

THE FOREIGN AREA OFFICER ASSOCIATION JOURNAL OF

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## IS RUSSIA THE GREATEST THREAT TO U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY?

**BG DAWNE DESKINS, USANG  
COL CHRIS HARRIS, USAF  
COL DON JOHNSON, USAF  
CAPT JON YOUNG, USN**

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## Fellow Foreign Affairs Professionals at Home and Abroad,

When I began assembling this issue it was well before the U.S. election and I thought that we would have the journal in your hands before the results were known. Alas, volunteerism being what it is, I am writing these notes just a few days after the announcement of our new Commander in Chief.

The results surprised many and certainly introduced a profound new geopolitical context for all partners and adversaries of the U.S. What will a “law and order” administration do? Our lead article, which is timely, asks whether Russia should be our primary national security concern or whether violent extremist groups should be a higher priority. I won’t spoil the ending for you. Read the article to see how the authors framed it, and write us a letter of response if you disagree.

Speaking of Russia, during the campaign there was some commentary in the media about how the U.S. should or shouldn’t engage with Putin’s administration. FAOs often emphasize the importance of military to military relationships as a backstop to political volatility. We have the privilege of forging these relationships and opening channels of communication. I was grateful to receive a reminder of this fact recently from one of our FAOA members, BG Peter Zwack, who served as Defense Attaché to Russia from 2012 to 2014. He sent me a link to his *DefenseOne* article from February 1st which unpacks some of the nuances of the U.S.-Russia relationship. The following excerpt is shared with his permission:

*Perhaps the highest-profile visit came in June 2013, when Sergun invited Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, for a three-day visit to Moscom. Following a trail carefully blazed by several predecessors, Flynn laid a wreath at Russia’s Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and visited the GRU’s ultra-modern headquarters outside Moscom. There he gave a unique hour-long address on leadership and intelligence to a conference room full of young GRU officers who, judging by their questions, clearly had never before encountered an American intelligence general...*

*Flynn hosted an unprecedented dinner for his counterpart in my residence at the U.S. Embassy. The GRU director arrived with two generals and an interpreter. ... The customary toasts were hoisted, though Sergun himself was a modest drinker. The last toast called for making “the air-locks fit,” an allusion to the extraordinary Apollo–Soyuz link-up in 1975 during the heart of the Cold War, and an allegory for improving relations. He liked that. All departed with U.S. Embassy*



Graham Plaster  
Editor in Chief,  
FAO Association Journal

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*baseball caps for their children. ... My last contact with Sergun occurred in late 2013, just months before relations broke. I requested a meeting to deliver a message, and this powerful intelligence general arrived in short notice in modest street clothes. He took my message and we talked briefly about a planned visit to the United States with some of his senior GRU officers. That idea, of course, went stillborn when Russia invaded Crimea. So where do we go from here? The status quo, despite some minor improvement, remains quite negative. We must find meaningful ways to talk and work with Russian military counterparts on geostrategic concerns of mutual interest, of which there are plenty. Despite disagreements and frustrating disinformation, we must persist in this. Nations, especially ones that are traditional confrontational competitors that can existentially threaten each other, must constantly and intensively communicate via different channels and echelons, including sensitive military and intelligence conduits. This is hardly weakness or supplication; rather it displays strength, confidence and prudence, and it shows we are comfortable in our own skin.\**

Beyond Russia, General Zwack’s point is applicable the world over. As foreign affairs professionals work towards this end, to “constantly and intensively communicate via different channels and echelons”, coming against the tide of fake news, misinformation memes, and political spin doctoring, FAOs are the ones who can set the record straight, speak truth to power and lay the framework for smart power.

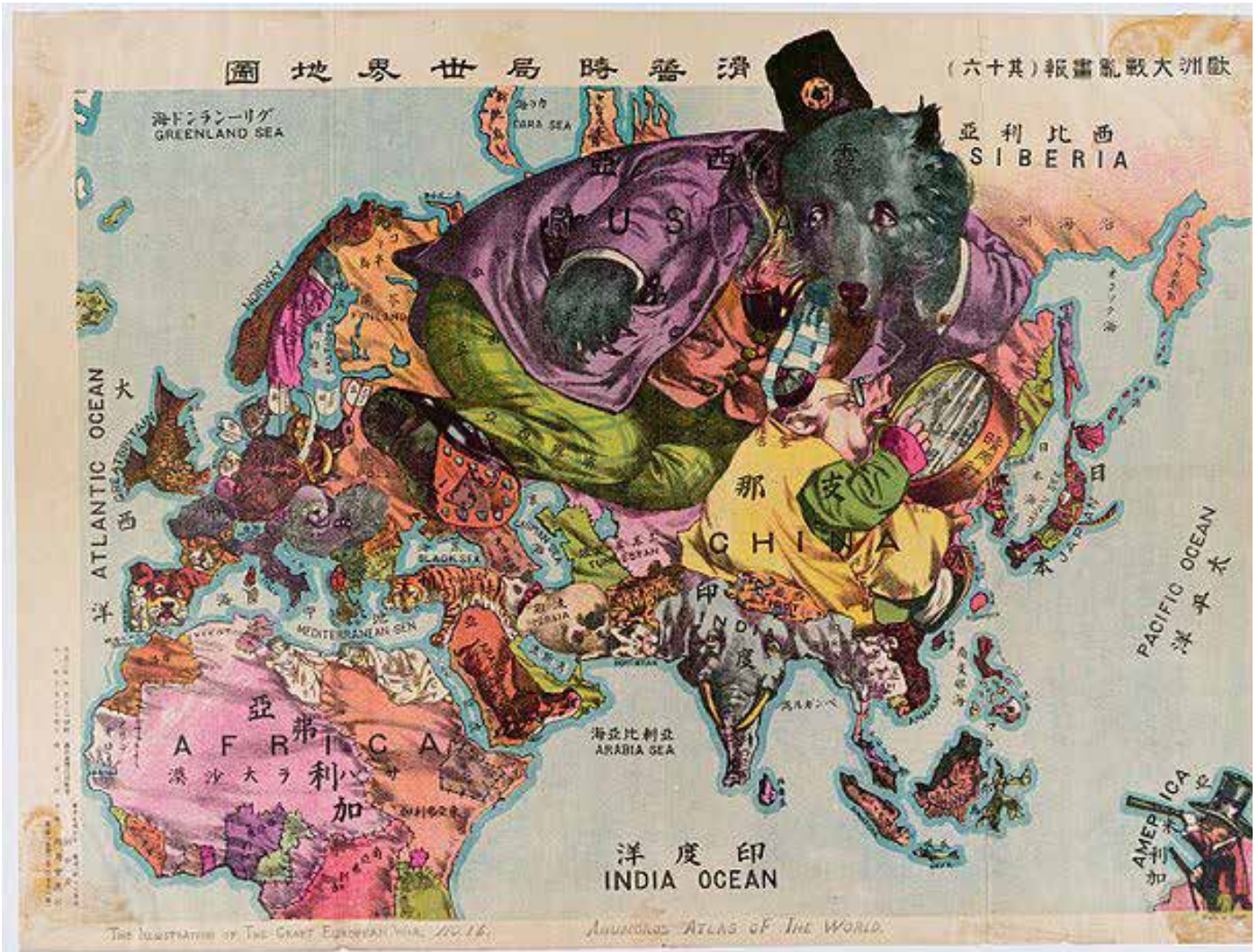
We’re in a new geopolitical context, but the importance of relationship building has not diminished. If anything, given the new leadership, I think we will see an increased emphasis on the work of FAOs, the specialists who both understand the culture and remain dedicated to “strength, confidence and prudence.”

Sincerely,  
*Graham*

\*BG Zwack is currently the Senior Russia-Eurasia Fellow at the National Defense University’s Institute of National Security Studies. He has been a keynote speaker for FAOA events. To read the full text of his article from *DefenseOne*, entitled “Death of the GRU Commander” visit:

[www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/02/death-gru-commander/125567](http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2016/02/death-gru-commander/125567)

# Is Russia the Greatest Threat to U.S. National Security?



BRIGADIER GENERAL DAWNE DESKINS, U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD,  
COLONEL CHRIS HARRIS, U.S. AIR FORCE,  
COLONEL DON JOHNSON, U.S. AIR FORCE,  
CAPTAIN JON YOUNG, U.S. NAVY

National Security Advisors are chartered to provide a single perspective of the greatest threats to the United States; however, this has become more convoluted in recent times with top advisors providing varying perspectives. Gone are the days of the Cold War where we enjoyed the comfort of having a unilateral threat without ambiguity. Because there has been a smearing of strategic guidance covering a multitude of threats and national interests, resources have been directed to the loudest suitor. Examples of this are the Pivot to the Pacific and the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) where the U.S. Government has redirected billions of defense dollars to these national interests. The European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) is a \$3.4 billion effort to increase military activities in Eastern and Central Europe to reassure NATO allies and partners of our commitment to their security and territorial integrity. The lack of clear guidance from political leadership has led to Defense Department leadership pursuing what Donald Snow refers to in his National Security book as less than vital interests (LTVs)."

Most recently, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen Joseph Dunford, testified before Congress stating, "My assessment today, senator, is that Russia presents the greatest threat to our national security." The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen Paul Selva, re-

sponsored by including the following threats, “Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea and all of the organizations that have grown around the ideology that was articulated by al-Qaeda early in the turn of this century.”

Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Mark Milley echoed Gen Selva’s remarks in his confirmation hearing citing Russia’s continued aggression in Ukraine and confirming the threats of “China, North Korea, the Islamic State group and Iran.” In contrast to this trend, Gen

Robert Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps, commented about Russia, “I don’t think they want to fight us. Right now, I don’t think they want to kill Americans.”

It is this article’s premise that although recent Russian aggressive actions in Europe have alarmed both the U.S. and its NATO partners, the uncontained threats of cyber-attack and violence against civilian populations and government infrastructure pose the most immediate threats to the United States. This paper will explain this complex security problem in terms of differentiating between the Russian attempt to reassert leverage on the world stage on the one hand, and the devastating threats of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and cyber-attacks against America’s homeland on the other. The authors apply the metaphor of America being like a healthy human being stuck in an unhealthy environment with a sickly colleague, Russia, while acknowledging the gruesome fact that there are other more immediate environmental dangers that can cause serious health issues to the internal organs. Some, cyber-attack and VEO strikes, may even be lethal.

This paper concludes that over time, the human body can find ways to exist in an environment with a sick colleague, but as for the contagions of VEOs and cyber-attacks, a nation’s only recourse is to prevent the presence of the contagions that otherwise would destroy the body. Russia is a resurgent threat to U.S. national security interests; however, the uncontained global threats of cyber-attacks and the global reach of Violent Extremist Organizations pose greater risks to U.S. citizens and national infrastructure. As such, the U.S. must apply a balance of military power and resources accordingly. One could say that all of these threats are additive driving the U.S. to address five or six of them; however, the DoD cannot afford to extend the military in so

many directions. Therefore, it is imperative to understand what is truly of vital importance to our national security and resource those accordingly, while accepting some measure of risk in less

than vital interests. This paper aims to address the threat aspects of why VEOs and cyber-attacks are a higher priority than the much-discussed re-emerging Russia. The resourcing discussion, although critical, will remain out of scope.

## **“THE NEED TO IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE AND INNOVATIVE CYBER-POLICY IS MORE IMPERATIVE THAN EVER.”**

### **Why Russia?**

Make no mistake,

aggressive Russian behavior demonstrates a very real threat to vital U.S. interests. In defense of Gen Dunford’s exclamation that “Russia poses the greatest security threat to the United States”, Russia’s threat to U.S. interests appears to have grown. In 2014, Russia acted more aggressively than at any time since the end of the Cold War by supporting rebels in eastern Ukraine and seizing Crimea. In 2015, they intervened in the Syrian civil war by bombing the enemies of long-time ally Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Gen Dunford’s statement reflects U.S. national strategy highlighting Putin’s Russia as a very real threat to long-term peace in Europe.

Our national strategic documents reflect U.S. leaders’ concerns over an increasing Russian threat. The 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS), 2014 National Military Strategy (NMS) and 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) all identify Russian aggression as a threat and protection of our U.S. citizens and allies abroad one of our highest priorities. Russian President Vladimir Putin poses the threat described in these documents through his nationalistic rhetoric, military strategy and aggressive actions both direct and by proxy. Putin’s Presidential election in 2012 to a third term brought with it an increased nationalist focus toward regaining Russia’s place as a world power. His message is clear -- Russia can only address

its global non-competitiveness by changing the world around it. Observers point to Putin’s initiatives to increase both military readiness and presence by 2020. Russia’s intention is to concentrate on capabilities in the Baltic, Crimea and the arctic. Russia increased defense spending dramatically since 2008, growing by 20% between 2014 and 2015 alone. The goal is to modernize their military forces by 70% by 2020 and to acquire a multi-domain, strategic-level reconnaissance-strike capability as well as a tactical-level reconnaissance-fire

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Editor’s Note: This team thesis won the FAO Association writing award at the Joint and Combined Warfighting School, Joint Forces Staff College. In the interest of space we publish this version without the authors’ research notes. To see the full thesis with research notes, please visit [www.FAOA.org](http://www.FAOA.org) and follow links for FAOA members only content. We are pleased to bring you this outstanding scholarship.

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Disclaimer: The contents of this submission reflect our writing team’s original views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

complex that together give Russia “high tech precision forces that could conduct operations in space, under the ocean, in the air on the sea and the ground and in cyberspace” by 2025.

The Russian strategic goal to destabilize NATO and the European Security system is evident. In 2008, Russian backed separatists in South Ossetia and Abkhazia went to war with Georgia for independence. Putin was quick to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent nations, blocking Georgia’s path to NATO membership. The latest act of aggression is the annexation of Crimea and expansion into Ukraine. This was another occupation through proxy, with “little green men” landing in Crimea, taking over Crimea’s regional partnership by intimidation and annexing the peninsula. Putin extolled the annexation of Crimea in his bi-annual speech to Russia’s diplomatic corps, “We, of course, had no right to abandon the residents of the Crimea and Sevastopol to the tyranny of armed nationalists and radicals...” Again the Russian strategy is to prevent NATO enlargement and the expansion of European security structures. Most recently, Russian aggression has reached Syria. While the results of Russian interference are to be determined, clearly regional instability, massive human migration affecting Europe, and the potential for an over-all weakening of both NATO and the EU community of nations favor Russian strategic aims.

#### Russia – “The Sickly Spoiler”

While Russia possesses considerable strength and is demonstrating willingness and skill in playing its hand, its capacity to project power beyond its “near abroad” sphere of influence is limited. Russia remains a dangerous spoiler with respect to U.S. interests abroad, but its capacity to continue this role is deteriorating, degraded by misguided strategic direction, economic missteps, and social factors that threaten Russian prosperity and capabilities forward. Time is not on Russia’s side.

Analysis of Russia’s security and defense policy, defense expenditure, military capabilities and activity reveal dual aims:

## **ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA’S SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY, DEFENSE EXPENDITURE, MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND ACTIVITY REVEAL DUAL AIMS:**

**(1) DETER NATO AND THE EU FROM FURTHER ENLARGEMENT**

**(2) RETAIN AND/OR EXPAND INFLUENCE IN THE POST-SOVIET**

**STATES. RUSSIA IS PURSUING THESE AIMS ACROSS THE**

**DIPLOMATIC, INFORMATION, MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC**

**INSTRUMENTS OF POWER.**

(1) deter NATO and the EU from further enlargement, and (2) retain and/or expand influence in the post-Soviet states. Russia is pursuing these aims across the Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic instruments of power. To achieve them, Putin is re-militarizing Russia’s approach to security and adopting destabilization strategies against neighbor states, especially those trending toward Western democratization and seeking inclusion in European and transatlantic security structures.

Putin is achieving unprecedented popularity among his people by appealing to familiar themes of nationalist pride and portraying a focus on bettering the lot of disempowered Russian people while promulgating a narrative that Western influence is to blame for their situation. These narratives are selling, but he is pursuing these aims at the expense of the long-term security and economic interests of the very parties from which his power is derived. He needs the Russian people, the country’s powerful and wealthy elite, and Russian power ministries to support his policies. Over the past decades, Russia has abandoned significant investments in political, economic, and military reforms. Putin is now moving Russia in old directions, before their modernizations are complete and before the Russian economy is diversified from over-reliance on oil and gas. In the words of S.R. Covington, “Putin has embraced a set of solutions to Russia’s insecurity that was identified as the source of the USSR’s weakness and non-competitiveness in the Gorbachev period -- measures that may very well compound inherent weaknesses, narrow alternative avenues to building security, and undermine Russia’s competitiveness.”

Where Putin witnessed Gorbachev swept from power in the wake of decisively choosing economic reforms and disengagement from strategic confrontation with the West, he has chosen a very different path to restoring Russian competitiveness. In recent years, he is retreating from cooperative overtures with Europe and NATO that promised security and opened paths to economic prosperity, turning starkly from

cooperation with the West back to competition, at least regionally. He is seizing opportunities to “pile on” as the West is challenged by other forces of disorder (e.g., violent extremism, migration, and discord within the EU), ramping up investment in military might to destabilize his periphery and re-build a ring of buffer states between Russia and the West. In doing so, he is continuing to neglect Russia’s greatest threats -- the realities of Russia’s social and economic vulnerabilities stemming from a declining population, poor health conditions, and an

imbalanced economy vulnerable to energy price fluctuation.

A starkly declining population obstructs Russia from prosperity. In the last 16 years of the Soviet era, births outnumbered deaths by 11.4 million. In the first 16 years of post-Soviet Russia, deaths outnumbered births by 12.4 million. Migration limited the net loss to slightly less than seven million, but the negative trends persist. The decline is exacerbated by low life expectancies stemming from poor health conditions and is simply disastrous for Russia's economic prospects. Russia's increasingly declining population means less and less human capital to fuel economic growth and diversification. The U.S. Census Bureau projects Russia's population will have declined 20 million between 1990 and 2025, pulling it from sixth to twelfth in the world in size, and Russia's working age population is projected to fall even more sharply on a percentage basis. These figures would challenge any economy, but they are especially daunting for Russia where reliance on oil and gas is extreme and prices are depressed.

Putin reinstated state control of the oil industry, weakening private ownership and capital markets. Today foreign investment is fleeing Russia and oil export taxes have risen to prop state resources, limiting oil company capacity to invest in modernization and expansion. Inefficiency plagued the gas and oil industries as state control grew, slowing and declining production. To make matters worse, today's \$32 oil is less than half the figure erroneously employed by Russian budgeters that is needed for Russian budgets to remain solvent. Russians are experiencing high levels of inflation and rising food prices. In 2015, creditors downgraded the nation's credit rating to junk status while sanctions resulting from Russian military aggressiveness are accelerating the economic decline.

Putin's decisions to abandon cooperation and economic integration with Europe and the West for the sake of power preservation and regional influence portend significant social and economic impact for Russians. Where Putin has historically been masterful at gauging public tolerance, it appears only a matter of time before the Russian people, beyond the benefit of Putin's circle of wealth and power, grow weary of the state's neglect of their genuine interests. As recently as 2011 and 2012, election protests were widespread in Russia. As Russians see their prosperity continue to suffer in comparison to the citizens of other nations, their discontent will grow and domestic Russian discord may be on the horizon. Putin's strategy is not serving the genuine interests of the population from which he

derives power.

Like the Russian economy, Russia's military capability has fallen prey to corruption and Russia's eroding social conditions. Efforts at reform have produced mixed results. The effects of corruption and inefficiency diluted the greatly ramped expenditures toward military might, impairing efforts to reform and more deeply professionalize the Russian armed forces. The Russian military is operating from a poor base of manpower and defense budgeting. The social conditions that plague the population affect Russian forces, and the demographic crisis is driving mass-conscription of individuals with decreasing levels of qualification and morale. Military budgeting is also plagued with the corruption and inefficiency that cripples the Russian economy -- provided funds are stolen or inefficiently appropriated to a great extent. Some estimates project up to a third of Russian defense expenditures are embezzled. The Russian military is struggling to maximize the effects of the significant resources being provided -- specifically it is not generating capabilities as robustly as the level of investment would suggest.

Russia's future "diagnosis" continues to appear sickly, its stamina and strength forward in question. Still, Russia remains a significant threat given its nuclear arsenal, cyber capability, and demonstrated success in Crimea and Georgia, but it currently lacks the will and capacity to confront the United States or its vital interests directly. It is likely to continue acting as a spoiler to non-vital U.S. interests given its aims to deter the expansion of European security systems and retain influence on its periphery, but how long it will be able to continue these pursuits effectively remains to be seen given the dismal demographic and economic outlooks for Russia.

### Defeating cyber intrusions requires understanding of the legal definitions:

**Cyber-crime (CC)** – an action committed by a non-state actor through cyber-space for a broad range of criminal purposes as defined by international law (e.g., espionage or fraud).

**Cyber-attack (CA)** – an action by a state actor with the intent to undermine a computer operating system or network in order to negatively impact the nation's political environment or national security (i.e., the intent is to cause national-level disruption or destruction).

**Cyber-warfare (CW)** – a cyber-attack whose effects are equivalent to an armed attack or one executed in conjunction with armed conflict (i.e., CW is a subset of CA and requires actual damage to infrastructure or national assets, like military targets).

### Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) – "The Great Destabilizer with the Occasional Haymaker"

While Russia is the "paranoid and sickly spoiler" to U.S. interests, VEOs are and will remain a destabilizing force for the foreseeable future. Most concerning is their ability to levy the occasional high-profile attack that kills or maims Americans. The growing threat of VEOs such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), al-Qaeda affiliates, Boko-Haram, Al-Shabab, and others present a more immediate threat to U.S. national security than Russia. Marine Gen Robert Neller commented about Russia, "I don't think they want to fight us. Right now, I don't think they want to kill Americans." He explained in more detail, "I think violent extremists want to kill us, and their capability is not that great but their intent is high, and the



fact that they have a message that seems to resonate around the world, not just in this country but in other countries in the Western world. They concern me equally.”

This last comment from Gen Neller cuts to the heart of the matter when discussing the greatest threats to national security. It is clear VEOs have demonstrated both intent and means to attack the U.S. and its allies. Violent extremist organizations such as ISIL are more capable than ever of executing major attacks with strategic consequences. This was most recently demonstrated in the Paris attacks where 130 people were killed and where the Russian airliner attack in the Sinai Peninsula killed 224 people. These groups operate in a decentralized manner thereby making them difficult, if not impossible, to contain. They are agile, globally connected, can organize and execute rapidly, and have access to disruptive technologies that wreak havoc amongst populations. In addition, the indiscriminate targeting of civilians through terrorist acts makes VEOs especially concerning. Their capabilities are unlike anything we have previously seen and lend itself to the evolution of information technology to rapidly organize and communicate.

### VEOs are Growing in Power and Capabilities

Terrorist organizations have access to a burgeoning base of available manpower from which to recruit and grow. Today, with new and skilled use of the internet, terrorist organizations may publicly recruit and inspire individuals to conduct attacks within their own homelands. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula no longer hides the fact that it builds bombs; it publicizes its instruction manual in its magazine and publicly urges people to use it. The recently published Report on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel sponsored by the Homeland Security Committee Task Force estimated that up to 25,000 foreign youth have traveled to Syria or Iraq to participate in the cause, potentially making up roughly 60% of the fighting force for ISIL. Foreign fighters have contributed to an alarming rise in global terrorism by expanding extremist networks, inciting individuals back home to conduct attacks, or by returning to carry out acts of terror themselves. For instance, one prominent British foreign fighter killed in Syria was linked to terrorist plots spanning the globe, from the United Kingdom to Australia, without ever having left the Middle East. Indeed, since early 2014 more than a dozen terrorist plots against Western targets have involved so-called “returnees” from terrorist safe havens like Syria and Libya.

### VEOs Access to Technology

Not only is the recruiting base growing but technology has become more accessible enabling the employment of new forms of weapons that have yet to be seen or countered. This technol-

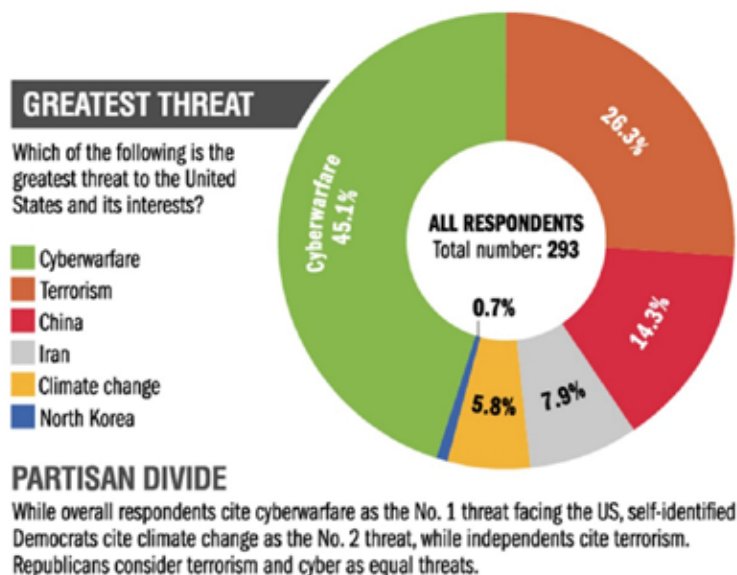


Figure 1: Threats to U.S. National Security

ogy evolution is outpacing the U.S., and there appears to be no progress toward closing this gap any time soon. New types of improvised explosive device (IED) switches, more elaborate payloads such as toxic industrial chemicals (TICs) and explosives that are more difficult to detect, non-metallic and surgically implanted devices, unmanned drones, and asymmetric means such as GPS spoofing and jamming are all readily available and being employed by VEOs.

What is particularly frightening is the targeting of airplanes with explosives smuggled onboard and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), also known as shoulder-fired surface to air missiles. Improvised explosive devices continue to evolve in circumventing detection using airport security measures. MANPADS are accessible to rogue actors and can target commercial airplanes. The recent IED attack by Al-Shabab on Daallo Airlines flight A321 in Somalia on 02 February 2016 blew a 3-foot hole in the side of the plane. Afterwards, Al-Jazeera reported that while the operation did not bring down the plane, “it struck terror in the hearts of the crusaders, demonstrating to the disbelievers that despite all their security measures and the strenuous efforts they make to conceal their presence, the Mujahideen can and will get to them.”

The cat-and-mouse game of new technology threats being employed and the development of countermeasures will only continue, thereby maintaining a constant vulnerability to these types of weapons. In addition, these weapons generally cost a fraction of the cost that the U.S. spends to counter them making for an unsustainable business model. Then there is the unthinkable—the most dangerous course of action would be one of these groups obtaining and wielding a nuclear weapon. President Obama addressed this issue at the 2010 UN Nuclear Security Summit. He stated, “The central focus of this nuclear

summit is the fact that the single biggest threat to U.S. security, both short term, medium term and long term, would be the possibility of a terrorist organization obtaining a nuclear weapon.” He added, “We know that organizations like al-Qaeda are in the process of trying to secure a nuclear weapon -- a weapon of mass destruction that they have no compunction at using.”

### VEOs and Criminal Enterprise

VEOs need money to finance their operations. In many cases, there is a convergence where transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) are linked to VEOs acting as the engines to keep the terrorist organization viable. Violent non-state actors, including terrorist organizations and insurgent movements, seek to collaborate with criminal networks -- and in some cases becoming criminal networks -- in order to finance acts of terrorism and purchase the implements of destruction and killing. Terrorists and insurgents can tap into the global illicit marketplace to underwrite their activities and acquire weapons and other supplies vital to their operations.

There is a positive nexus in dealing with this threat. Violent extremist groups are a major threat to both U.S. and Russian interests. There is room for both nations to find and collaborate on common solutions. During his September 2015 visit to London, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that Russia and the U.S. “share the same goals” when it comes to tackling the problem of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Greater Syria (ISIS). As ISIS expands its influence among the areas it has occupied, similar types of pan-Islamist groups are gaining strength within Russia’s borders, hoping to emulate this success. It appears as there may be more common ground with Russia and how to deal with violent extremist organizations that offsets it being a vital threat to the United States. Optimistically, this fact could help alleviate tensions over time rather than continued aggression between Russia and the U.S..

**THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED REPORT ON COMBATING TERRORIST AND FOREIGN FIGHTER TRAVEL SPONSORED BY THE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE TASK FORCE ESTIMATED THAT UP TO 25,000 FOREIGN YOUTH HAVE TRAVELED TO SYRIA OR IRAQ TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CAUSE, POTENTIALLY MAKING UP ROUGHLY 60% OF THE FIGHTING FORCE FOR ISIL.**

### Cyber-attack – “The Bullet to the Heart”

Russia is an aggressive brute – true. VEOs can destabilize a nation’s security and faith in its ability to govern – no doubt. However, a cyber-attack can be a bullet to the heart of a nation. Based on a 2013 poll conducted by Defense News about perceived threats to U.S. national security, Russia did not make the top five. Forty-five percent of respondents named a cyber-attack as the single greatest threat, nearly twenty percentage points above the second ranked threat, terrorism. The Defense News poll surveyed 352 senior employees within the White House, Pentagon, Congress, and the defense industry. Less than 2 months later, the House Intelligence Committee Chairman, Mike Rogers, called cyber-attack the “largest national security threat to the face the U.S. that we are not even close to being prepared to handle as a country.”

The threat of a cyber-attack within the U.S. is very alarming; however, few experts agree what constitutes a cyber-attack. The Techopedia website defines cyber-attack as a “deliberate exploitation of computer systems, technology-dependent enterprises and networks.” It addresses a range of activities from identity theft to fraud to extortion to denial-of-service. However, cyber-space, as a domain for modern warfare, demands greater specificity in terms. International law, like Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, addresses “armed conflict” and “self-defense.” These terms and their agreed-to definitions allow all nations to react to aggression by other nations. The perpetration of an armed attack affords a nation with a legal right to response and draws its authority from the UN Charter. In the world of cyber-effects though, the international community has yet to make such an agreement. Without international agreement on definitions and remedies for cyber-effects, all nations remain both vulnerable to cyber-attacks and constrained from taking legitimate, appropriate action when attacks occur. Hence, national security is at risk.

