PRISM

THE JOURNAL OF COMPLEX OPERATIONS

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"The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable."

Thucidydes, The History of the Pelopennesian War

FEATURES

BOOK REVIEW

China today aspires to great power status. Tiananmen Square. (Willee710, January 10, 2014)

Who Wants to Be A Great Power?

By Lawrence Freedman

S trategic competition is back in vogue. After years of worrying about ethnic conflict and humanitarian intervention, civil wars and counterinsurgency, there is a renewed focus among policymakers, think-tankers, and academics on traditional strategic concerns and in particular great power confrontation.[1] For many students of international relations this appears as no more than recognizing a feature of the system that never went away. As the United Nations has never turned into a world government, states still have to take responsibility for their own security, and that means that at times they are bound to clash.[2] In principle, those states with the greatest power should be the most secure, able to make threats and offer inducements to persuade lesser powers to get in line. For this reason, countries of any size and natural endowment might be expected to aspire to great power status. Who does not want to be rich and powerful? But it is a status that can be a mixed blessing. It suggests great ambitions and interests that go well beyond defending borders and maintaining order at home, to seeking to establish and sustain congenial governments elsewhere, and even coming to their assistance when necessary. Once interests are defined expansively, conflicts are apt to develop with other great powers with their own expansive interests. With every conflict the status is at risk for if even the most marginal of interests is not defended, this can be presented at home and abroad as a sign of weakness, reluctance to honor commitments, and ultimately declining power.

Great Power and the Realists

In the past, the most formidable great powers could be recognized by their continental or maritime empires. Empires are no longer possible. We now accept that acquiring colonies through conquest and holding on to them through suppression of popular desires for independence is not only illegitimate but also involves too much hazard. Instead of policing empires, therefore, great powers must now sustain networks of supporting states. These networks have a transactional quality, as they depend on shared interests, though they are more likely to be durable if they are reinforced with shared values and culture. In this essay I ask whether we should assume that the networks which turn an ordinary power into a great power are also worth the costs and risks. Why would any power able to look after itself want to acquire additional layers of greatness when this means taking

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on obligations for the security of weaker powers? To make the effort worthwhile, there must be some correspondence between the interests of the great power and the wider international system. Once this comes to be doubted then the demands of a great power role can seem increasingly questionable. Others may be waiting to take over the role, but they will face the same question: Why bother?

We know the capabilities that qualify a country to be considered a great power; substantial military strength that can be used over distances; interests that go beyond their immediate locale important enough to be defended, if necessary by force; and an economy of sufficient size to generate such interests and sustain the appropriate levels of force. Being a great power means that others must pay attention to your interests and can expect sanction if they fail to do so. It means never having to say you are sorry. In this respect, the more power the better. In "old realist theory," acquiring forms of strength became an end and not a means, leading to suggestions that power acquisition could never stop until world domination because every other contending source of power is seen as a threat. This means institutionalizing a degree of paranoia. Great powers never want to lose their competitive edge.

Those great powers at the top of an international system arranged to their satisfaction worry about being knocked off their perch. When in this position, they become conservatives, favoring a status quo which benefits them. They are soon on the lookout for radical revisionists who wish to displace them. But whatever their anxieties, they must also be wary about taking on other great powers, for that may mean war with a country of equivalent or near equivalent military strength. Thus, the starting point for much contemporary strategic discourse is that the United States, as the greatest power of all, now faces a severe challenge from Russia and China. The discussion then moves on to consider how these challenges can best be met.

There are only a few great powers but many small powers, more now than ever before. One of the distinguishing features of great powers is how they relate to small powers. They can be bullies, and often are, and for that reason smaller powers under threat from one great power will try to ally with other great powers. This requires convincing the potential great power ally that the small power security is a vital interest to the great power. The causes of war often tend to be bound up with security guarantees made by great powers to small powers. One persistent issue is whether an association with an otherwise weak power can bring benefits or is more likely to turn into an unwelcome obligation, especially once the prestige of the strong becomes attached to the fate of the weak. As a great power puts together its network of congenial states these assets in the competitive game can turn into liabilities.

So far, so realist. Others have worried about questions of international law and organizations, focused on climate change and the environment, or looked to economic change rather than shifting military balances as the drivers of history. Through all this, realist theorists of international relations continue to be preoccupied with the military strength and the vital interests of great powers. With great power competition heating up over the past decade after a relative lull, realists feel that their time has come again, pointing to the anarchic character of the international system to explain great power behavior. Where they are now less dogmatic is in the past assumption that domestic politics barely matters. It was an article of faith that the incentives that shaped the actions of one great power would have the same effect on another great power, even those with a completely different political character. What mattered was the drive to security. This faith still lies behind much international relations research which seems to assume that time and space are largely irrelevant, that great powers share the same character traits in different centuries and on different continents.

Great Power in the 21st Century

Yet it is evident that being a great power in 2020 is quite different from being one in 1920 let alone 1820. Even within realist terms so much is different in terms of the variety of candidate great powers and their geographic spread. In the age of Trump, Xi, and Putin, it is hard to take seriously the idea that domestic affairs have only a trivial effect on the logic of great power practice. Moreover, domestic affairs not only help explain strategic choices, in terms of identifying interests and making provisions for warfare, but also what the powers have on offer. The way they govern themselves and arrange their social and economic affairs is part of the influence they exert. This is not the same as soft power, which is a more limited concept. It is about a broader, ideological appeal. More importantly, the prevailing ideology of a country helps set its interests and readiness to exert other forms of power, including the use of armed force. It shapes a country's views of what constitutes a satisfactory international system. This is the point where the realists need to take in the political economists because those who benefit from free trade will have quite a different view from those more inclined to protectionist, autarchic policies. Or look to students of culture and values because those who prize individual freedoms and openness will have a different view from those nervous about admitting deep challenges to the ideological precepts that legitimize their power.

One reason that these more systemic concerns have become more important is because of the limits on the traditional ways of achieving greatness through territorial expansion. The world has now been divided up into independent states and there are few opportunities when it comes to acquiring new lands. When this is done, as with Crimea, it is considered shocking. Areas of contested territory, for example Kashmir, Palestine, and the South China Sea, remain potential flashpoints for war. This is why access to the Arctic is now seen to be a big deal strategically. Generally, however, influence over another's affairs has to be achieved by means other than occupation. This is not only a question of legality and the Charter of the United Nations but also the difficulty of occupying another's territory—especially if the local population is hostile and prepared to resist. We know of the possibilities of guerrilla warfare and of terrorism, but regimes can also struggle to counter forms of non-violent resistance. Of course, mass movements can peter out through lack of progress and sheer exhaustion. With enough brutality, resistant populations can be subdued. Authoritarian regimes turn naturally to repression when they are otherwise unable to cope with a disaffected section of the population. But it takes time to establish an effective apparatus of repression. This is not an easy option for a new occupying force, especially one that lacks overwhelming numbers.

At the other end of the scale, it is also possible now to obliterate individual cities or even whole countries using nuclear weapons. By and large this is viewed as the ultimate deterrent to aggression, whether conventional or nuclear, and that is the standard rationale for maintaining a nuclear arsenal. Such an arsenal is not normally suggested as a means of dealing with a disaffected population. As no nuclear weapons have been used since 1945, there is now a presumption that this norm, taboo, or habit of non-use has been internalized and is unlikely to be violated. Hopefully this is not too optimistic. The first country to resort to nuclear use will be stigmatized and denounced. If they nonetheless gain a serious and durable strategic advantage then others might also come to view their arsenals as more valuable and wide-ranging in their application than previously supposed. On the other hand, if the result is generally catastrophic then previous attitudes will be confirmed and moves towards nuclear abolition might be given a boost. Until such time, the main role of the weapons is to remind the nuclear powers why a major war is a bad idea and to help keep conflict below a certain level. The fear of escalation—a

function not only of nuclear weapons but also the dangers and uncertainties associated with conventional war—explains why the great powers work hard to prevent their forces clashing at any level, and therefore why so much conflict is conducted through means short of war, such as economic sanctions, information campaigns, or cyber-war. The reluctance to escalate gives these conflicts their indecisive and indefinite quality.

The United States is in a unique position. This is in two related respects that set it apart from both Russia and China, its most serious great power competitors. The first is that it has a vast network of allies and partners across the globe. Many countries depend on it for their security. No allies can be absolutely sure that the United States would assist if they were the victims of aggression, but it has suited many to assume this because otherwise they would face enormous costs in trying to make alternative arrangements which are unlikely to be as credible or reliable. In some cases, they might need to start to think about their own nuclear programs or even finding new allies. This network has been the most remarkable feature of the international system for seven decades. Short of some internal revolution (for example as with Iran in 1979), few have been inclined to defect from this network and some that tried (for example, France) came back in. It expanded rather than shrank with the end of the Cold War. Those on the outside generally had to cope with their conflicts alone; those on the edge sometimes drew the United States into costly wars to defend its position as a good ally. Much contemporary strategic analysis around military capabilities and other coercive instruments revolves around how to sustain the U.S. role within this network. Without it, the United States would still have its own territory to defend, but with Mexico to its south and Canada to its north, the demands would be far less. The network defines the United States as a great power and it is why it wants its power to be great.

What good is this network to the United States? This brings us to the second key feature of the American position. The United States has been, for want of a better term, a liberal hegemon. That is, the main international institutions reflect values of open trade, rule of law, and human rights. The United States has worked hard to sustain them. It is of course the case that the United States has not always upheld its own values, and that many of those who wish to participate in these institutions do not really believe in them. But they still have had to make a show. Moreover, alternative ideologies to liberal capitalism have not prospered. The collapse of European communism was not the result of soft power but a sharp ideological confrontation that the Soviet system lost. Simply put, the West offered a more attractive way of life and this added to disaffection in the Soviet satellite states. The demands for freedom in 1989 were a demand to join in rights that were taken for granted in the West. Just after the end of the Cold War, America's "unipolar moment" was proclaimed. No other state could match the scale of its power or the forms of its influence. It accounted for half of the world's military capabilities—with its allies, that figure went up to 80 percent. The arrangements for managing international commerce, finance, and security were decided and maintained by the United States and its allies and underpinned by their values.

A Doubting Great Power

Thirty years later, that moment has clearly passed. The United States is still the most powerful country in the world, but its polar position is under challenge from a number of contenders. More seriously, we now see the importance of the domestic factor. Its current president does not wish to preside over a liberal hegemon. He is not particularly attached to the underpinning values, nor does he admire the established international institutions. Instead, he sees them disadvantaging the United States, requiring

a transfer of resources and favors to partners and allies that take without giving. In the security realm, this extends to complaints about America's disproportionate contribution to collective defense. This has led to severe questioning both inside and outside the United States of America's global role. It is important to stress that this did not start with President Trump. He has, however, acted in abrupt and disruptive ways that have forced America's allies to question whether this is a country upon which they dare rely in the future.

The consequences of this for international politics have been most apparent in the Middle East. This has always been a difficult part of the world in which to operate because of the severe and cross-cutting local divisions—whether over religion, access to oil, type of government, and so on. It should also be noted that while the United States has a number of close strategic partnerships in the region—for example with Saudi Arabia and

Israel—it has no formal alliances. There has always been a tension between its professed value system and maintaining these partnerships, most sharply in recent times with Saudi Arabia. The region has never been known for its stability, but the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 left it deeply unsettled and the equivocal response to the Arab Spring of 2011 unsettled it further. The United States and its allies expressed hope that autocratic regimes would fall and be replaced with democracies, but it did not do too much to ensure that democracy triumphed. It stood back from the civil war in Syria, even when Syrian President Bashir al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people in 2013. With America absent, Russia became bolder and tougher in its support for al-Assad. The United States focused on the Islamic State after it made dramatic gains in both Syria and Iraq in 2014. Rather than relying on its own infantry, it worked with local forces, notably the Kurds, who ended up

"Let someone else fight over this long blood-stained sand!" President Donald Trump, October 23, 2019.

with little in return. This has raised questions about all American commitments. When questioning whether the United States should continue to get involved in long-standing conflicts, Trump tapped into a strand in U.S. public opinion suggesting that it was time to leave behind "blood-stained deserts." It was one that President Obama also recognized. This was an area of the world in which U.S. interests appeared either conflicted or hard to discern yet to which it was continually drawn.

For the United States, being a great power has meant entanglements around the world and a sense that letting one partner down will lead to its position being doubted by others. The confusion of Trump's "Making America Great Again" message is that on the one hand, it appears to be about asserting strength and seeing off rivals, but, on the other, it also means disregarding the interests and concerns of allies. This is evident in setting tariffs on close allies, even based on a claim of national security, and his reluctance to take sides even when an ally or a partner is in dispute. Trump is brazen in his approach, but he is not the first to wonder about the wisdom of promising unconditionally to come to the aid of other people who are apt to get themselves into trouble.

The reason why the international system currently conveys a sense of churn is therefore not primarily because Russia or China want this to be so—although they may well do—but because Trump is questioning the value of an international system his predecessors worked to develop and sustain. Questions are being asked about whether the underlying networks of trade and finance really serve U.S. purposes, and, if they do not, whether the overlay of alliances and strategic partnerships can make much sense. This is, of course, a debate that is far from concluded. Even within Republican Party circles, Trump is still something of an outlier on these questions. But he has introduced a dollop of doubt that those that have relied upon the United States for security cannot ignore. A serious debate has now begun in Western Europe, led by President Macron of France, as to whether a new security system is becoming necessary—one which accepts a more marginal role for America. Even the country closest to the United States, and now dependent on good relations post-Brexit, has worried aloud about U.S. reliability.

Few are convinced that such a system would be better than the one it would displace. It would cost a lot more for a start. It might not even cohere. This can be seen in debates in the EU over whether a customs union and single market can sustain a currency union and a security network of its own. It is a notable feature of current debates on strategic competition that the United States largely neglects the collection of erstwhile great powers on the other side of the Atlantic as players, yet the logic of the President's policies has been to encourage them to start to think of themselves as potential strategic competitors rather than natural and long-standing allies. The major European powers certainly have the economic capacity to match Russia, although this would require a significant boost to their defense budgets. For the moment, NATO remains the most established and coherent of all the U.S. alliances and it even has some capacity to survive with a much-reduced American role. The main structural difficulty lies with extended nuclear deterrence. At any rate, NATO is treaty-based, and there is no evident appetite in Washington to abandon it. The issue is more the seriousness with which the current administration takes its alliance obligations, should they be put to the test.

A Would-Be Great Power

This is one reason why these developments seem self-evidently good news for President Putin. From having a marginal role in the Middle East a decade ago, Russia has now moved to center stage. Few countries will now make moves without consulting

Moscow, and Putin has been careful to keep lines open to all players, including Saudi Arabia and Israel. He is now Syria's most important benefactor, more so than Iran. As he will now be aware, the advantages are not self-evident. Syria is broken and Russia lacks the resources to fix it. He needs donors but the most likely donors are unsympathetic to al-Assad. Meanwhile, although the most substantial rebel groups have been defeated, there is still great discontent which is unlikely to be eased by an economic revival in the near future. In addition, the territory has become an arena for a number of external actors, with Turkey wishing to take on the Kurds as well as continual skirmishing between Iran and Israel. Late in his presidency, when he was being criticized for his lack of engagement in Syria, Obama indicated that he thought that Putin was welcome to Syria and its many problems. Russia now has a central position in Middle East affairs, but it is far from hegemonic.

A determination to be recognized as a great power was a feature of the old Soviet Union as much as it is of the new Russia. Once confidence in the innate superiority of Marxism-Leninism—the presumed basis for a world revolution—was lost, Soviet leaders were desperate to get American presidents to acknowledge them as equals. The only area in which this could be done was in military power. That is why so much effort was put into measuring the military balance by counting missiles and their warheads. Putin has acknowledged that, unlike China, Russia cannot be considered an economic superpower. He has insisted, however, that it is a nuclear superpower, a feature to which he drew regular attention in the months after the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Ukraine's Donbas. He was also concerned that despite Russia's veto-wielding permanent membership of the Security Council, the U.S. and the UK consistently refused to consult seriously on their foreign policy gambles and seemed unconcerned that they were breaking rules they had set for others. Lastly, there was always anxiety that the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine were ways of softening countries up for NATO and EU membership and that the ultimate target of this subversion was Russia.

In all of this, Putin was largely thinking about relations with what he would like to consider his peer competitors. In terms of relationships with potential allies and clients, Leninist vanguardism remains strong. The Soviet Union never pretended that the alliance with Mao's China or the Warsaw Pact, bringing together the satellite states in central and eastern Europe, involved equals. In the end, the orders came from Moscow. Even sympathetic Communist parties in non-communist countries were kept under central control through the Comintern. The Soviet leadership questioned its alliance with China when it feared that the adventurism of Mao Zedong would lead to trouble. It was unsure how much support to give Arab clients in the Middle East. In the end, in 1989, it was unwilling to back up its erstwhile puppet regimes in the satellite states.

This has continued with the Russian Federation. Neither Yeltsin nor Putin could accept that the new institutional forms they proposed to establish good working relationships with the other former Soviet states—whether the Commonwealth of Independent States or the Eurasian Union—could be anything other than Russian-led. Russia has a command rather than consultative approach to leadership. This may be cultural but also reflects the narrow basis of its power beyond the purely military means. Its weakness lies in its economy. It always needs to be kept in mind that Russia's GDP is close to Spain's and it has major problems with its infrastructure and lack of investment, long-term environmental and demographic issues, and concerns about corruption and cronyism.

This helps explain why, in an effort to extend its sources of power, it has turned naturally to cyber and information warfare. These tactics certainly add to

its repertoire and much can be achieved at a far lower cost than is the case with traditional forms of hard power. We have discovered how effective they can be, although that discovery also pointed to their practical limitations. Cyber attacks of varying degrees of severity are now a feature of modern life. The attacks can come from computer-literate petty criminals to modern mafias to agents of states looking for ways to harm opponents. We have seen government systems brought down, energy supplies disrupted, and companies pushed into real difficulties. Disruption and interference never feel far away. Yet no country has been brought to its knees with such an attack. The "electronic Pearl Harbor" about which so many have warned has yet to occur. The reasons for this lie partly in the difficulty of mounting such an attack with certainty and partly with a victim's capacity for recovery. But it also lies with the attacker's problems with follow-up. For a start, there is the question of attribution. As soon as responsibility is acknowledged, there is the possibility of retaliation in kind or even worse. If no responsibility is acknowledged, how can there be political demands to build on the coercive effect of the attacks? If the victim agrees to some political demands, how can the attacker ensure that they are enforced when there is no desire to escalate to the next step of armed force?

Information operations also raise issues of attribution and potential retaliation, but they are in principle more insidious and effective. If you can get people to doubt their own political systems and despise their own leaders, then they might be open to radical and even insurrectionary suggestions. For an information campaign to be successful it needs to be credible. Brazen lying and bizarre conspiracy theories dreamed up for immediate effect will not do. Successful campaigns will pick up on concerns and ideas rooted in the targeted communities, amplifying key themes and twisting them where possible. We are not talking about precision-guided thoughts that can be lobbed *en masse* into populations as

a form of collective brainwashing so much as an ability to take advantage of disaffection within the target community. There is nothing particularly new with either cyber or information campaigns—in the past they came under the heading of sabotage, subversion, and propaganda. They can now be implemented with great speed and reach, but they have yet to take away from contemporary conflict its indefinite and indecisive character.

Thus, to the extent that Putin's campaigns against the West have made a difference, this is a function of the West's failings in the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 2007–8 financial crash, and so on. This comes back to the importance of the ideological battle which was generally assumed to have been won in 1990. The idea that liberal capitalism successfully coupled freedom with prosperity has been challenged. The globalism which was celebrated now turns out to have downsides, bringing social dislocation alongside its vaunted economic benefits. The ideological foundations of the Western network have not been wholly eroded but they have been shaken and need refreshment.

Western weakness can help explain the bold Russian action in Syria, but there are limits to Moscow's ability to construct a wider network. Its armed forces have limited reach, and further military investment may take vital resources away from the economy. It is in no position to hand out too many economic favors. When it has done so it has not always chosen wisely (for example, Venezuela). Nor is there a compelling competing ideology. Putin has offered illiberalism. In his version, he would deny that it was anti-democratic, on the grounds that his approach has popular support and his party wins elections, even if his candidates need some extra-legal help on occasion. It is about supporting national pride and dismissing minority concerns, praising social and religious conservatism. By its nature this is an ideology that has an appeal to elites even if it is naturally associated with populism.

He is not the only leader to find illiberalism attractive. This is an ideological predisposition that has echoes elsewhere in Europe, notably in former communist states. It can be found in Erdogan's Turkey and in Xi's China. President Trump might be tempted. By its nature, however, hardline nationalism is an awkward basis for a universal ideology, as the harder it gets the more it must worry about being contaminated and diluted by others. Polish nationalism is at odds with Russian nationalism even though there may be similar socio-political attitudes. The degree of authoritarianism also varies. Few political systems can suppress all dissenting views, especially when elections still take place. In the end, if there can be only one approved view the system becomes rigid and the leaders hear only themselves. If you live by fake news, in the end you will confuse yourself.

This is one reason why illiberalism lacks a record of economic success. The more illiberal countries in the EU benefit from the single market. Elsewhere, however, the tendency is for the elite to use the system to avoid accountability, which encourages corruption and discourages enterprise. Neither Russia nor Turkey has been able to demonstrate that illiberalism brings economic benefits. China is the example to show that it can deliver, but of course much of its most spectacular growth occurred when it was still relatively open and had a rotating leadership.

A Rising Great Power

Today China is seen as the natural successor to the United States as the dominant power. Its dramatic economic growth has propelled it from an also-ran into the front rank of powers. It also has size. Its territory is vast and its population large. In addition, after downplaying its great power ambitions, it has recently become more open and assertive. It has been throwing its weight about its region in an old-fashioned sense of redrawing borders to suit itself, notably in the South China

Sea. Should Taiwan declare itself independent from the mainland, Beijing has declared that this would be a declaration of civil war and it would respond accordingly. China is also acutely conscious of the ideological aspects of power. With its collectivist and Leninist roots, it is now taking illiberalism to new levels. It is exploring elaborate forms of social control, using the most advanced technologies to do so, keeping track of any dissident behavior and cracking down hard on dissident communities (most cruelly the Uyghurs). Its standards for what is and is not acceptable behavior has been extended quite vigorously to its external relations, taking exception to any criticism and always looking to punish the critics. The complex interaction between its domestic affairs and international status has been demonstrated by its struggle to cope with the Coronavirus and the closure of borders and air connections.

Its size and economic importance mean that arguably China does not need to develop its own international network to promote its great power status. Yet it is doing so with its Belt and Road Initiative, which is establishing infrastructure projects in numerous locales across the world. If this is successful, it could create a remarkable inter-connected network of interests that would underpin China's global role. Just as likely, the success will be patchy. Many of the countries chosen for projects are unstable and have poor development records, and major infrastructure projects may not serve them well. As these projects often rely on Chinese expertise and capabilities, they do not always benefit the local population. Lacking a secure economic basis, they can become a source of debt, which is likely to be hung around the supposed beneficiaries. There have been accusations of neo-colonialism. There is also the question of the security of the projects and personnel and how China will protect those who get caught up in conflicts.

A rule of thumb might be that where Chinese investment can provide a real stimulus it will be

Aerial view of Gwadar (Balochistan), western Pakistan, by the Arab Sea. This port is being leased to China for 43 years under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and is part of China's "String of Pearls." (Bjoertvedt, November 7, 2016)

successful, though this will be in countries that already have reasonably mature economies, but that elsewhere it may be accumulating liabilities and resentments. The main point, however, is to recognize the initiative as a way of establishing a great power status beyond its regional position and that it does not avoid the issues with all attempts to do this, including the needs of those who have accepted a degree of dependency. Moreover, its readiness to assert its power has led to it being treated warily not only by the United States but also other regional powers. Japan, India, Indonesia, and Australia are all watching it carefully.

So, while great power status is assumed to be the natural objective for large states, it can be a mixed blessing. There are satisfactions to be gained in getting one's way and setting conditions to which others must adjust as best they can. But to the extent that their expanded influence depends on the acquiescence and support of others, they acquire obligations which they are not always willing or able to discharge. As soon as they fail to assist their supporters, they lose some of the aura of power. The habits and expectations associated with great power status are embedded in Washington, Moscow, and Beijing, but now less so in London, Paris, and Berlin. They were once imperial capitals, proud of the territories they had conquered and ready to hold on to them tenaciously even as local populations objected and resisted. Their empires defined them as international players and shaped their armed forces and diplomatic endeavors. Eventually they became untenable. The processes of decolonization were often painful and there are legacy issues. But there are no serious suggestions that this is an age to which Western European countries would wish to

return even if they could. Issues of power and interest never go away. Questions of values and ideology will continue to influence international behavior. But at some point, the idea that great power status is something to be sought and welcomed for its own sake may also appear anomalous. PRISM

Notes

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HOW CIVIL RESISTANCE WORKS (AND WHY IT MATTERS TO SOF)
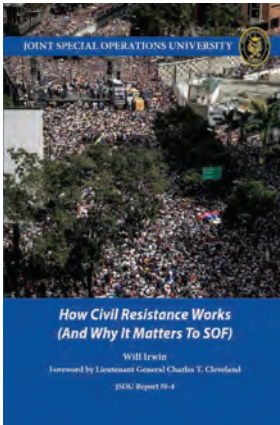
By Will Irwin

Mr. Will Irwin reminds us in this extremely timely and well-written monograph, as John F. Kennedy observed more than a half century ago, that those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable. Million man protest marches in Hong Kong, riots and rebellion in Caracas, continued rumors of widespread discontent in Tehran, sabotage in the face of unspeakable brutality in North Korea, sectarian civil war in Syria, and the unrelenting assault on liberal democracy by the dictatorial regime in Moscow—the headlines of today have their seeds in the inherent fear of tyrants. It is that fear on which America must capitalize and be prepared to use to our advantage. These disturbances reveal the critical role that America's special warfare units play in the contemporary era of nation state competition and conflict, for it's their own people that our enemies fear most. Will Irwin's monograph is a timely and important contribution to what will eventually become canon for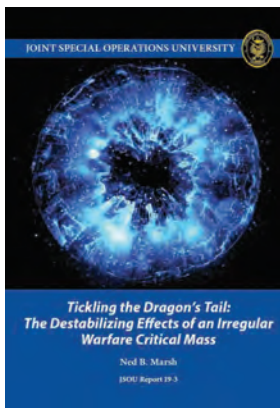 the American Way of Irregular War and the basis for the professional military education of its uniformed and civilian irregular warfare practitioners.

TICKLING THE DRAGON'S TAIL: THE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS OF AN IRREGULAR WARFARE CRITICAL MASS

By Ned B. Marsh

Lieutenant Colonel Ned Marsh wrote this monograph while attending the U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies. He proposes that over time a metaphorical critical mass constructed of global irregular warfare (IW) actors, state and non-state, has developed. The core is now active and exists within an enabling contemporary environmental structure. State warfare hegemony has decreased conventional competition and increased asymmetrical strategies. The result of this has been the emergence of IW as a prominent strategy and a self-propagating chain reaction of IW activity. This activity is releasing increasingly dangerous levels of destabilizing effect. This monograph reviews IW theory and history, and describes the contemporary operational paradigm. It analyzes the effect of cumulative IW activity and discusses prescriptive approaches to the problem. It concludes that, if stability is an objective, then counter-IW must be holistically undertaken with strategies to reduce conventional warfare competition.

CURRENT TRENDS IN SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES
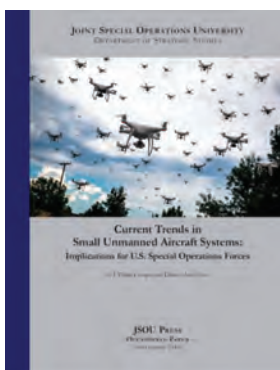
By J. Philip Craiger and Diane Maye Zorri

In this new occasional paper, Dr. J. Philip Craiger and Dr. Diane Maye Zorri explore current trends in small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) technology and its applications to Special Operations Forces (SOF). The paper begins with analysis of the definition and classification of sUAS, their major applications, and characteristics. The authors then present sUAS military applications, threats, current/future threat scenarios, and counter-sUAS capabilities and technology. The authors conclude with a look at the five-year trends in sUAS to include cyber-enabled counter-sUAS. Setting the stage in their introduction the authors state, "As armed forces around the world continue to invest in research and development of sUAS technologies, there will be tremendous potential to revolutionize warfare, particularly in context of special operations."

Wall of former KGB headquarters in Vilnius inscribed with names of those tortured and killed in its basement.
(Phillip Carter)

ROC(K) Solid Preparedness
Resistance Operations Concept in the Shadow of Russia

By Otto Fiala and Ulrica Pettersson

"We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender."
(Winston Churchill, June 4, 1940)

During the Cold War, NATO, led by the United States, and the Warsaw Pact, led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), maintained vast numbers of military forces in Central Europe, facing each other along what Winston Churchill labeled as an Iron Curtain. On the western side, in addition to these conventional forces, several NATO allies also maintained what were called "stay-behind networks," intended to remain within territory potentially over-run by Soviet forces in a war. These networks were established to remain within Soviet occupied territories, to conduct sabotage and other guerrilla type activities against Soviet forces, and to send intelligence to NATO allies. The networks were intended to engage in resistance against a Soviet occupation. Upon the dissolution of the USSR, these stay-behind networks were completely dismantled, due to the perception that the threat had disappeared with the end of the Cold War.

In the 21st century, Russia, which had been the core of the former USSR, became resurgent and began to re-assert its power and influence in and over several former Soviet Republics. In 2008, Russia seized the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2014, Russia seized the Crimea from Ukraine and continues to support separatist activities in Eastern Ukraine. These aggressive acts, coupled with additional aggressive Russian behavior toward the Baltic nations, prompted the 2014 U.S. European Reassurance Initiative, renamed the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) in 2017. This was an initiative of the Obama administration in 2014, which was included in the Department of Defense's FY 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget request to Congress. Since FY 2015, the initiative has provided funding in support of five lines of effort: (1) Increased Presence, (2) Exercises (e.g., Exercise BALTOPS is an annual, multinational maritime exercise focused on interoperability, maritime security, and cooperation among Baltic Sea and regional partners) and Training, (3) Enhanced Prepositioning, (4) Improved Infrastructure, and

COL(R) O. Fiala, PhD, JD is the author of the Resistance Operating Concept at SOCEUR. Ulrica Pettersson PhD, is an Associate Professor at Swedish Defence University.)

(5) Building Partnership Capacity. Additionally, at NATO's 2016 summit in Warsaw, the United States sponsored and NATO adopted the enhanced forward presence (EFP) program to expand the number of NATO participants forward deploying troops into the Baltic NATO allies on a rotational basis. This resulted in a continuing NATO program whereby the United States rotates a forward deployed battalion size Army presence in northeastern Poland, near the Suwalki Corridor, while the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany rotate similar-sized elements in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, respectively. These sponsoring nations rotate their troops on a heel-to-toe basis approximately every six months, resulting in a seamless continuous presence.

Concurrently, United States Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) began its concept exploration of resistance, as it recognized that the forward deployed NATO conventional forces were not adequate to defeat a major incursion. SOCEUR then collaborated with the Baltic NATO allies Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as with other allies and partners in seminars and workshops, to relearn what had been forgotten from the previous stay-behind organizations of Western Europe, to add new knowledge, and to develop a practical and effective Resistance Concept.

Figure 1. The Baltic States[1]

Source: Illustration generated by authors.

The Baltic Region

The Baltic states each have relatively small populations: Estonia has a population of about 1.3 million people; Latvia has about 2 million; and Lithuania has about 2.8 million.[2] Within these populations are many ethnic Russians. The populations of Estonia and Latvia are each about one quarter ethnic Russian, and Lithuania has a much smaller Russian population of about 6 percent.[3] Most of the ethnic Russian population in each of the three Baltic states originated from Russian migration into those states during the Cold War, encouraged by the Soviet Union, and cannot trace their family history in the Baltics prior to World War II (WWII). However, most of those ethnic Russians or Russophones remain within those countries and within the European Union because they do not want to live in Russia.[4] Though these Russian populations are not emigrating to Russia for many reasons, including the economic advantage of living inside the European Union, they are perceived as a threat by many non-Russian Baltic citizens. They are deemed possible targets for manipulation by Russian propaganda and information warfare, which could become acute and turn some ethnic Russians against their ethnic Baltic friends and neighbors if Russia decided to infringe on the sovereignty of any of the Baltic nations.

Each Baltic state shares borders with Russia. Estonia and Latvia are bordered by Russia to the east and Lithuania borders Russia's oblast, or exclave of Kaliningrad, to its southwest. The geographic situation of these Baltic nations provides them no strategic depth against an adversarial Russia.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each have a long history with Russian domination. Estonia and Latvia were conquered by the Russian Empire in 1710 and were dominated by it for two centuries until after World War I. Estonia and Latvia were only free from Russia for the twenty years between the World Wars. At the beginning of WWII, when the Soviets partitioned Poland between themselves and Germany, as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Estonia and Latvia lost their status as independent nations and were incorporated into the Soviet Union as Soviet Socialist Republics. They did not regain their national independence until 1991, during the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Lithuania was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until the late 18th century when most of it became part of Russian territory. After that, it endured similar Russian domination as its two Baltic cousin states, experiencing independence from Russian domination only between the two World Wars. Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union as a Soviet Socialist Republic at the same time as were Estonia and Latvia, and it was the first Baltic state to declare independence from the Soviet Union in 1990.

