs were hungry to learn who they were and realized they had natural allies outside of China.

It took some time for the Islamic materials the Turks were distributing to create a consciousness among the Uyghurs – especially the youth – that they were members of a vast Turko-Islamic community with potential allies all over the world. That scared the Chinese, and certainly was a major factor in how the Chinese decided to handle their Uyghur-Islamic problem.

In short, both the Central Asians and Chinese have identified what Turkey has been doing behind the scenes and are doing their best – in their own ways – to thwart the Turks.

■ *A Hudna?*

But now, Erdoğan is in serious financial trouble and desperately needs China’s help, so he has exchanged silence about what China is doing to his Sunni Muslim Turkic brothers for Chinese aid. But the Chinese should have no illusions.

Erdoğan is the informal leader of the Worldwide Muslim Brotherhood, which, like other Islamist groups, models its behavior after their prophet Muhammad. When weak, Muhammad signed a truce (hudna) with his enemies and lay in wait until he was strong enough to defeat them. It is understood that Erdoğan functions behind the scenes in the former Ottoman Empire, in Israel, and throughout Europe, quietly biding his time in these places, preparing to strike against them when it becomes opportune. It is therefore hard to imagine that Erdoğan is acting any differently toward the Chinese government regarding his Muslim brothers in China. And from an Islamic point of view, anything that advances Islam is part of the jihad, and therefore Islamically acceptable. Erdoğan is copying his prophet’s behavior regarding what the Chinese are doing to his fellow Turkic Muslims.

The Chinese – along with the

Russians, Americans, and other non-Muslim powers – should be clear about Erdoğan’s goal.

■ **Russia**

Russia and Turkey have never been allies. Over the past three hundred years, Turkey has lost 13 wars with Russia. At times they have worked together when it was in their mutual interest, but they have an uneasy relationship, vying for influence in Central Asia. As described above, Turkey has focused more on a common Islamic linguistic and religious heritage. But Central Asian leaders saw Turkey’s extremist Islam as dangerous and consequently did their best to distance themselves from Turkey.

Language and script are central to identity, and the Central Asian leaders are moving toward the Latin script as part of the process of decoupling from Russia.

When the Soviets took over Central Asia, they created Latin scripts for their newly minted local languages because Turkey still used Arabic script. When Turkey then moved to Latin script, the Russians changed the Turkic language scripts to Cyrillic, again to separate them from Turkey but also to tie the area more closely to Russia. But since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Turkic Republics have gradually moved from Cyrillic back to Latin, intentionally – though slowly – to move from the Russian stranglehold on their countries and to open themselves to the outside world.

Russia might see itself as the natural hegemon in that area, but many locals feel otherwise. Although the elites prefer Russian to their local languages, younger people are much more English-language oriented, moving the Russian connection slowly into the past.

At the same time, Russia does not have the economic wherewithal to compete with China in Central Asia. So, Russia seems to be biding its time, often bullying the Central Asians but not having much incentive for them to remain close to Russia. Even Kazakstan, the country geographically closest to Russia and having a large

Russian population, is slowly decoupling. Russians and other Slavs see the handwriting on the wall and are leaving Kazakstan, mostly for Russia. And the Kazaks have begun a transition from the Cyrillic script to Latin. By 2025, Kazak will no longer be written in Cyrillic.

Even the name of the country - Kazakhstan vs. Kazakstan - is a bone

Whether Russia’s organization of military drills in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to reassure those countries of the security of their Afghan border will increase Russia’s influence in Central Asia remains to be seen.

of contention between Russians and Kazaks. Shortly after Kazakstan declared independence from the USSR, for example, that country sent a delegation to Washington to meet with American leaders. The delegation was made up of about 50% ethnic Kazaks and about the same number of ethnic Slavs – mostly Russians. At a meeting at the Pentagon, an American asked how to pronounce the name of their country – Kazakhstan (the Russian variant) or Kazakstan (the Kazak variant.) Instantly, the ethnic Kazaks smiled and clearly felt a bond with the questioner. The ethnic Slavs sat stone-faced and reacted angrily.

So, there is no love lost between the Turkic-Muslim peoples of Central Asia and Russia, which is why the Central Asians are slowly but surely looking for other options. These leaders, however, are trying to hold Turkey at arm’s length because they fear Turkey’s radical Islam even more than they do Moscow.

■ **A Word about Afghanistan**

Erdoğan also has close ties with the Taliban, which in many ways has the same mission as he does. Both want radical Islam to be the major force throughout the Muslim world.

The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan will likely make the more secular-oriented Central Asian leaders even more suspicious about Turkey because they see the new “American-enabled” Taliban radical/fanatical Islamic regime in Afghanistan, possibly allied with Turkey, as a threat to their regimes as well.

Whether Russia’s organization of military drills in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to reassure those countries of the security of their Afghan border will increase Russia’s influence in Central Asia remains to be seen.

■ **Conclusion**

Iran might be the key to true Central Asian independence. Culturally, Iran is very similar to Uzbekistan, the Central Asian country with the longest sense of civilization. Tashkent, a Soviet/Russian-cultural creation, is the capital of that country, but the true cultural capitals are the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, both of which are culturally Iranian. It was, for example, in these two cities - and not in Iran - where the Persian language was revived in the 10th century after 300 years of Arab-Islamic domination. If Iran is free, will that ancient bond be recreated? Would that liberate these countries from both Russian and Chinese domination?

We await the effects of a free Iran with great anticipation.

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U.S.-Israel Police Cooperation Post-9/11

by **STEVEN POMERANTZ**

Editor's Note: The terrorist attacks of 9/11 exposed many shortcomings in the readiness capabilities of the United States to prevent and respond to foreign-based terrorist attacks on our homeland. Prominent among these was the inability of local law enforcement to meet the challenges associated with their role in the overall effort.

Preventing a violent terrorist attack before it can be successfully launched is the gold standard, accomplished only by the collection, analysis, and timely dissemination of accurate and detailed intelligence. The post-mortem reviews of the 9/11 attacks, however, while recognizing what had been done to enlist local law enforcement in an overall counter terrorism effort, also noted how much more was needed.

Israel has long been recognized as having the most highly developed and effective counter terrorism capabilities in the free world. I use the term “free world” deliberately. China, for example, has a very effective method of dealing with terrorism within its borders. Anyone even suspected of having such intentions is subject to arrest and indefinite detention with minimal, if any, legal protections. Israel, on the other hand is a democratic country whose legal system and law enforcement apparatus operates under constraints and in an environment whose similarity to our country far outweighs the differences.

The Jewish Institute for the National Security of America (JINSA) established in 1976 has been the premier American Jewish organization devoted exclusively

to issues of American national security as well as the U.S.-Israel military relationship. Its flagship program, begun in 1982, annually brings recently retired American Generals and Admirals to Israel for meetings with leading Israeli military and civilian leaders.

Immediately following the 9/11 tragedy, a former Chief of the New York City Police Department asked if JINSA could leverage its relationships in Israel on behalf of the American law enforcement community, using what it had accomplished for the military establishments as a model.

The first delegation of the JINSA Law Enforcement Exchange Program arrived

cities whose police departments consist of a handful of officers – as well as everything in between.

Israel, with its smaller size and population and more centralized criminal justice system, avoids some of the problems associated with scale, nevertheless has had to deal with issues familiar to its American colleagues. Intelligence sharing and timely dissemination of information, unity of command, and mounting a coordinated response at the scene of an attack, as well as communications interoperability are but a few of the issues faced by both countries.

Israelis are known for both their directness and willingness to share their

The Israeli willingness to admit early mistakes, many of which mirrored some of ours, was absolutely inspirational...

in Israel in 2002. Unlike the military, our country's law enforcement community is not centralized, consisting of approximately 18,000 local, county, tribal, state, and federal organizations. Each of these are autonomous, as well as being vastly different in size, structure, resources, mission, and capabilities. They range in size from police and sheriff's departments with thousands of officers or deputies like the NYPD, the Chicago PD and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, to thousands of small towns and

experiences and knowledge honestly and forthrightly with their American colleagues. One senior Israel National Police (INP) officer told our delegation “We paid in blood for many of the lessons we learned in countering terrorism, we hope that as a result of these exchanges you won't have to repeat our experience.” The Israeli willingness to admit early mistakes, many of which mirrored some of ours, was absolutely inspirational and one of the greatest benefits of our program. The problems associated with

preventing and responding to major terrorist attacks is indeed daunting. To see how well the Israelis had done and listen to them explain how they did it proved to be more than worth the effort.

■ *The Setup*

The week-long schedule is roughly divided in half between the two major themes – prevention and response. Prevention relies on intelligence gath-

ing, analysis, and dissemination. Although in Israel, as in the U.S., much of this mission is in hands of agencies other than local law enforcement – in Israel the Israel Security Agency (ISA) often referred to as the Shin Bet or Shabbak; in the U.S. the FBI – but local police play an important role. In the U.S. for example, there are almost a million local police officers and deputies patrolling our communities, while the number of federal agents across the country is only a small fraction of that. The chances of a local officer or deputy observing something that could be consequential in exposing a potential terrorist threat is real and needs to be incorporated into law enforcement training and operational doctrine.

According to the post-incident review, was made worse by the poorly executed response, the INP was given sole responsibility for managing the response to all terrorist attacks within the borders of the country. While multiple organizations; fire, EMT, etc. will also be present at the scene to carry out their important operations, overall command is in the hands of the senior police officer on site.

This goes a long way to ensure the best possible outcomes. The frequency and lethality of terror attacks in Israel has, unfortunately, provided the Israelis with the experience necessary to develop and train in the best possible response protocols. And they are ready and willing to share what they know with their American counterparts.

As important as intelligence collection and analysis are, from a local law enforcement perspective the overriding factor is getting the information into the hands of officers as quickly as humanly possible. Knowing an attack is planned for Tuesday in a certain location will be of absolutely zero value if it reaches local law enforcement on Wednesday.

Following the disastrous attack on a school in northern Israel in 1975, which,

■ *The Program*

The program begins within hours of landing, with an introductory dinner at which a senior member of the INP provides a briefing outlining the structure and mission of the organization, as well as Israel's overall security posture, and a lecture covering Israel's history and the larger Middle East.

The next morning, we begin our very packed week-long program. I have learned to expect that around the third day some of our participants will begin to comment on the length of the days and the number of activities we can squeeze into each day. It's always done humorously, and I respond in the same spirit, reminding them that they are all young and strong and here to learn and experience as much as possible.

We visit Israeli police installations various cities and towns, receiving specialized lectures/briefings dealing with both intelligence and prevention as well as a range of other issues. We speak to people in the Arab minority community to hear their point of view, including a visit to a facility housing high-level terrorist prisoners who have been given an opportunity to speak to our delegation in what always turns out to be a vain attempt to justify their actions. We have been in Sderot during a rocket attack and have had to seek shelter in the same

Policing the Old City is arguably the single most complex, sensitive, and ultimately difficult law enforcement challenge in the entire world...

We speak to people in the Arab minority community to hear their point of view...

fifteen seconds as the rest of the population. The discussion that followed with the senior police officer in Sderot explaining what it was like policing a city under constant threat was both informative and emotionally moving.