Defeating cyber intrusions requires understanding of the legal definitions:

**Cyber-crime (CC)** – an action committed by a non-state actor through cyber-space for a broad range of criminal purposes as defined by international law (e.g., espionage or fraud).

**Cyber-attack (CA)** – an action by a state actor with the intent to undermine a computer operating system or network in order to negatively impact the nation’s political environment or national security (i.e., the intent is to cause national-level disruption or destruction).

**Cyber-warfare (CW)** – a cyber-attack whose effects are equivalent to an armed attack or one executed in conjunction with armed conflict (i.e., CW is a subset of CA and requires actual damage to infrastructure or national assets, like military targets).

The main discriminators between these definitions are the actors, the intent, and the effect. If a state-sponsored actor generates cyber-effects inside the U.S. (e.g., a distributed attack on a DoD network to disrupt communications), then the action would be

classified as a CA. If that same actor were to use the same cyber-weapon against an air traffic control radar, and the effects were the loss of control of domestic air travel with the resultant loss of civilian airliners, the action would rise to the category of CW. As such, the U.S. would be fully entitled, under international law, to generate a proportional, armed response.

If a non-state actor generates cyber-effects that damage national infrastructure, like the scenario above, the action remains at the CC level, unless the actor can be tied directly to a state sponsor. This is arguably one of the most dangerous and challenging scenarios that any nation could face as the impact to the nation can be severe but the recourse is asymmetrically low, or even non-existent. Currently, there are few tools available to nations to hold members of other nations accountable for criminal acts. For this very reason, it is in the best interest of all nations to agree upon common definitions, and more importantly, the remedies for cyber-violations.

According to Matthew Rinear's article on cyber-warfare, "in 2007, the Israeli Air Force used a semantic attack (one that compromises the accuracy of information presented) to ensure a successful bombing of the Syrian nuclear facility. By feeding false messages to the Syrian radar system, the Israelis fooled their opponent into perceiving clear skies, providing an unimpeded path to mission complete." Since Israel used this type of cyber-effect in conjunction with an armed attack on Syria, one would classify it as cyber-warfare. Also classified as CW, Russia conducted cyber-operations prior to the armed operations in Estonia in 2007 and Georgia in 2008. With these types of demonstrated operations, both Israel and Russia have demonstrated the ability and willingness to combine kinetic operations with cyber-effects.

Perhaps the most illustrious cyber-effect in the recent past was the incredibly sophisticated cyber-worm called Stuxnet. "Aimed at two of Iran's major nuclear power facilities, Stuxnet assumed control of critical systems within the facilities by effectively bypassing the Iranian's cyber security and detection methods. From there, the program disabled nearly 1,000 of Iran's uranium centrifuges as well as a nuclear reactor turbine in the Bushehr facility. The program became the first known malicious software with the capability of targeting and destroying an industrial system."

With operations involving cyber-worms, like Stuxnet, and other cyber-weapons, the risk to American infrastructure is high. Since this battlespace lacks discrete borders, determining the cyber-actors can be difficult and often exceeds a nation's ability to ascertain. Accepting Rinear's assessment clearly puts the U.S. is at risk. "With ever-growing interconnectivity and dependence upon cyber-space to support daily life, the evolution of sophisticated cyber-attack, and the lack of controlling authority from the international community to define and deter cyber-conduct that may rise to the level of armed warfare, the need to implement a comprehensive and innovative cyber-policy is more imperative than ever." According to the 2013 Homeland Defense Strategy, the U.S. information networks and industrial control systems owned by DoD, and those maintained by commercial service providers and infrastructure operators, are subjected to increasingly sophisticated cyber-intrusions. They are vulnerable to natural and manmade disasters, as well as physical attack (cyber and kinetic).

Cyber-actors can generate faster effects with less money and with less risk of reprisal than ever before. Since it is much easier to copy a cyber-weapon than to create one outright, cyber-criminals can "copy-cat" cyber-effects by using proven cyber-weapons. Hackers have access to increasing numbers of cyber-weapons, as "Recent studies have revealed that 140 countries possess developed, operational programs that focus on the



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# Untangling the Gordian Knot? The Socio-Cultural Challenge of Syria

BY COLONEL WILLIAM MENGEL, U.S. ARMY

The socio-cultural environment of Syria presents significant challenges for the U.S. in the area of counterterrorism. Within the complex relationships between ethnic, religious and social groups are rifts that can be exploited by radical ideologies such as ISIL's brand of Sunni jihadism. This brief examination seeks to illuminate these tensions which are enabling the rise of ISIL, and thus provide a framework for understanding that can facilitate the development of approaches to counter ISIL.

Six major sets of tensions, and several subsets, mark the most significant fault lines within modern Syrian culture. Underlying these friction points is a more fundamental question of modernity and identity: what does it mean to be "Syrian" in a postmodern globalized society?

The first major tension is between modernist and traditionalist conceptions, and includes sub-elements such as divisions between urban and rural populations, gender issues, and the tension between secular and religious views. A second tension is the socioeconomic divide, expressed in social class antagonisms. A third tension is between ethnic groups, predominantly Arab and non-Arab, which includes Kurds, Persians and other minorities. A fourth tension is mainstream Islam (as a religion) in contrast with Islamism (a political ideology that uses particular interpretations of Islam as a source of legitimacy), an issue closely related with the aforementioned modernism and religion. A fifth tension is between fundamentalist takfiri groups and those they unilaterally designate as apostates. The final tension is between religious sects, particularly Sunni and Shi'ite. Some of these tensions are deep historic

issues, some are based on a more recent intellectual discomfort with modernity, and others are constructs that further political aims of groups such as Al Qaeda or ISIL.

Underlying the complex cultural conflicts within Syrian society is the inheritance of early Islamic, Byzantine, Ottoman and French colonial experiences. The history of Syria in the latter half of the twentieth century is interwoven with the thread of the postcolonial narrative, as the independent state struggles to define itself. A brief summary of some of the most salient points and key historical developments will provide the appropriate context for interpretation and analysis of Syrian sociocultural tensions.

During the 7th and 8th centuries, the early expansion of Islam rapidly seized the Syrian region from the Byzantine Empire, and

Damascus became the initial capital of the Islamic political entity, the Umayyad Caliphate. Located on the frontiers between the Byzantine, Sasanid Persian and Arab civilizations, this region, and particularly the cities Aleppo and Damascus, served as cosmopolitan centers of economic and intellectual exchange.

Aleppo and the surrounding area provided a safe haven for non-orthodox interpretations and sects, such as Alawites, Druze, Ismailis, and Monophysite Christians. While the Umayyad period saw Arabisation of the Aramaic-speaking, predominantly Christian Syrian population, the Caliphate government did not desire widespread conversion to Islam, as this would entail a loss of revenue. The Umayyad period was marked by frequent upheaval and civil war, not over religious issues but struggles between Arab tribes for political control.

**"WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MOVEMENT, AND UNTIL WE DO, WE ARE NOT GOING TO DEFEAT IT ... WE HAVE NOT DEFEATED THE IDEA. WE DO NOT EVEN UNDERSTAND THE IDEA."**

**MAJOR GENERAL MIKE NAGATA  
COMMANDER, SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – CENTRAL.  
AUGUST 2014.**

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Editor's Note: Colonel Mengel's thesis won the FAO Association writing award at the College of Naval Warfare. In the interest of space the Journal is publishing an abridged version, without research notes. Readers wishing to view the full thesis can click on this link to the on line version: [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org). The Journal is pleased to bring you this outstanding scholarship.

Following the ‘Abbasid defeat of the Umayyads, the next several hundred years saw a multiethnic polity home to a wide range of religious beliefs, although the level of religious tolerance was in the eye of the beholder. Christian and Jewish communities were accepted, but treatment of Muslim sects varied from region to region.

The Nusayri-Alawi sect of Shi’ism was founded in late 9th century Basra by Ibn Nusayr, who claimed to have been an intimate associate of the 10th and 11th imams. Persecuted by Sunni ‘Abbasid administrators of southern Iraq and excommunicated by other Shi’ite groups, the Nusayri maintained an underground network of the faithful, using the doctrine of taqiyya (concealment of beliefs) to survive. In the 10th century, Nusayri leader Al-Husayn ibn Hamdan al-Khasibi moved the sect from Basra to northern Syria, an area seen as more tolerant of non-orthodox sects. The Nusayri-Alawi sect (Alawites) flourished in the urban commercial space of northern Syria. The region which would become contemporary northwest Syria was a site of multisectarian tolerance and a center of trade.

The Ottoman era (1516-1918) saw the longest period of relative peace and stability in Syrian history, demonstrating the concept of a caliphate can coexist with, and be part of, a modern state. The Ottoman Turks based their claim to legitimacy on Sunni orthodoxy and shari’a (judicial system based on the Sunnah). The Ottoman Sultan claimed the title of Caliph, and represented the Ottoman Empire as the Sunni opposite to Safavid Persian Shi’ism. The association of Twelver Shi’ism with the Persian “other” deepened the distinction from the Ismaili, Alawi and Druze forms of Shi’ism present within Syria.

For the first 150 years of Ottoman rule, Damascus and its surroundings (Bilad al-Sham) were an important east-west trade hub between Europe and Asia. This trade declined as Europeans sought alternative maritime trade routes that bypassed the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-17th century, a major shift occurred as a north-south pilgrimage route replaced the east-west trade route. Ottoman authorities emphasized the importance of the Hajj, or pilgrimage to religious sites at Mecca in the Hijaz, further legitimizing Ottoman control of the entire region. The Ottoman regime kept both the pilgrimage routes and the holy sites safe for the Muslim world, bolstering their legitimacy through the tradition of Hajj.

This era also saw the development of social categories that form an important legacy for contemporary Syrian sociocultural identities. The Ottoman millet system defined subjects by religious community; the subsequent emergence of nationalist movements in the 19th century would seek to redefine these populations by shared linguistic heritage. In Ottoman society, Syrian Arab Muslims were still subjects (ra’aya) beneath Turkish

Muslims, providing some undercurrents that would support the emergence of Arab nationalism in the late 19th century. Socioeconomic stratification increased in Ottoman Syria with the emergence of the a’yan (notables) in the late 17th century, wealthy merchant families who dominated local politics with the key cities such as Aleppo and Damascus. The a’yan imported European ideas and aspects of European culture. They also tended to lead Sufi orders, espousing traditions of Islamic mysticism that emphasize individual religious experience as opposed to more rigid adherence to teachings of orthodox religious scholars.

The Ottoman system collapsed in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Empire failed to effectively modernize and was overtaken by the forces of Turkish and then Arab nationalism. Reforms of the Tanzimat era did not resolve obsolete social structures; Sultan Abdulhamid II sought to prop up declining legitimacy through construction of traditions suggesting his leadership of modern Islam. Ironically, Hamid II used Islamist language and symbols while suppressing Islamist intellectuals and censoring debate. As a result, the Salafist movement grew in Syria as an opposition to Hamidian interpretations of Islam. Simultaneously, the Nahdah (Renaissance) movement promoted a distinct Arab identity that included both Muslim and non-Muslim Arabs, redefining the community along ethno-linguistic lines as opposed to sectarian. These powerful forces were unleashed in the colossal conflict of the First World War, shattering the Ottoman Empire.

The contemporary history of Syria begins in 1918, marked by a postwar narrative of Western betrayal and colonial occupation. A key moment in the Syrian Arab nationalist narrative occurred on 30 September 1918, when the Arab a’yan of Damascus convinced the Ottoman Turkish administrators to depart rather than fight an unwinnable battle. The a’yan put up flags and prepared to welcome an Arab ruler, Prince Feisal, who was traveling north with T.E. Lawrence and the Arab forces. On the morning of 1 October, the Australian 10th Light Horse bypassed the Arabs and rode through the city, disrupting the planned triumphal procession and undercutting Feisal as the

## **“THIS THEME OF BETRAYAL IS CRITICAL FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1950s AND 1960s.”**

“liberator of Damascus”. The Arab forces arrived later that day, but the narrative of Western betrayal was already emerging. This was a visible demonstration of the Sykes-Picot concept of the Arab people as subjects or objects and not as actors.

This theme of betrayal is critical for an understanding of Syrian cultural and intellectual development in the 1950s

and 1960s. Following independence from the French colonial regime, Syria faced a crisis of identity. Syrian and Arab intellectuals faced a dilemma in constructing the metanarrative of Syria, as adoption of Western intellectual traditions and concepts threatened the authenticity of such a project. Defining a people as a “nation” based on a shared consciousness expressed through print-capitalism faced an additional challenge. How could the state of Syria have nationalism in the Western sense if the literary tradition upon which to build such a concept is Arabic-Islamic, and not Syrian? Middle Eastern intellectuals sought distinctive forms of identity, resulting in pan-Arabism and Nasserism. These concepts were a rejection of the arbitrary boundaries and categories imposed by Western powers – Britain and France – at Versailles and in the League of Nations Mandate system.

The alternatives to nationalism included Marxism, based on perceived socioeconomic inequities, and Islamism, which grew significantly post-1967 as a political alternative to Arab nationalism or international socialism. The oil crisis of the 1970s buttressed traditional elites (such as the Saudi monarchy) and widened the gulf between social classes across the region, increasing the appeal of all varieties of socialism.

From the Syrian perspective, the Camp David Accords of 1978 demonstrated Egypt was no longer willing to hold the mantle of Nasserist leadership, and Damascus took up this role. Ba’athist regimes, such as Syria, remained strong until the 1991-2003 time period. The end of the Cold War in 1989-91 removed international socialism as a viable alternative ideological structure for the Arab world. The 2003 Iraq War and the revolutionary upheavals of Arab Spring delegitimized Baathist regimes, leaving political Islam (Islamism) as the only remaining major ideological narrative.

As Arab Spring spread to Syria, the intellectual underpinnings of the regime have eroded, leaving Assad (the younger) with only increasing levels of force to compel submission. As we survey the political landscape in Syria in 2015, we see the

## **ANALYSIS OF THE CASES OF WOMEN JOINING ISIL FROM WESTERN COUNTRIES SUGGESTS ISIL DESIRES FEMALE RECRUITS FOR THE INFORMATION OPERATIONS VALUE (PRIMARILY TO SHAME MEN INTO JIHAD) AND NOT AS FIGHTERS.**

Assad regime lacks legitimacy, being propped up by the vestiges of its previous monopoly of force. Among the disparate actors in Syria, the remaining ideological drivers are divisive: Kurdish nationalism excludes all other ethnic groups; Hezbollah, Quwat al-Ridha, and other Shi’ite militias have sectarian agendas that are antithetical to Sunni groups; the Islamist jihadi organizations such as ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), and Ansar ash-Sham also have a clear exclusionary agenda. The Free Syrian Army and “moderate” groups lack a true unifying principle, as negative ideologies are inherently weak.

At first glance, the conflict between the Assad regime and ISIL seems to be a direct reflection of the modernist-traditionalist tension. However, the actual situation is more complex. While most fundamentalist religious movements rely heavily on a conservative-traditionalist mindset, ISIL demonstrates an unusual blend of modern and tradition. It is useful to view ISIL as a socio-cultural revolutionary phenomena, as it seeks to radically transform Syrian society using invented traditions and a particular interpretation of Islam as a source of legitimacy. The void created by ISIL’s social revolution is filled by invented traditions, an attempt to link ISIL with 7th century Islam and thus provide a firmament for legitimacy. ISIL plays on fear of change and modernity, and cloaks its own radical program under a veil of constructed tradition.

This synthesis of old and new ideas is similar to the “reactionary modernism” of the Nazi movement, which combined symbolism of a constructed past (e.g. torchlit ceremonies and Roman Legion-style standards) with the most modern ideas of the time (e.g. mass politics, video technology and scientific propaganda). In this method ISIL is able to coopt the Enlightenment without accompaniment of liberalism, thus becoming a much more powerful movement than peer organizations or earlier manifestations of Islamic jihadist movements. Old imagery and ritual provides legitimacy for revolutionary change. In Hobsbawm’s typology, this is the second major form of invented tradition, a construct to establish and legitimize authority.

ISIL has shown a high degree of sophistication in using these constructs to sidestep the modernist-traditionalist tension and generate appeal. One example of this cognitive tactic is ISIL’s handling of gender issues. As a microcosm of the larger issue of modernization, the role of women within Syrian society is a litmus test for cultural norms and helps explain why reductionist solutions are cognitively unpalatable. From the Western perspective, with a teleological view of social change, an intuitive solution seems to be to build liberal society in Syria by pressuring Syria to adopt norms such as gender equality. However, in a non-Western interpretation this can be seen as a form of Foucauldian epistemic violence. Such schemes have been attempted in the past, and failed to take root.

During the 1920s, the Soviet Union invested heavily in efforts to “modernize” Islamic societies in Central Asia by engineering gender equality, using women as a “surrogate proletariat” in a pre-industrial society that lacked an oppressed working class. The Soviets found that Islamic women, possibly following the tenets of taqiyya, went through the motions of

supporting Soviet gender equality programs in government sponsored public venues, but reverted to traditional societal roles at other times. The Soviet experiment at social engineering was a failure. Another example is the British efforts to criminalize sati (widow immolation) in India during the Raj period. The British encountered a surprisingly hostile opposition, initially focused on a lack of British understanding of Hindu traditional ritual and culture, while subsequent postcolonial criticism focused on the inability for the subject to participate in the debate.

The role of women within ISIL is difficult to discern, as ISIL attempts to maintain absolute control over information coming from ISIL territory. However, analysis of the cases of women joining ISIL from Western countries suggests ISIL desires female recruits for the information operations value (primarily to shame men into jihad) and not as fighters. ISIL prefers to have women marry jihadi men and propagate (AUAB's "birthing strategy"); ISIL leaders handle assertive women who want to be fighters by making them suicide bombers, thus eliminating potential challenges to ISIL's social order. By obfuscating the role of women within ISIL controlled

## **LIKE THE PKK, THE PYD HAS HAD TACTICAL ALLIANCES OF CONVENIENCE WITH THE ASSAD REGIME**

territory, ISIL attempts to avoid alienating potential female recruits, and maintains an amorphous blend of traditionalism and modernism. Control of information and messaging provides ISIL with an advantage in the cognitive domain.

Socioeconomic class structure within Syria has evolved under the Assad regime, beginning with widespread land reforms in the 1960s that broke the power of the old landlords and transformed Syrian agriculture. Ba'athist reforms did not alleviate poverty, however, thus leaving a large segment of rural poor consisting of smallholders and agricultural workers. Migration from rural areas to the major cities has increased the urban lower class, but this class remains fragmented and divided. On the other side of the spectrum, the old a'yan elites, merchants and landed families have provided the most pre-Civil War opposition to the Ba'athist regime, seeking liberal economic and conservative religious agendas. The petit bourgeoisie, consisting primarily of urban middle class merchants and small business owners, had been the most reliable source of support for the Assad regime. Although the Assad regime has lost legitimacy across much of Syria, the major urban centers in the west retain a core social group that desire to retain their current position in society. Market reforms in the decade prior to the

civil war increased the socioeconomic divide between the petit bourgeoisie and the urban lower class. Ceding control of the rural countryside to rebels has not negatively affected the urban power base of the regime.

The history of Syria as a borderland has resulted in a mix of ethnic groups that define themselves based upon cultural elements such as language, religion, and historic communal relationships. The Syrian Kurds form the largest ethnic minority, forming about 10% of the Syrian population. The Kurds form sizeable minorities in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran, although frequently divided internally. Within Syria, the Assad regime manipulated the Kurdish minority, denying citizenship to over 200,000 Kurds while allowing the PKK safe haven to continue its struggle against the Turkish government. Assad eventually expelled the PKK when Turkey threatened to intervene in 1998.

Following the outbreak of civil war in Syria in March 2011, an unknown group assassinated Mishaal Tammo, the moderate leader of the Syrian Kurdish Future Movement, and a new, PKK-affiliated group called the PYD emerged as the strongest organization representing the Kurdish ethnicity. Like the PKK, the PYD has had tactical alliances of convenience with the Assad regime; the objectives of the PYD are autonomy and legal recognition of the Kurdish minority, and they see Turkey as a more significant adversary than Assad. In July 2012, Assad pulled government forces out of the northeast Kurdish region, giving de facto autonomy to the Kurds. The PYD established a government at al-Qamishli, and the area has become a liberal autonomous region called Rojava. The Kurds have rallied behind the concept of Kurdish nationalism, which has proven to be a resilient alternative to Islamist groups such as ISIL.

The tension between Islam and Islamist groups is perhaps the most divisive rift within Syrian society, and is directly linked to the problems of modernity and the relationship between religion and politics. In Western tradition, separation of church and state was a product of the Wars of Reformation and Enlightenment in the Early Modern era. A similar development did not occur in the Islamic world, and until collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War, political and religious leadership was formally united in a single person. The Ottoman sultan was the political ruler of the empire, but also held the title of caliph, and thus was the religious head of the Sunni umma.

After the Ottoman collapse, and Turkey's embrace of secularism under Atatürk, some Islamic theorists sought to create political movements that would recreate the unity of political structures and Islamic religion. The result was Islamism, or political Islam, a distinct ideology that formed the basis behind the Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 in Egypt. The Islamist movement formed a third alternative, behind nationalism and socialism, in the crisis of identity during decolonization of the Middle East.

Sayyid Qutb built upon this concept, and influenced the development of the jihadist Islamism of Egyptian Islamic Jihad

and, subsequently, al-Qaeda. While jihadism advocates the use of violence to achieve Islamist ends, institutional Islamism seeks to work within existing political structures. Jihadists reject the democratic process entirely, and seek to establish an Islamic state by force. Institutional Islamists, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, seek victory at election polls and seek to achieve political control through democratic means. The tension between religious Islam and political Islam (Islamism) is one of the strongest in the Syrian conflict; ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra and other jihadist groups, as well as institutional Islamist groups such as the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, are in direct ideological conflict with “moderate” Islamic groups.

The more radical of the jihadist groups have brought the conflict to a new level with the concept of takfir (accusation of apostasy). Under this idea, radical jihadist groups justify attacks against Muslims. By adopting takfiri doctrine, ISIL leaders seek to coerce Syrian Muslims into joining ISIL, and legitimize violence against all opposition to ISIL rule, even from Muslims. The takfiri concept fuels conflict, but also removes some of the anti-Western and anti-Christian aspects of ISIL’s struggle. While the use of takfir may provide a short term tactical advantage to ISIL, the strategic cost may be significant, due to the potential for alienation from other Islamic groups. Takfir declarations can unify opposition to ISIL and create rifts between potential Salafist partners.

Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has declared Muslim Brotherhood members are heretics, and ISIL has attacked Al Qaeda’s affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, all justified using takfiri doctrine. The rift between these extremist groups could be deepened and widened through subtle and clandestine use of information operations, keeping in mind the obvious danger of any interventionist policy is uniting these factions against a common external enemy.

The final major cultural tension in the Syrian civil war is sectarian conflict. The long history of the Syrian region as a religiously diverse area and a haven for many non-orthodox sects suggests the impetus behind sectarian conflict is relatively new to Syria. Although the Assad regime was dominated by Alawites, the Nasayri-Alawi religious doctrine was not a driving factor behind Assad’s suppression of political opposition.

The introduction of Salafist-based jihadism in the Sunni Arab areas, particularly through Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIL, has ushered in sectarian conflict with Shi’ites in Syria. These groups are attempting to redefine the conflict as a sectarian struggle, as opposed to a political struggle, in an effort to gain legitimacy among Sunni Muslims. The situation is exacerbated by the Assad regime, by bringing in the Iranian proxy Lebanese Hezbollah. The situation in Lebanon has long been marked by a three-way sectarian struggle, and Hezbollah brings this mindset to Syria. The Syrian Civil War cannot be properly described as a Sunni revolt against a Shi’ite regime; such a reductionist interpretation fails to

adequately define the true nature of this conflict.

The keys to influencing this conflict are found in a thorough understanding of Syrian cultural identity. Salafi jihadist groups feed on fears of modernity and the threat to traditional Syrian culture. Mobilizing an effective opposition and counternarrative requires an ideological basis that is currently lacking among the moderate opposition. With the failures of nationalist and socialist ideological schemas, Islamism is winning by default. To combat this on a cultural level, an authentic Syrian alternative must emerge. A simple coalition of “anti-ISIL” elements lacks the ideological weight to effectively mobilize support. During the Russian Civil War, a wide range of anti-Bolshevik forces, aided by external support, failed to coalesce. Disparate groups of Whites, Greens, Social Revolutionaries, and other factions were unable to provide viable alternatives and unify opposition to the Bolsheviks unifying ideology, convincing narrative, and effective use of information operations and the latest technology. An ideological force, such as a strong Syrian national identity, might provide an opportunity for countering ISIL’s terror.

Restated in simpler terms, merely providing arms and training to a Syrian opposition to ISIL is unlikely to generate success. Moderate groups that lack a driving ideology are easily fragmented, and their members tend to drift away to stronger causes. This is particularly evident with the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian National Council. Additionally, overt U.S. support can severely undercut the legitimacy of a cause or leader by creating the appearance of Western interests taking primacy over those of the Syrian people.

The most successful and resilient ideological counter to ISIL’s violent Islamism has been Kurdish nationalism. Policy makers might consider an end state with Syria partitioned between a Kurdish state or autonomous region and a strong secular Arab state. Such an arrangement would leave little space

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**WHILE THE USE OF TAKFIR  
MAY PROVIDE A SHORT  
TERM TACTICAL ADVANTAGE  
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DUE TO THE POTENTIAL FOR  
ALIENATION FROM OTHER  
ISLAMIC GROUPS.**



# Western Foreign Fighters in Syria: An Empirical Analysis of Recruitment and Mobilization Mechanisms

BY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JUSTIN D. DRAGON, U.S. NAVY

Foreign fighter presence in military conflict is not a new phenomenon. The pace of integration of such fighters in a range of conflicts, however, has accelerated at a pronounced rate since the beginning of the Soviet–Afghan war of the 1980s. As a result, the debate regarding the presence of foreign fighters in conflict has entered a renaissance, especially given the existing strife within Syria and Iraq.

Scholars such as Thomas Hegghammer, Mohammed Hafez, and David Malet study the foreign fighter movement in order to better understand why it has resurged, and whether its pace can be stalled or reversed. These studies, while recognizing the existence of Western foreign fighters, have placed considerable emphasis on understanding the presence of regional combatants—that is to say, fighters that have come from within the Arab and North African Muslim world. Less focus has been placed on understanding how Westerners, namely Europeans, Australians, and North Americans, have been convinced to leave their homes and enter an unforgiving internecine conflict. This thesis seeks to better understand why Westerners are volunteering in Syria and Iraq. How are they being recruited? What is the demographic profile of these fighters? What happens when they enter a conflict, and what happens when (or if) they come home? And last, given these questions, this thesis also seeks to provide policy implications and recommendations that result from the research.

## Significance

This thesis is critical on multiple fronts. More easily understood is the security implication of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq today. There is legitimate concern that these men and women are arriving in the Levant as, at best, idealists seeking meaning to their lives or, at worst, partially radicalized groups seeking to gain operational combat experience. The immediate effect is the further complication of the chaos enveloping Syria and Iraq. The tenuous security environment is a justifiable concern because the spread of Levantine sectarian war can impact some of the most traveled energy corridors in the world. Moreover, the rising discourse is how to address the issue of Western foreign fighters that decide to return home.

A less acknowledged aspect of this topic is the refinement

of definitions. The terrorist narrative espoused by the United States, echoed by Europe, and acknowledged by the rest of the world readily conflates terrorists, jihadists, foreign fighters, and insurgents. While overlaps exist across these groups, there are distinctions, and expanding these definitions is critical for international policy makers to accurately and articulately address the diverse but related issues within Syria and Iraq. By conflating terrorists with foreign fighters, policy-makers reinforce the existing solutions of preventing and punishing and fail earnest attempts at dissuading and reintegrating these men and women. There is clear evidence that many foreign fighters arriving in Syria and Iraq are neither radicals, nor terrorists. Unfortunately, however, radicalization appears to accelerate once these prospective fighters arrive in country.

The continued advocacy of radicalization off-ramps, or the methods used to halt or reverse the radicalization process, appears to bear fruit. Labeling all foreign fighters as terrorists, on the other hand, instantly helps the cause of extremist groups, such as Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN) or the Islamic State (IS), because the legal implications of the terrorist label are far more divisive than those of foreign combatants.

## The Syrian Civil War And The Rise Of Foreign Fighters

The escalation of conflict in Syria and Iraq up to 2015 has grown concomitantly with the population of foreign fighters in the region. At the time of this research, surging foreign fighter populations continue to grow in Syria and Iraq, growing unrest has metastasized in Libya and Yemen, and there are increasing concerns of emerging Islamic State (IS) support in Afghanistan. While foreign fighters continue to represent both a minority of combatants in Syria and Iraq, and a small percentage with respect to each nations respective population, in the aggregate, their numbers are a threat. Foreign-fighter returnees and travel restricted aspiring jihadists have inflicted casualties across North America, Europe, Africa, and Australia. Multinational efforts to combat violent extremism in Syria and Iraq have shown some promise in the beginning of 2015, but as long as the numbers of foreign fighters with Western passports continue to increase, threats to the West will only escalate. In order to situate the research, this section will provide background on the contem-

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Editor's Note: Lieutenant Commander Dragon's thesis won the FAO Association writing award at the Naval Post-graduate School. His thesis includes an extraordinary effort of statistical data collection and analysis. In the interest of space we publish this edited version without research notes.

porary Syrian conflict, and analyze the emergence, growth, and current status of foreign fighters within Syria.