Resilience within Resistance - The Forest Brothers

The "Forest Brothers" was the title applied to the organized, anti-communist, anti-Soviet resistance effort in the Baltic states. Though the term was first used to describe people in the Baltic region who fled to rural areas to escape the effects of the Russian Revolution of 1905, the name earned prominence during the Baltic people's resistance during their second occupation by the Soviets. That resistance began in 1944 and lasted until 1953.

In 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany placed the Baltics in the Soviet sphere and allowed the Soviets to annex the region.[5,6] They soon suffered collectivization, deportations, and killings. When Nazi Germany reneged on its pact with the Soviets and invaded the Baltics in June 1941, the German troops were welcomed as liberators and the lesser of two evils. Having experienced massive repression under the Soviets, many Baltic citizens cooperated and fought with the Germans against the Soviets, including the early bands of Forest Brothers.[7]

After several years of Nazi occupation, the Soviets re-established their power over the Baltics in 1944 and began a more devastating wave of repression than their first occupation. Characterized by increased deportations of many former government officials and senior political party members, and more killings, the Soviets sent their secret police (NKVD – People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) against competing sources of power such as political and religious leaders. Additionally, large farms were confiscated and collectivized, large bank deposits were impounded, and local currency was banned.[8] The armed forces of each nation were purged, staffed with Russian commissars, and incorporated into the Red Army. Tens of thousands of people were deported to Siberia.[9]

In Estonia, active resisters again became known as Forest Brothers.[10] Gradually, the resisters in Latvia and Lithuania joined those in Estonia to engage in military actions against Red Army units and collaborators.[11] The main strengths of the Forest Brothers were their loose organization, ability to blend into their environment, and a generally supportive population.[12] The main hope of the Forest Brothers was the Atlantic Charter, a joint statement by the United States and Great Britain, issued on August 14, 1941, containing eight "common principles."[13] The Forest Brothers based their resistance efforts on one particular principle, from among the eight; that all countries could rightfully restore their self-government following occupation, and that all people could choose their form of government.

As resistance developed throughout the Baltics, the movements considered it vital to establish credibility and legitimacy to attain Western assistance. Each national element employed similar tactics and the same strategic aims, but did not engage in direct operational coordination. They wore uniforms, organized themselves along military lines, maintained military discipline, and initially engaged the Soviet forces in conventional battles. They expected to receive weapons, ammunition, medicine, communications equipment, and political support in fulfilment of the Atlantic Charter, which affirmed that all nations had a right to regain their lost independence.[14] Resistance operations were intended to support the strategic goal of national liberation by the West, based on the declaration of "self-determination."[15] This hope remained even after the western powers ceded the Baltics to the Soviet sphere of influence at Yalta.

The anti-Soviet resistance in the Baltics began with large, conventional style battles between organized Baltic Forest Brothers units—with as many as fifty thousand members throughout the Baltics—and the NKVD, from July 1944 to May 1946. These battles resulted in significant numbers of casualties on both sides. However, only the Soviets could easily replenish their numbers.[16]

From May 1946 through November 1948, extensive battles against Soviet security forces were avoided. The overall number of active fighters went down to about 4,000, divided into smaller groups, and they moved into camouflaged underground bunkers in the forests.[17]

From November 1948 to May 1953, the resistance movement continued losing strength, particularly active fighters, and thus devoted greater attention to propaganda work through print media, in an attempt to sustain nation-wide hope in regaining independence.[18] However, despite thousands of copies of dozens of periodicals, songs, prayer books, and proclamations printed in cramped underground bunkers, they could not overcome Soviet information dominance among the population. The resistance was limited to secret, underground printing presses with a limited ability to distribute printed material, while the Soviets dominated all the major newspapers and radio stations which distributed only pro-Soviet information.[19]

Throughout the Baltics, heavy blows to the movement were dealt by mass deportations and

collectivization beginning in March 1949. Many of the farmers and their families who supported the Forest Brothers were deported to Siberia. Removing those farmers and forcing collectivization robbed the Forest Brothers of their logistical support. Further, the NKVD's consistent improvements in their ability to locate, penetrate, and destroy resistance groups took a severe toll on the morale of the Brothers and the general population.

Eventually, the majority of the population saw the partisans as fighting a lost cause and simply wanted an end to the violence and the disruptions of their lives. Ensuing from battle casualties, subsequent deportation of supporters, and return of members to their legal lives, the numbers of guerrillas within the Forest Brothers declined precipitously. Finally, the peoples of the Baltics realized that after the defeat of Germany and large scale demobilization of western forces, the West would not uphold the Atlantic Charter signed by Churchill and Roosevelt in 1941 and risk igniting a major conflagration in Europe, and therefore material aid would not be given. This caused active resistance to appear increasingly futile. The Forest Brothers' reliance on the intervention of the West in order to free them from the Soviets, by maintaining themselves as a "force-in-being" ready to assist the allied armies as they fought the Soviets, had failed. Infiltration and betrayals became the prevalent Soviet method of finding and dismembering the remaining partisan cells, while more people sought some form of accommodation to a situation many viewed as irreversible. The relentless NKVD became increasingly ruthless.[20] Soviet suppression, combined with popular despondence, gradual acceptance of their situation, and a general amnesty granted by Soviet authorities upon the death of Stalin in 1953, resulted ultimately in the Soviet suppression of active armed resistance. After 1953, resistance became increasingly infrequent, although some partisans held out in the forests for decades.[21]

During both the anti-Nazi and the anti-Soviet fights, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania retained a strong sense of nationalism. They had failed in the goal of their resistance, to re-establish independent self-government, but their resilience persevered. This resilient nationalism was kept alive through retention of their native languages, church gatherings despite atheistic Soviet rule, and family and community gatherings where their national identities were subtly and non-threateningly asserted. This resilience provided the backbone for decades of quiet and passive resistance to Soviet domination and the retention of hope for eventual freedom. With the fall of the USSR in December 1991, sovereignty was reclaimed by each nation, with Lithuania becoming the first Soviet Republic to break from the Soviet Union in 1990, followed in 1991 by Estonia and Latvia.

Norwegian Resistance Under German Occupation

During WWII the Norwegian resistance movement played an important role in the battle against the Nazis. They managed to do substantial damage to the occupying forces, taking advantage of Norway's geography, a long coastline with vast amounts of uninhabited land and a long border with neutral Sweden that could be crossed over easily.

At the beginning of the war, there was a race between the United States and Germany to create atomic weapons. In Germany, atomic research had made significant progress; however, the Germans needed the critical element of heavy water to create an atomic reactor.[22] The reactor was a stepping stone to produce plutonium and in the long run an atomic bomb. This very rare water was only produced on a commercial scale in one place in Europe, on an ice-bound fortress in Vemork in the north of Nazi-occupied Norway.

The need for a covert operation behind enemy lines was now an urgent requirement.[23] Destroying the heavy water production, or sabotaging its

transportation, seemed to be the only way for the Allies to hinder Nazi Germany's forward progress toward an atomic bomb.

Britain had established a secret unit known as the Special Operations Executive (SOE) which trained operatives for covert sabotage raids. They recruited Norwegians who fled to England or Sweden during Germany's invasion and occupation. In order for the operatives to prepare for their future mission back behind enemy lines in Norway, they were put through a type of Special Forces training. It included, for example, climbing mountains, fording rivers, and outdoor camping for extended periods.[24]

In 1942, a reconnaissance group, code-named Operation Grouse (four Norwegians from SOE), was deployed into Norway along with a glider containing a strike force, Operation Freshman (combat engineers from 1st Airborne Division). However, Operation Freshman failed tragically on November 19, due to navigational difficulties and severe weather. Both aircraft and glider crashed into a mountain with some of the troops killed outright, and others captured before being quickly executed by the German response unit. Despite the highly dangerous and inhospitable terrain, SOE decided to leave the Operation Grouse team in place to do reconnaissance in preparation for a subsequent mission, Operation Gunnerside (an assault team). After four bitter winter months in theater, Operation Grouse finally linked up with Operation Gunnerside. On February 27, 1943, nine Norwegian saboteurs from the Operation Gunnerside team scaled the cliff in Vemork in cold and difficult weather and managed to blow up the German-controlled heavy water production.[25] The group was led by 23-year-old, Joachim Rønneberg, who interestingly did not have any previous military experience, apart from his SOE training and its special explosive technology component.

For the command team back in London, the wait for indications of the mission outcome was an anxious one, but at 11:55 hours on March 10,

the British Prime Minister and the Chief of SOE received the good news at Baker Street: "Operation carried out with 100 percent success."[26]

Joachim's group included a disparate collection of individuals, including a teacher, a postman, and a tour guide who decided to do something about Norway being invaded. Joachim later stated, "You have to fight for your freedom and for peace. You have to fight for it every day, to keep it. It's like a glass boat; it's easy to break; it's easy to lose."

The Norwegian example shows how ordinary people can do extraordinary things when motivated by a strong belief in their right to freedom. Operation Gunnerside highlights one specific group of young men, but there were hundreds of others—men and women—who performed equally patriotic actions in the name of resistance. It also highlights the importance of readiness and preparedness to strengthen resilience. Acknowledging this, the Swedish Government has recently published and distributed a pamphlet of important information for the population of Sweden: *If Crisis or War Comes.* The purpose of the brochure is "to help us become well prepared for everything, from serious accidents, extreme weather and IT attacks, to military conflicts."[27] It contains the basics of emergency preparedness, total defence and warning systems.

From a long term perspective, actions like this can help the public prepare for and cope with disinformation during potential hybrid warfare, manage to survive with limited electricity, food, and water resources, and finally maintain the "...we will never surrender"[28] mentality. The successful SOE raid on the Norsk Hydro Plant is also an important example of the value of international cooperation against a highly capable and more powerful opponent.

The Potential Russian Threat to the Baltics

After the fall of the USSR, each of the Baltic states joined the European Union for economic security

and NATO for military security. Their inclusion in NATO, in particular, meant that NATO now shares borders with Russia. Additionally, the loss of these three former Soviet Republics physically separated Russian Kaliningrad from the rest of Russia. As a port city, Kaliningrad's sea lines of communication provide its primary link to Russia, and it is Russia's only Baltic port that does not freeze in the winter. A rail line running along the Suwalki Gap provides Russian land access facilitated by agreements with Lithuania.

The Suwalki Gap lies in the northeast corner of Poland and southwest part of Lithuania. It is a marshy, lightly populated lowland area along the sixty-mile border between Poland and Lithuania. It is a strategically situated, narrow pass of land connecting Kaliningrad to Belarus, through Lithuania. Belarus often cooperates with Russia, for example conducting joint military exercises. The rail link facilitates Russian ground transportation between Kaliningrad and Belarus, based on the agreement with Lithuania. Russian control of the Suwalki Gap would allow it unfettered, year-round access along a direct land route from the Baltic Sea to Moscow. This would greatly enhance its ability to control the Baltic region, while granting it a significant military logistical advantage over NATO. Russian control of the Gap would physically cut off the Baltic states from the rest of NATO.[29] The Baltics could then only be accessed by NATO by sea and air over the Baltic Sea, reversing the present situation, vis-a-vis Russian access to Kaliningrad.

Russia has a significant regional advantage and the Kremlin is upgrading its military, to include two new divisions in its western region. Since 2015, Russia has been increasing its military presence in Kaliningrad. Kaliningrad also has a formidable layered air defense, including two air bases in Chernyakhovsk and Donskoye that house S-300 and S-400 surface-to-air missile defense systems, fighters, and strike aircraft. These forces could quickly turn the Baltic Sea region into a de facto no-fly zone.[30]

Kaliningrad now hosts approximately 20,000 Russian military personnel, including a naval infantry unit. Its substantial anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities are backed by an additional 120,000 personnel and large armored formations on the eastern side of the Baltics, in Russia's Western Military District. Russia also has substantial air assets in the region, as well as warships in the Baltic Sea.[31]

Russia was most likely responsible for the massive cyber-attack against the Estonian government in 2007, additional cyber-attacks on Baltic governments, and kidnapping an Estonian intelligence operative on Estonian soil. Russian agents have also been expelled from the Baltics for spying on military positions. Similar to the rhetoric it employed to justify military invasions of territory in Eastern Ukraine and Georgia, Moscow has alleged anti-Russian discrimination against ethnically Russian minorities in all three countries. Russian forces in the Western Military District, which borders Estonia and part of Latvia, have performed large-scale exercises simulating an invasion of the Baltics and strikes on neighboring Poland. These exercises can provide practice for invasions, while a future iteration could be used to mask an actual attack.[32] In fact, a 2016 RAND study war-gamed a Russian attack in the Baltics. It found that there were inadequate conventional NATO forces forward positioned to stop such an attack, and that Russian forces could reach the outskirts of the Estonian and Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga in 60 hours.[33]

Each of these three Baltic former Soviet Republics are NATO members. An incursion against any one of them would trigger NATO's Article 5, which would oblige NATO to use force if necessary to restore their territorial integrity. However, unlike during the Cold War, the United States does not have large conventional forces based on the eastern periphery of NATO against a Russian threat.

Russia, on the other hand, does have large forces in close proximity to the Baltics. In 2017,

Russian Zapad Exercise, 2017. (Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, September 14, 2017)

Russia conducted its ZAPAD exercise in the Western Military District which borders Estonia, Latvia, and Belarus. Russia conducts annual large-scale exercises that are rotated among its four military districts (Southern, Western, Eastern and Central), so a large-scale exercise, ZAPAD, is conducted near the Baltics every four years. At the time, many Western observers were concerned because Russia used these large-scale exercises in 2008 and 2014 as precursors to invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, respectively.[34]

Adding to Western concerns over the exercise, the Russians publicly underestimated the number of Russian soldiers participating in the exercise in order to avoid international notification requirements agreed to in the Vienna Documents (threshold of 13,000). This Russian practice plays into Russian military deception known as *maskirovka*. Western analysts estimated that approximately 60-70,000 Russian troops participated in the exercise, with about 12,000 inside Belarus which borders Latvia

and Lithuania, and with which Russia has a military defense treaty. The demonstrated Russian capability, coupled with its deceptive maskirovka practices, caused concern among many analysts.[35] Though they did not make it appear obvious that they could quickly invade one or all Baltic nations, their demonstrated capabilities did nothing to disprove the above-mentioned RAND study estimate.

In fact, the Russians have caused non-NATO member Sweden to take several protective measures in recent years, among them the distribution to all Swedish households of the *If Crisis or War Comes* pamphlet by the Ministry for Society Protection and Preparedness. Sweden had not distributed anything similar since 1943 during WWII. In 2016, Sweden also reintroduced a permanent military presence on the strategic island of Gotland which could be a Russian target due to its location if conflict broke out between NATO and Russia. In September 2017, Sweden conducted a military exercise entitled

Aurora, involving troops from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Norway, and the United States. In 2018, Sweden also reintroduced conscription, selecting 4,000 young people for service.[36]

SOCEUR Advances the Resistance Concept

In 2013, even prior to the Russian invasion of Crimea, SOCEUR began a project to examine resistance warfare capabilities within doctrinal unconventional warfare. This was to be done through developing a network of individual academic and practitioner subject matter experts and conducting multinational workshops to gather knowledge and disseminate it to a core group. The first workshop was presciently held in Warsaw, Poland in January 2014. The next month, Russia seized and annexed Crimea. That Russian action solidified the requirement to continue exploration of this topic and the capabilities that could be developed. The results of those continuing workshops and later Tabletop Exercises (TTX) formed the outline of what became known as the Resistance Operating Concept (ROC).[37]

Through this process it was clearly determined that resilience is a required attribute. Resilience is the foundation on which the "national will" to resist will be built. Therefore, national resilience is critical to an effective national defense, reinforcing the motivation to restore sovereignty over territory infringed upon. A government therefore must take

practical measures to assess the nation's vulnerabilities and to find ways to repair or protect them from foreign exploitation.

Externally, a government must strengthen relevant allied and partner nation relationships and increase interoperability with those nations in peacetime, resulting in a method of deterrence to underscore a cost-prohibitive outcome to any adversarial aggression. Internally, national and local emergency plans for natural and manmade disasters must be incorporated into national resilience. An incursion by a foreign power would likely bring effects upon the population that require a civil disaster relief response for immediate mitigation. Encompassing both external and internal efforts, government communications require notification of potential external threats to its own population, along with knowledge of prudent preparations to counter or mitigate those threats. These preparations, to ensure effective responses, require congruency within the necessary institutional and legal structures and policies to establish, develop, and conduct resistance if and when necessary, as well as individual measures of preparedness.[38]

The ROC defines *resilience* as "the will and ability to withstand external pressure and influences and/or recover from the effects of those pressures or influences;"[40] thus, national resilience is established during peacetime in a pre-crisis environment. National resiliency is then enhanced with the formation of a national resistance capability. The ROC

Figure 2. Resilience and Resistance in National Defense[39]

Source: After Action Report, Unconventional Warfare/Resistance Seminar, Baltic Defense College, Tartu, Estonia.

demonstrates the significance of national resilience as a fundamental condition and differentiates resilience from resistance; it is a necessary condition and critical cornerstone of national defense.

Planning for a resistance capability is a part of enhancing national resilience. Government organizational authorizations within its legal framework allow for planning and preparation activities where cadres are trained, equipment obtained, and support arrangements made with allies and partners. The ROC defines resistance as "a nation's organized, whole-of-society effort, encompassing the full range of activities from nonviolent to violent, led by a legally established government (potentially exiled/displaced or shadow) to reestablish independence and autonomy within its sovereign territory that has been wholly or partially occupied by a foreign power." The ROC's primary focus is the development of a state-authorized, trained, equipped, and organized resistance capability prior to an incursion. This is a component of national preparation for the possibility of full or partial occupation. Resistance, as a form of warfare, is part of a layered national defense.

The ROC

The lessons learned from the above cases, as well as others from WWII and the Cold War are encompassed in the ROC. None of the resistance organizations from WWII, such as the above-mentioned Forest Brothers, the multitude of organizations comprising the French resistance, the western-oriented Polish resistance, or the above Norwegian resistance action had the benefit of extended pre-conflict planning and preparation. After WWII, several NATO states, learning lessons from that war, established resistance or stay-behind networks in case of Soviet invasion. Yet, many of those stay-behind networks, though supported with personnel, training, and equipment, were established without the benefit of an adequate,

transparent, and complete legal framework, which eventually rendered political problems once their existence became known.

The ROC represents an effort to comprehensively, but succinctly, present the core elements of effective *resistance* and its underlying *resilience* within a whole of government framework by presenting and building upon what came before. These core elements of resistance involve pre-crisis planning and establishment of a resistance organization with the capabilities of recruitment, intelligence, financing, logistics sustainment, training, communications and security. It lays out the details of the resistance components of an underground, auxiliary, guerrillas, and a possible public component (if the occupier allows such a public component). It also describes the networks necessary for a resistance capability to function. The components and networks are not new. These are all contained in post-WWII U.S. Army doctrine and professional literature. A pre-crisis resistance capability can be factored into a nation's layered defense while potential adversaries must be made aware of this capability in order for it to be factored into a nation's deterrence. The objective of this government-established resistance capability is to restore national sovereignty and return the nation to its pre-conflict political status. The intent of the ROC is to assemble as much of this information as practical and useful within its covers to serve as a compendium of the topic and to assist in common planning efforts.

In the past several years, SOCEUR worked with the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) to develop resistance-focused courses for U.S. personnel deploying to the SOCEUR Area of Operations, as well as courses designed specifically for concerned allies and partners. The ROC forms the basis of JSOU's National Resistance course available to allies and partners and is used as reference material in other JSOU courses. It is the primary resistance reference document for several allies and partners and

is used at the Army's Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Ft. Bragg. The ROC was published by the Swedish Defense University in December 2019 and will be published by JSOU in the second quarter of FY20. The ROC is fulfilling its role as a collaborative planning guide.

Conclusion

Resistance is a form of warfare. It can be planned. The ROC is simply a resistance primer. It contains guidance and advice toward establishing a nationally authorized resistance capability. It advises the establishment of a pre-crisis organization for nations under greater threat, for the purpose of having a unified resistance effort against an occupier, and renders specific organizational guidance. This stakes out the conceptual political space in a crisis by reducing the prospect of competing ideologies or organizations seeking a political goal other than re-establishing the pre-conflict political order. The focus is on the legitimate re-establishment of national sovereignty. This allows the nation to resume its natural progression, guided by the will of the people.

This government-organized resistance is only used against an occupier and it is always controlled by the government, even if that government is exiled. The goal is to re-establish lost sovereignty over territory, the *status quo ante*. A potential opponent's knowledge of the will and capability of a nation to resist occupation will be factored into the calculation of a potential occupier and thus serve as a part of that nation's deterrence. The ROC is an attempt to better understand and integrate resistance planning efforts, both within the nation seeking to establish a resistance organization, and the nation(s) seeking to support that effort. PRISM

Notes

[1] Image from Encyclopædia Britannica website, published by Encyclopædia Britannica, url https://www.britannica.com/place/Baltic-states/media/1/50985/62209, accessed 20 July 2019.

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[5] James S. Corum, "A View from Northeastern Europe: The Baltic States and the Russian Regime." *South Central Review* vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 130.

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[8] Mart Laar, *War in the Woods: Estonia's Struggle for Survival*, 1944-1956 (Washington D.C.: Compass Press, 1992), xiv-xv.

[9] Daniel J. Kaszeta, "Lithuanian Resistance to Foreign Occupation 1940-1952," *Lituanus, Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* vol. 34, no. 3 (Fall 1988).

[10] Olavi Punga, "Estonia's Forest Brothers in 1941: Goals, Capabilities, and Outcomes," *Combating Terrorism Exchange* vol. 3, no. 3 (August 2013), https://globalecco.org/estonias-forest-brothers-in-1941-goals-capabilities-and-outcomes.

[11] Punga, "Estonia's Forest Brothers in 1941: Goals, Capabilities, and Outcomes."

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[13] The Atlantic Charter was a joint declaration released by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on August 14, 1941 following a meeting of the two heads of government on August 9 and 10, 1941 aboard the U.S.S. *Augusta* in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. The Atlantic Charter provided a broad statement of U.S. and British war aims. The Charter they drafted included eight "common principles" that the United States and Great Britain would be committed to supporting in the postwar world. Most importantly, both the United States and Great Britain were committed to supporting the restoration of self-governments for all countries that had been occupied during the war and allowing all peoples to choose their own form of government. The eight Common Principles: 1. Their countries seek no territorial aggrandizement; 2. Any territorial changes must accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; 3. All peoples should choose the form of government under which they will live; with self-government restored to those who have

been forcibly deprived of them; 4. They will endeavor, to further the enjoyment by all States, to the trade and raw materials of the world needed for economic prosperity; 5. They desire to bring about improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security for all nations; 6. They seek a post war peace affording all nations the means of dwelling in safety and allow people to live in freedom from fear and want; 7. Unhindered freedom of the seas; 8. All nations of the world must abandon the use of force. Nations which threaten aggression must be disarmed, pending a system of general security.

[14] Marlies Voelzke, ed., *War After War, Armed anti-Soviet Resistance in Lithuania, 1944-1953* (Vilnius: The Museum of Genocide Victims of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, no date).

[15] The Atlantic Charter was a joint statement by the United States and Great Britain, issued on 14 August 1941, at the conclusion of a meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt aboard the U.S.S. Augusta in Newfoundland, Canada, through the U.S. was officially neutral at the time and not a belligerent. The document contained eight "common principles." The reference here is to their commitment to the principle of the restoration of self-governments for all countries having been occupied and for all people to choose their form of government.

[16] Voelzke, ed., *War After War, Armed anti-Soviet Resistance in Lithuania.*

[17] Voelzke, ed., *War After War, Armed anti-Soviet Resistance in Lithuania.*

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Iron Dome system intercepts Gaza rockets aimed at the city Ashdod. The Israel Defense Force has adopted methods and technologies to minimize the risk from strategic surprise. (Israel Defense Forces)

AI Singularity and the Growing Risk of Surprise

Lessons from the IDF's Strategic and Operational Learning Processes, 2014-2019

By Meir Finkel

For decades, scholars have pondered the likelihood and effect of computers surpassing human intelligence, often referred to as the singularity. For militaries, artificial intelligence (AI) singularity will be a double-edged sword. We should seek to achieve and employ it, while denying our adversaries the opportunity to do so. When AI singularity does emerge, it will likely have profound implications for tactical capabilities, as well as strategic and operational decisionmaking. U.S. adversaries, including both China and to a lesser extent Russia, will seek to take advantage of the new possibilities AI singularity offers. This article focuses on countering these effects. While the emerging technologies are novel, the need for adaptation is perennial. I will base my recommendations on recent developments in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) "learning machine," which were aimed at enhancing its ability to cope with the accelerated evolution of its adversaries in the Middle East.

In her study "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," Elsa B. Kania identified several capabilities the Chinese are looking to enhance by leveraging AI, including "AI-enabled data fusion, information processing, and intelligence analysis; war-gaming, simulation, and training; defense, offense, and command in information warfare; and intelligent support to command decision-making." She notes that some Chinese thinkers anticipate a "'singularity' on the battlefield, at which human cognition can no longer keep pace with the speed of decisionmaking and tempo of combat in future warfare" and that the "PLA could prove less adverse to the prospect of taking humans 'out of the loop' to achieve an advantage." This development could present a strategic challenge to the United States, she argues. Kania urges the U.S. military to prepare for a future in which the United States may no longer enjoy a clear technological edge, especially by focusing on "the human factors and organizational capacity that are critical determinants of successful defense innovation."[1]

Although it may seem that AI singularity will mainly affect military capabilities at the tactical level, through robotic swarms for example, Kania asserts that "… the PLA may focus on leveraging AI to enhance command and control at the operational and even strategic levels of warfare through intelligent assistance to command decisionmaking, even seeking to enable decisionmaking at machine speed."

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This article focuses on the "human factors and organizational capacity" through an Israeli lens. Though we do not know if and when AI singularity will be achieved, nor by whom, I will present an approach to strategic and operational learning processes that can accelerate the ability both to exploit AI and to minimize its effects when employed by adversaries. Then I will deal with measures aimed at better responding to the rising possibility of AI-based technological and doctrinal surprise.

The recommendations presented here are based on new Israeli practices developed as part of the learning competition between the IDF and its adversaries from 2014 through 2019. They were not designed to deal directly with AI singularity but can offer insights on individual and organizational military learning and counter-surprise capabilities.

The IDF "Learning Machine"

The IDF's need to adapt and change has increased significantly in recent years due to four medium-scale campaigns (2006, 2008-09, 2012, 2014) and numerous small-scale engagements against "hybrid" learning networks, which in recent years include Iran, Hezbollah, the Syrian regime (backed by Russia), Hamas, Islamic Jihad (in Gaza), the Islamic State (in Sinai), Jabhat el-Nusra (on the Syrian Golan Heights), and others. The furious pace of change demanded rapid strategic assessments and operational concept development (for the northern theater), rapid strategic and operational decisionmaking before operations in all theaters, and a higher pace of IDF learning and adaptation to new tactical methods and technological capabilities employed by Israel's adversaries.

Those challenges forced the IDF to develop innovative, new learning and adaptation practices, the main elements of which were:

- A strategic and operational learning accelerator—The Dado Center[2] for Interdisciplinary Military Studies;

- An educational effort focused on learning and changeability that teaches the Design Learning Approach;

- Training scenarios that push uncertainty to the limit and demand real-time adaptation, from platoon leaders to the IDF Chief of Staff;

- A wartime Lessons Learned system that demands a 24 hour response time to change, be it in organization, procedures, or training;

- Organizational changes that push knowledge development, including the Depth Command and Commando Brigade, Cyber apparatus, the new J5 innovation and experimentation division, and an experimental multi-domain unit.

The Dado Center as a Strategic and Operational Learning "Accelerator"

The mission of the Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies, which I commanded from June 2014 until June 2019, is "To be the IDF expert for strategic and operational level learning and knowledge development processes, to develop the field, to assimilate it in the IDF, and to assist IDF bodies in its implementation." It belongs to IDF J7/J3 and was founded after the Second Lebanon War (2006), rooted in the Operational Theory Research Institute (OTRI). In the years immediately after the 2006 war it focused on the education of senior officers in systems thinking. In 2014 it started hosting strategic and operational level learning processes, based from 2015 on the revised Design Approach the IDF formulated.

While the Design Approach implemented by the U.S. Army in recent years focuses on the operational level and begins by identifying "outer" changes in reality, the Israeli approach focuses both on the strategic and operational levels and devotes substantial attention to the recognition of blue side "relevancy gaps" before looking for the best way forward.[3,4]

At the core of the learning process stands the assumption that the pre-existing or current concept is inadequate for the emerging challenge. Therefore, in every learning process, the first step is to critically examine the gap between our current concept, organization, and doctrine and reality. In other words, the process begins not with the direct analysis of the red side, an approach deeply embedded in the DNA of military officers. Rather it begins with an analysis of blue side challenges in recognizing the need to adapt to changes made by the red side (or changes in the international community, military technology, etc). This is initiated by challenging the commander's or organization's basic assumptions and beliefs; how they are manifested in our patterns of action, our organizational structure, and our patterns of behavior and learning. Only after the commander and his staff recognize this gap, can a learning process aimed at creating a relevant operational concept or future concept begin.

Based on the system analysis and structured critical analysis described above, the process continues looking for "potentials"—the positive and negative possibilities embedded in an emerging system and upon which it would be prudent to act in order to influence them in our favor for the creation of the desirable future system. Potentials can come in a variety of forms—enemy vulnerabilities, emerging technological capabilities, possible international treaties, and others. Based on our new improved understanding of the challenges, adaptation to this point, and the potentials we identified, a preliminary strategy is devised. The next step is self-criticism/contrasting, in which we determine potential threats to the emerging strategy. These may be external (adversaries) or internal (objections within the IDF, for example).

Upon challenge and consolidation the preliminary strategy becomes the approved strategy. The process then continues with the development of an operational campaign concept to achieve the desired

strategy. In many cases the output goes beyond guidelines for planning following the design phase, but also includes organizational changes in headquarters, a re-focus of intelligence, and changes in combat infrastructure. Three specific aspects of this process are especially noteworthy: 1) Each process is unique and tailor-made according to the issue, organization, and commander; 2) The process demands continuous double-loop learning—on the issue at hand, and on the thought methodologies employed during the process; 3) As IDF commanders conduct design processes in the context of preparation for immediate war, the process requires the commander to "split" his personality between a hierarchy-based leadership that tries to convince subordinates of the validity of current plans/capabilities, and an open-minded process that contains uneasy leadership challenges, such as admitting that current plans and capabilities may have lost their relevance.

Based on the Design Approach, increasingly processes were conducted in recent years by commanders with the aid of the Dado Center (examples are developing a holistic approach to the northern theater, border defense of the Golan Heights, border defense of the Israel-Lebanon border, the Gaza Strip, IS in the Sinai, the Home Front, and future land warfare).[5] In those processes IDF generals were aided by the Dado Center's design methodology experts with research focused on their needs and war-gaming capability. The Dado Center drew lessons from every process to improve future efforts. The accelerated pace of design processes not only helped commanders develop relevant solutions to their emerging challenges but also created a better and faster "design muscle" in their subordinates and staffs who took part in the process.[6]

Educational Effort Focused on Learning and Changeability

Based on the growing understanding within the IDF of the need to enhance strategic and operational

thinking as well as learning skills, a multi-faceted effort has been underway since 2014. It began with the Brigadier Course headed by the Commander of the Military Colleges, which taught design using a self-exploration pedagogy. Based on this course, the Dado Center created a document that was published in 2015 by the IDF J7 as the new, formal way the IDF conducts learning processes aimed at developing operational concepts.

Many adaptations in officer education have been made since 2015, following from the growing need to accelerate learning processes, and based on the formal design approach methodology. These include a change in the Dado Center's Colonels Course, aimed at educating specific position holders in the General Headquarters (GHQ), regional commands, services, and branches who lead or participate in design processes, from planning to design; the 2015 reorganization in the National Defense College's curriculum focusing on design mainly through self-experience gained by course participants through simulations; teaching the basics of design approach in the Command and Staff College for both battalion and squadron commanders and staff officers at the OF-4 rank starting in 2018. The Brigadiers Course mentioned earlier is still running. In 2018, the Division Commanders Course also began teaching part of the design process. Altogether, these represent a comprehensive educational effort within the IDF to enhance its organizational learning ability.

Training Scenarios that Push Uncertainty to the Limit: Counter-surprise "Vaccination"

My recommendations on dealing with battlefield uncertainty and managing the risk of technological and doctrinal surprise come from two sources; the theoretical approach developed in my book *On Flexibility*, which deals with recovery from technological and doctrinal surprise;[7] and from education and training practices of the IDF that focus on flexibility enhancement.

On Flexibility examined how armies have recovered quickly from technological and doctrinal surprises by using a variety of abilities that come under the general heading of flexibility. These abilities are also valid here, since most of the tactical implications of AI (as defined by Kania: Intelligent Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and Swarm Intelligence; Intelligent Unmanned Surface Vehicles; Intelligent Unmanned Ground Vehicles; Autonomous UUVs; Missile Intelligentization) can result in the same kinds of surprises. [8]

Flexibility is built upon four strata. The first stratum is conceptual and doctrinal. Conceptual and doctrinal flexibility occurs when senior civilian officials and military officers create an organizational atmosphere that encourages lower-ranking commanders to broach ideas that challenge the official doctrine. Officers (and enlisted men and women) who come forth with original ideas augment the number of options, thus enabling the army caught by surprise to modify its doctrine and tactics. A doctrine based on this approach presents a balanced view of all forms of war and reduces the danger of getting stuck in a dogmatic rut. Here I want to emphasize that due to the future contested battlefield environment envisioned in current Western military concepts, I assume that U.S. and other military forces will have to "invent" the last 30 percent of their doctrine in the field, because everything they possess walking in will be challenged.