Israeli police participate in a welcome ceremony for a visiting U.S. police delegation. (Photo: Israel Police)

■ **Jerusalem**

Visiting the Old City of Jerusalem and meeting with the commander of the police is another highlight of the visit. Policing the Old City is arguably the single most complex, sensitive, and ultimately difficult law enforcement challenge in the entire world – yes, the entire world! Holy to three religions, cramped and crowded, containing numerous sites sacred to each of the religious communities, visited by millions of tourists from the around the world, and, perhaps most significantly, the place where the tensions and violence associated with religious and political differences often play themselves out.

Perhaps there is no place where the consequences of a single major terror incident could have greater worldwide impact. Prevention is key. Observing how the INP, through a combination of intelligence gathering, physical security, and community relations, deal with their responsibilities gives our participants useful insights that they carry home with them.

■ **Shabbat: Time for Reflection**

On Friday night, after five days in Israel, our group, primarily comprised of non-Jewish men and women, sits down to a traditional Friday night Shabbat (Sabbath) dinner. We have Israeli guests join us, most of them people we have met with during the preceding week. It is a traditional meal with prayers, chopped liver, and gefilte fish. Fair to say that this is a first for most of the Americans.

Each participant has an opportunity to say a few words. Although we have had more than 200 participants since the program's inception, the remarks made by the vast majority are remarkably similar.

On a professional level, they characterize the lessons learned in superlative language. Some of them acknowledge they have already spoken to people in their organizations, discussing changes to training and operational procedures, while others talk about plans. More than a few call it the best “training” they

have received in their careers. They have observed up close how a country and its people have survived years of living with the ever-present threat of terrorist violence and not only endured but built a vibrant and prosperous democratic society under the rule of law.

On a personal level, most talk about the visit as a spiritual experience. They have visited places and seen sights that they first heard about as children at home and later learned about in Church and Sunday school. They have listened to the stories of survivors of terrorist attacks. They have visited the Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem. They have met and been warmly befriended by Israelis – Jews, Arabs, Christians, and Druze – all of whom seem to have in common the desire to meet and feed their American friends. Friendships have been formed that will last well beyond their return home. More than a few tears have been shed by both the speakers and the rest of the group before the meal is over.

■ *Post-Trip Analysis*

Each participant receives a formal survey requesting them to critique not only the overall trip but each of the presentations and lectures. As time goes by, we often hear how lessons learned in Israel are applied at home. Some involve training, some operational procedures, while others address an enhanced understanding of the concerns of the Jewish community and the personal outreach that grew out of their experience. On one occasion a chief described using what he learned in Israel to help defuse an armed hostage situation. Another said what he learned in Israel made his city a safer place.

What started as an effort to provide useful information to American law enforcement executives has not only exceeded our expectations in that regard

department from participating in any exchanges. (Of interest is the fact that no invitation was outstanding or anticipated for any such participation.) They

We have been in Sderot during a rocket attack and have had to seek shelter in the same fifteen seconds as the rest of the population.

were later successful in keeping two police departments in New England from participating in an unrelated program.

Given the insignificant impact of their efforts, JINSA initially chose to ig-

Their assertion that the “knee to the neck” technique was taught to our participants in Israel, for example, as well as the rest of their bogus charges were

easily refutable. Many of our past participants were eager to speak publicly and in detail about their experience and our itineraries from previous exchanges had been publicly available and stood in stark contrast to the allegations.

We have seen no evidence that the effort to interfere with our program is over nor do we have any concerns about its impact. We will, however, continue to confront them whenever they put forth their false, anti-Semitic allegations. With what appears to be a significant expenditure on their part, at best, they have managed to convince three police agencies out of 18,000 to forego a valuable opportunity to help improve the security of their communities. Congratulations!

Backhanded recognition of the success of this program has been provided by the enemies it has attracted.

but has resulted in benefits we didn't imagine. The building of enduring relationships between Israeli and American law enforcement executives, the enhancement of relationships between Jewish communities and their respective law enforcement leaders, and the goodwill that results from experiencing Israel and its people all fall under the umbrella of positive unexpected consequences.

■ *The Nay-Sayers*

Backhanded recognition of the success of this program has been provided by the enemies it has attracted. Those hostile to Israel, law enforcement or both, led by the Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), took aim at the program and in 2018 were successful in getting the city council in Durham, NC to ban its police

nore JVP and their equally radical anti-Semitic BDS allies. Following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the false, inflammatory, and outrageous efforts on the part of this organization to connect the death of Floyd and others to police exchanges with Israel supported by the American Jewish community, we felt that a line had been crossed and we had to respond. We were far from alone in our assessment of the JVP campaign, which was labeled as anti-Semitic by other respected Jewish organizations.

Formulating a response was made easy by the fact that their allegations were a patchwork of lies. Ignoring their usual rants about the history of Israel and its conflicts with Arabs and Palestinians, we focused on the specific charges dealing with our law enforcement exchanges.

■ *Conclusion*

As we go forward, we continue to adjust to new challenges and an ever-changing landscape in both countries. Technology, cybercrime, crimes against children, border security, community policing, lone wolf terrorism, and securing vulnerable targets affect police here and in Israel. Much has been learned and shared in the past and scores of American communities have benefitted as a result of this effort. There is every reason to believe that the same will be true in the future.

STEVEN POMERANTZ *is a retired assistant director of the FBI.*

When Our Allies Lose Confidence in America

An *in*FOCUS interview with MIKE POMPEO

Mike Pompeo is a politician, diplomat, businessman, and attorney who served as director of the Central Intelligence Agency (2017-18) and secretary of state (2018-21). A graduate of West Point and Harvard Law School, he represented Kansas in the U.S. House of Representatives (2011-17), where he served on the Intelligence, Energy and Commerce Committees, and on the Select Benghazi Committee. As secretary of state, he was an architect of the Abraham Accords and the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, as well as a hard line on Iranian cheating on the terms of the JCPOA. JPC Senior Director Shoshana Bryen was pleased to have an opportunity to speak with him in September.

***in*FOCUS: WHAT IS YOUR PROUD-EST ACCOMPLISHMENT AS SECRETARY OF STATE, AND DO YOU THINK IT WILL SURVIVE THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION?**

Secretary Mike Pompeo: The expansion of peace in the Middle East has to be on top. The Abraham Accords and other agreements will have a major impact the people of the region and beyond. I think these agreements will not only survive, but those relationships will flourish and grow and the peoples of those countries, and indeed more broadly in the region, will be better off as a result of those peace accords.

***iF*: THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS WILL GET STRONGER NOW BECAUSE OF THE THREAT FROM IRAN AND THE THREAT OF INCREASED SUNNI JIHADISM. THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE WHO THINK THE ARAB COUNTRIES OF THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS ARE GOING TO PULL BACK FROM ISRAEL AND TRY TO MAKE PEACE WITH IRAN – AND EVEN THE TALIBAN. WHAT’S YOUR VIEW?**

Pompeo: Both are possible. In the end, what matters are two things. First, the work that we collectively do together on counter-terrorism. We now have 20

really good years where we all figured out the methodologies, the systems, the communications technologies, the intelligence operations to deliver good security, increased security, both from Shia terror and from Sunni terror. If those continue to build, then relationships between the Abraham Accords countries will continue to grow. If they don’t, I think there’s risk. Second, American leadership matters. Countries in the region, Arab countries in the region, our Israeli friends, partners, they need to see America lead. They need to understand that America will be with its friends. It will support its allies. It will do the right thing by these countries. It will honor its most basic commitments.

The saddest thing about the debacle in Afghanistan, other than the loss of 13 Americans these past weeks, the saddest component of this is that the world no longer has the same confidence that America will continue to be their partner, and our adversaries saw American weakness. If the weakness continues, these countries will want to make sure that they are protected in ways that they would not be if they only rely on us. So, they will go reach out to places which will cause them to separate from us. There are competing tensions there.

I believe in the end America will get it right. I think America will continue to support our Israeli friends, support

our allies in the region, and that not only will the Abraham Accords survive, but I think they will prosper. And I am confident that if American leadership does the right things, the right leaders in the region continue to push forward, that the Abraham Accords will expand. I think this is a tremendously positive development, not only for peace, but for wealth creation and prosperity and stability in the region.

■ ***A Door for Palestinian Leadership***

***iF*: THE PALESTINIANS CHOSE NOT TO COME IN. THE DOOR WAS OPEN TO THEM. HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THAT?**

Pompeo: Corrupt leadership. You see this in countries all across the world. The reason they can’t come in is that you have a set of leaders for whom the status quo is the best solution. They have two separate sets of issues that have certainly connected the issue. You have the challenge in the Gaza Strip with the terrorists underwritten by the Iranians. It didn’t take but a handful of weeks from the time the Trump administration departed before the Iranians were flying rockets into Israel. Hamas is not in any way inclined to join a peace accord. West Bank and the Palestinian leadership, are corrupt leaders. They like their lifestyle.

They like taking money from the Americans. We're going to start giving them money again. Their incentive system is a mess.

I hope that the next generation of Palestinian leaders will come to see that there is a solution that works for all the people in the region, including the Palestinians. We offered a pretty darn good one, to make life better for the Palestinian people. They rejected it out of hand. They rejected it so out of hand, that they refused even to sit down and talk with the Americans or the Israelis about it. I think that's pretty telling about those who want peace and those who prefer continuing to throw Molotov cocktails across the wall.

iF: DOES ANTI-SEMITISM PLAY IN HERE?

Pompeo: Always. Always. It's alive in the world. It is one of the great tragedies of history and one we have to continue to be mindful of. It certainly has an impact with respect to the Palestinians. It has an impact with the American relationship with Israel too. You can see some in the American left who have a deep and embedded misunderstanding of Israel. They talk about Israel as an occupier. Nothing could be further from the truth. They talk about it as an "apartheid nation." Those are ridiculous claims. Yet buried in that is a connection to anti-Semitism that we've seen for an awfully long time, plus an anti-Zionist view. This is dangerous. It's dangerous for America, it's dangerous for Israel, and it is absolutely toxic for the relationship in our two countries.

iF: WOULD YOU SUGGEST THEN AS A STRATEGY, CONTINUING TO LEAVE THE PALESTINIANS ASIDE AND WORKING ON THE OTHER COUNTRIES? THE ADMINISTRATION CURRENTLY SEEMS TO WANT TO BRING THE PALESTINIANS IN.

Pompeo: I would love to bring them



Mike Pompeo

in; that would be wonderful. We wanted to do it too. Time and history matter and people matter. There are great leaders in the United Arab Emirates. MBZ [Ed: Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi] is a great noble person. And great leaders in Bahrain, all of the team. These were people who decided this was the right thing to do. The leadership in the West Bank is nowhere near making that kind of decision. I would encourage this administration to do what we did. We should continue to try to bring the Palestinians along. I'd hope the Iranians one day join the Abraham Accords too. Good leadership would recognize that being a partner with Israel is the right course of action. It's the moral course of action. It's the best course of action for the people in Isfahan and in Tehran. These would be really good things.

We should certainly want people

of Ramallah and Jericho to have those same opportunities. Hope that this administration will do it, but we should also be mindful that those are difficult, complex problems, and we should not for a moment allow those two problems to get in the way of peace and stability in the broader Middle East. We should continue to reach out to countries in the Asia and the Arab world and make clear to them that the expansion of our relationship with Israel will be a good thing for their peace and for their prosperity.