### The Syrian Conflict (2011–2015)

Syria's continuing civil war, and its systemic spread to Iraq, is bracketed by conflagration. On December 17, 2010, street vendor Mohammed Boazizi set himself ablaze after a culmination of bureaucratic humiliation, and the event was spread throughout the Arab world initially by the Facebook social media network. The subsequent crumbling of the Ben Ali regime, and the beginning of the then nascent Arab Spring would sweep through the region. Today, in contemporary Syria, fires still burn, and groups such as IS herald the coming of continued "flames of war." Bashar al-Assad and his Alawi elite, along with other authoritarian rulers of the greater Middle East watched, adapted, and reacted to the fates of their contemporary despots, but ultimately actions by Assad were insufficient to stem the rise of dissent and eventual violence within his country.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March of 2011, Syria had long been a culture cloaked in fear and repression. A Syrian scholar went as far as to describe his homeland as "the kingdom of fear, silence, and worshipping Leviathan." Protest and collective action, however, was not born simply out of an emerging wave of Tunisian and Egyptian protest. Social movement scholars have long stated that three key factors of movement emergence—political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing -- work over time; the political opportunity of Tunisia's unrest was seized by Syrians who had experience mobilizing. Although protest to authoritarian rule can be traced as far back as the 1960s, it was the "Statement of the 99," in June of 2000, that established a modern foundation from which to build a vehicle of protest. Ninety-nine scholars, seizing the moment of Hafez Al-Assad's death as an opportunity to speak out, decried the repressive government and called for reforms; this event would echo into 2011. As such, Boazizi's self-immolation was but the ignition of a fuse that had long been strung across the entire region. Sadly, the protests devolved into regime atrocities, sectarian violence, and the rise of extremist groups. Foreign fighters and the problems they have created in Syria are but a microcosm of the entire conflict.

As of 2015, the Syrian conflict has long surpassed the 1,000 battle deaths commonly used as a threshold for defining a civil war. Furthermore, while armed internal conflict in Syria may have begun as one between Assad's security apparatus and an organized armed insurgency such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), the opposition is now characterized by its completely fractured nature. Late 2013 estimates compiled by the BBC suggested that there were over 1000 armed opposition groups operating within Syria—and now Iraq. While the number of militant groups may be in constant flux, the number of combatants in Syria in Iraq has only increased. These groups span an ideological spectrum that runs from moderate, secular, and inclusive to abhorrent, ruthless and violent. Aside from the geopolitical concerns that cite regional stability and free flow of trade as impacted macro level variables, the conflict has also drawn unprecedented numbers of foreign fighters from across

the world. While foreign fighters in state level conflict are not a new phenomenon, the magnitude of fighters seen today, and most especially, the magnitude of Western foreign fighters is substantial and unprecedented.

### Foreign Fighters In Syria And Iraq

Initial reports of foreign fighters in Syria originated from the Assad regime in late 2011 and early 2012. These reports, however, drew pronounced skepticism from an international community that was receiving conflicting reports of foreigners supporting Assad's regime. As violence became more prevalent in Syria, spaces for militant groups to operate opened, and foreign fighters began entering at an ever-increasing rate. The following section analyzes the rise of foreign fighters in the Syrian civil war by tracing their emergence and growth beginning in 2011. The section concludes with an analysis of the current 2015 foreign-fighter data.

### Emergence

It was not until late November that articles began mentioning potential involvement of foreign combatants inside Syria. London-based Arabic newspaper Asharq Alawsat reported on November 28, 2011 that Free Syrian Army (FSA) personnel identified the Muqtada al-Sadr group, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), Hezbollah, and Amal Movement as groups active within Syria in support of the Assad regime. While these organizations do represent foreign involvement within Syria, they rest on the cusp of the Hegghammer–Malet definition of foreign fighters due to their state-related sponsorship and possible payment for services.

In January 2012, Guardian reporter Ian Black traveled to Syria to make sense of the growing internal conflict. The conversations Black had with the residents of Damascus were foreboding. While hope among the locals remained high in the burgeoning opposition, there was also concern of a rising Islamist threat. A local Syrian lawyer was quoted as saying, "I have no doubt the regime will be toppled. The problem is that the longer it takes, the more powerful the Islamists will become. Those that advocate violence will gain ground. It's a question of time and cost: time is getting shorter but the price is getting higher." Increased reporting on the role and presence of foreign fighters in Syria—to include the emergence of JAN—began to appear in April 2012. In May, amid the growing concern regarding foreigners fighting in Syria, the Sunday Times (London) was one of the first newspapers to mention initial estimates of up to 150 foreign fighters; UN observers, however, were unable to corroborate the information. The same UN observers, under the command of Norwegian General Robert Mood, temporarily ceased patrol operations in June due to escalating violence partially credited to the increase in foreign combatants.

June also saw the rise of Sunni religious leadership across the Middle East issuing various fatwas that instructed fellow Sunni Muslims to take up arms and travel to Syria to fight Bashar al-Assad. Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi, a prominent Jordanian Salafi-jihadi sheikh, issued a representative statement in 2012 that captured the themes of many fatwas of the mid-2012

period: “Muslims in Syria have been oppressed by Assad’s brutal and barbaric regime; therefore, according to Islam, it is obligatory for any able-bodied Muslim to support his brothers there.” Statements such as al-Tahawi’s grew in frequency as the conflict escalated.

Determining a discrete period for Syrian foreign fighter emergence is difficult to ascertain due to difficulty gathering data in the region. It is reasonable, however, to establish the second half of 2012—specifically May and June—as the temporal genesis of foreign-fighter discussion in international media, primarily due to the aforementioned religious decrees from Sunni religious leadership. Furthermore, the beginnings of theological legitimization by Muslim religious leaders in June of 2012 also represent the onset of foreign fighter growth within Syria. Also in June, a little known group, then known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), released a one-hour video entitled *The Clanging of the Swords*; the video was a call to arms and quietly revealed ISI to the world as a rising threat.

### Growth

Concern with foreign fighters reached higher levels of international attention with the publishing of a United Nations Human Rights Council report in September 2012. The report highlighted that foreign fighters were increasingly present in the Syrian conflict, and even more alarmingly, they appeared to have a radicalizing effect on anti-government local fighters. Aaron Zelin, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, lends credence to UN concerns, stating that by mid-2012 there were approximately 700–1400 foreign fighters who had either attempted to reach Syria or were actively engaged in the conflict.

While these numbers represented a small minority of combatants within Syria, reports at the beginning of 2013 supported an undeniable trend: foreign fighters were becoming a problem not only for Syria, but also for the nations that were supplying the fighters. A January 2013 *Times* (London) article revealed Hezbollah acknowledgement of Assad regime support. March saw additional English newspapers reporting on hundreds of British Muslims allegedly fighting within Syria; and some of these young men were being killed in the conflict.

A watershed moment for empirical foreign fighter research evaluation occurred a month earlier in February when the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR) completed a yearlong study chronicling the rising foreign fighter problem in Syria. The ICSR report, published in April, was the first to highlight the extent of Western foreign fighter participation, and it established a baseline from which to evaluate the continued growth of foreign fighters in Syria both from within the Middle East and from more distant nations.

Acknowledging the limitations in obtaining accurate census information, ICSR estimated that approximately 5,500 foreign fighters had participated throughout the length of the entire conflict. Moreover, the report highlighted initial motivations of these combatants: Assad and the alleged atrocities by his regime remained the primary reason for volunteerism. April 2013 also saw a pronounced increase of scrutiny by states vis-à-vis the

threat posed by returning foreign fighters. British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs William Hague highlighted the dangers of uncontested spaces within Syria as potential grounds for terror-based training camps. Citing national security concerns, Mr. Hague stated, “We assess some of the individuals being trained will seek to carry out attacks against Western interests in the region or in Western states now or in the future.” Similar concerns appeared across global media. On April 17, 2013, the *New York Times* reported the arrest of six men by Belgian police for attempting to recruit fighters to Syria. A continent away, concerns that Canadians could return as radicals was front-page news. Jihadist groups such as JAN and IS had yet to fully enter the international media spotlight—but this would occur, and soon.

The subsequent months leading into the summer of 2013 heralded the establishment of a second beacon of foreign fighter growth. This period of growth origination was characterized by the increased international attention drawn to jihadist groups operating in Syria, and also the justification of a Syrian jihad by prominent Sunni Muslim theologians.

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the ISI, announced the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in April, and concomitantly makes failed overtures to co-opt the better-known group JAN. Operating as independent entities, JAN and ISIS begin driving international media attention. In May 2013, JAN forces overran oil fields in Syria and begin selling barrels for profit. July and August thrust ISIS further into view with their freeing of approximately 500 prisoners—many of whom were convicted terrorists—in Iraq, and the conquering of Raqqa in Syria. While the actions and advances by JAN and ISIS likely resonated with a minority of Sunni Muslims, the message reached global audiences.

In late May, statements made by prominent and respected Sunni cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi reached a more moderate Muslim audience. With a following that numbered in the millions, Qaradawi’s call for all Muslims to fight against Assad’s regime was not only influential in and of itself, but his words also unshackled escalatory reservations of other prominent Sunni clerics in the region. Following Qaradawi’s statements, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, and Islamic clergy in Yemen voiced support of a Syrian jihad—and many others followed.

The second half of 2013 continued to display a trend of increasing foreign fighter numbers, and larger Western involvement. What had started as a regional pull for fighters from within the greater Middle East was starting to shift into a global pull bringing in more fighters from Europe, Australia, and North America. The *Times* (London) reported in August of United States intelligence estimates indicating that up to 10,000 foreign fighters were, or had been, involved in Syria. The same American source indicated that the fighter numbers could be as low as “a few thousand.” In December 2013, ICSR published a second comprehensive empirical study numbering foreign fighters in Syria in the realm of 11,000 combatants. The ICSR report confirmed concerns in Western nations; more Westerners were leaving for Syria with numbers tripling from

up to 600 fighters in April to 1,900 in December. By the end of 2013, foreign fighters were no longer media outliers in the Syrian civil war, but rather they had created a narrative that ran parallel to the enduring conflict. Moreover, groups such as ISIS were recruiting fighters globally by disseminating sophisticated propaganda via social media platforms.

2014 presented the continued trend of increasing foreign fighter participation in Syria. A report released in June by American security consultant firm The Soufan Group revealed that over 12,000 foreign fighters had gone to Syria, and approximately 3,000 of them had come from Western nations. This updated benchmark represented a number that exceeded all foreign fighters who had participated in the 10-year Soviet–Afghan war of the 1980s. More disturbing, however, was that these combatants appeared to mostly join groups that espoused a violent and extreme ideology.

Aside from increasing fighter numbers, 2014 introduced three major complexities into the foreign fighter problem. First, ISIS ascended to unprecedented levels of power resulting in substantial territorial control within Syria and Iraq. The increased ISIS presence and influence was reflected not only by territory gains and Baghdadi’s declaration of a new caliphate, but also by increased propaganda attempting to recruit Muslims to Syria and Iraq. Second, Western foreign fighters returning home and ISIS supporters living in the West conducted attacks in Belgium, Canada, and Australia. These attacks reified Western government concerns of returning Syrian combatants. Methods to address Western foreign fighter returnees had gained newfound urgency and importance. The third and final complexity was the introduction of American and coalition combat power into Syria and Iraq in order to confront ISIS. Although foreign fighters represented but a small subset of groups such as ISIS, the efficacy of ISIS’s media campaign showing foreigners burning passports and renouncing citizenship inexorably tied the threat posed by militant groups to the threat posed by their foreign combatants. As 2014 came to a close, ISIS and foreign fighters were central to state security concerns across all continents; and further, these worries had materialized into bloodshed, continued recruitment efforts, and media headlines that indicated the flow of combatants to Syria had not abated. Figure 1 shows the growth from 2011–2015 based on media reporting and government estimates.

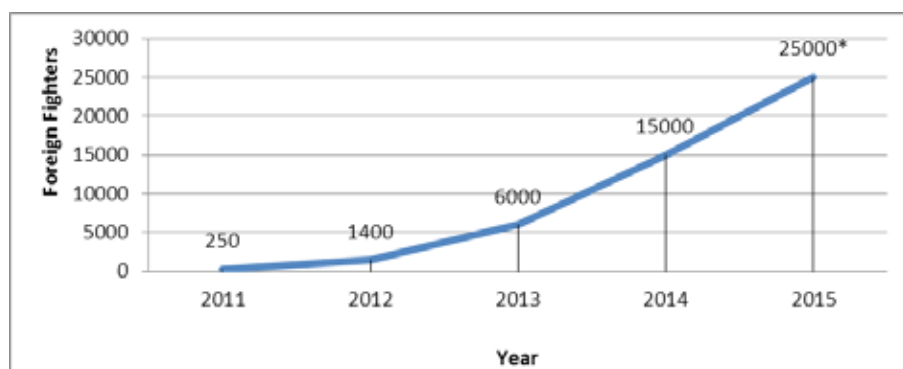
### Foreign Fighters In 2015

So what is the status of foreign fighters in Syria now? At the time of writing, the available figures, even with their acknowledged shortcomings, are harrowing. A February 2015 hearing before the United States House Committee on Homeland Security indicated that over 20,000 foreign fighters had traveled to Syria from 90 different countries. Further, the

assessment stated that a minimum of 3,400 of these fighters had come from Western nations.

There are some critical implications that can be drawn from the macro data. The enduring nature of the threat posed by foreign fighters is not solely a contemporary issue, but rather is rooted in a pattern that can be traced as far back as the Arab–Afghan War of the 1980s. Written a decade ago in *Foreign Affairs*, Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds warned that the insurgency in Iraq, which included many foreign combatants, would produce blowback globally once the conflict came to an end. Assuming that security conditions facilitating the emergence of stable state would come to fruition, Bergen and Reynolds speculated that foreign fighters would then be left with the choice of pursuing conflict elsewhere or returning home.

Sure enough, the wave of foreign fighters and local jihadists in Iraq birthed the precursor to ISIS in the form of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Although the vast majority of foreign fighters in the mid-2000s Iraqi insurgency were from the Middle East, there still existed limited Western nation involvement. Mohammed Hafez studied the ideology of suicide bombers during the height



Estimated Foreign Fighter Growth in Syria (\* as of January 2015)

of the insurgency, and his research indicated kinship and activist ties facilitated network activity in several European nations. The perpetuation of foreign fighter waves originating with the Arab–Afghans suggests that the current war in Syria will produce a new generation of foreign fighters who seek another conflict. Furthermore, because the Syrian conflict has attracted unprecedented numbers of Western foreign fighters, the threat to Western nations will grow concomitantly with Western foreign fighter involvement. The same can be said for other global regions that are contributing fighters to Syria and Iraq. In a 2013 report, Thomas Hegghammer empirically grounded the threat of returning combatants. Hegghammer found that of 945 analyzed fighters, 107 returned to commit attacks in the West. Applying the Hegghammer Factor to foreign fighter estimates gathered by the ICSR, Table 1 provides an approximation of threat severity.

The numbers of foreign fighters in the aggregate are substantial, but ICSR reports indicate that these figures likely

Table 1: Western Foreign Fighter Population Data from ICSR, 2014

Nation	Foreign Fighter Population	Per Capita (Up to; per million population)	Per Capita (Up to; per ten thousand Muslim population)	Hegghammer Factor*
Austria	100–150	18.2	4.3	17
Belgium	440	42.3	7.1	48
Denmark	100–150	45.0	11.2	28
Finland	50–70	13.3	66.4	8
France	1,200	18.1	1.8	132
Germany	500–600	7.4	2.0	66
Ireland	30	6.2	5.6	3
Italy	80	1.3	0.8	9
Netherlands	200–250	14.8	3.0	28
Norway	60	11.7	5.1	7
Spain	50–100	2.1	0.9	11
Sweden	150–180	18.5	5.1	20
Switzerland	40	5.0	1.0	4
United Kingdom	500–600	9.4	2.1	66
Australia	100–250	11.1	5.1	28
Canada	100	2.9	0.9	11
United States	100	0.3	0.5	11

\* The Hegghammer Factor is in reference to a 2013 study performed by Thomas Hegghammer indicating that out of sample of 945 foreign fighters, one in nine returned to the West to commit attacks.

contain some margins of error. Specifically, 2015 report figures represent Syria–Iraq conflict totals across the 2011–2015 periods. As such, ICSR estimates that 5–10 percent of combatants have died, and 10–30 percent are no longer in Syria or Iraq. Taking the ICSR estimates into account and applying the Hegghammer Factor yields over 400 men and women with North American, European, or Australian passports who would seek to commit violence in the West. Due to geographic isolation and the lower numbers involved, the potential impact on North America and Australia is considerably less than Europe. ICSR numbers, however, do not take into account those prospective foreign fighters who have been unable to leave their respective nations to go and fight within Syria and Iraq. An illustrative example is the case of Canadian Michael Zehaf-Bibeau; unable to acquire a passport for Syria, he proceeded on a shooting rampage in Ottawa on October 22, 2014. Policy implications given this data will be explored in the final chapter of this thesis.

## Conclusions

The Arab Spring in Syria has devolved from a promising social protest in 2011 to a vitriolic and internecine sectarian conflict that has eroded state borders, killed thousands, and displaced millions. The increasing numbers of foreign fighters and the violence that they have committed both within the Middle East and abroad represent security concerns that are being actively addressed by both national and supranational institutions.

Although this thesis does not attempt to soothsay, there are several critical implications that result from both the trend data and the profile analyses. First, from a strategic outlook, foreign fighting is not a new phenomenon. In the realm of Islamic fundamentalism, Syria represents yet another foreign fighter wave whose genesis was 1980s Afghanistan. As such, it is reasonable to expect that when the conflict in the Syria and Iraq is settled, another generation of unemployed foreign fighters will be left searching for an emerging conflict zone. ISIS appears prescient in this matter as they begin to send new recruits to a still politically fragile Libya. Prescriptive policy is beyond the scope of this research, but there is a need to both recognize this future threat and to design appropriate measures to mitigate and contain the impact.

Second, and more proximately, the trend data shows that the rate of foreign-fighter growth in Syria and Iraq continues to accelerate. While the preponderance of combatants come from the Middle East and North Africa, more combatants will come from the West. The Hegghammer Factor suggests that 11 percent of those who decide to fight in Syria and Iraq -- as of 2015, that equates to approximately 400 foreign fighters -- will return to the West with the intention of causing harm in their respective nations. While in the aggregate these numbers may be alarming, they are mitigated by several factors. First, the data in this thesis suggests that Western foreign fighters die at a much higher rate than their Middle

CONT. ON PG 61

# Chilean Strategy Towards Antarctica

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL VICENTE DONOSO HERMAN, CHILEAN AIR FORCE

Since transitioning to democracy in 1988, Chile has been a recognized leader in Latin America due to its rapid economic growth and commitment to democracy. Chile was the first South American nation to join the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2010. Notwithstanding its economic and political achievements, Chile has not properly addressed its Antarctic aspirations, which are extremely important from a long-term strategic perspective.

While Chile has been aloof, Argentina and the United Kingdom (UK) have been proactive in seeking to secure their interests, which directly rival Chile's.

Chile trails Argentina and the UK in establishing a strategic vision and has failed to lay foundations with sufficient concrete investments. Most alarming is that multiple Chilean

governments have failed to address the forthcoming dissolution of the Antarctic Treaty (AT) in 2048. For instance, Argentina has invested in its Antarctic program, even with its struggling economy. Jack Child contends, "Argentina has been the most active South American nation in Antarctic affairs." Similarly, the UK has also been visionary and consistent. It was the first nation to claim territory (1908) and maintains the largest program. Chile has not set priorities or invested adequately to defend its interest in Antarctica. This paper assesses the tension among Chile, Argentina, and the UK, and suggests three policy options for the current threat environment. To examine the

problem, legal framework, and claimant strategies, this paper tackles the discussion in four sections.

This paper first assesses Antarctica's strategic potential. Multiple geopolitical and economic benefits offer attractive incentives to nations that are able to establish firm political and territorial integrity. Rival states are attracted to its maritime routes, tourism, and natural resources.

The second part describes key legal considerations of the Antarctic Treaty in order to recognize the most appropriate approach to face the Antarctic's partition before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This section also synthesizes each country's legal, historic, and geological arguments. The third part discusses British and Argentina's strategies and argues Chile lags behind its two main rivals. This paper contrasts their Antarctic programs, investments and activities. It does so because "active presence"

**"IN 2048, A VERY IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL EVENT WILL OCCUR: THE ANTARCTIC TREATY, WHICH STOPS COUNTRIES FROM MINING THE CONTINENT'S ABUNDANT RESOURCES, WILL COME UP FOR REVIEW. CHINA - ALONG WITH THE U.S., THE U.K., AND OTHER COUNTRIES - INTENDS TO BE READY."**

Kelsey Campbell-Dollaghan  
GIZMODO (2 November 2014)

is the key argument for the ICJ.

Finally, the last section analyzes Chile's dilemma when considering a unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral approach. Chile's strategy must be in coordination with multiple allies to secure its Antarctic interests. In order to implement an effective and coherent strategy, Chile must leverage its main strengths.

## The Stakes in Antarctica

Population growth and the potential scarcity of natural resources may be the most important problems facing humanity. The effects of global warming are creating uncertainty with

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Editor's Note: Lieutenant Colonel Donoso's thesis won the FAO Association Major General Lansdale International Affairs Outstanding Research Award at the Air War College, Air University. In the interest of space we are publishing a shorter version, without research notes, in the Journal. Those interested in seeing the full thesis, with research notes, can follow this link to the FAO Association website: [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org). We are proud to bring you this outstanding scholarship.

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respect to food and water supplies. Antarctica concentrates a vast quantity of natural resources that may help with these challenges. It also offers geopolitical benefits to nations able to establish firm political and territorial integrity. Chile must carefully consider the risks of failing to execute an effective Antarctic strategy.

### Geopolitical and Strategic Potential

Antarctica is a central geographical platform that allows projection into the southern Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans. For instance, the Pacific offers 12,000 kilometers which represents half of the total perimeter of the Antarctic continent (23,680 kilometers). This is crucial when considering the benefits of the “exclusive economic zone,” as any nation possessing coastal lands has “sovereign right for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil.” Control of the Antarctic coast could access nearly fourteen million square kilometers of Antarctic waters in the Pacific Ocean, thirteen in the Atlantic Ocean, and fifteen in the Indian Ocean.

Antarctic is also crucial for transport. There are three maritime routes that connect the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, the Northwest Passage in Canada, the Panama Canal, and the Drake Passage in Chile. The Canadian passage has been virtually impassable due to year-round sea ice and remains unpredictable. The Panama Canal is expanding its capacity urgently due to the large demands of vessels and cargo ships. However, global maritime traffic will increase dramatically in the future and this canal may not be able to sustain such massive transit. Furthermore, natural disaster or terrorist act could disable it. Hence, the Drake Passage would be the best complement and alternative to the expanded Panama Canal. The potential benefits to Chile in the management of this corridor are numerous. For instance, Antarctic tourism is offering an attractive marketing symbolic value. The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) statistics shows 26,509 visits between 2011 and 2012, and 37,405 between 2013 and 2014. This thirty percent increment offers a great economic opportunity to Chile, because it may also be leveraged to expand tourism in the southern regions of Chile.

### Economic value

For thirty years, Chile has relied on its mining wealth. It produces 34% of global copper and 50% of the world’s lithium. Chile, however, will become increasingly vulnerable to its dependence on mining. Scholars estimate only 30 more years for its metal reserves. Also, as Corbo notes, “Chile has a fragile energy situation due to the lack of oil and gas reserves.” Finally, population growth and global warming will impact Chile unpredictably.

Mineral and energy resources are abundant in Antarctica. Reyno contends the existence of a large amount of minerals in the Antarctic continent such as chromium, cobalt, copper, gold, iron, molybdenum, manganese, nickel, lead, platinum, silver, titanium, uranium, vanadium, and zinc. Furthermore,

“the probability of finding mineral deposit is highest on the Antarctic Peninsula. Based on geological studies, the deposits most likely to be found are base metals (copper, lead, and zinc) and precious metals (gold and silver).” Antarctic energy resources offer great potential for coal and hydrocarbons (gas and oil). Indeed, in the Peninsula area, coal is between two and nine meters underground. Gas and oil are also abundant in this region, particularly in the Weddell, Bellingshausen, and Ross Sea.

Marine living resources in the Antarctic seas are also attractive. In the Southern Ocean, there is around 379 million tons of Antarctic krill. This is relevant because only half of the krill is eaten by whales and fish while the rest is legally protected for the health of the ecosystem. In short, the Antarctic sea has one of the densest fish populations on the planet.

Antarctic freshwater is another critical resource that is becoming scarcer. According to the U.S. Geology Survey, only 2.5% of the earth’s water is fresh. 68.7% of the world freshwater is frozen in ice. 30.1% is underground and only 1.2% of all freshwater is surface water. Reyno contends that Antarctic freshwater is its most valuable resource as it comprises nearly 24 million cubic kilometers, representing almost 80% of the planet’s fresh water. Like hydrocarbons, the densest glacier areas are located in the territory claimed by Argentina, Chile, and the UK.

### The Antarctic Territorial Claims

Over time, two points of view dominate the debate on Antarctica’s future. “Internationalist” nations like the United States, Soviet Union, Belgium, South Africa, and Japan considered the southern continent as “terra communis,” belonging to all, and not subject to appropriation and national sovereignty for any purpose. This view posits that Antarctica is subject to exploitation for the benefit of all humanity through the establishment of the Antarctic Administration. In contrast, advocates of “territorialism” like Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the UK argue that the continent is “terra nullius,” that it has no owner and it can be appropriated and subject to national sovereignty. These nations have advanced formal claims to sectors of the Antarctic continent, whereas the internationalist countries have abstained from making claims -- or recognizing claims made by others -- without renouncing their own possible rights in the region. Chile must be prepared to face challenges from both “internationalist” and “territorialism” nations.

Due to overwhelming global competition for the Antarctic domain, Chile must first consider Chile’s relationship with the UK and Argentina, whether relations with these nations can be cooperative or adversarial. Great Britain is the most formidable challenger. The British have long argued that they first registered the existence of Antarctic lands in the voyages of Captain James Cook during the reign of King George III (1760-1820). In contrast, Chile has claimed Spanish heritage whose historical archives confirm the first exploration up to parallel 64 S by the Spanish Admiral Gabriel de Castilla who departed from Valparaiso’s port (Chile) in 1603. Ultimately, Argentina has argued that they have demonstrated effective and continuous

occupation in the Falklands and South Orkneys Islands since 1904. Yet, all these arguments are frozen by the AT, and are irrelevant to the members of the Antarctic Treaty System.

### The Antarctic Treaty System (ATS)

On May 2, 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressed his concern about the future of Antarctica and proposed to participants of Paris Conference to meet again in the United States in order to establish an Antarctic regime. Twelve nations signed the AT in Washington, DC, on December 1, 1959. Over time, the AT has been adhered by 29 Consultative Parties and 24 Non Consultative Parties.

According to Peter Beck, one of the leading Antarctic scholars in the UK, “The AT was designed to create a legal framework for the containment of both existing and potential politico-legal disputes in order to preserve peace and stability in the region and to promote the cause of science and IGY-type cooperation.” Its fourteen articles seek to ensure that “in the interests of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord.” To this end it prohibits military activity, except in support of science; prohibits nuclear explosions and the disposal of nuclear waste; promotes scientific research and the exchange of data; and holds all territorial claims in abeyance. The AT is the core of the ATS which applies to the area south of 60° S latitude, including all ice shelves and islands.

Chile’s strategy must consider six AT articles relevant for its strategy. Article 1 stipulates that Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purpose only. Military personnel and equipment may be used albeit only for scientific purposes. Article 2 provides freedom of scientific investigation. Article 3 promotes that scientific program plans, personnel, observation, and results shall be freely exchanged. Article 4 defines that the AT does not recognize, dispute, or establish territorial claims. Crucially, it asserts that no new claims shall be asserted while the treaty is in force. Article 7 allows for treaty-state observers to have free access to any area and may inspect all stations, installations, and equipment. Finally, Article 11 defines that disputes are to be settled peacefully by the parties concerned or, ultimately, by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The AT appears to be strong enough to achieve its broad objectives. But these can come under pressures due to changes in the international political environment. The Protocol on Environmental Protection designated Antarctica as a “natural reserve, devoted to science and peace” and prohibited all activities relating to Antarctic mineral resources, except for scientific research. Yet, climate change, the growth of world population, and geopolitical rivalries could all threaten the ratification of this Protocol in 2048. The pillars of the AT could erode as countries force change due to economic and political pressures. Crucially, according to Article 11, in case of ratification of the AT, Antarctica shall be opened for accession, and the ICJ would be in charge of adjudicating Antarctica’s partitions, including the seven territorial claims.

### Overlapping territorial claims among the UK, Argentina, and Chile

All territorial claims are in “status quo” condition until the AT is terminated. Yet, we must examine Chile’s most immediate rivals. Since the UK, Argentina, and Chile share overlapping territorial claims, they have developed different strategies to ensure its Antarctic aspirations. Chilean strategy seems passive and aloof in comparison to more aggressive British and Argentine approaches. Thus, Chile must leverage the protection provided by the status quo window to revise and implement a more active and comprehensive approach. To appreciate this urgency it is important to review territorial claims and arguments of its rivals.

