

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2018

*in*FOCUS

QUARTERLY

GLOBAL HOTSPOTS



J. Michael Waller on Trump's Foreign Policy Strategy | **Emanuele Ottolenghi** and **John Hannah** on Iranian Activities in South America | **Yaakov Lappin** on Israel's Strategic Buildup | **Simon Henderson** on Saudi Arabia's New Leadership | **Fred Fleitz** on North Korea's Belligerence | **Steven Metz** on U.S. Forces in Africa | **Harry Halem** on Naval Rivalry in the South China Sea | **James Lyons** on Confronting Middle East Challenges | **Shanthie Mariet D'Souza** on Trump's Afghanistan Plan | **Jiri Valenta** and **Leni Friedman Valenta** on the U.S.-Russia Relationship | **Shoshana Bryen** reviews *The Chinese Invasion Threat*

Featuring an Interview with Congressman Doug Lamborn (R-CO)

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

The world once seemed generally divided into “us” and “them.” Allies and Axis. America/NATO and Russia/Warsaw Pact. Israelis and Arabs; Israelis and Saudis on the same side of the equation was unthinkable. The world wasn’t necessarily safer then, but it was simpler. In the post-Cold War, post-9/11, post-Arab Spring world, lines are blurred, relationships are more complicated, and threats come from old and new sources in old and new configurations.

There are too many hot spots in too many geographic locations to define this issue of *inFOCUS* regionally. The Winter 2018 issue will go around the world, highlighting some spots that are in the news daily, but others that are not – but bear watching.

China, Hezbollah, and Iran – addressed by Harry Halem, Yaakov Lappin, and James Lyons respectively – are “the usual suspect” addresses for international upheaval. Emmanuele Ottolenghi and John Hannah, Steven Metz, and Simon Henderson take us on roads less traveled as they focus on Venezuela, Africa, and Saudi Arabia. Fred Fleitz addresses Korean reunification from the point of view of North Korea – something rarely

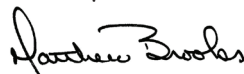
tried in the United States Indian assistance in Afghanistan was a small part of President Trump’s speech on America’s role in that country, but Shanthie Mariet D’Souza doesn’t discount the possibility. Jiri Valenta and Leni Friedman Valenta consider what will be left of Syria after the war. It is left to Michael Waller to make sense of American strategy in a disintegrating world.

Shoshana Bryen reviews The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan’s Defense and American Strategy in Asia by Ian Easton, in case you’d forgotten the threat China poses to our democratic friend Taiwan. China hasn’t.

And don’t miss our interview with Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO).

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,
Executive Director



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Global Conflicts: Can We Keep Tabs On It All?

by J. Michael Waller

With global conflicts stretching the United States toward the breaking point, many feared that the world's only super-power in 2017 was headed over a cliff.

Flailing policies in Afghanistan stole hard-fought American military gains and had made the Taliban enemy a player again. Things became even worse in Iraq, with ISIS jihadists forming their own caliphate in the north and into Syria, and the Islamic Republic of Iran conquering much of the rest of Iraq, including co-opting the U.S.-installed government in Baghdad. Iran not only built ballistic missiles and probably an atomic bomb, but received pallets of cash from Washington in the process – and now, as we are learning, a free pass for Hezbollah as part of the deal. North Korea proved its capacity with successful ballistic missile launches and underground nuclear tests.

Communist China built militarized reefs in international waters, hacked into the U.S. Office of Personnel Management records and stole the most personal details of every American who had applied for a security clearance, and embarked on an aggressive strategic nuclear weapons upgrade. Vladimir Putin's Russia unveiled a new generation of strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems without a peep of protest from Washington, indirectly had paid the husband and family foundation of a sitting secretary of state, shot down a Malaysian jetliner during its invasion and annexation of parts of Ukraine, and openly threatened NATO allies with subversion and destruction.

Chinese espionage and influence

operations are so vast that nobody in the U.S. can seem to keep track. Russia's aggressive intelligence collection and operations against the United States exceeded Cold War levels. Trans-national crime cartels, narcotics smuggling, human trafficking, child warriors, weapons proliferation, and other nightmares suddenly made Honduras and Peru, Uganda and Chad, Pacific Island microstates and other backwaters compelling national interests as illegal immigrants by the millions flooded the United States with impunity.

The Pentagon's 388-page *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* didn't even have a definition for "victory."

Without defining victory, the United States operated almost 800 military facilities in 70 countries and territories in 2015. They ranged from giant bases like Okinawa to small "lily pads" in Burkina

leadership and bureaucracies of the great multilateral organizations created and mostly funded by the United States and its closest allies, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, both based just blocks from the White House.

This was the background to outsider Donald Trump's transition to the presidency. Trump arrived at the White House doubly handicapped: He had trouble building a cohesive national security team and remained dogged by allegations that he or members of his inner circle had "colluded" with the Kremlin to win the 2016 election, along with some KGB hacking of electronic voting records.

The allegations seemed serious, considering the source: leaks and later public statements from senior officials in the FBI, CIA, and Director of National Intel-

He merged fellow populist Theodore Roosevelt's style, when "bully" meant "beautiful" or "wonderful" – two of Trump's favorite adjectives – with the modern sense of using intimidation or psychological force.

Faso, according to a study by American University Professor David Vine. The annual cost is estimated at between \$245 and \$300 billion. One of those bases, Al Udeid, Qatar, is a vital hub for the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which leads most of the fight against the very terrorists that the Qatar regime is indoctrinating and funding.

Russian, Chinese, and other unfriendly interests infiltrated the

ligence. The Trump team did a poor job addressing those allegations. It offered no guiding philosophy or strategy other than to "make America great again."

In inheriting the mess left by his predecessor, president Trump offered little concrete assurance that he would really fix things.

To this day, dozens of senior presidential posts remain unfilled in the State Department, Justice Department, and

Pentagon. Trump's first team under National Security Adviser Michael Flynn blew apart before it could assemble, with a decidedly establishmentarian figure, active duty Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, firing most of the Trump loyalists and building a team of Obama holdovers. The strong personality of Defense Secretary James Mattis, a retired Marine four-star general, provided a steady hand that favored Clinton-Obama defense experts anathema to Trump. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appointed few to carry out his bureaucratic reform objectives, relying heavily on the professional (and very ideological) foreign service and a dumpsterful of Obama loyalists.

For those in the national security and diplomatic fields – even many of his sympathizers and supporters – Trump seemed an unlikely person to come up with a coherent and workable strategy for American world leadership.

Then, days before Congress passed his promised tax reform, Trump released his first annual National Security Strategy. Brash Trumpian rhetoric that es-

diplomats to nuance his statements with the wishy-washy “what the president meant to say was”-type comments.

The president had hybridized the bully pulpit. He merged fellow populist Theodore Roosevelt's style, when “bully” meant “beautiful” or “wonderful” – two of Trump's favorite adjectives – with the modern sense of using intimidation or psychological force.

The foreign policy establishment hated it. But key players around the world loved his personal power and rhetoric, and strong sense of purpose. Instead of rallying his own diplomats, message-shapers, and others, Trump empowered foreign leaders who shared his interests to do the work on their own.

He showed the same trait in empowering U.S. military commanders waging the war against ISIS. The president delegated authority to the commanders themselves, with a simple order: Destroy the enemy.

This sense of empowering underlings, plus allies, coalition partners, and other sovereign powers that shared specif-

speech last July in Warsaw. In each speech, Trump singularly exercised brash but carefully calibrated leadership. He alienated friends, nominal friends, and allies on purpose in order to force them to deal on his terms, while empowering the people and countries he wanted to empower.

Standing in the Saudi capital before assembled world Muslim leaders, Trump ripped into individuals, governments, and regimes that directly or indirectly supported Islamist political indoctrination, subversion, and violence. He told Muslim leaders again and again to identify the Islamists and “drive them out.” That speech, and substantial behind-the-scenes politicking, sparked a remarkable transformation.

Suddenly, some of the worst challenges the U.S. faced in attacking jihadist ideology started to recede. The Wahhabi regime of Saudi Arabia took the lead in driving jihadist ideologues out of mosques, schools, political and administrative positions, and more. Allied with other Gulf states, the Saudis began a common purge, quickly isolating and squeezing the only Arab holdout – the rival Wahhabi regime of Qatar – which continued to support the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamists and jihadist terrorists of various stripes, and the Islamist Erdogan regime in Turkey and the Shi'ite Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ultimately, the Saudi response to Trump's December announcement that the U.S. would move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem was muted. Ditto for Egypt, Kuwait, and the UAE. The embassy move to Jerusalem, taboo for decades, for fear of alienating important Arab countries, wasn't such a big deal after all. This effort was, no doubt, worked behind the scenes by adept diplomacy among the U.S., Israel, and Arab countries, but the expenditures were minimal and with great effect.

Trump's Warsaw speech supported the efforts of Poland and a few other Central European countries to save their civilizations from foreign refugee invasions that would retard their demographics and ruin their national

...the best political and psychological warfare is backed with the threat of overwhelming destruction.

poused vague notions of American greatness coalesced December 18, 2017 into a thoughtful, purposeful roadmap. An “America First” strategy suddenly didn't seem so extreme, even though it was unabashedly Trumpian.

■ ***Business Experience and Personal Leadership***

Trump either didn't bother, or more likely was not prepared, to reorganize his government and appoint MAGA people to senior posts before he grew his presidential worldview. He used the theatrical power of his strong personality as a blunt instrument, yet did so with surgical precision. It was almost as if he didn't need his (overwhelmingly unsupportive)

ic interests with America, became a core of Trump's national security strategy. It was as if he had borrowed from his come-from-behind presidential campaign in a crowded field and used his simple and personal forcefulness to throw his opponents off-track and empower those with shared interest. He let his own personality generate tens of millions of dollars of free media to keep his costs down and let others carry his message.

It was as if he already had the key to regaining America's dominance around the world for pennies on the dollar.

Trump's strategic worldview coalesced in two major speeches: his “drive them out” address in Riyadh last May; and his “defense of Western civilization”



President Donald Trump delivers remarks regarding the Administration's National Security Strategy on December 19, 2017. (Photo: Joyce N. Boghosian / White House)

identities. No longer were Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic isolated under German Chancellor Angela Merkel's satisfied thumb. Trump supported their courage more strongly than he endorsed Britain's exit from the European Union. And he didn't shrink from his critics. Indeed, he seemed to derive more energy from their opposition.

This was leadership. Many found it shocking, and branded the president a reckless rogue. Donald Trump, a new president who had never governed beyond his family business, virtually isolated from Congress and the federal bureaucracy and with an administration in disarray, was guiding the United States through countless crises and challenges that had seemed to be without end.

■ **Empowerment and Leverage**

Trump spelled out much of his approach in his national security strategy. He had a simple formula. He made a vision statement, based on American founding principles and placing the well-being of all American citizens first. He explained his approach or business model. He prioritized. He delegated. He expected others to share responsibility. He challenged and empowered others.

He offered respect to all, rallying competition but demanding fair play. He would tolerate no nonsense. He set out a new kind of American leadership in the world. He wasn't going to try to save every failed state. Countries that can't or won't lift themselves up with some help, he explained, would be left to fail. Or the private sector could do the work without burdening the American taxpayer.

Decentralization is one of the keys. Washington cannot – and will not – try to manage everything any more. Successive interventionist administrations, Democrat and Republican, had tried to lead the world through management, Trump reasoned. They became so complacent leading the world's only superpower that they stopped seeing the subversive and military threats around them until too late. Then they would jump into a conflict or war for lack of foresight and integration of all elements of statecraft. Again and again and again. With no plan for victory.

Citing the American founders, Trump noted in his strategy that every human being has a God-given right to be a sovereign individual. Every person has a role to play if they wish. Governments answer to the people, not vice-versa.

Nations, too, are sovereign. In Trump's words, "peace, security, and prosperity depend on strong, sovereign nations that respect their citizens at home and cooperate to advance peace abroad." There's a mutuality, a reciprocity here, just as in business, but also a sense of fair play. Governments had to earn their place by how they respected their citizens and cooperated with the rest of the world.

This is not globalism. And it certainly is not isolationism.

Allies, in Trump's view, don't need to be a burden. They should be assets. "Allies and partners magnify our power," the National Security Strategy says. "We expect them to shoulder a fair share of the burden of responsibility to protect against common threats." Alliances and partnerships will be voluntary and mutually reinforcing: "We are not going to impose our values on others. Our alliances, partnerships, and coalitions are built on free will and shared interests. When the United States partners with other states, we develop policies that enable us to achieve our goals while our partners achieve theirs."

This is businesslike statecraft. This is an economizing approach. It requires fewer diplomats, bureaucrats, lawyers, troops, and tax dollars. It allows the United States to look after its interests by empowering and expecting others to do the same, and working with those who share our own interests.

■ **Defeat and Destroy**

To President Trump, winning is mandatory. It is not a matter of military power. It is a matter of mindset. His strategy repeatedly states that the United States and its allies and partners should "defeat" all enemies and "destroy" jihadist terrorists and ideologues. America's diplomats must become less complacent and more outgoing: "We must upgrade our diplomatic capabilities to compete in the current environment and to embrace a competitive mindset." As part of what he called "information statecraft," Trump said "We will improve our

understanding of how adversaries gain informational and psychological advantages across all policies. The United States must empower a true public diplomacy capability to compete effectively in this arena.”

“We need our allies to do the same,” Trump said, about modernizing and improving, “and affirm the political will to win.”

■ *Asymmetric vision*

As laid out in the National Security Strategy, Trump understands asymmetric warfare better than previous American presidents. According to his strategic vision, the nation’s adversaries are strong because they study our institutions, processes, philosophy, and actions, to look for our weak points. Here is some of what he said:

- “Adversaries target sources of American strength, including our democratic system and our economy.”

- “Adversaries studied the American way of war and began investing in capabilities that targeted our strengths and sought to exploit perceived weaknesses.”

- “Russia aims to weaken U.S. influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners.”

- “Through modernized forms of subversive tactics, Russia interferes in the domestic political affairs of countries around the world.”

- These approaches “enable adversaries to attempt strategic attacks against the United States – without resorting to nuclear weapons – in ways that could cripple our economy and our ability to deploy our military forces.”

- America’s “adversaries and competitors become adept at operating below the threshold of open military conflict and at the edges of international law. Repressive, closed states and organizations, although brittle in many ways, are often more agile and faster at integrating economic, military, and especially informational means to achieve their goals.”

- “Repressive leaders often collaborate to subvert free societies and corrupt

multilateral organizations.”

- “They employ sophisticated political, economic, and military campaigns that combine discrete actions.”

- “They are patient and content to accrue strategic gains over time – making it harder for the United States and our allies to respond.”

- “Such actions are calculated to achieve maximum effect without provoking a direct military response from the United States. And as these incremental gains are realized, over time, a new status quo emerges.”

- “The United States must prepare for this type of competition. China, Russia,

the U.S. global presence, while maximizing the economic benefit for American workers, businessmen, and investors. America finds allies and partners valuable, but only those with shared goals, a shared material burden, and the will to win. That cuts the burden even further.

Weak and emerging friends and partners who accept American help must earn their own place in the value chain so they can be sovereign and self-sufficient, or at least mutually beneficial to the United States, thus slashing the American burden even more. Those who will not implement sensible policies to prosper must fall by the wayside and accept char-

Weak and emerging friends and partners who accept American help must earn their own place in the value chain so they can be sovereign and self-sufficient...

and other state and non-state actors recognize that the United States often views the world in binary terms, with states being either ‘at peace’ or ‘at war,’ when it is actually an arena of continuous competition. Our adversaries will not fight us on these terms. We will raise our competitive game to meet that challenge, to protect American interests, and to advance our values.”

He didn’t say it plainly in his strategy, but Trump shows that he views world politics as constant political and psychological warfare. That type of conflict is cost-effective and can keep competition below the military tripwire. However, the best political and psychological warfare is backed with the threat of overwhelming destruction. In the words of the National Security Strategy, “We must convince adversaries that we can and will defeat them – not just punish them if they attack the United States.”