■ Afghanistan & Pakistan

iF: MOVING TO AFGHANISTAN. YOU'RE A MILITARY GUY. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OUR MILITARY, TO THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OUR COUNTRY NOW AFTER THIS DEBACLE? AND HOW DO WE ENCOURAGE YOUNG AMERICANS TO COME IN, STAY IN, AND FIGHT THOSE BATTLES THAT ARE COMING?

Pompeo: It is important service. I'm going to begin by saying thank you to all the young men and women who served in Afghanistan these past two decades. I saw it firsthand as a CIA Director. I saw up close and personal the work that they did, those intelligence operators, those military people, and all of our diplomats who kept America safe. We kept the world safe from terrorism. From that place, they should be proud of the service they engaged in.

This administration gave \$7 billion in currency availability to the Iranian regime. I promise you that money will be used for nefarious activity all across the world.

Now though, there is a challenge today, there'll be a challenge six months and six years from now. That service in uniform is noble. It is empowering. It is great training for life. And I would encourage them to hang in there, stay the course. America often has moments where it gets it wrong. I am hopeful that this leadership and this administration will see in the failures of what happened in Afghanistan and the failure to execute the withdrawal in an appropriate way that protected America and Americans. That they'll be better when they're next called upon to confront political challenges. I'm sorry that that's the case.

iF: SIDE QUESTION. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT PAKISTAN? WHY DO WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT PAKISTAN? THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE FRIENDS OF OURS.

Pompeo: Fantastic question. You'll note that right toward the beginning of the Trump administration we reduced support for Pakistan significantly. It's a

challenging place. They have nuclear capabilities. We wanted to make sure that those nuclear weapons are controlled. I think the programs make sense where we assist the Pakistanis with nuclear assurance efforts. It's also the case that they were from time to time helpful in counter-terrorism, although more on balance, they were harmful to our counter-terrorism efforts. We should never forget: Pakistan has provided safe harbor for al-Qaeda for an awfully long

time. Today they continue to engage in that kind of activity. They play footsie with the bad guys all the time, and we should not provide material support to the Pakistanis until such time they demonstrate real resolve to become part of the community of nations, and not offer safe haven to terrorists.

■ **Iran**

iF: YOU WERE ALWAYS A BIG JCPOA SKEPTIC, AN IRAN SKEPTIC. HOW CLOSE DO YOU THINK THEY ARE TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS? THEY'VE BEEN CHEATING. NOW WHAT?

Pompeo: Today, the Iranians have the best of all possible worlds. We have a sanctions regime we put on the regime that is still largely fully in place, but it's not being enforced. This administration gave \$7 billion in currency availability to the Iranian regime. I promise you that money will be used for nefarious activity all across the world. They've given a green light to Iranian terrorism. I talked about the missiles that flew from Gaza

that were Iranian. You should know, they fly out of Yemen and into Saudi Arabia nearly every day. These are Iranian terror activities. So, they've got relief from the sanctions through non-enforcement and they're not having to come up with a single thing. They're able to continue to break their commitments under the JCPOA and continue to develop their nuclear capabilities.

We had this right.

We had taken the Iranian regime down to its root, from \$123 billion worth of foreign exchange reserves to less than \$4 billion. They were on the cusp of having to make some really difficult decisions. They had already had to reduce the amount of money they were providing in Yemen and to Hezbollah in Lebanon. We had the Iranian regime in a very difficult place, and this administration simply let them off the hook.

The right course of action would be to go back to where we were, which is to demand that they cease enrichment in Iran, and in exchange for that, we're happy to make sure that they have all the nuclear capability they need to provide energy – if that's their real goal. No enrichment, no missile system development. No capacity to bring terror to the world. Those are the objectives. When they meet those, we're happy to welcome Iran back into the international world.

■ **U.S.-Israel Cooperation**

iF: THE STORY IN SEPTEMBER IS THAT ISRAEL IS WITHHOLDING INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION FROM THE UNITED STATES ON IRAN, FOR FEAR THAT IT WILL BE USED IN A WAY THAT DOESN'T HELP ISRAEL. DOES THAT SEEM REASONABLE TO YOU?

Pompeo: I haven't seen that reporting. I hope it's not true. I hope it's not true, but here's what I will say for sure. There is no intelligence organization that I ever encountered who would provide their best collection to anyone they thought might damage either the utility of that information or the risk that they'll have



U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel in 2019. (Photo: U.S. State Department / Ron Przysucha)

a source blown up – that is, they'll lose the capacity to continue to develop that intelligence. I never saw it happen.

If America can't be trusted, if our relationship with Israel is insufficient for them to have confidence that we will protect the information they share with us and vice versa, that they will protect the information that we provide to them, that's dangerous for Israel. It's dangerous for the United States. It's dangerous for the entire region.

We had an incredibly close relationship. We were sharing things that hadn't been shared in an awful long time. This was powerful data, mostly focused on activity with respect to Iran, but powerful data that allowed us to protect American lives. If this administration has destroyed that bond, destroyed that trust in a way that denies America access to information to protect Americans, this would really be tragic, and it'll have a long-term lasting effect to each of our two countries.

iF: DO WE WORRY ABOUT ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA AT A STRATEGIC LEVEL?

Pompeo: I do. I worry about every country's relationship with China. Look, the world for 40 years said sell more trinkets, buy more stuff, life will be good. This was our model too, here in the United States. This is a failed model. It might've been right in 1972; Dr. Kissinger might have been right. It might have been right in 2000. It is not right today. So yes, we had conversations with every set of leaders all across the world, first of all, to educate them, to remind them that the Chinese Communist Party is a communist party. Where they have intention, they show up with money, it is not a commercial transaction. It is a government influence operation.

And I certainly had those conversations with Israeli leadership as well. We want to make sure that the Israelis understand the risk. These are smart

people when it comes to evaluating risk. And they understand that there is a division that has taken place because of Xi Jinping, the division between the communist world and the West. The West needs to win this together, and it means our relationships with China have to be fundamentally altered, and that includes the Israel's relationship with China.

■ Nord Stream II

iF: CAN YOU TALK ABOUT NORD STREAM II PIPELINE BECAUSE THAT'S ABOUT US AND OUR ALLIES, AS MUCH AS IT IS ABOUT US AND RUSSIA. HOW BIG A DISASTER IS THE COMPLETION OF THE NORD STREAM II PIPELINE AND HOW BIG WILL IT BE IN JANUARY WHEN IT'S SNOWING?

Pompeo: There are two important things from this policy change that the Biden administration made. First is the one you talked about. We've now told

the Ukrainians, “Good luck.” We’ve now told the Poles, “Good luck.” We told the Germans, “Go ahead and get filthy rich buying Russian energy.” This is very damaging from a NATO security perspective. The fact that this administration allowed that pipeline to be completed will have long-term ramifications for the capacity of NATO to do the right thing when it’s pinch time.

The second thing I’d say is that Nord Stream II is precisely the kind of thing that you see happen when you have a weak administration. Not only did we allow the Russians to sell energy to the Germans, but we are also now shutting down American energy production so that Americans can’t sell energy to the Germans. This will cost hundreds of thousands of jobs in different states, but most importantly, now when Germany needs energy, their partners, their friends in the West won’t have energy to provide them. They’ll have to turn to Vladimir Putin. No strategist could think this makes any sense.

The last piece of this is it’s another iteration of American weakness. The absence of American resolve to just tell the Germans, “We love you. You’re our

figuring out how to make money, and the release of the Nord Stream II pipeline restrictions is an exemplar of that.

iF: DO THEY FEEL REMOVED OR DO THEY THINK WE’LL COME AND RESCUE THEM AGAIN?

Pompeo: Both.

Conclusion

iF: LET ME CONCLUDE WITH TWO QUESTIONS. YOU SHARED YOUR GREATEST SUCCESS WITH US. WHAT’S YOUR GREATEST REGRET, EITHER A POLICY OR A RELATIONSHIP THAT YOU WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY, OR YOU DIDN’T DO? WHAT WOULD YOU WANT TO GO BACK AND FIX?

Pompeo: I wish we had had more time and had gotten a formal foothold pushing back against the Chinese Communist Party sooner, better, faster, stronger. This is the singular threat that can destroy our Republic. Xi Jinping is determined to do this. It is an ideological threat. It is a military threat. It is a threat inside our own walls here in the United States.

United States. That in fact, we are not a nation in decline. Those are the things that I would love to have continued to work on.

iF: OF ALL THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED AROUND THE GLOBE, WILL CHINA BE THE THING THAT WILL HAUNT THE PRESIDENT?

Pompeo: It will be. It will be the Chinese Communist Party. This will prove the greatest challenge. Look, I’m sure there’ll be moments. There are always things that happen that are unexpected. We have a southern border today with Mexico that is posing real risk to the United States. The world has watched a terribly flawed execution of the draw-down in Afghanistan. We have increased the likelihood that there will be an attack originating from Afghanistan somewhere in the West. That there’ll be ungoverned space from which Sunni terrorists can operate. These are risks that this administration will have to deal with. We all take on challenges when we come in from previous administrations. We certainly had our share. They’re tasked to manage; they’re tasked to lead.

I see those as the central challenges, combined with making sure that America continues to defend the central international order that led to prosperity for the United States. We can’t count out of the Chinese Communist Party when it comes to economic matters either. We can’t let them run over us. We can’t let them continue to foist viruses on the world. That risk is enormous.

Three million people have been killed by a deadly virus, a highly contagious deadly virus that came from China, and they continue to cover it up.

iF: MIKE POMPEO, ON BEHALF OF inFOCUS QUARTERLY AND THE MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH POLICY CENTER, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR AN ENLIGHTENING – AND FRIGHTENING – CONSIDERATION OF AMERICAN POLICY.

Three million people have been killed by a deadly virus, a highly contagious deadly virus that came from China, and they continue to cover it up.

great friend and partner. You need to support NATO, and buying Russian energy is a bad idea, and we’re not going to let you.” We talk about Europe. Europe is deeply divided on this. Really, when the left talks about Europe and the United States, they’re just talking about Germany and France. Europe understands the strategic risk from Russia. They are prepared to confront it. The Germans and the French feel in some ways some removed. They are all about

It took us a little while to get to our strategy developed, so we didn’t accomplish as much as I wish we could’ve. We made real progress. I think we began to unite the world to understand this real threat, but there’s an awful long way to go and an awful lot of work to do. Another four years having the chance to build out a strategy, to make clear to the Chinese Communist Party that they weren’t going to be a global henchman, they weren’t going to dominate the

No Strategy for Victory. At Least Not for the Good Guys.

by J. MICHAEL WALLER

“Victory,” as the Department of Defense defines it in its Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, is – well, it’s not there.

It doesn’t exist.

The Pentagon has no official definition of victory.

The very word itself doesn’t appear once in the more than 350-page, annually updated lexicon. It hasn’t appeared for a decade, perhaps more.

No concept of victory helps explain why we fight Forever Wars and end up senselessly handing over our hard-fought victories to the enemy.

Victory doesn’t exist.

