

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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Robert D. Kaplan **The Force of Geography**

Bruce Riedel **The Other '62 Crisis**

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## REQUIEM FOR THE TWO-STATE PROMISE

Israel Tightens Its Grip  
on the Occupied Lands

by Akiva Eldar



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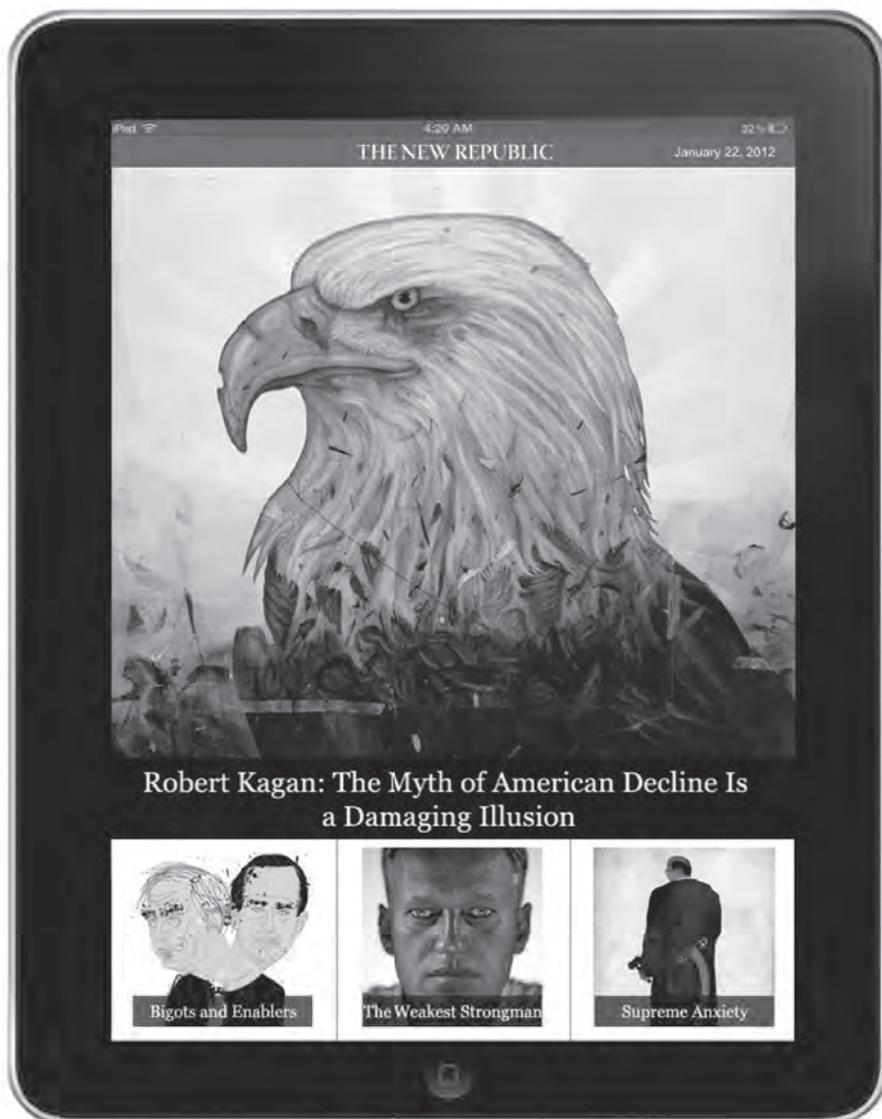
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# Israel's New Politics and the Fate of Palestine

By Akiva Eldar

*In my vision of peace, there are two free peoples living side by side in this small land, with good neighborly relations and mutual respect, each with its flag, anthem and government. . . . If we get a guarantee of demilitarization, and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the Jewish state, we are ready to agree to a real peace agreement, a demilitarized Palestinian state side by side with the Jewish state.*

—Benjamin Netanyahu, June 14, 2009

Seemingly, it was a historic moment. The prime minister of Israel and leader of the Likud Party publicly embraced the two-state solution. A short while into his second term in office, ten days after the newly inaugurated president of the United States promised in Cairo to “personally pursue this outcome,” Netanyahu declared an about-face, shifting from the traditional course he and his political camp had once pursued.

Thus, more than ninety years after the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, it appeared the successors of the founders of Zionism were moving toward a historic compromise to resolve the conflict embedded in that intentionally vague statement. It is the conflict between “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” and “nothing

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**Akiva Eldar** is the chief political columnist and an editorial writer for *Haaretz*. He wishes to thank his researcher, Eyal Raz, for assistance with this article.

shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

Now it appeared that this dispute, which for decades had split Israeli society into rival political camps, could be resolved. Forty-two years after the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, formerly held by Jordan and Egypt, a right-wing prime minister declared his willingness to return these territories to the people living in them, as well as his consent for the establishment of a new, independent state of Palestine.

But almost immediately, other voices emerged questioning whether this solution—dividing the land into two independent, coexisting states—was still feasible; whether the “window of opportunity” that might have been available in the past had already closed for good; whether the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank had reached a point of no return, creating a new situation that did not allow for any partition; and whether the division of political powers within Israeli society had changed, making the dramatic move impossible. As Robert Serry, UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, put it:

If the parties do not grasp the current opportunity, they should realize the implication is not merely slowing progress toward a two-state solution. Instead, we could be moving down the path toward a one-state reality, which would also move us further away from regional peace.

This article focuses on the Israeli side of this equation in part because the Palestinian leadership, as far back as 1988, made a strategic decision favoring the two-state solution, presented in the Algiers declaration of the Palestinian National Council. The Arab League, for its part, voted in favor of a peace initiative that would recognize the state of Israel and set the terms for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. Meanwhile, various bodies of the international community reasserted partition of the land as their formal policy. But Israel, which signed the Oslo accords nearly two decades ago, has been moving in a different direction. And Netanyahu's stirring words of June 2009 now ring hollow.

Israel never overtly spurned a two-state solution involving land partition and a Palestinian state. But it never acknowledged that West Bank developments had rendered such a solution impossible. Facing a default reality in which a one-state solution seemed the only option, Israel chose a third way—the continuation of the status quo. This unspoken strategic decision has dictated its policies and tactics for the past decade, simultaneously safeguarding political negotiations as a framework for the future and tightening Israel's control over the West Bank. In essence, a "peace process" that allegedly is meant to bring the occupation to an end and achieve a two-state solution has become a mechanism to perpetuate the conflict and preserve the status quo.

This reality and its implications are best understood through a brief survey of the history that brought the Israelis and Palestinians to this impasse. The story is one of courage, sincere efforts, internal conflicts on both sides, persistent maneuvering and elements of folly.

**I**n August 1993, the foreign ministers of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Shimon Peres and Mah-

moud Abbas, signed a declaration of principles. In September of that year, Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat exchanged the "letters of recognition," which led to an impressive signing ceremony on the White House lawn. Words about historical compromise, reconciliation and peace filled the air. The world perceived a true, deep change sweeping the Middle East, with both sides resolved to divide the land into two states.

Nevertheless, the negotiating partners' starting points remained far apart. The Palestinians considered engaging in a process based on the acceptance of the 1967 borders to be a major compromise in itself. They believed their willingness to settle for territory representing 22 percent of mandatory Palestine was already an immense compromise foreclosing much further concession. Israel, in contrast, considered these borders the starting point for talks and never intended to withdraw fully from the occupied territory.

Prime Minister Rabin accentuated this position in seeking Knesset support for the interim agreement, or Oslo II:

We would like this to be an entity which is less than a state, and which will independently run the lives of Palestinians under its authority. The borders of the State of Israel, during the permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six Day War. We will not return to the 4 June 1967 lines.

Rabin further referred to different areas of the West Bank that Israel would insist on keeping, including regions that no Palestinian negotiator could give up.

Because of these differences, the Oslo accords were originally labeled an interim agreement "for a transitional period not exceeding five years," meant to lay the foundations for "a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242

(1967) and 338 (1973).” Yet, even though the final objective intentionally remained vague, the agreement itself listed detailed timetables for the implementation of interim phases, including, most remarkably, an Israeli withdrawal from the cities of Gaza and Jericho in three months. Already in this sensitive initial phase, cracks appeared. “No dates are sacred,” said Rabin in December 1993, as the deadline for withdrawal was being postponed.

Nevertheless, despite the evident differences between both sides and the difficulties that were clear from the beginning, two-state-solution supporters believed the dynamics of the process would generate their own power, which would force the parties to take brave steps and reach an ultimate resolution. Whatever actual force these developments could have set in motion, the effort suffered a fatal blow on November 4, 1995, when an opponent of the agreement killed the prime minister.

Six months later, Israel conducted elections between two candidates for prime minister—Shimon Peres, perceived as a progenitor of the Oslo plan, and Benjamin Netanyahu, a fierce opponent of the process throughout his time as head of the parliamentary opposition. Netanyahu won narrowly.

His election marked a new era in Israel’s attitude toward the negotiations. Prior to Rabin’s assassination, one could reasonably argue that the main motivation of the government was to conclude an agreement. But Netanyahu did everything possible to safeguard the negotiations as a framework while concurrently evading their declared objective. All of his successors as prime minister followed this pattern.

Netanyahu himself testified to this

scheme and his way of handling it in a private conversation in 2001, when he was out of office. Unaware that he was being recorded, he bragged about the manipulative tactics he had used in his first tenure as prime minister to undermine the Oslo accords. He explained that he had insisted the Clinton administration provide



him with a written commitment that Israel alone would be able to determine the borders of the “defined military sites” that would remain under its control. He went on to say that by defining the entire Jordan Valley as a military location, he “actually stopped the Oslo Accord.” He was right. Without this large area, the Palestinians wouldn’t have a viable state.

Indeed, under Netanyahu’s first tenure as prime minister, which ended in 1999, little progress was made in implementing the agreed-upon phases or moving toward a

*No one publicly embraced this status quo choice as a policy, and yet it seemed to generate its own momentum as various players quietly understood that it served their purposes.*

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final-status agreement. When the five years allocated for the transitional period passed, no Palestinian state seemed near.

During his first term, Netanyahu came under attack from both sides. Those opposed to dividing the land were furious that he didn't spurn the peace process overtly. Supporters of the accords, meanwhile, protested against his foot-dragging in implementing the agreement's provisions. All condemned Netanyahu's indecision. But these critics failed to perceive that Israel's new status quo approach was actually a choice—and, indeed, a policy.

No one publicly embraced this decision, and yet it seemed to generate its own momentum as various players quietly understood that it served their purposes. A report published by the International Crisis Group, tellingly titled “The Emperor Has No Clothes: Palestinians and the End of the Peace Process,” lists benefits to the various partners in the so-called peace process, including the entities known collectively as the “quartet” (the UN, United States, European Union and Russia). The Europeans, said the report, wanted influence in the Middle East, and by funding the Palestinian Authority (PA) they found they could get a seat at some prestigious diplomatic tables. Russia and the UN harbored similar desires for diplomatic advancement.

Meanwhile, Washington knew its support for the ongoing peace process, however much it may be a sham, allowed it to maintain good relations with Arab countries even as it nurtured its “special

relationship” with Israel. Thus, the United States saw in the status quo an opportunity to preserve its influence in the Middle East by maintaining a delicate balance in its ties with most major regional players. But this approach is far removed from the evenhanded policy championed by President Dwight Eisenhower in the early years of Israel's existence. Israel today shows immense confidence in the financial aid and large diplomatic umbrella it gets from America, as reflected in Netanyahu's oft-quoted comment:

I know what America is. America is something that can be easily moved. Moved to the right [direction]. . . . They won't get in our way. They won't get in our way. . . . So let's say they say something. So they said it! They said it! 80 percent of the Americans support us.

Even the Palestinians get sucked into this status quo game, although they pay the highest price for the current stalemate and have demonstrated in recent years open hostility to continuing the barren peace talks. But in reality, under such extremely asymmetrical circumstances, they likely would suffer the most if the process were to collapse. Since the days of Yasir Arafat, and more intensely since the beginning of Mahmoud Abbas's presidency, the PA leadership has relied almost solely on the international community for generous financial aid and global attention. Thus, the PA is highly dependent on foreign support. Its leaders fear that if they take actions that upset the international community, and particularly the United States, they will lose

their aid—and consequently face a possible collapse in their political standing within the Palestinian community.

So, lacking any better alternative, the existence of the PA allows for a kind of welfare for large portions of the West Bank's political and economic elite. This is true of Fatah, whose *raison d'être* has become maintaining the ongoing process. It also includes tens of thousands of families whose livelihoods depend on the PA. For these families, stopping the aid would be disastrous. Thus, if the peace process has become an addiction for many participants, as the International Crisis Group report notes, this addiction has become an absolute reliance for the people of the PA.

**W**hatever motivates most participants in the process, Israel's embrace of it is most intense, for good reasons—including religion, historical traumas, national security, territorial aspirations, control over natural resources, the threat of internal social division and political survival. Yet, to understand how deeply rooted this imperative is for Israel, one must examine the foundation on which Israeli society and the ethos of its collective identity are built.

If Israeli citizens were to create a collective identification card, most would probably embrace the words "Jewish and democratic." From the 1940s, when Israel was yet to be established, up until today, these two adjectives have been almost a binding code, the vision with which the different elements of the state were to act. This sensibility was embodied in the country's declaration of independence, the basis of Israel's establishment. A body of commentary, scholarship and civic documents emerged that sought to examine whether those two terms were contradictory. These studies included the "basic laws," the groundwork for a possible future Israeli constitution,

restrictions imposed on the platforms of parties running for the Knesset, and many hundreds of news and academic articles.

Yet, since Israel is not merely an abstract idea but an actual political entity, these two concepts—one connected to a collective cultural and religious identity, the other a method for governing—must be merged with the realities of geography. The relationship between the three sides of this triangle—geography, demography and democracy—has influenced Israel's nature and policies from day one.

When the United Nations General Assembly voted on the partition plan in 1947, two-thirds of the inhabitants of mandatory Palestine were Arabs, while Jews constituted a third of the population. Of course, this situation did not allow for the existence of a state that would be both Jewish and democratic. But only a few months later, with the establishment of the state inside what would become the 1949 armistice line, 84 percent of the population of newly born Israel—spread over 78 percent of the land—were Jews. The formation of an almost absolute identity between the geographic partition and the demographic division over the different parts of what had been mandatory Palestine was anything but accidental. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, summarized the consequences of the 1948 war:

The IDF could have conquered the entire territory between the [Jordan] River and the Sea. But what kind of state would we have? . . . We would have a Knesset with an Arab majority. Having to choose between the wholeness of the land or a Jewish State, we chose the Jewish State.

In other words, the demographic concern was the dominant factor in Israel's decisions on how to conduct its first war—initially,

by encouraging more than seven hundred thousand Arab inhabitants to leave the territories over which it took control, then by refraining from conquering additional territory.

However, this consonance between geography and demography changed dramatically nineteen years later, with Israel's decisive victory in the Six-Day War of 1967. Israel's military took control over vast amounts of land, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the latter encompassing a 30 percent increase in territory over what Israel had controlled before the war. But these territories were not empty. And although many Palestinians on those lands left their homes, some for the second time, a large number remained. Thus did Israel's ability to retain simultaneously a Jewish and a democratic identity become endangered. But this departure from the Ben-Gurion formula was not quickly perceived by Israeli leaders, even though the triangle of demography, geography and democracy became much more complex and explosive.

**I**srael's geographic expansion in the 1967 war—and the new demographic proportions between Jews and Arabs under its control—once again forced Israel to make a choice: Which sides of the triangle would strengthen, and which would weaken? Seemingly, the territorial conquests undermined the demographic edge, meaning the Jewish majority. However, no one intended to allow a weakening in this fundamental component of the state's identity.

“The key phrase in the Israeli experience is ‘a Jewish majority.’ Israelis will do anything—wage war or make peace—to maintain a Jewish majority and preserve the Israeli tribal bonfire.” These were the words of Daniel Ben-Simon, former journalist and current Labor Party member of the Knesset. A senior member of the rival party has

expressed a similar position. In a conference held in March 2002, at the peak of the suicide bombings that killed many Israelis, Dan Meridor, deputy prime minister and minister of intelligence and atomic energy in the Israeli cabinet, said: “Of all the various questions—security, the Middle East peace process, etc.—the demographic-democratic problem is the chief imminent threat that we simply cannot evade.” More recently, the newly elected chairman of the Kadima Party, Shaul Mofaz, declared the so-called demographic threat the most dangerous of all to the existence of Israel.

This outlook, embraced by the most prominent figures of the mainstream political parties, is shared by the Jewish Israelis they represent. This is seen in public-opinion polls such as the Democracy Index, which found in 2010 that 86 percent of Israeli Jews believed decisive choices for the state must be taken on the basis of a Jewish majority.

Therefore, a careful analysis of the triangle model cannot focus on the strength of each side independently but must focus on possible two-side combinations. On the collective identity card, the definition of “Jewish and democratic” is being replaced with “Jewish and geographic.” Whenever two of the edges are dominant, the third tends to weaken, and the third in this instance is the democratic component.