The second stratum is organizational and technological—combined arms units, redundancy of capabilities when dealing with major operational challenges, and technological versatility and changeability.

The third stratum is flexibility in command and cognitive skills, which is of supreme importance in modern military organizations, despite the inordinate difficulty of its implementation. Mental flexibility is an acquired cognitive trait of commanders who have learned and operated in environments that encourage

On the Yom Kippur of October 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated surprise attack on Israel. Pictured here is an IDF medical crew evacuating an injured soldier from the battle field. (Israel Defense Forces, 11 October, 2005)

questioning and creativity. In the volatile conditions of the battlefield it enables a commander to adapt quickly and keep his or her wits. Flexible command expects junior commanders to take the initiative. The wide berth for initiative should enable them to come up with original solutions in surprise situations and receive their superiors' backing. Conceptual and doctrinal flexibility is the sine qua non for the development of this stratum, otherwise conditions will not be conducive to mental elasticity and decentralized command and control methods.

The fourth stratum is a rapid wartime lessons learned mechanism (see below).

The IDF exercises cognitive flexibility at almost all echelons. I will focus on the most relevant. In battalion and brigade exercises, the mission can change at the outset of the exercise, failure in achieving missions is an integral part of the exercise, and surprise is the norm. It is important to note that battalion and brigade commanders in the IDF experience similar challenges in their operational activity in Gaza, Golan Heights, as well as the Lebanese border. The combination of training and operational experience builds command stamina which should also hold for technological surprise in war. In division exercises all the aforementioned components exist, with the addition of another component—a wartime lessons learned mechanism.

At the GHQ level a new kind of exercise was established in 2014, in addition to the yearly "IDF exercise." An annual "thinking exercise" trains the Chief of Staff—the IDF commander—and his wartime thinking forum. In these exercises—which do not involve troops—the IDF commander is

challenged with "wartime design"—accelerated efforts to develop a relevant concept of operations for the given scenario. The exercises include surprise scenarios which serve as a "mental vaccination" against strategic surprises of the kind the IDF suffered in the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

It is important to note that both aspects of IDF practices presented above are based on its strategic culture, which includes relative openness to discussing one's conceptual and organizational relevancy gaps, and an agreed understanding that the aim of exercises is learning, not winning, and that in order to learn, the trainee has to fail, be surprised, and be challenged mentally. Any of the practices mentioned above should be adapted naturally to the culture of the military establishment that adopts the practice.

It is also important to note that the IDF uses computer-based cognitive screening which tests and gives scores to the ability of cadets in the Basic Officers Course and in the Alon Command and Staff College Course to recognize a change in the enemy's behavior and abilities (technological and doctrinal surprises) and respond to them. Individuals who experience difficulties in this regard (or others) go through focused cognitive training in order to develop those skills.[9]

A Wartime Lessons Learned System

The fourth stratum in the IDF flexibility approach is the mechanism that facilitates fast learning and rapid circulation of lessons so that the entire military system is updated on surprises and challenges and informed of their solutions. This stratum takes into account the need to link past, present, and future, and to rely on communications measures that permit a swift flow of information.

The arms industry is another area that can provide swift feedback enabling recovery from technological surprise. Close working relations between the Israeli armed forces and the arms industry can counter surprises by modifying existing equipment even while the battle is still in progress.

The processing of lessons during fighting was first employed by the Ground Forces Command prior to the Second Lebanon War (2006),[10] then developed and employed and significantly enhanced during Operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza (2008-9).[11] As part of this effort a "learning while fighting" field manual was published; "learning events" were added to the division's headquarters wartime daily routine (as part of the division tactics, techniques, and procedures); "learning officers" tasked to prepare the learning events were added to the Table of Organization and Equipment of the brigade and division headquarters personnel; dedicated training was carried out in order to prepare these officers; and a new training task was added to division exercises—identify the new weapons and tactics inserted by the exercise planners and develop solutions. When an operation begins, the Ground Forces Command opens a "war time learning center" that draws information from the units, processes it, and sends the new discoveries and techno-tactical solutions back to the units within 24 hours.

Training commanders in this learning mechanism has admittedly been uneven in terms of its effectiveness in recent years, but is an ongoing effort.

Organizational Changes that Push Knowledge Development

Some of the challenges that the IDF experienced in recent years either stem from or supposedly should be overcome by emerging capabilities, which must be explored in order to be better understood before their full exploitation. Therefore, some of the organizational changes in recent years have had an exploratory character. Then-Chief of Staff Benny Gantz established the Depth Command in 2012, and his successor Gadi Eizenkot established the Commando Brigade in 2016. Both organizations were tasked with developing concepts and

The IDF's paratroopers brigade operate within the Gaza Strip to find and disable Hamas' network terror tunnels and eliminate their threat to Israeli civilians. (Israel Defense Forces, 20 July 2014)

capabilities for the employment of IDF forces in the enemy's depth, which the IDF sees as more relevant than before. Eizenkot dealt extensively with the organizational changes needed to both mitigate risks and exploit potential benefits in the cyber domain. This began in 2016 with the appointment of the first IDF Cyber Chief of Staff as a first step (within the Deputy Chief of Staff office). Discussions on the need for a cyber branch resulted in the establishment of a new Cyber Defense Division in 2018 within the newly named Communications and Cyber Branch. Offensive cyber capabilities remain within the Intelligence Directorate. The organizational journey of the IDF in the field of cyber has not yet reached its final destination.

In March 2019 Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi, the current Chief of Staff, announced the establishment of a new innovation and experimentation division within J5, and a "multi- domain unit" aimed at exploring new potentials for the IDF, focused on enhanced lethality against Hezbollah and Hamas.[12]

From the IDF's Experience to AI Singularity?

The IDF's future war thinking recognizes the potential of AI for its own use, but gives relatively little attention to its exploitation by Israel's enemies, and does not deal at all with the challenge of AI singularity. Current efforts aimed at achieving the "command high ground" in all levels of war were accelerated in recent years in order to cope with the rapid changes in the Middle East on the geopolitical, strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

Still, important insights around the AI challenge can be gained from Israeli practices. First, the focus on one's own relevancy gaps may cultivate a more self-critical approach, as exemplified recently by Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, General David H. Berger, who issued a sweeping critique of the Marine's amphibious strategy, "calling the current approach of moving Marines ashore aboard slow, small amphibious vehicles and helicopters an 'impractical and unreasonable' plan that has been wedged within a force that 'is not organized, trained, or equipped to support the naval force' in high-end combat."[13] Acquiring the habit of looking for early signs of diminishing relevancy will substantially aid those who want to cope with the growing pace of changes that will surely be imposed by the introduction of AI into more and more military fields. Second, it is not known whether and how AI will replace human-based strategic and operational decision-making practices, so enhancing those that exist today will reap rewards.

There are two further recommendations regarding the rising potential of technological and doctrinal surprises based on AI. First, the broad concept of flexibility is as relevant here as it is for surprises stemming from other technological developments. Inserting surprises based on AI into training scenarios may aid not only the preparations of commanders and staffs, but also help to develop a better institutional understanding of the threat. Second, meeting the challenge of AI singularity, as with other threats, will require countermeasures. It may be worthwhile to consider developing measures to misguide enemy AI learning and decisionmaking through new kinds of deceptions and information warfare. A quick but erroneous enemy AI decision can paralyze his will to employ AI-based decision-making aid systems in the future. Developing countermeasures may prove to be easier and cheaper than developing offensive AI, as with cheap and easy-to-employ GPS jammers.

A limited "learning operation" at the beginning of a wide-scale confrontation—to assess the enemy and the situation and rapidly adjust before sending the main force—was suggested by Dado Center researchers as a lesson from IDF's engagement with the Hamas offensive tunnels in Operation "Cast Lead."[14] Though this recommendation was not immediately adopted by the IDF, with the high level of uncertainty in a future conflict with an enemy possessing sophisticated AI capabilities, such an approach would be essential. Even if the Dado Center proposal is not adopted per se, some kind of real-time lesson learning mechanism will be essential if the enemy employs AI in new and unforeseen ways. Adaptable organizations enable learning, unlike the pattern of traditional bureaucratic organizations that often kill new organizational initiatives in the cradle, especially in new and unfamiliar fields. This should be noted when taking first organizational steps into a potentially AI-dominated world.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that AI will have an influence on war, and therefore on how military organizations develop in order to utilize AI and negate its use by adversaries. It may be that due to differences in military culture and norms, non-Western militaries will have fewer constraints in weaponizing and employing such emerging technologies. Rapid learning cycles, both of force design, operational concepts, and wartime lessons will be of great benefit to military organizations that want to thrive in an AI-dominated environment, especially if they lag in the introduction of AI. Although based on its unique civilian and military culture, the practices the IDF developed in recent years in the field of learning mechanisms to better engage its rapidly transforming adversaries, may aid other militaries in thinking about the necessary changes to better prepare for the day AI singularity is achieved. Some of these changes may be at the very heart of military culture. PRISM

Notes

1 Elsa B. Kania, Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power. November 2017. Center for a New American Security.

2 Named after the ninth chief of staff of the IDF David Elazar (nicknamed Dado), who commanded the IDF in the Yom Kippur War.

3 This idea (and term) was developed by Zvi Lanir, a former intelligence researcher in the intelligence directorate (Aman), who's understanding after Yom Kippur war brought him to focus on one's own conceptual and organizational faults and blocks rather than on enemy analysis.

4 Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 5-0.1 - Army Design Methodology. July 2015. Washington, DC. The process begins with "Framing an operational environment [which] involves critical and creative thinking by a group to build models that represent the current conditions of the operational environment (current state)… (P. 1-4). "An operational environment is a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander." (P 3-1)

5 On the last one, see: Eran Ortal, 2019. "We're Confused, Too A Historical Perspective for Discussion of "Land Ahead"". *Military Review* March-April 2019: 84-98.

6 It is important to note that efforts are being made, specifically under the new chief of staff, LTG Aviv Kochavi, to accelerate not only operational concept-oriented design processes, but also force design processes. The design phase of the coming IDF multiyear plan was essentially another "senior design course" for the IDF's top brass.

7 Meir Finkel. 2011. On Flexibility: Recovery from Technological and Doctrinal Surprise on the Battlefield. Stanford University Press.

8 Kania, 22-26.

9 Ran Rimon, "Simulating Surprise," Ms&T Magazine (June 2016); Ran Rimon, "The Reflection Game," Ms&T Magazine (January 2018).

10 Steven Mains and Gil Ad Ariely. 2009. Learning While Fighting: Operational Knowledge Management That Makes a Difference. Prism 2 (s): 165-175.

11 Gil Ad Ariely, "Learning While Fighting in 'Cast Lead' Operation," Maarachot IDF Journal, no. 425, 12–21.

12 Azulai Y. (Globes). 2019a. 2019 19:11. Yuval . Israeli army chief wants to set up new innovation division.18 March. Available from https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-idf-seeking-to-set-up-new-innovation-division-1001278593.

13 Paul McLeary. 26 July 2019. "Sacred Cows Die As Marine Commandant Changes Course On Amphibs" breaking defence.

14 Lazar Berman, Yaniv Friedman, "Perfecting the Instrument: Learning Operations at the Beginning on Campaigns," Czech Military Review No. 3/2018. Vol. XXVII (LIX), September 9, 2018. Based on: Meir Finkel, 2014. "Learning Operations in the beginning of war," Ma'arachot 457: 15-19.

"Taking the mature China-Africa relationship and the upstart BRI together, Chinese interests are now considerably exposed to security upheaval well beyond China's borders." (Shutterstock/Golden Brown)

China's Private Military and Security Companies

"Chinese Muscle" and the Reasons for U.S. Engagement

By Christopher Spearin

On 7 February 2019, General Thomas Waldhauser, then-Commander of United States Africa Command, stated the following during a hearing of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee: "The Chinese bring the money and the Russians bring the muscle."[1] "Chinese money" is evident in the fact that since 2009, China has been Africa's largest trading partner. Building upon this robust relationship, President Xi Jinping announced in September 2018, that USD 60 billion in assistance, loans, and investments would be forthcoming to African recipients.[2] "Russian muscle" in Africa is increasingly evident through Moscow's reliance upon private military and security companies (PMSCs)—such as the Wagner Group— to do its bidding in countries like Libya, Sudan, and Central African Republic.

This article does not dispute the Commander's wide-ranging assertions about the United States' two appointed great power rivals, but it does contend that U.S. policymakers should also consider Chinese PMSCs, the "Chinese muscle" often found alongside "Chinese money." Moreover, one should contemplate the Chinese PMSC presence beyond Africa. As China develops a global footprint, for example through geoeconomic and geostrategic efforts such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its dependence upon PMSCs too will expand.

To make its case, this article has two parts. First, it presents the rationale for why China is increasingly relying upon PMSCs. The article identifies the growing vulnerabilities that have accompanied China's advancing global presence and the merits of a Chinese PMSC solution. Second, the article suggests the need for U.S. engagement vis-à-vis the Chinese PMSC issue despite its potential implications for China's expansionism. Indeed, the BRI, Chinese interactions with Africa, and Beijing's endeavors elsewhere will continue, thus maintaining its reliance on PMSCs. Additionally, the Chinese PMSC industry is in the midst of flux. Its eventual orientation is a matter of concern given that the United States has been the global champion of a defensively oriented and transparent PMSC industry. The United States assuredly wishes to dissuade China from following the assertive, offensive, and deniable route taken by Russia and its reliance upon firms. As such, the article contends that U.S. policymakers should strive, with some sensitivity, to bring China and its PMSCs more into the regulatory fold developed over the past 20 years.

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Chinese Global Expansion and Security Privatization

While China has engaged in development assistance, resource extraction activities, and infrastructure projects with African partners since the 1990s, the BRI is of a newer vintage and on a transcontinental scale. Announced by President Xi in 2013, China is working in more than 80 countries in Central, South, and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Horn of Africa to construct energy, land and maritime transportation, and communications networks with and through them, ending at the European Union. At its planned fruition, the BRI will connect 70 percent of the earth's population and be linked to countries generating 55 percent of the world's gross domestic product, and locales of 75 percent of global energy reserves.[3] With the level of investment reaching perhaps as high as USD 4 trillion, the BRI is nothing less than "a Marshall Plan with Chinese characteristics."[4]

Taking the mature China-Africa relationship and the upstart BRI together, Chinese interests are now considerably exposed to security upheaval well beyond China's borders. Wang Duanyong and Zhao Pei categorize these overseas challenges as "extraneous risks" and "endogenous risks."[5] Extraneous risks are those that Chinese actors confront in the often weak state, conflicted environments in which they invest, extract, and work. Criminality, extremism, terrorism, ethnic strife, and separatism frequently blight the countries in which China pursues its interests. Moreover, non-state actors may target the Chinese presence because of its perceived assistance to host government authorities. For example, in recent years, Chinese interests have been so targeted in South Sudan and Pakistan.

In contrast, endogenous risks are those of Chinese origin. Anti-Chinese sentiment may arise due to poor working conditions, the upset caused to the local economic status quo, a disregard for environmental degradations, a failure to engage fulsomely with local populations, and cultural insensitivity.[6] In some instances, resentment can surface because the hiring of locals is in fact limited given a Chinese penchant for "whole chain industry export."[7] Extraneous and endogenous risks can combine when the Chinese presence becomes embroiled in a host country's political dynamics. In Kenya, Zambia, South Sudan, the Maldives, Malaysia, and elsewhere, governing and opposition politicians in the midst of their politicking have decried the Chinese presence and the corruption that has allegedly occurred, leading to increased antipathy and heightened tensions.[8]

Though Beijing would like to rely upon local forces to provide security, host government authorities may be unable or unwilling to provide Chinese workers and businesses with adequate protection. The very weakness of many states in which China invests means that military and police bodies are often underpaid, overstretched, poorly trained, and riven by the same tensions affecting the state writ large. For instance, Chinese personnel working in the Democratic Republic of Congo report of routinely being subject to "legitimate harm" at the hands of soldiers and police officers.[9] In Iraq, one Chinese business called upon the local police in response to looting only to see the responding officers join in the fray.[10]

The dangers Chinese citizens and operations confront overseas and the varying responses of local forces have caught the attention of Chinese officialdom. In 2012, the *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, printed the following: "China should deeply study the diplomatic protection issue… China should also discuss how China strengthens its diplomatic influence… so that China can safeguard its national interests and protect its citizens to the maximum extent."[11] In terms of hard measures, note now the training offered by Chinese peacekeepers and other military personnel. Consider

Private security contractor DeWei Group has more than 8,000 employees operating in 37 countries. (Handout)

also that China is presently the second largest arms exporter to Africa. In terms of soft measures, the Chinese leadership hopes that economic improvements catalyzed by Chinese engagement will improve security outcomes overall. In 2014, President Xi promoted sustainable development as the way forward for security: "We need to focus on development, actively improve people's lives and narrow down the wealth gap so as to cement the foundation of security."[12] Nevertheless, only certain weapons are appropriate for protecting Chinese workers and worksites, embedding the lessons from training takes time, and reforming political, economic, and cultural issues takes even longer.

Yet reliance instead upon the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in a consistent and substantial way is also problematic. As the RAND Corporation's Timothy Heath identifies, the overseas protection of China's rights and interests is not fundamentally conceived as a military problem. True, Heath does recognize a Chinese capability to transport and operate military forces abroad, but this is a nascent and limited capability.[13] Moreover, other obstacles confronting greater PLA engagement include the following: complications concerning China's official non-interference policy; the symbolism of a PLA presence on land; potential concerns of escalation and a related tentativeness due to a lack of combat experience; the financial implications of funding such operations; and concerns that a robust PLA presence could unduly confound Beijing's regional diplomatic relationships.[14] One former PLA officer captures the limitations thus: "The need for security protection overseas is quite significant and the army is clearly not suitable for this job due to the potential problems it might cause for foreign relations."[15]

With the security demand not readily satisfied, the regulatory and political milieus have become increasingly supportive of a Chinese PMSC presence overseas. On 28 September 2009, the Executive Meeting of the State Council adopted the "Regulation on the Administration of Security and Guarding Services" which came into force 1 January 2010. This regulation provides some guidance on the requirements for registration and operations domestically and abroad. Lest there be concerns that Chinese PMSCs might work against the state, Article 78 of China's 2015 National Security Law draws all non-state actors to the cause of China's national security: "State organs, mass organizations, enterprises, public institutions, and other social organizations shall cooperate with relevant departments in employing relevant security measures as required by national security efforts."[16] Finally, top level sanction came in the wake of attacks against the Chinese presence in South Sudan in 2016. President Xi embraced the sorts of activities performed by PMSCs by identifying a requirement for "improved safety risk evaluation, monitoring and pre-warning, and the handling of emergencies."[17]

The result has been a burgeoning private security industry. Domestically, 2017 statistics reveal an industry 5,800 firms strong that employs approximately five million personnel.[18] China's domestic private security industry is now one of the largest in the world with a growth rate of approximately 20 percent annually.[19]

Internationally, the Chinese PMSC footprint, while smaller than some others, is growing in size and importance. Consider these examples. Dewei Security Group Limited protects both the China Road and Bridge Corporation's efforts to construct the Nairobi-Mombasa railway and the China National Petroleum Corporation's work in Sudan and South Sudan. It also provides security services to Chinese Poly-GCL Petroleum Group Holdings' Liquefied Natural Gas undertakings in Ethiopia.

Huaxin China Security performs counter-piracy work on Chinese flagged ships operating off the Horn of Africa and in Southeast Asian waters. Guanan Security & Technology guards ZhenHua Oil's activities in Iraq. Other firms are active in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Thailand, Turkey, and elsewhere working mostly for state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In total, approximately 30 Chinese firms offer their services overseas.[20]

Several factors capture the appeal of utilizing Chinese PMSCs specifically. Given the largely Chinese clientele, Chinese PMSCs can offer a common working language and respect cultural affinities.[21] As one Dewei official put it, "For Chinese firms, especially with security work, they… want to speak with another Chinese person. We can also one hundred percent reflect their thinking when we work."[22] Another factor is cost. Whereas foreign PMSCs often have more experience, it comes at a cost Chinese clients are unwilling to bear. Some calculations suggest that 12 Chinese guards equate to the cost of one U.S. or British guard.[23] Lastly, and related to this, Chinese personnel are preferred over foreigners given sensitivity to protecting the confidential information of SOEs. Chinese PMSC personnel with former military, police, or government experience seemingly pass an implicit higher loyalty test.[24] Therefore, it is not surprising that many Chinese PMSCs working abroad have their Beijing offices near SOE headquarters and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[25]

Looking to the future, opportunities seemingly abound for Chinese PMSCs. A managing director of the Chinese Overseas Security Group assessed in 2017 that "In eight years' time, we want to run a business that can cover 50–60 countries, which fits with the One Belt One Road coverage."[26] Given that 2016 assessments found that Chinese PMSC personnel working abroad outnumbered PLA personnel on United Nations duty—3,200 to

2,600—Chinese PMSCs are an important element of China's international posture.[27] In fact, for one industry watcher, China's swelling global presence and the quantitative expansion of Chinese PMSCs operating internationally taken together mean that the role Chinese firms play in "the security arena is going to affect not only the security actors but also the security stage as a whole."[28]

U.S. Engagement: Reasons and Response

On the one hand, the Chinese presence in Africa and a successful implementation of the BRI inherently challenge U.S. interests and standing in many parts of the world. Though the United States has implemented countering initiatives such as the Build Act, they do not match the scale of Chinese financing and infrastructure efforts.[29] These activities will likely open up new markets that will help China and others to wean themselves from their reliance on the U.S. market and the U.S. dollar.[30] Coupled with its material gains, China's endeavors will ideationally advance authoritarian capitalism, rather than free market capitalism championed by the United States, as a way of doing business globally. Absolutely and relatively to the United States, China will garner more sway abroad either through its welcomed largesse or through foreign governments now being economically indebted to Beijing.[31] In short, these developments easily fall into the 2017 National Security Strategy's worries that China wants "to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests."[32]

On the other hand, U.S. policymakers might also benefit from a degree of perspective—the BRI's fulsome success is no sure thing and Beijing has already encountered challenges in Africa. True, speaking about the BRI specifically in May 2017, President Xi asserted that the initiative "should focus on the fundamental issue of development, release the growth potential of various countries and achieve economic integration and interconnected development and deliver benefits to all."[33] The Chinese narrative for the BRI and elsewhere is that China works to develop "win-win" relationships. Nevertheless, according to one China observer, "win-win cooperation is perceived as 'China is going to win twice.'"[34] As indicated earlier, such a dynamic increases political tensions among the governments, political parties, and populations of target countries.

Regarding China's specific reliance upon PMSCs in this milieu, this author's contention is that the United States should not look away. This is counterintuitive because, at first glance, the above might suggest that the United States should not concern itself. From one angle, China's usage of PMSCs may help to make secure various Chinese economic and political initiatives that will negatively affect the United States in a zero-sum fashion. Why should the United States help this relationship to flourish? From another angle, China faces considerable problems abroad and Beijing's usage of PMSCs speaks, in part, to this generated resistance. Why should U.S. policymakers expend limited diplomatic resources to ameliorate China's sometimes fraught relationships?

To contextualize the reasons for a U.S. response, one should recognize that the United States is the global champion of a defensively oriented and transparent PMSC industry. This was made plain during the military activities in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere in this century that set the United States as the world's largest consumer of PMSC services. Certainly, U.S. officials have not denied their reliance upon PMSCs. If anything, government officials promote contractors writ large as part of the "Total Force Concept." As a regulator it is important to note the U.S. Department of Defense's 2012 decision to contract ASIS International and the American National Standards Institute to create the PSC.1 Standard. This standard buttresses the industry's defensive credentials that U.S. hiring decisions in

turn reinforce. Moreover, other states now use the standard in their PMSC procurement efforts.[35]

One can also applaud the United States as a setter of international norms for a variety of actors. The United States is an initial signatory to the 2008 Montreux Document on PMSCs.[36] In the Document, "Military and security services include, in particular, *armed guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, buildings and other places*; maintenance and operation of weapons systems; prisoner detention; and advice to or training of local forces and security personnel" (italics added).[37] The document also recommends various procedures that publicly set relationships between states and firms. This document has 56 state signatories as of June 2019.

Building on this, the United States, along with only six other countries, is a member of the International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA). This association concerns, in many ways, Montreux Document-related matters. This is through its advancement of the 2010 International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC), the industry's response to the Montreux Document. Like the Montreux Document, the ICoC has a defensive focus: firms are not to "use firearms against persons except in self-defence or defence of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury, or to prevent the perpetration of a particularly serious crime involving grave threat to life."[38]

In addition, predating the Montreux Document, the United States has been attentive to PMSC usage by non-state actors such as resource extraction companies. For instance, the 2000 Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights is a multi-stakeholder initiative involving states and non-governmental organizations, oil, gas, and mining companies that espouses a defensive focus: "Consistent with their function, private security should provide only preventative and defensive services and should not engage in activities exclusively the responsibility of state military or law enforcement authorities."[39] In short, PMSCs are not to use offensive violence on behalf of their commercial clients.

It follows that there are three reasons why the United States should engage on the Chinese PMSC issue. First, Chinese economic and political dynamics *that are not going to disappear* drive China's reliance on PMSCs. Chinese economic growth, a key element for domestic calm, has slowed, catalyzing Beijing to look to Africa and Asia particularly in order to export its excess capacity and to find new markets for consumer goods.[40] The fact that President Xi, unburdened by term limits since 2018, has linked himself closely to the BRI further extends the horizon. Indeed, Beijing has invested so much in the BRI that, for one Chinese analyst, it is "the essence of the realisation of the Chinese dream and the rejuvenation of our nation… It is the framework for foreign policy in the decades to come."[41] Overall, China's international outreach towards multiple continents, and the associated PMSC usage, will continue.

The second reason for U.S. engagement is that in the midst of China's continued reliance, there is great potential for change in the orientation of Chinese PMSCs. To explain, most Chinese PMSCs presently lack substantial capabilities to inflict lethal violence. Though the aforementioned 2010 regulation loosened restrictions on China's private security industry, rules remain in place regarding firearm possession. With the exception of firms conducting counter-piracy work at sea, the government does not permit Chinese PMSCs to use firearms abroad. Instead, Chinese PMSCs have focused on security within compounds and have generally relied upon non-lethal weaponry, martial arts, negotiation skills, local intelligence collection, and crisis management and evacuation procedures. In challenging environments, Chinese PMSCs are to rely either upon

locally contracted security firms who can carry arms or upon Chinese embassy and consular officials for assistance.

This approach has its limits and there is evidence of some workarounds given the dangers involved. Non-lethal measures may not provide the necessary deterrence. Local private security may not have the requisite capabilities, skillsets, or professionalism. Chinese government officials are often at great distance from the threatened worksite or living quarters and they have to count on their relationships with a sometimes shaky host security sector described above. As such, media reports indicate a persistent dilemma that confronts PMSCs: stay unarmed or delve into the local black market for weaponry.[42] Others indicate that firms have borrowed firearms from the local security firms.[43] Underscoring the need to arm their personnel, some firms have made arrangements abroad for firearms training.[44]

Additional change, going beyond a more robust defensive posture through firearms usage, might arrive through Chinese concepts and an experiential record concerning non-state actors that could frame an offensive use of PMSCs. Conceptually, since 2003, the Communist Party and China's Central Military Commission have embraced the so-called "Three Warfares" concept. While one can find an in-depth consideration of this approach elsewhere, it is important to stress for this article that it places less emphasis on violence delivered by state armed forces.[45] Instead, "Three Warfares" pays greater attention to a wider variety of tools, including state and non-state actors, which are neither as costly nor imbued with the same degree of symbolism. As Laura Jackson suggests, this stance is "a significant shift away from current understandings of war as defined primarily by the kinetic and tangible, and towards one focused more on thought processes, mental impressions, and the will to act."[46] Yet the

China's "little blue men, merchant and coast guard fleet have been deployed to obstruct freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. (East-West Institute, November 4, 2015)

concept's tools can be coercive in their own way and are the means to achieve strategic objectives. To explain further, these tools, used alone or in combination, are not as likely to spark a considerable response from adversaries prohibiting China's task achievement. In fact, their usage may be ambiguous, thus further hindering the reactions of others. Moreover, utilization of the "Three Warfares" is constant, thus blurring the boundaries between war and peace. As asserted by Elsa Kania: "the application of the three warfares is intended to control the prevailing discourse and influence perceptions in a way that advances China's interests, while compromising the capability of opponents to respond."[47]

The realization of this concept is evident through Chinese practices at the country's peripheries. As Lora Saalman contends, China relies upon "'little green men' (nomads and paramilitaries at land borders) and 'little blue men' (fishermen and coastguard vessels at maritime borders)" to expand its influence.[48] Reliance on these actors keeps the Chinese military in the background while the status quo is nevertheless upended in China's favor by means of incremental moves, coercion, and ambiguity. James Kraska asserts that such an approach augments "operational, legal and political challenges for any opponent ... [it] complicates the battlespace, degrades any opponent's decision-making process and exposes adversaries to political dilemmas that will make them more cautious to act against China."[49]

Though China uses this approach in areas of proximity to the mainland, one can argue that it might be employed further away. Indeed, China's approach towards the South China Sea is arguably a testing ground for future activism.[50] In this vein, the successful spread of the BRI might recast what is deemed as China's periphery, at least in a strategic sense.

In sum, one should not shy away from considering the future trajectory of Chinese PMSCs given these ideas and evolving practices. Without a doubt, they would stand contrary to the U.S. experience and how the U.S. approach has framed the defensive and predictable character of the international PMSC industry.

The third reason for U.S. engagement is to dissuade China from mimicking the route taken by Russia in its usage of PMSCs. Not only has Russia relied upon companies in a generally offensive manner, as a non-signatory to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, it has advocated a particularly aggressive posture vis-à-vis resource producing areas. For instance, a Syrian-Russian agreement permits Russian extractive companies to accrue 25 percent of the proceeds produced from regions external to Damascus' control. To capture these regions, PMSC reliance is required. On the one hand, Moscow has put this development in the context of countering international terrorism. President Putin commented that "members of these firms are risking their lives in the fight against terrorism by retaking oil wells and infrastructure that had been controlled by the Islamic State."[51] On the other hand, one should recall the February 2018 clash in Syria between U.S. forces and the Russian firm Wagner. This is because near the battle site was the Coneco oil processing facility under non-ISIS and non-regime control.[52] Due to the aggressive bent of some Chinese non-state actors, the resource-centric elements of China's relationship with Africa and the BRI, and the fact that China also is not a signatory to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, one could envision a more provocative and assertive China following a similar path.

Furthermore, there are potential similarities between Russia and China regarding transparency. For Russia, a non-signatory to the Montreux Document, despite high-level recognition that firms like Wagner are working abroad, Moscow denies official control and responsibility. Again, to quote President Putin, companies "are indeed present there [Syria]… However, they are related to neither the Russian government, nor the Armed Forces;

therefore, we have no comment."[53] Nevertheless, according to analyst Mark Galeotti, connections with the state are plain: firms are "'hybrid businesses,' technically private, but essentially acting as the arms of the Russian state."[54] For China, PMSC usage is a prospective tool to avoid negative outcomes that might be associated with a PLA mission abroad and an official disruption of the aforementioned non-interference policy. Because former members of China's state security sector populate firms, they are possibly "a parallel security strategy" upon which the Chinese state can rely.[55] Also, similar to Russian firms being both celebrated and denied, analysts from Merics and the International Institute for Strategic Studies contend that firms permit China "plausible deniability in worst-case scenarios whilst reaping the PR benefits of successful missions in the best-case scenarios."[56] For the United States then, Russian deniability vis-à-vis PMSCs has already proven problematic in the context of gray zone conflict.[57] Diverting China from considering a similar path would no doubt be optimal from the U.S. perspective.

The resulting U.S. approach orchestrating this diversion will require some delicacy. In part, this is because it concerns relations between peer competitors. It is unlikely, therefore, that Beijing would embrace, upon Washington's suggestion, the PSC.1 Standard in the hiring of Chinese PMSCs. Simply put, China following an overt U.S. policy is doubtful. In part, this is also because some of the international measures noted above rest predominantly upon the promotion of human rights, a longstanding sensitive matter both within China and concerning its activities overseas. Indeed, China frequently pushes back against human rights advocates.[58] Hence, pressing China to embrace overtly the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights would probably be counterproductive. In addition to security privatization, the principles concern other matters that China would surely find troubling: the actions of public security

forces (upon which China still relies) and how the policies of extraction companies might aggravate political, economic, civil, and social factors that heighten risk.