This is a real integrated approach to American national interests. American leaders should do what is best for the nation and the people. Not for other nations and people. That criterion alone slashes

ity from others. Re-vamping intelligence collection and analytical capabilities for long-term strategic purposes to anticipate events, cuts expenses by reducing the need for costly reactive policies. The same is true for those who would harm us.

Just when it seemed as if American global power was falling off the precipice, a brash and novice president found a way to prioritize national interests and economize the instruments of statecraft. Much of Donald Trump’s strategy recognizes and accepts the status quo. What’s revolutionary is his vision to regain American supremacy, build alliances, and defeat adversaries without bankrupting the country. If he starts appointing people fit for the job who share his views, he can make America great again.

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Venezuela: Narco-State Meets Iran-Backed Terror

by **EMANUELE OTTOLENGHI** and **JOHN HANNAH**

As if the political and economic chaos wracking Venezuela wasn't worrying enough, a couple of recent stories underscore the potential national security threat brewing there. First, last February's designation of Venezuela's vice president, Tareck El Aissami, as a drug kingpin by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Second, a CNN investigative report revealing that Venezuela's embassy in Iraq was allegedly selling Venezuelan passports and identity documents to Middle Eastern nationals. The CNN report doubled down on revelations that the Venezuelan embassy in Syria had engaged in similar activities in 2013, when a key Hezbollah liaison in Venezuela, the Treasury-sanctioned and FBI-wanted Ghazi Atef Nassereddine, was the deputy ambassador in Damascus. If true, such reckless action would almost certainly facilitate the entry of Islamist militants to Latin America. Put all this together and what do you get? A rabidly anti-American failed state that is aggressively incubating the convergence of narco-trafficking and jihadism in America's own backyard.

Venezuela's links to the drug trade are deep and well documented. In 2009, for example, the U.S. Department of Treasury sanctioned Venezuelan national, Walid Makled Garcia, under the Kingpin Act for drug trafficking. Makled was eventually arrested in Colombia and extradited to Venezuela, where he stood trial. According to the February 2017 Treasury designation of Vice President El Aissami, Makled's cocaine shipments enjoyed the protection of the vice president, who received payments from



Former Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (R) and former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (L) in Caracas in 2012. (Photo: AFP)

Makled in exchange for facilitating the shipments. These included shipments to the United States. During his trial, Makled claimed to have bribed and worked with the highest echelons of the Venezuelan state to keep his cocaine business running smoothly.

Subsequent cases showed that Venezuelan collusion with the cartels reaches the highest levels of the state. Two nephews of President Nicolas Maduro were arrested in Haiti and convicted on drug trafficking charges by a federal jury in Manhattan in November 2016. General Néstor Luis Reverol Torres – Venezuela's current minister of interior and justice, and former head of its national anti-narcotics agency – was indicted in the United States last August on cocaine trafficking charges, along with a former captain in Venezuela's National Guard. The list

of officials implicated in narco-trafficking also includes a former minister of interior and justice, two senior intelligence officers who later became governors, and now Vice President El Aissami.

The country's economy is a seemingly endless downward spiral, yet the regime retains control. That's partly because of the collusion of officials at the highest levels of power with drug cartels, whose limitless financial resources keep Maduro and his cronies afloat.

The implications for Washington are extremely damaging and not simply in terms of the drugs and violence flowing across the southern border. In El Aissami's case, five of the 13 entities sanctioned were Miami-based LLC's. Their illicit activity compromises the integrity of the U.S. financial system.

Of no less concern is Venezuela's long

history of collaboration with Iran, including sanctions evasion, terror finance, and ideological subversion. During the presidencies of Hugo Chávez and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Caracas was a key

Argentina's former president, Kristina Fernandez de Kirchner and the Iranian regime to cover up Tehran's and Hezbollah's role in the terror attack. Iran's Argentina-based intermediaries all have

mostly in 100 Bolivars notes, had been rendered worthless by hyperinflation. Venezuela suddenly announced it was withdrawing the bills from circulation in December 2016, causing a run on the banks (their cutoff date was since repeatedly extended). Even before they ceased being legal tender, the bills were only worth a few U.S. cents apiece, but had one redeeming quality: they are made with the same quality paper produced by the U.S. supplier to the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing and are therefore a favored choice for counterfeiting U.S. currency. If turned into \$100 bills, the useless Bolivars would suddenly have been worth 2 billion dollars.

Early reports indicated that the money was destined to be traded on the black market in Ciudad Del Este, a Paraguayan frontier town in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, and the home of U.S. designated Hezbollah counterfeiters. It is also possible that the money would first go through Bolivia's money houses, which still exchange Bolivars at Venezuela's fictitious official rate. Even if that were the case, Bolivian money changers would seek to make a profit from the worthless currency – and the easiest way to do that is if the cash would eventually be sold to local counterfeiters.

Cooperation did not stop at banking and business. Caracas also helped Tehran promote virulent anti-Americanism across Latin America.

facilitator of Tehran's sanctions-busting efforts. The two regimes established business ventures and financial institutions in Venezuela, which they used to launder Iranian money, procure technology, and bribe senior Venezuelan officials.

Cooperation did not stop at banking and business. Caracas also helped Tehran promote virulent anti-Americanism across Latin America. Indeed, Venezuela has increasingly become a center for Iran's revolutionary agitation in the Western Hemisphere.

In 2004, Tehran established the Centro de Intercambio Cultural Iran LatinoAmerica, or CICIL, in Caracas. CICIL is run by Islam Oriente, a foundation based in the Iranian religious center of Qom and headed by Mohsen Rabbani – the Iranian cleric implicated in the 1994 bombing of the Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. Rabbani's emissaries use Venezuela as a forward operating base for their Latin American activities, which include exporting the Iranian revolution, radicalizing local Muslims, helping Hezbollah consolidate its foothold among Western Hemisphere Lebanese communities, and linking to social and political movements that share Iran's anti-American agenda. Iran's missionary work in Latin America has often been downplayed as either innocuous or ineffective. Yet recent revelations about the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires have exposed a collusion between

links to Rabbani's missionary network. Some of them have been arrested, while the former president, as of this writing, is facing an arrest warrant for her role in the alleged cover-up.

Less understood is the Venezuelan nexus between organized crime and Iran's radical Islamic network, especially its most dangerous terrorist proxy, Hezbollah. Hezbollah has used South America as a base for its terror-finance networks for decades, laundering money on behalf of criminal organizations and using the profits to finance its quest for power in Lebanon, military adventurism in Syria, and terrorism overseas. In turn, its criminal activities benefit the Venezuelan regime.

Hezbollah has used South America as a base for its terror-finance networks for decades, laundering money on behalf of criminal organizations and using the profits to finance its quest for power...

A case in point is the February 2017 discovery by Paraguayan law enforcement agencies of 25 tons of Venezuelan currency hidden in cloth sacks and stashed in the home of a weapons merchant in the frontier town of Salto del Guaira, on the Paraguay-Brazil border. Two of the suspects have criminal records for arms smuggling. The money,

Suspensions of a narco-Hezbollah connection were also confirmed by local sources. In communications with one of the authors, local intelligence officials confirmed that Hezbollah operatives in the area have been seeking Bolivars for months. They also see a link between those arrested and another local Hezbollah operative.



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. (Photo: Mohammad Berno / Iranian President's Office)

It remains to be seen if these connections will be confirmed. But it's clear to see why Iran, Hezbollah, and Venezuela would all benefit from such a scheme. Suffering from a self-inflicted economic disaster, Venezuela is running

facilitator of the Venezuela-Hezbollah connection, favors the injection of billions of counterfeit greenbacks into the global economy because such a step is damaging to the U.S. financial system. The sanctioning of a Quds Force net-

The Bolivars seizure – one of many in the area since 2015 – illustrates the potential repercussions of paying insufficient attention to the boiling crisis in Venezuela. The country is a failed narco-state run by a clique of greedy anti-American ideologues in cahoots with Islamic radicals beholden to Iran, the world's foremost state sponsor of terror. As long as the Maduro regime governs in Caracas, the crisis that is consuming Venezuela will further strengthen Washington's enemies in the Western Hemisphere. Developing a coherent strategy to address this deadly convergence of threats should continue to be a high priority for U.S. policymakers.

As long as the Maduro regime governs in Caracas, the crisis that is consuming Venezuela will further strengthen Washington's enemies...

out of foreign currency reserves. Turning worthless currency into greenbacks helps address that problem. Hezbollah gets a hefty commission for the job and gains political leverage in Venezuela in exchange for its help. Iran, as the key

work producing counterfeited currency to fuel the Yemen civil war shows that in this area, as in many other illicit activities, Iran unscrupulously engages in rogue behavior to promote its proxies and tend to their financial needs.

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The IDF's Priority: War Readiness

by YAAKOV LAPPIN

Israel is enjoying a period of relative calm, but in five to ten years, its strategic environment will likely be significantly more complex and challenging than it is today. For that reason, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has, under the Gideon multi-year working plan, placed combat training and war readiness at the top of its agenda.

The IDF General Staff has identified the objective of attaining a good state of war readiness, and keeping this readiness high, as a crucial objective for Israel in the medium to long term. It is an objective that has been neglected in past years due to budget instability and the lack of a clear strategic directive to place war readiness front and center.

This dangerous blind spot appears to have been corrected. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot is intensively promoting the objective of war readiness throughout the whole of the military. A multi-year working plan provides a stable funding environment in which this can be achieved.

The stable truces in place with Hamas and Hezbollah, and the freeze in Iran's nuclear program, allow the IDF time and space to focus on combat training and force build-up, thereby giving Israel the ability to prepare for a more dangerous future. The truces are fueled by Israeli deterrence and an Israeli ability to skillfully leverage influences on enemy decision-making.

Both of the hybrid terrorist-guerilla armies, Hezbollah and Hamas, are bogged down by challenges of their own. Despite their ideologies, they are reluctant to initiate a full-scale clash with Israel at this stage, as that would expose

them to devastating Israeli firepower.

Such deterrence, could, however, prove time-limited. The prospect of combat with these foes, even if unintended, seems likely to grow with time. The risk of clashes with Hezbollah and Hamas will also be joined over time by new threats, the seeds of which can already be discerned.

As Maj. Gen. Herzl Halevi, head of the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate, said in June, "Israel's power deters all enemies in all arenas, state and non-state ... but there is a basic instability, and an increase in non-state actors. Their force build-up is intensifying, increasing the chances of scenarios of [a security] deterioration, even if no one wants these scenarios."

...truces are fueled by Israeli deterrence and an Israeli ability to skillfully leverage influences on enemy decision-making.

Several factors point to a likely increase of threats. An assessment of these confirms the wisdom of Eisenkot's directive to focus on achieving and maintaining good war readiness now, while conditions allow.

The Iranian regime has not given up its strategic objective of obtaining nuclear weapons. The sunset clauses on the nuclear deal will lift key restrictions over the next eight to thirteen years. Assuming the hard-line Shiite ideological-religious camp and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) continue to control Iran's foreign and military policies,

the Islamic Republic will be able restart its nuclear program at the end of the sunset clauses (if it does not cheat and breach the agreement beforehand).

Iran could begin enriching uranium again (using improved techniques it is currently researching) to bring it to nuclear breakout, and could try to reach that point at a time of its choosing. Its missile program is already developing. This means Israel could find itself in a state-to-state conflict in the not too distant future.

Additionally, Arab Sunni states threatened by Iran have launched civil nuclear programs of their own. These could turn out to be the initial stages of military nuclear programs, designed to counter Iran's nuclear shadow.

The prospect of a nuclear arms race in the region is therefore very real. It might develop as an added layer on top of the fast-paced conventional arms race that already exists throughout the Middle East.

An arms race in a region marked by instability and multiple failed states calls for an IDF that is capable of dealing with both non-state actors and state militaries that might, in the future, fall under the command of revolutionary Islamists. The latter are seeking to topple the pragmatic, rational Arab Sunni governments that currently share many interests with Israel.



Soldiers of the IDF's Givati Brigade train alongside U.S. Army forces in 2016. (Photo: IDF)

Meanwhile, powerful hybrid non-state actors, which are part army and part terrorist-guerrilla, are building up their forces near Israel's borders. Hezbollah in particular, though also Hamas, continues to build up its offensive capabilities. The Iranian missile factories set up in Lebanon are the latest indication of Hezbollah's ambitious force build-up program, which threatens the Israeli home front as well as strategic targets inside Israel.

Where Syria once existed as a centralized state, an assortment of well-armed Iranian-backed forces is gaining strength. The Shiite axis in Syria combats Sunni rebel organizations (some of them fundamentalist and jihadist) and receives Russian air support.

A number of these non-state entities are arming themselves with destructive firepower, including precision-guided heavy rockets and missiles. These capabilities were once reserved for the great powers. Halevi described this situation as one in which "great military power is falling into irresponsible hands."

The IDF is busy building up its own capabilities, and it remains the most potent military force in the Middle East. But as time progresses, Israel's strategic depth is shrinking due to the mass production of precision weaponry by Iran's military industries and the trafficking of

such weapons to Iranian proxies.

Israeli war readiness programs have doubled combat training for conscripts and reserves. The IDF is also working to ensure it has sufficient ammunition, fuel, and other equipment necessary to sustain prolonged combat operations in multiple arenas, including ones that do not border Israel.

IDF sources indicate that the military's force build-up program is being modeled on the assessment of enemy capabilities, not on potential scenarios. This more flexible approach is significantly better suited to the unpredictable, volatile Middle East that is taking shape.

Israel is mass-producing armored personnel carriers and tanks with Rafael's Trophy active protection system on board, meaning IDF formations moving into enemy territory in the future will not be hindered by shoulder-fired missiles and RPGs.

The air force is building up its ability to strike unprecedented numbers of targets in very little time and is developing firepower the Middle East has yet to witness.

Military intelligence is combining big data with hi-tech sensors to gather more information on more targets than ever before. An IDF C4i network is taking shape that will be capable of delivering that intelligence to the units that

need it in real time.

The IDF is also creating more border security battalions whose sole task is defense, thereby freeing infantry to conduct more war training.

There is much trouble on the horizon in the region. Despite the fact that the Middle East constitutes only five percent of the world's population, 58 percent of world refugees are Middle Easterners fleeing lands ravaged by conflict and radicalism.

According to Military Intelligence figures, 21 million youths in the Middle East have no access to an education system, meaning they will be prime recruitment targets for Islamist terrorist forces in the future.

Societies in places like Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have broken apart, and a lost generation is growing up without any viable solutions.

"I doubt any new Marshall plan can be applied," Halevi said in June, in reference to this situation. "The world must be explicitly disturbed."

YAAKOV LAPPIN is the Israel correspondent for Jane's Defense Weekly and author of *Virtual Caliphate: Exposing the Islamist State on the Internet*. A version of this article appeared in the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies's *Perspective Papers*.

The Next Generation of Saudi Rulers

by **SIMON HENDERSON**

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman appears to be shredding our understanding about how Saudi Arabia is ruled. Seeking to consolidate his power, he threw caution and consensus-building – the traditional techniques of Saudi leadership – out the window months ago, proceeding instead with almost reckless speed and an apparent disregard for winning the support of his uncles and numerous cousins. The arrest of 11 princes on charges of corruption suggest the royal family, the House of Saud, is no longer above the law.

Commentary over Mohammed bin Salman's recent moves has been divided between predictions that he is leading the country toward dictatorship or toward family revolt. But a careful examination of Mohammed bin Salman's actions and statements over the last year suggests that he is more calculating than impetuous. The Saudi attorney general said that the corruption investigations had been going on for three years, while Mohammed bin Salman mentioned the wide-ranging crackdown on corruption in a May interview. "I assure you that any person involved in a corruption case, whether minister, prince, or whatever, will not escape," he said.

Meanwhile, since April, Mohammed bin Salman, now 32, has been quietly orchestrating the appointments of a range of young princes in their late twenties or thirties to positions of power. They will likely be crucial to the success of his remodeling of the kingdom and could emerge as arbiters of power for decades to come. They are all either the grandsons or great-grandsons of

the kingdom's founder, Ibn Saud, who died in 1953. Mohammed bin Salman is entirely prudent in promoting these younger cousins, appealing to their ambition and vanity, and securing their loyalty. It is a good way of internalizing any competition between family lines – Ibn Saud had more than 40 sons, and the number of grandsons is in the hundreds. Mohammed bin Salman's actions have so far forestalled a collective family revolt, proving once again the utility of that old adage: divide and conquer.