The UK was the first nation that officially claimed Antarctic territory. In 1908, King Edward VII proclaimed Antarctic sovereignty in the South Atlantic Ocean to the south of the 50 degree south (S) parallel, and lying between the 20 and 80 degrees west (W) longitude. In March, 1917, this was amended from 50 degrees S south to 58 degrees S because the area claimed in the 1908 decree was part of South American mainland. So, on March 3, 1962, the UK announced new official boundaries of the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) which was defined between 20 and 80 degrees W and south of 60 degrees S. The BAT has an extension of nearly 700,000 square miles ( $\approx 1.7$  million  $\text{km}^2$ ) which covers the entire Argentine Antarctic Territory and 70% of the Chilean Antarctic territory. The UK contends four arguments to justify its claim. The crucial ones are “occupation and administrative acts, and presence and scientific activities.” (See Appendix “A”)

With respect to Argentina, Jack Child notes, “The Argentine authorities are deliberately vague about the date when the precise limits of this sector were defined and proclaimed.” In July 15, 1939, Argentina issued the first document related to its Antarctic activities. Between 1940 and 1956, there were intentions to organize an Argentine Antarctic committee, and to establish a post office and radio station. Yet, the only official document that specifies its official boundaries was dated on February 28, 1957. The Argentine territory is defined between 25 and 74 degrees W and south of 60 degrees S. Its surface has nearly 550,000 square miles ( $\approx 1.4$  million  $\text{km}^2$ ). Its entire territory is disputed by the UK and Chile. In order to justify its territorial claim, Argentina relies on eleven arguments. The crucial ones are “permanent occupation, administrative activities, and presence.” (See Appendix A)

Finally, on 6 November 1940, President Pedro Aguirre Cerda declared the limits of the Chilean Antarctic Territory (CAT). This territory is defined between 53 and 90 degrees W to the South Pole, and to the north with the Chilean continental territory. The CAT extension is nearly 500,000 square miles ( $\approx 1.2$  million  $\text{km}^2$ ) and it is a province of mainland Chile; its capital city is Punta Arenas. Chile sustains nine arguments to justify its claim. The crucial ones are “occupation and administrative acts, rescue activities, and presence and scientific activities” (See Appendix A). Since most of these arguments are similar to the UK and Argentina, it is necessary to review each nation strategies.



## British, Argentine and Chilean Strategies

### British Antarctic Strategy

British strategy is the most coherent and strongest. Its National Security Strategy (NSS) has defined four national interests, and recognized and prioritized two major threats related to Antarctica. First, disruption to oil or gas supplies to the UK. Second, short to medium term disruption to international supplies of resources (i.e. food, minerals) essential to the UK. To protect its national interests, the UK has fourteen overseas territories around the world and the British Antarctic Territory (BAT) is the most extensive.

As Appendix B details, the “BAT Strategic Paper” set out objectives and priorities for the “Special Expenditure” provision within the annual estimates of its government for five years. It stipulates that the BAT is administered by the staff in the Polar Regions Unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The BAT government has its own legislative framework and makes a range of legal and administrative activities, including an advisory body Place-Names and four Post Offices.

The presence in the territory is provided by the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), which operates three scientific stations and the UK Antarctic Heritage Thrust (UKAHT) at Port Lockroy. The BAT budget receives annual revenue from income tax and includes a wide range of key stakeholder to enhance its projects (104).

The BAS state objective is to be recognized by 2020, as a world-leading center for polar research and expertise, addressing issues of global importance.” To achieve this vision, its plan sets short, medium and long-term priorities and investment objectives for three years. The BAS budget (2015-2016) is 48,418 £MM (≈ \$73 million), which is five times greater than the amount invested by Argentina.

### Argentina Antarctic Strategy

Although Argentina has the best energy situation in South America, it too seeks to obtain Antarctic resources. Argentina identifies three strategic objectives that influence its Antarctic strategy, “absolute sovereignty over their territory, national geographic integration, and economic growth and sustainable development.” After losing the Falklands to the UK during the war in 1982, it lost hegemony in the south east Atlantic region. This defeat also weakened geographical arguments to justify their Antarctic claim. Argentina still rejects defeat. Indeed, its Constitution expresses the nation’s determination to recover these islands.

The Antarctic Argentine Policy was created in 1990 in order “to strengthen the Argentine sovereignty rights in the region.” As Appendix B illustrates, Argentina established seven prioritized objectives in its Antarctic program. In addition, it stipulates that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will control the program, and the Ministry of Defense will be responsible for the operational execution and logistical support. Argentina Antarctic presence is provided by six permanent and seven temporary stations.

Its budget receives annual revenue from income tax which is distributed to the National Antarctic Department and Antarctic Scientific Institute. To advance these objectives, Argentina created an annual Antarctic Plan which has 12 programs (93 projects) for 2015. Notwithstanding its poor economic performance, Argentina’s budget is 136,386,173 pesos (≈ \$14 million) or nearly three times more than Chile. Like the UK, Argentina incorporated Antarctica into a coherent strategy with clearly delineated responsibilities for all other national agencies.

### Chilean Antarctic Strategy

Unlike its rivals, Chile has no NSS or other document that identifies or defines national interests, threats or priorities. In 2012, there was an intention to publish an NSS where the government proposed national interests.” Yet, the idea floundered due to political disagreements in the Senate.

Chile’s Antarctic Policy was published on 28 March 1990. As Appendix B shows, it establishes eleven objectives which seek to enforce the ATS, strengthen the national sovereignty, Antarctic institutions, international cooperation, scientific activities and resources conservation, promotes tourism, and markets Chile, as a “bridge” toward Antarctica. Three main actors are involved to achieve these objectives. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the execution of the Antarctic plans. The Armed Forces guarantee national sovereignty and facilitate access to the region, and the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH) acts as a scientific coordinator center.

Five permanent and eleven temporary stations provide presence in the territory. The Antarctic Chilean program budget receives annual revenue from income tax which is distributed by the National Antarctic Department to the INACH. To develop its objectives, the government has created an annual Antarctic scientific plan which, as of 2015, has established 98 programs.

Notwithstanding its healthy economic situation, in contrast to Argentina, Chile has invested the fewest resources among the three claimant nations. Its Antarctic budget for 2015 is 4,134,414,000 Chilean pesos (≈ 5.8 million). To complement this small budget, the Armed Forces provide logistical support.

### Chilean Antarctic Strategic Dilemma

Given the new Antarctic players, the complexity of geopolitical rivalries, and the looming renegotiation of the AT, Chile needs to weigh unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral approaches, if it wants to compete more effectively. A “unilateral strategy” means Chile would insist in keeping the entire Antarctic territory it has claimed since 1959. Thus, it would present arguments at the ICJ, which would be contrasted against those of rival claimants. Yet, there are two main risks. First, either geopolitical or climate changes may nullify all previous arguments and reduce the weight of the international law and institutions. With this approach, Chile risks standing alone in extreme circumstances, left to suffer what it must. Second, according to Klaus Dodds and Peter Beck, the most decisive argument for the ICJ is “active presence.” However, what new argument would be considered if all claimant nations have similar active presence in this area? The answer is simple. According the AT, the key argument

would be the amount of Antarctic scientific activities developed and financial investments. In this case, Chile is behind as it has fewer activities and its budgets are significantly lower than the UK's and Argentina's. A unilateral strategy would be too risky for Chile given geopolitical uncertainty, its size, and because it is behind its immediate rivals with respect to investments.

A "bilateral strategy" is complex as well. Chile and Argentina have an agreement to face the British aspirations since 1948, which they have not pursued with vigor. In 1978, they almost went to war ("Beagle conflict") due to the dispute of the Nueva, Picton, and Lennox islands. Other minor conflicts have reduced trust. The most relevant break occurred when Chile supported British forces during the Falkland War (1982).

Some scholars suggest in a British-Chilean Alliance against Argentina. Jack Child states, "In the minds of many Argentine

## **IN THE MINDS OF MANY ARGENTINE GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSTS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILE AND GREAT BRITAIN IS SUSPECT AND A THREAT TO ARGENTINE INTERESTS.**

geopolitical analysts the relationship between Chile and Great Britain is suspect and a threat to Argentine interests." In fact, after the Argentine's defeat, Chile received the British Antarctic base at Adelaide Island as a gift, and Chile allowed the UK full access to its facilities on Diego Ramirez Island. In short, although Chile and Argentina have an agreement to face British aspirations in Antarctica, there is little confidence and Chile seems to have made its bed with the British. Conversely, an alliance with the UK would provide a wider international influence. The United States, as a strategic partner on Chile's side, would be helpful to face China and Russia. This option would not be without risk because it would affect Chile's relationship with South American countries that have Antarctic aspirations like Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay.

A triple strategy alliance among the UK, Argentina, and Chile would be ideal but it is difficult. Notwithstanding the Falklands War occurred thirty years ago, the political relationship between the UK and Argentina is still distanced and feeble. Argentines still feel deep frustration for losing these islands and seek to restore their hegemony in the South Atlantic area. With the Falklands Islands loss, Argentina also lost arguments

to sustain its Antarctic territorial claim. Those arguments now favor the UK.

A "Multilateral Strategy" can be dangerous. As Stephen Walt contends, "Alliances will tend to be less robust in a multipolar world... It will also be more difficult for each state to determine where the greatest threat lies, and international alliances are likely to be more flexible..." American, Russian, and Chinese presence in Antarctica is not coincidence. As Appendix C illustrates, although the most powerful nations of the world did not register territorial claim in the AT, they have taken different strategies towards Antarctica. For instance, the United States has three Antarctic stations; in the Peninsula area (Palmer), in Ross Island (McMurdo), and its most important center is located strategically at the geographic South Pole (Amundsen-Scott).

Russia spread eight stations across Antarctica. Only one center is on the Antarctic mainland (Vostok). The other stations are located in front of every ocean around the Antarctic continent. Moreover, China is developing an aggressive strategy. During the last decade, China started a large program to emulate the Russian Strategy and increase its Antarctic stations. In 2014, China established its fourth research station (Taishan) and recently announced the decision to build a fifth. Additionally, China is building a second icebreaker ship and setting up research drilling operations on an ice dome 13,422 feet above sea level. Simon Romero contends, "China's newly renovated Great Wall station on King George Island makes the Russian and Chilean bases seem antiquated."

A multilateral strategy has two risks. First, international alliances may jeopardize Chile's aspirations because its interests could be displaced by the interests of others within an alliance. Second, as Stephen Walt states, "Neither the history of the past 45 years nor the public statements of contemporary leaders offer a reliable guide to the future, and prudence suggests that existing alliance commitments can no longer be taken for granted." In other words, powerful nations can change their priorities due to new global threats. Less powerful nations like Chile can be adversely affected by the decision of these allies.

### **Chilean Strategy towards Antarctica (Recommendations)**

With uncertainty surrounding the AT, it will be difficult for Chile to realize its Antarctic aspirations with an ad hoc strategy. Although Chile has been passive, it has three main strengths. These are its proximity to the Antarctic continent, the capabilities of its Armed Forces, and its healthy economic situation. With these strengths, Chile must try to become South America's leading nation for Antarctic research and expertise, addressing issues of global importance.

Chile has the means to achieve and sustain this vision though it will need to increase Antarctic investments and

modernize its stations. Hence, Chile should establish three priorities to achieve its Antarctic objectives. First, Chile must establish a National Strategy where all instruments of national power interact in the same direction to defend concrete national interests. Chile neither has declared national interests nor defined a political strategy to protect its Antarctic claim. Arguably, the Armed Forces and INACH are the only entities behind its Antarctic program. In addition, Chile must define an approach to alliances in pursuit of its objectives. The UK and Argentina threaten Chilean aspirations, but collaboration with the British might be possible. Although there still is a feud between the UK and Argentina, Chile's long-term strategy must seek a trilateral approach with these nations. Thus, Chile has two basic goals to achieve. First, due to the new Antarctic players and geopolitical changes, Chile must persuade Argentina and the UK to change their Antarctic unilateral approaches to a multilateral approach. Second, Chile must encourage reconciliation between Argentina and the UK. Meanwhile, Chile's mid-term strategy must offset its lack of investments, enhance Antarctic influence, and promote that the AT is extended beyond 2048. The "status quo" provided by the AT is essential. Chile needs time to correct previous policy shortcomings. This legal umbrella allows Chile at least some time to develop a better strategy towards Antarctica, and specially to concrete a trilateral strategy. In short, Chile must encourage Argentine and British governments to tackle threats together. While the irreconcilable relation still exists between these nations, Chile must define its strategic vision. A coherent approach must offset the British Antarctic Survey vision; thus, considering Chile's strengths, its vision must try to be the world-leading nation for logistical, environmental, and search and rescue (SAR) operations.

Second, Chile has to drastically increase its Antarctic budget. Chile has invested fewer financial resources than the UK and Argentina. In fact, its Armed Forces must support the logistical requirements because the Antarctic budget is entirely assigned to scientific activities. Chile has to expand resources for the Armed Force, so they can also support international operations in the Antarctic seas. Since 2013, the Chilean icebreaker ship Admiral Viel (1969) has been often out of service causing serious problems for provisioning the Antarctic stations. The ports' infrastructure presents similar challenges. In order to receive more and larger international ships in the port of Punta Arenas city, and provide logistical services, it is necessary to improve and enlarge its facilities. Similar upgrades are needed at this city's airport. Moreover, the Chilean Air Force is the military service with the most active Antarctic participation. Yet, its main Antarctic Base (President Eduardo Frei Montalva) only has one airplane (DHC-6) and one helicopter (Bell-412) which are not sufficient to cover a large air SAR operation.

Third, according the AT guidelines, the scientific development will be vital before the ICJ. Scientific activities are the best way to obtain positive effects in the international realm. Chile needs to keep developing its science program. INACH has been actively developing, promoting, and supporting the scientific program. David Walton and John Dudeney conclude

that Chile is one of the four nations that has accomplished the most science projects during the last decade. Yet, the UK and Argentina are still doing better. Hence, by 2020, Chile has to increase the scientific projects and promote its activities abroad in order to become the South American Leader in Antarctic Science.

### Conclusion

After signing the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, Chile has demonstrated excessive confidence in its arguments with respect to Antarctica. Chile's Armed Forces and national scientific organization have maintained an active presence in Antarctica. Argentina and the UK have also maintained an active presence, but have invested more financial resources, extended their programs, and demonstrated coherent strategies to achieve their interests. Nonetheless, Chile still has time to implement a more coherent Antarctic strategy. In order to offset its previous behaviors, Chile first needs to increase its investment in Antarctica. In parallel, it must define a mid-term strategy that enhances its Antarctic influence and fosters an extension of the AT. Yet, given the uncertain geopolitical threats, it is imperative to build a long-term strategy and alliance with the UK and Argentina while recognizing the important role of U.S. advocacy.

Argentina, Chile and the UK need the United States as a strategic partner. Powerful nations like Russia and China are developing aggressive strategies in case the AT is terminated in 2048. Chile must encourage this alliance because, as Robert Kagan notes, Russia and China are declining and the United States shows a more predictable, cooperative, and healthy role in the world. In short, although these three nations conduct different Antarctic strategies, they share the same threats. An alliance with Argentina and the UK would bring two benefits. Friendly relations with Argentina will promote stability in the region. The UK and the United States share a special relationship, thus an alliance with the UK would possess robust international influence.

### About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel Vicente Donoso Herman is a Chilean Air Force Officer. He graduated from the Chilean Air Force Academy in 1992 as a pilot officer and as Executive Engineer in Aeronautical System (Bachelor Degree). In 2008, he graduated from University Gabriela Mistral with a Master in Human Resources. Finally, in 2014, he graduated from Chile's Command and Staff College.

After receiving his pilot wings, he specialized in transport aircraft and has flown more than 6,000 hours. During his career he has flown several airplanes such as T-35, T-37, DHC-6, KB-707 (Tanker), EB-707 (AWACS), KC-135, and Gulfstream IV. Finally, his last assignments have been the Aviation Group N° 5 in Puerto Montt City, the Aviation Group N° 10 and the Chilean Air War College in Santiago City.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

# U.S. Defense Attachés in Haiti Worked Behind the Scenes to Contribute to Diplomatic Engagement with Cuba

BY COMMANDER TED KIM, U.S. COAST GUARD,  
AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL SANTIAGO OTERO-ORTIZ, U.S. ARMY

“...President Obama spoke by phone with President Raul Castro of Cuba to discuss the process of normalization between the two countries in advance of Pope Francis’ upcoming visits to Cuba and the United States. The President underscored the importance of the United States and Cuba re-establishing diplomatic ties and the reopening of embassies in our respective countries. The two Presidents commended the role that Pope Francis has played in advancing relations between our countries. They noted the cooperation between U.S. and Cuban medical professionals during the U.S. Naval Ship Comfort’s visit to Haiti this week...”

*September 18, 2015  
The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary*



Cuban Ambassador to Haiti the Honorable Ricardo Garcia Napoles meeting with LTG Joe DiSalvo, US Army, (Deputy Commander US SOUTHCOM) during the opening ceremony.

**W**hen you see a headline on newspapers or television, there is always a story behind the story. There are many people working tirelessly behind the scenes to make the headline a reality. The intent of this article is to give an inside look at the role of the Defense Attachés assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti who served on the diplomatic frontline alongside State Department diplomats and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) colleagues to promote U.S. interests in Haiti.

### Planning for the Events:

In late June of 2015, the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché (SDO/DATT) to Haiti, United States Coast Guard Commander Ted J. Kim, received an email from the Caribbean Desk Officer at the Office of Secretary Defense/Western Hemisphere Affairs expressing National Security Council interest in a medical engagement with Cuban doctors in Haiti. Also, the Chief of the USAID Health Office at the Embassy contacted Haiti’s Security Cooperation Office (SCO) and the SDO/DATT to discuss possible engagements with Cuban doctors

The recommendation from USAID Health was for USAID

and USNS Comfort doctors to conduct a professional exchange during the ship's visit to Haiti. USAID Health recommended inviting the Cuban doctors to St. Luc's Hospital, a Catholic hospital funded by USAID and one of the medical treatment sites for the USNS Comfort mission. In response the SDO/DATT recommended inviting the Cuban Ambassador and Cuban doctors from the Cuban Medical Brigade operating in Haiti to the opening ceremony. He also recommended giving them a tour of the ship to allow Cuban doctors to meet U.S. counterparts before the medical engagements. USAID Health and the SCO drafted the diplomatic note (Dipnote) extending to the Cuban Ambassador and the Cuban doctors in Haiti an invitation to the opening ceremony, a tour of the USNS Comfort, and a medical engagement at St. Luc's Hospital. The Embassy delivered the Dipnote to the Cuban Government on August 14. By this time, all personnel in the SCO were fully occupied preparing for the ship visit and medical mission in Haiti. The SDO/DATT assigned primary responsibility for the task of preparing for the Cuban engagement to the Army Attaché, Lieutenant Colonel Santiago J. Otero-Ortiz, a Latin American Foreign Area Officer (FAO) and a native Spanish speaker.

The Cuban Government responded with their own Dipnote accepting the U.S. Government's (USG) invitation to attend the USNS Comfort's opening ceremony and tour of the ship. However, the Dipnote from Cuba did not mention or accept the USG's invitation for Cuban medical professionals to visit the medical site at St. Luc. The Cubans countered by offering an invitation for U.S. medical doctors to visit one of the Cuban medical hospitals in Haiti.

U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince was beginning to question whether the historical engagement between the U.S. and Cuba was going to materialize, when an unfortunate turn of events occurred. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, the SDO/DATT received the sad news that the MINUSTAH Military Force Commander, Brazilian Lieutenant General Jose Luiz Jaborandy Jr., had suddenly passed away in Miami. His body was flown back to Haiti along with his family for a memorial service in his honor on

September 2. It was during the memorial service for General Jaborandy that the ARMA, SDO/DATT, and the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission met with the Cuban Ambassador to Haiti.

This brief but critical contact allowed the U.S. Embassy to gauge the interest of the Cuban diplomatic delegation in participating in the visit of the USNS Comfort. The Cuban Ambassador to Haiti, Ricardo Garcia Nápoles, demonstrated great interest and enthusiasm about the medical engagement with the USNS Comfort personnel in Haiti, and indicated that the Cuban delegation and the medical brigade doctors were looking forward to the opening ceremony and tour of the ship. The SDO/DATT and ARMA outlined the details of the engagements with the Cuban Ambassador after the memorial service. This marked the first U.S. diplomatic engagement with Cuba in Haiti. After this first contact the ARMA worked behind the scenes and negotiated a series of high profile events with the Cuban Third Secretary.

On September 4, the Cuban Embassy in Haiti delivered another Dipnote, listing the Cuban doctors that were to participate in the medical engagement, and the Cuban medical sites in Haiti that U.S. medical professionals were invited to visit. The DAO coordinated with other USG agencies to ensure protocols were in place for any contingency that might arise while executing this first historical interaction with Cuban diplomats and medical personnel, given the USG policy towards Cuba. The DAO also coordinated with the Cuban Embassy in Haiti to conduct a site visit to one of the Cuban medical sites to assess force protection requirements in preparation for the visit by the Deputy Chief of Mission and USNS Comfort personnel. The U.S. Embassy's leadership entrusted the DAO to be the lead agent to communicate and coordinate with the Cuban Embassy diplomats and to integrate other embassy agencies.

### Executing the Events:

On September 10, the USNS Comfort arrived in Port-au-Prince, marking the start of Continuing Promise 2015's (CP-15) final mission. On September 11, during the opening ceremony,



*Commander Ted Kim, US Coast Guard (center), talking to Captain Sam Hancock, US Navy (Mission Commander of Continuing Promise 2015) and Mrs. Sophia Martelly (First Lady of Haiti) during the closing ceremony.*

the ARMA escorted the Cuban Ambassador and five Cuban doctors and introduced them to the chiefs of various U.S. agencies and other distinguished guests. The Cuban Ambassador candidly engaged with the U.S. delegation before the ceremony, including the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Pamela White, and U.S. Southern Command Deputy Commander, LTG Joe DiSalvo, as TV cameras and journalists watched closely. Ambassador White welcomed the Cuban Ambassador and doctors during her speech and thanked them for their participation in such a historic event. Ambassador White was also glad finally to be able to recognize the Cuban Ambassador as a fellow diplomat at an official function.

During the tour of the USNS Comfort, the Cuban doctors were enthusiastic as they engaged with the U.S. delegation, diplomats, and USNS Comfort's personnel. Ambassador Nápoles later noted that he was extremely satisfied with the warm welcome that the Cuban delegation received and thanked the U.S. Embassy and USNS Comfort leadership for the respect given to him and his delegation. This positive initial engagement set the tone for the rest of the activities with the Cubans and rekindled the discussion for visiting the St. Luc medical site by the Cuban delegation.

On September 15, an Embassy delegation visited La Renaissance Medical Center, a Cuban Medical Brigade site in downtown Port-au-Prince that specialized in ophthalmology and physical therapy. This second event with Cuba went smoothly.

This historic engagement marked the first time since the severing of diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961 that USG personnel and Cubans were allowed to openly engage diplomatically. The U.S. delegation was led by the Charge d'Affaires Brian Shukan; Political Counselor, Matt Purl; Mission Commander of the USNS Comfort, U.S. Navy Captain Sam Hancock; the SDO/DATT and ARMA; Acting Office Chief of USAID Health Office, Ms. Susanna Baker; and Acting Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Country Director, Dr. Samuel Martinez. Also in participation were a group of U.S. and Haitian medical professionals, three doctors from the USNS Comfort, and two Haitian doctors from a USAID-funded program at La Renaissance center.

Upon arrival of the delegation, the Cuban Ambassador greeted the delegation warmly and accompanied them on a detailed tour of the Cuban medical site, where Cuban doctors explained their work. After the tour, the U.S. and Haitian doctors participated in patient consultations side-by-side with Cuban doctors. In the meantime, the Cuban Ambassador and Charge' Shukan attended a presentation on the history of the Cuban medical mission in Haiti. Charge' Shukan thanked the Cuban Ambassador and his medical staff for the tour, and Ambassador Nápoles stated that developments in U.S.-Cuban cooperation are viewed positively by the Cuban Government. Meanwhile, LTC Otero-Ortiz negotiated with the Cuban Embassy for the Cuban Ambassador and doctors to visit the USNS Comfort's medical site at St. Luc Hospital.



*Commander Ted Kim, US Coast Guard (Senior Defense Official/ Defense Attaché) (front row left), attending the opening ceremony with Haitian and international guests.*

On September 17, the U.S. and Cuban delegations met again at St. Luc Hospital. The U.S. delegation was led by Charge' Shukan, and included U.S. Navy Captain Christine Sears, the Commander of the USNS Comfort's medical team; USAID; DAO PaP; and CDC. The Cuban delegation was led by Ambassador Nápoles and the five Cuban doctors present at the two previous engagements. The Haitian Minister of Public Health, Dr. Florence Guillaume, also participated in the event. The Cubans toured the site, viewing patient examinations and procedures in pediatrics, ophthalmology, and dentistry. The Cubans posed many questions to the USNS Comfort medical staff. The Cuban Ambassador also spoke with the American medical staff about their work. The atmosphere was friendly and at the end of the tour Charge' Shukan and the Cuban Ambassador had a brief press engagement. Minister Guillaume spoke about the importance of the USNS Comfort mission, and praised both the U.S. and Cuba for their assistance to Haiti in the field of health care. Charge' Shukan spoke about the success of the USNS Comfort visit, USG rapport with the Haitian Ministry of Public Health, and the significance of this historic medical engagement with Cuba.

On September 18, during the closing ceremony the SDO/DATT presented the Cuban doctors with SCO challenge coins and thanked the Cuban delegation for their participation in the opening and closing ceremonies and the medical engagements. Charge' Shukan made warm remarks in his speech about collaborating with Cuba, which drew applause from all attending the ceremony. The closing ceremony was another great success.

### Hotwash

The USNS Comfort mission in Haiti offered a unique opportunity for both the U.S. and Cuba to demonstrate their mutual interest in re-establishing diplomatic relations in an international forum. The Cuban participation in the ceremonies

and medical engagements were instrumental in advancing U.S.-Cuba diplomatic relations. The chiefs of mission from both countries expressed optimism about a new phase in U.S.-Cuban relations. DAO personnel played a major part in the process by assisting the DoS in re-engaging diplomatic relations with Cuba after 54 years of severed diplomatic ties, and setting the tone for the next steps in the collaboration between Cubans and Americans...all behind the scenes.

DAO Port-au-Prince has continued to engage with the Cuban Embassy to promote health related cooperation between two countries. For example, there was a last-minute request to perform an eye surgery on a five year old Haitian boy that the USNS Comfort could not accommodate due to the ship's departure schedule. This case was referred to the Cuban medical facility (La Renaissance), which LTC Otero-Ortiz coordinated with the Cuban Embassy. The surgery was successful and the boy was released from the Cuban medical facility. This cooperation showed that the Cuban engagement during the USNS Comfort mission was not just a symbolic gesture.

The authors would like to thank the U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince, USNS Comfort, U.S. Southern Command, and the Defense Intelligence Agency for their assistance and hard work to accomplish the mission.

#### About the Authors:

Commander Ted Kim, U.S. Coast Guard, is the Senior Defense Official, Defense Attaché, and Chief of Security Cooperation Office (SCO) at the U.S. Embassy, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He is a graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy and earned advanced degrees from the University of New Orleans, the George Washington University, and Georgetown University. He has over 21 years of active duty service in both operational and staff assignments with the Coast Guard, SOUTHCOM, and U.S. Embassies. His previous embassy assignment was in Singapore as Coast Guard Liaison Officer.

Lieutenant Colonel Santiago Otero-Ortiz, U.S. Army, is Army Attaché at the U.S. Embassy Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He is a Latin America FAO and previously served as Chief of the Security Cooperation Office at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia; as a military-political officer at U.S. Army South; and as a security advisor for the Iraqi Police and an Iraqi infantry Battalion on his combat tours in Iraq.



“The United States and Cuba share common interests, among them the health and welfare of the people of Haiti. U.S. and Cuban medical professionals collaborated during the USNS Comfort’s stop in Haiti, including working together at a Catholic hospital. As with our previous cooperation on Ebola, this provided a unique opportunity to engage with Cuban medical professionals and to discuss opportunities for future cooperation. This cooperation demonstrates how our continued normalization of relations with Cuba can help us advance our interests in the Americas.”

*President Obama  
September 23, 2015  
The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary*

# Fighting to Avoid Conflict: U.S. Counterterrorism Model in Northwest Africa

BY COLONEL SAMUEL W. CURTIS, U.S. ARMY

Predicting future threats is difficult because one cannot linearly project forward based on the events of the past. Nevertheless, at least in the near- to mid-term, the spread of violent extremism will persist as a strategic problem requiring U.S. action. The future strategic environment will tend toward separate, but interconnected and more mutually supporting threat franchises. The U.S. Government's (USG) desire will be to keep these threats local and contained. However, this multiplicity of threat, coupled with a desire to de-aggregate it, for a variety of reasons such as political acceptability, risk, limited resources, etc., necessitates a change in approach from theaters of war to something more indirect and sustainable.

Specifically, the U.S. will need to work through partners, instead of unilaterally. Thus the Department of Defense must fight differently in combating this threat – with and through partners, as exercised by Special Operations Forces (SOF) in Africa. As Leon Panetta, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, stated, “the task of training, advising, and partnering with foreign military and security forces has moved from the periphery to become a critical skill set across our armed forces.” This is not a new insight, but it is also not without limitations.

Relevant to this discussion are U.S. SOF operations in North and West Africa. These regions of Africa are strategic locations containing multiple weak states and several Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO) that threaten U.S. persons and interests. They are not declared theaters of war. However, every day U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) directs numerous operations, exercises, and security cooperation activities in North and West Africa, all in conjunction with partners, many of which are aimed at countering VEO. Most of these activities involve SOF.

SOF actively contain, disrupt, and degrade the VEO threat through shaping operations. The most successful of these operations are where SOF persistently advise and assist partner forces. That SOF, where approved to engage, is successful is widely accepted. How SOF conducts operations on the continent is less so. To the degree that North and West Africa illustrate the future operating environment -- clusters of weak states struggling to develop while simultaneously grappling with regional or transnational threats -- the USG should consider using SOF in contested security environments to directly enable partner nation (PN) operations to promote regional and global

stability.

First, enablement activities gain needed time for security cooperation activities such as institution building (a U.S. Army core competency) to achieve sustainable results. Second, results can be achieved within an acceptable National Security Council staff time horizon. Third, embedding advisors at the tactical level accelerates strategic effects. Finally, this approach is cost effective, requires only a small footprint, and is relatively low risk, but not decisive by itself. Echoing Rupert Smith, proactively enabling partner forces to combat VEOs will not, by itself professionalize their defense establishments or facilitate good governance. Nevertheless, enablement forward in contested security environments does establish the requisite security conditions in which long-term diplomatic and military assistance may be decisive.