In contrast, measures related to the Montreux Document may hold greater promise. Though the Document concerns human rights, humanitarian law obligations anchor it in a way that might be less problematic to Beijing. Like the United States, China is one of the initial signatories to the Montreux Document. But unlike the United States, China has not openly acted upon Montreux Document suggestions regarding good practices. China has yet to fully clear up policies related to exercising responsibility emphasized in the Document. Some China watchers note confusion as to which governmental ministries are responsible for Chinese PMSCs and SOEs. Also, some contend that there is a dearth of encompassing regulation (the sort which might be cleared up by a closer embrace of the document).[59] In this vein, others recommend that amidst the considerable uncertainty, Chinese PMSCs voluntarily follow the Document's good practices.[60]

A potential avenue for the United States would be to promote Chinese membership in the aforementioned ICoCA with its links to the Montreux Document. Already the ICoCA has five Chinese firms/organizations as members and two other Chinese individuals serve as observers.[61] From China's perspective, ICoCA membership would permit Beijing to participate in an international venture with growing implications both domestic and global. From the U.S. perspective, Chinese involvement would hopefully tie Chinese PMSC usage closer to the defensive frame advanced in multiple ways by Washington. For instance, the association stresses that through membership, "States… commit to provide information related to their implementation of the Montreux Document and the Code, including the development of their domestic regulatory framework for… [company] activities, and to promote compliance with the ICoC in their

contracting practices and policies."[62] Also, Chinese ICoCA membership would allow Beijing to remain cognizant of developments regarding the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights because the ICoCA holds observer status in the associated Voluntary Principles Initiative.

Conclusion

While it is a cliché to suggest the return of great power competition, it is important to acknowledge a new actor not present during the last round: the PMSC. General Waldhauser made such a recognition in regards to Russia and this article likewise examines the increasing flexing of "Chinese muscle" through Beijing's reliance upon PMSCs. For the United States, it is important to appreciate that China's growing engagement through economic activities on multiple continents and through multiple policy vehicles will increasingly have a "private" face with respect to security. It is also important to understand that how China will flex its muscle in the future is uncertain.

From the U.S. perspective, it would be beneficial for China to operate in a way that is defensive, transparent, and not assertive in the context of gray zone conflict. This speaks both to how Washington would like the international management of violence writ large to operate and to steady its relations with its peer competitors. Presently, the U.S. approach, like that of many other states, is to employ PMSCs to support state militaries and/or to keep conflicts on the backburner. Firms have neither the capabilities nor the orientation to upset the status quo through the application of violence. However, already Russia employs firms to "keep the kettle boiling," an approach that has confounded U.S. policymakers and unsettled global expectations.[63] Given the Russian model and the different ways in which China's PMSC usage might evolve, it behooves Washington to engage Beijing. This article offers a recommendation on the possible substance of that engagement. PRISM

Notes

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The world is caught up in an existential struggle. COVID-19 has paralyzed the global economy, shut down international travel, and killed hundreds of thousands around the world.

COVID-19

The Pandemic and its Impact on Security Policy

By Matthias Rogg

The world is caught up in an existential struggle. The opponent is intangible; it spares neither state nor social group and does not stop at any border. For many of us, this struggle feels like war. Indeed, with the growing use of war-like language[1] in the fight against COVID-19, also called coronavirus, a rapidly rising number of victims,[2] and last but not least the economic consequences which are becoming increasingly clear, we seem to be experiencing a war-like situation. This includes the more and more apparent social and psychological effects of the crisis: An increasing uncertainty among large social groups, but also a strengthening of group cohesion. People are afraid and join forces, but they also tend to be egoistic—certainly when their own livelihood is at risk—as illustrated by the EU member states' initial responses to the pleas of Italy and Spain.

Currently, attention is focused on two areas; the medical and the social domain, with the latter including legal, economic, political, and cultural aspects.[3] In view of the existential nature of the threat and the great uncertainties arising from the coronavirus crisis as well as the tensions that come with them, it is only a matter of time before this crisis also becomes the focus of security policy. Germany's armed forces are already making a significant effort to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. To address the coronavirus crisis, the Bundeswehr (the German Armed Forces) has mobilized 15,000 soldiers within a very short time,[4] has set up four regional commands to facilitate coordination, has supported interagency action when it comes to procurement processes, and has organised further activities with creative ideas (e.g. by making use of the "Helping Hands" concept).[5] The Bundeswehr has a long tradition of providing subsidiary assistance in emergency situations, which ranges from procurement and logistical support to area and facility protection by performing tasks in support of law enforcement and traffic control. Operations during an epidemic are nothing new to the Bundeswehr as shown most recently in the fight against Ebola in 2014 and 2015.[6] What is new, however, is the scale and the speed with which states and societies around the world are being hit hard by the current crisis.

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Pandemic Risks Have Been Known

The existential threat of a pandemic has always been a matter of public safety and security policy in Germany. The outbreak of the highly pathogenic Marburg virus in 1967 is just one example.[7] As part of a notification provided by the Federal Government, an extensive chapter of the 2012 report on risk analysis in civil protection discusses a pandemic due to a "Modi-SARS virus." In view of current events, this chapter reads like an ominous and all too accurate warning.[8] In the current version of the White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr published in 2016, a short section entitled "Epidemics and Pandemics" links the risks of regional destabilisation to systemic risks (which may also emerge in our country) and to Germany's interest in and responsibility for prevention and crisis management in cooperation with international partners and organisations.[9]

In 2015, the Helmut Schmidt University/Bundeswehr University Hamburg, on behalf of the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning, applied methods from the field of mathematics to compare different operations and research models that can be used to predict the course of an epidemic in a theater of operations.[10] With regard to Africa, a dual strategy characterised by significantly improved infrastructure and early detection seemed to be the most promising. The Bundeswehr, together with NATO partner states, is already using disease surveillance systems such as ASTER to ensure the rapid detection of infectious disease outbreaks.[11] To improve the infrastructure, the "One Million Community Health Workers" campaign, which was launched in 2013 and aims at employing one million community health workers in Africa, could be further developed.[12] According to the study, both approaches would "revolutionise" health care systems in Africa, making the outbreak of an epidemic substantially more difficult.

The dangers of a pandemic have been known for some time. Experts have repeatedly pointed out the relevance of this topic for national and international security, emphasising the importance of both early detection and sufficient infrastructure. Internationally, pandemics have either been regarded as "black swans"[13] or "wildcards"[14] in simulations. Although Germany brought forward the topic of a pandemic among the international participants of the 2015 G7 and G20 summits,[15] pandemics continued to represent an intractable problem faced not only by individual states or alliances, but by the entire world.[16]

The fact that all states in the world were surprised by the COVID-19 outbreak is perhaps not surprising. In fact, the 2019 Global Health Security (GHS) Index concluded that no nation was adequately prepared for an epidemic or a pandemic.[17] Interestingly, the 2019 GHS Index still classified the United States and the United Kingdom as "well prepared;" two states which are currently facing strong criticism for their approaches to crisis prevention and management. Despite the world's available capabilities as regards the early detection of epidemics (e.g. National Public Health Institute, Medical Intelligence, Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network),[18] the alarm bells at the international systems were apparently not ringing loudly enough—or maybe we simply failed to hear them. Therefore, we can already state that when analysing the crisis in retrospect, the question as to why the world stumbled into this catastrophe like a sleepwalker will have to be the subject of a rigorous inquiry.[19] Or perhaps the disaster was simply considered acceptable—for experts have long been warning of such a scenario![20]

From a security policy point of view, two perspectives arise: One focuses mainly on the national level and the other on the international level, with the latter in turn opening up discussions of possible impacts on German security policy.

Germany's Strategic Strength in the Face of the Crisis

Although the challenges of whole-of-government efforts should not be underestimated, Germany has been hit by the coronavirus crisis under comparatively favourable conditions. Today Germany is facing one crisis only. We neither have extreme weather events nor floods nor a government crisis to deal with—quite the opposite: We have a stable, experienced and, above all, effective government which enjoys the full confidence of the German people, especially in this situation. Furthermore, Germany can rely upon a functioning administration, an excellent health care system, and finally, upon an outstanding welfare system. The instrument of "short-time work allowance" alone, which is unique in the world, is a huge benefit to the economy. Unlike in many other countries, Western states among them, the public sector in Germany is in a strong financial position. Germany rightly enjoys the highest credit rating in the international financial markets and, therefore, has financial possibilities that enable quick and effective action. Thanks to the above Germany is very well set up in strategic terms.

COVID-19 Reveals Strategic Deficiencies

And yet, notwithstanding these favourable framework conditions in Germany, the crisis also makes it increasingly clear that federal states and municipalities lack substantial resources that, in theory, are required by law. Moreover, a lack of strategic reserves regarding personnel, material, and infrastructure at the federal level is also becoming apparent.[21] People have not felt this vulnerable in generations. Shortages of essential goods in the health care sector (medication, protective equipment, etc.) suddenly show us how much we depend on global supply chains. This is even the case for products the manufacturing of which should not

The largest plane in the world arrived in Germany from China bringing urgent medical supplies as part of efforts to help curb the spread of the coronavirus. (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 27 April 2020)

be an issue for an industrial nation with world renowned companies. For the very first time, many people are thinking about what and who is system-relevant during a crisis. Suddenly state regulation and resilience building are necessary again in the health care sector, even though only last year the closure of half of all German hospitals was being discussed for reasons of efficiency.[22] To regain strategic autonomy, we must pay more attention to supplier diversity, stock keeping, and the avoidance of redundancies in the future. The management of certain resources, the importance of which often becomes evident only in the course of a crisis, must be identified as relevant at an early stage and centrally controlled. Hans-Peter Bartels, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces, got to the heart of the problem: "Having is better than needing!"[23]

Since the suspension of compulsory military service, the Bundeswehr has had only very few strategic personnel resources at its disposal, and is therefore yet again relying on the great commitment of our reservists. At the end of the day, however, the Bundeswehr is extremely limited in providing support due to its focus on operations abroad as well as on national and collective defence. The consequences for the public health system and the civilian relief agencies, which for decades had benefited from young men doing civilian service, have become more than apparent. Right now, we certainly could use these highly committed young people in the armed forces and, above all, in the social and health care systems. Additionally, the gradual downsizing of the armed forces over the past 30 years and the not always transparent decisions regarding different stationing concepts have led to the closure of numerous Bundeswehr facilities. Today Germany lacks a comprehensive infrastructure that, given its structural features, would be perfectly suitable for the setting up of emergency shelters or for isolation purposes across the country. When coping with refugees in 2015, it

was painful to see these deficiencies, and now we are facing similar problems again. The fixed costs for maintaining a strategic reserve—be it with regard to personnel or material—could be far lower in the end than the direct costs and, especially, the resulting follow-up costs that may arise from a crisis. Germany urgently needs to improve this situation!

The Bundeswehr is Needed Now—and Will Still be Needed After COVID-19

When the crisis has abated, if not before, discussions on a national initiative to boost the economy, to revitalise the labour market, and to rebuild our social and cultural life will start immediately. Particularly because it is impossible to predict the long-term impact of the crisis at this point, and with some economic experts already comparing the current situation to national post-war recovery programmes, we should prepare for extreme competition for the financial resources that will be made available. Within the European Union, too, there are increasing calls for financial solidarity. Every citizen, every organization, and every institution is affected by the crisis and will seek compensation. Since most people today would probably associate the notion of "safety and security" with health, social welfare, and economic security, and as this is unlikely to change in the future, all aspects relating to Germany's and Europe's military security will very likely be pushed into the background. That would be disastrous.[24] It is not only because the crisis so clearly reveals our strategic deficiencies and the Bundeswehr's limited resources, but also because, thanks to the reversals initiated in funding, equipment and personnel trends, the armed forces have finally started a long overdue consolidation process. Stalling this process once more would be grossly negligent. For these reasons alone, it is of utmost importance that the Bundeswehr effectively proves its commitment during the crisis. The security policy challenges and threats which have justifiably led to a gradual growth

in the defence budget will not simply disappear after COVID-19. The crisis indicates, on the contrary, that the security landscape will presumably become even more complicated and a comprehensive approach to security even more important.

New Opportunities in Security Policy

The question as to how the European Union, which is already under pressure, will emerge from the crisis is one that is yet to appear on the agenda. When Germany takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2020, COVID-19 will probably still be the dominant issue—and the expectations, especially with regard to Germany, will be huge. This will particularly be the case for the heavily affected member states Italy and Spain. The fact that they—and not only them[25]—had to ask countries such as China and Russia, their competitors in terms of security policy if not rivals in terms of political systems, for material assistance during the crisis because EU members had turned them down, and that they immediately received the help they had asked for, reflects, among other things, how desperate the situation is. Italy, a country that had only recently been planning to provide a substantial contribution to NATO's large scale exercise "Defender Europe 2020," is now grateful for material and personnel assistance from Moscow in the fight against the coronavirus.[26] Russia not only wants to show the world its political strength and capacity to act, the Kremlin is probably also hoping to ease the tense relationship with NATO, maybe even to build a bridge which could result in loosening of the sanctions.

Russia, currently heavily focused on itself, is weakened by the crisis as well. The COVID-19 crisis has not peaked in Russia so far and reveals the infrastructural asymmetry between the centers of political and economic power with a highly developed health system and the rest of the country. A wide spread of the virus throughout Russia

would probably have tremendous consequences. It is an open question whether Russia would accept any foreign assistance, especially from the West. Simultaneously, the Russian economy is being hit significantly by the global drop in oil prices. The overall lack of transparency in Russia is a problem for the West and makes it even more inscrutable and less predictable. Under these circumstances Russia might either pursue isolation while its problems increase, the political leadership misusing the situation to suppress the internal democratic movement; or intervention externally with new foreign—in the worst case—military adventures.

China, in contrast, has already dealt with the first wave of the epidemic successfully and could use these experiences to its advantage. At first glance China seems to have the pole position regarding the economic restart and it is leading in crisis-relevant medical research. China has already used this advantage for domestic and foreign propaganda in a clever way to foster its political standing. China could take advantage of economic and financial weakness of all affected states to create dependencies; not only in Africa but also in Europe as already seen through its humanitarian engagement in Italy, or its takeover of strategic infrastructure.[27] While the West is reducing its development engagement globally, China might fill the political and economic gap.

There are signs however indicating that there is another facet at work (regarding security policy) inherent to the coronavirus; one that is not destructive but actually has the opposite effect. Security policy is changing everywhere in the world, and suddenly the impossible seems possible. In times of natural disasters, we have often seen conflict parties seek ways of working together, agree to ceasefires, and give their societies a moment to take a breath.[28] A perfect example is the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia that also hit Indonesia. It opened up a space for dialogue between the Aceh rebels and the Indonesian government—a

development which, up to that point, no one had thought possible.[29] During the coronavirus crisis, Venezuela and Colombia, the United States' adversary and closest ally respectively in that region, have begun to explore cooperation possibilities in the fight against the pandemic through the Pan American Health Organization. In Libya, the international actors have taken up negotiations to reach a "Corona ceasefire."[30] Shortly after the UAE had begun to support their "arch enemy" Iran with medical assistance in the fight against COVID-19, Qatar and Kuwait followed suit. In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered a one-month ceasefire in the fight against communist rebels to allow the armed forces to focus on fighting the coronavirus instead.[31] And even the United States, despite years of conflict with Russia, has sent humanitarian aid to the secessionist region of Abkhazia. As a matter of fact, and without being too enthusiastic, one can conclude that we are currently seeing some progress in a number of conflicts which had seemed to have reached an impasse. German foreign and security policy actors should carefully monitor the changing conditions and seize any opportunities that may arise.

Europe faces possibly its greatest challenge since World War II. Yet here lies a huge opportunity to rediscover the lost European idea. The European community has historically proven a successful endeavour. Over the last two generations, two core domains made the European Community very successful; a common economical and financial agenda and shared security interests. Specifically, the aspect of a common European security, often neglected by observers, was built through the plans of the European Defence Community back in 1952, materialized through Multinational Military Corps like the Euro Corps in Strasbourg, France, and finally proven through comprehensive European Union Capacity Building Missions primarily in Africa. Both domains are building the foundation of the European Union's "*Wertegemeinschaft*" (community of values). Therefore, we need to apply the lessons learned from the financial crisis of 2008, when European defence budgets saw significant cuts that are still impacting our current armed forces.[32] Instead, Europe has to create a new comprehensive security strategy to remain a competitive actor in a global world. We need to be more European while remaining transatlantic partners as COVID-19 accelerates crises and conflicts.

Notwithstanding these encouraging signals and the fact that positive changes seem to be emerging, Germans tend to focus only on what is happening in the Western world. However, the unforeseeable consequences of a further spread of the pandemic to regions that already suffer from a precarious security situation[33] could not be any more dramatic, and could aggravate the crisis in Germany in ways we cannot yet imagine. Despite the previously mentioned limited resources, a responsible approach to strategic and political thinking and action demands that we also take this dimension into account.[34] Gerd Müller, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, has once again appealed to Germany's responsibility for and interest in Africa, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current crisis has taught us, "We must thoroughly review supply chains to ensure that our supplies are not only crisis-proof, but also pathogen-free."[35] Many other states are finding themselves in a much more difficult situation. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, warned that the lack of basic medical care in the many conflict zones in the world throws the doors wide open to COVID-19.[36]

The current low numbers of documented COVID-19 cases in Africa and the Middle East are obviously due to the fact that the number of tests is completely inadequate, as many states in those regions have only a rudimentary medical infrastructure. Consider the Horn of Africa, where states have

only limited health infrastructures and resources to respond. Sudan, for example, has fewer than 80 ventilators and 200 Intensive Care Unit beds in a country of more than 40 million people. The situation in Somalia and South Sudan is even worse.[37]

In Africa we note the dangerous effects of health challenges affecting security and vice versa. Armed groups—typically non-state actors—have already exploited the situation created by the coronavirus, and Islamist militant groups and insurgent groups are expected to try to exploit the pandemic to their advantage.[38] In Libya, despite the negotiations on an armistice, attacks on hospitals, health care workers and medical supplies have increased, as was seen in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the fight against Ebola. A Reuters article states, "The coronavirus pandemic is fuelling extremism on the far-right and far-left in Europe and giving Islamic State and other militants cover to regain influence, the European Union's counter-terrorism chief has warned. And there have already been Islamic State-backed attacks in France and significant arrests in Spain and Germany." The article quotes EU counter-terrorism Chief Gilles de Kerchove saying there is a need for heightened vigilance, especially in the weeks and months to come. "For decades we've been talking about the development of a biological weapon by a terrorism group. That's the sort of thing we cannot lose sight of." [39]

However, the African states should not be underestimated—because they are far more experienced with pandemics than their European counterparts. At the same time, Africa's urban centers are at high risk as it is likely that an outbreak of the coronavirus in a large African urban center would cause a human catastrophe. Realistically, the question is not if, but when that will happen and where it will start. The course of the Ebola epidemic clearly showed that fragile states where people have little confidence in their government undermine countermeasures of any sort.

In the Middle East experts of the International Crisis Group estimate the risk for north-western Syria, around the region of Idlib, and Yemen to be particularly high.[40] Refugee camps are prominent among the other hot spots in the world; not only Moria on Lesbos, a place which has almost been forgotten, but also the camps in the Gaza Strip or those inhabited by the one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Wherever borders have been closed for refugees, as for example in Brazil and Columbia for refugees from Venezuela, the potential for violence grows. The continued travel restrictions which often indiscriminately apply to humanitarian workers, make it even more difficult to organise help on-site and to gain reliable situational awareness. As dramatic as a COVID-19 outbreak would be in an overcrowded refugee camp, it is nearly impossible to imagine how the local security forces would react and what this humanitarian disaster would mean for the political stability of already unstable regions.

The risk of migrants being smuggled to Europe is increasing, as EUROPOL has warned: "While the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in Europe is not yet clear, it is expected that its impact on economies in the developing world is likely to be even more profound. Prolonged economic instability and a sustained lack of opportunities in many African economies may trigger another wave of irregular migration towards the EU in the mid-term."[41]

The coronavirus has a toxic effect on authoritarian states as it accelerates crises and conflicts. The latest measures introduced by the Hungarian government using the coronavirus crisis as an excuse, i.e. declaring a state of emergency with no time limit allowing the government to rule by decree, remind us, especially we Germans, of the Enabling Act of 1933—and thus of the darkest of all chapters in our history.[42] Other examples from China, Algeria, and Russia show that with reference to COVID-19 oppositions' rights are being restricted even further[43] likely adding to the flow of refugees.
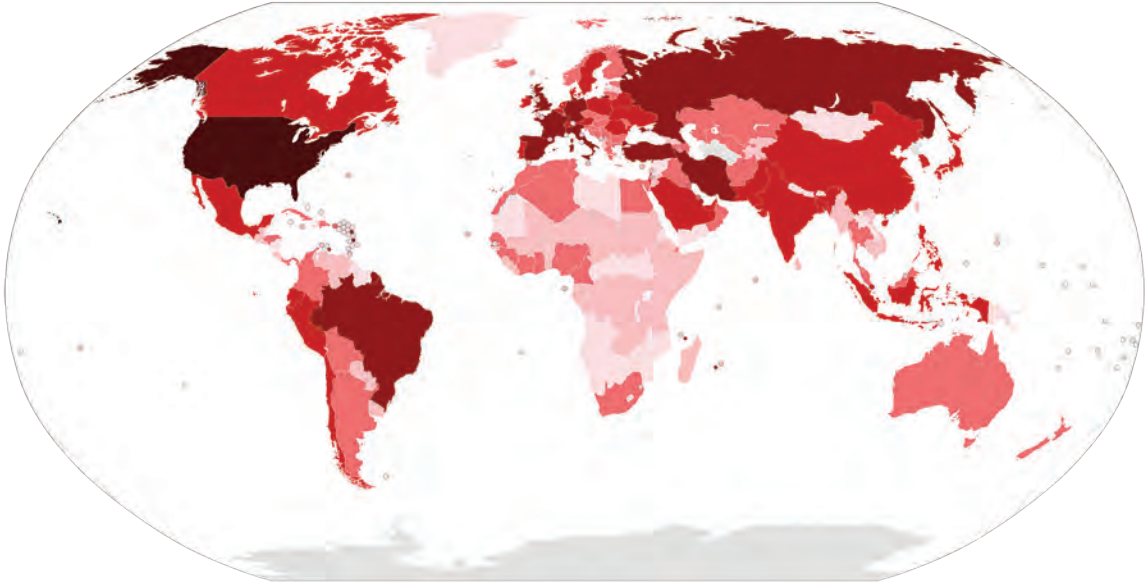
Worldwide confirmed cases of COVID-19 per capita as of 7 May 2020

It is also possible that, as the International Crisis Group convincingly notes, COVID-19 might induce such governments even to use the crisis as cover to embark on foreign policy adventures expecting the international community to be unable to react.[44]

Irrespective of which political orientation the crisis-shaken, economically weak states in the wider Middle East and in Africa have chosen, they are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic, have little chance of establishing an effective crisis management, and would very likely find it much more difficult to consolidate themselves politically, economically and socially in the wake of a pandemic. It takes little imagination to realise that COVID-19 would accelerate the crises and conflicts in those countries in many different ways.

Seven Theses and Recommendations for Action on COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an existential threat to the entire world. As noted above, for many of us, this struggle feels like war—even if the guns have

been silent so far. At the moment, we are still mainly dealing with the medical challenges, and with questions such as when life can return to what we remember as normal, or how we will be able to cope with the economic consequences. All this is important. Focusing on one's closer private circle or, at most, the national level is understandable. Yet it should not blur our vision when analysing international developments. The pandemic also has a security policy dimension the importance of which will only increase further. This article concludes with several summary observations and recommendations;

1. The COVID-19 pandemic will presumably open up opportunities for foreign and security policy as actions previously considered inconceivable are now emerging. Germany should carefully monitor ongoing developments and consider where it would be helpful, and also in its own interest, to put its weight into the balance and use its influence at the international level.

2. Learning with and from the crisis means giving more strategic consideration to "global health

and security" in the future. This topic must become the center of our attention—it must be the focus of our foreign and security policy and, thus, also of the armed forces.

3. German politicians keep emphasising the importance of scientific expertise during the crisis, and for this very reason the causes and manifestations of the crisis must be thoroughly investigated using scientific methods—and these investigations must start immediately. To this end, the Bundeswehr is called upon to contribute with all the resources of its universities and scientific institutes. This includes, always as part of a comprehensive approach, the execution of war games with decisionmakers as well as the development and maintenance of science-based models under pandemic conditions.

4. The conflicts emerging in the complex framework of health, the economy, and safety and security indicate that new ethical answers must be found for these conflicts, too.

5. Scarcely less important than the above is an honest, empirical, and critical analysis of the performance and coverage of medical early-warning systems, social resilience, as well as the employment of the Bundeswehr during the crisis.

6. We need a genuine debate about Germany's strategic reserves. And this discussion should not be limited to material aspects such as supply chains, procurement processes and stock holding: The introduction of a mandatory year of service, a topic that has been buried many times before, needs to re-appear on the political agenda—for when would be a better time to discuss the matter?

7. COVID-19 is a global challenge which requires global and comprehensive action. Germany, with its international reputation, particularly in the areas of foreign, security, and development policy, has work to do in this respect. Germany's

leaders must prove whether they are willing and capable of thinking and acting in a comprehensive manner. It is only a matter of time before the virus spreads into the most deprived regions of the world. Today we still have time to imagine the consequences and consider possible reactions. When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, we completely underestimated the coronavirus. We should not—must not—make the same mistake again! PRISM

Notes

[1] Cf. Donald Trump's most recent statements in which he called himself a 'wartime president', <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8127239/Donald-Trump-says-hes-wartime-president-fighting-unseen-enemy.html>.

[2] In Italy alone, the death toll at the end of March and beginning of April (approx. 1,000 deaths a day) was about twice as high as the average number of casualties in Italy during WW I (approx. 460 deaths a day).

[3] Cf. also the Ad hoc Recommendation by the German Ethics Council entitled 'Solidarity and Responsibility during the Coronavirus Crisis', which is worth reading, available at <https://www.ethikrat.org/fileadmin/Publikationen/Ad-hoc-Empfehlungen/englisch/recommendation-coronavirus-crisis>.

[4] Matthias Gebauer, Konstantin von Hammerstein, "Bundeswehr mobilisiert 15.000 Soldaten", *Spiegel online*, March 27, 2020, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/corona-krise-bundeswehr-mobilisiert-15-000-soldaten-a-fb7668c0-a47f-4ca5-b83b-3a2ddd3b68a1>.

[5] Christoph Loose, Jasmin Henning, "Corona: Bundeswehr beliefert Senioren in Wilhelmshaven", available at <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/streitkraeftebasis/aktuelles/corona-bundeswehr-beliefert-senioren-in-wilhelmshaven-230672>.

[6] Sven M. Funke, "'Phönix aus der Asche' Kampf gegen Ebola – die humanitäre Hilfe des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes und der Bundeswehr in Westafrika", *Wehrmedizin und Wehrpharmazie*, Vol. 59 (5), pp. 155–159.

[7] See the well-researched Wikipedia article (in German) on the Marburg virus: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marburg-Virus?wprov=sftil, last accessed on 1 April 2020>.

[8] Federal Government, *Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung: Bericht zur Risikoanalyse im Bevölkerungsschutz 2012* (Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 17/12051 dated 3 January 2013), pp. 5–6 and 55–88, available at <https://www.bbk.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/BBK/DE/Downloads/Krisenmanagement/BT-Bericht Risikoanalyse im BevSch 2012.pdf? blob=publicationFile>.

[9] Federal Ministry of Defence, *White Paper 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*, pp. 44–45, available at <https://issat.dcaf.ch/download/111704/2027268/2016%20White%20Paper.pdf>.

[10] Robin St. Mathea, *Eine Übersicht über dynamische Modelle zur mathematischen Epidemiologie*, 2015, Helmut-Schmidt-Universität/Universität der Bundeswehr: Hamburg, available at <https://studylibde.com/doc/10758898/technischer-report---helmut-schmidt>.

[11] ASTER is the acronym of 'Alerte et Surveillance en Temps Réel', the proven French real-time surveillance system that was adopted by NATO; cf. Hans-Ulrich Holtherm, "Entwicklung einer multinationalen 'Deployment Health Surveillance Capability (DHSC)' für die NATO", *Wehrmedizin und Wehrpharmazie*, available at <https://wehrmed.de/article/2180-entwicklung-einer-multinationalen-deployment-health-surveillance-capability-dhsc-fuer-die-nato.html>.

[12] Information on the One Million Community Health Workers Campaign: <http://1millionhealthworkers.org/about-us/>.

[13] Krim Delko, "Der Black Swan ist tatsächlich eingetroffen", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, March 3, 2020, available at <https://www.nzz.ch/finanzen/der-black-swan-ist-tatsaechlich-eingetroffen-ld.1544006>.

[14] In futurology, the term 'wildcard' is used for an event that is highly unlikely to occur, the consequences of which, however, would be very serious. Cf. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wild_card_(foresight)>.

[15] Federal Government, *Final Report by the Federal Government on the G7 Presidency 2015*, 2015, available at <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/998348/456776/55d315d9e1983d-3845909c588331e03f/2016-01-20-g7-abschluss-eng-en-data.pdf?download=1>.

[16] The question as to why e.g. South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore reacted early and decisively to the spread of the virus and thus, based on what we currently know, are dealing with the crisis more successfully will need to be further investigated.

[17] Global Health Security Index, available at <https://www.ghsindex.org>.

[18] <https://netzpolitik.org/2020/corona-tracking-datenschutz-kein-notwendiger-widerspruch/>; Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network: <https://extranet.who.int/goarn/>.

[19] The words 'stumbled' and 'like a sleepwalker' were chosen deliberately based on Christopher Clark's instructive analysis as to how the world staggered into war in 1914: Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin: 2013).

[20] Cf. the panel by Commander (MC) Dr Christian Haggenmiller (GIDS) at the World Health Summit in Berlin from 14 to 16 October 2018. See Megan Gannon, "An Unknown 'Disease X' Could Become an Epidemie. Can We Find It Before It's Too Late?", *Livescience*, October 18, 2018, available at <https://www.livescience.com/63862-disease-x-animal-source.html>. Cf. also Adam Jezard, "The World Health Organization Is Preparing for 'Disease X'", *World Economic Forum*, March 28, 2018, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/the-who-is-preparing-for-disease-x/>.

[21] Stefan Bayer, "Intervention statt Prävention als politisches Paradigma?", *#GIDSstatement*, No. 2/2020, available at <https://gids-hamburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GIDSstatement2020_2_Bayer_Intervention-1.pdf>.

[22] Jan Böcken, "Eine bessere Versorgung ist nur mit halb so vielen Kliniken möglich", *Bertelsmann Stiftung*, July 15, 2019, available at <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/juli/eine-bessere-versorgung-ist-nur-mit-halb-so-vielen-kliniken-moeglich/>.

[23] Johannes Varwick, Johannes, "Dr Hans-Peter Bartels interviewed by Prof. Dr Johannes Varwick from the GSP in Berlin", *GSP-Einblick* 1/2020, March 27, 2020, p. 5, available at <https://www.gsp-sipo.de/news/news-details/gsp-einblick-als-neues-gsp-format-mit-interviews-standpunkten-und-essays>.

[24] In this respect journalist Andreas Flocken states: "From what we have seen, the coronavirus seems to be a much bigger threat than the superpower rivalry between Russia and the United States. This is a result that perhaps should have an impact on the armaments efforts in the East and in the West.", in:Andreas Flocken, *NDR Info, Das Forum – Streitkräfte und Strategien (radio programme script)*, March 21, 2020, available at <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/sendungen/streitkraefte_und_strategien/streitkraeftesendemanuskript778.pdf>.

[25] China, for example, is taking advantage of the current crisis by expanding its already strong position in Africa even further and promises an incredible amount of medical help for every (!) state of the continent. Cf. International Crisis Group, "Covid-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch", *Crisis Group Special Briefing*, No. 4, New York/Brussels, p. 11, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-covid-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch>.

[26] Ellen Ivits, "From Russia With Love. Russland schickt Corona-Hilfe nach Italien – was sich Putin davon verspricht", *Stern*, March 27, 2020, available at <https://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/coronavirus--was-sich-russland-von-der-hilfe-an-italien-verspricht--9198832.html>.

[27] For example Chinas ambitions and influence in the Mediterranean Sea: George Georgiopolous, Angeliki Koutantou, Renee Maltezou, "China, Greece Agree to Push Ahead With COSCO's Piraeus Port Investment", *Reuters*, November 11, 2020, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-china/china-greece-agree-to-push-ahead-with-coscos-piraeus-port-investment-idUSKBN1XL1KC>.

[28] Joakim Kreutz, "From Tremors to Talks: Do Natural Desasters Produce Ripe Moments for Resolving Separatist Conflicts?", *International Interactions*, Vol. 38:4, 2020, pp. 482–502.

[29] Juan Garrigues, "Conflict and Peace Scenarios in Time of COVID-19", *CIDOB Opinion 618*, 2020, available at <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/publication_series/opinion/seguridad_y_politica_mundial/conflict_and_peace_scenarios_in_times_of_covid_19>.

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[31] International Crisis Group, "Covid-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch", *Crisis Group Special Briefing*, No. 4, New York/Brussels, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-covid-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch>.