As in all monarchies, bloodline is often more important than competence for prospective leaders in Saudi Arabia. Mohammed bin Salman probably wants to promote talent – but will also be pay-

- Abdulaziz bin Fahd is a great-grandson of Ibn Saud and deputy governor of the Jawf region, bordering Jordan, since June 2017. His father, a soldier, was made commander of Saudi ground forces in April 2017.

- Faisal bin Sattam was appointed ambassador to Italy in June 2017. He had shown early sympathy for the rise of Mohammed bin Salman: As a member of the Allegiance Council (the grouping of senior family members), he voted against Prince Muqrin becoming deputy crown prince in 2014, an early sign of belonging to the Salman camp. (Muqrin became crown prince on King Abdullah's death in January 2015 but was replaced by King Salman three months later. The late King

As in all monarchies, bloodline is often more important than competence for prospective leaders in Saudi Arabia.

ing attention to how to deflect resentment or the hint of opposition. Promoting sons can take some of the pain out of fathers being sidelined.

The House of Saud has witnessed difficult transitions before. What's different this time is that age is no longer equivalent to seniority and instead may have become a handicap. Comparative youth necessarily means a relative lack of experience, but that is a risk which Mohammed bin Salman seems to have decided he can handle.

The young up-and-coming princes to watch are (in alphabetical order):

Abdullah is reported to have schemed to replace Muqrin with Salman, thereby creating an opening as crown prince for the king's son Miteb, who was sacked as national guard minister and is one of those detained.)

- Abdulaziz bin Saud is the 30-year-old interior minister, appointed in June 2017. He replaced his full uncle and the then-crown prince, Muhammad bin Nayef, who was forced to resign. Abdulaziz bin Saud's father is governor of the oil-rich Eastern Province, where Saudi Shiites form a local majority. His new powers were curtailed within days of



Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud. (Photo: Kremlin.ru)

his appointment by the transfer of some of his responsibilities to a new state security organization. If he was upset, he didn't show it publicly.

- Abdulaziz bin Turki, 34, is deputy chairman of the General Sport Authority, appointed June 2017. His father, Turki bin Faisal, served as ambassador in Washington and London, as well as head of the kingdom's external intel-

He is the Oxford-educated son of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the former ambassador to the United States who cultivated ties with multiple American presidents.

- Khalid bin Salman, 29, was appointed as the Saudi ambassador to Washington this year. He is a former F-15 pilot and full brother of Mohammed bin Salman.

- Saud bin Khalid was appointed deputy governor of Medina in April 2017.

Comparative youth necessarily means a relative lack of experience, but that is a risk which Mohammed bin Salman seems to have decided he can handle.

ligence body, the General Intelligence Presidency. Of late, Turki bin Faisal has engaged in public discussions with former Israeli officials.

- Ahmed bin Fahd, a great-grandson of Ibn Saud, was appointed deputy governor of the Eastern Province in April 2017. His father, who had been deputy governor of the Eastern Province from 1986 to 1993, died in 2001.

- Bandar bin Khalid, 52, was appointed advisor to the royal court in June 2017. His father is governor of Mecca Province.

- Khalid bin Bandar was appointed ambassador to Germany in June 2017.

- Turki bin Muhammad, 38, was appointed advisor to the royal court in June 2017. His father, a son of the late King Fahd, was governor of the Eastern Province from 1985 to 2013.

A prince who would have made this list was Mansour bin Muqrin, the deputy governor of Asir Province, who was killed in a helicopter crash on November 5. He had served as deputy governor since 2013 and was made advisor to King Salman in April 2015, when his father was pushed from the position of crown prince. There is considerable speculation that he disliked Mohammed bin Salman,

which is plausible because his father had been sidelined. An additional rumor is that his death was not accidental, for which, as yet, there is no evidence.

This list of princes is also notable for who is absent. It does not include any sons or grandsons of the late King Abdullah, and has only one grandson of King Fahd. Any direct relatives of Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, one of the so-called Sudairi Seven, are also absent. The omission is easily explicable: Ahmad is thought to have voted in the Allegiance Council against the appointment of Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince in June this year.

Mohammed bin Salman clearly sees himself, and is seen by his father, as the next king of Saudi Arabia. The latest rumor is that the change may happen relatively quickly. Traditionally, the success of his transition would depend as much as anything on acceptance and support in the wider royal family, but Mohammed bin Salman's impatience and ambition suggest that won't be an option. Instead, his authority will rely on the backing of those in this list.

Another group that could prove crucial is princes in the military. These are harder to identify and are essentially in their positions to stop coups. A 1985 State Department cable released by WikiLeaks is rather dated but provides a good overview. "The mere presence of princes in the Armed Forces provides some degree of stability to the Al Saud regime," it concludes.

King Salman is thought to see Mohammed bin Salman as a modern-day Ibn Saud, a potentially great leader with huge ambition, and much more promising than any other, older potential contenders for the throne. But even Mohammed bin Salman appears to realize that, in order to transform his kingdom's economy and cope with the challenges of regional chaos, he must be the leader of a royal team.

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Addressing A Nuclear North Korea

by **FRED FLEITZ**

Do North Korea's nuclear and missile programs represent deterrence to protect it from an attack by the United States, defensive weapons the world can live with, or are they an existential threat to South Korea, Japan and the United States that may require the use of U.S. military force to address?

These questions are being debated in light of major advances in both programs over the last year and go to the heart of difficult decisions that President Donald Trump must make concerning North Korea that could cause or prevent a cataclysmic war.

■ *The Program as a Deterrent*

Until recently, it was plausible to argue that North Korea might be developing ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons for defensive reasons – as a deterrent. North Korean officials have made this argument on many occasions, claiming their nuclear weapons and the missiles to carry them will prevent the Kim Jong Un regime from suffering the fate of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Moammar Qaddafi in Libya.

The North Korean news agency said in January 2016 after North Korea's fourth nuclear test, "History proves that powerful nuclear deterrence serves as the strongest treasured sword for frustrating outsiders' aggression."

In addition, there has long been a concern that any use of military force against North Korea would result in a deadly counterattack against South Korea and possibly Japan. Nearly half of South Korea's population of 51 million

lives within 50 miles of the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Ten million live in the capital, Seoul, only 30 miles from the DMZ. There are 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea plus their family members.

A North Korean counterattack could kill millions. The North has an estimated 8,000 artillery cannons and rocket launchers near the DMZ, many hidden underground, which could fire an estimated 300,000 rounds on the South in the first hour of a counterattack. In addition, North Korea is believed to have hundreds of ballistic missiles capable of striking South Korea and Japan. *The Washington Post* reported on August 8, 2017 that the U.S. Intelligence Community had concluded that North Korea has "produced nuclear weapons for ballistic missile delivery, to include delivery by ICBM-class missiles."

In the same article, *The Post* reported that the U.S. Intelligence Community believes the North has up to 60 nuclear weapons. North Korea also is known to have chemical weapons and is believed to have a biological weapons program.

Believing that North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles are deterrents it will never give up – and that the cost of attempting to force Pyongyang to do so would be too high – many conclude the world needs to learn to live with North Korea's nuclear and missile arsenal and find a negotiated solution. This is the view of most arms control experts and American lawmakers, as well as the leaders of China, South Korea, and Russia.

Since mid-2017, North Korea, Russia, and China have been promoting a "freeze-for-freeze" proposal raised by

Chinese President Xi Jinping last spring to reduce tensions with the North. Pyongyang would freeze its nuclear and missile programs in exchange for the United States and South Korea suspending joint military exercises. The Trump administration firmly rejected this proposal since it would not reduce the threat from these weapons and would weaken South Korean security.

In response to increased U.S. pressure on North Korea to end its nuclear program after its possible H-bomb test last September, Russian President Vladimir Putin said North Korea "will eat grass but will not stop their program as long as they do not feel safe." During a recent visit to China, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged negotiations over what she described as the overly antagonistic rhetoric of President Trump. Clinton also stated that "inaction is a choice as well" in dealing with the North Korean threat, an ironic comment given the failure of the Obama administration's policy of inaction toward North Korea.

■ *Bipartisan Policy Failures*

In fairness to the Obama administration, North Korea's nuclear program is a threat several Republican and Democrat presidents failed to resolve. The George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations all attempted diplomacy and concessions to entice Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program. North Korea repeatedly pocketed these concessions but failed to live up to its commitments. On many occasions, there was a cycle of North Korean provocations to start

multilateral talks that it then would use to extract concessions, making vague commitments and pausing its provocations before resuming them to force new talks to extract more concessions.

According to former Secretary of State Colin Powell, North Korea started cheating on a 1994 nuclear agreement that the Clinton administration negotiated to halt the North's nuclear weapons program, the Agreed Framework, "as the ink was drying." This was a generous, one-sided agreement that provided North Korea with fuel oil and the construction of two light-water nuclear reactors. The Agreed Framework postponed sending spent fuel rods – a source of plutonium that can be used in bombs – out of the country and did not mention the one or two nuclear weapons the CIA believed North Korea had at the time.

The George W. Bush administration tried to strike a nuclear agreement with North Korea in 2008 and, as part of these negotiations, agreed to remove North Korea from the U.S. State Sponsor of Terrorism list in October of that year. A

Korea and preferring to concentrate on getting a nuclear agreement with Iran, the Obama administration adopted "Strategic Patience" in mid-2012, a policy of inaction toward North Korea, for the rest of the Obama years.

Under Strategic Patience, the Obama administration refused to offer North Korea any incentives to resume nuclear talks and insisted that talks would not resume until the North agreed to end its nuclear program. This policy reportedly was based on the assumption that taking no action on the North Korea situation was acceptable because Pyongyang was unlikely to make the technological advances to turn its primitive nuclear weapons program into a serious regional threat or a threat to the United States. Moreover, this policy also reportedly was based on the belief that the North Korean regime might collapse if left alone.

Strategic Patience was not designed to solve the North Korean threat. It was a policy to kick this problem down the road to the next president.

missile tests between 2012 and 2016 versus only 31 under the regimes of Kim's father and grandfather. These included more advanced long-range and medium range missiles, cruise missiles, and solid-fueled missiles.

■ *Enter the Trump Team*

North Korea has ignored tougher rhetoric by President Trump and continued to expand its nuclear and missile programs in 2017. It conducted an underground nuclear test on September 3, 2017 that it claims was an H-bomb and had an explosive yield of as much as 250 kilotons. This would be 25 times more powerful than North Korea's second largest nuclear test in September 2016.

North Korea also conducted 20 missile tests in 2017. These included more advanced designs such as ICBMs, a solid-fueled medium-range missile and a new intermediate-range missile. North Korea's November 29, 2017 ICBM test reached 2,800 miles on a lofted trajectory into space and may have been capable of striking anywhere in United States on a normal trajectory.

There are growing concerns that rapid advances in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs over the last few years may have been due to assistance from other countries, possibly China, Russia, Ukraine or Pakistan, and outside experts. In addition, some experts – including Amb. John Bolton – worry that North Korea and Iran may be collaborating in their nuclear and missile programs and that Tehran may be "outsourcing" its nuclear weapons research to North Korea. That way, Iran would not be found in violation of a 2015 nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), meant to limit its nuclear weapons development.

President Trump's anti-North Korean rhetoric, including a threat in his September 2017 UN General Assembly speech to "totally destroy" North Korea if it threatens U.S. allies, and tweets criticizing North Korea as well as China and South Korea for not pressuring the

The North has an estimated 8,000 artillery cannons and rocket launchers near the DMZ ... which could fire an estimated 300,000 rounds on the South in the first hour of a counterattack.

few weeks later, after North Korea got all the U.S. concessions it was looking for, it backed out of the agreement. A week before President Bush left office, North Korean officials announced they had weaponized 68 pounds of plutonium – enough for four or five nuclear bombs.

■ *Strategic Patience's Failure*

The North Korean government ignored the Obama administration's determined efforts in 2009 to negotiate a nuclear agreement by conducting a long-range missile test in April 2009 and its second nuclear test on May 21, 2009. After being repeatedly rebuffed by North

Under Strategic Patience, North Korea's nuclear and missile programs surged after Kim Jong Un succeeded his father in December 2011. The North conducted its third nuclear test in 2013 and fourth and fifth tests in 2016. These tests were of increasing explosive yields. North Korea also claimed that it tested miniaturized nuclear devices and a hydrogen bomb in 2013. North Korea engaged in increasingly belligerent rhetoric during this period, including frequent threats to attack the United States with nuclear weapons.

There also was a surge in North Korea's missile program. It conducted 56



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un watches a military drill on April 26, 2017. (Photo: Korean Central News Agency)

North have been controversial, but they also appear to have succeeded in helping pass stronger UN sanctions and convincing China to enforce them.

■ **An Offensive Force**

President Trump has condemned prior U.S. administrations for negotiations with North Korea, which he claims amounted to appeasement. The president has been similarly critical of recent calls to negotiate a freeze on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs because this would lock in these programs and because of concerns that Pyongyang would cheat on such an agreement.

A new factor affecting U.S. North Korea policy is that Pyongyang's nuclear weapon and missile efforts have grown so much in size and sophistication that they can no longer be considered solely, or even primarily, a deterrent. These weapons probably are being developed as an offensive force that Pyongyang will one day use to achieve its most important foreign policy objective: unifying the Korean peninsula under its leadership. Such weapons could also be used to drive America forces from the region and

possibly to attack U.S. territory. The possibility that these weapons are being developed with Iranian funding and could be shared with Iran also argues against considering them as only or mainly a deterrent the world can live with.

Due to miscalculation or error during tests of its ever more advanced nuclear weapons and missiles, as well as the North's refusal to agree to talks to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, chances

the North plans to use these weapons in the future. Limited use of force might be declaring a missile no-fly zone over North Korea, shooting down any missiles Pyongyang tests, a naval blockade, and stopping and searching North Korean ships for WMD-related cargo.

Deciding to take such action may be the most difficult decision Mr. Trump will make as president. But I believe he has determined correctly that the global

Due to miscalculation or error during tests of its ever more advanced nuclear weapons and missiles ... chances of a war with North Korea are increasing.

of a war with North Korea are increasing. The Trump administration took the right approach in 2017 by increasing sanctions and pressing nations worldwide to sever ties to the North. But President Trump now must weigh the risk of the limited use of military force given North Korea's refusal to yield to peaceful pressure and the growing likelihood that

risk posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs has become so serious that he cannot kick this threat down the road to the next president.

FRED FLEITZ is the senior vice president of the Center for Security Policy and served as chief of staff to Under Secretary of State John Bolton from 2001-2005.

A Light Footprint in a Hot Spot: America's Fight in Africa

by **STEVEN METZ**

In early October 2017, a small group of U.S. troops joined local forces from the African nation of Niger on a patrol to gather information on extremists operating in that country. This was not unprecedented: as extremism spread across the northern half of Africa in recent years, American support to local security forces had become routine. This time, though, something went badly wrong. After meeting local leaders in the small town of Tongo Tongo, the patrol was ambushed by around 50 heavily armed militants. A 30 minute engagement left four U.S. troops dead and two more wounded. Suddenly Niger, which most Americans had never heard of before the attack, became front page news, sparking a broad discussion of U.S. security policy in Africa. The question now is whether this will – or should – lead to a shift in American strategy on that troubled continent.

■ *Africa's Extremist Threat*

For the past few decades, Islamic extremists around the world have exploited local discontent and the psychological problems of alienated individuals to stoke revolutionary violence. Africa is particularly vulnerable. The continent has much to fuel extremism, whether communal tensions; a crushing lack of jobs and economic opportunity, exacerbated in many places by climate change; the decay of traditional authority structures; and governments unconcerned with security and development in places distant from the national capital. Africa is, as a 2016 study from the influential Center for Strategic and International Studies put it, “a fragile region under threat.”