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Editor's Note: Colonel Curtis' thesis won the FAO Association writing award at the U.S. Army War College. Because of its length, we publish an abridged version here. To read the full thesis with all research notes, visit [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org).

## The Strategic Indirect Approach

The strategic indirect approach encompasses much more than solely military means. In terms of using military power, the indirect approach can range from defense institution building to tactical-level training and equipping of indigenous forces. These activities fall under the rubric of security cooperation. Security cooperation's chief selling point is that it can be decisive, generates good will, and is both politically and physically low risk.

However, there are also down sides. Security cooperation activities are time consuming and results are slow to evolve. Further, the U.S. conducts security cooperation activities only in permissive environments and away from contested areas. While this significantly lowers risk to U.S. forces by ensuring capacity building takes place in a secure environment, it does not directly aid the partner nation in combat against violent extremism, or provide the U.S. visibility into the true character of specific threats. This lack of situational awareness limits our ability to exert and maintain effective pressure on the threat. Instead, the focus is on long-term PN capacity building vice addressing the near-term threat. In the interim, without bringing sufficient pressure to bear, the enemy adapts and metastasizes. The inverse can also happen: the host nation government does not live up to its end of the bargain in readiness, which in turn allows the VEO threat to develop to the extent that it has an over-match of capability. Thus, under security cooperation as traditionally implemented, the U.S. is entirely dependent on the will of the partner to use effectively the tools we provide. In other words,



risk increases over time, often at a faster rate than the positive effects from the pure indirect approach.

Simply stated, the dilemma is both time and degree of risk. The poles of the spectrum are unilateral action, which is quick and discrete, but often politically high-risk, even within failed states, and long-term capacity building initiatives on the other, which carry low-risk but have an indefinite event horizon for effects. The question is how does one pressure VEOs in the near-term to buy time for the indirect approach to work? Rephrased, how does one achieve desired effects within a politically acceptable time horizon?

To be strategically successful under these circumstances one must not only address long-term fundamental problems, but also proactively address the current environment. The limits of security cooperation are, in large part, addressed by shaping operations. Shaping activities are threat-focused and are often conducted through, and with, a host nation, or multinational partners, to isolate the threat and prevent the spread of conflict. This demands access, relationships, and situational awareness. Shaping activities are not necessarily the sole purview of SOF. However, the nature of the threat, as well as the unique attributes and capabilities required, often dictates SOF utilization. The goal is to achieve desired effects short of large-scale involvement by the U.S. in conflict. It is also important to note that the avoidance of large-scale U.S. involvement does not equal no fighting by U.S. forces – limited application of combat power, whether unilaterally or in support of a partner, can help the U.S. achieve its strategic objectives. In addition, though the U.S. is conducting only shaping operations, our partners may be engaged in existential conflict. This dynamic shapes partner attitudes and perceptions of U.S. assistance accordingly.

Under these circumstances, exerting pressure on an adversary in the near-term, while simultaneously only working through a partner force or surrogate, requires the approval of direct, persistent engagement and enablement. SOF directly enable and advise PN forces to great effect in combat zones in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Building the capacity and capability of the Iraqi Security Forces, coupled with our active advice and assistance with their operations, stabilized the security environment to the degree that policy makers felt that the U.S. could withdraw most U.S. forces. The U.S. is pursuing a similar approach in Afghanistan with the Afghan National Army and Police. U.S. efforts in Africa benefit from this approach.

### Strategic Environment in North and West Africa

USG counterterrorism activities in North and West Africa are not new and have evolved significantly over the last 15 years. Beginning with the African Crisis Response Initiative in the late 1990s, to the current multi-faceted, multi-year Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which integrated Operation Enduring Freedom – Trans Sahara as its Department of Defense component, the USG has been working to create a sustainable, long-term, small footprint and low signature solution to the violent extremist threat in the region. Despite these on-going efforts, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, the Islamic State as well as their af-

filiates' and adherents' scope, reach, influence, and nefarious activities continue to expand. This expansion presents a growing threat to U.S. persons and interests, both in Africa and in the U.S. This disturbing trend led President Obama to articulate the need to coordinate complementary short- and long-term efforts at combatting extremism in North and West Africa. In light of the above strategic direction and using authorities granted in multiple USG coordinated strategic orders, USAFRICOM in 2012 focused its previous regional counter-terrorism (CT) efforts, with Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRI-CA) as its implementer.

It is important to recognize U.S. interests in Africa as well as the intensity of those interests because strategy should be focused on shaping the strategic environment in ways that are favorable to the achievement of national ends. Using the interests as outlined in the 2015 United States National Security Strategy, many argue that all enduring U.S. national interests are present in Africa. However, looking globally, the intensity of U.S. interests still falls below assessments of other regions. For example, there is great potential for expanded trade and commerce with Africa, but current levels of trade are only a fraction of that between the United States and Europe or Asia. Similarly, threats from peer competitors such as Russia or China as well as terror threats emanating from the Middle East dwarf those from Africa today. The most pressing challenge in the near- to mid-term is the continent's dynamic and uncertain security environment and the concordant potential of the threat to spill over to western interests. Therefore, the required U.S. strategy is one of economy of effort or force. Recognizing this, the U.S. is prioritizing its programs in Africa on improving the conditions within Africa in order to better provide for the security of the United States.

The scale of North and West Africa is vast, but hard to internalize. All of the continental United States can fit within North and West Africa. Perhaps, more appropriate when comparing counter-terrorism operations, all of Afghanistan can fit easily just within the country of Mali. However, scale is not the only strategic factor. The terrain is some of the harshest in the world, specifically the stifling heat and aridness of the Sahara Desert, as well as the marginal soils of the Sahel. Given these conditions, development has only penetrated the interior to a limited degree. Lacking development and possessing limited means, the belt of countries between Mauritania to Chad are some of the poorest in the world. Moreover, the lack of infrastructure, combined with vast distances, retards the ability of these countries to secure their borders, or even to receive support (martial or humanitarian) from western countries.

Exacerbating these conditions are historic regional human movement patterns and smuggling routes, often dictated by terrain or key features such as water sources, that transcend borders. VEOs fully exploit these routes to move weapons, fighters, and cash. They also use them to meet, coordinate, refit, and raid, knowing that North and West African states have limited ability to monitor or interdict activities taking place on these routes. These conditions allow VEOs to not only shift locations, they also enable the various groups to leverage each

other or inter-connect.

Relatively recent developments, such as the Arab Spring, the Libyan Uprising and its subsequent turmoil, the 2012 Tuareg Rebellion and subsequent Malian Coup, Nigerian fecklessness, and other North and West Africa instabilities illustrate how under-governed spaces provide a fertile environment for VEO to develop, penetrate, and sustain themselves. Further supported by illicit activities such as narcotic smuggling and kidnap for ransom, AQIM, Boko Haram, and the Islamic State have capitalized on regional instability to expand their ties across the continent.

As a result, North and West Africa VEOs are increasingly mutually supporting and interconnected. Additionally, regional- and national-centered issues ensure that VEO gains across the Maghreb and Trans Sahel are often not aggressively challenged or contested by local governments that are either unable, or unwilling, to prevent the formation of safe havens and extremist sanctuaries. Given time, VEOs will continue to entrench themselves within illicit networks as well as local society. This greater inter-connectivity and entrenchment has, in the space of approximately five years, transformed AQIM, Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and their affiliates and adherents, from discrete and manageable individual problem sets for the U.S. on the continent, into an interconnected regional network necessitating persistent and synchronized military activities as part of a larger coherent and comprehensive USG regional response.

### Theory to Practice – US SOF Enablement of African Partners

Numerous VEOs and destabilizing elements make up the threat network in North and West Africa. However, for simplicity, they can be thought of as four inter-related, but discrete bins: AQIM-Southern Zone, Ansar al-Dine, Tahwid Wal Jihad and al-Murabitun activities in Northern Mali; the historic illicit trafficking routes through the Air Mountains/Salvador Pass known colloquially as the Niger Corridor; Ansar al-Sharia, militia activities, and the Islamic State in Libya and Tunisia; and Boko Haram activities in Northern Nigeria and border regions of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.

Within each bin, SOF work with PNs to build capacity of select units and support their operations, emphasizing the containment, disruption, and degradation of the VEO threat in Africa. Containment at the strategic level requires fundamental actions on the ground. Pushing SOF forward in contested security environments allows the U.S. to achieve the strategic effect of containing the VEO threat while taking into account the cultural characteristics in Africa.

In security assistance, it is often said that relationships

and trust are everything. To the degree that this is true, it is especially true in post-colonial Africa where strong suspicions of western intentions still linger. Persistent presence allows SOF to build the relationships and trust, as well as the situational awareness required to build effective PN capability over time. Conversely, virtual presence is physical absence, which results in the absence of trust and a lack of strategic effectiveness. The dynamic of trust is not just necessary with African partners, but also with the respective U.S. country teams and other western multinational partners. All SOF operations, whether bi-lateral or regional, are conducted with full transparency to, and the approval of, the appropriate U.S. ambassador. This ensures that each SOF operation supports the long-term goals of the U.S. Embassy. It also builds confidence in SOF based on the

maturity and discretion of SOF operators as observed over time. Similarly, the trust built over time with western multinational partners operating on the continent enables a candid dialogue on respective efforts that in turn promotes unity of effort and supporting effects.

Trust enabled special warfare engagements

to counter VEOs in Africa follow three, non-sequential, but mutually supporting lines of effort: achievement and maintenance of access and situational awareness; enablement of partner force operations; and generation of partner capacity. The first line of effort is recognition of the necessity for access and placement. Access and placement are an essential first step to generating influence and awareness in contested security environments. Influence in turn enables the proper positioning of PN forces, and formulation of viable future options for U.S. decision-makers, whether at the country team or national security staff level.

The second line of effort has SOF focusing on operationally enabling select PN forces in multiple ways. Regionally, SOF operations aim to cut threat lines of communication between networked VEOs, then isolate and contain the separate elements by leveraging a full array of U.S., PN, coalition, and African Union military capacities to disrupt, deny, and render ineffective the threat. The third line of effort emphasizes the development of sustainable capability at both the unit and enterprise levels. In order to gain unity of effort, SOCAFRICA and its command and control (C2) network prioritizes and synchronizes all counter-VEO actions and activities.

No operation should be conducted in a vacuum; context is key. Access and placement cannot be built in times of crisis but must be present at the onset of a crisis. Access and placement require the development of relationships and trust, and are gained over time through persistent engagement, not virtual presence. With access, SOF can observe, interpret, and report conditions, attitudes, and actions in critical security environments. This information provides decision-makers with the

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necessary situational awareness to include identifying exploitable opportunities. None of this is possible without a background of on-the-scene presence.

Technical means of collection, such as Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), are pursued to characterize the environment and develop a critical base-line understanding of the enemy. However, as the former commander of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, Major General Bowra has stated, “Human Intelligence remains the only platform capable of placing human judgment at the point of collection. The ability to gather impressions, discern intentions, and convey them to persons removed from the area is indispensable both in developing plans and in implementing actions designed to influence conditions and third-party actions.”

Following this logic, SOF reporting is not duplicative of, or competing with, but rather enhances, the larger collection enterprise. SOF activities provide valuable context and perspective to the Ambassador. Further, that SOF is overtly in a country is recognition of an intersection of mutual interests between the host nation and the U.S.

The model used by SOF in Africa for determining the appropriate partner force is to locate a force that maintains the trust and linkage to their respective national command authority, has a good human rights record, and is closing with the VEO threat. The latter speaks to the PN’s will. Will is critical in the fight against VEOs, as it is difficult to generate positive tactical and strategic effect in the near-term without it. In contrast, if a proposed partner force is not proactively engaging the threat or lacks the will to fight, that force would probably not be an appropriate candidate with which to partner. The time to generate effects would be too long and further, if will is lacking, improvements in partner performance may not be sustainable without direct U.S. involvement.

A partner force’s record and will are only a starting point. For activities to be effective, they must be nested with HN objectives and approved by their leadership. Once access and placement are achieved, and the appropriate partner is determined, engagement activities fall into multiple categories and are conducted in conjunction with, and with the concurrence of impacted country teams and host nations. All activities support both regional military and integrated country strategies, which results in a consistent U.S. effort.

The preferred model for SOF related activities in the second line of effort is to start with the partner force actively engaging the threat. SOF, within existing authorities, advises and operationally enables the partner force beyond traditional train-and-equip in order to assist in the current fight and build the partner’s capability to conduct CT operations over the

long-term. At its most benign, enablement is limited to information sharing and logistic assistance. However, enablement often includes accompaniment and augmentation. This could take the form of operational advice, intelligence sharing, targeting refinement, integration with air assets, and equipping, as well as any other U.S. capability that the partner may benefit from.

Persistence is necessary for building trust as well as for continuity of operations and training. Active enablement is preferred, as it incentivizes host nation action, focuses the partner force on the true threat, and provides a level of accountability for actions in the field. While SOF accompaniment increases the risk of a VEO attacking an American service member, SOF position themselves to ensure contact is not expected or likely. Their role is to enable and advise the partner force, not directly engage the threat.

The third line of effort, developing sustainable capability at both the unit and enterprise levels, is a function of patient and persistent engagement. SOF engagement is chiefly funded through 1200-series and Title 22 (TSCTP) CT programs, as well as newer mechanisms such as the Global Security Cooperation Fund and

the Counter Terrorism Partnership Fund. The particulars of each funding source is less important than the need for flexible fiscal authorities that support SOF’s preventative strategic approach.

It is clear that intelligence collection enables operations. Preparation of the Environment (PE) activities characterize the surroundings by developing the information, human, and physical infrastructure necessary to support contingencies and potential future activities. Assistance with sensitive site exploitation allows the host nation to better develop the threat picture and link their operations. However, intelligence collection also aids in the development of long-term sustainable structures. Operations and Intelligence (O&I) cells must be fed information to be relevant, and in turn relevancy draws partners. O&I cells, if nurtured, can become major hubs for regional activity for all partner nations. This builds the relationships and common operating methods required to build the foundation of long-term capacity.

Supporting these persistent activities are indirect and non-lethal shaping operations. Informational and civil-military operations positively influence vulnerable populations susceptible to VEO ideology, support activities in contested environments, and generate trust and confidence in the host nation government. Active coordination has integrated SOF activities and USAFRICOM’s Operation Objective Voice information operations activities into a broader whole-of-government plan as well as with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on vulnerable community messaging.

## **PERSISTENCE IS NECESSARY FOR BUILDING TRUST AS WELL AS FOR CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS**

The benefit of accelerated effects should not be understated. Certainly, intelligence can be shared and activities synchronized at a higher level (which they should), but this does not often translate to near-term effects on the ground. Examples of accelerated effect are numerous. After the Tuareg rebellion, and AQIM and other's subjugation of Northern Mali in 2012-2013, SOF's presence and relationships with Chadian and French forces enabled their rapid response. Similarly, after the Chibok kidnapping and the surge in the prominence of Boko Haram in 2014, there was considerable pressure for action. That SOF had a small but persistent presence forward with Nigerian, Chadian, and Cameroonian forces that gave the USG situational awareness, as well as a mechanism to push appropriate support forward. Additionally, as SOCAFRICA had small, distributed headquarters forward, SOF was able to shift assets quickly to augment the efforts of the larger USG Interdisciplinary Advisory Team assisting the U.S. Embassy Abuja without a loss in overall operational effectiveness.

The positive strategic and operational effect is not solely military in nature. For example, SOF provides the necessary security to enable the co-location and projects of USAID. Traditional security assistance does not offer the same opportunity. The model of SOF forward in contested environments enables other elements of power to gain access to areas where they can have the most benefit for U.S. interests. An illustration of this would be the creation of zones of resilience in locations in danger of VEO influence, such as the city of Diffa in southeast Niger, where over 50,000 Nigerian refugees have fled Boko Haram.

An equal part of the equation of improved performance is the incentivization of action and improved partner force confidence. SOF, by their presence and advice, provide both. When Boko Haram was threatening to cross the Komudugu Yobe River and raid into southeastern Niger, the small Forces Armées Nigériennes (FAN) Garrison at Diffa valiantly repulsed several Boko Haram suicide bomber attacks. Multinational SOF, as part of the larger counter Boko Haram effort, assisted the FAN by advising on the defense of Diffa. These actions set the conditions for Chadian Forces to pass through and secure the Lake Chad border areas.

SOF presence forward greatly improves situational awareness and understanding. This dynamic takes two forms. First, the familiarity and awareness of being forward in contested areas provides critical situational awareness at the tactical through strategic levels. Knowing the atmospherics, who are the key players and what are the ways to influence them, what are the critical needs of the populace, to what degree have VEOs penetrated the area, and what are their principle tactics,

techniques, and procedures, are just some of the atmospherics that SOF may provide. All of these atmospherics provide critical context for strategic decision makers. Thus, the benefits of forward presence outweighs the risk of being engaged by the VEO.

Second, SOF provides situational awareness of the partner and their actions. By having SOF embed with partner forces, the U.S. can make better decisions on where to be, as well as where not to be if the PN does not live up to their end of the bargain. Principally, do PN forces protect the populace or exploit it; are they prone to human rights violations, are they focused on the VEO threat, or on political rivals; are the soldiers being properly paid and equipped by their chain of command; and where do they go when on an operation? SOF, by their presence, encourages proper action.

Managing threats so as to keep them below a threshold requiring overt western engagement requires a degree of military effectiveness not easily achieved from diverse and distributed multi-national forces. Left to their own devices, multi-national efforts to support and assist can easily become

stove-piped, uncoordinated, and counter-productive, even with the establishment of regional collaboration mechanisms. Military effectiveness necessitates synchronizing direction.

Finally, it should be noted that the time of initiation of enablement is in inverse proportion to the amount of support required to achieve operational and strategic effect. Stated differently, delay in action has an exponential effect on the amount of assets required and the increased risk of responding

after a crisis has already developed. This is not to say that SOF cannot generate immediate effect through enablement of a partner force. Nevertheless, the unknowns will be greater, the risk higher, options more limited, and the trial-and-error inherent in operations will play out under the intense media scrutiny that often accompanies a crisis. Conversely, approval of a persistent, small-footprint, low-visibility, and low-cost SOF presence forward after recognition of a threat, but prior to a crisis, increases options for action, informs our understanding of the problem, and supports our partner's efforts to secure themselves. All of which is achieved in an environment of much lower political risk as these activities are conducted prior to crisis. Additionally, if threats do rise to crisis levels, public confidence is increased when policymaker's decisions are informed by a nuanced situational understanding and have viable options available. This has been borne out in Africa, and can be replicated elsewhere.

### Arguments against the Model

The principle argument against embedding SOF with

**SOF PRESENCE  
FORWARD GREATLY  
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SITUATIONAL  
AWARENESS**

partner forces is the fear of the militarization of foreign policy. This concern is especially acute in Africa, as the majority of U.S. missions are quite small. Even a relatively small U.S. military contingent can dwarf the size of the country team. Yet, U.S. SOF efforts complement and support, not compete against, U.S. country team efforts.

When in country, SOF efforts provide critical situational awareness to the country team, as well as help to disrupt VEO activity. This buys time and space for U.S. development and governance initiatives. An example of this is the value the U.S. gains from our military relationship with the Cameroonian Rapid Response Brigade (known by their French acronym BIR), considered by many to be one of the best military units in the region. The U.S. has assisted the BIR since 2009. In turn, our situational awareness of Boko Haram has been greatly enhanced. Additionally, it is the trust and relationships built over time by SOF with the Cameroonian Armed Forces that facilitated the recent deployment of U.S. forces to conduct airborne ISR operations against Boko Haram.

The second argument is that SOF forward in contested security environments risks making the situation worse. The base assumption in this critique is that instability is a linear vector and that introduction of U.S. SOF will change the trend line negatively. Granted, this could be the case given the complexity of many contested situations. The inverse could also be true as there is an inherent risk in inaction. Approval of a low visibility, small footprint SOF presence forward buys time for slower evolving policy options as well as provides the situational awareness necessary to inform other policy deliberations.

Conversely, a lack of presence forward significantly degrades situational awareness as the threat continues to metastasize. This accrues political and physical risk to the U.S. Low information can inadvertently drive decisions based on concerns over risk, resulting in missed opportunities while costs for future interventions in the problem set continue to grow and become more unpalatable. Situational awareness is the key to sound policy decisions that effectively mitigate and balance risk given the complexity of the national security problems in the region.

Strategic upsets are a defining attribute of the modern security environment. Stability can dissolve quickly, and the ability to respond rapidly and appropriately will be more important than in the past for policy makers. SOF activities, given their small scope, enables refinement of options through relatively low-cost trial-and-error (e.g., are we positioned optimally, are we engaged with the correct partner force, are our partner's intentions counter to our own, etc.). More importantly, by engaging early, SOF may be able to assist the host nation to de-escalate or degrade a threat over time so as to contain it versus permitting it to regionalize.

Closely related to the fear of making a situation worse

is the fear of the death of an American soldier. This is less a concern for the individual well-being of discrete actors and more about whether media coverage of a killed SOF operator will catastrophically hamper or set back American foreign policy in a region. The raid to seize two of Mohamed Farrah Aidid's lieutenants in Mogadishu in early 1993 is often cited as example. A more appropriate example is the reaction to the death of MSG Joshua Wheeler in Iraq in 2015. His actions in support of the partner force he was enabling were widely lauded, but more relevantly, his death did not meaningfully change the trajectory of the public debate on countering the Islamic State.

The degree of risk of forward engagement, and the decision of whether or not to accept it, often directly correlates to a threat's degree of visibility within the American news cycle, its commensurate U.S. political sensitivity, or the fear that any action may exacerbate the already negative trajectory of the threat. Ironically, these are the very same compelling arguments for early engagement. For example, persistent SOF engagement in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, to include forward enablement over the last five years when North Africa was below the

national consciousness, allowed the United States to respond quickly to the growing regional Boko Haram threat after the Chibok School Girls kidnapping on 14 April 2014. Similarly, SOF enablement of the African Union has led to the removal, or arrest, of four of the top five International Criminal Court Lord's Resistance Army indictees.

The opposite is also true. With the deterioration of security in Libya, the United States withdrew its presence, to include SOF. This

lowered near-term risk, but has retarded the ability of the U.S. to maintain situational awareness and relationships with key personalities. If at some point the United States chooses to engage the growing VEO threat in Libya, then action may initially be sub-optimal as U.S. forces re-orient to the environment, vet partner forces, and build relationships and supporting infrastructure.

## Conclusion

Given the cost and inconclusiveness of the past ten years of war, U.S. policy makers seem more inclined to embrace options short of war to gain influence and achieve foreign policy goals. Often this will take the form of partner support. However, it does not necessitate that the pendulum swing back to traditional forms of engagement – that by themselves, may not be adequate for the demands for responsiveness and security in the modern age.

Given the 21<sup>st</sup> century security environment, traditional security cooperation efforts must be augmented by more proactive and direct advisory assistance efforts; similar to those

**NO OPERATION  
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CONDUCTED  
IN A VACUUM;  
CONTEXT IS KEY.**

# Indonesia's New Maritime Strategy

BY COLONEL TIMOTHY W. GILLASPIE, U.S. AIR FORCE

With the election of President Joko Widodo (best known as Jokowi), Indonesia elected its first President from outside the traditional power players in Indonesia. This election continues the string of successful democratic transitions of power in Indonesia. This archipelago nation contains 17,000 islands and 3 time zones. It has a population 240 million with 40 million living below the poverty line and a gross domestic product of \$1 Trillion. Indonesia is the world's third largest democracy and the world's largest Islamic majority country. The size and location of Indonesia make it a critical component of the security and economy of the Pacific region. Dr Rizal Sukma, Executive Director, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, outlined Indonesia's new view of the "Pacific-Indo" region. Indonesia sees itself in the central and traditional role of connecting the Pacific region with the Indian and Middle East. President Jokowi has articulated this concept as the "Indonesia Vision for Global Maritime Nexus". The vision provides the overall objective of improving Indonesian security and economy. Improving the security and economy of Indonesia will place Indonesia at the top of the middle powers of the world.

President Jokowi outlined his vision for the strategy in five pillars. The five pillars listed below, as articulated in his speech to the East Asia Summit and translated by Adelle Neary, provide his strategy.

1. A revival of Indonesia's maritime culture, recognizing the link between the country's archipelagic geography, identity, and livelihood;
2. Improved management of Indonesia's oceans and fisheries through the development of the country's fishing industry and building maritime "food sovereignty" and security;
3. Boosting Indonesia's maritime economy by improving the country's port infrastructure, shipping industry, and maritime tourism;
4. Maritime diplomacy that encourages Indonesia's partners to work together to eliminate conflict arising over illegal fishing, breaches of sovereignty, territorial disputes, piracy, and environmental concerns like marine pollution; and
5. Bolstering Indonesia's maritime defenses, both to support the country's maritime sovereignty and wealth, and to fulfill its role in maintaining safety of navigation and maritime security.

Each objective of this strategy can lay foundations for another objective and bolster each objective. Indonesian's new maritime strategy plays to its strengths but has some economic and security challenges to overcome for success. In orchestrating this maritime strategy, Indonesia uses internal and external persuasion, inducement, and coercion.

An analysis of this strategy looks at the linkages of the

objectives and the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy. It is possible for Indonesia to meet its objectives but it faces some challenges. In 1953, President Sukarno during the inauguration of the Institute of the Navy in Surabaya said, "We must work hard to become a nation of sailors once again. Yes..., a nation of sailors in the broadest sense. Not only as crew onboard ships...no! But as those who roam the oceans. A nation with merchant fleets, military armada, a nation with activities at sea far beyond the rhythms of the ocean waves..." Though this quote made 60 years ago articulated a vision aligned with the environment, Indonesia did not achieve the vision identified, highlighting the difficulty President Jokowi faces meeting his vision.

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Editor's Note: Colonel Gillaspie's thesis won the FAO Association writing award at the National War College. The author provided this abridged version to meet space requirements for the Journal. The full thesis, including all research notes, is available online at [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org). The Journal is pleased to bring you this outstanding scholarship.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are Colonel Gillaspie's and do not represent the views of the National War College, United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or United States Government.

## Conditions

Some of Indonesia's current opportunities and challenges are rooted in the 17,000 islands history. Historically, Indonesia has been a trading nation because of its geographic location on the trade lanes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Its importance to Europeans grew when the Dutch East India Trading Company began trade with the islands. The Dutch increased their presence and gained control over major ports to control spice trade using local rivalries to collapse existing monarchs. Other authors argue that as the Dutch gained control of Indonesian trade and forced the Indonesians out of trade, the local population changed their focus from the sea to the land they controlled. In the 1920s, an anti-colonialism movement developed a sense of national identity for the islands that would make-up Indonesia. This movement was made-up of multiple political beliefs, which was different from many of the other movements of the time that had a single belief such as communism.

The defeat of the Japanese in World War II heralded Indonesia's declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 and the era of Sukarno. His political philosophy of Pancasila ("Five Principles") became the center of the Indonesian constitution.

### These Five Principles were:

1. "Belief in the one and only god";
2. "Just and civilized humanity";
3. "The unity of Indonesia";
4. "Democracy guided by the inner wisdom of unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives";
5. "Social justice for all Indonesian people."

Sukarno ruled Indonesia for 21 years in part because he portrayed his style of rule as a traditional style. A coup attempt by the Indonesia Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia - PKI) in 1965 brought President Suharto to power. Suharto developed a strong government bureaucracy to manage and control the country. He used the bureaucracy to force a common Indonesian perspective on the population. The corruption of Suharto's government and specifically his family forced Suharto from power in May 1998 after 32 years in power. Suharto left a legacy of large secure government employment and government corruption, but he had also held Indonesia together and provided education and medical care for the majority of Indonesians. Since the fall of Suharto, there have been five elected presidents, each with a transition becoming more democratic and peaceful. President Jokowi is the most recent.

### Indonesian interests, threats and opportunities

Interests: Before his election President Jokowi outlined what he saw as Indonesia's interests in his political manifesto. He identified the following interests: 1) Protection of Indonesia's sovereignty and territory; 2) Highly competitive, productive nation; 3) Developed society based on the law; 4) Society with good character, embracing the Indonesian culture; 5) Free and active foreign policy and relationships; 6) a high quality, educated Indonesian population; and 7) a strong and independent maritime constituency. These interests fall into the classic division of interest of security, economy, value preservation and value projection. The new maritime strategy has objectives linked to these interests.

Threats: The Sunda Strait, Malacca Strait, and Lombok Strait are critical sea lines of communication. Indonesia perceives threats to these straits from a lack of resources to adequately protect them from piracy. Additionally, Indonesia perceives threats to its territorial waters and fishing grounds within its Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) from other nations. Protection of the fishing grounds is critical to the productivity of the nation's fishing fleet.

Transportation between islands is a necessity for an archipelago nation. Any threat to that transportation network is a major vulnerability. The lack of coast guard and naval capability creates a threat to the national interest of security. Multiple Indonesian political interests threaten the ability to implement the strategy and threaten each of the interests because of the inability of the government to reorganize and

take action to support the interests.

The corruption that exists within the government also threatens Indonesian interests. Corruption undermines government credibility with the population and prevents the reform required to meet the goals supporting the national interests. When discussing corruption, it is important to differentiate between corruption and political patronage. While political patronage can be a form of corruption, it is still very much a part of Indonesian politics and addressing it separately from other forms of corruption is necessary to prevent a failure of the current democratic process.

Opportunities: The three straits provide an opportunity to strengthen the economy of Indonesia. The straits handle approximately 30% of the global maritime traded goods. Indonesia's international relationships provide an opportunity to increase regional trade. President Jokowi sees an opportunity

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in Indonesia's maritime culture and the people of Indonesia. He sees opportunities in the economy of the nation. Finally, Indonesia sees an opportunity to play honest broker in diplomatic negotiations in the region especially for the South China Sea.