**T**he move toward a “Jewish and geographic” state became even more prominent following changes undergone by Israeli society in recent decades. Settlers, although they composed a relatively small fraction of the population, became the vanguard that directed political thinking for most of the Jewish religious public. The ultra-Orthodox political parties, which previously had been considered the swing faction between dovish and hawkish political camps, accepted the settlers' doctrine

that occupied territories represented Israeli land. They stood by the right-wing parties in opposing partition. This political drift took place at a time when religious groups in Israel became larger in both absolute and relative terms. A survey conducted by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics in 2008 showed that only 40 percent of Israeli Jews between the ages of twenty and twenty-four identified themselves as nonreligious or secular. This trend has great influence on the direction Israeli society is taking nowadays.

In a survey conducted on the tenth anniversary of Prime Minister Rabin's assassination, Israeli Jews were asked to assess whether the decision to engage in the Oslo process had been correct. While 62 percent of the secular respondents answered affirmatively, the answer given by religious and ultra-Orthodox respondents was the complete opposite; among those respondents, representing a growing segment of Israeli society, more than 70 percent said it had been wrong. Placing "greater Israel" at the top of the value system meant that democracy and demography were undermined among the wider public, to the point where they believed the executive and the Knesset did not have the mandate to decide on territorial withdrawals. This is reflected in a recent statement by Benny Katzover, former chairman of the Shomron settlers' regional council and a settler leader: "The main role of Israeli democracy now is to disappear. Israeli democracy has finished its

role, and it must disassemble and give way to Judaism."

Gabriel Sheffer, a prominent expert on the study of regime and societal relations in Israel, views the lack of separation between religion and state in Israel as the key factor in understanding the country's recent history. In a 2005 article, he stressed that the historical failure to separate ethnic-national identity and religious belief is the primary cause of events in Jewish society and in the relationship between Israelis, Arabs and Palestinians. He explained that this issue distorts Israeli democracy. More recently, he characterized Israel as a Jewish-national-religious state that naturally excludes many citizen groups from any serious influence on public policy.

Even so, it would be a mistake to explain



Israeli society's right-wing drift only in terms of the growing power of religious groups. Another factor is the mass immigration of the early 1990s and the corollary collapse of the so-called Zionist Left.

In 1992, Israeli general elections ended with a change of government: the Labor

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and Meretz parties, which represented the Zionist Left in parliament, together won fifty-six of the Knesset's 120 seats. This outcome enabled Rabin to form a Center-Left coalition government that set in motion the historical recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and signed the declaration of principles. Seventeen years later, during the 2009 elections—the most recent in Israel—these two parties won only sixteen seats. Public-opinion surveys prior to the elections showed that 72 percent of Jewish respondents defined themselves as “right-wing.” These results illustrate the rise of the Israeli political Right, which has been growing in force since 1967.

During the 1990s, nearly a million immigrants arrived in Israel, about 85 percent from the former Soviet Union. This group's size and demographic characteristics had a crucial effect on the composition and nature of Israeli society. These newcomers found in Israel a refuge from a crumbling communist empire that had shaped much of their historical and cultural thinking. Natan Sharansky, a “refusenik” and an immigrant from the Soviet Union, explained to President Clinton, perhaps jocularly, why he was the only Israeli cabinet member who opposed the peace agreement the president was trying to promote at Camp David in 2000: “I can't vote for this, I'm Russian. . . . I come from one of the biggest countries in the world to one of the smallest. You want me to cut it in half. No, thank you.”

The 2009 Democracy Index revealed that “in general, the immigrants' attitudes

are less liberal and less tolerant in almost every realm and concerning every topic examined.” For example, 77 percent of former Soviet immigrants in the survey supported policies to encourage Arab emigration from Israel. The right-wing sensibility of these people, who are largely secular, stems not from religious attitudes but from a perception of the Jewish society as “landlord” of Israel, with aspirations to exercise strong national sovereignty over a territory that should be as extensive and secure as possible.

Former Knesset member Mossi Raz of Meretz, in analyzing the rise of the immigrant Right and the dovish political camp's unprecedented decline in the latest elections, said that “these million and a half immigrants, who arrived in recent decades, constitute 20 percent of the voters, but Meretz and the Labor Party together received only 5 percent of their votes.”

Even traditional supporters of the Zionist Left, such as secular people of the middle and upper classes, shifted toward the Right, in part due to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Likud Party's success in creating a conceptual turnabout in Israeli political culture. The conservative Right successfully separated the notion of “prosperity” from the term “peace” and convinced many Israelis that economic growth would emerge if the government merely managed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and practiced a neoliberal economic policy. This trend accelerated when the West declared a “war on terror” following the September 11, 2001, attacks, which gave Israeli enterprises new access to wide markets. As

*Forbes* magazine noted, Israel became the destination for those seeking antiterrorism technology. The stability and prosperity of Israel's economy, even without conflict resolution, diminished the imperative of peace for many.

Israel's Palestinian citizens also have undergone significant political changes since Oslo. These shifts, seen in voting patterns, result from the deterioration in the relationship between the Jewish and Arab populations. These, in turn, reflect a growing sense of Israel's changing nature as a state; a mistrust between the two population groups; and a rise in the intensity of hostility and violence between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This process had a twofold impact on voting patterns: first, Arab voter participation declined; and second, more Arabs who did participate gave their votes to Arab rather than Zionist parties. In 1996, for instance, 79.3 percent of eligible Arab voters took part in the first elections after Rabin's assassination. In 2003, it was 63 percent; in 2009, only 53.6 percent. Yet, as more of these Arab participants voted for Arab parties, the number of parliamentary seats granted to the three Arab political parties rose to eleven, the highest ever. In 1992, only 47.7 percent of Arab voters supported these parties, but in the elections of 1996, after the assassination of Rabin, sectarian voting jumped to 67.3 percent. In the latest elections, 82.1 percent of Palestinians who are Israeli citizens voted for one of these three parties.

**T**he balance of political power inside Israel is unsustainable, given the demographic facts between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. For the first time since the establishment of the state, the proportion of Jews and Arabs living under Israeli jurisdiction is approaching equilib-

rium. Sharon, who was aware of this, tried in 2005 to exclude a million and a half Palestinians from this calculation by withdrawing Israeli forces and settlers from the Gaza Strip. Yet, since Israel continued to exercise control over Gaza's airspace and sea—and to a very large extent over its land borders—Israel is still responsible for this territory and its inhabitants, according to a widely accepted interpretation of international law. Sergio della Pergola, an expert on demography, estimates that by Israel's hundredth anniversary, the demographic balance between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River will return to what it was before Israel's declaration of independence: two-thirds Arabs and non-Jews and one-third Jews. Demographers estimate that by 2030, the proportion of Jews in the population will decline to 46 percent. According to another estimate, a similar percentage will be reached by 2020, and some even suggest that by that time Jews will constitute only 40 percent of the population. Regardless, by the end of the present decade, Jews are expected to become a minority between the sea and the river.

The Oslo accords were intended to mark the beginning of a gradual end to the Israeli presence in the occupied territories. Instead, the accords opened a new era for the settlement enterprise, which continues its expansion in the so-called C areas, which encompass 60.2 percent of the West Bank territory and remain under full Israeli control. "This is one of the strangest maps of existing and potential autonomous territories ever agreed-upon by two conflicting parties," said Elisha Efrat, Israel Prize winner for geographical research. He referred to the way 176 "orange stains" (B areas), representing the Palestinian rural space, are spread throughout the map, with C areas separating them from one another and leaving Palestinians with mere isolated enclaves that preclude any national self-

sustainment. Jeff Halper, a human-rights activist, compares this to the Japanese game of Go, in which “you win by immobilizing your opponent, by gaining control of key points of a matrix so that every time s/he moves s/he encounters an obstacle of some kind.”

Since Israel refuses to undertake any commitment to freeze settlement, it uses the interim phases, whose purpose was to advance toward a two-state solution, to create obstacles that would impede a fair, agreed-upon partition of the territory. In the decade following the Oslo accords from 1993 to 2003, the number of West Bank settlers doubled, from 110,000 to 224,000 (not including East Jerusalem). Since then, the figure has risen to more than 340,000. Together with Israelis residing in Israeli-constructed neighborhoods in East Jerusalem, they now represent more than six hundred thousand people. The number of existing settlements authorized by Israel is 124, to which

one should add twelve East Jerusalem neighborhoods and more than a hundred “outposts” built by settlers without formal approval by the state (though with the help of public authorities and branches of the government). Many of those outposts were located carefully to prevent any territorial contiguity in a future Palestinian state. It is in these strategic areas of the mountain strip and across the separation wall that the

Jewish West Bank population grew the most during 2011.

At the same time, and more formally, Israeli governments worked to increase the settler population in “block settlements” in order to eventually annex these areas, as was openly declared. Some of these blocks are close to the 1967 borders, and, in informal negotiations (such as the Geneva Initiative), Palestinians agreed in principle to the idea that they would be annexed, as long as the Palestinian state would be compensated with separate territory equivalent in size.

However, they strongly rejected Israeli annexation of areas such as the Ariel and Karnei Shomron blocks, necessary for any viable Palestinian state with territorial contiguity.

To exercise control over the land without giving up its Jewish identity, Israel has embraced various policies of “separation.” It has separate legal systems for traditional Israeli territory and for the territory it occupies; it divides those who reside in

occupied lands based on ethnic identity; it has retained control over occupied lands but evaded responsibility for the people living there; and it has created a conceptual distinction between its democratic principles and its actual practices in the occupied territories. These separations have allowed Israel to manage the occupation for forty-five years while maintaining its identity and international status. No other



state in the twenty-first century has been able to get away with this, but it works for Israel, which has little incentive to change it.

This article was written shortly after a coalition government controlling ninety-four seats out of 120 was formed in Israel. The coalition agreement between the two largest parties, Likud and Kadima, does not leave room for hope regarding a future breakthrough toward a two-state solution. The sides talked only in general terms about the resumption of the political process and instead emphasized the importance of maintaining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. For this reason, they added a clarification regarding “the importance of maintaining defensible borders,” a phrase implying that any compromise contemplated by the coalition government centers on gaps between the positions of Likud and Kadima more than on those between Israelis and Palestinians.

At present, only fourteen Knesset members (a little more than 10 percent) constitute the opposition, which supports dividing the land into two states on the basis of the 1967 borders. Eleven of them are Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, and three are members of Meretz representing the Zionist Left. Even if we include the Labor Party, which facilitated the formation of Rabin’s cabinet some two decades ago with a majority of sixty-one seats, this

faction’s presence has now been reduced to twenty-two Knesset members. Recent opinion polls indicate that, if the elections were held today, this political bloc would win thirty-two seats, a little more than a quarter of the parliament. Thus, the formation of the new unity government represents the monolithic nature of Israeli society. For decades, the boundaries of Israeli Jewish society, based on the Jews’ relationship with the Palestinians and the question of dividing the land, were the focus of disputes that at times split Israelis into separate groups. But now a consensual answer has emerged. While the hawkish political camp has adopted some rhetoric that used to characterize the dovish bloc, the latter has been forced to accept the political reality of being dominated. Thus does Israel’s grip on the occupied territories tighten, even as the issue wanes on Israelis’ public agenda.

No doubt, the present unity government can promote almost anything it wishes. That means it is unlikely to use its power to promote a new partition of the land into two states in any way acceptable to Palestinians. History teaches us that Israelis are only willing to take brave and honest steps toward peace when they know the cost of failing to do so will be even greater. Unfortunately, given the realities of the current situation, there is little reason to think that the Israelis will take these steps anytime soon. □

# *The Divided Map of Europe*

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*By Robert D. Kaplan*

**T**he *idea* of Europe, in the minds of Westerners today, is an intellectual concept—liberal humanism with a geographical basis—that emerged through centuries of material and intellectual advancement, as well as a reaction to devastating military conflicts in previous historical ages. The last such conflict was World War II, which spawned a resolve to merge elements of sovereignty among democratic states in order to set in motion a pacifying trend.

Alas, this grand narrative now is under assault by underlying forces of history and geography. The economic divisions seen today in the European Union, manifest in the Continent's debt crisis and pressures on the euro, have their roots, at least partially, in contradictions that stretch far back into Europe's past and its existential struggle to grapple with the realities of its immutable geographical structure. It is this legacy—somewhat deterministic and rarely acknowledged—that Europe still must overcome and that therefore requires a detailed description.

In the years immediately before and after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, intellectuals celebrated the ideal of Central Europe—Mitteleuropa—as a beacon of relative

multiethnic tolerance and liberalism within the Hapsburg Empire to which the contiguous Balkans could and should aspire. But while the Continent's spiritual heart lies in Mitteleuropa, the political heart now lies slightly to the northwest, in what we might call Charlemagne's Europe. Charlemagne's Europe starts with the Benelux states, then meanders south along the Franco-German frontier to the approaches of the Alps. To wit, there is the European Commission and its civil service in Brussels, the European Court in the Hague, the treaty town of Maastricht, the European Parliament in Strasbourg and so on. All these places lie athwart a line running southward from the North Sea "that formed the centerpiece and primary communications route of the Carolingian monarchy," observes the late scholar of modern Europe Tony Judt.<sup>1</sup> The fact that this budding European superstate of our own era is concentrated in Europe's medieval core, with Charlemagne's capital city of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) still at its very center, is no accident. For nowhere on the Continent is Europe's sea and land interface quite as rich and profound as along this spinal column of Old World civilization. In the Low Countries, there is the openness to the great ocean, even as the entrance to the English Channel and a string of islands in Holland form a

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Judt, *A Grand Illusion?: An Essay on Europe* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 110.

protective barrier, giving these small states advantages out of proportion to their size. Immediately to the rear of this North Sea coast is a wealth of protected rivers and waterways, all promising trade, movement and consequent political development. The loess soil of northwestern Europe is dark and productive, and the forests provide a natural defense. Finally, the cold climate between the North Sea and the Alps, much more so than the warmer climate south of the Alps, has been sufficiently challenging to stimulate human resolve from the late Bronze Age forward, with Franks, Alamanni, Saxons and Frisians settling in late antiquity in Gaul, the Alpine foreland and the coastal lowlands. Here, in turn, would be the proving grounds of Francia and the Holy Roman Empire in the ninth century, of Burgundy, Lorraine, Brabant and Friesland, too, and of city-states such as Trier and Liege, all of which collectively displaced Rome and then fostered the politics that today drive the machinery of the European Union.

Of course, before all of the above came Rome—and before Rome, Greece. Both, in University of Chicago scholar William H. McNeill's choice words, constitute the antechamber of the "anciently civilized" world that began in Egypt and Mesopotamia and spread from there through Minoan Crete and Anatolia to the northern shore of the Mediterranean. Civilization, as we well know, took root in warm and protected river valleys such as the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates, then continued its migration into the relatively mild climates of the Levant, North Africa, and the Greek and Italian peninsulas, where living was hospitable with only rudimentary technology.

But though European civilization had its initial flowering along the Mediterranean, it continued to develop, in ages of more advanced technology and mobility, further

to the north in colder climes. Rome expanded here in the decades before the start of the Common Era, providing for the first time political order and domestic security from the Carpathians in the southeast to the Atlantic in the northwest—that is, throughout much of Central Europe and the region by the North Sea and English Channel. Large settlement complexes, called *oppida* by Julius Caesar, emerged throughout this sprawling, forested and well-watered European black-soil heartland, which provided the rudimentary foundation for the emergence of medieval and modern cities.<sup>2</sup>

Just as Roman expansion gave a certain stability to the so-called barbarian tribes of northern Europe, Rome's breakup would lead over the centuries to the formation of peoples and nation-states in what was to become Charlemagne's empire and Mitteleuropa. To be sure, the world of the Middle Ages replaced the world of antiquity as the geographic hold of the Mediterranean "slackened," when northern Europe simply broke free of Rome.<sup>3</sup> (Mediterranean unity was, of course, further shattered by the Arab thrust across North Africa.)<sup>4</sup> By the eleventh century, the map of Europe already had a modern appearance, with France and Poland roughly in their present shapes, the Holy Roman Empire in the guise of a united Germany and Bohemia—with Prague at its center—presaging the Czech Republic.

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<sup>2</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *Europe Between the Oceans: 9000 BC–AD 1000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 372.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 11, 13 and 20.

<sup>4</sup> Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1954), ACLS Humanities E-book.



Thus did history move north. And this is absolutely key for our own economically troubled time.

Mediterranean societies, despite their innovations in politics—Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic—were by and large defined by “traditionalism and rigidity,” in the words of the French historian and geographer Fernand Braudel. The poor quality of Mediterranean soil favored large holdings that were, perforce, under the control of the wealthy. And that, in turn, contributed to an inflexible social order. Meanwhile, in the forest clearings of northern Europe, with their richer soils, a freer civilization grew up, anchored by the informal power relationships of feudalism that would be able to take better advantage of the invention of movable type and other technologies yet to come.<sup>5</sup>

As deterministic as Braudel’s explanation may appear, it does work to explain the broad undercurrents of the European past. Obviously, human agency in the persons of such men as Jan Hus, Martin Luther and John Calvin was pivotal to the Protestant Reformation and hence to the Enlightenment that would allow for northern Europe’s dynamic emergence as

one of the cockpits of history in the modern era. Nevertheless, all that could not have happened without the immense river and ocean access and the loess earth, rich with coal and iron-ore deposits, which formed the foundation for such individual dynamism and industrialization. Great, eclectic and glittering empires certainly flowered along the Mediterranean in

the Middle Ages—notably the Norman Roger II’s in twelfth-century Sicily, and, lest we forget, the Renaissance blossomed first in late-medieval Florence, with the art of Michelangelo and the secular realism of Machiavelli. But it was the pull of the colder Atlantic that opened up global shipping routes that ultimately won out against the enclosed Mediterranean. While Portugal and Spain were the early beneficiaries of this Atlantic trade—owing to their protruding peninsular position—their pre-Enlightenment societies, traumatized by the proximity of (and occupation by) North African Muslims, lost ground eventually in the oceanic competition to the Dutch, French and English. So just as Charlemagne’s Holy Roman Empire succeeded Rome, in modern times northern Europe succeeded southern Europe, with the mineral-rich Carolingian core winning out in the form of the European Union. All this is attributable, in some measure, to geography.