Extensive research bears this out. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme has found that most African extremists come from marginalized regions within their country; have little exposure to other religions and ethnicities; and have few educational and economic opportunities. Most former extremists interviewed for the UN report mentioned employment as their most immediate need. Like inner city gangs in the United States, joining an extremist insurgency often is a way to make living while gaining a degree of status and power normally unavailable to poor youth.

While marginalization and the lack of opportunity exist in many parts of Africa, they are especially dangerous when weaponized by a violent, revolutionary ideology derived from Islam. As in many parts of the world, Muslims with a limited understanding of their religion and a

Violent Islamic extremism in its contemporary form first appeared in North Africa during the brutal Algerian civil war from 1991-2002. It gained a foothold in East Africa as Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda moved its operations from Afghanistan to Sudan and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad movement engineered the bloody 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. By 2006, East Africa's extremism problem grew much worse as a militant organization known as al-Shabaab emerged in Somalia and later began terrorist attacks in neighboring Uganda and Kenya.

In recent years, violent Islamic extremism spread to West Africa and the transitional zone between the Sahara Desert and the savanna regions known as the Sahel. Today al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which is focused on overthrowing the govern-

...marginalization and the lack of opportunity ...
are especially dangerous when weaponized...

psychological need for an externally-defined purpose in life are particularly susceptible to an ideology that gives the appearance of being based on faith. Much like the Christianity that was turned into an ideology that inspired Crusaders from northern Europe or Spanish conquistadores in earlier times, Islam is a proselytizing religion which can be distorted for political purposes.

ment of Algeria, has connections or cells throughout North Africa, the Sahel, and West Africa. Boko Haram, which originated in Nigeria, now operates in neighboring nations like Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. And there are several Islamic State (ISIS) affiliates including the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara which is thought to have been behind the recent attack in Niger, and the Islamic

State West Africa Province, which split from Boko Haram.

Of these movements, ISIS has the most growth potential in part because it has established a well-known global brand with transnational appeal, and in part because it is effective at online recruiting, giving it access to the rapidly expanding pool of young Africans with cell phone-based Internet access.

It is hard, though, to pin down the fluid, shifting web of violent extremism in Africa. There are many splinter groups and individual fighters sometimes move from one to another. For all of them, arms are readily available, many flowing out of Libya after the collapse of Moammar Qaddafi's regime. Like insurgency-based extremist movements around the world, the ones in Africa are also deep into crime, using it to fund operations and attract recruits. The weakness of local governments, police and security forces, and the remoteness of much of the region gives the militants operating space.

Luckily none of Africa's extremists-movements are close to taking over a nation or creating a viable "caliphate." But they can weaken fragile governments, stifle economic growth, attack U.S. and other Western targets, and create humanitarian crises in what is already a desperately poor and environmentally precarious part of the world. This has cascading effects: less economic growth and opportunity in West Africa and the Sahel means more young people attempting to cross the Mediterranean for Europe, potentially bringing extremism with them.

Today the militants cannot win but African governments cannot eradicate them. The result is a stalemate which mostly victimizes Africans who are not rich or powerful enough to surround themselves with armed security.

■ *America's Light Footprint*

Since the end of the Cold War the United States has considered sub-Saharan Africa a region with great economic and political promise but one that needs some assistance with security to reach it.

Because U.S. national interests in Africa are modest and Africa itself, with a painful legacy of colonialism, is wary, even hostile toward outsiders influencing regional security, American involvement has been small scale and low key, focused mostly on increasing the capability of local security forces. In American military parlance, Africa is an "economy of force" theater of operations.

During the 1990s, Washington developed modest training and assistance programs to augment the professionalism of African security forces and help them become more effective at peacekeeping. After the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks America's

good governance to take root. If we focus on working with our African partners on developing local solutions to radicalization, destabilization, and persistent conflict, we will remain the security partner of choice for the next decade, all while upholding our American values. Africa, our allies, the U.S., and, indeed, the world will benefit from our actions to promote stable and effective nation states and defense institutions in Africa."

While the United States occasionally strikes extremists directly using manned and unmanned aircraft or special operations forces, the core of the light footprint strategy is working

...the core of the light footprint strategy is working indirectly through local partners to minimize the American presence on the ground.

focus immediately shifted from peacekeeping to counter-terrorism. To direct this fight against extremism the United States created the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and refined its geographical focus in Africa, concentrating on the northern half of the continent. The single biggest U.S. military presence is in the Horn of Africa but the Pentagon has support and advisory programs across the continent in the places where violent extremism has a foothold. AFRICOM describes its strategy as "a light, adaptable footprint enabling joint operations, protection of U.S. personnel and facilities, crisis response, and security cooperation" which "seeks to disrupt and neutralize transnational threats by building African partner defense capability and capacity." According to the 2017 AFRICOM posture statement, this is designed to "advance American interests with a combination of strategic patience, targeted investments, and strong partnership to achieve shared security objectives and maintain our long-term approach, which contribute to the conditions for development and

indirectly through local partners to minimize the American presence on the ground. Over the past few years Niger has become particularly important. It is one of the poorest nations on earth but is also in one of the world's most dangerous neighborhoods, bordering Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Nigeria, all struggling with Islamic extremism.

While AFRICOM stresses that the United States "does not have an active, direct combat mission in Niger," it has stated that there are around 800 American military personnel there, most involved operating drone bases. Quietly and out of the limelight, Niger became a pivotal partner in the fight with Islamic extremism.

■ *A Complicated Path Ahead*

In the broadest sense, America's light footprint strategy in Africa is a compromise driven by competing, even contradictory demands. On one hand, Washington feels that it must do something to blunt extremism and help African nations victimized by it. On the other hand, neither Americans nor Africans



U.S. Army Africa Sgt. 1st Class Grady Hyatt leads an after-action review with soldiers of the Ghana Army in 2011. (Photo: U.S. Army)

want extensive U.S. military involvement. Thus the light footprint strategy is an effort to do something while limiting costs and minimizing the chances of being drawn in more deeply.

Like all compromises, this is far from perfect. U.S. troops helping African security forces have limited support, particularly in terms of airpower and medical evacuation. The October fight in Niger showed the danger of that. In places with a more extensive U.S. presence like the Iraq/Syria theater or Afghanistan, reinforcements, close air support and medical evacuation are normally minutes away. In Niger, it was hours. That amplifies the danger that U.S. forces face during counter extremism missions in Africa and increases the chances of something going wrong.

Since the low footprint strategy focuses on augmenting the capabilities of African governments and security forces, the United States can be no more successful than these partners. If America's

allies prove inept, brutal, corrupt, or simply uninterested in taking the measures needed to eliminate the political and economic problems that breed extremism, then the United States fails. This is an enduring dilemma since local governments often resist deep political and economic reform because national elites have a vested personal interest in the existing system. This means that America's partners often welcome security assistance but not political advice.

For all of these reasons, the low footprint strategy is not a path to victory over extremism but a way to contain and manage it. While this is realistic in today's political context, Americans don't normally think of security in terms of threat management but rather as winning and losing. Success—victory—is defined as eliminating enemies. The question is whether American policymakers and opinion shapers will adjust to and accept the idea of threat management in Africa and calm the public when bad things happen – like

the October fight in Niger or if one of America's African partners turns brutal, even genocidal. This matters greatly because in a conflict like the one with Islamic extremists, bad things invariably happen.

Today America's indirect, low footprint counter-extremism strategy in Africa is the best option available. Whether it can be sustained long enough to work or whether strategic success is even possible—remains to be seen. Until a few months ago most Americans had never heard of Niger but they may hear more of it in the future. Along the way other African nations, little known in the United States, may make headlines in the global conflict with violent Islamic extremism.

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Around the World in 40 Minutes

An *inFOCUS* Interview with Doug Lamborn

Representative Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.), represents one of the country's most military-intensive congressional districts. A protector of American military capability and veterans' services, he serves on the House Armed Services Committee and its Strategic Forces and Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittees, overseeing our nation's strategic weapons, ballistic missile defense, space programs, and Department of Energy national security programs. On the committee, he helps to ensure our nation is properly prepared for any missile or nuclear attacks. *inFOCUS* editor Shoshana Bryen met with him in late December.

inFOCUS: STARTING WITH IRAN, WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF A CORRIDOR OVER THE TOP OF SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN AND ISRAEL TO THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA?

Mr. Lamborn: I'm very concerned about the possibility of a land bridge for the Iranians. The majority of weapons Iran is bringing to Syria – and on to Hezbollah and Lebanon – presently come by air and sometimes by sea; those are slower and susceptible to interruption. With the ability to use trucks over land, the huge influx of missiles, for instance, on the northern border of Israel, will only get worse. Importing fighters will become easier. Importing weapons for Hezbollah and other fighters that could be used against Israel will only get worse.

So, I'm concerned that our administration, even though it's doing many good things – certainly much better than the previous administration – still seems to lack a consistent and coherent serious strategy for that part of the world. That's partly understandable because the Syrian issue is so complicated and there are no easy or good solutions. But to take 400 Marines away seems to be a step in the wrong direction, even though I know we can use those Marines to good effect wherever they end up.

I am concerned that we have not yet arrived at the best Syrian strategy. Which

means that by default, Iran and Russia, and bad actors like ISIS, will continue to have a larger role than they should.

iF: DO YOU THINK THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WOULD SUPPORT A CONTINUING MILITARY DEPLOYMENT IN SYRIA?

Lamborn: Yes, if President Trump and other people in the administration were to make a case for it, I think a limited increase in our efforts there would certainly be acceptable to the American people. What the American people don't want is another Iraq at this point in time, but no one's talking about that.

The administration has a lot of latitude here, given that the American people understand that Iran is a serious problem in the region and America shouldn't allow a vacuum that lets other people step in by default.

iF: WHICH IS ALSO PARTLY THE KURDISH QUESTION. THEY ARE OUR GREAT ALLIES ON THE GROUND, BUT WE APPEAR TO BE WITHDRAWING FROM THEM AS WELL.

Lamborn: The Kurds are a great American ally and should be supported as such. It was a mistake for them to push for an election recently because the United States – their primary international ally – wasn't

able to help them manage the aftermath, and we told them that. But despite that mistake we should arm them, because they are a reliable and brave ally, and they have the potential to continue to be a moderate force in the area. They've done much good for us in the past and they have the potential to continue doing much good for us in the future. So we should strengthen our ties with the Kurds.

iF: IS THERE A WAY THAT CONGRESS CAN STEP IN ON SOME OF THIS?

Lamborn: We've put language into the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) addressing this particular issue. There has been money specifically earmarked for the Kurds, for at least the past three years. The issue has been how much of it actually makes it to them and how the weapons deliveries are actually accomplished. The problem is that aid to the Kurds flows through Baghdad – and Baghdad doesn't always deliver in a timely or complete way.

iF: BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LET THIS GO, RIGHT?

Lamborn: No, no, no. We need to make sure that the Kurds remain American allies and that they have a working ability to fight against some of the region's most malign forces.

iF: DO THOSE MALIGN FORCES INCLUDE TURKEY?

Lamborn: Turkey is a NATO ally, and we should not gratuitously insult or do things that harm Turkey's interest. They are almost paranoid about the Kurds in their country, or the possibility of a Kurdish state – particularly in Syria, where the Turkish-Syrian border isn't always properly demarcated and there are Kurdish tribes on both sides. They didn't have quite the same problem with the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq, where the border was more clearly defined. We have to tread carefully. I'm an optimist who believes that if the administration works hard enough it can have a policy for Syria that incorporates Kurdish assistance while not offending the Turks, and in fact using them as an ally as well. That's my hope.

iF: YOU'RE GOING BACK TO YOUR ORIGINAL POINT HERE, WHICH WAS THAT WE DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A COHERENT SYRIA POLICY, WHICH MAKES IT HARDER TO DO THESE THINGS.

Lamborn: Yes. And there are so many trouble spots in the world right now. Some of them are newly developed, others are there because of Barack Obama's inattention. But we have to let the administration have time to fill out all of these strategies. The fact that there isn't a Syria strategy yet does not discourage me but I do want them to come up with one shortly.

iF: HOW DO YOU THINK RUSSIA SEES US? DOES IT THINK THAT WE'RE AN ADVERSARY, DOES IT THINK WE'RE A COMPETITOR?

Lamborn: The answer to that centers on how Vladimir Putin views us because he has so much power that his personal views pretty much carry the day in Russia. He wants to restore lost Russian grandeur and prestige. He views the downfall of the USSR as the biggest geopolitical calamity of the 20th century – while pretty much everyone else in



Congressman Doug Lamborn (R-CO)

the world would point to other things as being worse. In fact, the collapse of the USSR was a blessing.

But Vladimir Putin views the United States as a competitor and he's struggling to have a Russian resurgence in places like the Middle East. He is very opportunistic; I don't see him having a grand strategy in far-flung places of the world. But at best he wants to be a player, and at worst he will be opposing U.S. interests.

His worst efforts from our point of view and that of our NATO allies, are in the states neighboring Russia. The invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the invasion of Georgia, interference in Moldova, all of these things are ways that he wants to keep influence in former Soviet satellites. That's actually what he meant about the catastrophe – it was a catastrophe of losing control of millions of ethnic Russians who became citizens of those newly independent countries. He wants them back under Russian sovereignty. But he's doing it in a way that does not win the hearts and minds of the people in those

countries. At the first opportunity, I'm sure each of those countries will aggressively push away from Russia. And the United States should help those countries.

iF: THAT WAS MY NEXT QUESTION. WHAT'S A GOOD ROLE FOR US?

Lamborn: The United States should help those countries, especially Ukraine, resist Russian aggression and restore their territorial integrity, and continue allowing them to pursue a path toward European and Western integration. They are entitled to choose the direction of their future, even if it isn't the future Russia would want them to have. So, we should allow for loan guarantees and support, including supplying lethal aid to Ukraine.

iF: WE DON'T PROVIDE LETHAL AID AT THE MOMENT?

Lamborn: No. We supply non-lethal help, but as the Ukrainian president said when he came and spoke here, "We appreciate

meals and blankets. But we need arms.” That was several years ago but it still hasn’t changed. With the right kind of pressure, and Western assistance, the Ukrainians could make life very difficult for the Russians, even though the Russians are a superior military force. The Ukrainians are very brave, and they are resisting Russian encroachment, but if their pressure was to become even stronger then Russia would pay a higher price in political perception back home.

iF: AS HAPPENED TO THEM IN AFGHANISTAN. AND I ASSUME THAT THE SAME WOULD HOLD TRUE FOR THE BALTIC STATES?

Lamborn: Yes, the Baltic states are very small but they’re very brave and they’re well-equipped for their size. And they are resisting Russian aggression, and they’re totally aligned with the West. I believe we have an excellent working relationship with Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

iF: DO YOU THINK NATO WOULD GO TO WAR ON BEHALF OF LATVIA?

Lamborn: Yes. Under Article 5, I believe we would back up our commitments. An invasion of one of is an invasion of all.

iF: I’M HAPPY TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT YOU THINK WE’D BE WHERE WE’RE SUPPOSED TO BE.

Lamborn: Yes, and as a matter of fact, I was in two Baltic States in August. We saw American troops training and working with the host countries. Some of those troops were from Fort Carson in my congressional district – the 4th Infantry Division. And that does two things. It gives the NATO allies a greater awareness of what roadblocks there might be, sometimes literally, in deploying in the case of an emergency or crisis. For instance, if you find out that a bridge is too narrow for tanks to cross, the host country can fix that problem. Second, it sends a strong message to the Russians that the

United States is taking this very seriously. So even though we don’t have permanent bases in the three Baltic countries, we do have a very robust presence.

iF: CHINA CLEARLY ROLLED OUT THE RED CARPET FOR THE PRESIDENT. THEY WANTED HIM TO BE HAPPY. UNDERNEATH THAT, DO THEY SEE US AS AN ADVERSARY, OR AS A COMPETITOR?

China needs to go beyond just words and it has to show by its actions that it’s putting pressure on North Korea.

Lamborn: Both. There are elements, perhaps in the military or intelligence that see us an adversary. But at a minimum, many or most will see us as a competitor. I’m hopeful we can reach the point in the future where we cooperate on many issues including, but going beyond, trade. The Chinese are dead-set on expanding their influence in places like the South China Sea, and they’re using methods like expanding and building upon atolls that offend everyone in the area and that violate international norms. They are doing things that are territorially very aggressive.