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Air Force air advisors assigned to the 409th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron brief the Niger Armed Forces (FAN) before training exercises in Agadez, Niger, July 10, 2019. The FAN learned how to efficiently and safely clear a building. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Devin Boyer)

No Such Thing as a Perfect Partner
The Challenges of "By, With, and Through"

By Emily Knowles

I n recent military campaigns against violent non-state actors, many states have reduced the risk to their own forces by conducting airstrikes or supporting allies rather than placing their own forces on the ground.[1] Small teams of special operation forces (SOF) and military advisers, as well as military training teams and intelligence support units, have supported host-nation security forces in doing the bulk of front-line fighting against groups like al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and al-Qaeda. In some theaters, such as the campaign against the Islamic State, this has extended to include intensive air and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support. In other theaters, support may be limited to training and equipping local partners without conducting joint operations—like the support that the UK provides to Kenyan forces through the British Peace Support Team (Africa). This is a trend that the Oxford Research Group calls "remote warfare,"[2] although it goes by many other names, including "surrogate war,"[3] "light-footprint,"[4] "low-intensity war,"[5] and "by, with, and through."[6]

This article draws on field research conducted in Afghanistan (2017), Iraq (2017), Mali, (2018) and Kenya (2018) as well as a series of expert roundtables held in London between 2017–2019, and interviews held with militaries, diplomats, and civil society in Mali (2019) and Somalia (2016–2018). The purpose of the effort was to identify changes in military engagement following the drawdowns of large international military operations in Iraq (2011) and Afghanistan (2014) and to highlight the strategic implications of a shift towards remote warfare. This included considering the impact on mandates like the protection of civilians, transparency, and accountability, and long-term prospects for peace.

One of the things that surfaced quickly throughout the research was that remote warfare is not a specific approach to military operations in the same way that counter-terrorism,[7] counter-insurgency,[8] or peace support operations[9] are, nor are these activities guided by an overarching "remote warfare" or "by, with, and through" strategy.[10] While militaries might have specific units dedicated to some of these tasks—such as the American Security Force Assistance Brigades[11] or the British Specialised Infantry Group[12]—many other elements of training, advising, and assisting or conducting expeditionary warfare alongside local units are carried out by a range of regular, elite, and special forces. Air support increasingly falls to drone pilots as well as more traditional forms of air power,[13] while intelligence sharing and targeting support can be provided by

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many different agencies. Remote warfare is therefore less of an approach and more of a spectrum of support relationships between international militaries and their partners.[14]

Similarly, there is no one driver of the trend but rather a few key factors that have increased the incentives for engaging in this way. Part of the picture involves the way in which technological innovation—particularly the rise in drone technology—has enabled western states to replace the need for boots on the ground in some theaters.[15] When coupled with air superiority in these same environments, which has historically been used to avoid the deployment of ground troops, it is clear that technology is creating opportunities for modern militaries to substitute out intelligence and strike capabilities that might once have put troops in the line of fire.[16] The U.S. drones program is perhaps the most high-profile example, but others include the UK's strike against the Islamic State propagandist and British citizen Reyaad Khan, who was killed in Syria in August 2015,[17] or the June 2019 U.S. cyber attacks against Iranian military computers that were aimed at disabling the systems that control missile and rocket launchers.[18]

Another driver is the perceived security threat of safe havens and the related weakness of local partners in the regions where terrorist groups tend to thrive. In the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, then-British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, predicted the emergence of a "future in which unspeakable acts of evil are committed against us, coordinated from failed states in distant parts of the world." [19] The strategic imperative of denying terrorist groups safe haven in fragile or failed states has been a pivotal part of the military and political rationale linking U.S. and allied military action against violent non-state groups back to core national security concerns of preventing further attacks on their soil. [20] As then-commander of the NATO Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan General John Nicholson said in his February 2017 evidence

to the U.S. Senate, "Our mission was to ensure that Afghanistan would never again be a safe haven for al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups to attack America or our allies and partners. That mission has been successful for 15 years, but it is not over."[21]

Other drivers are more case-specific. For example, in a conference organized by the Peace Research Institute Oslo in December 2018 on small-state provision of security force assistance (SFA), many of the conversations focused on how states could ensure that they were good allies and partners for major military powers.[22] Providing troops to coalition missions such as NATO Resolute Support in Afghanistan or the air campaign against the Islamic State are a few examples where participants spoke of signaling their support to the U.S., while many interviewees in Mali cited showing support to the French as a component of why they were contributing to the EU Training Mission.[23] In the UK's 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), the government committed to "focus on areas of comparative national advantage valued by key allies, especially the United States, such as our intelligence capabilities and highly capable elite forces."[24] This was echoed in the 2015 SDSR which stated, "our special relationship with the US remains essential to our national security. It is founded on shared values, and our exceptionally close defence, diplomatic, security and intelligence cooperation."[25]

Following large-scale military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, some countries have also experienced increases in legislative scrutiny of military operations and shifting attitudes towards the costs in both blood and treasure of military engagement. In the UK for example, because remote warfare can offer the government military options that don't require recourse to Parliament under the War Powers Convention, it makes it an attractive option for risk-averse governments that fear losing a vote.[26] The government's failure to gain parliamentary authorization for the principle of military

Instructors from the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM) take Somali National Army (SNA) soldiers through training drills at Jazeera Training Camp in Mogadishu. AMISOM (Raymond Baguma, 25 March 2015)

action in Syria on August 29, 2013 has compounded this fear. While research suggests that it is far from clear that the 2013 Syria vote was a marker of parliamentary pacifism,[27] the acceleration of today's information age has certainly opened up military activities to greater debate and raised the risks for governments hoping to carry out discreet operations.[28] Low popular support for, or awareness of, enduring NATO commitments in Afghanistan was one of the factors that interviewees in Kabul cited for frustration on the ground, while extreme political risk aversion was cited as leading to very low appetites for accepting casualties on the NATO side.[29]

No Such Thing as a Perfect Partner
International Burden Sharing

It would be wrong to suggest that the template for working by, with, and through local partners is a new phenomenon. Wars have been fought alongside and integrated with allies and partners since antiquity.[30] The arming and supporting of rival factions reached fever pitch in the Cold War, when proxy wars enabled great powers to clash indirectly and—crucially—below the threshold for nuclear retaliation. However, contemporary operations have moved on from these past templates of waging war, not least in terms of international parties' restricted reach and influence over the forces they fight alongside, who are partners rather than merely proxies.

In addition, military operations now include a growing number of actors; both local and regional partner forces, international organizations like NATO, and coalitions of local, community, or substate allies like the Peshmerga or Syrian Democratic Forces. In these "coalitions of the willing," where the mission determines the coalition rather than the other way around,[31] partnerships can be fluid, ambiguous, and complex. These ad-hoc coalitions

do not possess any international legal personality, nor are they recognized as legal persons within the states' domestic legal systems, unlike more traditional alliance structures such as the UN or NATO.[32] They also challenge the way that militaries are set up to run operations, with multiple red-card holders who can opt their national forces out of particular activities, multiple sets of rules of engagement, and varying risk appetites.[33]

However, it is far from clear that the current approach to sharing the burden of operations across coalition partners is working. In Kabul in March 2017, only the American contingent had expeditionary rules of engagement that allowed them to accompany the troops that they were training.[34] Stringent restrictions on troop movements had a huge effect on the ability of troops to get out and build relationships with the people that they were meant to be supporting. One described how going to the Afghan MOD—which is down the road from Resolute Support Headquarters (HQ)—would require them to be accompanied by armored cars and given cover. Even walking to the U.S. Embassy, which is opposite Resolute Support HQ, would have required top armor and escort.[35] Interviewers were told that 25 percent of advisors could not currently advise because they did not have force protection.[36]

It also appeared that the act of pledging troops was more important to some contributing countries than the question of what they would be doing when they got there. Indeed, some countries had not fully honored their pledges, with only around 12,000 of the 15,000 NATO places that had been promised actually filled in March 2017.[37] The change from earlier points in the mission seemed stark. Interviewees talked about how staff who had been out in Afghanistan before the drawdown and were then deployed back as part of Resolute Support asked why no one was speaking to their old contacts. The conclusion seemed to be that the current contingent had not been able to build those relationships because they could not get meaningful access to their local partners.[38]

This appears to be a problem shared by other western troops. While interviewing recent returnees from the British training mission to AMISOM in Somalia, it was clear that troops were very aware that if anyone had got shot the mission could have been ended as a result. However, this led to a dilemma on the ground for those that wanted to have a meaningful effect and saw that they would not be able to do so on their current permissions. Some recounted how they had operated outside of their authorities in order to do their jobs—obviously a high risk considering the potential implications had anything gone wrong.[39] In a recent article for the British military outlet the Wavell Room, a soldier described how only two British personnel routinely went out into Mogadishu, and that these were the Chief J3 and J4 advisors for the European Union (EU) Training Mission.[40] While signaling support for allies is not necessarily a bad reason to join a coalition, if everybody is signaling rather than meaningfully engaging in a mission then chances of success seem slim.

Lead nations can also introduce dynamics into coalition partnerships that prove problematic for their allies. Negative public perceptions of the U.S. drones program in countries like the UK and Germany have led to huge political sensitivities around providing intelligence support or access to national facilities.[41] For example, U.S. Col Patrick Ryder told the *Guardian* that the U.S. and the UK had consulted each other regarding the targeting of Junaid Hussain, a British computer hacker, adding "both governments will continue to coordinate efforts to eliminate violent extremist organisations."[42] Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas Mercer, the British Army's chief legal adviser in Iraq in 2003, said the confirmation of a British link to Junaid Hussain's death raised "disturbing questions."[43] This is particularly true when you consider the fact that, while the UK has admitted involvement in

this successful strike against Junaid, it has kept very quiet about whether or not it was similarly involved in the first strike attempt which missed its target, instead killing three civilians.[44]

In March 2019 a German court ruled that Germany was not doing enough to ensure that the U.S. was respecting international law in its use of Ramstein military base to conduct drone strikes. The German airbase provides the U.S. with a satellite relay station and personnel, which was enough for the court to declare that Germany played a "central role" in the strikes and therefore had an obligation to protect the lives of the Yemenis who brought the case after their relatives were killed.[45] In September 2017, a week-long protest against the U.S. drones program drew over 5,000 people to Ramstein.[46] While the German government often maintained that it had "no knowledge" of U.S. operations taking place at the base,[47] their assumption that the U.S. has not violated German or international law was found by the court to be based on an "inadequate investigation of facts."[48]

Risk Reduction or Risk Transfer?

The March 2018 British Army Field Manual *Tactics for Stability Operations Part 5: Military Support to Capacity Building* notes that one of the advantages of using capacity building as part of combat operations is that it allows UK forces to overcome "the problems of achieving sufficient mass" when British troops cannot be deployed in combat roles.[49] However, while there may only be a "'light footprint" of western troops involved in operations, the commitment required from local troops remains considerable. Attrition rates for local military partners have been extremely high in contemporary campaigns. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) does not release official statistics, but the death toll for its troops is estimated at over 4,000.[50] Since 2013, the UN mission in Mali has lost over 200 troops,[51] while the Nigerian army is reportedly burying its

own troops at night to conceal the toll of its fight against Islamist groups in the northeast.[52] Attrition rates among Afghan forces have been consistently sky-high, with 6,700 deaths in just one year.[53] While remote warfare may seem low risk from the perspective of Western capitals, local troops are still paying heavily in these campaigns.

Working "by, with, and through" can also transfer greater risks onto local populations. Many local militaries and armed groups are less equipped to mitigate civilian harm than their international counterparts. For example, senior British military personnel have recounted how Iraqi forces had been deeply traumatized by the experiences of 2014 and in many cases were reluctant to advance without heavier levels of international air support than might otherwise have been used in densely populated urban terrain. The consequences of this can be seen clearly in western Mosul, the final Islamic State stronghold in the city, where around 15 neighborhoods have been completely destroyed. These districts previously housed around 230,000 residents, leaving large numbers of internally displaced people who will not be able to return in the short- to mid-term.[54] The UN estimates that eight out of 10 buildings damaged in Mosul were residential buildings, with 8,475 houses destroyed—more than 5,500 of which were in west Mosul's Old City.[55]

Military coalitions can also be a "race to the bottom" when it comes to opening operations up to scrutiny.[56] The only member of the international anti-Islamic State coalition to consistently concede civilian casualties from its air campaign was the U.S., with other partners hesitant to distinguish their own strikes from those of the coalition as a whole.[57] Empowering local armed groups can also have negative long-term consequences for civilians when those forces are corrupt, abusive, or sectarian. A depressing 23 percent of the violent incidents against civilians recorded over the past 12 years was perpetrated by state forces rather than militia

Devastation after the Battle for Mosul, July 9, 2017. (H. Mourdock)

or rebel groups.[58] In some instances, building the capacity of predatory armed forces feeds a cycle of violence and conflict that contributes to the "forever wars" that define the contemporary international security environment.

For example, local security forces like the Afghan Local Police (ALP) were intended to address the growing problems of insurgency and lack of Afghan National Army legitimacy in the areas where the Taliban were drawing their support. However, reports of abuses against the local communities that they were meant to be protecting were also widespread. A survey of U.S. Special Operations Forces teams mentoring ALP units in 2011 found that 20 percent reported ALP colleagues were guilty of undefined "physical abuse/violence;" a further 12 percent reported bribe-taking. Between one-fifth and one-sixth reported that ALP indulged

in salary fraud and theft. A smaller number witnessed rape, drug trafficking, drug abuse, and the selling or renting of ALP weapons and vehicles. Complaints of extortion and illegal taxation are commonplace. Some reports have even described ALP commanders selling the lives of their men: one allegedly accepted bribes equal to $500 per head to murder subordinates and killed six before capture. ALP in Faryab province were accused of raping, looting, and keeping a torture chamber with snakes at the bottom of a dry well.[59]

In 2016/17 the UK spent £0.8 million delivering international humanitarian law (IHL) and preventing sexual violence modules through the EU Training Mission in Mali, with a further £0.87 million allocated for broader military and civilian support (with a focus on infantry, medical, and IHL) for 2018/19.[60] These master's-degree level programs

were optimistically delivered with the aim of professionalizing a force with limited education levels that has been linked to numerous violations including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrests.[61] The Malian armed forces and the broader Malian government have also been accused of ethnic bias. In central Mali, Bambara and Dogon ethnic armed groups have recently been acquiring heavy, war-grade weaponry—some of which presumed to be coming from the armed forces—that has increased the lethality of localized disputes.[62]

In July 2017, Amnesty International released a report documenting the cases of 101 individuals accused of supporting Boko Haram—often without evidence—who were held incommunicado and allegedly tortured by Cameroonian security forces, including the elite Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR).[63] Created in 2001, the BIR is a special operations unit about 4,500 strong that has received security force assistance (SFA) from France, Israel, and the United States.[64] The BIR and other Cameroonian security institutions received IHL instruction as part of their technical training from the United States.[65] However, this has proven inadequate when it comes to altering heavy-handed approaches to countering terrorism and the politicization of the armed forces.

This is not to suggest that international partners should always cut assistance if their local partners prove to be corrupt or abusive. You can argue that increasing assistance and international presence in some of these environments would allow international partners to better scrutinize and influence behavior. However, there are also obligations that bind states to refrain from providing assistance that might cause or facilitate grave breaches of international humanitarian law.[66] Balancing the two is a dilemma, particularly if you subscribe to the view that donor states tend to overestimate the control they will have over their partners in the first place.[67]

Taking a Peacebuilding Approach to Working with Local Partners

International military partners consistently misdiagnose poor behavior as stemming from a lack of training or capability.[68] There is a related assumption that improving the tactical proficiency of partner forces will address these concerns. While this logic may work in some places, a focus on military effectiveness as a criterion for partnership, or as a metric for success, creates its own dilemmas. This was captured by Frances Z. Brown and Mara Karlin:

> *"…the fact that it uses military criteria to choose a partner for a relationship that often evolves into a political one. If, as Clausewitz famously wrote, "war is a mere continuation of politics by other means," the by-with-through model inverts this dictum, subordinating politics to … choices on the battlefield."*[69]

For example, as soon as the Taliban government fell in 2001, armed groups within Afghanistan began competing for positions and influence. The international community came under immediate pressure to improve security and create the conditions for a transfer of power to a new Afghan administration. However, even as early as 2003, analysts were warning that, "Between September 2001 and June 2002 certain choices were made by national and international decisionmakers that have had long-lasting repercussions for the political process in Afghanistan."[70]

In particular, the perceived capture of the process by powerful warlords who were then able to secure a place in the interim administration was seen as extremely damaging. Rather than pushing for a peace agreement in the sense of having a pact between warring parties, the Bonn process was geared at forging an agreement between leaders of four anti-Taliban groups that had been particularly instrumental to the international coalition that

toppled the Taliban government.[71] As early as 2002, experts were warning that "the Ministry of Defence [has become] a major obstacle to Demobilisation, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DDR) and the creation of the Afghan National Army (ANA)."[72]

Adopting a "winners take all" approach to engaging with local partners can exacerbate fragmentation on the ground in post-conflict societies. In many fragile contexts, governance and control is wielded through loose alliances between powerbrokers such as local strongmen, warlords, and militias.[73] These opaque and sometimes precarious relationships can dictate the development of political coalitions and lead to the intense politicization of armed groups, including the state armed forces. In weak states, the relative military might of different armed groups is one of the most crucial levers of power. In this context, foreign assistance can be an unintentional "kingmaker" as it strengthens parts of a fragmented system that may not serve the population or the stability of the state as a whole.[74] This creates incentives for elites to subvert assistance for their own purposes, while simultaneously engaging in corrupt or predatory behaviors that feed the instability that donors may be trying to address.[75]

In other places, improving the tactical proficiency of units can create "islands of excellence" where small groups of elite forces are both willing and capable of protecting civilians,[76] but fail to deliver positive outcomes over the long-term. Efforts cannot be sustained unless the defense and security sector writ large also shares this ethos, and the political conditions on the ground support compatible values.[77] For example, one of the great international hopes from long-term international engagement in Iraq was the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS)—a multi-ethnic elite unit that showed some promise as a template for the broader security forces.[78] The CTS were largely considered to be a professional, sustainable force by the time international trainers left in 2011.

However, even in the early days after the international withdrawal it was clear that being the exception to the rule of low Iraqi National Army capacity had its downsides. Tasking began to come directly from the Prime Minister's office, mostly for activities not suited to an elite counter-terrorism unit like securing voting centers, guarding convoys, and manning checkpoints. Experienced officers began to be replaced by people with connections to the Prime Minister, and the promotions system began to revert to a system based on loyalty rather than competence.[79] They were also removed from the Ministry of Defense chain of command to sit under its own ministry, but were not allocated money from the Iraqi defense budget.[80] Pouring money into specific units while the rest of the sector remains dysfunctional can contribute to the creation of "Fabergé egg" armies that are expensive to build but easy for insurgents to crack because the military as a whole lacks cohesion.[81] Rethinking this technical approach to remote warfare that prioritizes improving the tactical effectiveness of local troops on the frontlines is essential if the long-term outlook for peace is to improve.

One potential solution has its roots in the increasing focus on the importance of local ownership. In theory working by, with, and through local forces should lay the foundations for locally owned, locally responsive, and culturally attuned approaches to security. The UK's Building Stability Overseas Strategy emphasizes the need for conflict-sensitive international engagement abroad, advising that;

> *"the starting point needs to be … analysing and understanding the situation to ensure that work designed to build stability does not unintentionally make things worse. The chances of success are greatest when the international community gets behind a political settlement that lays the foundations for tackling the causes of conflict in a country."[82]*

In new stabilization guidance issued in 2019, the British government highlights the fact that "externally-backed peace processes and agreements that are significantly misaligned or out of sync with the underlying distribution of power and resources are likely to fail."[83] The U.S. government's 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review notes that "our national experience over the past two decades has taught us that it is not enough to win the battle; we must help our local partners secure the peace."[84] One blueprint would be to approach assistance as a form of peacebuilding for fragmented security sectors, with assistance geared towards improving relationships between the many formal and informal groups that are often providing security in these environments, as well as between the security sector and the civilians that it is there to serve.[85]

This means working with a wider range of groups based on their provision of legitimate, accountable security to the population as a whole. This also means letting go of or deprioritizing more traditional criteria like military effectiveness. Different communities will have different needs and different experiences of insecurity in a rapidly changing conflict or post-conflict environment. It is important to capture these concerns when deciding on the right course of action. For example, groups that are seen as corrupt and abusive in some areas can be seen as a lifeline in others:

> *"I know that people in Kabul are talking about cancelling the ALP, but you don't understand", said a provincial governor, gesturing at the barbed wire along his compound's perimeter. "Without those guys, the Taliban will climb over that wall and cut my head off."*[86]

The dynamics of legitimate and effective security provision will vary both across communities and across time. This is also the case for the dynamics of fear, and perceptions of risk associated with the courses of action chosen by policymakers. Both require frequent consultation and re-evaluation to make sure that policies adapt to changing circumstances. The international community must be careful to avoid quick assumptions about the extent to which local groups will use their knowledge and links with the community to solve problems and reduce support for violent actors. Just because groups are local, they should not be assumed to be a proxy for local legitimacy. This is where community consultation and detailed mapping become essential to avoid violent competition between different groups vying for assistance. Rather than allowing international actors to set the criteria for group inclusion, this should be a locally led process that is driven by community responses to the question of; who do you support to provide your security and why?

This means adopting a new vision for delivering military assistance in fragile states where success is evaluated against the long-term impact of programs on prospects for peace and security. Peacebuilding metrics could include; the ethnic diversity of course attendance, attendance rates for marginalized ethnicities or genders, hierarchies (informal and formal) between soldiers who attend courses, and the strength of positive and negative interactions between attendees. Efforts to maximize the exposure to each other of units or services who might have poor or problematic relations should be boosted and rewarded, rather than measuring basic attendance figures, or recall of tactical skills and concepts.

This may mean accepting a form of assistance that integrates leaders from the government and security forces but would also include informal actors who hold local legitimacy in providing security. While this creates a messier picture, what is lost in efficiency may be gained in sustainability. Compacts between elite groups and donors are fragile and open to abuse by groups seeking to entrench their own power rather than tackle instability. Fictionalizing a state apparatus and then refusing

to deal outside of it only serves to mask the deep divisions that remain. These agreements often fail to address issues around representation in the security sector, or behavior that prioritizes the protection of some groups over the population as a whole. Using assistance to create opportunities for broad community engagement and wider relationship-building within fragmented security sectors is an approach that is anchored in local realities, starting where actors are, not where third parties want them to be.

Conclusion

Taking a peacebuilding approach to working with local militaries and armed groups means using assistance to fragmented security sectors to increase cooperation between various formal and informal elites in a weak state. This approach places less emphasis on developing conventional military power and more emphasis on facilitating and improving relations between the different factions within the security sector and between the security sector and the civilian population.[87] If international providers help local partners perform better at military tasks without ensuring that the forces have local legitimacy and strong accountability, progress is likely to be fleeting and could actually exacerbate civilian harm and the underlying drivers of violent conflict.

These negative outcomes are not inevitable. In theory, working by, with, and through local forces should lay the foundations for locally owned, locally responsive and culturally attuned approaches to security. Local, national, and regional armed groups have the potential to provide crucial support to peace processes and they bear ultimate responsibility for protecting local populations. Finding a way to support the emergence of legitimate, accountable, and effective local, national, and regional security forces is an essential part of setting the conditions for lasting peace.

However, this cannot happen without policies that account for the fact that these same partners

have the potential to be major spoilers or perpetrators of harm. Rather than developing strong procedures to manage these risks and dilemmas, the tendency in western capitals is currently to approach partner operations as a low-cost, low-risk form of war. Debates within western militaries tend to ignore the transfer of risk onto partner forces and local civilians, and local partners and NGOs are often excluded from the international policy debate. Fixing this means doing more than trying to improve the way that international militaries work with local partners. It means adjusting the vision for what success would really mean. PRISM

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Syrian refugees protest at the platform of Budapest Keleti railway station. Budapest, Hungary, Central Europe, 4 September 2015. (Mstyslav Chernov) Refugee flows from fragile states are overwhelming the capacity of destination states worldwide.

Elite Incentives and Power Dynamics in Fragile States

By Sarah Rose

B y 2030, it is estimated that half of the world's poor will be concentrated in fragile states. These are countries where the social contract between the government and its people is weak or absent—a breakdown which both creates a heightened risk of shocks from conflict, violence, pandemic illness, and/or natural disasters, and limits the country's resilience to them. The increasing interlinkage between global development and state fragility, the potential cross-border nature of some of the risks, and the deeply mixed track record of successful international intervention to date, have prompted many donor organizations—including the United States—to reorient their policies and approaches to better support fragile states' pathways to peace, stability, and resilience. Getting this right—or at a minimum doing no harm—is imperative. And perhaps nowhere is this more true than in the United States, which—with nearly a third of its development assistance going to fragile states—is the world's top donor to fragile states.[1]

In the United States, several new initiatives and proposed reforms seek to learn from lessons of the past and address shortcomings in how the U.S. government delivers aid to confront fragility. The 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR), developed jointly by the State Department, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD) seeks to improve how governmental actors and agencies pursue stabilization goals. USAID has begun a bureaucratic transformation process that will, in part, elevate and harmonize the agency's prevention, stabilization, and crisis response efforts. And the State Department, in partnership with USAID, recently released the Strategic Prevention Project, an assessment of how to target aid better to reduce the risk and severity of violence.[2] Congress is paying attention to fragility, too. The 2019 Global Fragility Act sets out expectations for agencies to develop a more coordinated and more strategic approach to tackle the root causes of state fragility and violence. Congress was also the driving force behind the United States Institute of Peace's 2019 task force report on preventing extremism in fragile states.[3]

Central to the success of these new policies and reforms will be acting on the often recognized—but rarely systematically acted upon—principle that fragility is fundamentally a political problem. Often donors, including

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the United States, have sought to treat the symptoms of fragility with narrow, short-term programming. While this may relieve urgent needs or deliver quick, visible dividends, it is unlikely to produce sustained results in the absence of efforts to address the complex political dynamics at the root of the problem.

Understanding the Incentives of National Actors

Fragility is often, at least in part, rooted in intentional choices by powerful elites to maximize their own interests at the expense of others. Incumbents recognize that strengthened institutions may weaken their political power and see limited electoral reward for confronting fragility, especially where geographic or ethnic fractionalization both contribute to fragility and determine voting patterns.[4] This can significantly limit what development assistance can accomplish. For predatory or exclusionary elites, the incentive of an aid package pales in comparison to the gains they stand to get from preserving the status quo—especially when aid comes with the goal of strengthening institutions or improving outcomes for groups outside of their support networks.

In some cases, the incentives donor aid can create are perverse. Fragile-state elites can be savvy about monetizing fragility, including with aid dollars, using them to entrench the coalitions that keep them in power.[5] Elites also understand well that significant donor resources are sometimes made available to them *because* of the security risks associated with their fragility, creating an unintended (on the part of the donor) vicious cycle.[6] Donors should be wary of appealing to the enlightened self-interest of leaders and officials without paying attention to the spoiler role they can play.

Unifying the U.S. Government Response

It is well understood that the United States' ability to alter incentives and leverage change is compromised

when other major sources of funding—notably China, or in some places the Gulf States—are positioned as well-resourced and willing alternatives. But the U.S. government can also work against itself in how it approaches malign elites.

Essentially, diplomatic, development, and military actors do not always uniformly agree that addressing fragility is critical for achieving their near-term objectives. Even when they do share the same broad goal of confronting fragility, the State Department, USAID, and DOD each tend to view the problems of a particular fragile state—and define a strategy for how to address them—through the lens of their own mission and mandate.[7] But these visions do not always align toward the pursuit of a collective goal and may work at cross purposes with one another.[8]

Because of the political imperative to couch foreign aid as tied to U.S. self-interest, security objectives have often led, affecting the prioritization of other objectives that might be equally or more relevant to helping countries address fragility. Yet tolerating or supporting malign elites in pursuit of near-term objectives can end up exacerbating fragility and compromise the long-term interests of the United States.

Seeking to address the weak, predatory, and unaccountable governance that is often at the root of state fragility has not always been sufficiently elevated or integrated into U.S. strategies.[9] Instead, governance tends to exist as a stand-alone policy priority, siloed within agencies, with a relatively small cadre of staff in charge of relatively limited funds supporting narrow programmatic solutions to particular governance challenges.[10]

Even within the segments of the interagency that do focus on governance, the sector has often gotten short shrift. For instance, until very recently, USAID's Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) unit sat within the Bureau of Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). Because DCHA also included USAID's high profile, resource intensive disaster assistance

and political transition/stabilization teams, DRG often ended up sidelined within its own bureau.[11] USAID's response has been to move governance to the new Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI). Its new bureau-mates (economic growth, education, the Global Development Lab, among others) are probably less likely to overshadow DRG with their urgency. But DRG will become one of nine subunits, so questions about its ability to command resources and leadership attention are likely to remain. Furthermore, while the change seeks to establish a resource center for cross-cutting governance support that can better reach throughout the Agency and its missions, it also structurally removes governance from the Agency's work on violence prevention, stabilization, countering violent extremism, and political transition—all areas where governance is central—which are all located in the new Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization. USAID acknowledges the need for strong linkages between the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization and the governance unit within DDI. This will be critical, though what it will look like in practice remains unclear.

The State Department can also play a key role in elevating governance as part of a U.S. strategy in particular fragile states. Diplomatic engagement can provide support and legitimacy to reformers during narrow windows of opening and encourage elites to pursue a more inclusive agenda. Preventive diplomacy using mediation or other approaches can help keep disputes from escalating or limit their effect when they occur.

When done well, foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement can and should reinforce one another to influence elite incentives and support inclusive governance objectives.[12] But the degree to which the two efforts are well coordinated has varied. For example, targeted diplomatic efforts combined with an increase in aid in advance of Kenya's 2013 elections contributed to their relatively peaceful conduct.[13] On the other hand, in Ethiopia—a key ally and top recipient of U.S. foreign aid—the kind of high-level diplomatic support that could reinforce the still-nascent major democratic political transition has been limited.[14]

At the heart of the U.S. government's new fragility focused policies and reforms is a recognition that breakdowns in interagency alignment can be costly. The SAR and the Global Fragility Act, in particular, seek to address this by delineating roles for key agencies, with the State Department as the overall lead, USAID as the lead implementing agency for non-security assistance, and DOD as a supporting security actor (with civilian concurrence).[15] The bipartisan support (in the case of the Global Fragility Act) and cross agency buy-in (in the case of the SAR) suggest that U.S. actors are serious about better alignment and will be held accountable for making progress toward that goal. But it does not promise to be easy. Addressing the question of who should lead is different from answering the question of what leadership will look like in practice. Who will have budgetary, policy, and legal leverage? When agencies disagree, how will disputes be resolved? And how can coordination surmount the challenges posed by different agency cultures, timelines, planning processes, even terminology?[16]

Fragility-Focused Political Economy Assessments

Even with a well-coordinated strategy, an external push for change will only succeed when it bolsters internal support.[17] It is critical for donors to be able to recognize and move quickly to support key windows of opening and to understand how will and capacity are uneven across sectors, domains within sectors, and geographic space. Even within weak or kleptocratic governments, there can be islands of good governance with strong service delivery.

Donors working in fragile states often have high expectations for reforms that are not well

grounded in an understanding of the political economy and the incentives of elites to pursue or block change.[18] While the United States has invested significantly in understanding the political economy of several of the fragile states it engages, analysis has been less robust in others.[19]

An iterative, intelligence-informed examination of the political system in which a donor intervention will take (or is taking) place—including analysis of the formal and informal networks, alliances, and rent flows that support the status quo—should be central to any fragile state strategy. Fragility-focused political economy assessments are critical for understanding opportunities to engage with elites, more precisely target programs, avoid unintended

consequences, and understand where aid tools are more or less likely to be effective.[20]

Getting these assessments right requires local knowledge from diverse and extensive local networks that go well beyond standard bilateral interlocutors. Assessments must also account for the heterogeneity of political will and legitimacy within fragile-state governments. Donors may be able to build upon and strengthen pockets of relative will and functionality—but need to understand how these fit within the broader power system. For instance, to maintain aid flows, kleptocratic governments sometimes comply selectively with donor objectives, particularly in sectors that do not threaten their power preservation

Paktia provincial Deputy Governor Abdal Rahma Mangal, left, talks with tribal leaders in the Jani Khel district during a visit to a remote village Feb. 15, 2009. (DoD photo by Fred W. Baker III)

structures and are more insulated from their rent-seeking behavior.[21]

Different parts of the U.S. government have always done various sorts of political economy analyses—many of very high quality—but they are rarely rolled up into one place in a way that enables all interagency actors to "sing from the same hymn sheet." In particular, while intelligence on the corrupt, criminal, and kleptocratic elements in a fragile state is often seen as integral to setting the agenda for political and diplomatic engagement, it has not always been brought to bear in development policymaking in an intentional, systematic way, despite its relevance for aid effectiveness. Furthermore, assessments are often conducted too infrequently to maximize their utility. A single point-in-time snapshot—often undertaken at the beginning of strategy or program development—has limited value to inform a multi-year effort since it fails to account for how various developments, including the aid strategy or program itself, change the ecosystem during program implementation.[22] Key political economy questions must be tracked on an ongoing basis.

Donors are increasingly aware of the need for regular, shared, multi-stakeholder, political economy assessments.[23] Still, it takes time for the practice to become institutionalized and meaningfully incorporated.[24] For example, USAID has good guidance on applied political economy analysis for "thinking politically," which focuses on the very issues described above. But it also acknowledges that it is a work in progress, saying "[t]his work is not simply about a particular analytical product; perhaps more importantly, it's also about a mindset."[25] Building a common mindset across agencies is more challenging still.