<sup>5</sup> Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), 75.

The medieval Mediterranean was itself divided between the Frankish West and the Byzantine East. For it isn't only divisions between north and south that both define and plague Europe today but also those between west and east and, as we shall see, between northwest and center. Consider the migration route of the Danube Valley that continues eastward beyond the Great Hungarian Plain, the Balkans and the Black Sea, all the way through the Pontic and Kazakh steppes to Mongolia and China.<sup>6</sup> This geographical fact, along with the flat, unimpeded access to Russia further north, forms the basis for the waves of invasions of mainly Slavic and Turkic peoples from the East, which have, as we know, greatly shaped Europe's political destiny. So just as there is a Carolingian Europe and a Mediterranean Europe, there is, too, often as a result of these invasions from the East, a Byzantine-Ottoman Europe, a Prussian Europe and a Hapsburg Europe, all of which are geographically distinct and have an echo today through somewhat differing economic-development patterns, however many other factors may be involved. And these varying patterns cannot simply be erased by the creation of a single currency.

Indeed, in the fourth century AD, the Roman Empire itself divided into western and eastern halves. Rome remained the capital of the western empire, while Constantinople became the capital of the eastern one. Rome's western empire gave way to Charlemagne's kingdom further north and to the Vatican—Western Europe, in other words. The eastern empire, Byzantium, was populated mainly by Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians and later by Muslims when the Ottoman Turks, migrating from the East, captured Constantinople in 1453. The border between these eastern and western empires ran through the middle of what after World War I became the multiethnic

state of Yugoslavia. When that state broke apart violently in 1991, at least initially the breakup echoed the divisions of Rome sixteen centuries earlier. The Slovenes and Croats were Roman Catholics, heirs to a tradition that went back from Austria-Hungary to Rome in the West. The Serbs were Eastern Orthodox and heirs to the Ottoman-Byzantine legacy of Rome in the East. The Carpathian Mountains, which run northeast of the former Yugoslavia and divide Romania into two parts, partially reinforced this boundary between Rome and Byzantium and later between the Hapsburg emperors in Vienna and the Turkish sultans in Constantinople. Passes and thus trade routes existed through these formidable mountains, bringing the cultural repository of Mitteleuropa deep into the Byzantine and Ottoman Balkans. But even if the Carpathians were not a hard and fast border, like the Alps, they marked a gradation, a shift in the balance from one Europe to another. Southeastern Europe would be poor not only compared to northwestern Europe but also in comparison to northeastern Europe, with its Prussian tradition. That is to say the Balkans were not only poor and politically underdeveloped compared to the Benelux countries but also compared to Poland and Hungary.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall brought all these divisions into sharp relief. The Warsaw Pact had constituted a full-fledged eastern empire, ruled from Moscow, featuring military occupation and freeze-frame poverty brought about by the introduction of command economies. During the forty-four years of Kremlin rule, much of Prussian, Hapsburg and Byzantine-Ottoman Europe was locked away in a Soviet prison of nations collectively known as Eastern

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<sup>6</sup> Cunliffe, *Europe Between the Oceans*, 32–42.

*The fact that this budding European superstate of our own era is concentrated in Europe's medieval core, with Charlemagne's capital city of Aachen still at its very center, is no accident.*

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Europe. Meanwhile, in Western Europe the European Union was taking shape, first as the European Coal and Steel Community, then as the Common Market and finally as the EU, building out from its Carolingian base of France, Germany and the Benelux countries to encompass Italy, Great Britain, and later Greece and the Iberian nations. Because of its economic head start during the Cold War years, Carolingian Europe inside NATO has emerged as stronger, for the time being, than Prussian northeastern Europe and Danubian Mitteleuropa, which historically were equally prosperous but for too long were located inside the Warsaw Pact.

The Soviet thrust into Central Europe in the latter phases of World War II created this entire turn of events, even as it bore out the thesis of political scientist Halford Mackinder that Asiatic invasions have shaped the European destiny. Of course, we shouldn't carry this determinism too far, since without the actions of one man, Adolf Hitler, World War II may not have occurred, and then there would have been no Soviet invasion.

But Hitler did exist, and so we are left with the situation as it exists today: the Europe of Charlemagne. Yet because of the resurgence of a united Germany, the balance of power within Europe may shift slightly eastward to the confluence of Prussia and Mitteleuropa, with German economic power invigorating Poland, the Baltic states and the upper Danube. The Mediterranean seaboard and the Byzantine-Ottoman Balkans generally lag behind. The worlds of the Mediterranean

and the Balkans meet in mountainous and peninsular Greece, which despite being rescued from communism in the late 1940s remains among the most economically and socially troubled of the European Union's members. Greece, at the northwestern edge of the Near Eastern *oikoumene* (inhabited world), was the beneficiary of geography in antiquity—the place where the heartless systems of Egypt and Persia-Mesopotamia could be softened and humanized, leading to the invention of the West. But in today's Europe, dominated by its northern states, Greece finds itself at the wrong end of things, the orientalized end, far more stable and prosperous than places such as Bulgaria and Kosovo but only because it was spared the ravages of communism. Roughly three-quarters of Greek businesses are family owned and rely on family labor, so minimum-wage laws do not always apply, and often those without family connections cannot be promoted.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon finds expression in what to many is purely a financial crisis but in fact is deeply rooted in cultural realities, which means more fundamentally in history and geography.

Geography is a driving force here. When the Warsaw Pact broke up, the formerly captive countries advanced economically and politically almost exactly according to their positions on the map: Poland, the Baltic states, Hungary and the Bohemian end of Czechoslovakia initially performed the best, again with significant variations,

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<sup>7</sup> Philomila Tsoukala, "A Family Portrait of a Greek Tragedy," *New York Times* (April 24, 2010): WK 14.

while the Balkan countries to the south generally suffered greater destitution and unrest. All the vicissitudes of the twentieth century notwithstanding—including the pulverizing effects of Nazism and communism—the legacies of Prussian, Hapsburg, Byzantine and Ottoman rules are still relevant. These empires were first and foremost creatures of geography, influenced as they were by migration patterns from the Asiatic East.

Thus, behold again that eleventh-century map of Europe, with the Holy Roman Empire resembling a united Germany at its center. All around are region states: Burgundy, Bohemia, Pomerania and Estonia, with Aragon, Castille, Navarre and Portugal to the southwest. Think now of the regional success stories in the twenty-first century, mainly in Carolingian Europe: Baden-Württemberg, the Rhone-Alpes, Lombardy and Catalonia. These populations, as Judt reminds us, are for the most part northerners, who peer down on the supposedly “backward, lazy, Mediterranean, subsidized ‘south,’” even as they look in some horror at Balkan nations like Romania and Bulgaria joining the European Union.<sup>8</sup> It is the center versus the periphery, with the losers in the periphery generally, though not exclusively, in those regions closer geographically to the Middle East and North Africa. But precisely because the Brussels-headquartered European superstate has worked so well for northerly subregions such as Baden-Württemberg and Catalonia, these subregions have been liberated from their own one-size-fits-all, chain-store national governments and have consequently flourished by occupying historically anchored economic, political and cultural niches.

Beyond their dissatisfaction with Europe’s losers on the periphery, among prosperous northern Europeans there is

an unease over the dissolution of society itself. National populations and labor forces are demographically stagnant in Europe and consequently graying. Europe will lose 24 percent of its prime, working-age population by 2050, and its population of those over sixty years old will rise by 47 percent in that time frame. This will likely lead to increased immigration of young people from the Third World to support Europe’s aging welfare states. While reports of Muslim domination of Europe have been exaggerated, the percentage of



Muslims in major European countries will, in fact, triple by midcentury, from the current 3 percent of the population to 10 percent. Whereas in 1913 Europe had more people than China, by 2050 the combined populations of Europe, the United States and Canada will comprise just 12 percent

<sup>8</sup> Judt, *A Grand Illusion?*, 114.

of the world total, down from 33 percent after World War I.<sup>9</sup> Europe is certainly in the process of being demographically diminished by Asia and Africa, even as European populations themselves become more African and Middle Eastern.

Indeed, the map of Europe is about to move southward and once again encompass the entire Mediterranean world, as it did not only under Rome but also under the Byzantines and the Ottoman Turks. For decades, because of autocratic regimes that stifled economic and social development—while also being the incubators of extremist politics—North Africa was effectively cut off from the northern rim of the Mediterranean. North Africa gave Europe economic migrants and little else. But as North African states evolve into messy democracies, the degree of political and economic interactions with nearby Europe will, over time, multiply. The Mediterranean will become a connector rather than the divider it has been during most of the postcolonial era.

Just as it moved eastward to encompass the former satellite states of the Soviet Union following the democratic revolutions of 1989, Europe will now expand to the south to encompass the Arab uprisings. Tunisia and Egypt are not about to join the European Union, but they are about to become shadow zones of deepening EU involvement. Thus, the EU itself will become an even more ambitious and unwieldy project than ever before. Europe's real southern boundary is not the Mediterranean but the Sahara desert, which cuts equatorial Africa off from the North.

Nevertheless, the European Union, albeit beset by divisions, anxieties and massive growing pains, will remain one of the world's great postindustrial hubs. Thus, the ongoing power shift within it, eastward from Brussels-Strasbourg to Berlin—from the European Union to Germany—will be

pivotal to global politics. For it is Germany, Russia and Greece—with only eleven million people and with or without its debt crisis—that will most perceptively reveal Europe's destiny.

**T**he very fact of a united Germany has to mean comparatively less influence for the European Union than in the days of a divided Germany, given united Germany's geographical, demographic and economic preponderance in the heart of Europe. Germany's population is now eighty-one million, compared to almost sixty-six million in France and sixty-one million in Italy. Germany's gross domestic product is \$3.63 trillion. France's is \$2.81 trillion, and Italy's is \$2.25 trillion. More significant is the fact that whereas France's economic influence is mainly limited to the countries of Cold War Western Europe, German economic influence encompasses both Western Europe and the former Warsaw Pact states, a tribute to its more central geographical position and trade links with both East and West.<sup>10</sup>

Besides their geographical position astride both maritime Europe and Mitteleuropa, Germans have a built-in cultural attitude toward trade. As Norbert Walter, formerly the senior economist for Deutsche Bank, told me long ago, "Germans would rather dominate real economic activities than strict financial activities. We keep clients, we find out what they need, developing niches and relationships over the decades." This ability is aided by a particular dynamism, as the political philosopher Peter Koslowski once explained: "Because so many Germans started from zero after [World War II], we are aggressively modernist. Modernism and

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<sup>9</sup> Jack A. Goldstone, "The New Population Bomb: The Four Megatrends That Will Change the World," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (January/February 2010): 31–43.

<sup>10</sup> Judt, *A Grand Illusion?*

middle-class culture have been raised to the status of ideologies here.” United Germany is also spatially organized to take advantage of an era of flourishing northern European subregions. Because of the tradition of small, independent states arising out of the Thirty Years’ War in the seventeenth century—which still guides Germany’s federal system—there is no single, great pressure cooker of a capital but rather a series of smaller ones that manage to survive even in an era of a reborn Berlin; Hamburg is a media center, Munich a fashion center, Frankfurt a banking center and so on, with a railway system radiating impartially in all directions. Because Germany came late to unification in the second half of the nineteenth century, it has preserved its regional flavor, which is advantageous in today’s Europe. Finally, the fall of the Berlin Wall—which in historical terms is still recent, given that trends take decades to fully emerge—has reconnected Germany to Central Europe, recreating, in exceedingly subtle and informal ways, the First and Second Reichs of the twelfth and nineteenth centuries, roughly equivalent to the Holy Roman Empire.

Besides the Berlin Wall’s collapse, another factor that has buttressed German geopolitical strength is the historic German-Polish reconciliation that occurred during the mid-1990s. As Zbigniew Brzezinski writes, “Through Poland, German influence could radiate northward—into the Baltic states—and eastward—into Ukraine and Belarus.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, German power is enhanced both by a larger Europe and also by a Europe in which Mitteleuropa reemerges as a separate entity.

A critical factor in this evolution will be the degree to which European—and particularly German—quasi pacifism holds up in the future. As the Britain-based strategist Colin S. Gray writes, “Snake-bitten . . . on the Somme, at Verdun,



and by the Götterdämmerung of 1945, the powers of West-Central Europe have been convincingly debellized.”<sup>12</sup> But it isn’t only the legacy of war and destruction that makes Europeans averse to military solutions (aside from peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions). Another factor is that Europe during the Cold War had its security provided for by an American superpower and today faces no palpable conventional threat. “The threat to Europe comes not in the form of uniforms, but in the tattered garb of refugees,” the German-American academic and journalist Josef Joffe said to me in conversation. But what

<sup>11</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperative* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 69–71.

<sup>12</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005), 37.

*When the Warsaw Pact broke up, the formerly captive countries advanced economically and politically almost exactly according to their positions on the map.*

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if Europe's destiny is still subordinate to Asiatic history, in the form of a resurgent Russia? Then there might be a threat. For what drove the Soviet Union to carve out an empire in Eastern Europe at the end of World War II still holds today: a legacy of depredations against Russia by Lithuanians, Poles, Swedes, Frenchmen and Germans, leading to the need for a cordon sanitaire of compliant regimes in the geographically protected space between historic Russia and Central Europe. To be sure, the Russians will not deploy land forces to reoccupy Eastern Europe for the sake of a new cordon sanitaire, but they will do so through a combination of political and economic pressure. Partly owing to Europe's need for natural gas from Russia, Moscow could exert undue influence on its former satellites in years to come. Russia supplies some 25 percent of Europe's gas, 40 percent of Germany's, and nearly 100 percent of Finland's and the Baltic states'.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we may all wake up from Europe's epic economic and currency crisis to a world with greater Russian influence within the Continent. Moscow's investment activities as well as its critical role as an energy supplier would loom larger in a weakened and newly divided Europe.

So will a debellitized Germany partly succumb to Russian influence, leading to a somewhat Finlandized Eastern Europe and an even more hollow North Atlantic Treaty Organization? Or will Germany subtly stand up to Russia through various political and economic means, even as its society remains immersed in postheroic quasi pacifism? This latter scenario would present

a richly complex European destiny, one in which Central Europe would fully reappear and flower for the first time since before World War I, and a tier of states between Germany and Russia would equally flourish, leaving Europe in peace even as its aversion to military deployments is geopolitically inconvenient for the United States. In this scenario, Russia would accommodate itself to countries as far east as Ukraine and Georgia joining Europe. Thus, the idea of Europe as a geographical expression of historic liberalism would finally be realized. The Continent went through centuries of political rearrangements in the Middle Ages following Rome's collapse. And in search of that idea, Europe will continue to rearrange itself following the long European war of 1914–1989.

**I**n geographical terms, Europe has been many things throughout its history. Following the age of exploration, Europe moved laterally westward as commerce shifted across the Atlantic, making cities such as Quebec, Philadelphia and Havana closer economically to Western Europe than cities to the east such as Krakow and Lvov, even as Ottoman military advances as far northwest as Vienna in the late seventeenth century cut off the Balkans from much of the rest of the European subcontinent. Of course, nowadays Europe is shifting to the east as it admits former communist nations

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<sup>13</sup> Steve LeVine, "Pipeline Politics Redux," *Foreign Policy*, June 10, 2010, [http://oilandglory.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/10/pipeline\\_politics\\_redux](http://oilandglory.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/10/pipeline_politics_redux).

into the European Union and to the south as it grapples with the political and economic stabilization of the southern shore of the Mediterranean in North Africa.

In all these rearrangements, Greece, of all places, will provide an insightful register of the health of the European project—and for reasons that go beyond the current financial crisis. Greece is the only part of the Balkans accessible on several seaboards to the Mediterranean and thus is the unifier of two European worlds. Greece is geographically equidistant between Brussels and Moscow, and it is as close to Russia culturally as it is to Europe by virtue of its Eastern Orthodox Christianity, a legacy of Byzantium. Throughout modern history, Greece has been burdened by political underdevelopment. Whereas the mid-nineteenth-century revolutions in Europe were often of middle-class origin, with political liberties as their goal, the Greek independence movement was mainly an ethnic movement with a religious basis. The Greek people overwhelmingly sided with Russia in favor of the Serbs and against Europe during the 1999 Kosovo war, even if the government's position was more helpful. Greece is the most economically troubled European nation that was not part of the communist zone during the Cold War. It is also, going back to antiquity, where Europe—and by inference the West—both ends and begins. The war that Herodotus chronicled between Greece and Persia

established a “dichotomy” of West against East that persisted for millennia.<sup>14</sup> Athens barely remained in the Western camp at the beginning of the Cold War, owing to its own civil war between rightists and communists and the fateful negotiations between Churchill and Stalin that ultimately made Greece part of NATO. It is interesting to contemplate what would have happened during the Cold War had the negotiations between Churchill and Stalin gone differently: imagine how much stronger the Kremlin's strategic position would have been with Greece inside the communist bloc, endangering Italy across the Adriatic Sea, to say nothing of the whole eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Greek financial crisis, so emblematic of Greece's political and economic underdevelopment, has rocked the European Union's currency system since 2010. Because of the tensions it has wrought between northern and southern European countries—and between countries like France and Germany—it has been nothing less than the most significant event in Europe since the wars of the Yugoslav secession. As Greece ably demonstrates, Europe remains a truly ambitious work in progress—one that, as in the past, will have its fate affected by trends and convulsions from the south and east. □

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<sup>14</sup> William Anthony Hay, “Geopolitics of Europe,” *Orbis* 47, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 295–310.