In response, the United States must continue to strengthen ties with our allies in the region, and I think the administration is doing a very good job of this. This includes Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. And we also need to include Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and others.

iF: DOES IT INCLUDE TAIWAN?

Lamborn: It should definitely include Taiwan. Obviously, it’s in a unique category.

There have been a few hiccups with South Korea. I’m not convinced it was helpful to question our free trade agreement with South Korea during this time of sensitivity. And I think that the new South Korean leader, who leans more to the left than the previous South Korean administration, was too quick to bow to Chinese

demands to stop expanding American-provided missile defense on the peninsula. I think U.S. missile defense equipment is the best way of addressing the North Korean problem in the short run. And you can’t talk about China without talking about North Korea and vice versa, which is why I’m bringing up North Korea.

China needs to go beyond just words and it has to show by its actions that it’s

putting pressure on North Korea. The UN is unable to do very much and what little it can do it’s already pretty much done. The United States can continue financial sanctions and should strengthen those. And we should press the Chinese for economic sanctions, especially energy to North Korea, both coal and oil. But what the United States can do that no one else can do is give South Korea THAAD missile defense batteries that will protect South Korea in the event of medium-range missiles coming from North Korea. I think South Korea should go further in this direction. We’re already doing this with Japan.

iF: AND IF WE COULD GET CHINA TO AGREE TO THAT IT WOULD BE A HUGE STEP FOR CHINA.

Lamborn: China believes that the radars of these missile defense installations are looking far into China. That is simply not true. We don’t. We are only concerned with North Korean activity, and deterring that.

iF: ON TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD AND TO HAPPIER NEWS. THERE’S NO BETTER DEFENDER OF ISRAEL THAN YOU. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT WAYS THAT ISRAEL IS A HELPFUL ALLY TO THE UNITED STATES?



Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and Russian President Vladimir Putin at Khmeimim Air Base in Syria. (Photo: Kremlin.ru)

Lamborn: I really want to see America and Israel working together on tunnel detection and destruction. And we've made some steps in that direction, especially on the funding side, and I've been instrumental in initiating that in our legislation. But those resources could be better deployed. However, Israel has detected some tunnels and recently blew up a tunnel on the Israeli side of the border with the Gaza Strip, and it killed a bunch of Palestinians who were doing things they shouldn't have been doing. I don't think anyone on the side of the West will mourn their passing.

When it comes to missile defense, Israel did a great job with developing Iron Dome and the U.S. taxpayer and people in Congress, myself included, have been very supportive and have given large amounts of U.S. aid to help that materialize and progress. Israel has shared that technology and I certainly anticipate that we can use that technology to protect our own interests overseas. We don't have a missile threat on our borders, fortunately, but we do have troops and allies that are threatened, across the ocean, as we just discussed.

Israel has been a great partner, sharing technology while we have helped them fund further batteries for Iron Dome. And

most of the money we give to Israel comes right back to us through Israeli purchases of American equipment and technology – 75 percent right now. It's a great working relationship.

iF: I KNEW THERE WAS GOOD NEWS IN THIS INTERVIEW SOMEWHERE. AND THAT'S IT. WHAT SHOULD WE SAY ABOUT EGYPT?

Lamborn: For 40 years, since the historic visit by Anwar Sadat to the Knesset, Israel and Egypt have been at peace. And those are the two most powerful countries in the region. It was a cold peace at times, but what has emerged is a wonderful and significant development. And they seem to be, especially under the leadership of President [Abdel Fattah] al-Sisi, continuing their strong and positive relationship.

iF: SHOULD THE UNITED STATES BE HELPING EGYPT MORE THAN IT IS?

Lamborn: We should help him even more than we do now. The Trump administration is doing that better than the previous administration. There is a place to criticize an authoritarian government

for human rights issues. But we should not do that to the point where we lose our ability to have a working relationship. And we should not do that to the point where they lose the ability to pursue their own interests. And like many have said, and Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer said, the choice is you either have the military running Egypt or you have the Muslim Brotherhood running Egypt. I'd rather have the military running Egypt. I have no problem with that.

iF: DOES IT WORRY YOU THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE NOW GOING TO BE USING EGYPT FOR AN AIR BASING FACILITY?

Lamborn: It bothers me to see the Russians exerting an expanding influence in the Middle East anywhere, including Egypt.

iF: LAST ISRAEL QUESTION. PEACE PROCESS? IS THERE ONE? CAN THERE BE ONE? SHOULD THERE BE ONE?

Lamborn: Things have reached a point where the next step should be taken by the Palestinians. Israel has made so many concessions in the past, and they have not been reciprocated. Rather than push Israel to make further concessions that endanger its security, we should turn to the Palestinians and say, "It's your turn to make a concession." They should do things like recognize the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state; a legitimate and permanent part of the region. And there are other efforts. The Palestinian Authority should stop incitement, stop glorifying terrorism, stop educating the next generation to be anti-Jewish and anti-Israel.

My legislation in the House, the Taylor Force Act, which Lindsey Graham is carrying in the Senate, has great bipartisan support. Taylor Force is a way of inducing the Palestinians to stop incitement by reducing American budget aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as it is paying salaries to terrorists and to their families. The Taylor Force Act passed the House on December 5, and is heading to the Senate.

The Palestinians need to take tangible steps and make concessions on their part.

There is strong bipartisan support for each of these things in Congress, which is encouraging. Sometimes we disagree on how strongly to exert Congress's authority or ability to control the purse strings. And different administrations may or may not cooperate so much with Congress. Unfortunately, the Obama administration did not cooperate very much. The Taylor Force Act is an example of Congress taking a step in the right direction. One of the really bad elements about those payments is that they were structured by the PA so that you get a higher payment if you've killed more Jews, and more Israelis. That's just reprehensible. Taylor Force wasn't either Jewish or Israeli. He was an American visitor who happened to be on Israeli soil, and that's why he was targeted. So hopefully that tragic story gets the attention of Americans.

iF: LET'S GO TO LATIN AMERICA NEXT. WHAT CAN THE UNITED STATES DO, IF ANYTHING, TO BE HELPFUL TO THE PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA WHO LIVE UNDER REALLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES?

Lamborn: Venezuela is a problem not only because of its socialist government, but also because of its relationship with Iran. At the same time, I'm encouraged by the fact that the Trump administration has reversed some of the Cuba policy that Barack Obama started. President Obama made concessions to the Cubans without getting anything in return. That's horrible diplomacy, and it's a bad example in all of Latin America. Because Venezuela has a close relationship with and gets some assistance from Cuba, it also will see how the United States interacts with Cuba and draw its own conclusions. I'm hopeful that we won't just be stronger in our demands for Cuban reform – I think that's coming – but that we will also be stronger toward Venezuela's government.

The previous administration didn't do anything to make Venezuela pay for its human rights abuses. I'm not sure the Trump administration has finalized its approach to Venezuela, so I don't know what that will look like yet, but we need to assist the pro-democracy forces in that country. There is a large group of Venezuelans who know democratic norms, who have practiced them and who are bravely fighting the current regime. But they're at risk of falling even further under the heavy hand of oppression.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is violating all norms of democracy by

[Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] is that it gives them a nuclear weapon as soon as a few years. As soon as the requisite time goes by – the sunset clauses kick in after 10 to 15 years, and we're counting down from 2015.

This is the position that [Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu has taken. The Iranian deal, the JCPOA, gives a nuclear weapon to Iran – it's just a matter of time. And we can't let that happen. Their history and their track record should make it clear that if they have that power to hold over the heads of their neighbors, including but not only

Taylor Force is a way of inducing the Palestinians to stop incitement by reducing American budget aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as they are paying salaries to terrorists...

the way he's cracking down on the pro-democracy forces in his country, and the way he's consolidating power in his own hands. Some things he's doing are even worse than what Hugo Chavez was doing.

I'm hopeful that we'll see a better policy toward Venezuela. There are so many troubled spots in the world right now, starting with North Korea of course, and Iran as well, that I don't think we've yet seen the administration be able to turn its full attention to Latin America.

iF: BACK TO WHERE WE STARTED. IRAN—THIS TIME ITS NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES. WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO ABOUT THIS?

Lamborn: You saved the easiest for last.

Once again, I'm hopeful that the Trump administration will carry through on its good words, both Mr. Trump's positions while he was campaigning, and the things administration officials have said since January. We can't let Iran develop a nuclear weapon; that's simply the bottom line. And the trouble with the JCPOA

Israel, or the fact that they like to use proxies and give weapons to proxies and try to avoid having fingerprints, it's just an untenable situation. I applaud President Trump for refusing to certify in the latest round that Iran is in compliance.

As a member of Congress, I look forward to working with the administration very soon to flesh out what that means. At a minimum, we will be imposing stronger sanctions. The administration has already been doing that, sanctioning individuals and companies and banks for behavior related not only to nuclear capabilities, but to missile capabilities, terrorism and human rights. Where we go from there may depend on how Iran responds. But in any case, we've just started reversing some of the bad effects of the Obama administration. Iran is a powerful and malignant country. And so obviously it has to be treated with a lot of caution. But they can't be allowed to own nuclear weapons.

iF: THANK YOU, ON BEHALF OF THE JEWISH POLICY CENTER AND THE READERS OF inFOCUS MAGAZINE.

The South China Sea: Flashpoints for U.S. Interests

by **HARRY HALEM**

“All nations want peace, but they want a peace that suits them.” – Admiral Jacky Fisher (Royal Navy), 1894

International politics rest upon a contradiction. Systemically hierarchical organization is nearly impossible. Despite the universalist ambitions of imperial powers, the geographical and material scope of the world precludes a globally legitimate international order. Nevertheless, one can identify multiple “orders” throughout history, both local, as in classical Greece, imperial China, medieval Italy, and feudal Japan, and global, in particular the present Anglo-American system.

But order is precarious. System-transforming great power war is its greatest enemy. The most materially robust agents in a system can, if committed, smash an international order with their raw power. Such confrontations characterize international history, with the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars serving as recent examples.

The shape of these systemic conflicts is readily apparent. Athenian naval power and imperial ambition made it an adversary of Greece’s traditional hegemon, Sparta. German power made it Britain’s natural 20th-century opponent. Similarly, present power dynamics between the United States and China predispose the two countries to rivalry. Not only does strength balance strength, but rising states also stress the static distribution of power a hegemon imposes.

In the prelude to great power confrontation, one must understand both the international competitors and potential flashpoints that can instigate

conflict. Great power wars are seldom unintentional. Nevertheless, they typically begin unplanned – Thucydides’ account of the Peloponnesian War dedicates significant time to this fact. Thus, assessing the dynamics of this flashpoint is critical to projecting potential Sino-American escalation.

The South China Sea (SCS) in particular requires careful study. Three aspects comprise a proper assessment of SCS conflict potential. First, a review of great power interests in the SCS reveals the specific relevance of that potential flashpoint to broader Sino-American rivalry. Second, an account of previous Chinese expansionist efforts, and re-

China’s political order rests upon contradiction. State-capitalist authoritarianism requires selective liberalization and engagement with the international economy while preserving overall centralization. This policy’s material benefits have enabled its success. Consistent economic growth has staved off calls for internal political liberalization and deeper economic reforms. Nevertheless, the present Chinese system has weak spots. The potential for a public debt overhang due to state involvement in market activity could stifle economic growth, as Japan experienced in its 1990s recession. Moreover, China’s 1.4 billion people dually enable Chinese economic

Consistent economic growth has staved off calls for internal political liberalization and deeper economic reforms.

sponses by regional actors, is necessary to understand the type of potential escalation. Third, a review of the balance of forces indicates the strong incentives for limited Chinese aggression. These aspects combine to demonstrate the gap between American deterrence goals and present strategic posture.

■ *Dynamics, Interests & SCS*

The Korean Peninsula and East China Sea are alternative potential flashpoints to the SCS. However, the SCS’s conflict potential is higher because of the region’s direct connection to China’s energy insecurity and likely plans for economic dominance.

growth and make extremely high energy demands. China has lacked sufficient domestic energy reserves to support its economy since the mid-1980s. Although coal still provides the majority of China’s electrical power, and nuclear power investments have paid dividends, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) remains 60 percent oil import dependent.

This energy deficit explains the SCS’s relevance. One quarter of the world’s seaborne oil passes through the Strait of Malacca on the SCS’s western edge – 80 percent of Chinese maritime oil imports transit the strait. Beijing’s One Belt - One Road initiative through Central Asia will offset some of China’s

maritime oil import dependence, but for at least the next decade, a hostile power controlling the SCS would pose a threat to Chinese economic security. Additionally, the SCS holds at least 11 billion barrels of oil and 250 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Chinese control of the SCS,

uninterrupted flow of goods internationally – freedom of navigation as a normative goal is derived from this positive benefit. Declarations of good faith will not ensure China respects this principle, making the risk of Chinese domination of the SCS too high to allow. Addition-

Whether China's insecurity or desire for domination drives it to control the South China Sea, its stranglehold there would give it control over 50 percent of the world's maritime trade.

therefore, supports political stability by alleviating the country's energy pressures, while hostile control of the SCS gives external powers significant leverage in any crisis scenario. Moreover, fulfilling President Xi Jinping's "China Dream" requires continuing economic growth, as returning China to its "historical" global position would entail creating a state that produced one-third of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Whether China's long-term goal is regime security or reclaiming great power status, it is clear that energy flows, and therefore the SCS, will be relevant, and that consolidating control over the area is in Beijing's interest.

Conversely, the United States has a material interest in denying China control over the SCS' trade flows and energy reserves. Despite fluctuations in relative power, America has maintained its position of international hegemon since the end of the Second World War. China, in entente with Russia, Iran, and North Korea, threatens the Anglo-American international order that provided the framework for post-World War II international relations.

Whether China's insecurity or desire for domination drives it to control the South China Sea, its stranglehold there would give it control over 50 percent of the world's maritime trade. American power is predicated on the

ally, Chinese control would pressure American lines of communication between its Euro-Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Asian military forces and regional allies. Just as Chinese interest in the SCS consistently leads to attempted expansion, American regional interest consistently dictates countering China's position. This persistence of overlapping and opposing interests makes the SCS a likely Sino-American flashpoint.