The Afghanistan war, as others have noted, was just a series of tours of duty for top commanders to “serve” during their brief rotations in and out, and to pass everything off to their successors with no strategy for victory.

The multi-trillion-dollar Afghan war, which maimed and killed countless thousands of people, wasn’t designed for victory. Everything – the territory of an entire country, millions of liberated Afghans, and billions of dollars in American weaponry – were unilaterally surrendered to the enemy.

Of course, the Pentagon dictionary has no definition for “enemy.”

The hole is right there on page 74, like a missing tooth, between “enduring location” and “engage.”

No enemy.

■ A “Prudent Idea” vs “Achieving Objectives”

The dictionary is only a dictionary,

but it’s important because it reflects a mindset inculcated through generations of officers and senior civilians across the military services and Defense Department. It reveals a dumbing down of the Pentagon’s view of its role in national defense.

All of this calls into question the underlying civilian strategy that governs the nation’s bloated defense budget and military priorities that impose such a burden on the taxpayers. The DoD dictionary can explain, in a nutshell, how the Pentagon teaches its personnel to think about strategy.

Strategy, if one properly interprets

forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace and war.” A prudent idea versus science and art.

■ Strategy and Technology

One might dismiss these omissions and lexicographic pabulum as minor in comparison to the world’s finest technologies and peerless tactical/operational combat capabilities of our fighting forces. Yet it’s the definitions that govern all the hardware and doctrines and tactics and people.

Making military history with the 2001 amphibious invasion of landlocked

The 2001 amphibious invasion of landlocked Afghanistan was a bold innovation for the ages. Exiting the country after 20 years was a different matter.

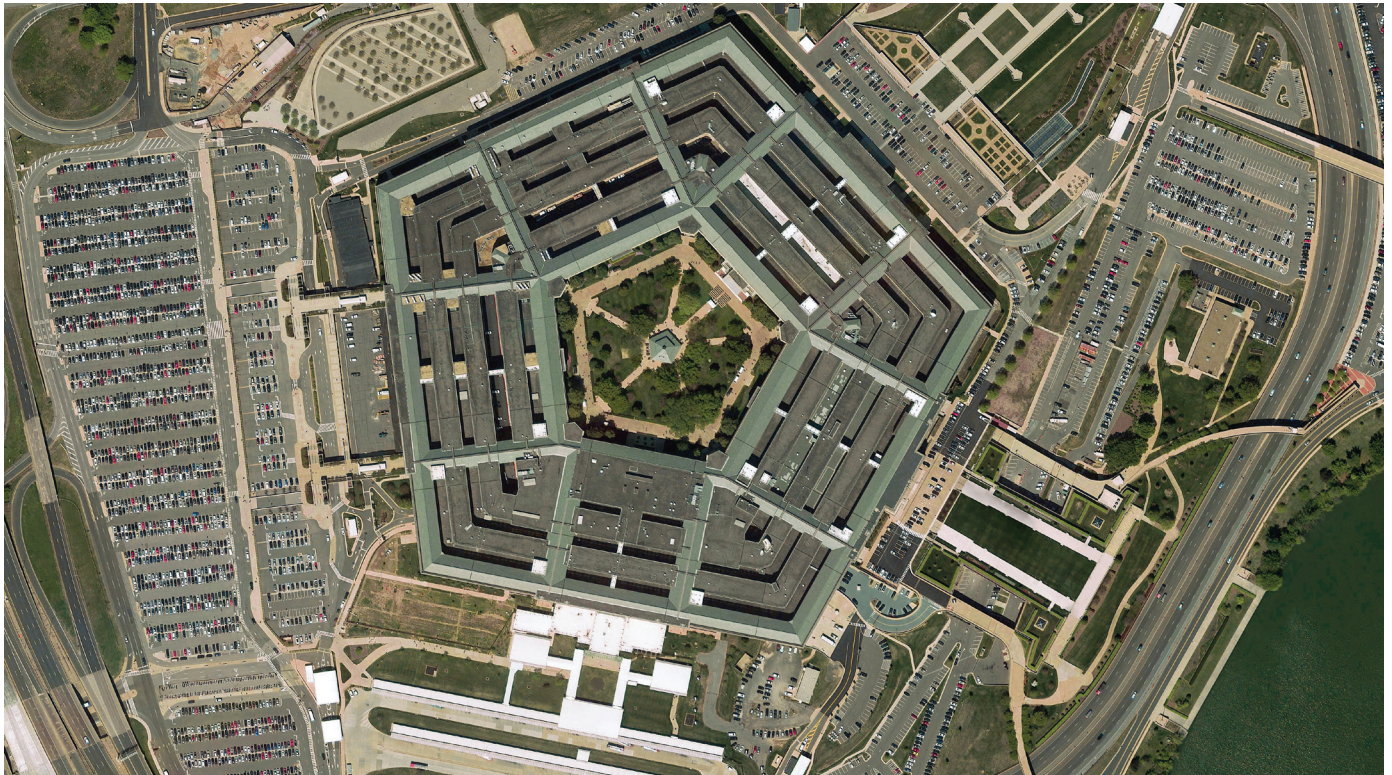
the Pentagon definition, is no longer strategic. The DoD Dictionary calls strategy “A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”

A prudent idea.

That’s pretty dumbed-down from, say, the Merriam-Webster definition, which simply but elegantly is “the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military

Afghanistan was a bold innovation for the ages. Exiting that country after 20 years was a different matter.

It became apparent early on that the United States never had a strategy to win the war. The real intellectual firepower wasn’t devoted to a solid final outcome as it was to building our way into Afghanistan and building our way out. The war became part of Washington’s normal day, much like the war against poverty or the war on crime. Before long, the intent wasn’t to defeat the target but



An aerial view of the Pentagon, headquarters to the U.S. military.

simply to manage the situation.

For that matter, who would have dreamed that the war would have dragged on for two decades in the first place? Where in the war plan did it say that we would return Afghanistan back to the terrorists who attacked us? Who designed the end state to fight and die in Afghanistan, with its colossal and virtually untapped riches of rare earth minerals vital to our economy, and hand it all over to the Chinese Communist Party?

Yet here we are.

■ **Taliban Strategic Aims**

What was the strategic aim of the Afghanistan war after the U.S. and its allies overthrew the Taliban, killed and captured its leaders, set up some sort of Afghan government that was friendly to us, and our Navy SEALs killed Osama bin Laden (in Pakistan)?

Our warriors captured top Taliban leaders and held them at Guantanamo for years until Barack Obama, with Joe Biden's slithering consent, set them free to their home base in Qatar. After

the Trump interregnum, Biden himself would create the circumstances for those same freed terrorists to rule the country he surrendered.

Do we even have a real counterterrorism strategy? The FBI has a \$10 million reward for information leading to the arrest of the notorious Sirajuddin Haqqani, yet the President of the United States enabled Haqqani to return home to run Afghanistan's internal security forces.

And why just pick on Afghanistan? The great, departed Boston University Professor Uri Ra'anán told his students after 9/11, paraphrasing here, "The question isn't whether the attacks were state-sponsored. The question is which state sponsored them."

■ **Terror's State Sponsors**

Yet, just as the CIA and the diplomatic establishment vigorously denied in the early 1980s that the Soviet Union had been a state sponsor of global terrorist networks – until CIA Director Bill Casey told analysts to go back and

find what journalists including Claire Sterling had already documented, and what Soviet archives would later confirm – the establishment wished away the idea that, perhaps somehow, the al-Qaeda attacks that led to twenty years of war were, indeed, state-sponsored.

No serious strategist of either party in our government publicly identified the state sponsors of 9/11 and laid out a strategy to take the fight to the source of the terrorism that plagued us.

We knew it then, of course. The openly jihadist dictatorship of Qatar. Entire swathes of the government and royal family then ruling Saudi Arabia. Pakistan and its notorious Inter-Services Intelligence network. Even Iran.

Two decades later, while the Saudi regime has become more of a mixed bag when it comes to violent jihad, Qatar became more powerful than ever by cleverly letting the U.S. Central Command use al-Udeid as a major military hub on the one hand, and funding and sheltering the Taliban and other terrorists on the other.

Pakistan played multiple sides during the Afghan war, while Iran was not made to suffer for its IED warfare against American and Coalition troops in both

■ *The Trump Years*

Speaking of President Donald Trump, while the mercurial president pitched and yawed the country through

Without strategy, our leaders make decisions to pump the Kremlin with European cash while making our NATO allies on continental Europe dependent on Vladimir Putin for energy...

Afghanistan and Iraq – until years later when President Donald Trump finished off Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

■ *Working Against Our Own Interests*

Without strategy, our leaders make decisions to pump the Kremlin with European cash while making our NATO allies on continental Europe dependent on Vladimir Putin for energy and pulling the rug from under Ukraine and unflinching NATO ally Poland.

Without strategy, we built up Communist China from agrarian backwater to an economic and military superpower with the confidence to threaten Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, and more. We stood by Beijing as it held us hostage through economic warfare, political subversion, and seemingly endless technological, financial, and political espionage.

A cynic might think that that was the strategy all along. Compelling evidence shows that suspicion to be fairly well grounded.

Now, Beijing has replaced and exceeded the Soviet Union as a hostile outside force subverting and destabilizing the Western Hemisphere, filling the vacuum left from a Monroe Doctrine – a timeless grand strategy, and successful when enforced – that the Obama administration officially renounced, and the Trump administration never really cared about.

a lurching, often illogical set of foreign and national security policies that could hardly be called strategic, he did articulate a worldview that helped others shape a new and coherent grand strategy for the country.

His America First approach to the world, so annoyingly simplistic to his globalist critics in both parties, did in fact move the Overton Window to force the policy establishment to re-think the

Beijing has replaced and exceeded the Soviet Union as a hostile outside force subverting and destabilizing the Western Hemisphere, filling the vacuum left from a Monroe Doctrine... the Obama administration officially renounced...

country’s endless policies and commitments. Trump forced the nation to confront the fact that team America could no longer sustain its role as world police.

America, he said, is a sovereign country of sovereign people who are governed by their own consent. America would look out for its own interests and place them first. It wasn’t a jingoistic or chauvinistic approach, but a practical, transactional one. Trump encouraged all countries governed by the consent of the governed, or at least friendly to those who are, to seek their own sovereign interests, and in so doing, find common cause with the United States. He transformed the

Middle East with his historic “Drive Them Out” speech in Riyadh, followed by his national sovereignty speech in Warsaw to call NATO members to live up their defense commitments.

The Riyadh speech helped Arab countries unite against Qatari terrorism and subversion. The Warsaw speech forced allies, some kicking and screaming, to face up to the fact that most were freeloading and shirking their commitments even as they assisted the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, certain able figures on his National Security Council staff devised a remarkable National Strategy of the United States that was more coherent, comprehensive, and crystalline than any since President Ronald Reagan. But it was too little, too late, for Trump’s often squandered presidency.

While there is much to criticize about Trump’s many disastrous diplomatic, defense, and national security

personnel appointments, two elements of his legacy particularly stand out to show what a few committed and determined appointees can accomplish: the Abraham Accords that united most of the Gulf Arabs against Qatar and Iran and with the state of Israel; and a strategic interagency active defense against Communist China.