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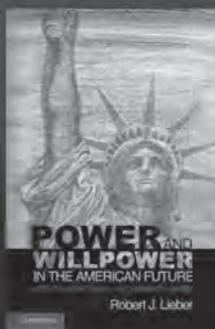
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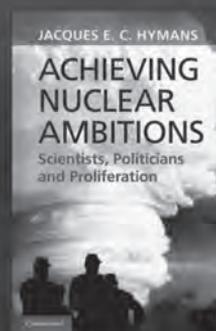
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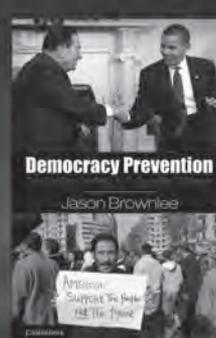
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# *The Salafi Awakening*

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*By Daniel Byman and Zack Gold*

Since Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was pushed aside on February 11, 2011, many U.S. academics and policy makers have issued warnings, reassurances and speculations on the question of how relations with Egypt will be affected by the rise of its largest opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. True to expectations, the Brotherhood did well in the first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections, with its Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) collecting almost half of the seats in the new People's Assembly. The biggest election surprise, however, was that its greatest rival was not one of Egypt's many secular parties, all of which did poorly, but rather another set of Islamists—the Salafi Islamist bloc won almost a quarter of the seats.

This surprising Salafi showing stirred many Egyptian liberals and international human-rights activists to warn that the Salafis, if given any power, would curtail the rights of women and non-Muslim minorities, particularly Egypt's large Coptic Christian population. For the United States, the potential consequences of the Salafi rise are also profound. In some circles, the label "Salafi" is understood to mean one particular stream of Salafism championed by Ayman al-Zawahiri (an Egyptian),

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Osama bin Laden's successor as head of Al Qaeda. And indeed, some of the Salafis in politics once were jihadis. Even if the Salafis are not all closet jihadis, they are feared because of their unrelenting hostility toward Israel, harsh stance on women's and minority rights, rejection of democratic principles and general anti-Americanism. The Brotherhood presents itself as a group of pragmatic, kinder and gentler Islamists. The Salafis do not.

Thus, a big question hovering over events in Egypt is how a strong Salafi influence there will affect U.S. interests in the region. Recognizing the concerns of the international community, the leadership of the largest Salafi party has gone out of its way to strike a pragmatic tone on foreign-policy priorities. However, it is hostile to U.S. military actions in the region and opposes U.S. counterterror measures and support of Israel. Tensions on issues such as minority rights also seem likely, as the primary Salafi focus is on domestic political and social issues. Perhaps most worrisome, many of the problems the United States has with the Salafis reflect mainstream Egyptian public opinion. Hence, far from being radical outliers, Egypt's Salafis represent a kind of barometer on the thinking of significant elements of the country's population, and any democratic leaders will take these feelings into account. As most U.S. interests in the region will not—and should not—change, the United States will only be able to offset some of this criticism,

and often we simply must anticipate problems. Ideally, areas of disagreement should not be put at the center of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship.

The Salafi movement gets its name from the Arabic *al-salaf al-salih* (the worthy ancestors, or venerable forefathers), which refers to the early generations of Muslims, “who had first-hand experience of the rise of Islam and are regarded as exemplary for the correct way to live for future Muslims,” in the words of author Roel Meijer. Though they are not inherently antimodernity, Salafis strive to emulate the Prophet Muhammad and maintain a literalist reading of the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet. Historically, Salafis have focused more on personal behavior and less on politics.

There is no centralized international Salafi leadership, and Salafi practices may differ regionally, by country, within individual countries and even (or especially) among the followers of different Salafi preachers within a city. Particularly important to Salafis are charismatic religious leaders, and divisions often occur due to personal rivalries masquerading as doctrinal disputes.

The Sharia Assembly was created as a Salafi association in Egypt in 1912—sixteen years before the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Salafism really took off in the 1970s and 1980s with the return of Egyptian laborers from the Arabian Peninsula, specifically Saudi Arabia. The Saudi legal system is based on Wahhabi doctrine—perhaps the most well-known Salafi movement—and both the government and wealthy Saudi individuals export Wahhabism across the *ummah* (Islamic community) by funding preachers, building mosques and spreading Salafi religious materials.

Egyptian government policy also fostered the spread of Salafism. While Islamists faced

many restrictions and brutal treatment at the hand of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s government, his successor, Anwar Sadat, lifted the lid and portrayed himself as a pious leader in hopes of using the Islamists to counter the strong Nasserist current. However, his relations with Islamists soured because of his refusal to implement Islamic law, his close ties to Washington and his peace deal with Israel. Radical Salafis, some of whom were linked to a young jihadi leader named Ayman al-Zawahiri,



assassinated Sadat in 1981. One assassin declared, “I have killed Pharaoh.”

The Sadat assassination led to ferocious repression of many Salafi groups. The level of repression rose and fell during the Mubarak years, but the regime kept a heavy hand on Salafi organizations if they showed any political inclination. As a result, many Salafis focused their activities on preaching and community service, trying to Islamicize society from the bottom up. The Mubarak

regime encouraged this, hoping to use apolitical Salafis to counter the influence of the more political Muslim Brotherhood.

As Georgetown University's Jonathan Brown argues, Egypt's Salafi movement split three ways in its reactions to last year's January 25 revolution. When the uprising began, most Salafi leaders backed Mubarak and condemned the demonstrators. However, as the demonstrations progressed and the government became more repressive, some Salafi leaders criticized the government's actions against demonstrators. Meanwhile, another Salafi contingent remained silent.

The revolution offered the Salafis both a challenge and an opportunity. Salafi groups long have criticized democracy as an invention of man, whereas God's law should rule. Fallible humans should not be allowed to sanction or encourage un-Islamic activity and justify it in the name of the people's will. So Salafis in most of the Arab world had been politically quiescent—a decision that the lack of political opportunities and regime repression reinforced. After the revolution, however, many Salafis realized that by not participating in elections, they would miss an opportunity. Shortly after Mubarak's fall, Salafi movements and the Muslim Brotherhood mobilized their followers to support a constitutional referendum to protect an Islamic space in society and stop secular activists from controlling the process. Other Salafi groups such as the Salafi Call saw the revolution as an opportunity to implement an Islamic society from the top down. Salafi organizations ran candidates in Egypt's first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections, hoping Salafi members of parliament would be able to influence Egypt's political system for years to come, either by protecting the current status of Islam in Egypt's governance or strengthening Islamic rule by clarifying ambiguities and codifying sharia.

The Salafis did unexpectedly well in the elections. Their local organizations mobilized followers effectively, as did their charismatic leaders. They appealed to poorer Egyptians, in contrast to the more staid and middle-class Islamists associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. They probably also appealed to many Egyptians who accepted the Brotherhood's mantra that "Islam is the solution" but saw the Salafis, not the Brotherhood, as the standard-bearers for religion.

Because Salafi views on democracy are evolving and inconsistent, and because some still consider the movement undemocratic, it remains unclear where its participation in elections will lead. Salafi political parties may run candidates in this one election to protect the status of Islam in Egypt or to lay the foundation for an Islamic state. They may seek to legislate an end to democracy itself. Or they may become accustomed to democracy and continue to run in future elections as parties that will work for and uphold Islamic ideals. Whether they would surrender power, particularly to secularists or others they deem "un-Islamic," is also an open question. Indeed, Salafi groups themselves are unclear on their future role.

The Salafi parties abandoned the Democratic Alliance, dominated by the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, to form the Islamist bloc in November 2011, with the political party of the Salafi Call, Al Nour, as its main component. The Salafi Call is Egypt's largest Salafi movement. Omar Ashour of the University of Exeter notes that Al Nour and the Salafi Call have a political jump on other Salafi parties and movements because of "their long organizational and administrative experience and their charismatic leaders." The Asala Party, a far smaller Salafi party that joined the Islamist bloc, in contrast, has a support

*As the largest and most politically vibrant alternative to the Brotherhood, the Salafis will project their influence at least indirectly in all parliamentary action.*

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base limited to the Cairo area. These formal parties are supported in turn by the Salafi front, a coalition of different Salafi strands that claims it will do whatever is necessary to solidify the role of Islam in society.

The most troubling component of the Islamist bloc is the Building and Development Party, the political wing of Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya (GI). The GI was one of Egypt's most notorious terrorist groups in the 1980s and 1990s, with its members responsible for attacks on Egyptian government officials and Coptic Christians as well as the 1997 tourist massacre in the Egyptian city of Luxor. Although the GI formally renounced violence in 2003 (and began its recantation well before then), the group remains on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations. Indeed, the founder of the Building and Development Party is Tareq al-Zomor, who was released from prison in March 2011 after serving around thirty years for planning Sadat's assassination. Nevertheless, the party insists it has "accepted the principles of political pluralism and has renounced violence." The GI's terrorist past did not preempt its party's approval.

In addition to the GI, the Salafi movement has come to be associated with Al Qaeda and violent jihad. Though the Salafi Call is part of the "quietist" Salafi trend, Salafism also has an activist current: groups that go beyond preaching to call for the overthrow of non-Muslim—or, in Salafi eyes, not properly Muslim—governments and encourage or carry out actions to such ends.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Mubarak regime fought (and won) a brutal war with domestic terrorist actors such as the GI and the Egyptian remnants of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad Organization. Violent, or sometimes simply politically active, Salafis were imprisoned under brutal conditions. Many Egyptian jihadis fled the country, some of whom—like al-Zawahiri and his followers—joined forces with Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. In prison, many other Salafis—particularly those associated with the GI but also some connected to al-Zawahiri's organization, including the group's top ideologue Sayyed Imam al-Sharif, known as Dr. Fadl—recanted. They published several books criticizing their own use of violence and Al Qaeda. Though al-Zawahiri blasted those who repudiated violence, claiming they did so under torture, their criticism dealt a huge blow to Al Qaeda's narrative.

After the revolution, some violent Salafis who escaped prison took shelter in the deserted Sinai, where Egyptian security forces were less active and where they could seek protection from the tribal bedouins. On February 7, 2011, well-armed fighters attacked security and government institutions in Rafah, on the border with Gaza. A week earlier, the pipeline in El Arish, which exports Egyptian gas to Israel and Jordan, was bombed for the first of what would be ten times in 2011. Another Sinai police station was assaulted on July 30, 2011, when a hundred armed men streamed through El Arish waving black Islamic banners and calling themselves Al Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula.

Sinai-based radicals are also active against Israel. A deadly cross-border raid on Israel on August 18, 2011, which was initially blamed on Palestinians, increasingly appears to have been planned and executed at least in part by Egyptians. That December, a new Egyptian jihadi group announced its founding and claimed credit for the attack. Calling itself Ansar al-Jihad (Supporters of Holy War) in the Sinai Peninsula, the group swore fealty to bin Laden and decried the treatment and suspicion of Salafi Muslims under the Mubarak regime.

**L**iberal Egyptians fear the Brotherhood and the Salafis, which together control over 70 percent of the People's Assembly, might team up to dominate both legislating and writing the constitution, ignoring the interests and concerns of secular parties, women, Christians and other minorities. Although both the Salafis and the Brotherhood want Egypt to be an Islamic state, they have differing visions for achieving this goal.

The Salafis tend to be far more anti-institutional than the Brotherhood. In power, Salafis likely will emphasize more bottom-up solutions that focus on society. Another issue concerns the pace of Islamicization. One FJP spokesman claimed that his party "sees the state as a civil state with an Islamic background. All rights to all citizens would be preserved, guarded by the law and the constitution, not by religious beliefs of citizens." Al Nour, he argued, would rush to implement Islamic law before society is prepared for it. So far, this has led to disagreements and even limited clashes

over the future of Egypt. Reportedly, Brotherhood youths had to be chastised for their harsh dealings with Al Nour.

Despite the Muslim Brotherhood's claims that it will work with secular parties, its monopolistic behavior has driven the Salafis to cooperate with modern liberal Islamists at times—demonstrating that it isn't only in America that politics makes strange bedfellows. However, as the largest and most politically vibrant alternative to the Brotherhood, the Salafis will project their influence at least indirectly in all parliamentary action. In addition, they have the potential to capture many current Brotherhood supporters by using the same arguments for Islamicizing Egypt that the Brotherhood itself has long used. A revealing, if somewhat humorous, event interrupted one of the first sessions of the new parliament. Asala Party MP Mamdouh Ismail stood in the back of the



chamber and chanted the Muslim call to prayer at the top of his voice. This led to a shouting match with the Speaker and FJP parliamentarian Saad el-Katatni, who reminded Ismail that he was no more a Muslim than anyone else.

For now, the Brotherhood has shown itself to be pragmatic, and it might work more with liberals to reassure international audiences. But it could also try to move in both directions simultaneously, offering liberals concessions in some areas while reasserting religious credentials to rally its conservative base in others, as happened when the Brotherhood's presidential candidate promised Salafi clerics a role in ensuring laws comply with Islamic law, for example. At the same time, wary of the Brotherhood's monopolization of power, Al Nour and Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya backed rival Islamist candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh in May's presidential election, though both quickly threw their support behind the Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi when their candidate did not make the runoff.

**W**hat the Salafis want from the United States remains unknown. The broader Salafi current (like most Egyptians) has long been critical of Washington and its policies in the region, with many seeing the United States as a power bent on subjugating Muslims. Shortly after President Barack Obama's election in 2008, a popular Salafi preacher on Egyptian television, Hassan Abu al-Ashbal, called on the president-elect to convert to Islam "and to withdraw your huge armies and military bases from the lands of the Muslims."

Yet the Salafis may be tempered by the realities of power. Since there is no Salafi hierarchy, outlandish clerics are able to tarnish the image of all Salafis, but Al Nour spokesman Mohamed Nour suggests the Salafi movement is evolving: "As we interact with the community, . . . our views on many issues are becoming more inclusive." And indeed, Al Nour initially spoke up for the American democracy-promotion organizations that the Egyptian government pursued, though party leaders said they

were misquoted when it became clear that public opinion was on the other side.

Perhaps more importantly, it is possible that despite the genuine hostility the United States will sink below other Salafi priorities. On the topic of U.S. security cooperation, an issue one would assume would raise the ire of Salafis, Al Nour chairman Emad El-din Abdel Ghafour instead waffled, claiming "it is necessary for the various political forces to consider this and make a decision consistent with the popular will in this matter." This was not exactly an endorsement but neither was it the vehement rejection that might have been expected. Historically, Salafi figures have focused first and foremost on individual behavior rather than on bigger strategic and political issues. For now, their thinking on these broader issues lacks coherence.

The Salafi position on the United States is particularly important because Washington has long valued Egypt as one of its most significant partners against Al Qaeda and its allies. Because Egyptian jihadis helped found and played an important role in Al Qaeda in the 1990s, Washington and Cairo were natural allies. The United States rendered suspected terrorists to Egypt, and the two countries shared intelligence on the threat. The likelihood of a conviction—and thus the ability to easily get suspected terrorists off the streets—made Egypt a valued partner. As Michael Scheuer, former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, avers, "It served American purposes to get these people arrested, and Egyptian purposes to get these people back, where they could be interrogated."

Mubarak's fall and the subsequent rise of the Salafis could challenge this partnership. Some of the Salafis represented by the Islamist bloc, including members of the GI, were imprisoned under Mubarak in part due to U.S. efforts. While many have no

*Like politicians everywhere, the Salafis may be willing to make compromises on some foreign-policy issues—the main focus of U.S. concerns—to concentrate on what matters most to their constituents.*

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love for bin Laden, it is a big jump to favor cooperating with the same U.S. agencies that helped imprison their members before the revolution.

In addition, in the Salafi community the U.S. “war on terror” is associated with killing Muslim civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, prison abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, and other unpopular measures. The Salafi movement embraces the causes of Muslims worldwide and would be reluctant to help in their perceived oppression—or be seen as doing so. Indeed, Abboud al-Zomor (released from prison with his cousin Tareq) told the newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat*, “I have no problem with al-Zawahiri returning to his country in safety and with honor.”

Even beyond the risk of jeopardizing direct cooperation, U.S. counterterrorism efforts could suffer as many experienced jihadis are now on the streets or hiding out in the Sinai. An even bigger problem relates to the promotion of violent extremism. Peddlers of propaganda critical of the U.S. military in Afghanistan and of Israeli actions will find the new Egypt a far freer environment in which to operate, even if their materials are blatantly false and encourage violence. The strains of Salafism stressing that non-Muslims (or even non-Sunnis or non-Salafis) are unbelievers and that jihad is a pillar of faith are likely to find it far easier to preach and disseminate religious materials. Some vitriolic rhetoric is inevitable, but a strong Salafi role in Egypt could worsen the tone and increase the frequency. None of these activities in isolation leads to terrorism, but together

they create an atmosphere where attacking the United States, Israel and Western countries is considered legitimate and the people who do so are seen as heroic.