### Indonesian Goals (Ends)

With his new maritime strategy, President Jokowi has set the five pillars outlined above. These five pillars are designed to improve the situation of Indonesian's population by securing its borders and resources and improving its economic situation and supporting the national interests outlined above. The five pillars outline ends (goals) and ways but do not describe the means. Dividing the goals into political/diplomatic, economic, and military goals provides an outline for reviewing goals, which are interlinking and dependent on each other for a successful strategy.

There are two political/diplomatic goals: revival of Indonesia's maritime culture, and elimination of conflict with partners. The political goal intended to influence the internal public's embrace of the nation's archipelago characteristics is revival of maritime culture. These characteristics include trade, ocean transportation, care and respect for the ocean. The next political goal, intended for the external audience, is eliminate conflict. The conflicts identified are primarily international in nature. The economic goal is boosting maritime economy. The

military goals are to support the country's maritime sovereignty and wealth, and to maintain safety of navigation and maritime security. The final goal falls into both military and economic areas is improved management of Indonesia's oceans and fisheries.

### Indonesian Capabilities (Means)

As stated earlier, the five pillars of Indonesia's maritime strategy outline the goals and the ways, but do not highlight the means. Since the East Asia Summit speech that articulated the pillars, Indonesia has started to identify the means. The navy and coast guard dominate the military means of the strategy. The use of intelligence and surveillance capabilities, safety and ocean policing capabilities, and maritime combat capabilities are the more detailed military means that Indonesia plans to use in its strategy.

Indonesia plans to use multiple diplomatic and political tools to achieve its objectives. Indonesia plans to use diplomatic engagement in multilateral organizations, bilateral relationships, and Maritime diplomacy. For the purpose of this analysis, Maritime diplomacy is interaction between countries through maritime related tools such as port calls, fisheries, maritime

**PRESIDENT JOKOWI RECENTLY ENDED THE FUEL SUBSIDY, FREEING AT LEAST 7% OF HIS BUDGET OR APPROXIMATELY \$27 BILLION. THIS MONEY IS NOW SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES SUCH AS THE BUILDING OF 25 DAMS.**

shipping, and sea lines of communication. The Foreign Ministry has traditional diplomatic tools such as negotiations and engagements at its disposal. Indonesia plans to use engagement in these multilateral organizations such as ASEAN to achieve its goals.

Indonesia has financial tools to use in its strategy that include loans and grants. The government also has the ability to provide subsidies. Indonesia also has its own funds to invest in the strategy. A later discussion covers whether or not these funds are enough to support the strategy.

The informational means available to government to support the strategy are diverse. The government can use presidential communication in the form of speeches, meetings,

and President Jokowi's "blusukans" or walkabouts. Intelligence provides means to support security efforts and receives support from military means.

### Vulnerabilities

The vulnerability to security is the lack of funds to increase size of Navy and Air Force. The diplomatic tools are vulnerable to domestic politics. If domestic politics do not support the diplomatic efforts, the efforts may prove fruitless. Additionally, disagreement over boundaries can impact the bilateral relationships and weaken the ability of the diplomatic tools to support the strategy. Lack of infrastructure, education of population to support economic changes, bureaucracy for starting businesses, lack of improvement in economic well-being of a specific ethnic or religious portion of the population create vulnerabilities to the strategy. If the tools to support intelligence are not developed, intelligence gathering will suffer. Additionally, the use of Presidential communications is vulnerable to a failure in other areas. Actions must support Presidential communications; if they do not, the value of the informational tool is undercut.

### Strategic Concept (Ways)

Indonesia exhibits a complex understanding of the orchestration of the ways and means to achieve its objectives. Indonesia aligns diplomatic and political actions with the increase development and use of military actions to persuade and coerce countries to respect its borders. Additionally, aligned with the increased internal infrastructure development, anti-corruption efforts and bureaucracy reduction efforts, the Indonesian government has made diplomatic efforts to encourage foreign direct investment in infrastructure and informational efforts to highlight its efforts to cut bureaucracy, corruption, and instability.

Indonesia has placed a high priority on using public diplomacy to persuade other countries and private investors that the fight against corruption and reduction of bureaucracy makes the country a good investment. The use of economic tools include loans, grants, and subsidies to encourage and support investment. The use of government funds for direct investment in infrastructure projects to signal government dedication to the projects. The government also needs the support of outside investors to be successful so President Jokowi is trying to persuade outside investors with reduced bureaucracy for those investing in major infrastructure and supporting projects.

Indonesia, in accordance with international law, began sinking foreign vessels fishing illegally in Indonesian waters in order to induce other countries to stop fishing in Indonesian waters. The announcements of plans to create a Coast Guard and expand the size of the Navy lend credibility, internally and



externally, that Indonesia plans to change its focus and bolster its diplomatic efforts to secure its borders and play a larger role in the security of the world's major shipping lanes. According to the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Security, Indonesia will use the new Coast Guard to secure maritime borders, tackle illegal fishing, and human trafficking

Participation in military exercises with the U.S. and other countries further persuades these countries of the reliability of the Indonesian efforts.

Finally, sequencing to execute the strategy lacks formal articulation. The effort started equally on all fronts with efforts on-going for the coast guard, military, infrastructure, business development, and diplomatic. The effort requires more detailed sequencing to ensure that the resources are in place for each effort. For example, the infrastructure must arrive before for new coast guard vessels arrive at the ports or the coast guard will have no place to park the vessels. Another example is infrastructure improvements must occur before large-scale pushes for new businesses requiring infrastructure are made. If businesses do not see progress on infrastructure, they will not invest until the infrastructure is available.

### Assessment Options

A slowing economy impacts Indonesia's ability to support its internal investments. However, President Jokowi recently ended the fuel subsidy, freeing at least 7% of his budget or approximately \$27 billion. This money is now supporting productive activities such as the building of 25 dams. The challenge remains that obtaining additional foreign direct investment into infrastructure requires an opportunity for private companies to make a profit. Indonesia must complete the changes to bureaucracy and corruption to dramatically increase the investment.

Infrastructure investors must also see opportunities beyond the infrastructure to other long-term opportunities. For example, a company willing to invest in a port must see opportunity to make money from the port so countries or business must use the port. Additionally, the scope and size of Indonesia requires a dramatic increase in the funding of the Navy and Coast Guard to truly secure Indonesia's EEZ. The risk to this large increase in military spending is that other countries in the region may feel threatened. If they feel threatened, Indonesia may disrupt its current diplomatic efforts to remain the honest broker of conflicts in the region.

The focus on maritime infrastructure but also providing for land-based infrastructure ensures good alignment in the orchestration of the strategy. The information campaign, economic incentives, security improvements, and diplomatic efforts support this focus. This push has priority over other business development but does not ignore the requirement to develop economic opportunities that will take advantages of the improvements in the infrastructure. The breadth of the strategy across Indonesia attempts to address domestic politics.

### Possible Costs

The largest costs are financial. The challenge for funding

new infrastructure and enhanced security is the requirement for resources, which depend on unguaranteed economic growth. Without economic growth and increased funding, the changes in security and infrastructure are difficult to make. If Indonesia is able to improve market access, unprepared local business may face decisive competition. The increased competition could cause local businesses to fold under the competition.

The main non-financial possible cost, which is also a risk, is the loss of status in the region as the honest broker and mediator with China. The loss of this role could remove from the region a country trusted by all sides to mediate disputes. Additionally, it could put Indonesia firmly against increasing Chinese actions in the South China Sea.

### Possible Risks

An Indonesia more forcefully enforcing its territorial integrity, especially in relation to its fisheries, could bring it into conflict with other countries in the region. If other countries feel threatened, it could cost Indonesia its role as the honest broker in the region. The loss of this status could raise tensions with China, as ASEAN countries do not see a country that can deal with China as the honest broker.

A large risk to the strategy is obtaining private funding for infrastructure development. This risk manifests itself in several forms. Inability to develop new infrastructure reduces the ability to develop other businesses reliant on the infrastructure or improve existing businesses such as fishing. The lack of private funding could increase pressures on the Indonesian government through domestic politics.

If the Indonesia Army fights the funding changes, a risk presents itself to the strategy's swing to the Navy and Air Force. Additionally, the strategy is at risk if the budget increases are not large enough, or if reduced Army funding and the subsequent increase to the Navy and Air Force funding put the government budget under pressure.

President Jokowi requested that foreign companies investing in Indonesia increase the portion of employees that are Indonesia. The lack of a well-educated work force or a work force not educated in the most technical industries challenges the President's request. In 2014, the Minister of Defense, Professor Ir. Purnomo Yusgiantoro, identified three basic requirements that Indonesia had to meet to have a world class Navy and attain middle power status by 2030. The first basic requirement was the development of human resources that "can master maritime technology and understand the extent of sea power and supported by logistics sustainability-oriented maritime industries."

As Indonesia attempts to reinvigorate its maritime status, the requirement for a population that not only believes in Indonesia's future but also has the skills to develop that future will prove critical. The ability of the Indonesian education system to produce enough individuals to build the new Indonesian maritime capabilities is an area that creates risk for the entire strategy. The government has indicated it will attempt to improve education but it is questionable if it can improve education fast enough to meet public expectations of progress

on the development projects. The education system must retrain teachers and change the culture of the system to meet the objectives. The education system thus puts the strategy at risk. In the short term, educational shortfalls are overcome by bringing outside experts, but for the long term Indonesia must develop indigenous talent to meet the objectives.

The other two requirements the Minister identified were sea control and deterrence power supported by the economy and national defense industries. These requirements are put at risk if the education and training of the country cannot develop and sustain the economy and industries.

Increased access could result in new competition for local businesses, which could create new efforts at economic nationalism. Economic nationalism could result in protectionist measures that reduce the amount of foreign investment that Indonesia has tried so hard to encourage.

Finally, the two largest risks to the strategy are an inability to reform bureaucracy and reduce corruption. Both of these efforts are required to the build confidence of foreign investors to reduce the risks of doing business in Indonesia. The World Bank currently ranks Indonesia 114 out of 189 countries on its scale of ease of doing business. If the efforts to reduce bureaucracy and corruption do not meet the expectations of investors, their lack of investment threatens the strategy.

### Conclusion

President Jokowi has identified a robust strategy. Indonesia must address its limitations in order to achieve the goals identified in the strategy. The largest issues to overcome are corruption and bureaucracy. The government must also address the sequencing of the strategy to ensure it accomplishes objectives in the best order for success. President Jokowi has proven adept in his management of Jakarta in tackling both. He has the support of a large portion of the population and has taken immediate actions toward all five objectives. Indonesia's success at achieving the objectives depends on maintaining forward momentum on the objectives and continuing to address the limiting factors. If they can make progress toward the objectives, they will support the national interests and move Indonesia to the top of the middle powers.

### About the Author:

Colonel Gillaspie is the Vice Commander, 82nd Training Wing, Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. He assists and advises the commander responsible for the training of more than 60,000 Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps students annually at Sheppard Air Force Base and also through the wing's field training detachments located throughout the world. He has had 11 duty assignments and filled multiple positions at various levels within the U.S. Air Force and Joint communities.



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## BOOK REVIEW

# Game Changers: Going Local to Defeat Violent Extremists

AUTHOR: D. SCOTT MANN, LTC US ARMY (RETIRED), SPECIAL FORCES  
REVIEWER: DAN FARSON, CAPTAIN, U.S. NAVY (RETIRED)

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Game Changers seems destined to become a textbook on the use of military and civilian advisors in countering violent extremism. It is suitable, in whole or through use of excerpts, for strategic, operational, and tactical levels of education and training for military, civilian government, law enforcement, and some business leaders. It is written in a clear, accessible style with an excellent number of footnotes and a good bibliography. There are concise summaries at the end of each chapter and main section.

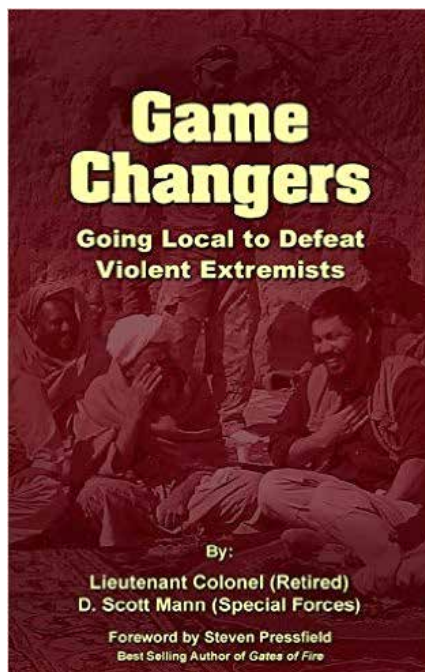
The book is organized in three main sections: Defining the Game; Changing the Game; and then three real-world case studies. The Foreword contains valuable insights related to the main sections, and should not be ignored. Most of the text describes methods and lessons learned from the military in the recent conflict in Afghanistan. Mentions of Southeast Asia, South America, Iraq, and Syria are included in a way that enriches the author's points. He names specific individuals who had a part in achieving successes, while those whose decisions resulted in setbacks are loosely identified by position. This is a good technique which gives the book a positive tone.

In Defining the Game, Mann makes clear up front that Game Changers is focused on defeating violent Islamic extremists, who he estimates make up the majority of violent extremists with global reach. He goes on to note applicability of the methods he advocates to other situations, including defeat of transnational crime groups, and to the success of commercial operations in lightly governed areas. He lay out clearly a definition for defeat for the violent extremists: render them irrelevant in the societies they depend upon for safe haven.

The author lists several ways previous attempts at the game have failed, including poor transmission or lack of an overall Western forces narrative, desire for immediate impact, and focusing security and security assistance through inept central governments that lack local legitimacy. The author describes hard-won victories that have been thrown away, primarily through the actions of strategic decision-makers.

Changing the Game involves advisors "getting surrounded" by the communities in which they will be embedded for a long time, and conducting Village Stabilization Operations (VSO). The key goal is to restore the ability of traditional local leaders to resolve local grievances and provide local security. The advisor should include economic development and connecting the re-empowered local leaders to a responsive central government. Other important keys to success include collaborative pre-deployment training of all U.S. actors who will be in theater during a given period of time, 24 hours a day presence in the village to be stabilized, dependence upon the village for support of the advisory team, and development of local security forces answerable to local leaders. Conventional Western forces must be available to deal with clear threats. Finally it is imperative to have a responsive chain of command in which senior U.S. leaders take a large role in selling the VSO narrative to host nation central government. Mann notes firmly

that it is not possible to kill one's way to victory, Mann's analysis of the effect of drone strikes when disconnected from VSO operations on the ground is not to be missed. Short version: Killing the wrong people, even when done with greatly reduced footprint and resources compared to conventional forces, still results in angering the local population.



The author covers in great length the importance of crafting and transmitting the Western narrative in this section. Mann goes so far as to say, relative to countering violent extremism, that conducting no intervention is the best plan when no narrative is set.

The third main section of the book presents three real-world situations. First and most extensively covered are recommendations for actions to take now in countering violent extremism in Afghanistan, Iraq, and to deal with ISIS. The second case deals with an ongoing commercial situation in Mozambique, and the last covers law enforcement challenges in Salinas, California. These are not feel-good, everything turns out beautifully in the end types of stories. Failures and the author's analysis of them are liberally sprinkled in among successes.

Mann clearly describes well the conflict that 'going local' creates with the central governments of the areas under discussion, and does a good job of explaining various ways this has been handled in real life situations. He also addresses the 'zero option' of total withdrawal from these difficult areas, and assigns a near-zero probability that this would lead to any decline in the export of violent extremism from the safe havens thus made available.

In the Epilogue, it's clear that Scott Mann, although no longer on active duty, is still in the game. He uses these pages to make the reader aware of the Stability Institute, which he founded and leads as chief executive. He's using this platform to continue supporting collaboration among all the 'resilient actors,' that is, those working to make violent extremists irrelevant in the societies they depend upon for safe haven. Read about these efforts at [www.stabilityinstitute.com](http://www.stabilityinstitute.com). I did, and joined up.

#### About the reviewer:

Captain (retired) Dan Farson is a contractor in northern Virginia. He served as Air Attaché and Deputy Defense Attaché in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 2011-2012. He also served as Defense Attaché in Tripoli, Libya for five months from October 2010 until closure of the embassy in February 2011. He served on the NATO International Military Staff, Cooperation and Regional Security branch from August 2005 to October 2008, on the staff of the USS Constellation carrier battle group commander from 2000 through 2002, and in various units of the U.S. Submarine Force from 1981 through 2000.



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## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

# FAO Association Joins AUSA to Sponsor Security Conference

The Foreign Area Officers Association joined with the Liberty Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA) in New York City to hold a joint conference on national security issues. The conference was held at historic Fort Hamilton on 23 June 2016. Fort Hamilton sits at the foot of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge on the Brooklyn side and served as a coastal defense garrison from 1825 until 1948. It was notably upgraded in 1840 by engineer Captain Robert E. Lee, where he served as Chief Engineer until 1846.

The conference focused on national security issues, with emphasis that ISIS and al-Qaeda are active threats to the US. A recurring theme was that Islamic terrorism has the potential and ability to attack inside the U.S. and that our nation should be more aggressive in defending our way of life. Speakers included Kent Clizbe, a retired CIA officer; George C. Venizselos, former Assistant Director of the New York City FBI office; Paul De Souza, founder and president of Cyber Security Forum Initiative; and Detective Sergeant Douglas Kaczor, who made an excellent presentation on terrorism.

The conference was organized by two FAO Association members: Edward Andron in New York, and Miklos Kiss in the DC area. Mr. Kiss traveled to New York to attend the conference.

An estimated 60 persons attended the event, mostly retired military officers and security officers from private firms in the New York area.

Co-organizer and FAO Association member Edward Andron gave the opening address to the gathering, and has given permission to include his remarks here, slightly edited in the interest of space. Thank you, Eddie, for your work in putting this event together.

**T**hank you all for joining us here tonight. As we gather here this evening, our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and families of those who perished at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. Like the San Bernardino attack in California, the attack on Pulse was an attack on all of us -- no less than the World Trade Center attacks.

“With a keen, analytical, and realistic approach to these horrific and tragic events, democracies must acknowledge that international terrorism is a “collective problem,” as we have seen in England, Paris, and Brussels. Everything else follows from this. When one nation is under attack, the rest must understand that democracy itself is under attack, and western, civilized democratic nations must work together in a collaborative effort to defend against terrorist threats. Through this process we ask ourselves: how do we work together to protect New York City from ISIS and other Islamic terrorist group inspired attacks?

“Counterterrorism cannot be conducted in a vacuum; it takes a vast coordinated effort, industry partners, and strategic collaboration working in concert with one another toward the same goal. Between federal and state government, our military, the intelligence community, local law enforcement, and information sharing through strategic partnerships with private industry, all of which collectively work to protect our critical infrastructure and key resources, we can mitigate these threats.

“It is also worth noting that we, as citizens, also represent one of our greatest resources in countering the threat of terrorism. By educating the public and encouraging people to report suspicious activity, we can leverage our tremendous numbers to reach more broadly and deeply into all of our communities. When every American is looking out for one another, it makes it less likely for terrorist groups to operate undetected. We really need to build that sense of cohesiveness as a society again.

“As you may know, the AUSA -- Association of the U.S. Army is a private nonprofit organization that acts as the political arm and advisory group for the U.S. Army, and which develops programs and activities that provide community support for the U.S. Army through individual and corporate members. Founded in 1950, it has 125 Chapters worldwide and our mission is threefold: first, being the voice of all components of Americas Army; second, fostering support of the Army’s role in National Security; and third, providing professional education and information programs. Chapters serve as liaisons between the Army and local civilian communities. They also help educate the public about the need for a strong national defense and the Army.

In addition, Chapters are involved in a variety of programs to help support deployed and mobilized soldiers and their families and much, much more.

“As a member of the Executive Committee of the AUSA NY Chapter, I envisioned a strategic partnership by combining our strengths with those of the Foreign Area Officers Association (FAOA) of which I am also a member, with a stellar panel of experts across the spectrum of the military communities. The FAOA is a nonprofit professional group bringing together thought leadership in

the fields of intelligence, security cooperation, foreign military sales, peacekeeping, diplomacy and geopolitical advisory expertise for the U.S. DoD, US Government, stakeholders, and allied governments. Foreign Area officers typically serve in the Department of State, Department of Defense, the several military organizations, and the Defense Intelligence Agency as military attaches, and embedded within military intelligence and political military planners on the Joint staff.

“Our moderator tonight, Captain Frederick Fife of the New Jersey State Police and former FBI Special Agent, will coordinate a panel discussion with our equally distinguished panelists covering a wide spectrum of their subject matter areas of expertise -- from academia to cyber warfare, and from our military and intelligence communities to our federal and state law enforcement agencies. Each and every one of our panelists and moderator has invaluable and specialized expertise acquired through their collective wisdom, experience, and service to our nation.

“We look forward to hearing their perspectives and diverse experiences, as well as how they worked alongside different agencies that share similar missions, and how we must continue to work together in protecting our national security by defining the problem, identifying sources, gathering information and processing, and evaluating that information, analyzing and recommending actions for political and military planners, and then finally by measuring the efficacy of the intel based on analytical methods and techniques...because good intelligence forms the basis of sound policy making.

“We are at war and must plan and direct! As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where

he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy!” Also, as President Reagan once said, “I don’t think any of us should forget that the security of America is our highest responsibility.”

“Now is the time to decide. Now is the time to act. Where do you stand in defeating terrorism?”

“We are at war and must collect, process, and collate!

“There are those that have the power but do not care, and there are those that care, but do not have the power!

“We are at war and must analyze, disseminate, and reevaluate Intel!

“In closing, we will not be remembered by what we had when we are gone but by what we gave to protect our great nation. If each one of us reaches one, we can exponentially turn our mission, commitment, and our duty as US Citizens to protecting our nation into a force multiplier. Because we are at war and must defeat ISIS and all other forms of terrorism, their splinter groups, and subgroups completely and permanently!

“Through our shared vision, strength of leadership, and undivided commitment to our cause and strategic collaboration, there is nothing we cannot accomplish together in fighting..... and defeating terrorism!

“Thank you and GOD BLESS AMERICA!”

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(cognitive or geographical) for ISIL, JN, and similar groups. Additionally, in building the foundation for an Arab state, the ideas of nationalism, Nasserism, or even Ba’athism should not be dismissed based solely on excesses and abuse of power by the autocratic regimes of Assad and Hussein. Similarly, the brutality of ISIL and JN should not be extrapolated into a representation of all Islam. Arab nationalism has immense power as a hegemonic identity that can provide an alternative to the jihadist narrative. A key to reaching a viable resolution of the conflict is acceptance of the validity of these alternatives.

This is an intricate and complex problem that requires a sophisticated solution, not merely kinetic strikes. Alexander the Great, an exceptional military and strategic leader, was never able to unravel the problem of the Gordian knot. Lacking patience for a complex problem with a lengthy solution, Alexander “solved” it using brute force. He made the problem go away, but did not truly unravel it. Truly solving the problem of ISIL in Syria will require patience and sophistication, not a simple application of force.

### About the Author

Colonel Bill Mengel is Chief of Intelligence Requirements at the U.S. Special Operations Command. Commissioned as an Armor Officer after graduating from the US Military Academy at West Point, he served in command and staff positions in infantry and armor units from platoon to battalion level with deployments to Kuwait and Bosnia. He became a Special Forces officer in 1997 and served multiple deployments to the Balkans and the Middle East. After service as a professor at West Point he served on the Joint Staff as Chief of the Special Operations/Counterterrorism, J2 and then served as Director of Intelligence at Special Operations Command Pacific. He holds a M.A. and Ph.D. from Princeton University, a Master of Science from the National Intelligence University, and a Master of Arts from the Naval War College. He received the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Society Award of Excellence in 2000.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

# Venice to Dakar

## How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Operations Protect Directorate

BY COLONEL SCOTT H. MORGAN, U.S. ARMY

My family and I were recently presented with a once-in-a-lifetime travel opportunity. Having received orders to assume responsibilities as the SDO/DATT in Dakar, Senegal, we needed to conduct a PCS move from U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) in Vicenza, Italy to the celebrated gateway of West Africa. Knowing that we would probably never have a chance like this again, Kendra and I decided to take our two boys, Evan and Tristan, on a 17-day road trip from Venice to Dakar.

We began preparing for the trip six weeks prior to our mid-June departure date, starting with a deliberate effort to service and upgrade our vehicle, a 2012 Dodge Journey, for a 3,500-mile drive through eight countries. In addition to replacing all four tires and conducting scheduled maintenance, we purchased a roof container and packed it to capacity with everything we might need for contingencies.

This included two additional tires, a few quarts of oil, radiator coolant, wiper fluid, a jug of water, and a spare fuel can. We also replaced the Dodge's transmission with a new one that had to be shipped from the United States. Thankfully, this last bit of work was under warranty. So aside from some nail-biting as we waited for the transmission to arrive, the physical preparations for our trip were relatively straightforward.

At the same time, my wife and I worked for six weeks to plan our route and the stops along the way. For Kendra, that meant surfing various travel blogs for stopover locations and fun family attractions. She has a knack for finding outstanding bed-and-breakfasts in even the most remote parts of the world. And for my part, that meant ensuring we had a safe travel route mapped out with contingency stopover points in case of unscheduled delays. This was especially important when planning the more remote parts of the trip through the Sahara Desert. Predictably, it also took some effort to coordinate country clearance approvals through North Africa, which I will elaborate upon a bit later. Finally, with all preparations and planning completed, we loaded up the back of our car with everything we needed for the voyage and departed Vicenza the day after our boys' school let out for summer vacation.

Our travel plan included seven long days of driving, mixed

with a variety of stops along the way. We started with visits to the Venice lagoon islands of Murano and Burano, where we saw glass blowers making the much-celebrated Murano glass and enjoyed a couple of relaxed dinners with our friend, LTC Jesse Garcia, who had worked with me at USARAF but braved a long daily commute by train so that he could live in historic Venice. Next, we spent our first real day of the road trip driving to Nice, where we relaxed at the beach and enjoyed the hospitality of an old friend who was formerly my French professor. A couple of days later, we were in Barcelona and visited the breathtaking Sagrada Familia Cathedral, Gaudi's architectural masterpiece. Then it was off to Gibraltar to experience a fascinating relic of the British Empire and conduct some final preparations before taking the ferry to North Africa.

We were staying in the comfortable but somewhat dated Bristol Hotel and were looking forward to a day of climbing "The Rock" to tour the Gibraltar Caverns (the historic fortifications) and see the famous Gibraltar "apes," which are actually very mischievous Macaques known for stealing food from the backpacks of unsuspecting tourists. As this was an English-speaking corner of the globe, I decided to turn on BBC World News before we went out for breakfast. Sadly, the news wasn't good. A single terrorist had killed dozens of holiday beachgoers in Tunisia. This was only one of several high-profile terrorist attacks during the most recent Ramadan season in locations as far ranging as Baghdad and Chattanooga. But given our itinerary, while I was quite certain that we were in no danger, I also recognized the need to send a message to our Operations Protect folks at USARAF, who keep close tabs on all U.S. Army travelers to the continent.

Prior to planning our adventure, I will admit to thinking of our Operations Protect Directorate in much the same way as I thought of my own parents; very well intentioned and prone to over-protectiveness, but unable to really be of much assistance. Having worked with our force protection planners to prepare for this trip, I will admit to having significantly underestimated their contribution. Not only was our force protection planning and support process useful, it was absolutely essential to ensuring that my family and I had a safe and relatively

uneventful voyage in terms of security. By approaching our trip from a healthy optic of risk mitigation and detailed planning, we were able to gain useful support from a number of stakeholders, both at the headquarters level and on the ground in North Africa.

To begin with, USARAF was tracking our progress continually. So in case of emergency, we could have called for assistance and been easily located on short notice. Likewise, the U.S. Defense Attaché Offices (USDAO) in Morocco and Mauritania provided us with direct support during our transit. This included a diplomatic escort with a second vehicle driven by Lieutenant Colonel Jesse Moore and Commander Mike Meydenbauer during our three-day transit of the Western Sahara, as well as the gracious hospitality of Lieutenant Colonel Clem Ketchum, who hosted us at his home in Nouakchott, Mauritania for two nights as we rested up and prepared for the final leg of our voyage to Dakar. Taken together with the additional tires, fuel cans, and other items we had packed for trip, it's fair to say that our risk mitigation measures for this family vacation were truly exceptional.

That's not to say that the process of navigating the USARAF Theater Information Management System (TIMS) and APACS wasn't cumbersome. In fact, it was a bureaucratic pain in the backside that required every bit of four weeks of processing and repeated E-mail correspondence to navigate. This is exacerbated by the tyranny of distance and the lack of interoperability between various databases. It was only because of the patience and assistance that I received from the team of APACS theater clearance specialists at U.S. African Command (AFRICOM) that I was able to fully line up my theater entry and country clearance approvals at all. I even went to the extreme of putting together a detailed PowerPoint presentation for the Africa part of our voyage for the USARAF personnel recovery team, which was a first for me in planning a family vacation. But at the end of the day, my family had not only a solid plan for safely transiting the Sahara Desert, but also we had a great deal of support prepared to help us along the way.

The reward for all of these preparations was a travel adventure along the North African coastline that was memorable for all of the right reasons. We started with an overnight stop in the city of Tangier, a cultural crossroads between Europe and North Africa. We continued south along the coast with an overnight stop in the picturesque fishing village of Essaouira. At this point, we began to see camels, shop in the souks, and stuff ourselves after sunset on fantastic Moroccan dishes prepared in tajines.

Everywhere in Morocco the locals were friendly, open, and hospitable. And I can't say how many times we heard people say, "Don't worry, please relax and enjoy your stay here. We're so happy to have visitors in Morocco; this is not Tunisia."

As we continued south to the kite surfing resorts of Agadir and then on to a Club Mistral ecotourism lodge in Dakhla, there were fewer and fewer foreign-registered cars on the road. In fact, there were fewer and fewer cars period. Aided by Jesse and Mike, who were running point for us, we successfully navigated

an increasing number of Moroccan "Gendarmerie Royale" security checkpoints. The Moroccan officers were always very helpful and polite, but clearly unaccustomed to seeing families transit the Sahara.