Furthermore, regular, high quality analysis is only useful if agencies can pivot easily to respond to its findings. This implies an accompanying need for more flexible, adaptable programming.[26] Structuring programs for adaptive management builds in feedback loops that allow agencies and implementing partners to regularly and iteratively adjust their approaches in response to new information about program performance and/or changes in—or a better understanding of—the context in which the program is being implemented. In the less predictable, more fluid environments that characterize many fragile states, the ability to adapt programming to new (or newly understood) challenges is particularly important and is associated with better programmatic outcomes.[27]

Donors have recognized the importance of adaptive approaches for some time. Within the U.S. government, USAID has been advancing these ideas for years through its emphasis on collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA). However, widespread implementation has been slow to take hold since it requires shifts in well-established bureaucratic culture, practices, and accountability processes. Low tolerance for risk and the prescriptive nature of the Agency's traditional approach to designing projects and managing awards has slowed the uptake of adaptive management practices.

There are promising signs of a shift. The Global Fragility Act gives adaptive management new impetus calling for programs that are flexible, adaptable, and responsive to changes in local context. And USAID's 2018 Acquisitions and Assistance Strategy promises to structure more procurements to facilitate adaptive management.[28] Still, both the culture of risk aversion and time pressure on staff that contribute to a preference for "tried-and-true" tools will remain countervailing pressures.

Capitalizing on Pockets of Political Will

Where there has been a recent democratic transition or where high-level leadership is honestly seeking to address fragility, development assistance and other aspects of development policy can be powerful tools to support reformers in the face of resistance from vested interests.

Aid Conditions

Conditioning aid on policy reforms or other actions is one approach donors often use to try to drive governance, institutional, or policy change. It has a fraught history, however. Indeed, many country governments have successfully evaded outside pressure for changes while maintaining aid flows.[29] Nevertheless, almost all development agencies understand that the success and sustainability of most aid-financed interventions require some degree of policy or governance contribution by the country partner.[30] Where political leadership is uncommitted to a development strategy or where they place little value on cultivating or maintaining a relationship with Western donors—whether for a "stamp of approval" as a reformer, a means of accessing aid, a pathway to particular investment opportunities, or other reasons—conditions are unlikely to alter elites' incentives, especially if unconditioned aid is available from other donors. But research suggests that where political leadership is truly committed to a development strategy, conditions can help support reform efforts in the face of resistance from domestic vested interests.[31]

How conditions are applied matters. Conditionality is a more effective strategy when donors are less prescriptive and more flexible and focus more on desired policy outcomes rather than the specific form the reform takes.[32] Giving partner-country stakeholders leadership over the design and implementation of conditions is also important to secure buy-in.[33] When conditions are seen as externally imposed or preempt local buy-in, elites that feel threatened are likely to undermine them. And since the promise of aid is unlikely to be the primary impetus for a government's decision to pursue reform, donors must understand the internal dynamics that could reinforce—or impede—a government's embrace of a policy condition. Observing how governments generate domestic political dividends can help donors initiate conversations about positive, mutually reinforcing conditions.

Conditions are also unhelpful—and indeed can backfire—where the withdrawal of funding for failure to meet an agreed-upon benchmark is not a credible option or threat. Donor agencies face significant bureaucratic pressure to spend planned funds, stemming either from an internal need to spend down current funds in order to defend future budget requests, and/or from other interagency actors that want to shore up certain bilateral relationships in pursuit of other (e.g., foreign policy, security) objectives. Failure to respond to a fissure in the established accountability framework, however, both undermines the impact of the aid investment and creates moral hazard for future engagements.[34]

Though the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) invests only in relatively well-governed countries—a minority of which are considered fragile—its experience with policy conditionality can provide an illustrative example. Policy conditions are a core element in all MCC compacts. To date, MCC has not systematically collected or reported information about countries' completion of these conditions, but anecdotal evidence suggest that they have sometimes empowered reformist elements within a government to push for difficult changes. For example, when MCC was developing a compact with Lesotho, its Basotho counterparts identified the legal status of married women—who were viewed as minors under the law—as an important impediment to the success of a program focused on private sector activity. MCC's inclusion of a condition around this change provided the leverage that helped empower the domestic supporters of reform to push it through.[35]

Not all conditions have been equally effective, however, highlighting the importance of local buy-in. MCC's compact with Mozambique contained a condition for the government to undertake reforms to improve the efficiency, transparency, and security of transferring and acquiring land rights. This was a deeply politically charged issue and the government was ultimately unwilling to tackle the major issues.[36]

Comparative Rankings

Cross-country indices or other benchmarking efforts that publicly rank countries' governance or policy performance over time can be influential for some reform-minded governments and help unify support for their efforts.[37] For instance, when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as Liberia's president, she championed reforms that would improve Liberia's standing on the International Finance Corporation's Doing Business Index. And MCC—which only funds countries that perform relatively well on its "scorecard" of policy indicators—has spurred reform conversations (of varying degrees of seriousness) in countries seeking funding and/or the good governance "stamp of approval" MCC eligibility provides.[38]

But even though indicator-based assessments may play a role in shaping policies, resulting reforms often respond more to the indicator itself—or donor demands around the kinds of things the indicator measures—which may or may not address the underlying issues necessary to achieve meaningful reform. This is particularly true of governance-focused assessments. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they are not shown to be effective at persuading government leaders to address issues related to power and corruption.[39]

Inclusivity and Social Cohesion

In fragile states where there has been political conflict, crafting a political settlement among elites is often an important early step in placating parties to the conflict, shifting their incentives away from continuing violence, and tempering the potential spoiler role they can play. Broader than peace agreements, political settlements encompass "the formal and informal processes, agreements, and practices that help consolidate politics, rather than violence, as a means for dealing with disagreements about interests, ideas and the distribution and use of power."[40] And they are important for creating stability coming out of conflict.

But even as they are important for ending violence, political settlements are also inherently exclusionary and predatory; they do not create a foundation for lasting peace, resilience, and broad-based economic growth.[41] Indeed, when exclusionary settlements turn into entrenched power dynamics, they can set the stage for a return to violence. Persistent political exclusion, especially when compounded by job scarcity and insecurity, is a central factor behind peace breakdowns.[42] In Afghanistan, for example, elite bargains that attempted to "buy off" local insurgents and give regional leaders autonomy to preserve traditional power balances enabled the continuation of exclusionary practices against women and allowed criminal enterprises to thrive, which, among other factors, has undermined the potential for an inclusive, resilient state.[43]

Inclusive settlements, on the other hand, can ensure effective mediation of contests for resources and give space to various actors with distinct interests. They also confer legitimacy upon and restore confidence in institutions that are essential for developing a more resilient state.[44] Inclusive governing coalitions are more likely to facilitate productive discussion about reforms with a broader set of stakeholders, seek to implement those changes in collaboration with them, and design policies and institutions that reflect that inclusive approach. These can all contribute toward legitimacy and stability over the longer term.[45] Indeed, the presence of "inclusive enough" political settlements has been an important characteristic of states that have emerged from fragility.[46]

Colombia provides a good example of the failure of an exclusionary elite bargain to control violence over the long term. The political settlement reached after the civil war in the 1940s and 1950s created parties controlled by elites, with little representation of poor, rural, Afro-Caribbean, or indigenous Colombians—the majority of the population. While the agreement ended the fighting, its

lack of inclusivity allowed extremists to emerge and gain power as excluded populations turned to them to help challenge the status quo. It was not until overwhelming popular demand for a constitutional referendum (in 1991) broke the narrow elite bargain and paved the way for a new, more inclusive state-society relationship that violence began to abate. While violence continued for the next two decades, it never returned to its pre-1991 levels.[47] The real shift to greater inclusivity made Colombia's peace process one of the more successful—if still somewhat fraught—accords in recent history.[48]

Despite their importance, however, promoting more inclusive political systems and fostering social cohesion have rarely been significant U.S. priorities.[49] Often, the U.S. government's approach has reflected a position that political settlements—and then getting to elections—matter most, rather than fully considering these steps as part of a broader and longer-term governance strengthening process.

Part of the U.S. government's limited motivation to shift from elite deals to inclusive political processes stems from the narrow and discrete timeframes that typically govern its decisions and actions. First, there is often pressure to deliver demonstrable quick wins. Even when taking a longer-term view, concrete planning and accompanying commitments rarely extend beyond a couple of years. But progress toward fostering inclusion and building state-society relations takes a generation or more (and is rarely linear)—far longer than a budgeting or planning cycle, or even the lifespan of a single administration. It is also hard to measure, especially on quarterly or annual reporting cycle timelines, and it is difficult to attribute changes to discrete interventions. In a bureaucratic culture that emphasizes measurability as accountability, these longer-term, uneven, often-unattributable pursuits are less appealing to those keen to demonstrate results.[50]

Young women in a community meeting. Inclusive settlements confer legitimacy on institutions that are essential to state resilience. Aurangabad, India. World Bank (Simone D. McCourtie)

Channeling aid through multilateral institutions and funds can help individual donor governments pursue critical longer-term goals in a more consistent way. While bi-lateral donors often have more leeway than multilaterals to seek to directly influence elites' incentives (the World Bank's articles of agreement, for instance, prohibit interference in the political affairs of any member), multi-lateral donors are typically less subject to short-term changes in political priorities or shifting geostrategic needs. This allows for the longer-term, more consistent investment patterns in areas that can help foster inclusion.

But even within the U.S. government, the need for longer-term commitments to longer-term problems is increasingly recognized. The Global Fragility Act requires that the State Department lead other agencies in developing a 10-year strategy that incorporates a focus on building inclusivity. In addition, the State Department-led Strategic Prevention Project recognizes the need for more focus on inclusivity and social cohesion, and the SAR highlights the need to support broader, inclusive processes. The next step is to operationalize these recommendations; it does not promise to be easy or straightforward.

Supporting the shift from elite deals to inclusive government is a fine line for donors to walk—with little in the way of a map to guide them.[51] While inclusivity is important for longer-term legitimacy and political resilience, change only happens if elites agree to it; too much external (or internal) pressure can lead to crackdowns on groups seen to be applying pressure, or even provoke a fracture that contributes to renewed violence.[52]

Still, there are known modalities of donor influence: Supporting and advocating for the inclusion of legitimate actors contesting political space; applying diplomatic pressure to bring elites to the negotiating table; mediating between parties; applying political and economic pressure to encourage elites to dismantle systems of exclusion; helping address perceptions of injustice by supporting inclusive service delivery; and investing in social capital—strengthening connections among like-minded communities ("bonding"), forging connections across communities with fewer shared interests ("bridging"), and connecting communities to formal institutions ("linking").[53] All of these require the type of regular political economy monitoring described above to gauge the risk of backlash and adapt—or stop—interventions as necessary.

Evaluating interventions to test theories of change is also important. While donors sometimes fund programs intended to foster social cohesion, it is not clear whether they are effective at achieving that objective. Community-driven development programs, for example—in which communities identify, implement, and maintain externally funded development projects—often carry social cohesion objectives.[54] But almost across the board, they have been found to have little or no impact on this desired outcome.[55]

Recommendations

There is no clear set of solutions for a donor seeking to grapple better with elite incentives and power dynamics in fragile states. Predatory and exclusionary governments present intractable problems that bureaucratic solutions will not fix on their own. We have moved toward nearly universal acknowledgement that politics and power are central to the development and security trajectory of fragile states, but efforts to reorient aid tools to influence these driving forces are incomplete. The recommendations below are a partial set of ideas that reinforce and build upon recent efforts to frame a new U.S. approach to fragile states and offer practical steps that can help achieve that vision.

The White House should develop a government-wide fragile-state strategy to elevate fragility as a national policy priority. Agencies have individual fragility strategies but they are not well unified

and each on its own does not sufficiently elevate fragility as a national priority. A White House-led strategy should bring together interagency actors around common principles, including how to reconcile and unify U.S. government response to democratic declines and closing civic space.

The State Department and USAID should ensure that diplomacy and foreign assistance reinforce one another in pursuit of governance objectives. Each tool is stronger in combination with the other. Diplomacy is often a prominent tool to encourage—or react to—free and fair elections, but the roots and repercussions of governance quality extend far beyond elections. The State Department should actively seek opportunities to use diplomacy to reinforce foreign assistance goals associated with institution strengthening, civil society participation, and reformist transition.

Interagency actors should conduct frequent, high quality, intelligence-informed political economy analyses that are actionable and systematically shared among agencies. Frequent, iterative political economy analyses should identify political risks, pinpoint capacities and assets for adapting to those risks, and discuss how political risks interact with economic, social, environmental, and security risks. Analyses should—either through written products or the exchange of analysts—be shared among agencies so the entire U.S. government is operating with the same set of assumptions. Analyses should also draw out key operational advice for missions or operational teams. While analyses are often helpfully descriptive, they have rarely taken the next step to describe the implications of the analysis for the actions or approaches different actors might pursue. Though the State Department would likely be well-placed to lead this effort, analyses should capitalize on the relevant expertise among different agencies, including the intelligence community.

USAID and the State Department should ensure more awards allow for adaptive management. For regular, fragility-focused political economy analysis to inform programming, implementing agencies should implement their policy commitment to manage programs more adaptively. Adaptive management also allows programs to respond to the changes in context that are common in the fluid environments of fragile states and revisit the (almost always at least partially flawed) assumptions accompanying program theories of change.

USAID should use assistance to support social cohesion objectives carefully, building on evidence of failure and adding to the body of evidence about what works. Helping societies build social capital may be a way for donors to support a transition from a closed elite political deal to more inclusive forms of governance. However, evidence suggests that many interventions with social cohesion objectives have failed to achieve them. U.S. foreign assistance investments in social capital building should be based on a keen understanding of the existing evidence and informed by political and social analyses. Social capital investments require a long-term, adaptive approach and a level of comfort with a drawn-out, nonlinear path to change.[56] Investments should also be accompanied by robust evaluation to draw lessons that can be applied to future programming.

USAID should ensure strong linkages between its governance unit and the new Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization. Now that USAID's Democracy, Rights, and Governance Office is bureaucratically divorced from the Agency's work on fragility, violence prevention, counterterrorism, and stabilization, creating strong institutional linkages between the two units will be critical to ensure coherent, governance-focused support to missions in fragile states.

The administration should make greater use of multi-lateral systems. Less than 10 percent of U.S. foreign aid goes to multi-lateral funds and

institutions. But because multilaterals are less subject than bi-lateral donors to shifts in political and geostrategic priorities, they are particularly well suited for the longer-term, more consistent investment patterns that strengthening governance and fostering inclusion require.

Congress—with support from members of the development community—should develop more realistic, longer-term expectations for assistance to fragile states. The Global Fragility Act recognizes that U.S. government efforts in fragile states have too often operated on short time frames, focusing on delivering quick and visible wins, and underprioritizing longer-term development. In asking agencies to take a long-term, 10-year strategic view, Congress allows them to focus on efforts like supporting inclusive governance, whose results may be slower to materialize but are foundational to addressing the underlying drivers of fragility. This is an important way forward, but a dose of realism is still warranted. Building institutions and social capital are generational pursuits. Though it is fair to expect headway within a decade, implementing agencies and their congressional overseers should still be wary of saddling long-term plans with even longer-term goals.

Congress will also need to shift its oversight focus. Tying accountability closely to targets risks orienting programs too much toward that which is easily measured and overlooking (or at least underreporting on) real outcomes. If Congress sees its oversight role principally as a monitor of targets and metrics, it may—perhaps inadvertently—redirect agency behavior toward meeting shorter-term (i.e., more measurable, more attributable) targets rather than focusing on longer-term goals. It should ask agencies to report more on the context around reported indicators and seek to understand the processes the State Department and USAID used for monitoring, evaluation, and learning, including how they collected local, conflict sensitive information and used it to adapt program implementation.[57] PRISM

Notes

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Marshall Plan aid to Germany enabled that country to rise from the ashes of defeat, as symbolized by this worker in West Berlin. (U.S. National Archives)

Foreign Aid in an Era of Great Power Competition

By Andrew S. Natsios

"Most especially in the conduct of foreign relations, that democratic governments appear to me to be decidedly inferior to governments carried out by different principles…But a democracy is unable to regulate the details of an important undertaking, to persevere in a design, and to work out its execution in the presence of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy, and it will not await their consequences with patience. These are qualities which more especially belong to an individual or to an aristocracy."

Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (1835)1

O ver the past decade the international political system has evolved into a state of great power rivalry in which the United States is challenged for international leadership by a rising China and a rapidly re-arming, revanchist Russia. A new militant nationalism is spreading across the globe; democracy appears to be in retreat as aggrieved populations turn to populist authoritarianism as a remedy. This rising political and strategic competition has now crossed over into the international development space.

The international development order that emerged at the end of the Cold War is now unraveling. That order produced some of the greatest strides in human history: the widest expansion of democracy and human rights, the largest drop in poverty, the sharpest reduction in starvation and famine deaths, remarkable increases in life expectancy, literacy, and nutrition, and through the internet, the most access to information ever seen.[2] Certainly much of this progress is attributable to globalization, investment, and economic growth; but foreign assistance has also played an important role.[3] Despite this remarkable progress, many western donor governments recently have attempted to cut or consolidate their aid programs. In sharp contrast, China and Russia—the two presumed Great Power rivals to the United States—are expanding theirs.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 provides perhaps the best illustration of this new era of great power rivalry. Black Swan events—unanticipated and era-changing—drove much of 20th century history: World War I, the Great Influenza, World War II, and the rise and collapse of the Soviet Union, being the most notable examples. The COVID-19 pandemic may surpass the tragic events of 9/11 as the defining Black Swan event of the early 21st century. It will be studied by Washington think tanks and academia for decades to come to comprehend fully

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how it unfolded and became exaggerated by the social media. And how it drove much of the world's population to retreat to their homes, pushed countries into depression-level unemployment, collapsed stock markets around the world, paralyzed the global trading system, bankrupted airlines, and panicked governments into retreating behind national (and even sub-national) borders. But it also showed the weaknesses of international institutions such as the World Health Organization which appeared powerless to stop the spread of the disease and was largely ignored in practice by the Chinese government during the early stages of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to the worst relations between China and the western democracies since the Tiananmen Square crisis which took years to recover. This time it will be even more difficult for China because of Beijing's early missteps which allowed the virus to get out of control, and because COVID-19 has affected every country and every person in every country, as lockdowns spread and mass unemployment rises across the world. The Trump Administration has avoided assuming the traditional leadership role the United States has taken in virtually every international crisis since the 1940's. While the U.S. has sent a modest $100 million in assistance to developing countries, the Administration included no funding in its proposal to Congress for its first supplemental budget. It was the U.S. Congress which added $1.55 billion for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), State Department, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to assist developing countries. I have argued elsewhere that the best place to stop disease outbreaks mutating into pandemics is at the source, not at the borders of the United States. And it is the CDC international division and USAID which have that capacity to intervene at the source when they are allowed to do so.[4]

Xi Jinping has attempted to change the anti-China narrative on the pandemic by offering to send medical teams to Europe and other countries to provide advice and medical supplies based on the Chinese experience with the virus. How this aid will be received by recipient countries remains to be seen. The Chinese government's propaganda machine used social media to spread preposterous stories that the U.S. military had brought the virus to China, infuriating the White House. In retaliation, both President Trump and Secretary of State Pompeo have tried to change the name of COVID-19 to the China or Wuhan Virus. Both countries are racing to be the first to produce a vaccine to save the world from the disease.

One of the outcomes of the pandemic in developing countries will be as much in the economic damage as in human illness and deaths. Already, exports from the global south to the north have dramatically declined as have remittances to the south from African and Latin American ethnic diasporas living in the north. We may see cascading defaults in developing countries unable to pay their rising debt obligations to China to pay for the Chinese Belt and Road infrastructure projects. Debt will have to be forgiven or refinanced, and China will have to be at the table since they hold this debt and they will have to participate in bailouts.

Even before COVID-19 Washington policymakers struggled to design a coherent new U.S. foreign aid strategy tied more intimately to U.S. national interests to counter Russian and Chinese efforts. Perhaps the current crisis will sharpen the debate in the United States on the strategic use of foreign aid when there are direct national security threats at stake. This article will review how the U.S. foreign assistance program helped win the Cold War during an earlier period of great power rivalry, the weaknesses and strengths of current foreign aid programs of China and Russia, and then using the lessons from the Cold War aid program, suggest a new realpolitik aid strategy for the United States.

The Belt and Road Initiative includes 1/3 of world trade and GDP and over 60% of the world's population. (World Bank)

How Foreign Aid Helped Win the Cold War

Much of the academic literature and professional international development ideology argues against the use of foreign aid for national security purposes, suggesting that this reduces success rates in developmental terms. They nearly all use the illustration of President Mobutu of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (called Zaire when he was in power) as the poster child for the abuse of foreign policy-based aid. While there certainly have been political aid failures, there have been far more successes. I would argue the greatest USAID success stories during the Cold War were those directly connected to U.S. national interests. These successes certainly benefited the United States but they also benefited developing countries as they transitioned to become advanced developed countries.

Between the end of WWII and the end of the Cold War the United States built a chain of alliances with more than 55 allies in its great power rivalry with the Soviet Union. The United States then connected its economy with these allies through most favored nation and open trade agreements; the U.S. military worked with their militaries through mutual defense treaties; the State Department ran programs to promote American culture; and USAID used development programs to institutionalize the liberal international order, build democratic capitalist societies, export American values and institutions, provide human services, increase agricultural production and economic growth, and stabilize countries under pressure from the Communist bloc.

One of the earliest and most famous of these aid programs was the Marshall Plan, announced on June 5, 1947 at Harvard University by Secretary of State George C. Marshall in his commencement address, which sought to rebuild Europe from the destruction of World War II. While Marshall claimed "Our policy is directed not against any

country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos," he was being diplomatic, as one of the purposes of the Marshall Plan was to stop Stalin's takeover of a devastated Europe and thus contain Soviet expansionism.

The successor U.S. government aid programs also served another more subtle purpose which was to connect American institutions with those of U.S. allies in the developing world through university linkage programs, NGO and civil society grants, and scholarship programs to bring promising young leaders to earn degrees at American colleges and universities.

While America exported civil society and democratic capitalism, the Soviet Union attempted to spread Marxist-Leninist ideology through its aid programs which built projects like the Aswan Dam in Egypt and brought developing country students to the Soviet Union for their college degrees. But Eastern Bloc countries could not match the resources of western aid programs. The Soviet Union's total Official Development Assistance (ODA) programs were a mere 10 percent of total donor government aid during the Cold War. Marxist-Leninist ideology was militantly hostile to the development of private market economies, democracy and governance programs, civil society organizations, and independent universities and colleges.

USAID's foreign aid programs were products of the Cold War as an instrument to prevent developing countries falling to communism. It was not until 1961 that a single federal agency—USAID—was created by President John F. Kennedy to institutionalize the foreign aid program of the United States government. The creation of USAID must be understood in its historical context. In August 1961, a month before the first Foreign Assistance Act was approved by Congress, the Communist East German government built the Berlin Wall to prevent further escapes to the West. The Wall was constructed in the middle of the Berlin crisis, one of the most

dangerous Cold War confrontations between the United States and the Soviet Union. In December 1961, one month after the creation of USAID, Cuban leader Fidel Castro announced to the world that he had embraced Marxist-Leninism ideology and thus was allying Cuba with the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the greatest success story of foreign aid during the Cold War next to the Marshall Plan was the "Green Revolution." Dr. Norman Borlaug, an American plant breeder from Kansas who taught at Texas A&M University (where the Borlaug Institute continues to carry on his legacy) and his colleagues in India bred new varieties of corn, rice, and wheat which dramatically increased yields. These new seed varieties were then released into seed markets in India, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia. USAID implemented much of the program with Dr. Borlaug and local Ministries of Agriculture in the lead, while the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations funded the actual breeding of the seeds.

In congressional testimony then-USAID Administrator, William Gaud, reported that 50 percent USAID's budget in the 1960's was spent implementing the Green Revolution in Asia. It was Gaud who in a speech on March 8, 1968 coined the term "Green Revolution" to describe the program. Gaud said, "These and other developments in the field of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violent Red Revolution like that of the Soviets, nor is it a White Revolution like that of the Shah of Iran. I call it the Green Revolution." One of the important lessons of the Green Revolution was that it did not unfold in a year or two; it took several decades to breed the seed, test it in each country, change agricultural policies in recipient countries to encourage increased production, build rural roads to move inputs and harvests, and train local agricultural technicians to institutionalize the programs. The

Cold War aid programs of USAID had a time horizon of 20 years at a minimum.

In a National Academy of Science retrospective report on the Green Revolution, Prabhu L. Pingali writes;

> *The developing world witnessed an extraordinary period of food crop productivity growth over the past 50 years, despite increasing land scarcity and rising land values. Although populations had more than doubled, **the production of cereal crops tripled during this period**, with only a 30 percent increase in land area cultivated…*
>
> *Much of the success was caused by the combination of high rates of investment in crop research, infrastructure, and market development and appropriate policy support that took place during the first Green Revolution (GR).*[5]

The Green Revolution was a stunning success as both a humanitarian program—because it ended famine in non-Communist Asia and dramatically reduced chronic malnutrition—as well as a strategic one tied to U.S. foreign policy by containing communist expansionism. While China and the Soviet Union were busy funding and arming communist insurgencies in Asia (Laos, South Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia), Mao Zedong was also implementing his radical agricultural revolution (1958-1962)—the Great Leap Forward—which led to the Great Chinese Famine that killed 45 million people—one of history's greatest catastrophes.[6] So while the democratic capitalist west was massively increasing food production in Asia, Mao was reducing it in China leading to the mass starvation of his own people.

The Green Revolution also set the stage for industrialization as no country has industrialized without first modernizing its agricultural economy to produce large grain surpluses to feed their cities and for export.[7]

USAID not only had great successes in the sectors of development, it also had remarkable successes in Asia at the country level, particularly in South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Between 1952 and 1980 the United States spent $18 billion (in 2009 dollars) in development assistance to rebuild South Korea (ROK) following the Korean War, with a civilian army of 10,000 USAID workers (mostly South Korean nationals) constructing roads, schools, and health clinics.[8] During the Kennedy Administration, influenced by W.W. Rostow's Modernization Theory, USAID senior staff convinced ROK President Park Chung-Hee to pursue an export-based economic growth model which turned into one of the greatest economic miracles of the 20th century. In the 1950's South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, its economy devastated by the Korean War with a third of its people suffering severe acute malnutrition (until U.S. food aid arrived). It is now the 13th largest economy in the world. The South Korean aid program proved once again the importance of a long time horizon: it took twenty years to implement.

Similar programs were pursued in Taiwan under Chiang-Kai-shek, as well as in Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia where communist insurgencies were underway. Vietnam was a strategic a failure in Asia, but that was because it was being carried out in the middle of a civil war (which is one of several reasons the U.S. government's more recent aid programs in Iraq and Afghanistan were not as successful as they might have been had there been peace and stability). Many of the studies of USAID programs have focused on the strategic failure in South Vietnam, not the remarkable successes across non-Communist Asia.

While serving as USAID Administrator I asked senior career officers what the most successful aid program was; they nearly universally said the Agency's scholarship programs. For example, 3,000

promising South Korean students were brought to the United States to get advanced degrees during the 1950's and 1960's under the U.S. aid program.[9] The same was true in Taiwan, Indonesia, India, South Vietnam, and Thailand. During the Cold War USAID brought 18,000-20,000 students per year from allied and neutral developing countries such as India to obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees at U.S. universities. This trend began gradually to decline after the Cold War to merely a few thousand. Many graduates later became Presidents, Prime Ministers, Finance Ministers, civil society leaders, and major business figures.[10] The success of these scholarship programs only became apparent as the graduates rose to positions of power in their home countries over several decades. Thus during the Cold War, the United States educated country elites, a program that is now a shadow of what it once was.[11] Its decline may be directly attributable to the Office of Management and Budget's relentless demand for immediate and quantifiable results reported on an annual basis, which scholarship programs cannot provide.

USAID also managed, over twenty-year cycles, university linkage programs in South Korea, India, Indonesia, and other countries coupling American universities with newly created counterparts in these countries. In the 1950's the Indian Government and USAID's predecessor agencies worked with the private Ford Foundation to build and staff a chain of agricultural colleges to institutionalize the Green Revolution. They also created more than a dozen engineering schools (called Technical Institutes) linked with a dozen American engineering universities between the early 1950's and 1970's, exchanging faculty, collaborating on research, and sharing curricula. These Indian institutions now provide graduates to staff the current-day high technology revolution, which was led by Indian entrepreneurs many of whom had earned their PhDs at U.S. engineering schools on USAID scholarships.

One of the other major foreign assistance success stories, particularly in Asia, was USAID's (voluntary) family planning program. In the countries in Asia where USAID implemented these family planning programs fertility rates dropped significantly, which a number of econometric studies show to have been a factor in the high economic growth rates of the East Asia Tigers.[12] During my tenure as USAID Administrator USAID initiated a similar program in Ethiopia with the Ministry of Health which led over a 12 year period to a drop in fertility rates from six to four children on average per family.

The Current U.S. Aid Program

Nearly 100 percent of the U.S. foreign aid budget is divided into inflexible sector and subsector earmarks which have little do with the preferences of developing countries. For example, only about 10 to 20 percent of U.S. government foreign aid spending is designed to increase economic growth (which includes USAID agriculture programs). The health account which makes up 33 percent of the entire aid budget of $34.2 billion for 2018 is designed to fight diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Polio, early childhood diseases, and Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), family planning, rather than increasing economic growth. About 25 percent of U.S. foreign aid is spent on disaster assistance in crises (both natural and man-made) to keep people alive and reduce human suffering, and address crises in fragile and failed states. USAID's environmental programs are designed to slow or stop economic growth in environmentally sensitive areas, not accelerate it. Economic growth is in fact one of the few areas of aid spending for which there is no earmark and thus it's underfunding. But most people and governments in the developing world want aid which accelerates economic growth, job creation, and education, and job training geared towards marketplace demands.

Thus, western aid programs, including those of the United States, have focused not on infrastructure and economic growth demanded by the developing world, but programs that are popular in the Congress and among the American people—health, education, environment, and humanitarian assistance—since indirectly or directly it is Congress and the American people that provide the funding. The World Bank over time has reduced loans for infrastructure under pressure from non-governmental organizations and western environmental groups which oppose mega-development and infrastructure programs.

The international development space abhors a vacuum; that has presented an opportunity for China to fill the vacuum with mega-construction projects such as highways, ports, bridges, dams, soccer stadiums, and airports. China has no environmental groups or civil society organizations to protest or constrain their foreign aid programs as do traditional democratic donors, and no auditors or inspectors to second-guess every decision made by development professionals. China can build these very visible projects very rapidly. In an era of great power competition, the demands of developing countries must take priority over U.S. (and other donor) domestic interest groups if the United States hopes to compete with China for influence in the developing world.

Because the U.S. foreign assistance budget is so heavily earmarked there is no flexibility to respond to opportunities or specific requests and needs of recipient countries; every dollar is already committed. After the end of the Cold War the sector earmarks demanded by advocacy groups, NGOs, and religious institutions, rose to be 100 percent of the aid budget, as the national security justification diminished. These groups assiduously protect the earmarks.

The current aid system has such high levels of accountability that this system generates an enormous demand for paperwork and bureaucracy.

This is because the technocratic oversight agencies of the U.S. government—OMB, GAO, the F Office at the State Department, the USAID Inspector General (IG), Special IG for Afghan reconstruction, and Congressional Oversight Committees—each demand quarterly reports, annual project evaluations, measureable indicators, audits, and other data to prove programs are working. The OMB, IG, and GAO technocrats have seized control of the aid budget and insist that program accountability is more important than the strategic consequences of the program. These new accountability systems have had diminishing returns, are very expensive, and in fact do little to improve program performance.[13] Despite these weaknesses in the U.S. foreign assistance ecosystem, major accomplishments have been achieved; in disaster relief as incidents of famine and starvation deaths have precipitously declined since the 1980's despite growing chaos across the globe, in health through the HIV/AIDS and Malaria programs of the Bush Administration, in agriculture through the Feed the Future initiative of the Obama Administration, and through the locally-generated projects of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

A significant trend in the 21st century western aid ecosystem is the emergence of private foundation and corporate funding of aid programs which has massively increased between 1970 and 2000: the Gates Foundation being the most notable example.[14] In 1970, the U.S. government provided 70 percent of U.S. funds going to the developing world, while private foreign direct investment provided the remaining 30 percent. By 2007, those trends had reversed, according to the Hudson Institute's 2007 Index of Global Philanthropy: official U.S. aid programs provided only 9 percent ($21.8 billion) of the $235.2 billion flowing from the United States to developing countries; private sources sent the remaining 91 percent (that is, $213.4 billion). The data show that foundations, corporations, nonprofits,

and other private philanthropic sources sent $37 billion to developing countries; ethnic diasporas sent $79 billion in remittances (mostly from Latin America); and corporations and individuals sent $97.4 billion in private capital flows, mostly to Asia.[15]

In recognition of this shift in funding sources in 2001 USAID created the Global Development Alliance (GDA) system of public-private partnerships to jointly fund development projects. Corporations, foundations, and NGOs ended up providing 75 percent of the funding while USAID provided 25 percent (plus its expertise in designing and managing the development projects). Public-private partnerships make no sense in the Chinese or Russian aid landscape as their private sector is for the most part controlled by and subordinate to state interests. And the Russian and Chinese private sectors appear to have little interest in corporate social responsibility.

Aid with Chinese Characteristics

The creation and expansion of the China aid program did not begin with Donald Trump's election to the Presidency; it has been growing for some time along with China's growing military power. However, since Xi Jinping assumed office in March 2013 China has moved aggressively to expand its foreign aid programs.