The most obvious challenge comes from the presence of Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya within the Islamist bloc. The GI is on the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations and, at the same time, part of the new Egyptian parliament. While a case can be made that the main, Egyptian-based branch of the GI has renounced terrorism, its presence on the list poses a problem for U.S. efforts to cooperate with Egypt. If the GI is part of the Islamist bloc, and if the Islamist bloc is formally or informally part of the government, then is Egypt a terrorist state?

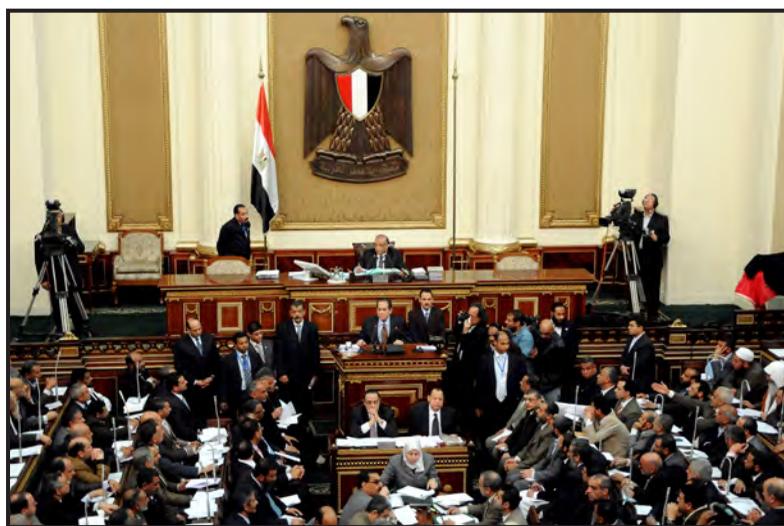
Putting aside anti-United States terrorism, Egypt continues to have a Salafi terrorism problem of its own. In the mid-2000s, a Salafi group calling itself Tawhid wal Jihad (Monotheism and Holy War) emerged in the Sinai. The group targeted Egypt’s relationship with Israel by bombing the town of Taba in 2004, where Israeli vacationers cross into the Sinai; it targeted Egypt’s tourism sector with both the bombing in Taba and bombings in the Sinai resort towns of Sharm el-Sheikh and Dahab in 2005 and 2006, respectively; and it targeted Egyptian secular nationalism, as the bombings coincided with the Egyptian public holidays of the October War anniversary in 2004, Revolution Day in 2005 and celebration of the ancient Egyptian Spring Festival in 2006. In theory, these groups might be less hostile to the government with Salafis in power. In

practice, the opposite might be true. The Islamist bloc, some jihadis contend, has sullied itself by entering politics. Moreover, many of the attacks from the Sinai are on Western targets as well as the Egyptian state, and the Sinai terrorists might hope the Salafi government would be supportive, or at least not hostile.

The Salafi front has demanded the dismantling of Egypt's national-security agency and may also encourage

preachers are often vitriolic in their condemnations, and an Al Nour statement declared, "The party strongly objects [to] normalization and dialogue attempts and establishing relations with an entity which wants to wipe off our identity, occupies our lands, imposes a siege on our brothers and strongly supports our hangers."

The good news is that concerns of the Salafis pushing Egypt to abrogate the 1979 peace treaty with Israel seem exaggerated,



a purge of the Egyptian military. This is understandable—these institutions brutalized the Islamists for decades, and they are undemocratic to the core. Should they do so, however, they will also gut Egypt's counterterrorism capacity. Jihadis in the Sinai might take advantage of any potential security vacuum to strike at Israel.

**I**srael also worries about Salafi influence in Egypt, and for the Jewish state the concerns are more immediate given the two nations' shared border and history of conflict. Looking at Salafi rhetoric, at least, Israel has reason to worry. Individual Salafi

at least for now. Indeed, so far, the Salafis—like the Muslim Brotherhood—appear to seek to calm international audiences, even to the point of reassuring Israel. In an interview with Israeli Army Radio, no less, an Al Nour Party spokesman promised that the party would respect the peace treaty with Israel and existing agreements.

But focusing on the peace treaty misses much of the role that Egypt played under Mubarak with regard to Israel's security. During those years, Egypt policed its border, and if Israel suspected a terrorist plot, Israeli intelligence and Egyptian intelligence would work together to fight it. Egypt's

intelligence and military may still control counterterrorism policy after elections, but even if they do, they will be more politically sensitive than in the past. Directly aiding anti-Israel terrorists at present is not high on the Salafi agenda, but Salafis could push the regime to turn a blind eye to anti-Israel violence emanating from the Sinai. They may not openly cooperate with terrorists, but they would not want to collaborate with Israel either. Depending on the course of events in the region and the stances of other parties, they may also find supporting anti-Israel forces a way to undermine their rivals within Egypt.

Terrorists based in Gaza have found it difficult to attack Israel due to the security barrier along Gaza's border with Israel. If they could easily go from Gaza into the Sinai, they would have a far easier avenue of attack. Israel also has relied on Egypt to limit the goods entering Gaza as part of the economic pressure it puts on Hamas. It is one thing to ignore Israel but another to cooperate with Israel against Hamas. While Hamas is linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafis in Gaza are often critical of Hamas, it would be difficult for Salafis to completely ignore Hamas's needs should a crisis occur. In the end, they view the Palestinians as the good guys.

Beyond counterterrorism, Mubarak was a valued partner in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It is moribund now, but should it start again the United States would want Arab states to provide political backing for concessions on the part of the Palestinians. Mubarak repeatedly stood by secular Palestinian leaders as they negotiated with Israel and tried to broker deals involving Israel and Hamas. The Salafis, on the other hand, probably would criticize any concessions to Israel.

In August 2011, eight Israelis died at the hands of terrorists coming from the Sinai. The Israeli military, in hot pursuit,

entered the Sinai and accidentally killed six members of the Egyptian security forces along with several terrorists. The killing of Egyptian security forces enraged Egyptians and led protesters to storm the Israeli embassy. Israeli leaders and the Egyptian military were able to calm tensions, but for several days the United States feared the situation would permanently damage relations between the two countries.

Replay this cross-border attack in, say, 2014, and imagine a Brotherhood government with strong Salafi influence. How would the Brotherhood respond if Israeli forces shot Egyptians in hot pursuit? It is easy to imagine the situation quickly escalating, with the Salafi movement using any attempt by the Brotherhood to calm passions as proof that it would sell out its fellow Muslims.

**C**ontaining Iran is perhaps President Obama's top regional agenda item. Fears of an Islamist arc that would go from Tehran through Baghdad and reach Cairo (or even Tripoli and Tunis) are greatly overblown. But the GI's Building and Development Party, for one, includes in its platform the formation of an "Islamic axis" with Iran and Turkey as a first step in reviving the caliphate. Salafis would hesitate to endorse, or be seen as endorsing, a U.S.-led campaign against Iran given the unpopularity of the United States. This would be particularly true for any military action in the region.

Yet the majority of Salafis have little sympathy for Iran's Islamic Republic. Many see Shia Muslims as apostates and thus, in a way, even worse than Christians or Jews. When Ismail Haniya, head of Gaza's Hamas-run government, visited Egypt in February 2012, he was lambasted in a statement by the Salafi Call: "We refuse that Haniya leads the prayer in Egypt's largest Sunni mosque after he shook hands with

the Shiites,” referring to a recent visit to Iran. Also, Salafis, like most Egyptians, have a strong sense of national pride and want their country, not Iran, to play a leading role in the Arab world.

**T**he United States, on paper at least, champions not just democracy in Egypt but liberal democracy—meaning not only elections but also the full panoply of minority rights, political protections and other assurances that an elected majority is not abusive.

Salafis will push to make a conservative interpretation of Islamic law the only law of the land, and during the process to draft a new constitution, they were not afraid to say so. Building and Development Party MP Hani Nour Eddin said his party “won’t give up the application of the Sharia.” At a conference last fall hosted by the Asala Party, Sheikh Shehab al-Din Ahmed rejected Egypt’s long-held civilian law, saying, “The application of the French law in Egypt spread evils and corrupted the country morally, politically and economically, so there’s no other substitute for applying the Sharia.” This absolutism may apply elsewhere. Egyptians saw how Al Nour always put its own female candidates (legally required on every electoral list) in the bottom position and did not show their images in campaign materials. Before he was barred as a presidential candidate, Salafi preacher Hazem Saleh Abu Ismail campaigned on forcing all Muslim women to wear the veil.

Salafis also reject the notion of non-Muslims being of equal status in Egyptian politics and society—including Egypt’s Coptic Christians, who represent roughly 10 percent of the population. When the parliament held a moment of silence to commemorate the death of Coptic Pope Shenouda III, several Salafi MPs left the room and others refused to stand.

For many Salafis, democracy is only tolerable as long as it can help build an Islamic state, so domestic policies are sure to be at the top of the Islamist bloc’s agenda. Indeed, like politicians everywhere, the Salafis may be willing to make compromises on some foreign-policy issues—the main focus of U.S. concerns—to concentrate on what matters most to their constituents.

**T**he Obama administration has reached out to the Muslim Brotherhood, talking to its leaders and otherwise recognizing that it will be a power, perhaps *the* power, in a democratic Egypt. Handling the Salafis, however, will be trickier as they are less organized and more radical.

Nevertheless, the United States is right to engage the Salafi political parties. As the Obama administration noted on the Muslim Brotherhood, engagement means dialogue, not agreement. Engaging with Al Nour, as with other Egyptian political parties, will allow the United States to express its red lines as well as learn the group’s intentions. Engagement now is particularly important, as the political agendas and priorities of the Salafi groups are still in flux. U.S. influence will be limited at best, but Washington is far more likely to have influence now than in the years to come. In this engagement, the United States should voice the same objectives and demands it uses when talking to the Brotherhood and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which has ruled Egypt since it pushed Mubarak aside over a year ago. Continued U.S. aid depends on Egypt remaining a U.S. ally on counterterrorism, not breaking the peace treaty with Israel and other important strategic issues.

A particularly nettlesome concern will be how to handle Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya and its Building and Development Party. The GI is a small minority party within the

Salafi current, so by itself it can be ignored. However, encouraging ostracism of the GI or demanding that it be outlawed could easily backfire, making the group a magnet for anti-American sentiment and forcing other Salafis to come to its defense against the despised United States, all of which would increase its popularity and influence. Indeed, Washington's goal is to convince groups like the GI to further distance themselves from terrorism. If it engages in peaceful politics, the GI will become a living refutation of Al Qaeda: a Salafi party using the political system, not violence, to advance its agenda. Conversely, banning the GI, if it remains peaceful, would reinforce a narrative that violence is the only path to power. The United States should make the GI's designation status based on whether or not it supports terrorism and violent extremism. If it does support violence, then the Egyptian government should be pushed to outlaw it, but if it doesn't, delisting it would send a powerful message.

When in doubt, the United States should move quietly and avoid having its own policies become the news story. The Salafi parties so far have focused primarily on domestic issues. This will not necessarily continue, however, because many members and supporters are hostile to Israel and the United States. Keeping any cooperation out of the headlines is vital to avoid giving demagogues a target for their rhetoric.

Setting priorities is essential. The United States wants many things from

Egypt, but it cannot have them all. For groups like the Salafis, which do not control the government, realism is in order. Military access to the region via Egypt, counterterrorism cooperation and a constructive Egyptian relationship with Israel are particularly important. Conversely, Egypt's role in containing Iran is limited, and the Salafis are more likely to oppose Iran if the United States does not make Iran into the cause for anti-Americanism in the region.

Human rights will be a delicate issue. The role of religion in society, and what this means for Egypt's minorities and women, will be the biggest and most important area of disagreement. Given the political sensitivity of these issues, the United States has little influence. Thus, while Washington should make its views known, taking a strong and combative stance would further undermine Egypt's already weak liberals.

The problem the Salafis pose for U.S. policy reflects a broader challenge for the United States in Egypt—and in the new Arab world in general. The Salafis represent an important strand of public opinion in Egypt and elsewhere, and public opinion in general is anti-American and often opposes U.S. positions on Israel, women's and minority rights, and the use of force in the region. Thus, even if the United States wins over a particular Salafi leader, the political impetus for various anti-American policies will remain strong. □

# *The Fading Arab Oil Empire*

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*By Paul D. Miller*

**P**resident Obama's pivot to East Asia is well-timed. The geostrategic importance of the Middle East is vastly overblown. The region matters to the United States chiefly because of its influence in the world oil market, but that influence has been in terminal decline for a generation, a fact almost wholly unnoticed by outside observers. A confluence of developments—including rising prices and production costs, declining reserves, and the availability of alternate fuels and unconventional sources of oil—will decisively undermine the defining role of the Middle East in the global energy market. Meanwhile, the United States has vital interests at stake elsewhere in the world at least as pressing, if not more so, than its interests in the Middle East. These include thwarting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, fighting transnational terrorism and maintaining stability in key strategic locations of the world.

For centuries prior to World War II, the Middle East was considered strategically irrelevant. Alexander the Great marched across the impoverished Arabian Peninsula only because it lay between him and his goal: the fabled wealth of Persia and India. The region was merely an expanse

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to be crossed for traders on the Silk Road between Europe and China in the Middle Ages. The great empires of modern Europe turned to every other region in the world, including Africa, before colonizing the Middle East late in the age of empire because the vast desert appeared to be of little use to them. The British occupied Egypt in the nineteenth century and invested in the Suez Canal not because of anything Egypt had to offer but because it was the fastest way to get to India.

The contemporary strategic importance of the Middle East stems from its comparative advantage in producing oil, a commodity vital to the modern world economy. This comparative advantage is based on four factors. First, Middle Eastern oil is the cheapest in the world to produce because of simple geology. Middle Eastern oil lies under flat desert, not under an ocean or in the Amazonian river basin. In 2008, producing a barrel of oil cost between \$6 and \$28 in the Middle East and North Africa, compared to up to \$39 elsewhere in the world and up to \$113 per barrel of oil shale.

Second, most Middle Eastern oil is a superior product. The chemical properties of Middle Eastern “light sweet” crude oil make it easier and cheaper to refine than the “heavy” crude of Venezuela, for example. Third, Middle Eastern oil developers benefit from economies of scale because the cheap oil there is so plentiful. Even today, the region is still home to more

than half the world's proven, commercially viable conventional oil reserves and a third of world oil production. Fourth, the Middle East's dominance of oil production and reserves makes it "too big to fail," which effectively lowers producers' risks. Buyers believe, with justification, that neither the governments in the region nor the developed world would allow a significant disruption to oil production (especially after the embargoes in the 1970s backfired).

This comparative advantage translates into global power and influence because of the modern world economy's high demand for oil. Oil was used for lighting and lubrication long before the industrial era, but the modern market for oil started in 1886, when Karl Benz invented a machine for automated mobility powered by an internal-combustion engine fueled by refined petroleum. In a remarkably short time, the world abruptly ceased using steam, coal and animals to power the transport of people and goods, transitioning almost entirely to petroleum products. One hundred twenty-five years after Benz patented the automobile, Americans consumed thirty-six quadrillion BTUs of energy from petroleum. This provided 94 percent of their transportation-energy needs and 40 percent of their industrial-energy consumption; it also accounted for more than a third of the nation's entire energy demand. The United States' experience has been mirrored in countries across the globe. Global transportation—by car, truck, airplane, bus, motorcycle, boat and even some trains—is overwhelmingly powered by fuels derived from oil.

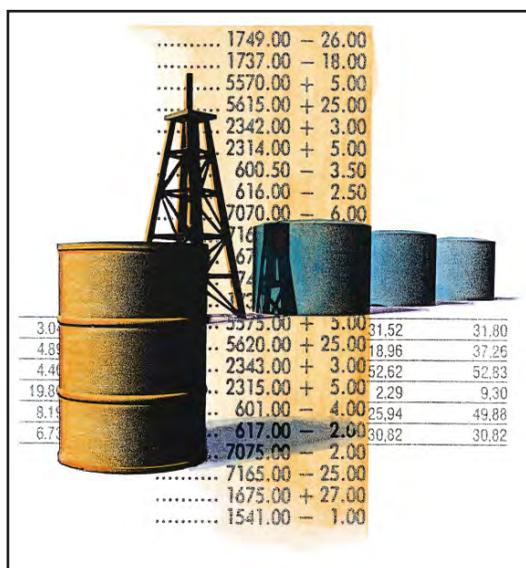
**T**hese two factors—the Middle East's comparative advantage in oil production and the world economy's need for oil to power transport—made the modern Middle East what it is today. The region

would not be as strategically important otherwise.

But the Middle East's comparative advantage in energy production and the world's need for oil both peaked around 1974, and both have been in long-term decline ever since. In reaction to the oil embargoes and disruptions of 1974 and 1979, the Western world embarked on a generational and largely successful effort at energy conservation. The United States' energy intensity—a measure of how much energy is used per dollar of GDP—has been cut in half since 1973, falling from 15,400 BTUs per dollar to 7,470 in 2010, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. This unheralded success means that because of advances in efficiency and conservation practices, the world economy is less dependent on all forms of energy, oil included, than previously. Additionally, the world's energy needs are being met by an ever-expanding menu of inputs, including nuclear power and renewable sources. In 2010, petroleum's share of America's energy sources was the lowest it had been since 1951. The world economy's oil intensity, or "the amount of oil needed to produce one dollar of GDP," in the words of the International Energy Agency (IEA), "has fallen steadily over the last three decades." That is not the whole story: "The decline has accelerated since 2004, mainly as a result of higher oil prices, which have encouraged conservation, more efficient oil use and switching to other fuels." The introduction of electric and hybrid cars in recent years, while still in its infancy, promises to accelerate the decline in demand for petroleum-based fuels.