Those accomplishments are being undone. And the lack of strategy enabled our enemies, on the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaeda attacks, to declare an Afghan Caliphate.

J. MICHAEL WALLER is Senior Analyst for Strategy at the Center for Security Policy.

Perfidious Pakistan

by LISA SCHIFFREN

In 2014, when the Obama military surge in Afghanistan was over and a major drawdown was underway, Hamid Gul, head of Pakistan's military intelligence service, who had worked closely with the U.S. during the Soviet War, in a televised interview opined, "When history is written, it will be stated that the ISI defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan with the help of America. Then there will be another sentence. The ISI, with the help of America, defeated America."

In this prolonged, awful moment in which the United States has departed Afghanistan in abject failure, accusations about who lost Afghanistan to the forces of Islamism and terror are thick on the ground. Historic outcomes are rarely 'inevitable,' due to uncontrollable social forces, as the structuralists like to claim. But the way a nation pursues a goal can determine, or forever impede, success. Rarely has there been a clearer case of the seeds of defeat being sown at the very start of the endeavor than in the American 20 Year War in Afghanistan.

As the Taliban took over Kabul in mid-August, without much of a fight, the Pakistani Prime Minister, former cricket player Imran Khan, blurted out his congratulations, praising the Taliban for "breaking the chains of slavery." He later clarified that he meant "mental slavery," specifically to American ideas.

Khan, the current front man for Pakistan's ever present military dictatorship, was indiscreet. But why shouldn't he celebrate the clear victory of Pakistan's 'deep state,' the Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI), in its 20, or, really, 30-year war to install the Taliban in Afghanistan? This was the culmination of ISI's relentless, intermittently covert plan to guarantee influence, if not precisely sovereignty, in neighboring

Afghanistan. The stated reasons that this was so critical to them vary from desired "strategic depth," to countering potential influence that their arch-enemy India might have with a democratic government, to a clear but not easily comprehensible desire to aid the most fanatic and primitive of Islamist regimes, even though Pakistan itself is relatively modern and moderate in its public practice of Islam.

The war was initially billed as a battle to destroy the terrorist forces, notably Osama bin Laden, and al-Qaeda, that planned the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., from Taliban-controlled territory. President George W. Bush announced that those who harbored such forces would also be our targets unless they chose to surrender bin Laden – which they emphatically did not.

Al-Qaeda was decimated, and the Taliban scattered by effective U.S. bombing and groundwork, in the

dependent on high tech equipment, that few Afghans could maintain, given high rates of illiteracy and low rates of technical competence among the forces, had consequences. And then there was the monumental financial corruption, which touched every institution we supported, and every leader we backed – and his brothers. As early as 2006 reporters noted that Afghan soldiers sometimes starved as officers skimmed funds meant to feed and pay them, which undermined legitimacy.

Could these problems have been fixed with honest reckoning? Perhaps.

But the main complication was political. It began and ended with the dysfunctional relationship between the United States and Pakistan.

Pakistan pursued a "double game" all along, playing ball with Uncle Sam, while training, fielding, and often leading the Taliban in battle, against our own troops and the Afghans we were

Pakistan pursued a "double game" all along, playing ball with Uncle Sam, while training, fielding, and often leading the Taliban in battle, against our own troops...

"small footprint" years of 2001-02. Complications ensued when the mission came to include the building of institutions required for Afghan national stability. These complications include the choice of a centralized, elected government model that made little sense in an ethnically, tribally, and geographically riven nation, which has historically preferred decentralized power. The decision to build a modern national army,

training. The Taliban originated in madrassas in Pak border lands in 1994, funded with Saudi money and taught by Saudi Wahabi fundamentalist Imams. The young, mostly Pashtun students, were turned into a fighting force by Pakistan's military intelligence branch, and deployed by Pakistan ostensibly to impose stability at a moment when neighboring Afghanistan had devolved into post-Soviet era internecine fighting.



Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan addresses 74th UN General Assembly at UN Headquarters in 2019. (Photo: Lev Radin)

It's clear enough why Pakistan would do what it thought was in its interest. But it is not remotely comprehensible why a great power would tolerate conditions that were so obviously self-defeating to its goals, let alone bankroll it, under three presidents.

■ **Geography is Destiny**

George Bush stood at Ground Zero with a bullhorn on September 14, 2001 and told the world that the terrorists and their supporters would be hearing from the U.S. soon. Weeks later, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas J. Feith, were on a plane to meet with regional leaders, lining up support for the invasion to come. Because Afghanistan is landlocked, and its neighbors include nations with which the U.S. has problematic relations, it was always going to be the case that pursuing a war in Afghanistan required close cooperation with Pakistan.

In an interview, Feith recalled his initial meeting with then Pakistani

Prime Minister Pervez Musharraf, who had come to power in a military coup. Musharraf was vocal about being willing to help destroy al-Qaeda, “but it was clear to me that they weren’t going to co-operate against the Taliban the same way. They were protecting them.”

On the other hand, the Paks were quite willing to work with the U.S. military, which was the key to an invasion. Feith noted that, while he was a bit skeptical of their commitment, the generals at CENTCOM were happy with the arrangements that were worked out to get men and matériel into Afghanistan, which required traversing Pakistani territory. And that was the critical issue.

■ **It's Complicated ... Yet Mundane.**

According to Feith the CIA also argued that the U.S. should attack al-Qaeda, but not the Taliban, because absent the stabilizing force of Taliban control, a civil war between Tajiks and Uzbeks in the North, and Pashtuns in the south would ensue. The Rumsfeld strategy

called for destroying terror networks that were not entirely visible and imposing severe penalties on state sponsors of terrorism. As it turned out, al-Qaeda and the Taliban were deeply intertwined, as they remain today, making the distinction between them misleading.

The answer to the question “why did the U.S. allow a junior ally to undermine our military actions and foil our goals” includes the fact that, until recently, Pakistan’s national cohesion was considered fragile. There were endless predictions that the state would break apart over ethnic and tribal rivalries – which has not happened. And, of course, Pakistan is a nuclear power. One that no one particularly trusts and which the U.S. has long felt the need to monitor. That became urgent in late fall of 2001, when a conflict between Pakistan and India heated up, forcing allies to talk the two nuclear-armed enemies down. “The U.S. was friendly with both India and Pakistan, but we didn’t have much leverage with either one,” Feith noted. To be sure, even though U.S. aid to Pakistan

rose rapidly over the ensuing decades, the U.S. never got much leverage.

Then, in early 2003, the Bush Administration invaded Iraq, with a whole different set of cultural and political pitfalls to navigate, and the Taliban's revival fell further down the list of U.S. concerns.

U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke said, "We may be fighting the wrong enemy in the wrong country."

Meanwhile, the double game was clear. Over (not much) time every American spy, diplomat, military officer, and journalist serving in Afghanistan or Pakistan, came to see the cost of ISI subsidizing the Taliban. Many spoke up. Nothing changed.

Carlotta Gall reported in the *New York Times* that in 2001, as the U.S. was bombing the Taliban into submission in northern Afghanistan, Pakistan was forced to send planes to Kunduz, where a few thousand of its military trainers, officers, soldiers, and ISI officers were stuck. Her 2014 book, *The Wrong Enemy*, detailed ISI's double game in its most arrogant and brutal aspects, including murdering Pakistani journalists who got too close. The book took its title from a statement by U.S. Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, who said, "We may be fighting the wrong enemy in the wrong country." He understood, as did every subsequent ambassador, that ISI was the real enemy. Yet nothing changed.

The late Steve Mastay, a 35-year veteran Afghan hand, wrote from Kabul in the *Imaginative Conservative* in 2010:

America subsidizes the Pakistani military that supports the insurgency that kills American soldiers. As the US Congress confirms, American contractors pay bribes to the Taliban

who blow up American troops. American contractors and spooks provide millions to strengthen brutal warlords and corrupt officials against whom American leaders rail, usually blaming President Karzai. Ten years of often-failed American

development work, and little cooperation to help Afghans build their own government, policies, and priorities, have still had a few good results—but almost none of which are visible to ordinary Afghans who believe it was all a trick and America stole back the money it promised. American agencies fight each another within the U.S. Embassy and on Capitol Hill, lobbying for one another's budgets and mandates, mindless of the work thwarted and the damage done to Afghanistan. Americans say they support dialogue with the insurgents while the CIA helps the Pakistani intelligence services arrest those Taliban leaders most likely to parley.

By 2011, U.S.-backed Afghan President, Hamid Karzai was deeply frustrated by the position in which the U.S. capitulation to Pakistan had placed him. He was so disgusted with the U.S. inability to guarantee Afghanistan's autonomy that he was threatening to agree to a deal proffered by Pakistan's ISI. By that point the Taliban were back in play as negotiating partners for the U.S., if there was to be the peace deal President Barack Obama wanted. Indeed, President Obama was pulling strings to find appropriate Taliban negotiating partners for the U.S. to talk to. Karzai

understood that Obama would probably go around him.

And then came May 1, 2011, the day on which several SEAL Teams landed in the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, literally down the block from the Pak equivalent of West Point, in which Osama bin Laden had lived for 6 years, and finally killed the man behind 9/11. You might wonder how the Obama Administration could forgive the Pakistani government for harboring Bin Laden for nearly a decade. Some American policy makers chose to presume Pak incompetence. President Obama was happy to get credit for the kill. The head of ISI at the time was mainly concerned that Pakistani citizens would be angry to learn how permeable their borders were.

Having gotten away with their game that long, having learned that there were no consequences for deception, betrayal, or undermining a two decade, multi-trillion-dollar American effort to turn Afghanistan into a free and stable nation that did not harbor terrorists, ISI was certainly not going to stop. President Donald Trump was clear about his intention to leave, whether or not some troops stayed behind on a base or two. By the time his Administration's negotiations with the Taliban began at Doha, Qatar, Ashraf Ghani's Afghan government was refusing to talk.

Game over.

When the Taliban came tripping over the Durand line into Afghanistan from their bases in Pakistan last spring, President Biden had long since and adamantly decided to leave at any cost. ISI had beat the big, lazy, decadent superpower at the Great Game. And now, it will be interesting to see how long it takes the brutal and aggressive Taliban to figure out how to destabilize Pakistan.

LISA SCHIFFREN is a communications consultant at the Jewish Policy Center. She spent three years reporting from Pakistan and Afghanistan during the Soviet War.

Worse and Better in the Wake of the Arab Spring

by SHOSHANA BRYEN

In 2011 – 10 years ago and 10 years after the 9-11 attacks – there was a widespread uprising across the Arab world. It was tagged “The Arab Spring” to associate it with the 1968 Prague Spring (which, it should be noted, was viciously suppressed) and then the collapse of the Soviet Union and the freeing of Central Europe. But it was not at all the same and our American – and Western – confusion caused enormous upheaval for the Arab people. On the other hand, it arguably led to the Abraham Accords and better acceptance of Israel in the region.

The results of these uprisings varied

that of the Western part, with regard to economics, journalism, the middle class, and the role of women. Experience with kings, princes, wars, and parliaments had generally correlated on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

■ Colonial History

It is a mistake to think of the Arab Spring in any such nationalist or capitalist or ideological terms. Instead, think of tectonic plates. Since 3000 BCE, the broader Middle East has been governed by outside forces, mostly colonial forces governing from elsewhere.

when they drew the borders of nations emerging from Ottoman and European rule, in that post-colonial moment. One hundred years ago – that’s all.