Over the past decade China has signed 99 year leases of hundreds of thousands of hectares of African agricultural land in Tanzania, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Madagascar among others to produce food, as they worry about long-term food security. The Belt and Road Initiative to build infrastructure links between the Chinese interior and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa is grand in its scale and massive in its funding, but is experiencing growing headwinds from participant countries.[16] Governments in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar have been backing away from these

agreements because of the fear of excessive debt commitments and the dire consequences of loan defaults. In some cases countries have had to transfer control of their ports and other infrastructure, or their oil exports as happened in Ecuador, when they cannot pay the debt service to Chinese lenders. This developing country debt to China will likely grow to crisis proportions in the wake of the Great Corona Pandemic. The only solution will be for China to forgive the debt without penalty, as traditional donors did in the early 2000's led by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President George W. Bush, when debt burdens to international banks were crushing developing country budgets. This coming debt crisis may prove the end of the Belt and Road Initiative, or at least its decline.

Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice have argued that China's building or managing ports and infrastructure follows the same pattern Great Britain used to create the colonial empire which dominated the industrial infrastructure of the world and covered a quarter of globe in the 19th century.[17] In many ways the Chinese are not funding their aid program with their own capital reserves, they are using them to leverage loans made to developing countries which the recipients will eventually have to repay. Thus the Chinese aid program is extractive in nature whether in leasing land to grow food for Chinese consumption, Chinese mining operations, oil and gas reserves, or as a destination for Chinese manufactured goods. Developing country governments which have bought into this arrangement have received infrastructure in return. But this commonly understood picture of the China aid program is incomplete. China is also exporting its model of development and its culture and institutions; mega-infrastructure projects, authoritarian politics, state based-economics, and mercantilist ideology. It has reinforced this model through its scholarship programs.

China has taken one of USAID's greatest successes—its scholarship program—and replicated it, while the U.S. government has allowed its official scholarship program to atrophy. It has become increasingly difficult for foreign students to get visas to come to the U.S. These disappointed developing country students now have an alternative: China.

"In 2015, a total of 397,635 international students visited China from 202 countries, 5.46 percent more than the preceding year. These students studied in 811 colleges, research institutes, and universities in 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities across China. The Chinese government awarded 40,600 scholarships to international students with the remainder being self-financed. About 184,799 international students were admitted for academic degrees, an increase of 20,405 students compared to the previous year."[18]

Thus, China has in place an extensive scholarship program for students from developing countries to take degrees at Chinese universities, learn Mandarin, and take courses in Chinese culture twice the size of the USAID program at the height of the Cold War. The question is whether these students will return home and attempt to transform their cultures and societies on the Chinese mercantilist authoritarian rather than the American model of democratic capitalism with a strong civil society?

China is also developing the institutional infrastructure to promulgate the Chinese version of development in the 21st century. In December 2015 China created the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank which now has 74 member countries as well as 26 prospective members but which the Obama Administration refused to join. The Obama Administration helped create the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP) among Asian countries to try to counter China's growing trade dominance, but the Trump Administration withdrew from the negotiations which caused the collapse of the TPP (the same countries minus the United States then formed their own trading block). In both cases the United States ceded its place in the development and trade space thus unintentionally increasing Chinese influence.

China is populating international organizations with its own technocrats in high positions of power, and sending troops to UN Peacekeeping Operations (it is now one of the largest contributors to UNDPO) even as the United States has gradually reduced its presence in these same institutions. Some in the United States may see this as a positive trend because of burden sharing; but backing away from funding and staffing international organizations is self-destructive as America closes in on itself and becomes increasingly isolated in a world dominated by Chinese economic, cultural and diplomatic influence.

The Beijing leadership believes its authoritarian mercantilist model of economic development is superior to traditional donor aid programs. China funds its programs through concessional loans at reduced interest rates to governments and businesses around the globe through several organizational mechanisms including state banks which have an explicit mandate to support government priorities rather than pursuing purely commercial deals.[19] The Chinese Communist Party apparatus has a heavy hand in coordinating and directing foreign investments that are consistent with its broad, geostrategic imperatives, an aid environment quite different than that of private market economies such as the United States. Thus, the lines are blurred between the Chinese public and private sectors in these deals.

The China foreign aid budget is reportedly between $5-7 billion dollars a year, and has several attractive features for developing countries that might be unattractive investments for traditional donors—at

least on the surface. First, China generally ignores the performance of its aid recipients (unless they default on loan payments), human rights abuses, corruption, return on investment, or program accountability. Some of China's aid programs are concentrated in rogue or failed states such as North Korea, Venezuela, Cuba, Libya, and Sudan (until 2019 when a new civilian government took office). According to a Brooking Institution study Chinese aid programs are concentrated in the most corrupt governments in the world and the aid is spent disproportionately in the home areas of the heads of state.[20]

Second, China's aid programs focus on "monument development," which is to say highly visible infrastructure projects—highways, ports, dams, airports, and soccer stadiums—which are popular, at least initially, until they start deteriorating because of the absence of operations and maintenance capacity.

Much Chinese aid is in the form of construction projects built by imported Chinese workers, a practice which is very unpopular in developing countries that want their own workers trained and employed. This has led to speculation that the real motive of all China's aid programs, including the Belt and Road Initiative, is the need to export surplus male labor (unemployed and unmarried men) which Party leaders fear could be a destabilizing force in future years. This is a strategic weakness of the China aid program which the United States should exploit by hiring, empowering, and training (which is the basis for most bilateral western aid programs) as many people from recipient countries as possible because China's aid programs cannot and will not do that.

Third, while infrastructure and construction projects are completed rapidly they are built without concern for environmental impact, and do not protect the health and safety of construction workers who often work two shifts per day, seven days per week. The speed of construction and visibility of these mega-infrastructure projects makes them dramatic and visible evidence of China's emergence as a Great Power. The problem is that China's aid managers appear either to have no interest in institution building or do not know how to develop local capacity. Given the deep structural weaknesses in China's own institutions, this is perhaps understandable. American aid programs focus heavily on institution and capacity building which is something they should continue, particularly as this is a failing of the China development model.

Fourth, negotiations on aid programs between China and host governments are conducted in secret and without the intrusive "meddling" or oversight of other donors, international institutions, local parliaments, or civil society. Thus, they display little transparency in their aid allocation, programming, contracting, or implementation systems.

In 2016 China established its own bilateral independent aid agency, now called the China International Development Cooperation Agency, or CIDCA, and transferred its existing aid programs from the Ministry of Commerce where they had been housed since the inception of the foreign aid program. This development is most interesting as many western governments now are centralizing control of their aid agencies in their foreign ministries, while China is making its aid agency more independent. The size and extent of China's aid programs and financing are supposed to be a state secret, but it is known that the largest recipient of Chinese aid programs is China's "Great Power" ally and neighbor, the Russian Republic, which was granted a loan on concessional terms to construct a gas pipeline from Siberia to China.[21]
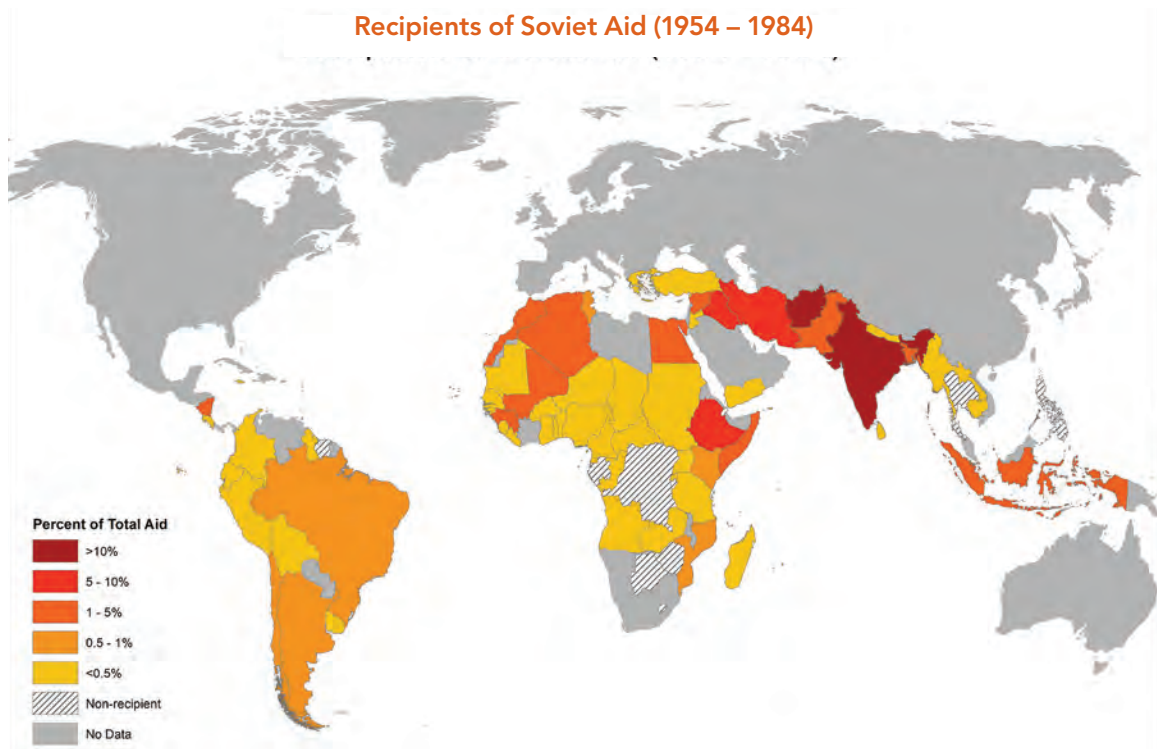
Russian Aid Program

Putting the Chinese and Russians in the same category as Great Power rivals of the United States in terms of foreign aid is misleading. Russia's foreign aid program displays none of the size, strategic vision, or coherence of China's program. Russia does not have the foreign currency reserves, the surplus male labor

pool, the economic need for natural resources from developing countries (Russia is naturally endowed on its own soil with a third of the mineral and fossil fuel resources of the entire planet), nor the industrial production to export (their exports other than fossil fuels, consist of weapons systems and more recently, grain). Nevertheless, Russia's international development assistance has grown 300 percent since 2010 according to a study done by Aid Data.[22] It topped $1.16 billion in 2015, but fell to $1.02 billion in 2016.

Russia's foreign interventions have actually systematically undermined and even reversed development progress. According to an in-depth *New York Times* investigative report published October 18, 2019, the Russian Air Force systematically bombed hospitals in Syria and made the humanitarian emergency *more* severe, a counter-developmental tactic if there ever was one.[23]

There is considerable evidence that Russia is driving refugee and displaced populations from Syria towards Europe in order to destabilize the European Union. In Senate testimony in March 2016 the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO reported that, "Together, Russia and the Assad Regime are deliberately weaponizing migration in an attempt to overwhelm European structures and break European resolve."

While Russia's aid program has been helpful in funding international health programs, the benefits are undone by spreading misinformation about vaccines through the internet.[24] While this disinformation may have been directed at European and American audiences, it is also being read in developing countries and has fueled a recently rising tide of anti-vaccine propaganda in Africa which is creating hostility to vaccination

Recipients of Soviet Aid (1954 – 1984)

Percent of Total Aid

- >10%
- 5 - 10%
- 1 - 5%
- 0.5 - 1%
- <0.5%
- Non-recipient
- No Data

Map showing recipients of Soviet aid, 1954 – 1984. (AidData, Gerda Asmus, Andreas Fuchs, Angelika Müller, and Soren Patterson. Data from CIA and OECD-DAC)

Recipients of Russian Aid (2011 – 2015)
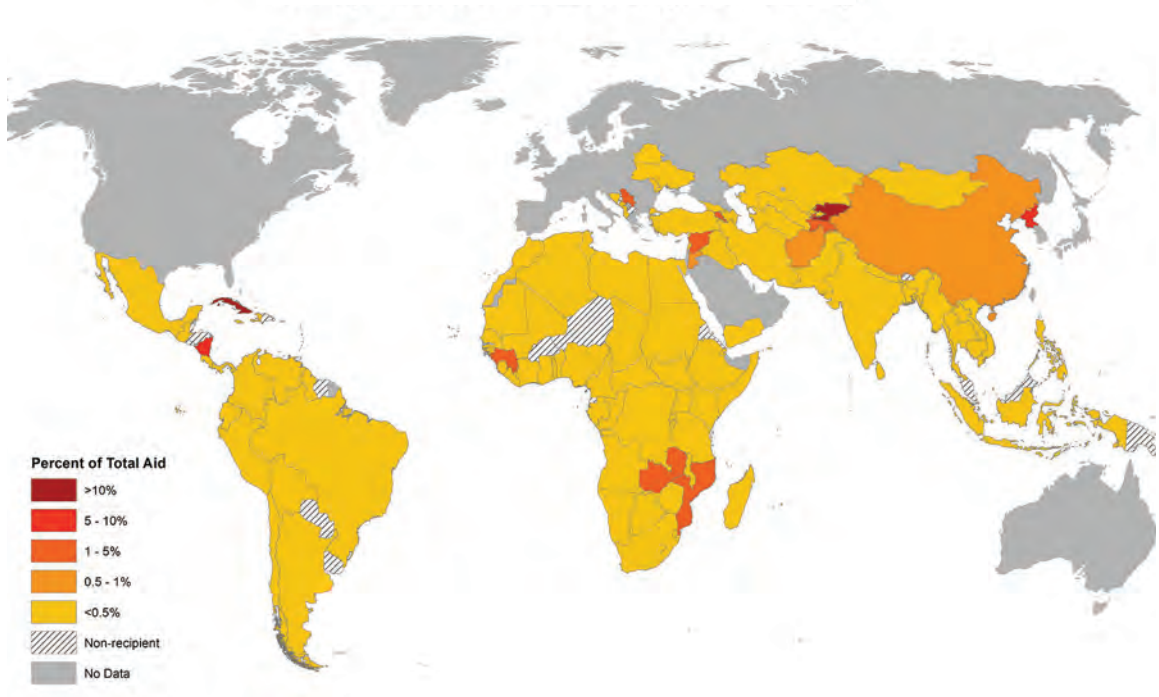
Map showing recipients of Russian aid, 2011 – 2015. (AidData, Gerda Asmus, Andreas Fuchs, Angelika Müller, and Soren Patterson. Data from CIA and OECD-DAC)

campaigns. It could even hinder the future distribution of vaccines to combat the Great Corona Pandemic. These contemporary Russian tactics would have embarrassed the Cold War Soviet elites that cooperated with western democracies on the highly successful efforts beginning in the 1960's to eradicate smallpox (and also polio, less successfully). Some estimate that 300 million people died from smallpox in the twentieth century before it was finally eradicated in 1977 through this remarkable cooperation.[25]

Strategic Principles for U.S. Foreign Assistance in a Time of Great Power Rivalry

The era of globalization may be coming to an end. Corporate supply chains that have focused exclusively on efficiency and cost over reliability have

proven very fragile. This has proven especially notable in the case of pharmaceuticals.[26] The global COVID-19 Pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities which the new, more protectionist era the world seems headed toward may accelerate.

Below are some of the elements of a new aid strategy to protect U.S. national interests during this environment characterized by both growing nationalism and Great Power competition.

A Realist Mission for Foreign Assistance

The Obama Administration rewrote the more traditional realist USAID mission to focus on eradicating extreme poverty as its central objective. In practice this led to plans to phase out programs in middle-income countries. This was a mistake as those countries can fall backwards and regress in the development process (as Venezuela

has proven). More importantly, middle-income countries—many of which still have significant populations suffering from poverty and underdevelopment—may be of critical strategic importance to the United States. A better approach would be to determine American interests in a country based on their strategic importance which will not likely change from one year to another. The basis of any alliance system with the United States should not be tactical or transactional, but strategic and long-term as was the case during the Cold War.

The mission of USAID should be rewritten to focus on supporting our allies, friends, and countries of strategic importance, whether they are middle- or low-income, linking American society and institutions with those of developing countries. The U.S. foreign assistance program should emphasize those elements that it is uniquely suited to provide, for which there is a local demand, and that neither Russian nor Chinese aid programs can offer. Supporting the development of civil society, democracy, human rights, and free market capitalism, economic growth, agriculture, and health and education are some of those elements.

Maintain the High Moral Ground.

Many U.S. aid efforts, such as the HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Polio eradication, and Neglected Tropical Disease programs, save lives, reduce human suffering, and stabilize societies traumatized by epidemic disease outbreaks. Some hard realists argue these programs should be abandoned making funding available for more strategically important programs. This overlooks the fact that the United States is admired and revered in developing countries because of these health programs (among other reasons) and their effect on the average person. And now with the COVID-19 pandemic, these health programs appear even more strategic than they were earlier. The Chinese health programs in Africa and other regions have focused principally on building

hospitals, without any infrastructure, technical training, or institution building. These hospital buildings will be of little help in combatting the devastation of any pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 should teach hard realists who are dismissive of development assistance and "humanitarian programs," if senior policymakers ignore such crises they can alter world history, and not in a good way. While the behavior of governments, both great and small, during the crisis has reinforced the structural realist argument that the nation state remains the fundamental organizing principle of the international system, the progress of the virus has shown that foreign policies of great and small powers are principally driven by internal political pressures from their own citizens to protect them from external threats such as diseases, pressures which have little to do with balance of power theories of statecraft.

Avoid Transactional and Tactical Foreign Assistance

President Trump has used foreign assistance in negotiations with countries to achieve other outcomes: That is, as a tool of diplomacy to induce non-developmental outcomes. For the most part this has been with punitive rather than positive incentives. These transactional uses of aid have little to do with development and have been counterproductive historically. During the Cold War, the least defensible and most infamous use of foreign aid subsidized predatory, corrupt, and tyrannical regimes (which claimed to be anti-Communist) with no interest in any kind of development.

President Trump's suspension of the aid programs in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador as punishment for insufficient cooperation in stopping migration to the United States is a case in point. These aid programs were designed to address the drivers of migration, and the empirical evidence shows that they were beginning to work. By suspending these

aid programs the pressure for people to migrate to the United States has increased, not diminished.

The challenge in a period of great power competition will be determining which countries are U.S. allies, which are adversaries, and which are neither. Using votes in the UN Security Council or the General Assembly to determine who is friend or foe is unwise, as some countries which are allies inevitably will disagree with the United States on certain issues. President Trump and former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley were angered when U.S. aid beneficiaries voted in favor of a resolution criticizing the U.S. Embassy move in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and proposed making aid conditional on countries voting with us. What was not said is that the two countries which wrote and sponsored the resolution—Jordan and Egypt—are among America's two closest allies in the Arab world. Given domestic public opinion in their own countries they would have risked political hostility at home had they voted against the resolution. More importantly for American foreign policy, Israel relies on the stability of its two neighbors for its own security. Cutting aid to Jordan and Egypt because of their UN votes would have endangered Israel's security.[27] The United States should not use foreign aid to buy votes in any forum, although aid can be used as an inducement in negotiations as it was by President Carter who promised generous aid packages to Israel and Egypt if they signed the Camp David Accords which ended the state of war between the two countries and stabilized the Middle East. The larger conceptual problem with using aid as a transactional tool in negotiations is that programs cannot be turned off and on like a light switch to satisfy short term political imperatives without damaging the programs viability.

Realign Aid Strategy to a 10-20 Year Time Horizon.

The relentless demand for instant results from development programs has been among the greatest failures of U.S. policy. This is a problem in all democracies, but particularly in the United States. Successful development programs which result in transformational change require long time horizons of 10-20 years to take root, grow, and become self-sustaining. They must take an incremental rather than revolutionary approach.[28] From the earliest foreign aid programs, some policymakers have been disappointed when transformational changes have not taken place overnight.

Only fourteen months after its creation USAID was widely believed to be failing because it had not yet transformed Latin America. Daniel Bell, who was sent to fix USAID as its second Administrator, in his retirement interview raised the issues of time horizon and demonstrable results several times. "The President, I know personally came to feel that the Alliance for Progress did not move nearly as quickly as he had hoped it would."[29]

Bell reported, "I'm sure they (Kennedy's advisors) became aware during the Kennedy years of the inherent difficulties with which the U.S. was trying to deal in less developed countries--the very stubborn obstacles to change…to the rapid achievement of economic and social progress."[30] The fact that President Kennedy and his advisors expected Latin America to "achieve rapid economic and social progress" fourteen months after USAID was established shows how detached they were from the realities of development theory and practice (and of social change).

The 20 year time horizon for aid programs during the Cold War has gradually been abandoned in the post-Cold War era as the technocrats from OMB took control of aid funding and insisted on ever shorter program horizons: to ten years, then five, and today to one year as OMB demands annual reports showing measureable progress without which programs are terminated. A realist foreign aid strategy for a period of Great Power Competition must return to the longer time horizons of the Cold War, or it will fail.

Correct Structural, Regulatory, and Statutory Weaknesses in Aid Programs.

The quantitative measurements school of public management has dominated OMB and some Congressional Committees since the early 1990s resulting in greater centralization of decisionmaking over aid programs. During the Cold War, USAID was by far the most decentralized aid agency in the world and the most effective. The historical record suggests that aid programs particularly in unstable environments are more successful when decisions are made locally. Retired USAID career officers told me that the Green Revolution looked different in each country, even though the common denominator was the improved seed varieties.

We now have rigorous empirical evidence to support this decentralization imperative. In *Navigation by Judgment: Organizational Autonomy and Country Context in the Delivery of Foreign Aid*, Daniel Honig has examined the organizational features of international development organizations (aid agencies) over 14,000 aid projects.[31] Honig reports that "navigation by measurement" may improve organizational performance when working in predictable environments and when the tasks are observable in nature—road building, vaccine distribution, etc. However, when the environment is unpredictable and projects focus on less observable tasks—such as governance reforms or health system improvement—"navigation by judgment" (which requires a highly decentralized management model) may prove to be the superior strategy for improving organizational performance. USAID program management should be decentralized as it was during the Cold War.

James Q. Wilson reached a similar conclusion: "In general, authority should be placed at the lowest level at which all essential elements of information are available."[32] This is particularly true in aid programming far removed culturally and geographically from Washington. Most importantly

from both an international development and foreign policy perspective the country directors responsible for the foreign assistance programs should be influential with, if not the chief development adviser to, the President or Prime Minister and the cabinet members of the countries which are the recipients of U.S. aid. To do that USAID Mission Directors must have broad discretion to respond to local needs rather than the needs of Washington command and control agencies.

Timing and Location of USAID Missions should be Based on U.S. National Interests Rather than Graduation Criteria.

Since the 1990's every President, OMB, and Congressional oversight committee, has been obsessed with "country graduation" from aid programs, particularly for middle-income countries. For example, over the past 30 years this pressure led to USAID closing its offices in Panama, Bulgaria, Romania, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger. The latter three had to be promptly re-opened up due to the terrorist threat posed by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Many more country programs were scaled back in size. During my tenure as USAID Administrator, under the same pressures, plans were made (though never implemented) to leave Morocco, Yemen, Brazil, Guyana, and South Africa. As it were, the strategic imperatives that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11 resulted in opening 10 new missions and abandoning none, thus overruling the imperatives of graduation criteria.

This constant refrain of closing missions has been self-defeating and results from a misunderstanding of U.S. national interests. Countries should only graduate or close USAID Missions if the risk to vital U.S. national interests has been permanently and decisively mitigated or eliminated, not because they have become middle-income countries. For example, the United States should have robust aid missions in Egypt and Panama

regardless of their per capita income because they host the most important canals in the world and are critically important to American commerce and a stable world economic order.

Recognize the Shifting Geographic focus of Great Power Competition from Europe to the Developing World

The focus of Departments of State and Defense planning under both the Obama and Trump Administrations has been to pivot to Asia. Chinese strategic interests are not limited to Asia; they are global and extend to the entire developing world. China recognized the importance of the global south some time ago and has invested its resources accordingly. Geography should drive the foreign assistance budget, and the geographical center of gravity is in the South. Nor should sector earmarks drive the USAID budget which has been the case since the end

of the Cold War. During this period of Great Power competition the heavily earmarked sector budgets of the U.S. government should give way to the relative geostrategic interests. Africa will be the battleground in the Great Power rivalry of the 21st century because of its vast mineral and hydrocarbon wealth, its massive open land for food production (Africa has 60 percent of the earth's arable land and by 2060 will have a larger population than China), its high projected economic growth rates in this century, and the popularity of America among its people and its leaders.[33] The geography of the U.S. foreign aid budget has already shifted to Africa because of the investments made by President G.W. Bush and later by President Obama. These investments should be nurtured and cultivated, not cut short by myopic thinking in Washington.

But the United States also has vital interests that must be supported by aid programs in Central and South America. These interests include reducing mass

Chinese train in Tibet about 20 km north of Yangbaijan. (Jan Reurink)

migration, countering narcotics trafficking, reinforcing the salutary evolving regional trade regimes, combatting criminal cartels, and opposing ongoing Marxist subversion supported by Cuba and Venezuela.

The United States should use its foreign assistance to strategically reengage in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia to counter Russian and Chinese influence there as well. Most of these countries want a robust U.S. aid presence to counter threats from their northern Great Power neighbors. Russian pressure on the Caucasus, the Balkans and Eastern Europe should encourage increased aid budgets not closing aid missions. Growing Chinese influence in Central Asia is not a justification for abandoning those countries, but rather justifies robust aid programs in the region.

Great Power Cooperation in Development is Possible

While Great Power competition may dominate world politics in coming years or decades, our aid programs should deliberately seek out some areas of development cooperation with China and Russia where national interest allows. Before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, I would have argued that the best candidate for such cooperation might be in international health (particularly now given how traumatic the Pandemic has been to the world order). Unfortunately, likely due to so many profound strategic implications of the Pandemic, great power competition set in instead.

Rebuild a large-scale, Developmentally Sound Academic Exchange Program Including Scholarships and Institutional Linkages with the Global South

In most developing countries American colleges and universities remain the most respected and desirable degree institutions for aspiring professionals. English remains the language of education and commerce throughout the world. Mandarin

Chinese is not an easy language to learn for students from most developing countries leading some Chinese universities to offer their courses in English. While China's science-based universities are rising in the international rankings, American schools are still the leaders. A realist foreign aid program to compete with China and Russia should shift to a much more aggressive effort to connect American institutions of higher learning through either scholarships or linkage programs, as this plays to America's strengths.

Rising middle-income countries with large populations such as Brazil, India, and Mexico (among others) that have become regional powers often want a different relationship with the United States, and do not wish to be aid recipient countries any longer. Long term university linkages programs would likely be welcomed by these countries and make developmental sense as well.

This strategic approach to Great Power competition in development assistance will protect the vital interests of the United States and its allies and partners, address international threats to U.S. national security, and reduce areas of potential conflict with China and Russia that could lead to military confrontation. But foreign aid must be used strategically and deal with the world as it is, devoid of the utopianism, naiveté, and unrealistic expectations that have at times characterized it in the past.

We do not know how long this new international order will last—the Cold War lasted 40 years and the Post-Cold War period lasted 30 years—but irreversible demographic trends leading to the depopulation of both China and Russia (even more so of their working age population) will certainly limit their ambitions and the threat they represent. Until demography becomes destiny Washington policymakers should use all the tools—particularly foreign assistance—to manage prudently the U.S. relationship with China and Russia in the developing world. PRISM

Notes

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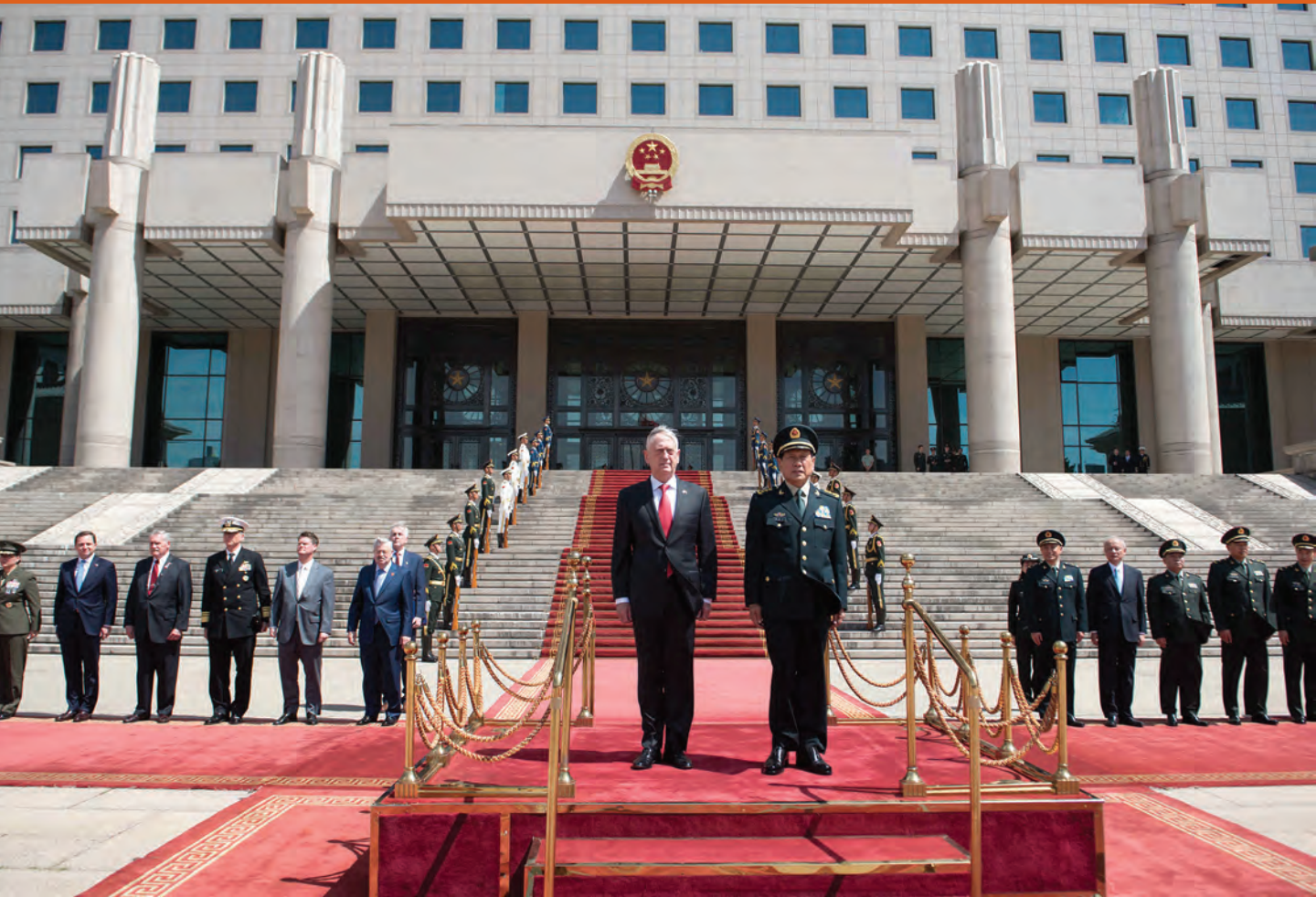
Defense Secretary James N. Mattis meets with China's Defense Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe at the People's Liberation Army's Bayi Building in Beijing, June 28, 2018. (DoD photo by Army Sgt. Amber I. Smith)

Perspectives for a China Strategy

By Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

When the Munich Security Conference met in February 2020, China was the most frequently mentioned country, while there was an exaggerated mood of Western decline. Yet as the recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown, China has both strengths and weaknesses. Its initial censorship, suppression of feedback and curtailment of international information allowed the pandemic to develop and fester. Draconian quarantine of Wuhan curtailed its spread somewhat; followed by a government propaganda campaign to attract others to the theme that China's behavior had been benign. When the pandemic eventually subsides, however, China will be faced with the political and economic costs resulting from the exposure of both a failed public health system and an overly rigid party control system.

Beyond the COVID-19 crisis, we face the larger question of how to frame a strategy toward the inexorably rising China. The perennial theme of Western decline is not new, though the role of China is. Oswald Spengler opined about the decline of the West over a century ago. During the Cold War, American pundits and politicians went through several cycles of belief in declinism that featured fear of the Soviet Union. In the end, however, when it turned out to be the Soviet Union that declined many proclaimed the West triumphant. In his 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama wrote that humanity had reached "the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." A few years later, Samuel Huntington issued a gloomier prognosis in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* that "the rise of China and the increasing assertiveness of this 'biggest player in the history of man' will place tremendous stress on international stability in the early twenty-first century."[1] Today the prevailing fear is indeed the rise of China. Accordingly the 2017 version of the National Security Strategy of the United States focuses on great power competition with China, and to a lesser extent with Russia.

In a longer historical perspective, this century is witnessing not the rise, but the recovery of Asia. Western civilization did not fully flower until 1500, and before 1800 Asia (including India and Japan as well

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as China) was home to more than half the world's population and world economy. By 1900, however, while Asia still represented more than half the world's population its share of the global economy had fallen to only 20 percent. Meanwhile the industrial revolution in Europe and North America and their domination of the seas made Europe the center of the global balance of power—until it tore itself apart in World War I. As I wrote a decade ago, the 21st century will see the return of Asia, but Asia is much more than just China.[2] Asia has its own internal balance of power, and many Asian states welcome a Western presence to make sure they are not dominated by China.[3]

The United States became the world's largest economy at the end of the 19th century, but it was not until it tipped the outcome of World War I that it became crucial to the global balance of power. Failing to understand that balance, America retreated into isolationism, and the 1930s was a disastrous decade. Following World War II, Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower avoided the mistakes of isolationism and created the institutions of what would become the Western liberal order.