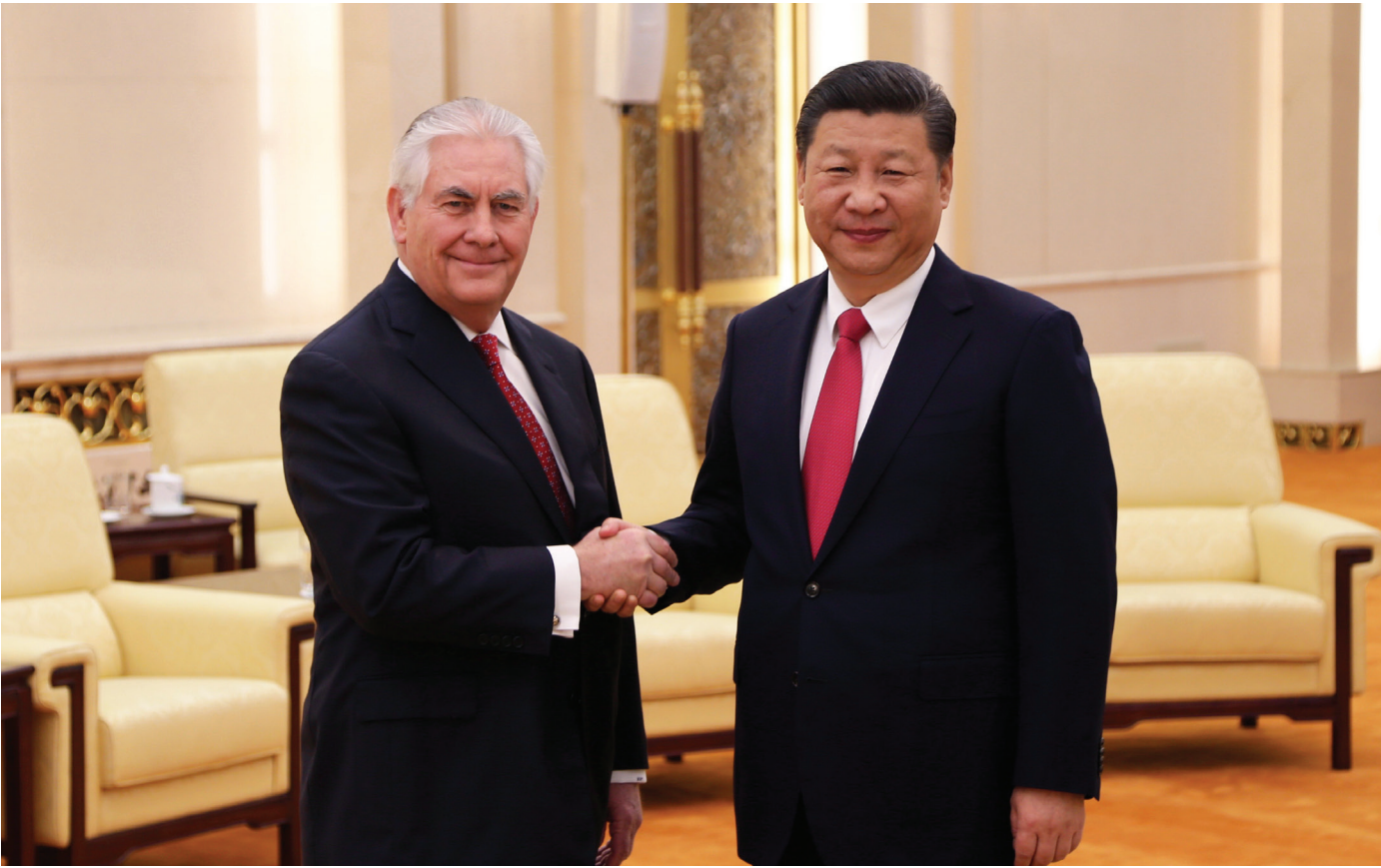
■ *Encroachments and Responses*

Alongside the great powers, Vietnam and the Philippines serve as the primary SCS regional actors, while Taiwan and Malaysia have relevance. Legally, SCS disputes center around Chinese assertion of its territorial rights over an area enclosed by the "Nine-Dash Line." The 1951 Treaty of San Francisco, which officially ended hostilities between Japan and the Allied Powers, terminated Japanese claims to all SCS territories. However, the treaty indicated no successors to Japan's claims, leading to the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the People's Republic of China (mainland) claiming sovereignty over the entirety of the area. This demarcation line directly conflicts with Vietnamese, Philippine, Indonesian, Malaysian, and Bruneian Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) as demarcated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

These overlapping claims effectively make the entirety of the SCS a legally contested zone. Competition centers upon reefs and archipelagos, most importantly the Spratly and Paracel Islands and Scarborough Shoal. If China is to fulfill its aim of controlling the SCS, it must compensate for its inferior initial position – China's coastline curves northeast from Hainan, away from the maritime chokepoints it covets. Military installations on the archipelagos throughout the SCS, in particular the Spratly and Paracel Islands and Scarborough Shoal, would allow China to police all traffic heading northeast from the Strait of Malacca, descend on the Strait in the event of conflict, and control oil flows towards energy-import dependent Japan.

To this end, China has engaged in an increasingly assertive campaign of maritime expansion. Sporadic incidents occurred from the 1970s onward, including two naval skirmishes between China and Vietnam. However, 2012 marked a turning point in Chinese policy – since then Beijing has actively sought to create faits accomplis that preclude responses to its acquisitions, or to stoke tensions and provoke Philippine or Vietnamese escalation. Chinese island construction is an example of the former approach. Focusing its efforts on the Spratlys, China created 3,200 acres of land between 2013 and 2016 by piling sand and concrete atop reefs throughout the archipelago.

Of particular note are the Chinese installations at Fiery Cross, Mischief, and Subi Reefs. Each artificial island sports a military-grade runway, while Fiery Cross and Mischief in particular field anti-air and anti-ship missile batteries, deep-water ports, and living facilities for permanent personnel. The 2012 Scarborough Shoal and 2014 HD-931 standoffs exemplify the latter strategy. The first incident was sparked when Chinese ships prevented the Philippine Navy from arresting Chinese fishermen accused of illegally collecting coral and sharks. China instigated the second standoff by moving the HD-931



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, China on March 19, 2017. (Photo: State Department)

oil rig to within disputed waters near the Paracel Islands, and barred Vietnamese interference by deploying 46 Navy and Coast Guard ships along with a number of fishing boats in support. This combination of approaches indicates that China hopes to either create facts on the ground that cannot be overturned without significant escalation, or prompt an escalation from one of its smaller adversaries that justifies a major military response.

Small states typically have limited options when confronted by territorially acquisitive great powers. Like the classical Greek Poleis of Melos and Plataea, they must choose either surrender or destruction absent external intervention. Vietnam and the Philippines are trapped by this same dilemma. Ceding ground to China directly limits their freedom of movement – too many capitulations, and China will be able to dictate Vietnamese and Philippine trade and military policy. But a confrontation is equally undesirable,

considering the preponderance of power China can bring to bear. The BRP Sierra Madre, a 73-year-old Tank Landing Ship run aground on Second Thomas Shoal, and its handful of Philippine Marines, is the Philippine response to China's Spratlys expansion.

Moreover, China's physical dominance allows it to diversify its SCS assets, forcing Vietnam and the Philippines to overstretch their resources. The China Coast Guard (CCG), rather than the Peoples Liberation Army-Navy (PLAN), has recently been the tool of choice for Beijing to assert its sovereignty over disputed South China Sea waters. China's regional competitors are forced to choose between attempting to match the CCG's operational tempo with their own Coast Guards, and risk being progressively outclassed, or employ naval forces, and potentially prompt an escalation. The Philippines attempted to legally outmaneuver China through the United Nations, but international legal

restraints have done little to change China's posture. Malaysia and Taiwan suffer from the same issues as Vietnam and the Philippines, although their interests are confined to specific sectors of the SCS.

■ **American Involvement**

The present balance of forces creates major incentives for Chinese escalation. China benefits from a lack of direct American regional engagement. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan all have an interest in coordinating their responses to China's expansion. However, these actors have not been able to resolve their own territorial disputes. Present regional organizations, namely ASEAN, have not significantly increased cohesion – cracks have appeared between the major players in the SCS dispute and disengaged states like Thailand. The United States can serve as an external balancer, facilitating coordination between South Asian states and bolstering their efforts with its own military capabilities.



China has developed Fiery Cross Reef to include a 10,000 runway. (Photo: Google Earth / Digital Globe)

Despite the Trump administration's significantly more aggressive rhetoric, American SCS policy has remained remarkably similar since 2014. The United States has responded to Chinese expansion with its regional military assets, conducting Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in disputed maritime areas and occasional flyovers of disputed reefs and islands. Washington has also diplomatically supported de-escalation attempts, while publicly rebuking China's territorial aggression. However, this has done little to curb China's efforts.

Without an increased American presence, China will remain free to bully smaller regional powers, forcing them to choose between maintaining the status quo and accepting the erosion of their territory, or increasing the level of risk by escalating. History demonstrates the low risk of "accidental escalation" – the 1988 Black Sea Bumping incident serves as an example. However, that does not decrease the chances of conflict. The crowded air and sea-lanes and overlapping territorial claims in the SCS create a number of areas in which China could provoke a crisis by declaring an Air Defense Identification Zone or violating Vietnamese and Philippine fishing rights. Vietnam and the Philippines

cannot be expected to restrain themselves forever. The involvement of a volatile personality like Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte increases the possibility of a violent response to the next major PRC provocation. Despite his previous pro-China rhetoric, Duterte has increased Philippine military presence in the Spratlys, fortifying nine islands in the archipelago.

Armed escalation between the PLA and Vietnamese or Philippine Armed Forces would likely entail the overwhelming application of force by the Chinese against the relevant adversary.

Despite the Trump administration's significantly more aggressive rhetoric, American SCS policy has remained remarkably similar since 2014.

The balance of forces heavily favors China. The Philippine Navy fields three former Hamilton-class Coast Guard Cutters and a WWII-era Canon-class destroyer as its large surface combatants, supplementing them with second-hand minesweepers and corvettes. Its two-ship frigate purchase from Hyundai

Heavy Industries (HHI) and one-ship corvette buy from the ROK Navy have yet to be delivered. Thus, Philippine surface combatants are at best 40 years old.

By contrast, the PLAN South Seas Fleet's Type-052D, Type-054, and Type-056 surface combatants are some of the world's most modern warships. Even its eight Ming-class submarines, all of which are based on early Cold War designs, would pose a significant threat to Philippine naval forces. Moreover, China's island-based air assets would significantly outnumber the Philippine Air Force's 12 FA-50 fighter aircraft.

Vietnam fares slightly better. It supplements secondhand Soviet surface combatants and eight Kilo-class submarines with a handful of modern frigates, like its three Gepard 3.9-class ships. Vietnamese air defense capabilities are much more robust than those of the Philippines – its 46 Su-27's and

Su-30's combined with surplus Soviet and modern Israeli air defense systems would prove difficult for Chinese forces to overwhelm quickly. Nevertheless, China has the definitive upper hand in escalatory situations.

However, China's reliance on artificial islands is a critical strategic liability in any long-term conflict. In a brief confrontation, these forward bases provide China with the quantitative superiority it would need to neutralize Vietnamese and Philippine forces. But small island bases are vulnerable absent absolute sea control. American submarines could prevent naval resupply of artificial islands, or even destroy their foundations with well-placed torpedoes or explosive charges. Special Operations Forces (SOF) detachments could be deployed to neutralize smaller garrisons and harass larger ones. Long-range Chinese missiles can hit American aircraft carriers, but long-range American missiles could strike airfields more easily by virtue of their immobility.

Absent increased American presence, SCS conflicts are likely to be brief, considering the PLA's material preponderance over its likely adversaries. Such a situation clearly serves Chinese interests. More robust American presence in the SCS would directly remedy this present imbalance. In addition, the U.S.

decisive confrontation between China and its SCS rivals. By contrast, present American disengagement only encourages Chinese aggression.

However, engagement must be defined. Deterrence, the harmonization of military strategy and political goals to prevent conflict, is inexact. It requires matching two blunt instruments, and communicating intention to another actor that may not interpret signals properly. Considering these difficulties, the present gap between American force structure and political goals enables conflict.

At present, the balance of forces favors the United States in an extended conflict. China's long-range missiles, swarming surface combatants, and quantitative superiority in airframes may push American forces out of strike range of Chinese forces in the SCS. However, the U.S. Navy's Carrier Strike Groups would be able to impose a "far blockade" on the Strait of Malacca, choking off China's oil supply, and forcing the PLAN to operate without cover from Chinese-occupied islands. The U.S. Navy's Carrier Air Wing lacks the flexibility it had during the Cold War, while its surface force has become defensive as its numbers have declined. Nevertheless, this strategy plays to America's strengths, just as Britain's North Sea blockade eroded Imperial German power during World War I.

At present, the balance of forces favors the United States in an extended conflict.

could likely engender cooperation between Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan over China policy. The states strategically relevant to the SCS lack the historical enmity toward each other that hampers Japanese-Korean military cooperation. This would help ease coordination among the countries. Increased American involvement would decrease the likelihood of a brief,

Despite the efficacy of such a policy in the long-term, its short-term blind spots create serious deterrence gaps. Defensive naval strategies are successful over time, but do not threaten to deliver immediate offensive punishment. China remains free to gradually erode Philippine and Vietnamese sovereignty, and may still opt for a brief confrontation in the SCS if it can consolidate its gains

before an American response. Two policy choices would help bridge this present gap. First, forward-basing American surface combatants in the SCS would enable persistent American presence, provide high-end capabilities to outclassed friendly states, and serve as a tripwire to explicitly demonstrate the significance of the SCS to American interests. Second, greater cooperation with, and funding for, allied coast guards would give regional partners the ability to push back against Chinese expansion in kind without unduly risking escalation.

■ Conclusion - Long-Term Resolve

Any analysis of great power conflict is naturally pessimistic – the analyst's goal is to maximize one party's advantage in a worst-case scenario. However, the United States must realize that simply recognizing the challenges it faces will not prevent war. Paradoxically, the best way to preclude conflict is to prepare for it. Military strength, rather than open discussion between China and the United States, can prevent a cataclysmic confrontation. Sufficient funding is critical to create a U.S. Navy robust enough to prevent escalation in the SCS, and in Asia more broadly.

Nevertheless, that strength is meaningless absent the political will to maintain and use it. This fact has not only historical, objective support, but also ethical value. America's goal is not survival and domination, but also the maintenance of the democratic experiment it first spearheaded over two centuries ago. American leaders and citizens would do well to remember the words of Athens' greatest citizen, Pericles, to his countrymen after a year of conflict with Sparta: "...knowing that happiness requires freedom, and freedom requires courage, do not shrink from the dangers of war." (Thucydides, 2.43 2-4)

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A Strategy to Achieve U.S. Mid-East Objectives

by ADMIRAL JAMES LYONS USN (RET.)

Even with the defeat of ISIS in both Iraq and Syria, we are far from achieving our overall U.S. objectives in the Middle East. The Iranian Crescent is clearly expanding and threatening to encircle our traditional allies and friends. Complicating matters is Russia's resurgence as a power broker, not only in Syria and Iran, but also its renewed military and economic relations with Egypt and the emergence of a new jihadist axis including Turkey, Qatar, and Iran.

With the killing of the former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, there is no clear path forward in resolving the Yemen civil war. While Saleh was a divisive figure, he was also clever enough to broker a settlement. When he announced an offer to link up with the Saudis, it sealed his demise. The recent firing of a likely Iranian-made ballistic missile by the Houthi rebels at the Riyadh International Airport and the Saudi royal court at al-Yamama palace has added a new dimension to that crisis. Clearly, a blockade needs to be set up to intercept arms smuggling by Iran. We should also assist the Saudi coalition (Egypt, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Sudan) to retake the Port of Hodeidah, which would be a tremendous psychological blow to the Houthi rebels and Iran.

■ Defining U.S. Interests

With the United States being challenged throughout the world, a realistic, disciplined strategy should be adopted that is based on our core vital interest, including:

- Preventing Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability has been one of our vital interests. The Iranian regime has been actively seeking nuclear

weapons capability since the late 1980s, primarily clandestinely but thanks to the Obama administration, with an international veneer of legitimacy. However, under the Obama administration, this objective was severely undercut with the five-party, unsigned "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA). Regrettably, with North Korea being the off-site laboratory for Iran, it must be assumed

Sykes-Picot Treaty is dead. We must recognize realities on the ground. Neither Iraq nor Syria will ever be able to exercise control over their former sovereign territory. An independent Kurdistan is a dagger in the heart of Iranian objectives.

- Support and actually lead efforts for regime change in Tehran.
- Reinforce our alliances with our regional friends and allies.

Pakistan now sees China as the future dominant power in South Asia.

that Iran already has a nuclear weapon capability. Unconfirmed reports that North Korea covertly shipped three nuclear warheads to Iran underscores this danger. Therefore, our objective now must be to prevent Iran from deploying any nuclear capability against the United States and our allies.

- Roll back Iranian geo-strategic hegemony in the region. As a first step, disrupt Iran's attempt to establish a land bridge from Tehran to the Mediterranean Sea and Lebanon and disrupt its attempts to encircle the Arabian Peninsula with puppet regimes.

- Ensure the survival of Israel. This will require strengthening the bilateral relationship, both diplomatically and militarily.

- Ensure freedom of the seas including keeping open strategic straits, e.g., Hormuz and Bab-el-Mandeb.

- Support an independent Kurdistan. Not only were they our loyal allies in helping us defeat ISIS, but an independent Kurdistan is key to disrupting Iran's land bridge to Lebanon. The 1916

■ Supporting Non-Jihadi Forces

It must be understood that Baghdad, Beirut, and Damascus are all Iranian puppet regimes. Hezbollah and the various Shiite jihadi militia groups in both the former Iraq and Syria are all proxy militias under the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)/Qods Force Command. As part of our strategy, we must refuse to cooperate with them or provide them any support. We need to work with and support the non-jihadi Sunni forces in the region to confront and degrade the Iranian militias.