But it was the last 100 years in a 3,000-year process.

The first pull on the plates was the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq – what we call the First Gulf War in 1990-91. Saddam said Kuwait was the 19th province of Baghdad, stripped away by the British who wanted control there.

He was right. It was.

The Bush (43) and Obama administrations both believed that the people of the region wanted something called “democracy.” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called freedom a “yearning in every human heart.” The Obama people wanted to “atone” for what they thought was white – and American – colonialism. Both were wrong.

Americans talk about “freedom” and “democracy” or hope the Arab countries will have a “democratic” revolution – but “democracy” is not an operative concept. When people are angry in the Middle East, they call for “justice” not “democracy.” Justice, for them, is the opposite of corruption. So, where “democracy” is not a useful concept, the Western notion of “rule of law” – meaning one set of laws applied equally to the rulers, the rich, and the regular people without regard for race, religion, sex, or political proclivity – would be analogous to calls in the Arab world for “justice” and an end to “corruption.”

And corruption is the first of four common elements in revolutions from Tunisia to Bahrain and Yemen, from Syria to Libya, from Afghanistan to Egypt.

American policy frightened governments around the region... [they] didn’t want to be like Syria...

from moderately successful to disastrous destabilization. It is unsurprising that the Arab Spring splintered in different directions; the societies of the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and the non-Arab Muslim societies of Turkey and Iran are vastly different and have vastly different requirements for societal control.

Lifting the yoke of the Soviet Union from the captive western nations simply restored them to their former position as part of Europe, “whole and free” as the Atlanticists correctly said. Before Soviet domination, the history, economy, society, religion, and national development of the Central [not actually “Eastern”] part of the European continent was similar to

That’s a lot of years and a lot of colonial rule – and some of those colonial empires lasted hundreds of years. In terms of local societies, the colonial structure meant you were always beholden to someone far away. However important you thought you were as a sheikh, an imam, a warrior, etc., you still paid rent or tribute to someone else somewhere else. You could never be at the top of the hierarchy – this compressed society, making it in some ways more egalitarian than what followed.

The Arab Spring was the pulling apart of the boundaries and societies stitched together primarily by the British and the French in the aftermath of WWI,

■ *Corruption, Plus Money, Sex, and Humiliation*

Corruption: All of those societies suffer from endemic corruption. Some regimes with oil have wealthy tribal, religious, and princely elites, others such as Libya, or Iraq under Saddam, used oil wealth to fund the military that kept them in power. Secular dictatorships without oil, such as Egypt and Syria, concentrated wealth in the hands of the military-backed elite. Iran has oil, religious elites, and a military oligarchy. The middle class, where it exists, is small and generally beholden to the elites for employment – that is, the ability to earn money and support a family.

Islamic radicalism has no answer to the problem of the rise of educated and ambitious young people. Religious despots are not a positive alternative to secular despots.

Money: These countries are primarily statist and/or nominally socialist, with governments that dole out jobs, especially in government, which makes for inefficient job creation. Large numbers of educated young people can't find work because no government can ever crank out enough jobs, and people can't manage their way through the maze of government regulation to be market-based entrepreneurs. Technology-based entrepreneurialism is impossible in societies that regulate communication.

The UAE and Bahrain understood that and have been working on much more capitalist and non-oil-related job production for years. The fact that the UAE sent a module to Mars – and that more than 30% of the science team was female – is the outward evidence of an extraordinary leap forward.

On the other hand, back in 2011 it wasn't an accident that the Tunisian revolution was touched off by a young man with an "illegal" vegetable cart.

Sex and humiliation: For most people in the Arab world, sex is meant to be a function of marriage. The casual sex and single life of Western capitals is not available to average Arab men for religious, financial, and social reasons. But you need money to get married and they don't have jobs, so they can't. It is not an accident that young men with no hope of marriage are lured into jihad in part with the promise of virgins in the afterlife. Sex without money; sex without responsibility.

To be clear, marriage isn't just about sex: a wife, job, home, and family are the attributes of adulthood. But without jobs with a future, marriage is postponed, and young men often remain in their par-

ents' house well into their 30s. To be fully grown but less than an adult in the eyes of society is humiliating.

It wasn't an accident that the Tunisian vegetable vendor was pushed over the edge when a female police officer harassed him.

The good news is that Islamic radicalism has no answer to the problem of the rise of educated and ambitious young people. Religious despots are not a positive alternative to secular despots.

■ *America Mis-Steps In*

The bad news is that until the Trump administration, the United States made all the wrong moves. President Trump's policy successes in the Middle East consisted primarily of opening artificial floodgates and allowing for the passage of political currents already moving. This is not a small thing.

As early as 2006, during the war between Israel and Hezbollah, the editor-in-chief of a major Saudi paper wrote:

This war was inevitable as the Lebanese government couldn't bring Hezbollah within its authority and make it work for the interests of Lebanon. Similarly, (Abbas) has been unable to rein in the Hamas Movement. Unfortunately, we must admit that in such a war the only way to get rid of "these irregular phenomena" is what Israel is doing. The operations of Israel in Gaza and Lebanon are in the interest of people of Arab countries and the international community.

By 2021, Hezbollah had decimated the once prosperous and forward-looking Lebanon.

The Arab Spring turned ugly. In 2011, the government of Hosni Mubarak was removed – with American help – and replaced with the terror of a Muslim Brotherhood state that was, itself, ousted in 2013. Libya, under an Obama Administration-directed American military assault, crashed in 2011 and the wars since then have killed thousands, wrecked industry, fueled the migrant crisis, and provided weapons for ISIS and al Qaeda in Syria. And, of course, in Syria, the promise of the Spring encouraged the uprising against a brutal dictator, that led to the civil war. In that war, the U.S. supported and armed militias that it did not understand, which killed more than 600,000 people, displaced more than half of the Syrian population, and included the use of poison gas. Much of this was funded by Iran's largesse, which was partially American largesse.

American policy frightened governments around the region. The Gulf States, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan didn't want to be like Syria, if they had a choice. They did have a choice.

Suddenly, the allure of war and the ideological principle of throwing the Jews into the sea paled in comparison with figuring out how to stay in power and determine the role of the people under their systems of government. Technology,



President Trump hosts Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyani for the signing of Abraham Accords on the South Lawn of the White House. (Photo: White House / Shealah Craighead)

water, and the fight against Iran's export of radical ideology—both Shiite and Sunni—were better priorities, and some Arab states began to see Israel as a potential partner in their pursuit.

■ *The Abraham Accords*

A combination of things brought the Gulf States to create the Abraham Accords

- Fear of Iran
- Fear of the upheaval of the Arab Spring coupled with the understanding that new governing and economic models were necessary to stay in power
- Respect for the fact that the U.S., under President Trump, was a firm ally. Yes, a firm ally to Israel, but a firm ally. They began to think he could be their ally as well.

The Biden Administration's immediate slap at Saudi Arabia's position in the war with Yemen's Houthis began to undermine that conviction.

When Egypt made peace, it was looking for American weapons to replace the Russian weapons. When Jordan made peace, it needed Israeli security to prevent a Palestinian uprising in the Kingdom – and still does. A brave Jordanian military

officer once pointed out to a group of American military professionals that, if you look at the maps carefully, you see that Jordanian soldiers are pointed INWARD, planning to save the King from internal upheaval, not to attack Israel.

Under the Abraham Accords, Israel and the Gulf States have changed the dynamic in the region. There is an Israel-Gulf business association. Textbooks in the UAE tell Israel's real story – including the story of Jewish history in the Arabian Peninsula. Morocco, among other Arab states, has revised textbooks and is inviting Israelis publicly to visit Jewish history in Morocco.

■ *My New, Favorite Story*

The Association of Gulf Jewish Communities has been established to create a network of Jewish institutions across the region. [And yes, there are small indigenous Jewish communities.] One such institution is the Beth Din of Arabia, a rabbinical court to adjudicate communal and personal status issues among the Jewish population of the Gulf states. It will be headquartered in Bahrain.

Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Council

of the Emirates Yehuda Sarna will serve as the president of the new court, and Senior Rabbi of the Jewish Council of the Emirates Eli Abadie will be its presiding rabbi. Rabbi Abadie said, "This dates back to the Treaty of Umar and recognition from the advent of Islam of Judaism as a bona fide, monotheistic religion and 'people of the book.'" He noted that Jewish communities in Muslim lands were historically given religious autonomy to adjudicate their own personal status issues.

Rabbi Sarna adds, "The very presence of a rabbinical court is a signal of integration into local society, so exploration of how a rabbinical court interlocks with local judicial departments is really a larger question of how the Jewish community can become integrated into the fabric of Gulf countries."

The real impact of the Abraham Accords, then, is to offer Arab-driven political answers to the Arab Spring. Which bodes well for the region.

SHOSHANA BRYEN is Senior Director of The Jewish Policy Center and Editor of *inFOCUS Quarterly*.

Afghanistan: The Long War We Never Understood

by **THOMAS JOSCELYN**

Thomas Joscelyn is senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and senior editor of FDD's *Long War Journal*. Much of his research focuses on al-Qaeda and Islamic State operations, and U.S. military and political actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He has served as a consultant to the FBI counterterrorism division and has testified before both House and Senate Committees. This interview is taken from a JPC Webinar hosted by *inFOCUS* editor Shoshana Bryen. The full audio and video can be seen on the JPC website.

Thomas Joscelyn: I'll argue to the end of my life that the U.S. never really understood who we were fighting in Afghanistan. Just recently, President Biden said during a press conference that al-Qaeda was gone from Afghanistan. Some people say this was the slip of the tongue. I would say that the inclination of America's political elite has been, across both parties, and three different administrations now, to make that claim in one version or another.

It is rooted in the policy desire to get out.

And in fact, most of the past 10 years, America has just been trying to get out of Afghanistan as opposed to actually fighting to win or actually trying to affect some other policy outcome that makes sense. But if you ask a lot of senior policymakers, or politicians, or even people in the intel bureaucracy about al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, it's not a real organization for them. It became an abstraction in the minds of many people in Washington.

As the nerd who studies the biographies of terrorists, it's not an abstraction for me. The relationship between al-Qaeda and the Taliban is still strong. al-Qaeda is not gone from Afghanistan. Just since November of 2020, we've tracked firm evidence showing that they are in at least 18 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is the number two of the Taliban, is deeply in bed with al-Qaeda. He and his family really built

al-Qaeda. And if he's not al-Qaeda, he is as close to al-Qaeda as you can become without being al-Qaeda.

Which brings me this: al-Qaeda, twenty years after 9/11, remains a cohesive international organization. And the U.S. withdrawal is a boon for the global jihadi movement and al-Qaeda.

We are documenting right now how al-Qaeda in West Africa, East Africa, Syria, Yemen, and different components throughout South Asia and elsewhere, are all celebrating, saying this as a monumental victory. From their perspective, it's a reason to show that their violence, their terrorism, their jihadism has been validated. The mujahideen beat the Soviets the first time around in Afghanistan, and now the second iteration of jihadis have beaten America the second time around.