Some contemporary realists believe the rise of China portends a conflict that will tear the world apart similar to the sundering of Europe in 1914. Graham Allison has warned of a "Thucydides Trap" invoking the history of the Peloponnesian War which was caused by the rise in power of Athens and the fear it created in Sparta. While Allison's historical cases and numbers have been questioned, his metaphor serves a useful warning.[4] Strategists must pay attention both to the rise of China and the fear it creates in the United States.

Assessing Chinese Power

It is equally dangerous to over- or underestimate Chinese power. Underestimation breeds complacency, while overestimation creates fear—either of

which can lead to miscalculation. Good strategy requires careful net assessment. Many current, gloomy projections rest on exaggerations of China's strength and Western weakness. Some observers warn that the rise of China will spell the end of the American era, but this is far from clear.[5] Nonetheless, failure to successfully cope with the rise of China could have disastrous consequences for America and the rest of the world.

Contrary to current conventional wisdom, China has not yet replaced the United States as the world's largest economy. Today China's economy is only about two-thirds that of the United States, and an even smaller fraction if Europe, Japan, Australia, and other Western allies are included. Measured in purchasing power parity, the Chinese economy became larger than the American economy in 2014, but purchasing power parity is an economist's device for comparing estimates of welfare, not for measuring power. For example, oil and jet engines are imported at current exchange rates, not some notional purchasing power adjustment. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is in any case a very crude measure of power. For the first half of its "century of humiliation" that started with the opium wars with Britain in 1839, China had the world's largest GDP (and military) but that did not accurately describe the balance of power.[6] Per capita income gives a better index of the sophistication of an economy; American per capita income is several times that of China.

Many economists expect China to pass the United States someday as the world's largest economy (measured as GDP in dollars), but the estimated date varies from 2030 to mid-century depending on what one assumes about the rates of Chinese and American growth, and whether either country stumbles along the projected ahistorical linear paths. Past growth rates are not good predictors.

By any measure, however, the gravitational pull of China's economy is increasing. China is now the world's largest manufacturer and the major trading

partner of nearly every country in the world.[7] Not only does its growing economy support military and aid expenditures, but access to the Chinese market and its ability to set standards for that market are a significant source of political influence.

As we have seen above, Thucydides famously attributed the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War to two causes: the rise of a new power—Athens, and the fear that created in an established power—Sparta. Most readers focus on the first half of Thucydides assessment, but the second is equally important to strategic planning and more within our control.

Most Sinologists properly doubt that U.S. foreign policy can prevent the rise of China's economy, but if we use our contextual intelligence well, we can avoid the exaggerated fears that could provoke a new cold or worse, a hot war. Even if China someday surpasses the United States in total economic size, that is not the only measure of geopolitical power. As we saw, the United States became the world's largest economy at the end of the 19th century, but did not become a central player in the global balance of power until three decades later in the context of World War I. Economic might is just part of the equation.

Geographic boundaries of the first and second island chains.

In terms of military might China is well behind the United States. U.S. military expenditure is several times that of China. While Chinese military capabilities have been increasing in recent years and pose new challenges to U.S. and Western forces in the region, China is not a global peer. Nor will it be able to exclude the United States from the Western Pacific so long as the United States maintains its alliance and bases in Japan. Despite its non-nuclear status, Japan anchors the first island chain and possesses a formidable military which exercises regularly with U.S. forces. Despite trade tensions, the U.S.-Japan alliance is stronger today than it was thirty years ago at the end of the Cold War.

Sometimes analysts draw pessimistic conclusions from war games played in the limited context of Taiwan. However, with China's vital energy supply lines vulnerable to American naval domination in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, it would be a mistake for China's leaders to assume that a naval conflict near Taiwan (or in the South China Sea) would stay limited to that region.

China has also invested heavily in soft power, the ability to get preferred outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Cultural exchanges and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects can enhance China's attractiveness, but the BRI is more like a successful marketing propaganda than a true Marshall Plan for the world. BRI projects range from those that promote economic infrastructure to those designed primarily to contain India.[8] Chinese soft power faces two major limits. Ongoing territorial conflicts with neighbors such as Japan, India, Vietnam, and the Philippines make it difficult for China to appear attractive while contesting rival claims. And domestic insistence on tight Communist Party control deprives China of the benefits of civil society that European countries or the United States enjoy. Authoritarian responses to artists like Ai Wei Wei and dissidents like Liu Xiaobo, or the cultural repression in Xinjiang limit China's attractiveness in democratic societies. In measuring soft power, opinion polls as well as a recent index published by Portland, a

Headquarters for Alibaba Group in Hangzhou (Danielinblue, designed by HASSELL (architects))

London consultancy, ranked China in twenty-sixth place while the United States ranked near the top.[9] Ironically, Mao Tse Tung's brutal but ideological Communism in the 1960s had a far greater transnational soft power appeal.

China's huge economic scale matters; it is an inescapable fact. The United States was once the world's largest trading nation and largest bilateral lender. Today nearly one hundred countries count China as their largest trading partner, compared to fifty-seven that have such a relationship with the United States. China plans to lend more than a trillion dollars for infrastructure projects with its Belt and Road Initiative over the next decade, while the United States has cut back aid. China's economic success story enhances its soft power, and government control of access to its large market provides hard power leverage. Moreover, China's authoritarian politics and mercantilist practices make its economic power readily usable by the government. China will gain economic power from the sheer size of its market as well as its overseas investments and development assistance.

Of the seven giant global companies in the age of Artificial Intelligence (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, Baidu, Alibaba, and Tencent), three, or nearly half are Chinese. And Chinese companies dare not defy the Chinese Communist Party, rendering them tools in China's geostrategic competition toolkit. With the world's largest population, its largest internet audience, and while data resources are becoming the "new oil" of world politics, China is poised to become the Saudi Arabia of big data.[10] Overall, Chinese power relative to the United States is likely to increase.

American Assets

In assessing the balance of power, it is important to remember that the United States has some long-term power advantages that will persist regardless of current Chinese actions. One is geography. The United States is surrounded by two oceans and benign neighbors that are likely to remain friendly. China has borders with fourteen countries and has territorial disputes with India, Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines among others. Energy independence is another American advantage.[11] A decade ago, the United States seemed hopelessly dependent on imported energy. The recent shale revolution has transformed it from energy importer to energy exporter, and the International Energy Agency projects that North America may be self-sufficient in the coming decade. Meanwhile, China is becoming ever-more dependent on energy imports, and much of the oil it imports is transported through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, where the United States and others maintain a significant naval presence. Eliminating this vulnerability will take decades.

The United States enjoys financial power derived from its large transnational financial institutions as well as the role of the U.S. dollar. Of the foreign reserves held by the world's governments, just 1.1 percent are in yuan, compared with 64 percent for the dollar. While China aspires to a larger role, a credible reserve currency depends on currency convertibility, deep capital markets, honest government, and the rule of law—all lacking in China and not quickly developed. While China could divest its large holdings of dollars, such action would risk damaging its own economy as much as the United States. China dumping dollars might bring the United States to its knees, but it would have a similar effect on China itself.

Power in interdependent relations depends upon asymmetric vulnerability and there are too many symmetries in U.S.-China interdependence at this point, though that might change if there is a much more radical decoupling. Although the dollar cannot remain pre-eminent forever, and American overuse of financial sanctions creates incentives for other countries to look for other financial

instruments, the yuan is unlikely to displace the dollar in the near term.

The United States also has demographic strengths. It is the only major developed country that is currently projected to hold its place (third) in the demographic ranking of countries. While the rate of American population growth has slowed in recent years, it is not shrinking as are the populations of Russia, Europe, and Japan. Seven of the world's fifteen largest economies will face a shrinking workforce over the next decade and a half, including China whose population will decline by 9 percent, while the U.S. workforce is likely to increase by 5 percent. China will soon lose its first-place population rank to India, and its working age population already peaked in 2015. Chinese worry about "growing old before growing rich."[12]

America has been at the forefront in the development of key technologies (bio, nano, information) that are central to this century's economic growth, and American research universities dominate higher education. In a 2019 ranking by Shanghai Jiaotong University, fifteen of the top twenty global universities were in the United States; none were in China.

To challenge U.S. dominance in this domain, China is investing heavily in research and development; it competes well in some fields now, and has set a goal to be the global leader in artificial intelligence by 2030. Some experts believe that with its enormous data resources, lack of privacy restraints on how data is used, and the fact that advances in machine learning will require trained engineers more than cutting-edge scientists, China could achieve its artificial intelligence (AI) goal. Given the importance of machine learning as a general-purpose technology that affects many domains, China's gains in AI are of particular significance.[13]

Chinese technological progress is no longer based solely on imitation. Although clumsily handled, the Donald Trump administration was correct to punish China for cyber theft of intellectual property, coerced intellectual property transfer, and unfair trade practices such as subsidized credit to state-owned enterprises. Reciprocity needs to be enforced. If China can ban Google and Facebook from its market for security reasons, the United States can surely take similar steps. Huawei and ZTE, for example, should not be allowed to participate in building American 5G networks. However, a successful American response to China's technological challenge will depend upon improvements at home more than upon external sanctions.

American complacency is always a danger, but so also is lack of confidence and exaggerated fears that lead to overreaction. In the view of John Deutch, a former Provost of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, if the United States attains its potential improvements in innovation potential, "China's great leap forward will likely at best be a few steps toward closing the innovation leadership gap that the United States currently enjoys." But notice the "if."[14]

Devising a Strategy

The United States holds high cards in its poker hand, but hysteria could cause it to fail to play its cards skillfully. When the Bill Clinton administration published its East Asian Strategy Report in 1995 to cope with the rise of China, we decided to reaffirm the U.S.-Japan alliance well before seeking to engage China in the World Trade Organization. Discarding our high cards of alliances and international institutions today would be a serious mistake. If the United States maintains its alliance with Japan, China cannot push it beyond the first island chain because Japan is a major part of that chain. Another possible mistake would be to try to cut off all immigration. When asked why he did not think China would pass the United States in total power any time soon, the late Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew cited the ability of America to draw upon the talents of the whole world and recombine them in diversity and creativity that was not

possible for China's ethnic Han nationalism.[15] If the United States were to discard its high cards of external alliances and domestic openness today, Lee could be proven wrong.

As China's power grows, some observers worry we are destined for war, but few consider an opposite disruptive danger. Rather than acting like a revolutionary power in the international order, China might decide to be a free rider like the United States was in the 1930s. China may act too weakly rather than too strongly and refuse to contribute to an international order that it did not create. China knows it has benefited substantially from the post-1945, Western international order.[16] In the United Nations Security Council, China is one of the five countries with a veto. China is now the second largest funder of UN peacekeeping forces and has participated in UN programs related to Ebola virus containment and climate change. China has also benefited greatly from economic institutions like the WTO and the International Monetary Fund, and is a party to the 2015 Climate Accords.

On the other hand, China has started its own Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRI program of international infrastructure projects that some see as an economic offensive. China has not practiced full reciprocity as a market economy, and its rejection of a 2016 Hague Tribunal ruling regarding the South China Sea raised questions about whether China would treat its legal obligations a la carte (as the United States has sometimes done). American and allied navies' freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea remain essential to maintain this point.

Thus far, China has not tried to overthrow but rather to increase its influence within the world order from which it benefits, but this could change as Chinese power grows.[17] Appetites sometimes grow with eating, and Xi Jinping's rhetoric about China as a great state suggests this could occur. The Trump administration has called China a revisionist power, but so far its revisionism has been quite moderate, unlike extreme revisionist powers such as Hitler's Germany. China is not interested in kicking over the card table but in tilting the table so it can claim a larger share of the winnings. China's growing economic power will create problems for the United States and the international order, and this friction will likely continue. The United States will have to manage alliances, networks, and institutions deftly to shape the environment in which China uses its growing power.

As Chinese power increases, the American-led, liberal international order will have to change. China has little interest in liberalism or American domination, but it does have a continuing interest in an "open and rules-based" world order. In the aftermath of the trade wars and COVID-19 pandemic, there is bound to be a degree of disengagement between the two countries.[18] The American approach to an open international economy will need to be adjusted for greater oversight of Chinese trade and investments that threaten its technological and national security objectives, but there is still a basis for fruitful interdependence and rules of the road to govern that independence. The West can also express its disagreement over values and human rights while cooperating on rules of the road related to matters where there are joint interests. Our values are an important source of our soft power.

In late 2017, President Trump announced a new National Security Strategy focused primarily on great power competition with China and Russia. It provided the benefit of a wake-up call, but as a strategy to protect American security, it is inadequate. Under the influence of the information revolution and globalization, world politics is changing. Even if the United States prevails over China as a great power, we cannot protect our security acting alone. COVID-19 is only the latest example of national security challenges that cannot be met unilaterally. Global financial stability is
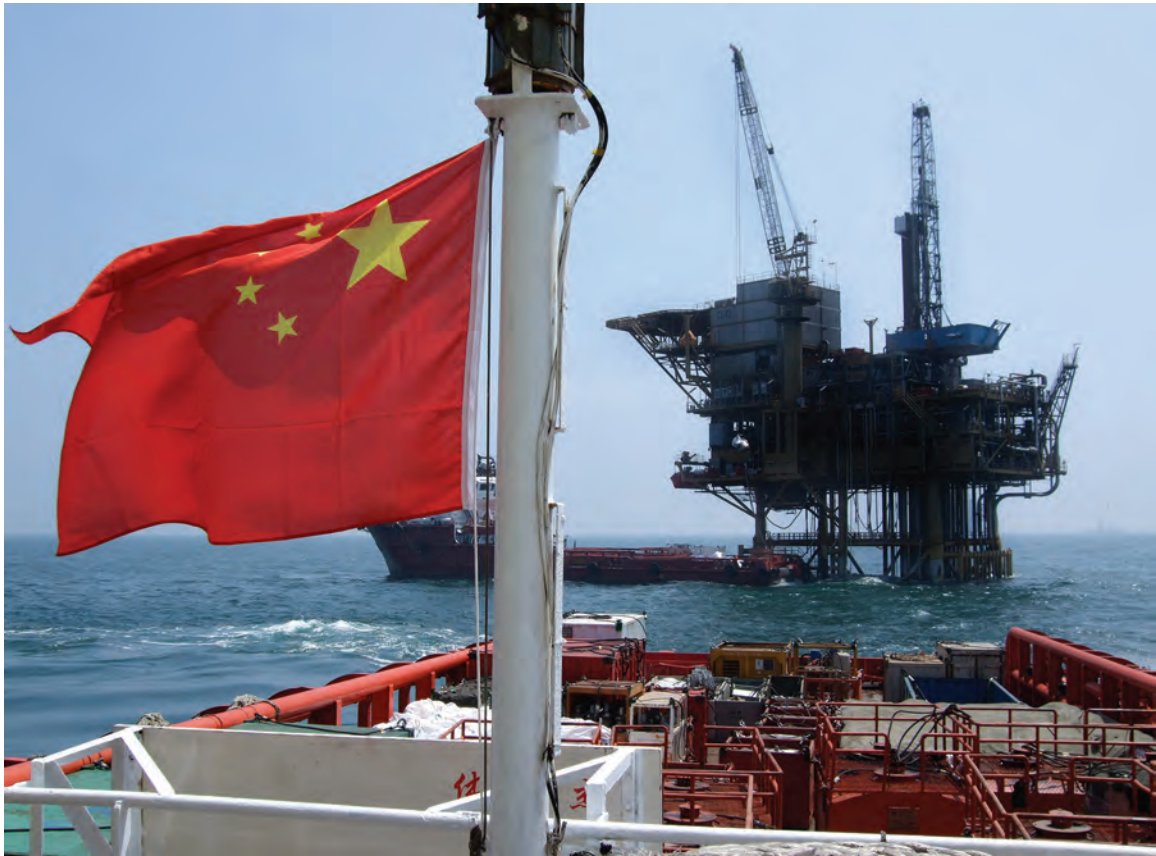
China has provoked its neighbors by deep-sea oil drilling in disputed waters. (Rob Ellis)

another; it is vital to the prosperity of Americans, but we need the cooperation of others to safeguard it. And regardless of potential setbacks to economic globalization caused by trade wars, environmental globalization will increase.

Pandemics, climate change, and economic instability threaten all Americans, but we cannot manage these problems alone. In a world where borders are becoming more porous to everything from drugs to infectious diseases to cyber terrorism, we must use our soft power of attraction to develop and cultivate networks and institutions capable of addressing these untraditional challenges.

A successful national security strategy for the United States must begin with the recognition that our size and superpower status mean we have to

lead the cooperation effort. A classic problem with public goods (like clean air, which all can share and from which none can be excluded) is that if the largest consumer does not take the lead, others will free-ride and the public goods will not be produced. President Trump's National Security Strategy says little about these increasingly important transnational threats to national security. As the technology expert Richard Danzig summarizes the problem, "Twenty-first century technologies are global not just in their distribution, but also in their consequences. Pathogens, AI systems, computer viruses, and radiation that others may accidentally release could become as much our problem as theirs. Agreed reporting systems, shared controls, common contingency plans, norms and treaties must be

pursued as a means of moderating our numerous mutual risks."[19] Neither tariffs nor border walls can solve these problems. Even with American leadership, success will require the cooperation of others. The United States will have to work more closely with other countries and institutions rather than in the dismissive manner of the Trump administration.

On transnational issues like COVID-19, climate change, and global economic stability power becomes a positive-sum game. It is not sufficient to think in terms of American power *over* others. We must also think of power in terms of the ability to accomplish joint goals which involves power *with* others. On many transnational issues, empowering others can help us to accomplish our own goals. The United States benefits if China improves its energy efficiency and emits less carbon dioxide, or improves its public health systems. In the world of the 21st century, institutional networks and connectedness are an important source of national power. In a world of growing complexity, the most connected states are the most powerful. Washington has some sixty treaty allies while China has few, but we are squandering that strategic resource.

In the past, the openness of the United States enhanced its capacity to build networks, maintain institutions, and sustain alliances. But will that openness and willingness to engage with the rest of the world prove sustainable in the populist mood currently dominating American domestic politics, or will we see a 21st century analogue to our isolationism of the 1930s? Even if the United States continues to possess greater military, economic, and soft power resources than any other country, we may not choose to convert those resources into effective power behavior on the global scene. Between the two world wars, we did not and the result was disastrous.

If the key to America's future security and prosperity is learning the importance of "power with" as well as "power over," our current strategy is not up to the task. Every country puts its interests first, but the important question is how broadly or narrowly those interests are defined. Recent events have shown an inclination toward short-term, zero-sum transactional interpretations with little attention to institutions or allies. The United States appears to be stepping back from the long-term, enlightened self-interest that marked the security paradigm designed by Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower after 1945, and successfully guided us through the Cold War. The new threat to our security is not just from transnational forces like COVID-19 and climate change but from our domestic failure to adjust own attitudes to this new world.

Conclusion: Cooperative Rivalry

Despite Russia and China's current alliance of convenience against the United States, a real alliance of authoritarian countries similar to the Axis of the 1930s or the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s is unlikely given the underlying mistrust between Russia and China and the difficulty of coordinating competing nationalist ideologies.[20] Today's alliance of authoritarians lacks the soft power appeal of the 1950s, though steps will need to be taken to counter their covert "sharp power" threat to democratic values. China makes major soft power efforts to promote its authoritarian social model through economic inducements as well as manipulation of social media.[21] However, while Maoism used to bring protesters onto the world's streets, it is unlikely that many protesters will march under the banner of "Xi Jinping Thought about Socialism with Chinese Characteristics."

Since the Nixon era, China and the United States have cooperated despite ideological differences. Rapid Asian economic growth has encouraged a horizontal power shift to the region, but Asia has its own internal balance of power. Chinese power is balanced by Japan, India, and Australia among others. None want to be dominated by China. The United States will remain

crucial to that Asian balance of power. If the United States maintains those alliances, the prospects are slight that in the traditional interstate competition China can drive the United States from the Western Pacific, much less dominate the world. The United States holds the high cards in the traditional great power competition. The question is whether it will play them well.

The more difficult question for an effective national security strategy will be whether the United States and China can develop attitudes that allow them to cooperate in producing global public goods while competing in the traditional areas of great power competition. Exaggerated fears and worst-case analyses may make such a balanced policy impossible. The U.S.-China relationship is a cooperative rivalry where a successful strategy of "smart competition," as advocated by Orville Schell and Susan Shirk, will require equal attention to both aspects of that description.[22] But such a future will require good contextual intelligence, careful management on both sides, and no major miscalculations. That will be a hard test of the skills of our leaders. PRISM

Notes

[1] See Oswald Spengler, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson, *The Decline of the West*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926); Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*. (New York, Free Press, 1992); Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*. (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996).

[2] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011). Chapter 6.

[3] Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle Between China, India and Japan Will Shape Our Next Decade*. (New York: Harcourt, 2008). This insight provides the basis for the most plausible strategies among the four outlined (accommodation, collective balancing, comprehensive pressure, regime change) by Hal Brands and Zack Cooper, "After Responsible Stakeholder, What? Debating America's China Strategy," *Texas National Security Review*, February 2020.

[4] Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap*? (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2018). Michael Beckley challenges this analysis and argues that power transition theory is littered with false positives and false negatives. "The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters," *International Security*, 43, no. 2 (Fall 2018), 42–43. Kori Schake argues that there has been only one case. *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

[5] See Joshua Shifrinson, *Rising Titans: Falling Giants* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[6] Michael Beckley, "The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters," *International Security* 43, no. 2 (Fall 2018). 22.

[7] Chas W. Freeman Jr, "China's National Experiences and the Evolution of PRC Grand Strategy," in David Shambaugh, ed. *China and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). 56.

[8] See "Special Report: China's Belt and Road," *The Economist*, February 8, 2020.

[9] Portland Consultancy, *The Soft Power 30*. London, 2018.

[10] Kai-Fu Lee, *AI Superpowers: China, Silicon Valley and the New World Order* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2018), 83.

[11] Meghan O'Sullivan, *Windfall: How the New Energy Abundance Upends Global Politics and Strengthens America's Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017).

[12] Adele Hayutin, *Global Workforce Change: Demographics Behind the Headlines* (Stanford, CA: The Hoover Institution, 2018).

[13] Lee, AI Superpowers.

[14] John Deutch, "Assessing and Responding to China's Innovation Initiative," in Maintaining America's Edge, ed. Leah Bitounis and Jonathon Price (Washington: Aspen Institute, 2019), 163.

[15] *Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore, September 22, 2012. See also Joseph S. Nye, Jr. Is the American Century Over?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015). 77.

[16] Ceri Parker, "China's Xi Jinping Defends Globalization from the Davos Stage," World Economic Forum, January 27, 2017; "Statement by Wang Yi," filmed February 17, 2017, Munich Security Conference, 23:41.

[17] Michael Mazarr, Timothy Heath, and Astrid Cevallos, *China and the International Order* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 4.

[18] I go into details in Joseph Nye, "Power and Interdependence with China,"*The Washington Quarterly* 43, no. 1, (2020). 7-21.

[19] This section is adapted from my book *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[20] See Bobo Lo, *A Wary Embrace: What the Russia–China Relationship Means for the World* (Docklands, VIC: Penguin Random House Australia, 2017).

[21] Larry Diamond and Orville Schell, *Chinese Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2018).

[22] Orville Schell and Susan L Shirk, Chairs, *Course Correction: Toward an Effective and Sustainable China Policy.* (New York: Asia Society Task Force, February 2019).

Full Spectrum Dominance: Irregular Warfare and the War on Terror

By Maria Ryan
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Reviewed By Dr. Bryce Loidolt

One might assume that a history of America's 21st century turn to irregular warfare would have little to offer policymakers grappling with the challenge of great power competition. In *Full Spectrum Dominance: Irregular Warfare and the War on Terror* however, Maria Ryan offers a meticulous account not of how the United States might organize itself for futuristic high-tech warfare or geopolitical competition, but, rather, how it came to elevate a form of warfare that many U.S. defense planners and practitioners would prefer to view through the rear-view mirror. And yet, the lessons implied by Ryan's impressive piece of scholarship should serve as a cautionary tale not just for practitioners seeking to ensure irregular warfare remains a "core competency" of the U.S. military, but also for those managing the tradeoffs and dilemmas of the contemporary strategic environment.[1]

Processes of change and adaptation are often complex. Bureaucracies can be rigid and stuck in their ways, as a range of human and organizational factors produce or obstruct innovative behavior.[2] An Assistant Professor of American History at the University of Nottingham, Ryan's explanation for

America's warm embrace of irregular warfare offers an analytically rich account. It is a series of "complementary tracks" Ryan argues, that led the United States to adopt what was at the time a "countercultural definition of warfare."[3]

Some aspects of the book's argument are by now self-evident. To Ryan's credit, these receive the least of her attention. Few will raise an eyebrow when they read that 9/11 was the initial motivator for greater recognition of the problem of weak and failed states. Nor will many find it surprising that U.S. experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan both motivated and manifested this growing emphasis on non-traditional threats and interagency approaches to addressing them.

In other instances, the book masterfully covers new ground. Ryan makes a well-documented claim that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, often argued to be a devotee of the concept of a technology-driven Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), played a pivotal role in this shift to a decidedly low-tech form of warfare.[4] This amendment to the historical record is likely to be one of many enduring legacies of this important text. The chapter on organizational change in the U.S. State Department also nicely supplements U.S. military and defense-centric works examining this period in U.S. foreign policy.

Much of the book explores U.S. activities in the Philippines, Georgia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, so-called "peripheral theaters." Although much has been written on the first of these, the other two are often overlooked in the post-9/11 historiography. Through the conscientious use of publicly-available primary source materials, Ryan does an admirable job of piecing together the context, motivations, and contours of U.S. campaigns in each of these three locales.

These cases might appear strange bedfellows at first glance. Yet, nearly two decades ago, President Bush declared the Philippines, Georgia, and Yemen as

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constituting the "second stage" of the War on Terror.[5] In this respect, Ryan's inclusion of sub-Saharan Africa – a rather diverse and vast region in its own right—rather than Yemen, may perplex some readers.

Even so, the similarities Ryan identifies across her cases are striking. The United States appeared to vastly overestimate—and perhaps even exaggerate—the extent of al-Qaida's presence or the risk that it might appear. Regularly described as a successful case of small footprint intervention, U.S. activities under Operation Enduring Freedom—Philippines (OEF-P) were designed to counter the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which Ryan describes as "more of a criminal nuisance than a serious terror threat."[6] Georgia is also emblematic of this propensity, as the United States directed its attention to the Pankisi Gorge, where it believed al-Qaida militants had gathered, but where Ryan contends the links between local militants and al-Qaida were tangential at best. Nowhere is this inflation of the terrorism threat more apparent than in sub-Saharan Africa, where U.S. efforts were largely designed to *prevent* the emergence of Islamist militancy in areas where it had generally been absent.

It is difficult to dispute Ryan's conclusion that the conflation of local and transnational militancy led the United States to commit serious errors throughout the Global War on Terror, a point well-made by proponents of so-called "global counterinsurgency" at the time.[7] Ryan may at times overstate the purely local nature of the conflicts in each theater, however, while understating the extent of al-Qaida's global reach. Bin Ladin's network did indeed attempt to build operational links to at least some of these theaters prior to 9/11, which could certainly have warranted some level of concern on the part of the United States.[8] More broadly, the claim that al-Qaeda "referred more to a mode of activism, not an organization" is more contested than Ryan's narrative would lead the reader to believe.[9]

Just as the United States may have exaggerated the transnational ties of local militants, Ryan contends that it also under-appreciated each conflict's historical and cultural context. Grounded in a "superficial" belief that weak or failing states were the root causes of terrorism, the United States engaged in a decidedly technocratic approach to extending government control.[10] Across the three cases the United States utilized train and equip programs designed to build the capacity of local security forces, and subordinated development goals to security objectives in ways that were controversial and potentially counterproductive.

Executed with little appreciation for the political nuances of the recipient state, these policy instruments generated few, if any, positive results. In the Philippines the ASG remained active and resilient. In sub-Saharan Africa U.S. activities and decisions are blamed for failing to prevent the rise of not one, but two, al-Qaida affiliates on the continent. And, in Georgia, local security forces were never able to conduct an effective operation to assert control in the Pankisi Gorge, ostensibly one of the major initial motivations of U.S. support.

Ryan's conclusions warrant some qualification. Narratives of overall failure in any of these campaigns may overlook some of their successes, however modest. Although this reviewer shares her frustration with the so-called "self-congratulatory" commentary on OEF-P, a number of objective, systematic analyses have found that the Armed Forces of the Philippines adopted more discriminatory tactics as a result of U.S. training, equipment, and advice.[11] Moreover, a RAND study found that U.S. security assistance to Africa lowered the likelihood of civil war and of terrorist violence when employed in conjunction with peacekeeping operations.[12] Using vague metrics or impossibly high standards for success, Ryan's narrative at times would benefit from a more robust and balanced treatment of the outcomes she describes.

Perhaps its most significant shortcoming is that *Full Spectrum Dominance* is lacking in prescriptions. This may be because there are simply no easy answers to the challenges the book identifies. There can be little doubt that understanding the grievances driving conflict and instability is as important as it is challenging. Putting this insight into practice is no easy feat. An erroneous perception of irregular warfare successes may also continue to drive the United States to intervene in these kinds of conflicts, and blindness to the "political cause(s) of violence" is a recurring, and perhaps unavoidable historical trend.[13]

What, then, can U.S. policymakers and practitioners gain from a historical analysis of secondary theaters in a global conflict against an adversary that is no longer a priority?

Ryan's analysis, in fact, points to several plausible conclusions. As the Joint Force considers how to sustain irregular warfare as a "core competency," it is reasonable to assume that the large-scale, manpower-intensive campaigns attempted in Iraq and Afghanistan will not be the preferred model. Instead, policymakers continue to extol the virtues of so-called "small footprint" interventions, even as scholars provide more sobering conclusions.[14] Situated within the latter chorus of rigorous analyses, *Full Spectrum Dominance* suggests that U.S. policymakers should temper their expectations. No matter how well-intentioned, U.S. efforts seemed to fall woefully short in each of the theaters Ryan explores. U.S. policymakers should thus not view this approach as a necessarily effective fall-back option amidst a prioritization of more high-tech forms of warfare.

Yet, the more prescient lessons U.S. policymakers can derive from Ryan's insightful analysis are hardly limited to irregular wars. The narrative of a "Global War on Terror" yielded unnecessary alarmism, myopia, and strategic overreach. The result was counter-productive over-investment in theaters that were of secondary importance. One might wonder whether there is a similar risk in policymakers' framing of interstate competition, the global challenge of the day. Avoiding similarly poor outcomes in addressing Russian adventurism and manifestations of Chinese ambition may require a more discerning approach to strategy and policy than the one *Full Spectrum Dominance* describes.

Ultimately, Maria Ryan has made an enduring scholarly contribution by providing an important and compelling account of how military bureaucracies can adopt and implement change, but also the strategic strait jackets that formulaic approaches to combating transnational threats can impose. *Full Spectrum Dominance* manages to strike a commendable balance between scholarly rigor and accessibility, making for an indispensable addition to our understanding of America's post-9/11 wars.

Notes

[1] Richard D. Stephenson, "NDS Irregular Warfare Annex Implementation Plan," October 23, 2019, available at https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/MECC2019/mecc2019day1brief8_iw.pdf?ver=2019-10-17-143158-750.

[2] On these, see, e.g.: Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray Eds, *The Culture of Military Organizations*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War, French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 905-934.

[3] Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum Dominance: Irregular Warfare and the War on Terror*, (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 3.

[4] Fotios Moustakis, and Rudra Chaudhuri, "The Rumsfeld Doctrine and the Cost of US Unilateralism: Lessons Learned." *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 358-375.

[5] President George W. Bush, "Remarks at Ceremony Marking the 6-Month Anniversary of the September 11 Attacks," March 11, 2002, available at: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/coalition/cr/rm/2002/8729.htm>.

[6] Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum* Dominance, 54.

7 See, e.g.: David J Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 597-617; David Martin Jones, and Michael Lawrence Rowan Smith, "Whose Hearts and Whose Minds? The Curious Case of Global Counter-Insurgency," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 1 (2010): 81-121.

8 911 Commission report 58; 147; James J.F. Forest, "Al-Qaeda's Influence in Sub-Saharan Africa Myths, Realities, and Possibilities," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 3-4, (September 2011): 63-80.

9 Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum* Dominance, 52; Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "Revisiting the Early al Qaeda: An Updated Account of its Formative Years," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 1 (2012): 1-36; Rohan Gunaratna and Aviv Oreg, "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 12 (2010): 1043-1078.

10 Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum* Dominance, 214.

11 Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum* Dominance, 75; Stephen Watts et al., *Countering Others' Insurgencies: Understanding U.S. Small-Footprint Interventions in Local Context*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 104-110; Geoffrey Lambert, Larry Lewis, and Sarah Sewall, "Operation Enduring Freedom – Philippines: Civilian Harm and the Indirect Approach," *PRISM* 3, no. 4, (September 2012): 116-136.

12 Stephen Watts et al., *Building Security in Africa: An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018).

13 Maria Ryan, *Full Spectrum* Dominance, 214.

14 See, e.g.: Mara E. Karlin, *Building militaries in fragile states: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 4, no. 1-2 (2018): 89-142.