We should also work with the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), the largest, oldest and best organized of all Iranian opposition groups, as well as with Israel to monitor – and when the time comes, to destroy – Iran's clandestine nuclear weapon program. This is key to preventing Iran from actually deploying its nuclear weapons, whether in a test demonstration scenario – or an actual attack. We must be prepared to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure, if necessary.

We need to intensify the Trump administration's developing relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We need to ensure that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's objectives and vision coincide with ours and those of our allies (Israel). We need to work with MbS and support his efforts to modernize the Kingdom while at the same time curbing the power of the Wahhabi clergy and root out corruption.

■ **Cutting off the LAF**

The recent "two-step" by the Lebanese President Saad Hariri remains confusing as to his actual intentions as well as relationship with the Saudis. He first showed up in Riyadh in mid-November 2017 to announce his resignation as prime minister of Lebanon because Iran and Hezbollah effectively control Lebanon. That was useful in actually exposing the true situation on the ground. The subsequent withdrawal of his resignation upon his return to Beirut, while confusing, nevertheless changed nothing with regard to Iran and Hezbollah's control of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The LAF is a wholly owned subsidiary of the IRGC and controlled by Hezbollah, so it makes absolutely no sense for the U.S. to continue to provide it with military equipment. Ac-

The strategic center of gravity has actually shifted from Afghanistan to the Pakistani province of Balochistan...

cordingly, the recently announced \$120 million worth of military equipment that the Trump administration is planning to transfer to the LAF must be cancelled. The same with our bribery money to the Palestinian Authority, which refuses to recognize Israel's legitimacy and continues to make payment to terrorists' families.

Our strategy must also confront the new emerging jihadist axis of Turkey, Qatar, and Iran. This alliance is committed to regional objectives counter to those of America and our allies.

■ **Pakistan in Afghanistan**

As can be seen, the United States has no core compelling vital national security interests in Afghanistan. It is a primitive, tribal Islamic society and cannot be modernized in any meaningful Western sense for the foreseeable future. Therefore, we should not waste any more of our national treasure on this corrupt society. It is not a question of whether or not the current U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan will succeed, but rather to acknowledge that the strategic environment makes success virtually impossible. This is due to the fact that Pakistan, upon which the outcome of our counterinsurgency strategy depends, views Afghanistan as a client state with only the thinnest veneer of sovereignty, and has regional plans markedly different from those of the United States and NATO.

As Col. Larry Sellin, USA (ret.) has pointed out many times, Pakistan regulates the operational tempo through its support of the Taliban and therefore, effectively controls how our troops are employed in Afghanistan. Additionally, because U.S. supply lines for those troops pass through Pakistan, it also wields an effective choke hold on our operations there. Our counterinsurgency tactics

place our forces at the same tactical level of the Taliban. Consequently, we are playing to the strengths of the enemy rather than our own. According to Sellin, Pakistan will always do just enough to prevent the United States and NATO from ever reaching the point of ensuring a stable and secure Afghanistan.

Pakistan now sees China as the future dominant power in South Asia. The Chinese are investing heavily in the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is the regional linchpin of

China's global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC is more than economic. It will also help China to control military choke points, such as from a likely new naval base in Gwadar. Its proximity to the Straits of Hormuz, through which most of China's energy flows, should not be overlooked. It should also be noted that the Chinese are expanding the Gwadar International Airport to handle military flights. Clearly the current U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan is ill-suited for future strategic challenges in the region.

■ **The Role of Balochistan**

The strategic center of gravity has actually shifted from Afghanistan to the Pakistani province of Balochistan, which is not only critical to China's \$46 billion investment in CPEC, but is now the home of an extensive Taliban support infrastructure and a breeding ground for transnational terrorism. A shift of Balochistan in the direction of its former secular independent status would drive a geo-political stake into the heart of radical Islam, obviate Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan and shatter China's plan to economically dominate South Asia and control the vital Indian Ocean sea lanes to the Persian Gulf and Suez Canal.

As can be seen, our overall strategy for the Middle East and South Asia must be framed by our core vital interests. Besides the necessary political and diplomatic efforts, our strategy must be based on a balance of power with our regional allies to prevent regional hegemony by any one country (Iran, Russia, or China). This will require a deployed force structure that enables us to conduct surgical strikes with the effective use of special forces, combined with the non-jihadist Sunni-Shia elements to thwart plans to keep off-balance any nation that threatens U.S. regional interest.

Admiral JAMES LYONS, USN (ret.) served as the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Trump's Afghanistan Strategy: The Least Bad Option

by SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA

Donald Trump's strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia announced in August, was intended to highlight the novelty and surprise elements of a roadmap that purportedly sought little short of the decimation of terrorism. For all that, the "new" strategy, its overheated semantics and studious ambiguity notwithstanding, in reality is but a continuation of the American trial-and-error method that has kept insurgent aspirations of a victory alive these 16 years since the United States intervened in Afghanistan. After spending much blood and treasure, has the United States learned from its mistakes? Is the present strategy a break with the past? Or is it a mere continuation of a policy with no defined objectives and outcomes? India needs to consider carefully its desired terms of engagement for any serious partnership with the Americans in Afghanistan.

■ *Ambiguities and Novelty*

After all the opposition to the war in Afghanistan he unleashed over the years via social media, especially in his election campaign, when push came to shove, Donald Trump's strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia chose the least bad option, the one which would have the least resistance and would provide room for maneuver to match domestic needs and geopolitical interests. Despite tall claims of having studied Afghanistan in great detail and from every conceivable angle, Trump's Afghanistan strategy is neither new nor comprehensive. New Delhi needs to remain cautious before embracing this ambiguous strategy. Among its many ambiguities, three are especially worth considering:

■ *Kinetic vs Non-kinetic*

First, the strategy, apparently scripted by the U.S. military, is not about nation-building but kinetic operations, search-and-destroy by another name. Getting a free hand on the ground with no micro-management from Washington is a victory of sorts for the American generals in Afghanistan. Still, much confusion abounds as to whether the strategy is counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism plus, or an overt reliance on the use of military force. Moving away from the earlier time-based approach to one based on conditions is certainly appropriate. In this, Trump has addressed the error of his predecessor, Barack Obama, who in December 2009 had announced troop surge and exit at the same time. This only worked to insurgent advantage, allowing an approach of "waiting out the enemy."

Yet there is no indication whether the intent is to convert Afghanistan into a new South Korea, where U.S. troops are indefinitely based, or something else. A

components, will limit the gains achieved through kinetic operations. Claiming that all of this will be something more than smoke and mirrors is guaranteed, Trump proclaimed, by the application of will. Unlike in the prior administration, he implied, this time the United States will fight to win. To point out the sheer profligacy of such a pronouncement seems almost a waste of effort.

■ *Regional Power Play*

Second, Trump has not identified any benchmarks and targets for actions. This keeps the expectation bar low but also does not address the basic component of metrics. Neither has he expressed in any clear terms expected steps to be taken by Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, or even the United States itself. Most importantly, the role of other major regional powers such as Russia, China, Iran, UAE, and Saudi Arabia remains undefined. Afghanistan's tragedy lies in the fact that its internal contradictions have been ex-

...the apparent decoupling of kinetic and non-kinetic elements of the strategy...will limit the gains achieved through kinetic operations.

conditions-based approach is preferable to the mistaken announcement of a time schedule, but there is nothing to indicate what will be done to address those conditions that are fueling extremism and violence. Further, the apparent decoupling of kinetic and non-kinetic elements of the strategy, the military and civilian

exploited by external powers. Without a regional strategy, the external powers will continue along this path, notably neighboring Pakistan.

■ *Safe Haven*

Third, every American president is aware of Pakistan's role and interests in



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani in 2016.

supporting the terrorist groups in Afghanistan. It is perhaps the first time that a U.S. president has stated this publicly, but it is not as though the reality has not hitherto figured into planning. Nevertheless, there it was: “Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror,” Trump stated unambiguously. Unspecified was just what coercive instruments could be brought to play to change Pakistan’s behavior.

Trump’s critique of Pakistan is in line with New Delhi and Kabul’s position on the external support and sanctuary provided to the insurgent and terrorist groups that are the source of Afghanistan’s instability. Pakistan has been a mendacious ally in the U.S.-led war on terror, sheltering terror groups like the Taliban and the Haqqani network, and using them as strategic assets in Afghanistan, despite more than \$33 billion in American aid being given to Pakistan in the last decade and half for the counter-terrorism cooperation.

■ **Strategic Partnership in Afghanistan**

Trump’s sudden recognition of New Delhi’s concerns has been received with caution in view of the role he wishes to assign India as a strategic ally and further develop the strategic partnership. The proof lies in the pudding. Even as

Pakistan considers cozying up to China as its safety-valve, the strategy has been welcomed in Kabul and New Delhi. In spite of Trump’s awkward mentioning first of India’s substantial trade benefits from good relations with the U.S. – before elaborating on his expectations from New Delhi “to do more” – New Delhi has welcomed the strategy. It is seen as a nod to the importance of India’s economic and development assistance thus far and an acknowledgement that without India’s soft power, things could be much worse.

■ **Counter-terrorism Cooperation**

Though mentioning the fact that at least 20 U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the highest concentration in any region anywhere in the world, Trump’s strategy appears geared toward targeting al-Qaeda and ISIS. If the United States is still looking for a political settlement with the Taliban, New Delhi will have to make sure that this is done by the Afghan government through an open, inclusive, and accountable process.

Moreover, New Delhi needs to tell Washington that the targeting of terrorist groups cannot be selective and must include groups that are detrimental to India’s security interests, as well. Any

robust counter-terrorism cooperation with the United States will need to address issues of funding, training, and support provided to these groups.

■ **Building Non-Kinetic Capabilities**

India has pledged more than \$3 billion to various civilian capacity-building, infrastructure, and development projects in Afghanistan. This has brought it significant good will among the Afghans. By avoiding a narrow security-dominated approach India is seen as a neutral partner and not a party to the conflict. It is prudent, then, for New Delhi to stay clear of involvement in the kinetic side of the equation, while simultaneously urging the United States to play a more meaningful non-kinetic role in institution building and reform.

This goes against the Trump administration’s stated goal of avoiding nation-building, yet any military strategy divorced from building strong institutions of governance and service delivery is unlikely to translate kinetic gains into tangible political outcomes. The mere addition of 3,000 troops to Afghanistan, where they will bolster the approximately 11,000 American forces already there, will not make much impact unless there is a clarity of the mission, rules of engagement and outcome, in addition to building effective and responsive governance institutions.

There is a serious possibility that the United States is looking to India to perform the non-kinetic component while Washington engages in what certain figures feel it does best, war fighting. This would be a thankless position for New Delhi to be in that could entail burden-sharing and risk strategic distortion as concerns its own interests.

■ **Long Drawn-Out War**

Likewise, the role of private contractors in the push to outsource the war; the continued dependence upon warlords, power-brokers, and militias for support of counter-insurgency operations; the

use of airpower as a surrogate for actual engagement, together with inadequate human intelligence (HUMINT) resulting in collateral damage and increase in civilian casualties, all need to be clarified. The potential for New Delhi to be caught in the blowback from Washington's ill-considered approaches must be weighed.

Skeptics are already highlighting that by lumping its Afghan with its South Asia (India and Pakistan) strategy, the Trump administration runs the danger of not only intensifying the India-Pakistan competition but also intensifying regional competition as Pakistan seeks succor from the likes of China, Russia, and Iran. The dangers of such competition notwithstanding, Pakistan will need to compete with India on the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan which will accrue good will from the Afghans. At the moment, the popular sentiment for Pakistan remains very low.

A weak and unstable Afghanistan has been a primary objective of its predatory neighbors. Leaving to the side the reality that countries like Pakistan are not simply going to give up this quest, regardless of U.S. positions or threats, there is the fundamental necessity for any American strategy that has hope of success to build a strong and stable Afghan state, one which will make it difficult for its predatory neighbors and their proxies to continue subversion and assault.

■ **Institution Building and Reform**

This can be achieved by institution building and reforms in the security, political, economic, and governance sectors. The Trump administration has refrained from making clear, long-term commitments. The time to do so is now.

In the security sector, there remains a need for better training, equipment, vetting, and policing capabilities, as well as an increase in Afghan airpower capability. The latter element alone, if inadequate, seems all but to guarantee that the gains achieved through kinetic operations will be simply lost.

In the political sector, in addition to revamping the indigenous institutions for peace and reconciliation such as the High Peace Council, reconciled and reintegrated fighters will need opportunities for employment and acceptability as they transition back into society. More importantly, as Afghanistan heads to another round of presidential and much-delayed parliamentary elections in 2019 and 2018 respectively, systems, procedures, and logistics need to be put in place to avoid the messy outcomes of previous years. These have seriously undermined the credibility and functioning of the Afghan government. Greater decentralization will help popular participation on the margins. The limits of an overly centralized form of governance of the past decade and a half are evident.

A legitimate government that delivers to basic services the people is essential to any hope of victory, however defined. A clean, responsive and accountable governance system under the rule of law is essential to build the trust of the populace and deprive the insurgents of its

that will be an antidote to enemy forces and predatory neighbors. The Strategic Partnership Agreement signed by New Delhi with Kabul in October 2011 provides a good template. As America adopts a kinetic approach toward Afghanistan, New Delhi will have to spell out the conditions for any cooperation to take this strategic partnership ahead.

For New Delhi to partner with U.S. development and aid agencies, such as USAID, there is a need for integrated planning to provide market access for the products produced, accompanied by skill-based training for small and medium enterprises for income generation and boosting domestic production. Continuing instability has enabled neighboring countries to pour in cheap goods, thus, stunting Afghanistan's indigenous economic revival and growth.

New Delhi will have to tread carefully in the shifting sands inside Afghanistan and the region. Rather than rushing into the American embrace, New Delhi's primary objective must be to fulfill its obligations as Kabul's strate-

New Delhi needs to tell Washington that the
targeting of terrorist groups cannot be selective and
must include groups that are detrimental to India's
security interests, as well.

support. If this appears so much pie-in-the-sky, then there hardly appears any point in being involved. Just what the announced U.S. strategy is to contribute to such an end-state is puzzling.

■ **Prospects for India-U.S. Partnership in Afghanistan**

If India and the United States intend to work together in denying hostile groups and their sponsors any space in Afghanistan, the first step will be to outline a comprehensive and long-term plan along with the Afghan government to build a strong and stable Afghanistan

partner. President Trump has sought an honorable and enduring outcome, the contours of which remain unknown. The Afghans have long looked to a friendly India to play this role of a serious interlocutor. India should step up to the plate commensurate with its rising power status and aspirations.

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An Open Letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin

by JIRI VALENTA and LENI FRIEDMAN VALENTA

Dear Mr. President: Thank you for publicizing that President Donald Trump and the CIA shared information that helped avoid a terrorist attack on St. Petersburg's Kadansky Cathedral. This reminds us that at the June 2001 Slovenia summit, you shared information collected by Russian intelligence in Chechnya warning about an Al Qaeda attack on the United States. It is unfortunate the strong Russo-U.S. relationship of 2001-2002 has unraveled over time for many reasons – and we are reminded of the need to restore it.

■ *Resolution of Syrian Conflict*

In the interest of improving that relationship, we wish to briefly make known our views on certain policy issues, cognizant that others are reading this letter. We do not speak for any governmental body.

As you know, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, having launched a covert war in Syria and supporting the rebels seeking to oust Asad, were on a path to war with Russia and Iran in Syria. Former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell even spoke of “killing Russians” in Syria. Why not share frankly the reasons for Russia's 2015 intervention there?

Besides protecting your considerable investments, you saw the vacuum created by the killing of dictators in Iraq and Libya delivering power to the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood. Surely, the removal of Asad would also have turned secular Syria into another jihadist hell.

At the Asia-Pacific Economic

Cooperation summit in Vietnam in November, you and President Trump issued a joint statement on Syria. Sadly, the full summit was called off; as your adviser, Andrey Kortunov remarked, you and Russia are still “toxic” to Trump at home.