Sirajuddin Haqqani's father declared victory over the Soviets on behalf of the mujahideen. Now, today, he, the son, and you can just think of the psychological import of this, the son gets to declare victory over the Americans. This is a major development in the history of jihadism. It's a boon for al-Qaeda. And I believe this is going to have ramifications for a generation to come.

inFOCUS: YOU ARE THE EDITOR OF THE LONG WAR JOURNAL. TELL US WHAT A LONG WAR IS. IS IT ACTUALLY A WAY TO DEFEAT PEOPLE? DO WE HAVE TO PLAN TO BE AT

WAR FOR GENERATIONS BECAUSE THOSE GUYS LOOK LIKE THEY'RE GOING TO BE AT WAR WITH US FOR GENERATIONS?

Joscelyn: "Long War" was a term that bubbled up in the Pentagon very briefly to describe the effort against jihadist al-Qaeda and then its various derivatives. But it speaks to how the American side in this war never stuck to a formal definition or any definition, really, of who they were fighting. And you'll recall what was formerly known as the "global war on terror" slowly devolved into what was known as "overseas contingency operations," which is really just gibberish.

But why has it been a long war? The fundamental thing about our jihadist enemies on is that they're not organized like the conventional military forces we defeated in World War II. They are organized as insurgents, guerilla fighters. And as anybody who has studied insurgencies knows, they can bedevil us. They can be very difficult to overcome and defeat. Most people don't know this, but al-Qaeda has actually studied the Vietnamese insurgency. They studied Mao. They studied how to develop into an insurgency force capable of reconquering Kabul.

That insurgency platform has proliferated. You have al-Qaeda insurgencies, and ISIS insurgencies, which are a little bit different but draw from the same well, all over the globe. These

insurgencies are primed to fight a long war, and they're going to continue fighting a long war whether America fights it or not.

■ *The Role of Pakistan*

iF: PAKISTAN FORMED, HOUSED, AND RUNS THE TALIBAN, AND THE U.S. SUPPORTS PAKISTAN SIGNIFICANTLY. IS IT FAIR TO SAY THAT THE U.S. COULD HAVE PUSHED OUR ALLIES, PAKISTAN, AND SAUDI ARABIA, TO CURTAIL OR STOP THE TALIBAN AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST?

Joscelyn: *Long War Journal* has been banned in Pakistan for over eight years; the website is physically banned because the Pakistani government and military intelligence services have been deeply in bed with the Afghan Taliban leadership, the Haqqanis, and others. They have played a vital role in providing safe havens and support for the insurgency that has captured Kabul.

The possible fundamental miscalculation that the Pakistani establishment made is that what happens in Afghanistan doesn't stay in Afghanistan. And one of the first places that it spills over is Pakistan. We've documented daily how jihadis in the Pakistani Taliban, which is openly loyal to the Afghan Taliban, have been carrying out terrorist attacks almost every single day.

There is footage on CNN where [correspondent] Clarissa Ward interviewed a fighter. The fighter said, "Our goal was for sharia to be implemented here in Afghanistan, but that's not the end. Someday sharia will be implemented all over the world."

Much of the Taliban thinks along those lines, leaders and fighters.

Now, about America pushing Pakistan, one of the fundamental problems in the war in Afghanistan was that the initial invasion that overthrew the Islamic emirate in late 2001 came with a set of diplomatic demands that Secretary of State Colin Powell issued to

the Pakistani state.

And if you go through those demands, you'll realize that only one of the 10 or 11 demands was ever satisfied. The others were not. And part of the failure here is that there has been no consistent American leadership to hold Pakistan accountable for failing to live up to those other demands. We've only seen furtive attempts really to hold the Pakistanis accountable, like withholding aid for a time in 2017, but there's never been a systematic effort.

Then there is America's fear of Pakistan. Pakistan has had a fast-growing nuclear arsenal over the past 29 years, in a state teeming with jihadism, Islamism, and extremism. It's unstable.

The thinking in American quarters is we need their military to keep it together because who knows what happens if they can't. But I would say that that calculation came at the cost, in particular, of losing the war in Afghanistan to the jihadis who have been in bed with the Pakistani state. It's a complicated thing, and I think Pakistan may have miscalculated here, and there's going to be a surge in jihadism in Pakistan itself in the coming months.

■ *Nation Building*

iF: PRESIDENT BARAK OBAMA DID THE AFGHAN SURGE. AND HE MADE IT VERY CLEAR THAT THE PARAMETERS WERE AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN TOGETHER. TALK TO US ABOUT NATION-BUILDING. AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN WE SAY THAT THE WAY TO SOLVE THE JIHADI PROBLEM – THE SHARIA PROBLEM, THE TERRORISM PROBLEM – IS TO BUILD SOCIETIES OF WESTERN-ORIENTED PEOPLE. THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED, AND HE PUT A LOT OF MONEY IN IT.

Joscelyn: We've had presidents who didn't really care about this and didn't really want to deal with this. And given the rhetoric you just cited, keep in mind that more Americans died during the

surge under President Obama in Afghanistan fighting than during the rest of the war.

The commander in chief who oversaw that has been remarkably silent. That's because he had an ambivalence about being there in the first place, despite the flowery rhetoric about teaching girls to read and building a civil society. Remember, his surge came with an 18-month timestamp on it that said basically, we're going to fight for 18 months, and then we're going to start getting out. So, the surge he announced in 2009 had ended by 2011. Then, by 2014, he announced the end of America's combat operations in Afghanistan.

Think about that from a war-fighting perspective. How can you stay in a country that's ravaged by war, where the other party is continuing to fight, and you say, "Well, we're going to stay, but we're not going to have combat operations or fight?" Of course, America did continue to have combat operations. But it speaks to the psychological ambivalence and cognitive dissonance here on this war, and it explains a lot of the failures. America stayed there even after its political leaders had quit on the war.

It's not true that America has been nation-building in Afghanistan the whole time. It is true that an awful lot of money was wasted. It's also true that America has essentially rearmed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, making it stronger by giving it a stronger infrastructure and military than it had 20 years ago. This is a monumental debacle.

■ *Accountability for Failure*

iF: WHERE IS ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THIS? IS THIS A MILITARY FAILURE? IS IT A POLITICAL FAILURE?

Joscelyn: It starts with the political class. We need better political leadership. I'm going to criticize the military in a second, but look, for all his faults, I think President Bush was correct that each president has to synthesize this monumental amount of information

and make a decision based on the information at hand.

I would argue that American presidents have made the wrong decision time and time again when it comes to the Afghan war.

It goes back to the 1990s, when Bill Clinton passed up multiple opportuni-

cavalier regarding what was going on, not really paying attention. From 2014 on, the Afghans really did shoulder the burden in terms of casualties – 66,000 Afghan soldiers and security forces died in this war under feckless leadership from our generals. The casualty rate for the Americans was much, much, much

It wasn't until I started working with people in government or dealing with government agencies that I learned of the concept of "failing upward"...

ties to kill bin Laden and some of the senior al-Qaeda leadership with drone strikes. It's in the 9/11 Commission Report. President Bush, unfortunately, didn't kill Osama bin Laden. He could have done more to send American forces for a use of overwhelming force for a discrete period to really finish the senior al-Qaeda leadership, and he didn't. And that was a costly mistake.

And then Barack Obama comes in, and he doesn't really want to fight this war but has a surge and then ends it and says, "We're not going to fight at all, and we're going to have combat operations come home." And then, he also pursued these fanciful peace talks with the Taliban, and really a lot of apologies for the Taliban sunk in.

And then President Trump comes in 2017. He wants out. He says over and over again, "I want out." He agrees to stay, and then by 2018, he says, "We're out, and the Taliban is our counter-terrorism partner."

This is the type of nonsense in political leadership that we've seen. It starts with erratic political leadership and then goes to the military leadership. Military service members in the field did a great job with a bad hand, and they absolutely deserve our respect.

But the leadership has been so

lower, very small.

It wasn't until I started working with people in government or dealing with government agencies that I learned of the concept of "failing upward," and dealing with the generals of Afghanistan, that you could fail constantly. It didn't matter that you failed just as long as you were saying what people wanted to hear, and you were part of the herd. But how is it that we can have failure after failure

after failure, obvious failures, and there's never any accountability? That's the part that makes me pessimistic because can't make a comeback unless there's some sort of accountability for the failures at hand.

iF: WAS OUR NATION-BUILDING MISDIRECTED IN TRYING TO BUILD A GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

SIMILAR TO OURS, RATHER THAN WHAT MIGHT WORK FOR THEM?

Joscelyn: Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely. The problem was compounded on the military side because the U.S. and its allies built a Western-style military that wasn't built to fight the wars that Afghans fight. So that is absolutely correct, and again, there wasn't a consistent effort to build the Afghan government or Afghan security force, so I don't want to say it was a 20-year effort that was consistent or well thought out. But to the extent that there was an effort, it was that, and it was flawed.

■ *Iran and the Taliban*

iF: WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IRAN WILL ACTUALLY ALIGN WITH THE TALIBAN?

Joscelyn: Unfortunately, the Iranians own a share of this victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan. This was missed by a lot of our political leaders. The myth is that Iran was very helpful after the overthrow of the Taliban's Islamic emirate in 2001 and was on the side of the international community in trying to stand

The problem was compounded on the military side because the U.S. and its allies built a Western-style military that wasn't built to fight the wars that Afghans fight.

up a new government. But Khairullah Khairkhwa, who was at Guantanamo and is now a senior Taliban official, actually negotiated in 2000 and 2001 with the Iranians; he admitted it many times. He negotiated the agreement on behalf of Mullah Omar and the Taliban for the Iranians to help work with the Taliban against us in Afghanistan.

We can point to a number of

similar arrangements in which the Iranians provided facilitation, safe haven, arms, training for different parts of the Taliban's insurgency. They know the Taliban very well; better than we do. And they know how to reach accommodation with them, even though they were opposed to one another back as far as 1998.

iF: WAS THERE AN ASSUMPTION THAT EITHER THE TALIBAN WAS GOING TO TURN ON AL-QAEDA, OR THAT, IN FACT, THEY WERE NOT CLOSE?

Joscelyn: This is one of the key fault lines in this war: This narrative was false. In fact, the Taliban and al-Qaeda are not just two organizations that are aligned. They are blood brothers. They are intermingled. And oftentimes, you can't tell them apart because you don't really know who's the Taliban guy or who's an al-Qaeda guy. That's the lesson of the Haqqanis, for example.

This intermingling started in the mid-1990s. Mullah Omar never betrayed Osama bin Laden. He never turned him over to the West. But what

we came to learn, and this is one of the most disturbing aspects of this war, is that this Taliban apologia set in, a narrative that was basically pretending that the Taliban wasn't really culpable for al-Qaeda's actions. That the two really weren't all that close and there was this daylight between them that could be exploited if the circumstances were right.

The bottom line is that there's never been any evidence of that. There's never been any reason to believe that. Meanwhile, at *Long War Journal*, we've been accumulating almost on a daily basis more and more and more evidence of how intertwined the two really are.

iF: THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID THAT TALIBAN IS A "MORTAL ENEMY OF ISIS." REALLY?