The Middle East's comparative advantage in oil production also is eroding. It will always have a superior product, but the three other factors comprising its advantage are disappearing. First, oil-production costs in the Middle East are certain to rise.

Oil is so cheap in the region because it is easy to get out of the ground. But as the world uses up the cheapest and most easily developed oil, Middle Eastern crude will become more costly to produce. Some fields in the Middle East have been producing continuously for eighty years and are rapidly maturing (meaning they are almost past their peak production). Saudi Arabia in particular has a high percentage of mature or maturing oil fields.



Thirteen of the twenty largest oil fields in the world are located in the Middle East, and they all entered production between 1928 and 1968. As a field passes its peak, it becomes more technically difficult and costly to extract its oil. This is especially true once a developer switches to secondary, tertiary and unconventional methods to extract the remaining oil. Production costs in the Middle East inevitably will rise in coming years; that is as certain as the laws of geology and economics. The oil market will be characterized increasingly by harder-to-develop, more expensive oil.

This trend will accelerate as demand for oil increases in the developing world and prices rise. After the oil-price spikes of the 1970s, the rest of the world invested in oil production (and energy conservation). The Middle East's share of production fell to less than 19 percent by 1985, its lowest point since 1953. Overcapacity then caused prices to collapse, and the Middle East recovered its relative position in the market, but the episode shows what is in store for the future. Prices are on a long-term and relentless increase, driven largely by rising demand in places like China and India; global liquid-fuel consumption is likely to reach 111 million barrels per day by 2035—up from 85 million barrels per day today. Prices have risen sharply since 2002, partly because of political instability in the region but also in part because of the long-term, underlying pressures on the market. This is likely to spur worldwide investment in capacity, further eroding the Middle East's market share over the next decade.

Second, rising prices are a powerful incentive for producers to develop new production capacity in other regions and through unconventional methods. Oil recovered from secondary and tertiary drilling technology or from shale, sand and deep-water rigs will become more commercially viable as prices rise. The Middle East's market share will shrink, and other regions will start to benefit from the same economies of scale that Middle Eastern producers have enjoyed, leveling the playing field. Already, the Middle East accounts for a decreasing amount of the world's proven oil reserves. It accounted for 56 percent of reserves in 2010, its second-lowest point since 1953. This was down from 66 percent in 2002 and below the long-term average of 61 percent over the last three decades. Even those numbers

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may be inflated; much of the Middle East's reserve growth in recent decades came in a single leap, from 1986 to 1987, when several states reported sudden and massive increases in their estimated reserves without further exploration or technological development. Industry experts speculate these "paper reserves" were primarily a bargaining tool in negotiations between OPEC states—because OPEC members' production quotas are linked to their proven reserves, claiming more reserves allows them to produce more. Reported figures since then are unreliable. Even under the inflated numbers, the Middle East accounts for only 46 percent of remaining reserves of oil and liquid natural gas ultimately recoverable with conventional means, according to the IEA.

And that is only "proven" reserves. Proven reserves comprise oil deposits recoverable under current market prices and with current technology. A better indication of a state's future share of the oil market is its "ultimate" reserves, which include proven, probable and possible reserves. As the world oil price rises and technology improves, possible and probable reserves become proven. In the Middle East, it is likely that a greater share of ultimate reserves is already proven than in the rest of the world. As prices increase and technology advances, therefore—and more possible and probable reserves become economically viable—the rest of the world will see a disproportionately greater rise in proven reserves.

The picture here is stark: when unconventional methods of oil

development are taken into account, including development of heavy oil, shale oil and oil sands, the Middle East suddenly becomes a minor player. There may be as many as 7.9 trillion barrels of potentially recoverable oil left in the world from all sources, according to the IEA, with more than 90 percent of it outside the Middle East. The Middle East dominates the currently proven, conventional and commercially viable reserves, but these reserves account for less than 10 percent of the total oil in the world. Once unconventional methods become commercially competitive, the Middle East will be dwarfed by Canada, the United States and Venezuela.

Finally, as the massive unconventional oil deposits become commercially viable, the Middle Eastern oil industry will no longer be too big to fail. Middle Eastern oil producers will lose the implicit discount on risk they gain from dominating the current world oil market. They will, in fact, be dispensable, making it much harder for them to get a free ride on the implicit guarantees and subsidies they currently enjoy from their host governments. As they devolve from global politicians into businessmen, governments will rightly ask if these guarantees make good business sense anymore.

There has been much discussion about when the world will reach "peak oil," the point at which we will have used up more than half the total petroleum on the planet. That point is a long way off. But the world is approaching—if it has not already passed—an earlier point that is hugely significant for the global balance of power:

the peak of cheap Middle Eastern oil. And that means the Middle East's comparative advantage is eroding. As the price of oil rises, producers elsewhere in the world will be able to invest in larger operations and benefit from the economies of scale that Middle Eastern producers have always had. And as demand, production costs and prices rise, Middle Eastern producers will be competing with the rest of the world in a much tighter market.

Since 1945, the United States has rightly sought to prevent any single power from dominating the Middle East's oil supplies. An oil hegemon, whether Soviet, Baathist, Nasserite, Iranian or Islamist, would have had the capacity to blackmail the United States and the world with economic warfare. To that end, the United States supported anticommunist monarchies and autocracies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain, among others, during the Cold War. It has armed Saudi Arabia with a staggering \$81.6 billion of arms sales since 1950, almost a fifth of all U.S. weapons shipments. It supported Iraq against Iran in the 1980s before fighting Iraq to defend Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 1990–1991. After the 2001 terrorist attacks, it further bolstered ties in the region, adding Kuwait, Bahrain and Morocco to its collection of major non-NATO allies, which includes Egypt, Israel and Jordan. In 2003, it invaded and occupied Iraq over fears, later proven overblown, that Iraq's WMD proliferation might give Saddam Hussein or allied terrorists unacceptable leverage in the region. The U.S. military's Central Command, formed in 1983, has a forward headquarters in Qatar, and the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain. This military infrastructure guarantees a long-term U.S. military presence in the region.

Those policies were largely sensible efforts to maintain the security of world

energy supplies. However, they make less sense in light of the brewing realities in the world oil market. These developments—the world's increasing energy efficiency and the Middle East's loss of its comparative advantage in oil production—will take time to play out fully. But they have been under way for several decades already. In two decades or so, the global oil market and the Middle East's geopolitical influence will be dramatically different from what they are today. The Middle East will remain an important player, but it will no longer be able to act as the “central bank of oil,” as the princes of Saudi Arabia style their kingdom. Moreover, it will forever lose the ability to credibly threaten to wield oil as a weapon. The sword of Damocles that has implicitly hovered over the West since the 1970s will be gone.

That means the central goal of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East will essentially be achieved: no power will be able to threaten the United States with unacceptable leverage over the American economy. That is because oil itself will be less important, and the world oil market will be more diffuse and diverse. The importance of this development cannot be overstated. It is a tectonic shift in the geopolitical balance of power, a strategically pivotal development only slightly less momentous than the fall of the Soviet Union. It is the slow-motion collapse of the Middle Eastern oil empire.

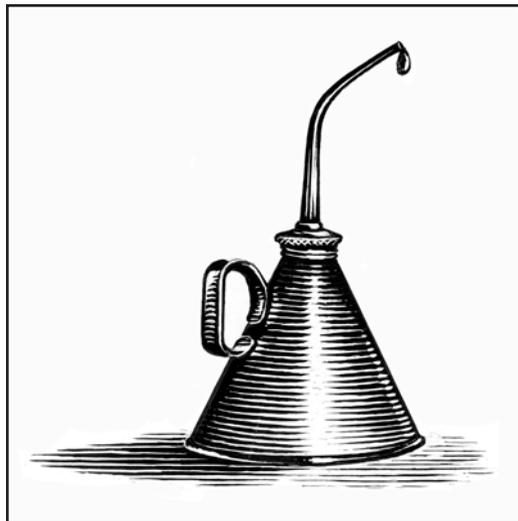
In turn, the United States can and should begin to adapt its foreign policy to reflect these realities. It can look with more complacency on the rise and fall of particular regimes across the Middle East and North Africa. The Arab Spring, even if it brings to power moderate Islamist governments, is unlikely to threaten American interests. Washington also can play a less active part in conflicts between states, reverting to a role more like its

indirect support for Iraq against Iran and less like its direct involvement in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars. Further, it can speak out more freely against tyranny and human-rights abuses, especially in Saudi Arabia, one of the most oppressive countries on earth. It can reclaim its position as the advocate of global liberalism, undoing the damage to the U.S. brand done by its close association with Middle Eastern dictators.

**T**he United States has additional interests in the Middle East, but they are outweighed by those in other parts of the world. For example, the region is a hotbed of terrorism and may become a major locus of WMD proliferation. But South Asia hosts terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, that threaten the United States more directly. Further, South Asia is home to two declared nuclear powers. Thus, South Asia—not the Middle East—should be the focus of U.S. counterterrorism and counterproliferation efforts in coming decades.

Additionally, the Middle East has two of the world's most important choke points for ocean-going trade: the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz. But governments in the region, heavily reliant on exports, have strong interests in keeping trade routes open. Despite Iranian leaders' recent threats, no government is likely to cut off its own economic lifeline voluntarily. Meanwhile, the Malacca Strait in East Asia will remain important for a diverse array of ocean-going trade for the foreseeable future.

Finally, the United States rightly is committed to Israel's security. If Iran succeeds in building a nuclear weapon, Israel could face a potential existential threat—the same threat fellow U.S. allies in East Asia, including South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, have been facing from North Korea since 2006. Once again, U.S.



interests in the Middle East are no more, and probably less, important than U.S. interests in other regions.

The changing realities of the world energy market do not mean the United States can or should ignore the Middle East. Certainly, Israel's security and Iran's behavior will keep the region a focus for policy makers' attention. But, placed in a global perspective, the United States has more or deeper interests at stake in other regions of the world—especially Europe and Asia—than in the Middle East. Budget cuts are concentrating minds inside the Beltway with newfound discipline. And a new presidential term begins next January, either with President Obama or Mitt Romney taking over. This confluence of events gives American policy makers a powerful opportunity to reassess U.S. grand strategy, along with its attendant military-deployment and force structure. As they do so, they should recognize the emerging realities in the Middle East. Our rationale for guaranteeing the region's stability in exchange for cheap oil is fading, and that mission quickly is becoming more trouble than it is worth. □

# *The Perpetual Border Battle*

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*By Mark Krikorian*

**A** narrative is taking root among policy makers and opinion leaders that the illegal-immigration problem has been resolved and further concern over the issue is simply unnecessary. A *New York Times* op-ed by University of Southern California professor Dowell Myers exemplified this perspective when it began: “The immigration crisis that has roiled American politics for decades has faded into history.”

This idea of complete resolution is highly dubious. There is no doubt that the number of people sneaking across the southern U.S. border has declined significantly, and the total illegal population has dropped somewhat from the record high of several years ago. But there is little reason to conclude this is a permanent development ushering in a new migration paradigm for the United States. More likely, it is merely a pause brought on by the U.S. economic slump and other factors on both sides of the border.

Indeed, it could be argued that the current lull in illegal immigration is just the end of the beginning. The United States has made progress toward the first goal of a sensible immigration policy—namely, developing the means to make an enforcement policy stick. But the country has barely begun the process of crafting

a comprehensive immigration policy that has a chance of actually working—or even deciding what such a comprehensive policy should be. Thus, the *New York Times* op-ed had it wrong, and this issue is certain to roil American politics for decades to come.

Those on both sides of the issue have valid points in the ongoing debate, and, of course, they also have distinctive policy prescriptions that flow from their conclusions and outlooks. And while it may be too early to tell how long the current lull will last (assuming it hasn't already ended), assessing these policy prescriptions requires us to examine in some detail the state of illegal immigration, the reasons for the current situation and possible future developments.

**T**here's broad agreement that the illegal-immigrant population peaked in 2007 and declined for the next two years. The three main sources of estimates—the Department of Homeland Security, the Pew Hispanic Center and the Center for Immigration Studies—all conclude that in 2007, the illegal population neared or exceeded twelve million (the estimates range from 11.8 to 12.5 million) and declined to roughly eleven million (between 10.8 and 11.1 million) by 2009. The decline stopped after 2009, so until new estimates or new facts are developed, it's safe to say that there are currently about eleven million unauthorized residents of the United States. Dramatically higher numbers sometimes bandied

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*The Government Accountability Office reported last year that only 44 percent of the border is under “operational control.” It’s hard to say a task is complete when it’s not even half done.*

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about by commentators and politicians—such as a 2005 estimate by Bear Stearns analysts that the illegal population could be as high as twenty million—are almost certainly incorrect. If the number were that high, it would be reflected in birth and death records, since in a modern society such as ours almost no one is born or dies without that fact being administratively recorded, and we have a pretty good idea of the fertility and mortality rates of the illegal population.

It seems clear that illegal crossings at the border, known formally as entries without inspection, are also down. Although illegal entry is not the only source of illegal immigrants—perhaps 40 percent of the illegal population entered legally on some kind of visa and then overstayed—it is the main source, and there’s a lot less of it. The only administrative metric available for illegal crossings is the number of apprehensions made by the Border Patrol. This is an imperfect yardstick; a drop in apprehensions could mean there are fewer illegal immigrants available for agents to catch, or it could mean that the Border Patrol is becoming less efficient at finding them. Likewise, the total apprehensions number includes people who attempt to cross multiple times, though such recidivism appears to have declined slightly. It’s possible, then, that a drop in apprehensions, coupled with a drop in recidivism, might not indicate a reduction in the actual number of individuals trying to sneak across the border.

But the decrease in the number of arrests at the border is sufficiently steep that the only plausible explanation is that attempted

crossings have declined, and the experience of border residents confirms this. Arrests on the Mexican border exceeded one million almost every year since the early 1980s and totaled almost 1.2 million in 2005. In 2007, arrests were under nine hundred thousand. They dropped to a little over half a million in 2009 and 328,000 in 2011. That 2011 number is the lowest seen in the country since the early 1970s.

The Pew Hispanic Center has estimated that the total inflow of illegal immigrants, both border jumpers and visa overstayers, declined from 850,000 annually during 2000–2005 to just three hundred thousand annually during 2007–2009. The total number of illegal aliens declined despite a continued inflow of new illegal aliens because, over time, many people stop being illegal aliens. Some return home, some launder their status to become legal immigrants and a few die. Though researchers disagree, both statistical and anecdotal evidence suggests the number of illegal immigrants leaving the United States increased during the recession.

With regard to Mexico in particular, Pew has recently reported that net migration has dropped to zero. This includes all immigrants, both legal and illegal (51 percent of recent Mexican immigrants are illegal). Specifically, Pew compares the 2005–2010 period to 1995–2000 and finds that the number of Mexicans arriving in the United States fell by half and the number returning doubled. From 2005–2010, arrivals and departures were roughly equal, with each figure at about 1.4 million. The number of departures is fudged somewhat,

since it includes three hundred thousand U.S.-born (and thus U.S. citizen) children of Mexican immigrants, so even Pew finds continued net Mexican immigration, but the increase in departures (most of them voluntary) and the drop in new arrivals is striking.

**T**here is little doubt that the annual flow of illegal immigrants has slowed and the total illegal population has shrunk somewhat, although eleven million illegal immigrants is still a very large number. While interesting, this fact on its own doesn't tell us much that can be applied to policy. It's necessary to explore the reasons for the decline. Three explanations have been offered: first, the recession; second, increased enforcement; and third, changes in Mexico, the source of roughly 60 percent of the illegal population.

The economy requires the least explanation. Employment is the main magnet drawing illegal immigrants to the United States, so it makes sense that a tighter job market would lead more illegal immigrants to return home and dissuade some prospective illegal immigrants from embarking on the trek north. The recession officially began in December 2007, when the national unemployment rate was 5 percent. A year later, it was 7.3 percent. Another year after that, it reached 9.9 percent. The increase in the unemployment rate was even greater for illegal immigrants. Using young Hispanic immigrants with no more than a high-school education as a proxy for the illegal population (three-quarters of such people are illegal, and they make up two-thirds of the illegal population), we see that their unemployment rate shot up at the start of the recession from around 8 percent to about 15 percent, according to a Center for Immigration Studies analysis. This jump was especially quick and severe because the

recession was kicked off by a housing bust, and illegal workers were disproportionately concentrated in construction and extraction jobs. Some 21 percent of these immigrants worked in such occupations, compared with just 5 percent of native-born American workers. This unemployment, combined with tougher times even for those still employed, led to a drop in remittances to Mexico by immigrants in general (both legal and illegal); the total value of remittances sent home dropped 3.6 percent in 2008 and a further 15.7 percent in 2009.

As bad as economic conditions were for illegal immigrants, the decline in their numbers began even before the start of the recession, so it seems likely that increased enforcement also has played a role. And that's no surprise, given the buildup in enforcement that has been under way since the Clinton administration. In 1995, there were about five thousand agents in the Border Patrol (most, but not all, working on the Mexican border). That number increased to ten thousand in 2002, hit fifteen thousand five years later and now exceeds twenty-one thousand.