In your joint statement, you agreed that “there is no military solution to the conflict in Syria.” You committed to the Geneva process. You upheld the maintenance of Syria's sovereignty and right to free elections under U.N. supervision. The two of you also agreed to cooperate on military de-confliction, a joint effort at the liquidation of ISIS, a review of cease fire agreements, safe de-escalation, and humanitarian measures. However, I am sure you would agree with Kortunov that the joint statement was “a step in the right direction, but collaboration remains situational, not strategic.”

You had reason to worry when Trump fired 59 Tomahawk missiles at Asad's Shayrat airfield to punish him for a second poison gas attack on civilians. (The first was in 2013). Wisely, you appear to have concluded that Trump, whether or not he believed Asad respon-

to the 2013 sarin gas attack).

Reports also indicate you are not at ease with the 2,000 U.S. troops still in Syria. Why not? Under Obama, the United States was covertly seeking to oust Asad. Trump redirected American forces and helped smash ISIS. America does plan to stay for a while, but to stabilize Syria in strategic collaboration with Russia.

However, on your surprise stopover at your Khmeimim airbase in Syria on Dec. 11, 2017, you claimed victory on behalf of Syrian dictator Asad's forces, as Russia, with the help of Iranian personnel, has wrested control of most of the country from the Islamic State. Thus, you said you planned to send a “significant” part of your forces home. It was an odd move. In the United States, in light of past Russian pullouts including Leonid Brezhnev's so-called withdrawals from Afghanistan, you were not entirely believed.

In any event, be frank: The civil war in Syria is by no means over, and Syria is economically devastated—loss of oil revenues, infrastructure, and shortages of food. Defeating an enemy is one thing; sustaining peace is another.

Unless you and Trump get together to negotiate directly and forge strategic cooperation between our countries, the Syrian war will drag on for years.

sible for the attack, had to demonstrate that when it comes to red lines, he's not Obama (who did not respond with force

At present, U.S. and Russian forces must avoid accidents in a crowded Syria. This brings me to that incident over the

Euphrates River in December when a couple of American F-22 Raptors almost butted heads with a pair of your Su Frogfoots. Of course, they blamed each other. What's new? Yet you must know that two weeks earlier, your side submitted an identical report on an event that the American side said never happened. We have to work together, or at least avoid each other.

Furthermore, there are actors in Syria besides Russians and Americans. These include Iranians, foreign rebels, Kurds, Turks and Saudis, not to mention Assad's forces. The Kurds, loyal and successful U.S. allies, seek a homeland, i.e. a big chunk of Syria, and some U.S. troops in Syria support the largely Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Battling the Kurds are the Turks, who, despite their support of jihadist forces, are still NATO allies. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent his troops into Syria largely fearing successes of the Kurds could rouse separatist forces in eastern Turkey. But you and Trump have to think creatively about how to offer Kurds at least autonomy in the peace talks in Geneva, and perhaps a path to future independence – they are the balance to jihadists.

There is also the problem of finding a national leader to replace Assad, the much-hated leader of the Alawite minority. Yet it remains important to you and Trump that Alawites protect Syria's Arab Christians.

Unless you and Trump get together to negotiate directly and forge strategic cooperation between our countries the Syrian war will drag on for years.

■ **Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem**

Syria does not exist in a vacuum. The neighbors are affected, and besides Turkey, one of these is Israel. Frankly, we are confused about where you stand on the U.S. decision to acknowledge Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the American embassy. You, yourself, recognized West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, yet your diplomats have now attacked

Trump for effectively doing the same.

Russia is friendly with both Israel and the PLO – of which the Palestinian Authority is a branch. Perhaps your diplomats can be helpful in negotiating an end to their conflict. The solution must include the right of Israel to control the Golan Heights without the presence of Hezbollah, Iran's primary armed proxy.

Just this week we were horrified to discover that the Obama administration, while criticizing your support of Hezbollah, protected Hezbollah's massive drug peddling and money laundering schemes in the Americas. But you were selling arms to Hezbollah drug kingpins. One, Ali Fayad, was indicted for plans to assassinate U.S. officials and attempting to acquire anti-aircraft missiles.

■ **Possible Summit in Prague**

President Putin, we frankly do not believe that the major threats to world order can be fully resolved without you and President Trump sitting together. Despite domestic politics and polarization at home, an open-ended summit should take place.

We suggest Prague, the capital of a NATO country, whose president, Milos Zeman, has friendly relations with both the United States and Russia.

■ **We Need Each Other**

The United States and Russia should strive to renew the anti-Islamist terrorist partnership. The attack on the Kadan-sky Cathedral was spoiled by a CIA tip and joint operations of American and Russian intelligence. But ISIS fighters and their violent sympathizers, defeated in Iraq and Syria, are not demoralized. Their jihad is spreading across the globe.

In the continuing war with jihadists, both our nations, while endowed with different faces of Judaic-Christian civilization, need each other to fight and eventually defeat not just Islamic terrorism but the evil ideology that underlies it. Unfortunately, our president, constantly facing false charges of racism, cannot attack the new Nazis, as Winston

Churchill, did the old ones, when he spoke of how "the civilized world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed the Nazi gangsters to build up, year by year from almost nothing."

Born in Nazi-occupied Bohemia to a Czech-Jewish, Holocaust afflicted family, JIRI VALENTA, Ph.D., is a Non-Resident Senior Research Associate at the BESA [Begin-Sadat] Center for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, Tel Aviv, Israel. He and his wife, LENI FRIEDMAN VALENTA, are the principals of The Institute of Post-Communist Studies and Terrorism (jvlv.net).

Author of Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968 (Johns Hopkins, 1991), and other books, Jiri founded the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies [ISEES] at the University of Miami in 1986. Valenta is a long-standing member of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former professor and coordinator of Soviet and East European Studies at the U.S. Naval Post-Graduate School. He served with Natan Sharansky and Alan Dershowitz on the National Council on Soviet Jewry from 1976-87.

He is also the 2005 winner of the Jan Masaryk silver medal from the Czech Republic for his "contribution to preserving and promoting relations between Czech Republic and the United States of America," while managing a Czech foreign ministry think tank under Vaclav Havel from 1991-93. Beside co-producing books on Czech national interests, Valenta proposed that the PLO embassy be closed as a terrorist center. The PLO published a booklet, Palestinska Otazka [Palestine Question] attacking Valenta and the Embassy remained open.

Shortly before the August 1991 anti-Yeltsin coup attempt in Moscow, Valenta helped organize a new route to Israel through Prague for Soviet Jews seeking to emigrate. The Sanford Ziff Freedom Flight, supported by philanthropist Ziff and the Cuban American National Foundation, was approved and facilitated by then-President Vaclav Havel.

Planning to Win

review by SHOSHANA BRYEN

Some things are just too unpleasant to contemplate, too far in the future, or too complicated to demand attention. Or too scary. Or conflict with other things we know – or think we know. A North Korean nuclear attack on an American island would be one of those. An Iranian attack on Israel would be another. A Chinese attack on Taiwan would be all of those. “It won’t happen,” people say, “because the consequences (for the attacker) would be too terrible.”

Too terrible, perhaps, for American sensibilities – we like to think most people prefer peace to war, negotiation to shooting, and kicking the can down the road to making a stand. And certainly we like to think people prefer building military forces for defense, not for offense. But The Chinese Invasion Threat by Ian Easton of the Project 2049 Institute is a chilling reminder that not everyone sees things as we do and some countries prepare for the future they expect to have, even if they expect to have it at great cost.

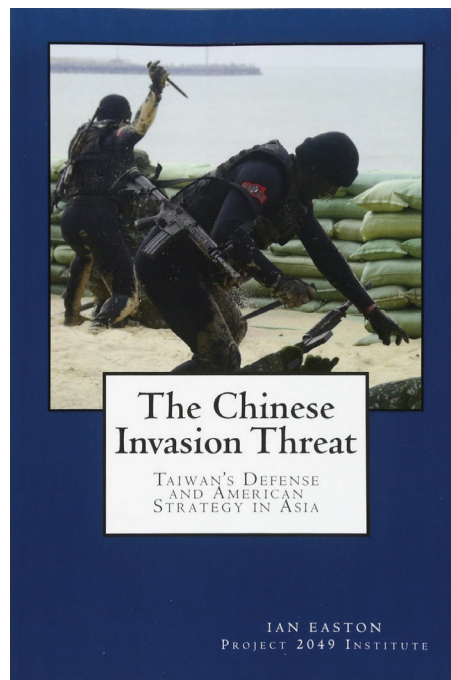
The Project 2049 Institute presents its mission as seeking “to guide decision makers toward a more secure Asia by the century’s mid-point... fill(ing) a gap in the public policy realm through forward looking, region-specific research on alternative security and policy solutions.” Easton is a research fellow, previously a visiting fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs, and a China analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses. If the goal is to focus attention on parts of the international security system governments might prefer to ignore, Easton – on behalf of the Institute – succeeds mightily. He begins not with U.S.-China trade or political positions, but with the fundamental point of communist China’s policy.

The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) believes the island nation of Taiwan belongs to Beijing. The PRC has spent decades planning and arming for the invasion of Taiwan and the restoration of the island to its rule. Planning and arming to win. Yes, if it could get the Taiwanese government to capitulate peacefully, China would take it. But as Easton details with maps, charts and great familiarity with Chinese military journals, Taiwan is the first national priority of the PRC government, if for no other reason than that a flourishing democracy in Taiwan provides Chinese people with a model for life inconsistent with communist rule. The repressive nature of the PRC government is a running theme, coloring choices the government makes and accounting for it looking over its shoulder at the possibility of rebellion at home if it is too adventurous and not successful enough abroad.

The Taiwanese view the whole thing from the other end of the telescope. Taiwan is planning and arming not to lose. Easton reads their journals as well.

The United States, true to its post-Cold War form, broadly believes engagement with the PRC, trade deals, “confidence-building measures” and points of common interest will create a web of ties China will not risk for the restoration of Taiwan. Easton contends there is no common interest. “China has made clear that its primary external objective is attaining the ability to apply overwhelming force against Taiwan during a conflict and, if necessary, destroy American-led forces.”

At this point, the American reader should be saying, “But it will be so destructive that no one – particularly the PRC government, which has worked assiduously to build a Chinese middle class – would do that.”



The Chinese Invasion Threat
Ian Easton

Project 2049 Institute
2017



Local spectators greet to the Chinese Navy destroyer Qingdao (DDG 113) mooring in Pearl Harbor in 2006. (Photo: U.S. Navy)

Maybe not, but maybe. The PRC is no less clear than the Ayatollah Khomeini was when he said an Iranian nuclear attack on Israel would result in Israeli retaliation leaving 10 million Iranians dead. The exchange, he said, would be survivable for Iran but not for Israel. It was, therefore, an acceptable trade-off. Americans generally think of Khomeini as having been a raving lunatic, but somehow think of the Communist Party of China as a responsible partner for trade and politics.

Our political differences exacerbate our misunderstanding of Chinese policy – or at least, our understanding of the PRC commitment to winning. The good news is that the U.S. is bound to Taiwan through the Taiwan Relations Act, which clearly states America's responsibilities:

To provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character and to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security or the social or economic system of the people of Taiwan.

Even if we find it hard to imagine the PRC invading Taiwan, the United States has to be prepared to help Taiwan defend itself.

Easton, a rare Chinese-speaker in U.S. policy circles, draws on Chinese-language defense manuals, journals, and papers to understand what the PLA is thinking, planning and buying. He balances this with Taiwanese writings on the same subjects. One useful conclusion is that professional military planners are well aware of, and highly attuned to, things that could go wrong – which

makes sense because if something they advocate goes south, so do their careers and maybe their lives. Papers filled with bombast about the ease of invasion and occupation, Easton says, are more likely written by unimportant, low-level political operatives.

Take the pessimistic papers the most seriously.

Although focused on what the PRC plans to do, a fascinating chapter brings attention to Taiwan's coping mechanisms – military, economic and social. Taiwan plans the way Israel plans. Drills, reserve service, dual-use ships, planes and airports, and national mobilization drills are part of life from childhood to adulthood. But the objective is to convince the Chinese not to invade – and only secondarily to defeat invasion if necessarily. Easton quotes a Taiwanese scholar:

If China even threatens to attack Taiwan, it could greatly damage our economy. Investors will flee. That happened to us in 1996, and we haven't forgotten it. We are now in a position to cripple Shanghai's economy in return...an economic blockade would really hurt us too! Nonetheless, our businessmen are some of the most flexible in the world. They would move on to other markets and recover in a few years. China, on the other hand, would be devastated. The pain would be unbearable for the Communists."

Perhaps. But the Taiwanese are also preparing military obstacles in the event of a Chinese invasion across the Straits. Much of the book focuses on scenarios for an invasion and Taiwan's plans for stopping it.

Easton provides clear themes, clear scenarios, clear policy predictions, and clear recommendations. There is even an interesting section on weather patterns and their impact on invasion plans. He argues for an American policy based on understanding that our long-term interests in the Pacific are tied to Taiwan and democratic American allies in Asia,

not to the PRC. An American failure to support Taiwan in an emergency would have an impact across a wide area of the world. He dates a change in PRC behavior toward the United States to 2007,

Our political differences exacerbate our misunderstanding of Chinese policy – or at least, our understanding of the PRC commitment to winning.

when China "shot a ballistic missile into a target satellite in low earth orbit... which clearly demonstrated China's intention to weaponize space and neutralize the eyes and ears of American military power in a conflict." Further aggressive activities followed, but each was minimized or ignored in favor of positive U.S.-mainland relations.

Everything is clear in The Chinese Invasion Threat except the geography.

Americans are not familiar with the geography of Taiwan, and the lack of good maps is an enormous drawback. Although Easton talks the reader through Chinese considerations for where it might invade and how its forces

might travel through the island, it is hard to envision. He writes about ports, airports and cities that are invisible. The maps that are there – 9 in 275 pages of text plus 15 pages of invasion scenarios

in an appendix – are amateurish and not helpful at all.

This is not an easy book, and the average reader can skip over some of the tables and a few of the hardware descriptions – although he doesn't go overboard on those. Do not skip the invasion scenarios at the end. Consider The Chinese Invasion Threat the kale of national security books. You know you won't especially enjoy it, but you know you should do it, and you will be better off when you do.

So, do.

SHOSHANA BRYEN is the editor of *inFOCUS* and the Senior Director of the Jewish Policy Center.

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■ *A Final Thought ...*

Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel

President Donald Trump's decision to have the United States recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was not taken in a vacuum. It was another step in changing the moribund Palestinian-Israeli "peace process" into something else. What else is not clear, but the intention and the antecedents are.

The intention is to disabuse the Palestinians of the notion that the United States is neutral between them and our democratic, pro-Western, tolerant, free-market ally Israel. Clarity will actually make the United States an honest broker in any future negotiations – honest being the operative word. Our support for Palestinian aspirations is conditional on their behavior.

As for antecedents...

Israel's requirements in any "process" have long been the safeguards guaranteed by UN Security Council Resolution 242: "Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force." Where the boundaries are negotiable; Israel's capital in an undivided Jerusalem is not, though the formulation leaves a bit of room for politics.

Current Palestinian requirements are an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza without giving legitimacy

to Israel's sovereignty anywhere. The PLO Charter, like that of Hamas, claims Palestine in the whole British Mandate territory, including Jordan. For now, however, the Palestinian Authority slogan is "From the (Jordan) River to the (Mediterranean) Sea," meaning all of Israel, and that is what they teach their children.

The president proceeded in stages.

- First, he called out Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for teaching Palestinian children to venerate violence and terror against Israel and Jews.

- He offered support to the Taylor Force Act in Congress to eliminate American financial support for Palestinian payments to terrorists.

- Third was a threat to close the PLO mission in Washington for violating its conditional charter and threatening Israel in the International Criminal Court

- Finally, the Jerusalem declaration.

What's next?

American support for Palestinian aspirations is not withdrawn, but hinges on Palestinian behavior. If Palestinian leaders can't meet American requirements, they will have undermined themselves and their people (again). They can't say it wasn't clear.

– Shoshana Bryen,
Editor, *inFOCUS*