At one such checkpoint, an officer asked me about Kendra with a somewhat perplexed look on his face, and it was clear from his expression that he had not even noticed Evan and Tristan in the back seat behind our tinted windows.

"Sir, I see from your diplomatic note that you are traveling to Senegal to take up a new assignment, but the lady with you, does she work for you?"

Not wanting to end up on Kendra's naughty list, I was quick to disabuse him of this notion, "No, sir, we are married and traveling as a family. She doesn't work for me. I work for her. And you can see that our children are in the back."

As I rolled down our back windows, a look of recognition came across his face and his demeanor immediately warmed, "Oh, I'm sorry, now I understand. This is very good. Have a great day and a very safe trip. I will call ahead so that the next checkpoint knows to expect to see you." And with that, we were on our way. He was true to his word, because the Gendarmes at the next checkpoint gave us a warm greeting and a smiling, "Bonjour, les enfants," for the boys.

At about this point in our voyage, it occurred to me that we were having an unintended positive impact on the people we were meeting along the way. Continued news reports from Tunisia were noting a massive evacuation of European tourists and warnings of the potential for further attacks. The terrible acts of one man were inspiring a climate of fear that cost Tunisia hundreds of millions of euros in lost tourist revenue for 2015. That's a staggeringly disproportionate impact. And the effects weren't limited to one country. Morocco, as a nearby destination in the Maghreb, was experiencing a noticeable slump that went far beyond what one would expect due to the Ramadan season. In a small way, our family vacation served as a counter-balance. By taking a measured and rational approach, we were showing that acts of terrorism would not prevent westerners from engaging with local communities in North Africa.

Would we have undertaken our trip without the tremendous support and assistance we received from our Operations Protect Directorate and the USDAO missions along the way? Perhaps not, especially considering that two children were part of the equation. And that's what makes this such a great example of what our military, and especially our corps of regional specialists can do in terms of advancing our interests through local interaction.

We have a variety of force protection tools at our disposal designed primarily to mitigate risk for operational forces, training missions, and joint military exercises conducted throughout the African region. By widening our optic, Foreign Area Officers can and should continue to use these tools for broader purposes, to ensure continued access not just for family

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# Strange Bedfellows in Afghanistan: New Prospects for a Negotiated Settlement with the Taliban

BY COMMANDER TODD GLIDDEN, U.S. NAVY;  
MAJOR SHAWN PATTON, U.S. ARMY; AND  
MAJOR NATHAN STACKHOUSE, U.S. AIR FORCE

The Afghan Taliban is at a crossroads. For decades the insurgent organization has benefited from a toxic brew of Pakistani patronage, ethnic rivalry, and foreign fighter support. These factors have generated a perpetual cycle of violent instability in Afghanistan and dampened the prospects for a viable national unity government. U.S. policy has oscillated between surges, troop drawdowns, and moving timelines. With the foothold established by the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province (IS-KP), however, it appears US policymakers are actively reconsidering previous plans for complete troop withdrawal and are establishing the foundation for a long-term military presence in the Central Asian country. Such an arrangement is essential if coalition forces, led by the United States, are to preserve the gains made over the past fifteen years of conflict and position the Afghan government for successful negotiated settlement with the Taliban. There are reasons for doubt and skepticism, yet the changing security environment pressures the Taliban in new and possibly decisive ways, while incentivizing regional powers' commitment to Afghanistan's unified future. Diplomats are likely to discover a more permissive regional setting to explore lasting peace proposals, yet these possibilities will be stillborn without U.S. security guarantees keeping centrifugal tendencies at bay. In summary, we contend a long-term U.S. military commitment to Afghanistan is the key prerequisite for leveraging this unique diplomatic opportunity for peace created through the emergence of the Islamic State, Taliban fragmentation, and changing regional dynamics.

## Political Context

Peace in Afghanistan is predicated on ending the Taliban insurgency, but achieving this outcome has eluded policymakers and diplomats alike since the end of major combat operations. The 2014 presidential election demonstrated Afghanistan's capacity for peaceful democratic transition, but the promise of responsive political institutions has largely failed to materialize despite the establishment of a national unity government between leaders from the two largest ethnic groups. President Ashraf Ghani has made reconciliation with the Taliban the *raison d'être* of his administration and recognizes the wider

patterns of instability that have kept the Central Asian country perpetually unstable. To an extent greater than his predecessor, Ghani focuses on the regional dynamics behind the ongoing insurgency and spends much of his political capital on diplomatic overtures to outside powers with stakes in Afghanistan's future. The United States and international donors underwrite the military and financial costs for keeping the nation afloat, yet long-term military commitment remains elusive and subject to

ever-changing security conditions. The uncertainty surrounding the status of U.S. forces in particular has generated anxiety in Kabul as district and provincial power brokers throughout the country consider placing their bets on a fragile, delicately-crafted ethnic balance rather than resort to the type of tribal politics that have dominated the Afghan political scene.

## Insurgent Context

Despite some spectacular tactical successes during the 2015 fighting season -- temporarily overrunning Kunduz, threatening government positions in Kandahar and Helmand, and high-profile bombings in Kabul -- the Taliban and its allies may be in a far more weakened position than previously assessed. Spawned by a leadership succession crisis following the announcement of former Taliban leader Mullah Omar's death, at least two major factions and several smaller ones are vying for the reins of power. In an organization that prizes hierarchical authority above all else, the contestants, ranging from the old anti-Soviet mujahedin to young militants challenging the status quo, threaten to unravel the Taliban's impressive solidarity over the past two decades.

The Taliban's opacity in decision making is legendary, and it is uncertain how the internal turmoil will be resolved. For over two years, the death of former leader Mullah Omar was kept secret, not just from outsiders but also within the organization. Apparently Akhtar Mohammad Mansour has assumed the title and position as the next *ameer*, yet his hold on power may be tenuous. It is reasonable to infer the Taliban may not be the cohesive entity it is often assumed to be if it fears mass defection over succession. Its willingness to actively deceive fellow adherents for a protracted period of time may betray an inherent structural brittleness. Overall, it remains to be

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Editor's note: In the interest of space, this team thesis is published here without research notes. To read the full thesis, including research material, click on this link to our webpage: [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org).

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seen whether Mansour will be able to continue the practice of speaking and acting on behalf of a unified insurgency or if it will fracture along new geographic and ideological lines.

The situation is further complicated with the addition of Islamic State militants operating out of the eastern province of Nangahar. Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) threatens the Taliban in ways foreign military forces cannot. Though still in the nascent stages of development -- estimates put IS-KP number somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters -- the terrorist organization creates competition for jihadist loyalties within Afghanistan. The fact that many of its members are former Taliban who have switched allegiances underscores the momentum of Al Qaeda's chief rival.

Now that the United States is reconsidering its force commitment beyond 2016, there is little chance the Taliban can achieve its main objective of reestablishing the pre-9/11 emirate if the Afghan government's main patron remains in place for decades to come. The Taliban will continue to make headlines and push Afghan security forces to the limits but will be hindered in taking down the Kabul regime. If we assume US-Afghan forces cannot totally pacify the Taliban, we also assert an enduring presence helps define the insurgents' calculations and prospects for unambiguous military victory. A diplomatic consensus is coalescing around the notion that military victory against the Taliban is unattainable. Barzegar writes: "The main challenge of the continuation of the war in Afghanistan is the illusion of this idea of victory against extremist groups such as the Taliban. Such conditions give shallow hope to the Afghan people and raise the expectations of the international community that the Taliban can be eliminated from the Afghan political scene, which is a far cry from the political-security realities on the ground." Farrell and Semple ask, "If the Afghan government could not defeat the Taliban with the full support of ISAF, what chance would the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) have operating on their own? The answer, of course, is none."

Regarding premature troop withdrawal, one scholar's insight on Iraq is also germane to Afghanistan: "It is reasonable to expect that the insurgents will estimate that their chances of achieving victory have improved, making them less likely to agree to a settlement; at the very least, they will demand more favorable (to them) terms in any settlement agreement that can be brokered."

US intelligence, aviation, counterterrorism and logistics capabilities compensate for inherent deficiencies in Afghan security forces and check Taliban ambitions. These force multipliers provide the essential scaffolding for the Afghan government to construct lasting peace and security with its neighbors. US counterinsurgency efforts during the past fifteen years have positioned Afghanistan for success, but these gains are fragile and reversible. In a recent RAND report, Afghanistan actually scores well when compared to other counterinsurgencies over the past six decades, but it has more liabilities and inherent tensions than any other winner. The RAND authors point to the dearth of commitment and motivation within the Afghan security forces as especially problematic and

"has become even more worrisome in light of the partial collapse of Iraqi security forces in the face of the Islamic State threat." With sustained American effort to build our partner's capacity, however, Afghans will be better equipped to manage these challenges, deter encroachments upon their sovereignty, and contribute to Central Asian stability.

### Regional Context

Iran's interests in Afghanistan mostly overlap with those of the United States, but they have been overshadowed by geostrategic competition originating in the 1979 revolution and exacerbated by the 2003 Iraq invasion when Iran was numbered among the "Axis of Evil." These interests include maintaining Afghanistan's independence from outside provocateurs and supporting economic priorities such as the expansion of regional hydrocarbon infrastructure. Historically opposed to the Taliban, Iran views Afghan instability through the lens of terrorism, drug proliferation, and cross-border migration.

While many analysts rightly identify improved relations with Pakistan as essential, Tehran's influence may be the most overlooked component for any lasting peace and its objectives are more straightforward than Islamabad's. The Shiite neighbor leverages significant soft power resources in Afghanistan. Persian language and culture, trade, and infrastructure development are the primary means whereby Iran seeks to extend influence. These efforts have paid dividends, especially in the western provinces. Iran offers succor to Afghanistan's minority Shiite community, the Hazaras, thus favoring pluralistic government to ensure a modicum of protection to this historically disenfranchised community. Iranian leaders prefer Afghanistan to resist long-term security cooperation with the United States, yet they may be willing to support the national unity government -- provided it accommodates Iran's interests.

While Iran systematically employs proxy war tactics on its western flank, it sees stability as the best way to advance its interests in the east. In a broader sense, however, Iran and Saudi Arabia are embroiled in a far-reaching contest over supremacy in the Islamic world. The Shia-Sunni divide has exploded in Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq and Syria, leaving a vast security vacuum in its wake. How, or whether, Islamic sectarian violence spreads to Afghanistan remains an open question, and it is compounded by the ancient disputes between Arabs and Persians. Several recent attacks and kidnappings across the country suggest Hazaras are being targeted, and the Ghani government is attempting to prevent the Taliban and its allies from exploiting this vulnerability threatening the unity government's tenuous ethnic-religious balance. If the Saudi kingdom stokes the flames and begins supporting anti-Shiite recrimination in Afghanistan, violence will likely split the country apart, inviting partition, and creating the disintegrating conditions for terrorists and insurgents to flourish. Nothing suggests this is taking place, although it does cast a shadow over Central Asia, adding yet another layer of complexity in forging Afghanistan's post-2016 future.

Ironically, despite Iran's reluctance to accept a large U.S. military presence in its backyard, it may serve as a hedge against a sectarian conflict that would probably reduce Iranian influence

in Afghanistan. The Iraq experience demonstrates how difficult it can be to replace U.S. forces when the operational environment is insurgent-friendly and host nation security forces are inexperienced and ill-equipped. As sectarian conflict is the chief characteristic in Iraq and the Levant, Western decision makers will be eager to prevent a repeat performance. ISIS has perfected intra-Islamic friction, and there is sound reason for thinking it will be exported to the eastern Afghan provinces where IS-KP is quickly becoming operationally emergent. An extended U.S. military commitment would help prevent the threat from metastasizing while keeping the unity government from fracturing, both of which align with Iran's strategic goals.

U.S.-Iranian relations have also thawed significantly now that the nuclear deal has removed a major source of tension between the two nations. Lifted sanctions permit greater flow of business and trade, possibilities previously hindered by American positions vis-a-vis Iran. Now that nuclear politics is no longer the overarching theme, Iran can conceivably become a stabilizing force in the region by capitalizing on its significant soft power resources. Additionally, whereas pre-nuclear negotiating opportunities centered almost exclusively on Pakistan, detente clears diplomatic space for imaginative peace proposals that welcome, rather than isolate, Iranian contributions. As Iran assumes regional gravitas, it will have more incentive to conduct coordinated activities with Pakistan with emphasis on economic development instead of narrowly defined security. The new dynamic would bode well for Afghanistan as it seeks to broaden opportunities for a burgeoning youth population. In agreement with Kabul, Tehran reluctantly recognizes that any lasting peace settlement necessarily involves some sort of rapprochement with the Taliban, but it seeks to keep that involvement to a minimum in order to prevent its neighbor from gravitating back toward failed state status. In summary, cooperation can replace rivalry in the Afghan context now that the U.S. position toward Iran is undergoing a strategic realignment. Iranian cooperation may well be a tacit acknowledgement that U.S. hard power in Afghanistan complements its own desire to gain stability and prosperity in the east.

Pakistan remains a wild card. Its history is one of continual conflict with India, the nation from which it separated in 1947. Three major wars have been fought between the two powers, and Pakistani leaders highlight the need for strategic depth against an enemy they view in existential terms. The Afghan Taliban provides a quasi-proxy force giving Pakistan some leverage over India in Central Asia, but it is a mistake to conclude the organization is Islamabad's puppet. Observers are split over the extent to which Pakistan exerts control over the Afghan Taliban, but with origins in the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, the relationship is clearly covert and mutually beneficial, though indirect and situationally dependent. Consequently, as one scholar puts it, "This poses major challenges for a strategy based upon persuading Pakistan to apply leverage on the Taliban, given that there is no agreement among the parties involved over the extent of the leverage, nor any means for them to monitor it."

The flip side of this equation is the Pakistani Taliban,

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which remains separate from the Afghan Taliban and retaliates against Pakistan for the army's activities throughout the federally administered tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Both the Afghan Taliban and the TTP are ethnically Pashtun and find safe haven in the tumultuous regions straddling Afghan and Pakistani territory. The TTP took credit for a December 2014 attack against a Pakistan Army school that resulted in the deaths of 145 children, the deadliest terrorist attack on Pakistani soil. The ensuing domestic firestorm resulted in a rare request by the ISI director for coordinated action against the perpetrators, claiming TTP assailants routinely use Afghanistan to plan and conduct attacks against Pakistan. President Ghani made similar claims regarding the Afghan Taliban's use of Pakistan's territory, but this blood-stained event seems to have convinced Pakistan's leaders of the increasing danger posed by large ungoverned spaces swarming with Taliban belligerents of both stripes.

Ghani is trying to capitalize on this unexpected development, and it forms the basis for his diplomatic overture to Islamabad. He hopes to convince his counterparts of joint cooperation against a mutual threat and use it to expand relations from security to economic development.

Previous attempts have not yielded much fruit, although newfound Chinese interest in the outcome may compel Pakistan to negotiate in good faith during upcoming talks. Chinese interest in Pakistan is traced back to the Cold War during which both countries sought to counter India. The relationship has expanded over that time and now includes extensive trade and arms transfers. One proposed pipeline would carry Iranian gas to China via Pakistan. Pakistan has served as a major interlocutor between the US and China, making both countries' involvement in a negotiated settlement indispensable if Islamabad is to support a peace deal in Afghanistan. Talks between the US, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan are collectively referred to as the Quadrilateral Coordination Group. The first meeting took place on 11 Jan 2016 in Islamabad.

Depending on the Afghan Taliban's degree of independence, Pakistan's support may not be enough to eradicate the scourge even if it is a willing partner. "Pakistan may be able to lead the Taliban to the negotiating table—but this does not mean they can make them negotiate." But if Pakistan no longer views the ungoverned Pashtun tribal areas as a net gain, joint resolution of the Durand Line becomes a natural corollary. That would help clarify the boundary between the two neighbors and establish greater trust between the Afghan and Pakistani security forces. As an ally of both countries, US forces and activities could help prevent backsliding, serving as a third party adjudicator to any diplomatic breakthrough.

### Diplomatic Context

Of course, one of the greatest unknowns now is the extent to which Pakistan can control or influence the post-Omar Taliban. If the Taliban can no longer be considered a single entity, which elements can Islamabad push to the negotiating table? And what standing would such elements have to carry through on any commitments made? If Akhtar Mohammad

Mansour is able to consolidate power, there is some evidence to suggest he would support talks, but the Taliban's overall propensity for strongman rule still makes a power-sharing deal with the national unity government difficult to strike. Heretofore, the Taliban has only needed to placate its military commanders, maintain Pakistani support, and demonstrate resilience with each subsequent fighting season. Now, it must contend with internal fragmentation and defection to the Islamic State. If the Taliban, along with the Haqqani Network and its Al Qaeda allies, no longer monopolizes the jihadi terrain but must face up to the challenge of a new and formidable upstart, then the parameters for a lasting settlement begin to take shape.

First, having eclipsed Al Qaeda as the paramount global terror threat, the Islamic State presents no mere nuisance to the Taliban but rather an existential threat. Despite a shared Salafist worldview, Al Qaeda recognizes the importance of deference in local matters so as not to upset the balance that provides a permissible operating environment within failed or failing states. Whereas the Taliban seeks to recreate an emirate, the Islamic State claims to govern a caliphate; its universal declaration undermines the Taliban's legitimacy and local authority.

According to Brynjar Lia, an emirate means a principality ruled by an emir or commander. It "is a highly scalable concept in terms of territorial scope and material resources. The very scalability of the jihadi state-building project from merely a group of committed fighters to a full-fledged state with a multi-million size civilian population enables jihadis to view every action they take as relevant for the ultimate goal of a powerful Caliphate ruling the Muslim world." Lia writes that emirates and caliphates (so-called jihadi proto-states) share four essential characteristics: ideological intensity, internationalist, territorially expansive, and irredentist.

A global caliphate is indeed common to both organizations' goals, but fierce differences over tactics and strategy divide their respective approaches. Al Qaeda, as the progenitor of the Islamic State, suffered a near-fatal blow during the 2007-2008 surge led by US forces in Anbar province, Iraq. The so-called "Awakening" proved that Sunni differences can be exploited when atrocities reach a breaking point and local support crumbles. Al Qaeda learned a lesson of strategic patience but the Islamic State emerged out of the ashes of the conflict with greater determination to complete the unfinished work begun by Al Qaeda in Iraq. By controlling large swaths of territory in Iraq, Syria, and key cities in Libya, ISIS is demonstrating its own state-building capacity. From oil sales to public services and cleverly crafted propaganda, the Islamic State has produced a compelling narrative and governance model for Islamists to follow.

Hence, due to the Taliban's patronage of Al Qaeda, it can

expect the vengeance from IS-KP once the newcomer reaches maturity. In a recent report from the American Enterprise Institute, the authors stated "ISIS in Afghanistan is in a pitched battle with the Taliban. The fact that both groups seek to drive the U.S. out and topple the current government in Kabul has not led ISIS to put aside its doctrinal differences with the Taliban." This places the Taliban in a peculiar situation. The Taliban could open up a new front against IS-KP, but leadership disputes and the current fight against the Afghan government make achievement of this possibility remote. On the other hand, the Taliban could accept the olive branch extended by the Ghani administration. Reconciliation would, of course, require the Taliban's renunciation of terrorism and severing its longstanding affiliation with Al Qaeda, but the insurgents would gain an ally against a surging and ruthless adversary.

Second, revised rules of engagement permitting strikes against IS-KP in Afghanistan are unwittingly removing an important lever of influence. The designation of IS-KP as a foreign terrorist organization is a sound decision, but our diplomatic effort for a negotiated settlement is hamstrung and possibly derailed through the hasty destruction of IS-KP. A new jihadist front in Afghanistan unexpectedly counters and disarms one of the Taliban's main preconditions for negotiated

settlement, the removal of foreign forces.

Diplomats can plausibly respond to the red-line demand by telling Taliban representatives that while we share the goal of departure, we need a sizeable presence to counter the Islamic State in the intermediate term, a goal that should resonate powerfully with Taliban leaders given the retaliation they would anticipate in the aftermath of any deal. Future force reductions could be offered as incentives to keep the peace, but it would also give the coalition and unity government the time to allow the settlement to congeal without sacrificing the underlying security safeguards necessary to keep the government solvent and capable of holding the Taliban accountable.

If the Taliban were to respond by suggesting the U.S. is intentionally keeping IS-KP afloat, negotiators could point to the last fifteen years of the insurgency as evidence the military option seldom produces decisive results in such conflicts. The only reason both sides are meeting is because each has come to realize the military option produces stalemate. This realization often happens after four to seven years of conflict have elapsed. Both sides can continue to wage war, but neither side tends to gain the decisive upper hand. Without minimizing the Islamic State threat in Afghanistan, we argue its elimination must not assume equal or greater status with the insurgency we are trying to end. Rather, its existence provides an essential incentive for the Taliban to negotiate in good faith. IS-KP can be contained, and granting the main effort against the group in

## **[AL QAEDA] SUFFERED A NEAR-FATAL BLOW DURING THE 2007-2008 SURGE ... THE ISLAMIC STATE EMERGED OUT OF THE ASHES**

Syria, Iraq, and Libya pays dividends, it will wither on the vine in Afghanistan.

On the differences between Al Qaeda and ISIS, Kagan writes, “ISIS established its Caliphate in Iraq and requires the territory it holds in Iraq and Syria to sustain its legitimacy vis-à-vis al Qaeda, with which it competes for the leadership of the global Salafi-jihadi movement, and with respect to current fighters and potential recruits. Depriving ISIS of that territory will force it to reconstitute and, quite possibly, transform itself again into a different kind of organization with far less capability to acquire and deploy resources. Iraq and Syria form the locus in which defeating ISIS will have non-linear effects on the global ISIS network and brand. Defeating Jabhat al Nusra in Syria will not have the same effect on the global al Qaeda movement because of the robust and independent affiliates in Yemen, South Asia, and Africa. It will disrupt that movement, however, which has been focusing attention and resources on the fight in Syria and benefiting from its ability to fundraise and recruit on Jabhat al Nusra’s activities. It will also register as a major defeat for al Qaeda and its leader, Ayman al Zawahiri, who has put his name and prestige behind Jabhat al Nusra.”

Finally, the presence of an Islamic State franchise unites Iran and Pakistan. Iran is already challenged by the threat posed by Islamic State in the west and cannot be eager for a reenactment in the east. Moreover, the suicide attack on the Pakistani consulate in Jalalabad in mid-January heightens the fear of contagion by IS-KP and the inability of Pakistan’s vaunted security services to contain it. Combined support from Tehran and Islamabad for the Afghan government would limit IS-KP’s capacity to sustain itself and prevent deeper inroads in Central Asia. Despite their apparent differences, IS-KP presents both countries with sound security reasons for strengthening the fledgling administration in Kabul rather than leaving it ravished by terrorists and insurgents.

## Conclusion

Negotiated settlement in Afghanistan will include strange bedfellows, and the logic of the situation requires it. The notion of seeking non-traditional allies like Iran and allowing Islamic State to gain a foothold strike the casual observer as preposterous. Regional trends suggest devolution will characterize Afghanistan’s future, leading to the collapse of the national unity government and the resumption of tribal politics. The chances of that frightful prospect are greatly reduced with a long term U.S. military commitment. Only a military presence will ensure Afghanistan continues along a stable trajectory, for it provides diplomats with the assurance needed to take advantage of new opportunities and fault lines. Iraq is the example par excellence of what happens when U.S. forces prematurely withdraw from an ethnically heterogeneous, multi-religious nation with weak institutions and nascent democratic norms.

In Ashraf Ghani, the United States has a partner who seeks genuine rapprochement with Afghanistan’s neighbors but lacks the independent means to keep predatory actors from exploiting the country’s manifold weaknesses. President Obama campaigned on a promise to end the war in Afghanistan during his

tenure. Just a short time ago, the plan was to reduce U.S. troop levels down to a normal embassy presence by the end of 2016, but now the administration has announced the current level of 9,800 will be held for most of the year before dropping to 5,500 by year’s end. A decades-long military presence may be in the offing, but the next president will have to specify the extent and scale of our commitment. Key force aviation enablers, along with intelligence and logistics, will likely constitute an ongoing commitment in the intermediate term. Ambiguity over the details aids diplomats during negotiations, but the US military commitment must not be doubted by either friend or foe. U.S. forces are no panacea, but without them the likelihood of negotiated settlement diminish greatly.

Our reluctance to maintain “boots on the ground” must not make us myopic to the opportunity costs of withdrawal, especially the diplomatic synergies now emerging. Because the U.S. fight against jihadism is global in scope, U.S. efforts in one theater bolster the activities in another without necessarily requiring additional resources. Hindsight reveals the danger of precipitous withdrawal in Iraq, helping diplomats appreciate the linkage between security and stability in the Afghan context.

We are not arguing for more resources but for maintaining a steady state of U.S.-specific capabilities until the national unity government and its security forces become more proficient. We are, however, suggesting that the right diplomatic sequencing and mix is necessary in order to exploit the increasing number of internal and external pressures on the Taliban. Lord Ismay, NATO’s first Secretary General, stated that the alliance’s goal was to “keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” If we were to apply his axiom to Afghanistan, we might say the national unity government must “keep the terrorists out, the Americans in, and the Taliban down.” But the twist is that we may need to keep some terrorists in for a time in order to keep the Taliban down. The current military stalemate can become the Taliban’s checkmate, but it will require an enduring U.S. military commitment to attain it.

## About the Authors

Commander Todd Glidden is an instructor at the Joint Forces Staff College on the Joint Command and Control and Information Operations faculty. He earned a MS in Computer Science from the Naval Postgraduate School in 2009. Prior to his current assignment he was Assistant N6 for Commander Carrier Strike Group TWO.

Major Shawn Patton serves at U.S. European Command. He earned a BS in Microbiology from Clemson University in 1996 and a MA in Public Administration from Webster University in 2007. He previously served as the Air Defense Chief in the Combat Plans Division at the Combined Air Operations Center in Qatar.

Major Nathan Stackhouse serves as a policy advisor at the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy. He has a BS in Political Science from the Air Force Academy in 1999 and an MA in Government from the University of Virginia in 2007. Prior to his current assignment he served as an AFPAC HAND advisor in Kabul, Afghanistan.

# Illiberal Democracy's Challenge to European Security Policy

BY MS. NAHAL KAZEMI, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The end of the Cold War and the expansions of both NATO and the EU suggested that while it may have been inaccurate to declare an “end of history,” across the world, perhaps at least the West was moving inexorably toward liberal democracy and free markets. In recent years, however, we have seen an alarming trend of democratic progress not only slowing down, but even reversing in some states that had previously been seen as post-Cold War success stories. In this Essay, I will exam this trend in several European countries and the attending effect on Europe's security policy.

In a 1997 essay in *Foreign Affairs*, Fareed Zakaria defined the problem posed by “illiberal democracy.” “Democratically elected regimes, often ones that have been reelected or reaffirmed through referenda, are routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedoms.” Illiberal democracy is often used to denote those countries in which elections are generally competitive, free, and fair, but in which there is “poor accountability of the executive to other centers of authority, the inconsistent and partial application of the rule of law, low access to alternative sources of information, qualified ability to associate, and so on.” A high level of corruption and a lack of transparency in governance are also hallmarks of illiberal democracies.

In the nearly twenty years since Zakaria's article was written, we have seen the rise of illiberal democracy not only in the Palestinian Territories, Iraq, or Pakistan, but in the heart of Europe as well. Changes to the European order since the end of the Cold War, new threats posed from the East and the South, and an aggressive effort by supporters of illiberal democracy to defend it as an alternative to Western, liberal democracy, all require that we reassess the challenge illiberal democracy poses to Europe, particularly in the security realm. If we are not rigorous in our assessment of Euro-Atlantic interests and values, and we are not equally precise in defining what illiberal democracy is and why it threatens those values, we risk the erosion of Euro-Atlantic institutions and the Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

In the Visegrad Four nations of Central Europe – Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia – as well as in Turkey, Romania, and Bulgaria, we have

examples of states in which elections are generally seen as free and fair, but in which there are significant concerns about the separation of powers, corruption, accountability of the executive, and/or protection of certain fundamental rights. These developments are particularly vexing because these nations are all NATO member states. All of them except Turkey are also members of the EU (Turkey is an applicant to EU membership).

## Assessment: What the EU and NATO Mean – Then and Now

During the Cold War, both NATO and the EU's predecessor institutions' were organized in response to the particular threats and opportunities they faced. In other words, the external factors in Albert Humphrey's SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis model, drove the development of the internal factors. For instance, democratic imperfections could be tolerated in NATO Allies (such as Portugal, Turkey, and Greece), because NATO's mission differed during the Cold War. NATO was designed to tie to the United State to Europe and to guarantee Western Europe's security and independence from the threat of an expansionist Soviet Union, or as the first NATO Secretary General, Lord Ismay, put it: “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” Staunch anti-communism and the attending view of the threat posed by communism, was far more important than a commitment to liberal democratic values.

Similarly, the precursor entities to the European Union were initially formed in the aftermath of World War II to tie Europe's powerful economies to each other in order to prevent them from going to war against each other again. The European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community were initially focused on reducing barriers to trade and enhancing shared economic interests and did not originally have a substantial bureaucracy in Brussels dedicated to common foreign and security policy, harmonizing labor, environmental, and health regulations, and investing in infrastructure projects in member states – these were all expanded substantially under the 1993 Maastricht Treaty.