Border fencing is also much more formidable, both in quality and quantity. While there is disagreement about the amount of fencing necessary on the border, there's no dispute that some fencing is essential, particularly in high-traffic areas, to slow and redirect potential illegal crossers.

The little fencing that used to exist consisted of welded-together, corrugated metal sheets acquired by the Border Patrol as army surplus. (They were used in Vietnam as portable landing mats for helicopters.) These were poorly maintained and, since they were solid, prevented agents from seeing what was happening on the other side. What's more, the corrugated ridges sometimes ran horizontally, which turned them into ladders for border jumpers.

Although some of this comically inadequate fencing is still in place, it has been replaced and augmented by modern barriers, first south of San Diego and then along much of the Arizona border and smaller sections in Texas. In compliance with the Secure Fence Act of 2006, there is close to seven hundred miles of fencing

(again, of a much smaller overall number).

Much of the traffic that originally went through these two locations shifted to Arizona, and the Clinton and Bush administrations were unprepared—or unwilling—to do what was necessary to respond. During much of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Arizona accounted



now along the two-thousand-mile border with Mexico, supported by technology such as ground sensors, pole-mounted remote cameras and even unmanned drones.

Combined with new tactics, the barrier in San Diego, consisting of two rows of fencing separated by a road for Border Patrol vehicles, had a dramatic impact on the flow. While San Diego accounted for more than 40 percent of all apprehensions in 1995, by 2011 it accounted for less than 13 percent of a much smaller total.

The Border Patrol's new tactics were actually pioneered in the mid-1990s in El Paso, the other main crossing point for illegal immigrants at the time, and the decline there has been even more dramatic. In 1993, El Paso accounted for nearly 25 percent of all Border Patrol arrests. By 2011, it accounted for only about 3 percent

for half of all Border Patrol apprehensions, helping explain the intensity of voter concern over immigration. Most of the Arizona border now has some form of fencing.

There have been significant improvements in enforcement away from the border as well. One of the most important elements of the expansive 1996 immigration law was the 287(g) program, which established a formal mechanism for integrating selected state and local police into federal immigration enforcement. An even broader program known as Secure Communities is on track to connect all police and sheriff's departments in the nation to immigration databases so that every time a suspect is booked, his fingerprints will be checked against both the FBI's records and those of the

*The problems associated with illegal immigration—burdens on schools, pressure on public services, even wage suppression—have nothing to do with legal status and everything to do with numbers.*

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Department of Homeland Security. The target date for full national coverage is the end of 2013, but two-thirds of the nation's local jurisdictions are already online, including all in the four border states and many others in the West, Midwest and South.

One result of these improvements has been an increase in the number of deportations—or “removals,” as they are now labeled. (Removals are distinct from “returns,” most of which involve Mexicans caught at the border and sent back across by the Border Patrol.) Although a comparison with past years isn't exact because the Obama administration has added some categories of people to returns for public-relations purposes, the increase is still dramatic. In 1995, about fifty-one thousand people were deported (most of them illegal immigrants, but some legal immigrants who rendered themselves deportable by committing crimes). By 1998, the total had more than tripled to 175,000, and then it more than doubled again by 2008 to 360,000. It has remained close to four hundred thousand for the past several years.

Another vital area in which enforcement has improved is employment. Only in 1986 did it become unlawful for employers to hire illegal immigrants; before then, they were specifically exempted from the definition of “harboring” illegal immigrants by what came to be known as the Texas proviso. But even after 1986, the paper-based enforcement system was easily gamed and had little impact on illegal employment.

That began to change, very slowly, with the enactment of the 1996 law, which required the development of pilot programs to enable employers to electronically verify the information provided by new hires. The current iteration of these programs is called E-Verify, and employers use it to check the name, date of birth and Social Security number of new hires. While still voluntary, the system is having an increasingly large impact. More than three hundred thousand employers currently use it to screen new employees, and last year about a third of all hires nationwide were run through the system. Although the system is improving daily, it is still possible to fool it with a fully developed stolen identity. But most illegal immigrants don't have the resources for that, and employers in industries with lots of illegal workers are finding that when they inform prospective employees they use E-Verify, many simply leave and look elsewhere.

Other enforcement improvements also merit attention. State driver's license systems (including the nondriver identification cards issued by the state motor-vehicles agencies) are America's national ID system—a decentralized one, to be sure, but a national system nonetheless. The weaknesses of that system became apparent a decade ago when the 9/11 Commission revealed that the nineteen hijackers had between them thirty state-issued pieces of identification, which they used to smoothly navigate American society. The result was the REAL ID Act of 2005, which established minimum standards for state IDs to be accepted

for federal purposes, such as boarding airplanes.

Although the bill's focus was preventing terrorist access to American society, any weakness can be exploited. Before 9/11, not even half the states checked a license applicant's legal status. Today, only New Mexico and Washington State still issue regular driver's licenses to illegal aliens, while Utah provides a special illegal-alien license. Although the REAL ID Act's deadlines have been repeatedly extended to accommodate state objections, the genuine improvements in identification (including other innovations such as digitized birth records) have made it harder for illegal immigrants to live undetected in the United States.

Finally, states have passed a variety of measures that have contributed to the decline in illegal immigration. These include requirements that landlords verify the legal status of those applying for a lease and making the presence of illegal aliens a state offense. Even where these measures have been held up by the courts, the hyperbolic coverage of them in Spanish-language media outlets effectively persuaded some illegal immigrants to leave and deterred some prospective entrants from making the trip.

One state measure that survived court challenge has been shown to have made a notable difference. In 2007, Arizona passed a law requiring employers in the state to use the federal E-Verify system for hiring as a condition of retaining a business license. It was challenged by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and various liberal and civil-rights groups, but it was finally upheld by the Supreme Court last year. Research by the Public Policy Institute of California found that in its first two years, the new law reduced Arizona's illegal population by 17 percent—nearly one hundred thousand persons.

A weak U.S. economy and stronger enforcement are joined by a third possible reason for today's relative lull in illegal immigration: changes within Mexico itself. The key development is the trend toward smaller families, thus slowing population growth and easing pressures for emigration.

The UN reports that Mexico's total fertility rate (TFR), the number of children the average woman would have during her lifetime, was 6.7 in the early 1950s; in 1950, the population was about twenty-eight million. Over the next fifty years, that high fertility rate caused Mexico's population to nearly quadruple to one hundred million at the turn of the century and to about 114 million now.

But as Mexico's population exploded, the TFR began to decline. It is now estimated by the UN to be just over 2.2 (the CIA estimates 2.3). This is close to the U.S. rate of about 2.1, which is the "replacement rate" that a country needs for long-term population stability. What's more, the UN projects Mexico's fertility rate will fall to 1.7 by midcentury (about the current rate for Denmark and Finland), at which time Mexico's population is expected to start declining.

**O**f these three factors—the U.S. economy, an enhanced enforcement regime and Mexico's demographic shifts—the first is obviously the most changeable. The unemployment rate has already begun to decline, dropping from 9.1 percent in August 2011 to 8.2 percent in June of this year. GDP growth resumed in 2010 at an annual rate of 2.8 percent (though the 2011 rate was lower).

What's more, there's evidence that immigrants are capturing a disproportionate share of whatever new jobs are being created. A Center for Immigration Studies report looking specifically at Texas found that, from 2007 through the second quarter

of 2011, 81 percent of job growth went to newly arrived immigrants, half of them illegal aliens.

The vicissitudes of the economy obviously can't be relied on to limit illegal immigration. So to the degree that the economy is the cause for the current lull, it would seem to be temporary. That raises a question: Even with the return of strong job growth, would the new enforcement measures continue to blunt renewed pressure for illegal immigration?

President Obama's answer would appear to be yes. Speaking in El Paso last year, he outlined various improvements in border enforcement, then mocked those still dissatisfied:

But even though we've answered these concerns, I've got to say I suspect there are still going to be some who are trying to move the goal posts on us one more time. . . . You know, they said we needed to triple the Border Patrol. Or now they're going to say we need to quadruple the Border Patrol. Or they'll want a higher fence. Maybe they'll need a moat. Maybe they want alligators in the moat. They'll never be satisfied. And I understand that. That's politics.

Obama's mockery implies the country has done everything a nation can possibly do to control immigration, that the recent improvements complete the infrastructure necessary for border control and that it's time to move on to other things—namely, amnesty for the illegal immigrants already here and increases in future legal immigration.

Unfortunately, this is not true. Much needs to be done before the United States has the enforcement arrangements necessary to permanently reduce illegal immigration to a nuisance rather than an ongoing crisis. Start at the border. The increases in the Border Patrol over the past fifteen years have been real, but even at

a staff level of twenty-one thousand, the agency—responsible for more than 7,500 miles of our land frontiers—is smaller than the New York City Police Department, which has 34,500 uniformed officers. Furthermore, the improvements in fencing are often exaggerated. Of the nearly seven hundred miles of physical barriers along our southern border, a large portion are Normandy barriers, designed to stop vehicular incursions across the border but of no use in stopping people on foot. What's more, when Congress passed the Secure Fence Act, it imagined double fencing of the kind south of San Diego. In fact, only about 1 percent of the border has a double layer.

This is why the Government Accountability Office reported last year that only 44 percent of the border is under “operational control,” with only 15 percent actually “controlled” (the tightest level of security). That 44 percent figure is triple what it was in 2005, but it's hard to say a task is complete when it's not even half done.

The high level of deportations is likewise deceptive. The administration likes to boast of “record” deportations, but the other half of the story is that the growth in deportations has stopped. The reason annual deportations have been just under four hundred thousand during this administration is that the White House refuses to ask Congress for the funds to increase it further. Like the child on trial for killing his parents who then pleads for mercy as an orphan, the administration has created the very resource constraints it points to as the reason for not increasing deportations further.

Beyond that, some key enforcement tools remain unused. The E-Verify system is working well, but its effectiveness is necessarily limited until it is required for all new hires. Regrettably, the president is

holding that change hostage in exchange for amnesty for illegal immigrants. In other words, he (and many in both parties who share his perspective) will accept the tool needed to exclude illegal immigrants from the workforce only after amnesty has ensured there are no more illegal aliens left in the workforce.

Another potentially valuable tool that is still not fully functional is a system to track all entries *and* exits by foreign visitors. As noted above, a large share of the illegal population was admitted legally in some sort of temporary status and never left. But despite a congressional mandate passed in the 1996 immigration-reform bill and reiterated by the 9/11 Commission, we still have no fully functional exit-tracking program and no plans to build one. The lack of such an elementary capability makes a mockery of the claim that our immigration infrastructure is complete.

And then there's the problem of political will. Even the improvements we've put in place over the past fifteen years are of little benefit if they are not used properly. And the current administration has announced that, as a matter of policy, it will seek to arrest and deport only those illegal immigrants who have committed serious, nonimmigration offenses. In a series of memos encouraging agents in the field to exercise their "prosecutorial discretion," the administration made clear that it views illegal presence in the United States (and all its ancillary crimes, such as document fraud and identity theft) as a secondary offense, like not buckling your seat belt while driving. In other words, they seek to pursue immigration offenses only in conjunction with

other crimes. That means they will deport a rapist after he has completed his U.S. prison sentence, but they are uninterested in ordinary illegal aliens.

While prioritizing limited resources is part of any enforcement regime, this wholesale downgrade of an entire body of law is unprecedented. It's as though the Internal Revenue Service were to announce that ordinary citizens who are not terrorists or money launderers don't need to comply with the tax law because, as a matter of policy, no one would pursue them. The unprecedented and even lawless nature of the administration's approach is perhaps why so many immigration agents in the field have simply refused to obey what they see as an illegal order—one even their labor union said they should resist.

Do these things matter if the supply of illegal immigrants is drying up? Unfortunately, lack of sufficient enforcement remains a problem. Lower fertility and declining population are no guarantee that emigration from Mexico will come to an end. Emigration is not analogous to an overflowing cup that stops spilling liquid when the level falls. Migration is based on networks of family, clan and village that can continue to operate long after the conditions that may have sparked the original emigration



have disappeared. For example, the states of western-central Mexico—far from the border—that sent farmworkers in the 1940s and 1950s through the so-called *bracero* program are still disproportionately important sending areas nearly a lifetime after the program began.

Looking at fertility rates in other countries confirms that low birthrates and low emigration are not necessarily connected. Mexico's current TFR is almost identical to that of other countries of emigration—Burma and Indonesia—but also the same as countries of immigration—Saudi Arabia and Argentina. Likewise, South Korea and Russia have some of the lowest TFRs in the world—1.23 and 1.42, respectively. In fact, Russia's population is already declining and is expected to fall about 11 percent by midcentury. And yet both South Korea and Russia are major source countries for immigration to the United States. Though correlation doesn't necessarily imply causation, in both cases the U.S. immigrant populations from those countries have risen just as fertility rates have fallen.

And there's always the rest of the world. Mexicans account for more than half of the current illegal population, but close to another 20 percent comes from Central America, which is even poorer and less developed. And TFRs are still very high in much of Africa and the Middle East. The importance of networks means we get little immigration from, say, Chad, but the U.S.

legal-immigration system, especially refugee resettlement and the visa lottery, actually creates new networks for future illegal immigration.

As important as it is to have a functioning immigration-control program, legal immigration is ultimately more consequential. Of the forty million foreign-born people living in the United States, nearly three-quarters of them are legal. Even in 2008–2009, during the two years of the worst recession in living memory, 2.5 million people moved here from abroad, most of them legally. And the problems associated with illegal immigration—burdens on schools, pressure on public services, even wage suppression—have nothing to do with legal status and everything to do with numbers. For example, a fourth of all people in the United States living in poverty are immigrants (legal and illegal) and their young children. Immigrant families account for a third of the uninsured, while 36 percent of immigrant households use at least one federal welfare program.

Thus, there is no reason to conclude this big national crisis, or the intense political emotions it generates, will fade from the scene anytime soon. Those who think otherwise are engaging in wishful thinking, likely born of their own favorable view toward the immigration wave of recent decades. The problem is ongoing, as is the civic and political imperative that it be confronted. □

# *JFK's Overshadowed Crisis*

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*By Bruce Riedel*

**I**n April, India launched a long-range missile capable of carrying a nuclear bomb deep into the Indian Ocean. The successful Agni missile test fulfilled India's fifty-year quest to achieve the means of dispatching a nuclear weapon to Beijing. Just about fifty years ago, in October 1962, India fought a brief war against China in the Himalaya Mountains. India lost that war—and vowed it would acquire the capacity to deter Chinese aggression.

The Sino-Indian war also posed a crisis for America's young president, John F. Kennedy, who had entered office determined to build a strong U.S. relationship with India. But his attention that fateful autumn was diverted to a more ominous crisis—the one involving Soviet efforts to place nuclear missiles in Cuba—that unleashed a dangerous nuclear face-off with the Soviet Union. Thus, Kennedy confronted two simultaneous crises, one far overshadowed by the other at the time and also later in history.

But Kennedy's handling of the 1962 war—in the midst of a far graver national challenge—offers lessons today for those interested in the ongoing diplomatic conundrum posed by India and its mutually hostile neighbor, Pakistan.

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When Kennedy became president in January 1961, the United States and India were estranged democracies. Throughout the 1950s, President Dwight Eisenhower had tilted his administration's subcontinent diplomacy toward Pakistan's military dictatorship and away from India. After all, Pakistan offered its territory as a secret base for America's U-2 spy planes, which were used effectively to penetrate Soviet airspace and collect valuable intelligence on Washington's Cold War adversary.

India's neutralist government in New Delhi never would have contemplated such an arrangement. So Ike cut his deal with Pakistan, which included the sale of F-104 jets and Patton tanks, both superior to India's weapons. Needless to say, this didn't endear the American government to New Delhi.

In the 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy promised a departure from Eisenhower's foreign policy—more vigorous and less accepting of Western colonialism. Though an ardent cold warrior, Kennedy also recognized that the winds of change were whipping around the world, ending the era of colonial empires. He had been an early critic of France's colonial war in Algeria, for example, and he understood that many of the new postcolonial states would resist pressures to join one bloc or another in the Cold War.

Further, as a senator Kennedy had sponsored legislation to increase food aid to India. And so it wasn't surprising

that as president he sought to woo India and its leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, into a closer relationship with Washington that didn't require any formal anticommunist commitment from India. He sent his friend John Kenneth Galbraith to New Delhi as U.S. ambassador.

Yet Kennedy also wanted to maintain a tight alliance with Pakistan. Like presidents before and after, he tried to befriend both nations. He invited Pakistan's president Mohammad Ayub Khan to visit the United States twice during his thousand days in office. In July 1961, Ayub was feted in New York with a ticker-tape parade on Fifth Avenue and in Washington with a full state visit including a state dinner at Mount Vernon, the only time that the first president's mansion has hosted a state dinner. A year later, in September 1962, Kennedy hosted Ayub again at the family home in Newport, Rhode Island, and his farm in Middleburg, Virginia. Ayub gave Jacqueline Kennedy a horse. The Kennedy team hailed Pakistan as a reliable ally against communism and a model for development in the Third World.

But it was the India relationship that most preoccupied Kennedy as he contemplated U.S. relations with South Asia. Galbraith's appointment put a Kennedy man and a firm advocate of his New Frontier at the center stage of U.S.-Indian relations. No president since has sent such a close friend and high-powered representative to New Delhi as ambassador.

Galbraith frequently wrote Kennedy long letters from India in which he commented not only on India and South Asia but also on global developments, domestic issues, economics and especially the growing conflict in South Vietnam, where he was an early and prescient critic of U.S. involvement. His letters and diary, which have been published, offer penetrating insights into this period.