Joscelyn: There is an ongoing ISIS threat in Kabul. We've reported on that. They are trying to play spoiler here. The reason why I talk a lot more about al-Qaeda in this situation is because, if you actually properly understand and define it, al-Qaeda just had a major strategic victory.

ISIS is trying but ISIS hasn't had a strategic victory in a long time. It has

never had anything close to what the Taliban-al-Qaeda axis did. In fact, there was a big ideological argument between the two sides. They have operational disagreements. This speaks to how confused the U.S. military became in Afghanistan that they didn't even know who they were fighting or on whose behalf they were fighting. They didn't even know anymore. They were confused. And that speaks to the systemic failures I'm talking about.

iF: PEOPLE WHO LISTEN TO THIS SHOW ON A REGULAR BASIS KNOW THAT I, BEING AN OPTIMIST, LIKE TO END EVERY CONVERSATION ON AN OPTIMISTIC NOTE. YOU'RE MAKING THAT VERY DIFFICULT.

Joscelyn: Sorry.

iF: ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE HELPED TO PUT THE DEBACLE IN KABUL INTO A PERSPECTIVE THAT IS BROAD AND DEEP. OUR UNDERSTANDING HAS INCREASED EXPONENTIALLY. AND FOR THAT, WE THANK YOU.



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Freedom Under Attack

review by SHOSHANA BRYEN

The movement is:

- Universal: Dealing with presumed ends of collectives – class, race, history.
- Teleological, or depersonalized: Not deriving from the aspirations of concrete persons but constituting the “destiny” of some collectivity.
- Final: Replacing flux with stability. The permanent ordering of the world, the thousand-year Reich, the end of history.
- Comprehensive: Involving everyone (and) all aspects of human life and society.
- Moral: Postulating the fulfillment of man’s moral mission.

• Promising an end to alienation: False consciousness, isolation, anomie, separation, loneliness, purposeless all are defined as subjective consequences of objective social ills (to be) eradicated through social engineering.

The practitioner’s “methods are as distinctive as his goals. He is...distinguished from other utopians by his willingness – no, his determination – to use state power to achieve these goals. ‘Scientific’ (ones) are those that organize and use power to achieve their goals. They understand... that revolutions are made by revolutionaries wielded into tight, purposeful organizations of dedicated zealots... Organization, they agree, is the scientific instrument for the seizure of political power. Party is crucial.”

Can you name the movement and/or its most prominent practitioners? Whether you can or not, the late Jeane J. Kirkpatrick’s *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics* is your next important read.

And hurry up.

In his 1967 gubernatorial inaugural address, Ronald Reagan said, “Freedom is a fragile thing and it’s never more than one generation away from extinction. It

is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation.”

If a generation is normally defined as 20-30 years, we’re late.

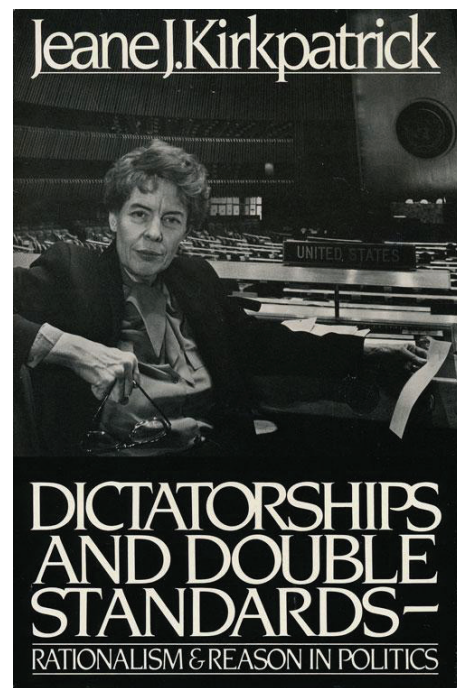
Ambassador Kirkpatrick is best remembered as Permanent Representative of the United States to the UN, where she was a strong voice for America and for Israel. She was also a professor of political science at Georgetown University and resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. She was, in Ronald Reagan’s cabinet, a Democrat.

■ *Authoritarians and Totalitarians*

Published in 1982, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* is not easy, but it is crucial. Things seemed simpler then, in Reagan’s first term. Yes, we had a recession and inflation, Iran was the enemy, the Soviets were the Evil Empire, and “Star Wars” as in missile defense was still on the drawing board. But people could still talk across party lines. World War II was a living memory and even Russia’s 1917 communist revolution could still be recalled by some.

In that era, the estimable Ambassador Kirkpatrick gave America a lesson in the differences between totalitarians and authoritarians. Between Hitler and Nicaragua’s Somoza. Between Stalin and Saudi Arabia’s King Khalid. Between people who were greedy, nasty, and mean but generally left the peasantry alone, and people who were greedy, nasty, and mean but also required the public to absorb the new social/religious/world order and abandon traditional notions of family, church, property, and state. She explained how those differences could and should inform American public policy.

We need a refresher course, because



today the Biden administration has been assiduously courting China, the Taliban, and Iran, totalitarians all. At the same time, there is a clear pullback from long-time partners Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

■ 2021

The current careless habit of people calling anyone who disagrees with them a Nazi is disgusting, but it is generally considered the disgusting careless habit of people who don’t remember the Holocaust, or the politics of Germany in the 1930s that led to Hitler. The same people don’t remember Stalin’s engineered Ukrainian famine.

No.

For every nasty or careless twitter-pundit, there are a great many people who know exactly how totalitarians come to power and consider the goals listed above to be a checklist. The blithe disregard for historical precision by the rest of us helps them immeasurably. [For an outstanding reminder of the slow, easy, bucolic rise of Nazi power – until it wasn’t – read Andrew Nagorski’s terrifying “Hitlerland,”

reviewed in *inFOCUS*, Summer 2013.]

Totalitarian would-bes are also helped by a lack of historical understanding about the United States, the balancing of rights, freedoms, and limitations; the role of the Constitution in limiting government. In a brilliantly upside-down description of progress in America, Kirkpatrick notes that “Government actions...could INCREASE the freedom of working children and their mothers and fathers by regulating wages, hours, and working condi-

Totalitarian would-bes are also helped by a lack of historical understanding about the United States, the balancing of rights, freedoms, and limitations; the role of the Constitution in limiting government.

tions. The concomitant RESTRICTIONS on employers’ freedom of contract did not seem to high a price to pay.”

Increase freedom for more people by adding restrictions to other people. It is the balance that is crucial, and she turns to the Founding Fathers and Federalist Papers for understanding:

[They] sought a political remedy – not a social, cultural, or economic remedy – to the political problem of how to govern...in such a manner as to preserve liberty, law, and government by consent. A properly constructed constitution would provide the answer... Expressions of perfectibility never struck root in American political culture, but the possibility of improvement and of progress is affirmed and emphasized.

Madison applauds “the genius of the whole system; the nature of just and constitutional laws; and above all, the vigilante and manly spirit which actuates the people of America – a spirit which nourishes freedom, and return is nourished by it.”

OK, the “manly” part is a little out of date, but the foundational thought runs

directly counter to today’s American “progressives” who insist on applying today’s “woke” morality to generations past. For them, it isn’t enough that Americans have progressed from having slaves to fighting a political war about slavery to fighting a physical war about slavery to establishing Civil Rights, Voter Rights and Welfare legislation to level the playing field. Today’s “progressives” not only believe in “perfectibility” now, but retrospectively. As if the literal erasure of people who sinned in ages

past according to the standard of today makes them more perfect. As if they don’t sin in this generation. As if “perfectibility” is achievable here and now, but only by them – see the checklist.

“The possibility of improvement and of progress” vs “You have to do what we say because we have the answer. How do we know we’re right? Don’t ask. We’re right.” You choose.

Kirkpatrick had no idea that political movements in contemporary America would divide “equality” and “equity” (a “social, cultural, or economic remedy to the political problem”) into separate categories, yet she went there.

In classical and welfare-state liberalism... the concern for equality is identical with the commitment to the widest possible sharing of freedom. Equality, then, is important... but it is never all-important, and it is never sought as an absolute... The United States, and others, preserve freedom of speech, press, and religion, due process, and related limits on government’s power to regulate the lives of its citizens.

The democratic welfare state’s continued emphasis on the liberty of the individual sharply distinguishes it

from a related but very different ideology whose principal goal is the destruction of the capitalist system in favor of a state-owned and -controlled economy.”

And, obviously knowing nothing of Critical Race Theory, Ambassador Kirkpatrick still nails the key to the American future.

Since public schools are the institution created and maintained by the whole society for the purpose of preparing the young for adult roles in the society, it seems inarguably clear that schools not only may but should teach democratic values. It is remarkable that the question should even be raised; nevertheless, it has been raised increasingly of late.

Concepts like truth, honor, teamwork responsibility, rule of law, restraint in the use of power, respect for others, must be introduced, illustrated, and transferred somehow into habits. In this process the roles of the school and the teacher are not only legitimate; they are irreducible, irreplaceable.

The strong suggestion – more than a suggestion – is that those who believe Ronald Reagan, who believe we are never more than one generation from losing those precious teachings that make America the beacon of freedom and liberty, should be running for School Board and County Council. That they should ensure that their congressional representatives remember that they are sent to Washington to REPRESENT them, not rule them.

In one of his rare public pessimistic moments, Reagan added in his gubernatorial address that freedom “comes only once to a people. And those in world history who have known freedom and then lost it have never known it again.” It’s not worth the risk to find out.

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■ *A Final Thought ...*

American Power

Afghanistan is not the lynchpin of American power and counterterrorism is not the only priority for the United States.

Even in the age of missile-based warfare, the freedom of navigation and the passage of goods, energy, and people on the seas is essential to a peaceful and prosperous world. Command of the seas and the ability to ensure this freedom is what makes a superpower. The United States is the only country that meets this definition; no one else can do what we can do and must do.

Beijing would have us believe China can and will be freedom's guarantor, but... no.

These are the steps:

- Return the U.S. Navy carrier task force to the Pacific and our fleet of strategic bombers to Guam. The Biden administration's decision to take them out was foolish and short-sighted. The White House must fix that.
- Shore up the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Return the Iran-backed Houthi rebels to the terror list and strengthen the embargo on Iranian weapons entering Yemen. In the Persian Gulf, our allies increasingly see Israel as an ally against global jihadism that threatens them and the countries of North Africa, as well as Jordan.

- Reiterate that U.S.-Israel security cooperation is, in the American view, essential to a peaceful Mediterranean Sea, NATO and Middle East. Cooperative research and development, procurement and training are as important to us as they are to Israel.

- Cancel the Iran talks in Vienna. Being honest about Iran's nuclear program will make America's word more credible in the region and elsewhere.

- Close the Mexican border to illegal immigration and issue a statement acknowledging that not only do our southern neighbors use that route, but so do terrorists who hide among them.

- Reopen the Keystone XL Pipeline. Energy independence as a key to American power.

And, finally, whatever you do, make it real—which leads to an important “don't.”

- Don't be satisfied with empty posturing.

The hole the United States is in today does not have to be permanent. But now for a little realism. The current administration isn't likely to take any—much less all—of these steps to carry the right message to America's allies and adversaries.