As the threats and opportunities

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Editor's Note: Ms. Kazemi's thesis won the FAO Association Award at the U.S. Navy College of Command and Staff. We publish here a slightly abridged version without research notes. To see the full thesis with research material, click on this link to the on-line version: [www.faoa.org](http://www.faoa.org). The Journal is pleased to bring you this outstanding scholarship

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Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this article are solely the author's and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Department of State or the United States Government.

changed in the post-Cold War period, the missions of both NATO and the EU changed as well. In both organizations, shared liberal and democratic values have become part of the organizations' key strengths and are now at the core of their identities in the post-Cold War era, in addition to their highly advanced economies, large populations, and abundant resources. Both sought to build on the strength of their shared beliefs and leverage them to spread democratic values in former Soviet states. There was a series of expansions of both organizations in the 1990s and 2000s, expressly aimed at integrating the newly independent states of Eastern Europe and assisting them in consolidating their statuses as free, democratic societies with liberal, market-based economies. Helping to create a Europe "whole, free, and at peace," was and is the central mission of U.S. foreign policy in Europe.

But just as the collapse of the bipolar world order created new opportunities and drove the organizations to focus on new strengths, the post-Cold War world also brought new, more complex threats. The rise of ISIL, and the related refugee crisis from Iraq and Syria, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and aggression toward its neighbors, pose challenges to some of Europe's most important values – respect for international law, respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of race, nationality, or religion, and the international norm that state borders should not be changed by the use of military force. Moreover, many members of both organizations find that not only their values, but their core interests and their security are imperiled by these threats.

Both the EU and NATO operate on a consensus basis, which was simpler when both organizations had fewer members and more straightforward missions. Today, the requirement of reaching consensus can be both a strength and a weakness. If members cannot agree on the organization's key objectives, if they question the organization's norms and values, or if they have widely disparate views of the threats and challenges, this weakens both the institutions and their ability to mount a unified response to such challenges.

### Assessment: Contemporary Illiberal Democracies in Europe

Any assessment of illiberal democracy in Europe requires an effort to define what it is and what makes it different from our traditional conception of democracy. To that end, a brief summary of three European countries (Hungary, Poland, and Turkey) which have openly embraced the concept of illiberal democracy follows. These assessments consider both how illiberal democrats define themselves and their opponents' most pointed criticisms.

In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban has provided a full throated defense of illiberal democracy, declaring his desire to model his nation on the examples of Russia, Singapore, and Turkey. He has also rejected the EU's calls for resettling refugees and expressed skepticism about the EU's sanctions policy against Russia. Domestically, Orban's Fidesz party weakened the nation's constitutional court, forced through major revisions to the constitution, and then adopted an entirely new

constitution. Orban's government also passed restrictive new media laws and election regulations. Hungary passed a new Law on Churches, which saw hundreds of religious organizations (mostly smaller denominations and minority faiths) lose their official status as churches, a move determined to be illegal by the European Court of Human Rights. Orban has defended these changes, arguing that liberalism has come to embrace "corruption, sex, and violence," as well as economic exploitation of the working and middle classes by massive corporations. He has also defended illiberalism as a protection of Christian, European values against Muslim immigrants and multiculturalism.

Poland's newly elected government has also taken a number of steps typical of illiberal democracies – passing new laws that limit media independence and curtailing the independence of the judiciary. It has sided with Hungary in staunchly opposing the EU's plans to deal with the migrant crisis from the Middle East and has refused to resettle refugees. Sixty four percent of Poles support the government's decision to close the country to asylum seekers. Like their Hungarian counterparts, Poland's illiberal democrats also sought to justify the country's illiberal streak as mere political conservatism – an antidote to progressivism run amok. Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski declared the world should not move in unison "toward a new mix of cultures and races, a world of cyclists and vegetarians." The right-wing Law and Justice Party, which won control of parliament in October, 2015, campaigned on a platform of family values and strong defense (Poland is substantially more hawkish toward Russia than Hungary).

Turkey was cited by Viktor Orban as a model of the type of state he was attempting to build. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, head of the Islamist Justice and Development Party served as the nation's prime minister from 2003 to 2014, before becoming president (after successfully changing the constitution to strengthen the role of the president) in 2014. President Erdogan governs on a platform of religious nationalism and initially called himself a "conservative democrat." He has recently stepped up Turkey's battle against its Kurdish separatists and cracked down on media freedom. Erdogan's government has prosecuted journalists and ordinary citizens alike for criticizing the government, going so far as to prosecute school-aged children for what they've posted on Facebook. Erdogan has also complained to German Chancellor Angela Merkel about satirical portrayals of him by a German comedian, demanding his prosecution.

Erdogan has declared that fighting terrorism is more important than democracy or the rule of law. He has called for expanded anti-terror laws to prosecute those who publicly endorse or condone acts of terror. The Turkish President has sought to strip Kurdish lawmakers of their immunity so they can be prosecuted for statements which suggest support for Kurdish independence or autonomy. Turkey faces real security threats: both from the PKK, a Kurdish separatist terror group and from the bloody civil war in neighboring Syria. Its responses, however, threaten the most basic of democratic norms.

An honest assessment of all three examples of illiberal democracy described above will demonstrate that the hallmark

characteristics of such states are not justified by the challenges their leaders claim to face. Attacking judicial independence, prosecuting journalists for mocking government officials, curtailing free speech rights, and stirring religious and ethnic tensions are not logical responses to terrorism, economic inequality, or the stresses modern life has placed on families or traditional values. Instead, these are the actions we would expect of leaders seeking to consolidate their authority, weaken institutional checks on their power, and intimidate and undermine political opponents. In each example, it seems the leaders of these countries have exploited linguistic ambiguity; in order to legitimize their policies, they have defined the “illiberal” in “illiberal democracy” to mean “traditional” or “conservative.”

But criticism of these countries for their illiberal democracies has not been based on their decisions to order stores closed on Sundays or to increase social security spending for families with children. Nor is illiberal democracy synonymous with criticism of Europe’s experiment with multiculturalism. Angela Merkel has offered both a robust defense of liberal democratic values and a pointed critique of the failings of multiculturalism. The real problem with illiberal democracies is not that their leaders are conservatives, or inspired by their religious faith; it is that they consolidate their own power by stripping their political opponents of the important rights they need in order to fully participate in a truly democratic society. As Princeton Professor Jan-Werner Müller put it: As long as critics keep using the phrase “illiberal democracy” to describe what is happening in countries like Poland, leaders like Kaczyński will simply say, “Exactly!” Far from being received as a criticism, the phrase reinforces such leaders’ image as opponents of liberalism, while allowing them to continue to refer to their actions as “democratic.”

In order to not fall into this linguistic trap, Müller recommends referring to these countries not as “illiberal democracies,” but more simply as “undemocratic” states. We could also use Hungarian sociologist and politician, Balint Magyar’s, more colorful epithet: “the post-Communist Mafia state.” Regardless of what we call these states, we must push back when they frame their political philosophy as nothing more than a defense of traditional values.

### Assessment: The Challenges Illiberal Democracy Poses in the Current Security Environment

In all three of these examples, leaders of these countries have used challenges or threats as a justification for undermining basic principles of a democratic society – freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. As NATO and the EU seek meaningful responses to the refugee crisis, to the Syrian civil war, to terrorism, and to Russian irredentism in Europe, these developments risk fraying the bonds among member states necessary to maintain unity and execute policy. The European Union is even considering political and economic sanctions against both Hungary and Poland – a step that would seriously jeopardize European unity in the face of new security challenges.

The EU has the ability to “quarantine” members for anti-democratic behavior under Article 7 of the Maastricht Treaty (the allegedly offending state is unable to block consensus under this article), essentially stripping them of their voting rights and ability to participate. The EU has so far been both unable and unwilling to use this extreme measure in response to either Hungary or Poland. There is a lesser measure under Article 7, which would essentially put a member state into a probation-like status and only requires a 4/5 vote of EU members (as opposed to consensus), but this measure has also never been used.

Within NATO, there are few tools available to encourage Allies to move away from illiberal democracy. There are neither mechanisms nor precedents to sanction or censure Allies for undermining the Alliance’s values. If the situations continue to deteriorate, the United States could, in theory, make some elements of bilateral security cooperation contingent upon improvements in democratic governance and anti-corruption efforts.

The United States has publicly criticized Hungary’s more troubling policies and has taken the rather unusual step of banning certain government officials of an Ally from receiving visas to travel to the United States due to their involvement in corruption. The United States and Hungary have cooperated very closely on defense issues – Hungary has contributed troops to both the NATO mission in Afghanistan and the anti-ISIS efforts in Iraq. It is unclear if this cooperation – or cooperation on reassurance measures (NATO’s efforts to support its front line states in the face of challenges posed by Russia) – will be negatively affected if the relationship between the U.S. and Hungary worsens.

In both the NATO and EU contexts, illiberal democracy creates tension between the value of maintaining consensus and institutional unity and defending the values of the institution. Both institutions must find new ways to balance these tensions – to reaffirm their values as core strengths and to maintain unity in the face of complex outside threats. The examples of illiberal democracies should also provide a lesson to both organizations as they consider admitting new members: there is insufficient reason to believe that “positive peer pressure” within NATO or the EU will ensure new members (potentially Macedonia for NATO, Albania for the EU) will make their democratic gains durable and permanent. Instead, both organizations should demand the consolidation of democratic structures and norms when they still have the leverage to make these demands – before admitting the applicant state.

### About the Author

Ms. Nahal Kazemi is a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State. She has served tours in Hungary, Iraq, Morocco, in Washington, D.C., in the State Department Operations Center and the Office of European Political Military Affairs. Ms. Kazemi is a former attorney and a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She speaks Hungarian, Farsi, and Arabic.



## BOOK REVIEW

# Warrior Diplomat: A Green Beret's Battle from Washington to Afghanistan

AUTHOR: MICHAEL G. WALTZ

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REVIEWED BY DUSTIN VANDEHEY

In *Warrior Diplomat*, Michael Waltz compares his experience serving as both a U.S. Army officer in combat and as a high level policy advisor in Washington during the war in Afghanistan. Waltz served as commander of a U.S. Army Special Forces unit in Afghanistan and then served in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics. Afterwards he served as Special Advisor to Vice President Richard B. Cheney for South Asia and Counterterrorism. Waltz's extensive knowledge of the war is derived from his multiple tours in Afghanistan.

Common themes in *Warrior Diplomat* include bureaucratic infighting amongst NATO countries and the U.S., the lack of an initial long-term military strategy, limited resources, and dwindling support from the population, all of which challenged the coalition in its war effort. Waltz brings a high level of credibility to the book, having served in both the policy circles of Washington and the Afghanistan Theater. In *Warrior Diplomat* the author makes it clear that the scope of warfare has evolved, requiring greater emphasis on counterinsurgency, longer coalition commitments, and a broader array of resources.

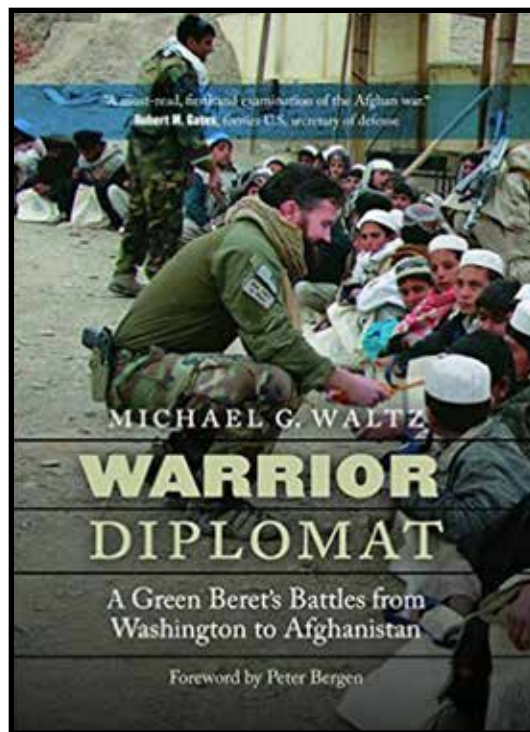
One central theme Waltz emphasizes throughout the book is the need to establish and maintain strong relations with the local tribal populations in Afghanistan. He explains that local tribal support is critical to a successful counterinsurgency strategy. Waltz argues that efforts to establish relations with members of Afghanistan's tribal communities crumbled as the coalition failed to establish clear objectives for the war effort. As complicated bureaucratic policy strained the coalition, its credibility to protect local tribes further eroded, especially as the Taliban increased its unconventional and insurgent campaign in

Afghanistan.

The U.S. was waging a conventional war in a theatre that required an unconventional strategy, which limited the coalition's ability to protect tribes isolated in difficult terrain. Waltz gives as an example the Mangal tribal areas in Khost Province, located in a strategic mountain range that separates Pakistan from Afghanistan. Because of a coalition strategy to reduce casualties from roadside bombs, coalition forces employed Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles to protect personnel from sophisticated IED attacks. While this technology provided protection, MRAPs only operated in urban areas because of their inability to function in the complex terrain of Afghanistan. Units that consistently operated in mountainous regions were withdrawn because of a military policy that restricted transportation to areas only accessible by the MRAP vehicles. As units discontinued patrols in these tribal areas, local leaders felt abandoned and lost trust in the international coalition. While this is one example of many problems covered in *Warrior Diplomat*, clearly local tribal support was paramount for coalition forces in conducting a successful counterinsurgency strategy in an environment as geographically, politically, and culturally diverse as

Afghanistan.

Waltz discusses the border region with Pakistan as extremely difficult for U.S. and coalition forces struggling to maintain security and prevent a Taliban resurgence. While Pakistan is an ally of the United States, its inability to secure the border with Afghanistan weakened the coalition's success at effective counterinsurgency. Waltz brings up several examples including the Frontier Corps -- Pakistan's border police, a force sympathetic to the Taliban. The arduous bureaucratic approval processes for



units responding to insurgent attacks from Pakistan drastically weakened the coalition's credibility with Afghan tribes reliant on U.S. Special Forces for protection and support.

While the Taliban's strategy in Pakistan was successful in challenging the tactical efforts of the coalition, it also brought into question the strength of U.S.-Pakistan relations on a broader scale. Waltz clearly voices his frustration throughout the book with the growing bureaucratic complexities in both policy and military circles, which he felt hindered the war effort and isolated needed support from the local population while weakening the overall coalition effort in Afghanistan.

According to Waltz, several political factors additionally hindered the war effort. The Bush Administration's initial strategy focused primarily on counterterrorism but didn't take nation building into account. The strategy did not demonstrate a greater long-term commitment from the coalition to protect Afghanistan's tribal communities and limit the Taliban's capabilities. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 pulled resources and

## **WALTZ CONTENDS THAT IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAVE THE POLITICAL WILL, AND THE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY RESOURCES TO MAKE SUCH A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO AFGHANISTAN.**

personnel out of Afghanistan, further straining the coalition as the Taliban grew in size and capability.

The term "counterinsurgency" was controversial during Donald Rumsfeld's tenure as Secretary of Defense. The U.S. government changed priorities and moved extensive resources to Iraq. Labeling the Taliban an insurgency would have pressured the administration to refocus on Afghanistan, undermining the administration's change in priorities; to challenge the change was politically unwise.

As NATO took over greater control of the war effort in 2006, the growing international coalition struggled to find a concrete operational plan as well as how to define counterinsurgency. As a U.S. Army officer operating on the ground, Waltz grew increasingly frustrated because some NATO countries lacked the training and resources to conduct counterinsurgency operations, as well as the political will to succeed. After President Obama took office, mixed and confusing messages of troop surges as well as a timetable for withdrawal further weakened relationships between Special Forces units and tribal communities reliant on them for protection.

In reading *Warrior Diplomat*, it becomes clear that waging an effective counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan requires a long-term military and diplomatic commitment. The author draws parallels with Afghanistan and the sustained U.S. commitments in both Germany and South Korea. While Germany and South Korea have become highly industrialized and economically viable countries, achieving similar long-term stability in Afghanistan would prove to be even more complicated and challenging due to the unconventional nature of the war effort.

While acknowledging the challenges militarily, economically and socially of such a sustained U.S. commitment, Waltz refers back to what the Afghan Mangal tribal elder Ghafoorzai told him: we must prepare our grandchildren to stand shoulder to shoulder with his grandchildren. This extraordinary statement supports the central themes of *Warrior Diplomat* and highlights a gross misjudgment on the part of the international community in its strategic and operational flaws in South Asia. Waltz contends that it is highly unlikely that the U.S. and the international community have the political will, and the economic and military resources to make such a long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

What *Warrior Diplomat* lacks is a broader discussion of military bureaucratic structure and its effects on insurgent warfare. Waltz discusses the repercussions of overly bureaucratic military policies, but an analysis as to why these structures exist in Afghanistan would give the book greater context. If the military's formal command structure and policy apparatus hinder operational capabilities in Afghanistan, policies should change to reflect current best practices in counterinsurgency. If historically, the U.S. military struggles to adapt as warfare evolves, then Waltz could have critiqued broader institutional flaws in the U.S. military and government. With this analysis, Waltz could have drawn a stronger conclusion as to whether the U.S. would have been capable of waging a long-term strategy that effectively adhered to the complex political and cultural norms of Afghanistan. If tribal relationship development in Afghanistan were key to successful counterinsurgency, then what would these strategies look like long term for U.S. forces?

*Warrior Diplomat* tackles the gritty realities of insurgent warfare in Afghanistan told through the eyes of an author who experienced the conflict from multiple playing fields. Waltz's expertise on this topic is extensive and unique, as he served both on the ground in Afghanistan and in a policy role in Washington. As a staff member for Vice President Cheney, Waltz influenced policies that affected him directly on the front lines of Afghanistan as a U.S. Army Special Forces officer. Waltz's diverse experience in both Washington and Afghanistan give this book a depth and credibility unique to this field of study. For those looking to understand Afghanistan from both the military and policy perspectives, *Warrior Diplomat* successfully delivers and covers these topics in great detail.

### **About the Reviewer:**

Dustin Vandehey is an Intern at The Intelligence Community LLC, with a research interest in Afghanistan and Central Asia. He currently works for Tuality Healthcare in Portland, Oregon as a Public Information Officer/Emergency Management Specialist. He holds a Master of Arts in National Security Studies from California State University San Bernardino and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Political Science from the University of Oregon. While in graduate school, he spent a summer interning in criminal investigations for the U.S. State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

# Letter to the Editor

**A**s a Turkish FAO, I was pleased to see two articles in recent issues of the FAO Journal: “Is Turkey Slipping Out of the West’s Orbit” by Colonel Chris Chronis, and “Turkey A Misunderstood Ally” by Major Jeff Jager. Both articles are thought provoking and deserve close attention - especially with regard to recent events in Turkey. The failed coup of 15 July and the crackdown by the Erdogan government point to an even more pressing need to understand Turkey and where Erdogan wants to take it.

Since Ataturk pulled Turkey out of the wreckage of WW1, the country has been on an upward climb of modernization, as evidenced by the governments of Turgut Ozel, Tansu Ciller, and Suleyman Demirel. The early years of the Erdogan regime continued this progression, especially in the economic arena. But events over the past several years have raised concerns that he is taking Turkey in a different direction - refuting the tenets and importance of Ataturk, moving Turkey away from being a secular state, and summarily arresting retired and serving members of the military.

Erdogan’s AKP is the first Islamic party to gain power in Turkey since Ataturk abolished the Sultanate and Caliphate; its roots are in the Welfare Party (RP - Refah Partesi) founded by Islamist activist Necmettin Erbakan in the early 1980s. It is no secret that Erdogan wants to make Turkey more strictly Islamic - the head scarf issue being one example. But other actions have raised concerns: the arrests and/or firing of parliamentarians, jurists, journalists, and others critical of Erdogan and his policies, the arrests of military personnel without proof of wrong doing, and the construction of a new residence (read palace) in a protected forest in Oran, on the outskirts of Ankara.

Having served in Turkey after the 1980 military coup lead by General Kenan Evren and seeing the seamless transition from military to civilian rule by Turgut Ozal, I find it interesting that the recent coup attempt is being blamed on a “Gülenist” faction of the military. Although the circumstances were different, the 1980 coup was orchestrated by the Turkish General Staff with the full support of the Land Forces, Naval, Air Forces, and Jandarma Commands. Apparently this one was not. But thousands of military personnel have been arrested as of this letter, to include over 85 generals and admirals.

Could it be that this was a “staged” coup, giving Erdogan an excuse to further clean house and to gain support for “saving” the Turkish people? When news of the coup first broke out, the media said Erdogan’s whereabouts was unknown. Later, it was reported that he was on vacation in Marmaris and had narrowly escaped capture and death by a “renegade military unit.” True or not, it has given him the opportunity to clamp down on the military again, as well as on anyone else who disagrees with him. Witness the arrest of thousands of military personnel, jurists, clerics, and teachers; the closing of over 600 schools (not madrasas); and imposition of a 3-month state of emergency. What form of democracy is this?

Turkey lives in a dangerous neighborhood and protects the southern flank of NATO. And NATO membership is an important part of the U.S. relationship with Turkey. If U.S. leadership fails to remember this and either forces or allows Erdogan to withdraw from NATO due to “loose cannon” rhetoric, then some President will be forever accused of “losing Turkey.”

U.S. leadership needs to watch Erdogan very closely, actively engage him to keep Turkey in the West’s camp, and encourage him to exercise moderation in the coming weeks and months. Turkey has sought EU membership for decades, but should Erdogan reinstitute the death penalty to seek revenge on the coup leaders and participants, that could be yet another step in driving a wedge between Turkey and the West and a potential death knell for Turkey’s EU bid. We must avoid this.

Turkey has always been an exciting place to live and work. My experience with Turkey dates back to 1975-76 as a Field Artilleryman during the U.S. embargo of Turkey due to its invasion of Cyprus to prevent Greek enosis; 1983-85 as the aide to Chief, JUSMMAT, after the coup that ended years of civil strife; 1994-97 as the Joint Programs Director and Pol-Mil Officer for ODC Turkey; 1999-2001 as the TRADOC LNO to the Turkish Army; and several trips while assigned to DISAM and DSCA.

Thank you.  
Paul Gendrolis  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army - Retired

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Editor’s note: The Journal encourages readers to join the conversation by writing letters to the editor or follow-up essays. Letters to the Editor and follow-on essays are edited for space constraints and must address the issue at hand, not the professionalism of previous authors.

use of cyber-attacks.”

“Arguably presenting even more trouble than state-sponsored actors, individual actors can strike both quickly and surreptitiously.” Without deep pockets to fund operations, cyber is becoming the leading tool used by attackers. In addition, retribution against an individual actor changes the nature of “warfare” as historically, nations have executed combat operations against other nations or large groups of radicals, like the Taliban and al-Qaeda, not individual actors. At present, the U.S. has too few remedies to deal with cyber-effects from hackers while the hackers can deal devastating blows to U.S. infrastructure. For this reason, cyber-crime, cyber-attacks, and cyber-warfare currently pose among the most immediate and dangerous threats to U.S. national security.

### Conclusion

Stated U.S. national strategic policies underscore the significance of a re-emerging Russian security policy that challenges the U.S. and its allies in both Europe and the Middle East. Although Russia can be termed the “sick patient,” this “patient” can be dangerous to the global stability and must be continually and consistently managed and engaged in order to “bring it along and hopefully get healthier.” Unfortunately, while U.S. foreign policies focus on Russian expansion, there is the looming, real possibility of severe infections and strikes by out-of-control VEOs and cyber-actors that can cripple the U.S. overnight and can bring about life-threatening effects to financial systems, infrastructure, and confidence in the government. This is the current challenge from which U.S. National Security Advisors must come to a unified solution to “cure” this potential pandemic.

### About the Authors

Brigadier General Dawne Deskins is the Director, Air, Space and Cyber Operations for the National Guard (NGB/A3). She has a BS in Communications from Ithaca College and a MS in Management from Florida State University. Prior to her current assignment she served as Commander, Eastern Air Defense Sector.

Colonel Christopher Harris is the Commander, 17th Mission Support Group, Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas. Colonel Harris earned a BS in English and a MS in Military Operational Art and Science from the Air Command and Staff College in 2007 before completing the Senior Course at the NATO Defense College in 2012. Prior to his current assignment, Colonel Harris served as the Division Chief for Office of Defense Cooperation Support in U.S. European Command’s Directorate of Policy, Strategy, Partnering and Plans (ECJ5/8).

Colonel Don Johnson is the Director of Staff, HQ Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. Colonel Johnson earned a BS in Aeronautical Engineering, and a MS in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, and a MS in Military Operational Art and Science from the Air Command and Staff College in 2006. Prior to his current assignment he served as the Director of Test, F-35 Joint Program Office, Crystal City, Virginia.

Captain Jon Young is an explosive ordnance disposal qualified Special Operations Officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve. His full time employment is as the Director for Rapid Capability Delivery with the Joint Improvised-threat Defeat Agency (JIDA). He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and a Masters of Arts degree from Webster University in 2000. He is currently assigned to the Reserve Unit that supports the Naval Ordnance Safety and Security Activity located in Indian Head, MD.

vacations, but for soft power efforts as well. This includes programs for civil-military partnership, interagency initiatives, and cultural exchanges to name a few. So despite the bureaucratic challenges, I’ve come to really believe in the utility of our force protection planning system as an enabler for exceptional travel.

In closing, I would like to express a special thanks to everyone who supported our recent road trip while making a personal commitment to “pay it forward.” For my friends, colleagues, and fellow FAOs who may be traveling through Senegal in the next couple of years, please take this as a personal commitment to facilitate your travel and safe passage to the extent possible. And for those who want to undertake an ambitious voyage, it may be useful to underscore a recommendation to begin socializing the force protection considerations as early in the planning process as possible.

### About the Author:

Colonel “Scotty” Morgan is the SDO/DAIT in Dakar, Senegal, his fifth assignment as a Sub-Saharan Africa FAO. Before moving to Dakar he was Chief of International Military Affairs, Security Cooperation Directorate, U.S. Army Africa. Colonel Morgan also deployed as a FAO to the Headquarters of ISAF in Kabul, Afghanistan, where he worked with the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture. He has worked extensively with French forces in conflict zones in the Balkans and the Ivory Coast. Colonel Morgan has a Masters Degree from the University of Paris, Pantheon-Sorbonne, and he is a graduate of the French Combined Joint Staff College.

conducted in formal theaters of war as well as the contested zones of Africa. U.S. SOF, with their knowledge of local environments and dialects, must be allowed to persistently enable PN/HN forces forward in contested security environments. A strategy of persistent low-level, small-footprint engagement, to include over-the-shoulder assistance in contested security environments, does not equal permanent presence. The desired condition is one where enabled PN forces are developed to the point that they are capable of conducting CT operations on their own, or support a regional neighbor doing the same.

The best example of enabling action is the success of the Chadian Groupement Speciale Anti-terroriste (SATG) in Mali. In 2012, exploiting the Taureg rebellion, groups aligned with al-Qaida subjugated the northern half of Mali. Early January the following year, these groups pushed south to just north of the key city of Segou on the Niger River and were threatening the capital, Bamako. Later that month, the SATG, in a column of about 100 light vehicles, mostly Toyota Land Cruisers, departed Chad and transited across Niger to Mali to support the multinational effort to restore Malian sovereignty. Prior to leaving Chad, Brig. Gen. Abdraman Youssouf Mery, the SATG Commander, cautioned his officers. “We are going outside of our borders now. We are going to help the population, our fellow Africans, so we have to respect the laws and the rules of these foreign countries and respect human rights. Remember, we are going there to bring peace to our neighbors.” Through relationships with the FAN built over time through TSCTP programs and Flintlock-series exercises, the SATG crossed the length of Niger (1,500 kilometers of Sahara Desert) with the support of the FAN with all of their vehicles in only three days. Once in Mali, the Chadian forces fought north another 1,500 kilometers

toward the VEO sanctuary along the mountainous border with Algeria. By late February, the Chadians began clearing the Massif de Tigharghar, to include the Valley of Ametetai, a key terrorist stronghold. The highpoint of the Chadian campaign came on 1 March when the SATG secured the VEO safe haven and killed Abou Zeid, a prominent AQIM Commander and a principle actor in the subjugation of Northern Mali. Afterwards, when their support of the defense of Mali was complete, they returned to Chad triumphant and elated that Africans could join together to help Africans outside of a Western paradigm. Afterwards, GEN Mery graciously credited the persistent support of SOF prior to the conflict as strongly contributing to the success of the SATG.

The SATG example shows that enablement works and results can be achieved in the near-term. It also shows that U.S. forces forward were not necessary when a crisis emerged. Simply stated, persistent advisory assistance mitigates risk, increases flexibility and achieves the desired conditions for U.S. and PN security by containing threats. In the final analysis, SOF’s ability to unobtrusively enable PN operations that in turn prevent crises from escalating should be used outside theaters of war, where appropriate, to allow the United States to avoid direct armed conflict.

#### About the Author

Colonel Samuel W. Curtis has served in numerous Special Operations assignments from the tactical to strategic level. His last assignment was as the Deputy Commander, Special Operations Command Africa. Colonel Curtis is currently the Commander of U.S. Army Garrison Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Eastern or North African counterparts. Second, for the majority of Western nations the numbers are small. For instance, according to Table 1 in Chapter II, France’s 1,200 estimated foreign fighters represented 18 fighters per million French citizens, or 0.02 percent of France’s Muslim population. With Canadian or American numbers between 100–200 foreign fighters, the percentages are far less. A 2014 Brookings Institute policy paper on the subject begins its title appropriately, “Be Afraid. Be A Little Afraid.” Among several conclusions, the paper states “the threat of Westerners traveling to Syria and Iraq is not negligible, but nor should it be overstated.” As many terrorist attacks have shown, small numbers can have a strategic impact, but to call Western foreign fighters a grave national security threat is arguably hyperbole. National intelligence, law enforcement, and military organizations must remain vigilant but also recognize the scope of the problem set.

At the individual level, the final critical implication relates to foreign fighter age and religious conversion. With an average age of 23, the sampled fighters were disproportionately young when compared to the broader pool of historical foreign fighters. Also notably, 38 percent of Western extremist foreign fighters were converts to Islam. This percentage appears to be unusually high. It is no surprise that groups like ISIS target younger prospective recruits, but the data gathered in this study demonstrates that their outreach appears to be effective in a limited capacity due to both this youth, and the unusually high conversion rate. Methods to counter these effects should seek to bridge rifts between Muslim communities and the nations to which they belong.

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