Kennedy never traveled to India during his presidency, but Jacqueline Kennedy visited both India and Pakistan in March 1962. The charismatic and photogenic first lady was a big hit. Nehru was so entranced that he kept a photo of Mrs. Kennedy in his private study for the rest of his life. The Peace Corps, created by Kennedy early in his tenure, also drew the United States and India closer together, as did other factors such as enhanced American economic assistance and the candid dialogue between top leaders. Nehru visited the White House in November 1961 at the age of seventy-one, accompanied by his daughter Indira (though that visit was undercut a bit by the fact that Nehru seemed old, tired and disengaged).

**B**y far the most important development in the relationship emerged with the Chinese invasion of India in October 1962. Like much of India's borders, the boundary between China and India was set by the British in the nineteenth century. The small kingdom of Tibet was given a border drawn to the Raj's advantage. The western portion of the border was known as the Johnson line, dividing Kashmir from China. The eastern one was the McMahon line, dividing Assam in eastern India from China. Both lines were named after British diplomats. When China invaded Tibet in October 1950, it therefore inherited a border it did not regard as legitimate or fair. Negotiations between Beijing and New Delhi in the 1950s proved futile. But China opened negotiations with Pakistan on their shared border in Kashmir, and the result was the cession of a large part of northern Kashmir to China and an agreed border between Islamabad and Beijing.

Nehru championed Communist China's right to take over China's permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, which was still held by the Nationalist

Party government in Taiwan. He sharply criticized America's refusal to recognize the People's Republic of China and portrayed China and India as kindred spirits, two great Asian countries that had been exploited by Western imperialism but now were free and independent.

So it was a crushing blow to Nehru and India in October 1962 when China

of American bombers to repulse the Chinese advance. America unexpectedly found itself arming both Pakistan and India, with no assurance they would not use the weapons against each other.

It is clear from Galbraith's diary that Washington was surprised by the Chinese invasion. But, with the U.S. bureaucracy fixated on the life-and-death duel over



surprised them and invaded to seize control of territories it claimed along the 3,225-kilometer border. The Chinese forces, superior in leadership and weapons, routed the Indian Army, which retreated in confusion from the Himalayas. The situation was most precarious in India's easternmost regions, which were linked to the rest of the country only by a narrow land connection north of what was then East Pakistan. After maintaining its neutrality in the Cold War for fifteen years, India found itself the victim of a Chinese invasion it was powerless to halt. Nehru was devastated. He reluctantly turned to the United States and Britain, asking for immediate supplies for the Indian Army. In his panic, he also requested the deployment

Cuba, Galbraith was given almost no instructions from the White House or State Department during the key period of the Indo-Chinese crisis. Thus, he became the main decision maker on the American side, a role he relished. As he wrote, "Washington continues totally occupied with Cuba. For a week, I have had a considerable war on my hands without a single telegram, letter, telephone call or other communication of guidance." To add another element of drama, the crisis also coincided with the move of the ambassador and his family into a new residence, Roosevelt House, where the staff could find no dishes and Galbraith was without a room suitable for small, intimate discussions.

*It is virtually impossible to have good relations with both India and Pakistan. We may want them to stop being rivals, but they can't escape their history and geography.*

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Working closely with his British counterpart, as U.S. diplomats typically do in South Asia, Galbraith fashioned a response that backed India and delivered much-needed military assistance to the Indians. Once a request for aid was formally transmitted, the first American shipments of military support arrived by air four days later. British support came as well.

Chinese intentions were impossible to decipher. After their initial victories, they paused for several weeks. Then they attacked again with devastating results, driving the Indians back in the East. Had they pressed on in the most vulnerable sector, they could have cut off Assam and eastern India and linked up with East Pakistan. Even Calcutta was at risk. Nehru asked for more aid—a dozen squadrons of American fighters and two squadrons of bombers—to redress the imbalance. In his desperation, he sought direct American military intervention, at least in the air. This would have meant war with China.

There ensued many anxious moments in New Delhi, Washington and London until China unilaterally announced a cease-fire on November 19, 1962. Kennedy never had to answer the request for air power. The war was over; India was humiliated; Nehru was devastated. But U.S.-Indian relations were better than ever before. America's approval ratings among Indians soared from 7 percent at the start of the war to 62 percent at the end.

Galbraith's memoirs make it clear that, even as he faced the Chinese threat, he had to devote an equal measure of his

energy and skill to managing Indo-Pakistani relations. Pakistan promptly sought to exploit India's distress. Ayub's government suggested to the American embassy in Karachi that Pakistani neutrality in the war could be assured by Indian concessions in Kashmir. Implicitly, an Indian refusal would bring Pakistan into the war. China tried to sweeten the deal by offering a nonaggression pact with Pakistan. Galbraith writes that throughout the crisis:

My concern . . . was about equally divided between helping the Indians against the Chinese and keeping peace between the Indians and Pakistanis. . . . The nightmare of a combined attack by Pakistan and China, with the possibility of defeat, collapse and even anarchy in India, was much on my mind.

In short, at a defining early moment in U.S.-Indian relations, when China and India were military adversaries, America found itself trying to manage the Indo-Pakistani rivalry to avoid Armageddon in India. Pakistan was outraged that America was arming its rival and wanted to be bought off in Kashmir. Working with his American and British counterparts in Karachi, Galbraith persuaded India and Pakistan to begin a dialogue on Kashmir. Nehru reluctantly agreed. Galbraith describes him as a much-diminished prime minister. He had devoted his entire life to Indian independence but now was forced to rely on Washington and London. American C-130s were delivering vital military aid, and an American aircraft carrier, USS *Enterprise*, was visiting Madras to show tangible support.

Galbraith suggested to Kennedy in one of his private letters that the United States and United Kingdom seize the opportunity to quietly move toward a Kashmir settlement. Galbraith opposed a territorial settlement; he envisioned a much more subtle deal that would transform the entire nature of South Asian politics, a fundamental rapprochement based on regional cooperation that would make Kashmir largely irrelevant. In a letter to the president on December 6, 1962, the ambassador wrote:

It would be fatal, however, to show hesitancy at this moment when [the Indians] are relying on us and when the fear of the Chinese is so great. Now that we have got the Kashmir issue out in the open—a significant achievement in itself—we must press it but in such a manner as not to involve ourselves in the inbuilt antagonisms between the two countries. We must continue to make it clear to the Indians that it is their task, not ours and not Pakistan's. In my view, incidentally, Kashmir is not soluble in territorial terms. But by holding up the example of the way in which France and Germany have moved to soften their antagonism by the Common Market and common instruments of administration, including such territorial disputes as that over the Saar, there is a chance of getting the Indo-Pakistan dialogue into constructive channels.

Galbraith had reached the right conclusion about the proper American role in South Asia in the midst of a terrible crisis.

Instead of Galbraith's sophisticated approach, the Kennedy team joined forces with the British on a more conventional policy. After letters from JFK to Ayub and Nehru, the two South Asian leaders reluctantly agreed to resume bilateral discussions on Kashmir, with American and British diplomats pushing each side to compromise on territorial offers. On

the eve of the first round, Pakistan's new foreign minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, announced that China and Pakistan had reached an agreement to demarcate their border in Kashmir. China received a considerable concession of territory from historic Kashmir. The Indians were furious. After being attacked and invaded by China, India now saw Pakistan giving away part of the territory still in dispute and about which bilateral negotiations were about to commence. Bhutto maintained the Chinese had tricked him into prematurely announcing the deal. The United States and Britain accepted this farce; Nehru did not. Talks began, but they were destined to fail. After six desultory rounds, they collapsed.

Kennedy began his presidential tenure eager to build the ties with India that had languished under Eisenhower and Truman. By the time of his death, the United States was helping build a new Indian Army with six mountain divisions to face China. But Kennedy and his successor, Lyndon Johnson, would not sell India high-performance jet aircraft like the F-104s Pakistan was getting. In 1965, Pakistan used the F-104s in an unprovoked war on India in Kashmir, Operation Grand Slam. LBJ promptly cut off military aid to both countries.

JFK was determined to keep a strong alliance with Pakistan even as he improved ties with India. But as U.S. arms flowed to India in the wake of the Chinese invasion, the U.S.-Pakistani connection began to sink. Islamabad did not want an ally that armed both sides. It had not joined SEATO and CENTO to see American arms flowing to its archrival, India. Ayub feared the American arms sent to India were rapidly diminishing his qualitative advantage over his rival, and he was right.

Not surprisingly, Pakistan turned increasingly to China. After the border agreement, Pakistan signed an aviation

agreement with the Chinese, which broke an American-inspired campaign to isolate that communist nation. Pakistan International Airlines began regular flights between Dacca and Shanghai. The Kennedy team responded with the first of what would become a long list of sanctions on Pakistan—canceling a deal to upgrade the Dacca airport.

In his last days, Kennedy became increasingly irritated with the Pakistanis and with Ayub. In one of his last meetings with his national-security team, he asked, “What do we get from Pakistan? In return for the protection of our alliance and our assistance what do they do for us?” The answer was another secret intelligence base that the CIA and NSA used to eavesdrop on China and Russia. Ayub skillfully exploited America’s desire for the base to keep Kennedy’s question rhetorical. The base was expanded considerably in a new secret protocol in September 1963.

Less than two months later, Kennedy was dead. Sardar, the horse Ayub had given Mrs. Kennedy, followed his casket down Pennsylvania Avenue, riderless.

The failure of Pakistan’s efforts to extort concessions from India on Kashmir led Ayub in 1965 to unleash Operation Gibraltar, a campaign of subversion in the Himalayan state. That ended in the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, which was

disastrous for Pakistan. It lost the war, and the conflict led to a rupture in trade and transportation links between the two South Asian states that continues today. It also ushered in a series of increasingly dangerous crises between the two, contributing to the subcontinent being probably the most likely arena for nuclear conflict in the twenty-first century.

The Sino-Indian war had one other major consequence: India moved closer to its decision to develop a nuclear deterrent.

Nehru had begun a nuclear-power program early after independence and acquired reactors from the United States and Canada. But he insisted India would use them only for peaceful purposes. His worldview held the use of nuclear weapons to be unthinkable. But in the wake of the Chinese invasion, the first Indian voices emerged in favor of a nuclear-weapons program. The opposition party called for the development of the



bomb to deter further Chinese aggression. Nehru still demurred, but the path to a peaceful nuclear-explosive test had begun.

Meanwhile, the Americans also came to realize that the United States and India likely would need the bomb in order to stop another major Chinese invasion. In 1963, Kennedy met with his military advisers shortly before his death to review options in the event of another

Chinese attack. Secret tapes record Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara telling Kennedy, "Before any substantial commitment to defend India against China is given, we should recognize that in order to carry out that commitment against any substantial Chinese attack, we would have to use nuclear weapons." Kennedy responded, "We should defend India, and therefore we will defend India if she were attacked."

**T**he Kennedy era underscores several key points about U.S. diplomacy in South Asia. First, it is virtually impossible to have good relations with both India and Pakistan. We may want them to stop being rivals, but they can't escape their history and geography. Almost every American president has sought to have good ties with both, though none really has succeeded because it is a zero-sum game for two rivals who cannot abide America being their enemy's friend. When we give one country a substantial gain, like the 2005 U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, the other feels hurt and demands equal treatment.

Second, China is our rival for influence in the region because it has the capacity to frustrate American goals. For Pakistanis, China is the "all-weather friend" that they can rely on, unlike the unreliable and quixotic Americans. China provided Pakistan with key technology to build the bomb in the 1970s while America was trying to prevent Pakistani acquisition of nuclear weapons. Today, Beijing is building new reactors to fuel the fastest-growing nuclear arsenal in the world in Pakistan.

Third, Kashmir is the spoiler in the region; it needs a subtle solution that so far has escaped American diplomacy. JFK was the last American president to make a concerted effort to resolve the underlying issue causing so much instability in South Asia. All of his successors have regarded it as too hard, so every few years another major crisis erupts that takes the subcontinent to the brink of destruction. Galbraith laid out the subtle path to a better outcome, but it has been the road not taken. Instead, the path India set out on fifty years ago has led to the Agni. Nobody knows where it will end. □

# The Folly of Nation Building

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By Amitai Etzioni

There is a growing consensus that the United States can't afford another war, or even a major armed humanitarian intervention. But in reality, the cost of war itself is not the critical issue. It is the nation building following many wars that drives up the costs.

For every war of the kind we are waging in Afghanistan, we could afford five hundred interventions of the type America carried out in Libya in 2011. The war in Libya cost the United States roughly \$1 billion, according to the Department of Defense, and the war in Afghanistan so far has cost over \$500 billion, according to the National Priorities Project.

If costs are measured in blood and not just money, the disparity is even greater, both in terms of our losses and the losses of all others involved. Particularly important in this context is the fact that nation building, foreign aid, imported democratization, Marshall Plans and counterinsurgency (COIN) with a major element of nation building are not only very costly but also highly prone to failure. Thus, they are best avoided.

Michael Mandelbaum writes in *The Frugal Superpower* that since World

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War II, "in foreign affairs as in economic policy, the watchword was 'more.' That era has ended. The defining fact of foreign policy in the second decade of the twenty-first century and beyond will be 'less.'" Likewise, Charles Kupchan argues in *Democracy* that America's economic difficulties, combined with increasing public indifference toward its international obligations, "necessitate that the country scale back its international commitments to bring them into line with diminishing means." James Traub and Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, among many others, also have made statements to the same effect.

Before the intervention in Libya, the high costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were viewed with growing alarm as deficit battles intensified at home and among America's allies. A comprehensive estimate of the United States' total war costs, released by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, takes into account funds allocated to operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as future obligations for veterans' benefits and ongoing war costs. It pegs the cost of the wars at between \$3.2 trillion and \$4 trillion. Long before the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, several leading students of international relations advanced what might be called the overextension theory, which proposes that empires expand until they collapse under their own weight due to burdensome overseas commitments. This thesis was applied most notably to

the United States by Paul Kennedy in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. A similar argument was advanced more recently by Niall Ferguson in *Civilization: The West and the Rest*.

This line of analysis fails to distinguish between the costs of nation building and those of military intervention. The 1991 U.S. intervention expelled Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, exacted a heavy cost from Iraq for violating another nation's sovereignty and shored up America's credibility, which had been low since Vietnam. And it was achieved swiftly, with limited deaths—fewer than four hundred, comparable to the Spanish-American War—and at low cost (\$61 billion). Almost 90 percent of this was borne by U.S. allies.

Likewise, the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam's regime were carried out swiftly, with few casualties and low costs. Only \$56 billion had been appropriated for Iraq operations by the time President Bush declared "Mission Accomplished" on May 1, 2003, and 172 coalition servicemen had died. But the nation-building phase that followed was a different story. After May 2003, more than four thousand Americans and at least one hundred thousand Iraqis died, and the direct U.S. cost of military operations in the country exceeded \$650 billion.

Similarly, the 1999 intervention in Kosovo was completed with almost no U.S. casualties and few outlays. The great difficulties and large outlays were caused by the nation building that followed (although in this case, it was carried out more by the UN than the United States). All this shows that it is not the military intervention but the nation building that exacts most of the costs and casualties.

The 2001 overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan was carried out swiftly, with minimal American casualties and costs. Only twelve U.S. soldiers died in Afghanistan in

2001. The fighting was carried out largely by locals of the Northern Alliance. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the combined costs of the war for 2002–2003 defined as related to "security" were only \$535 million. Most of the ensuing casualties and costs came during the following period in which the counterterrorism (CT) approach was replaced with COIN.

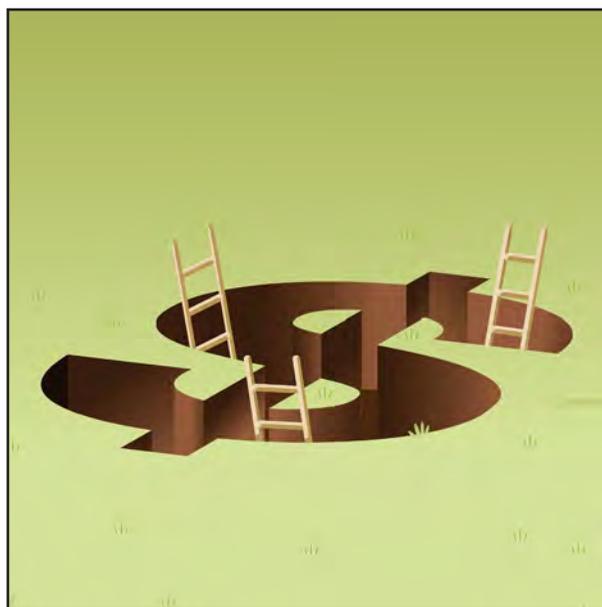
One can argue that the military operation in Afghanistan was not over after the Taliban government was defeated. After all, the goal was to eradicate Al Qaeda, and it took several years before its ranks were truly thinned out. But when the war costs are divided between those that concerned security and those that involved nation building (as put forth in an April 2009 GAO report examining costs from 2002–2009), almost half the funds were used for nonsecurity goals such as education, reconstruction, democracy and governance building. Moreover, while nation building did little to improve security, the security efforts were necessary to make nation building possible. Hence, at least part of the security costs should be considered nation-building ones.

There is little doubt that if the strategy Vice President Joe Biden has advocated had been followed—dealing with the remaining terrorists from outside the country by use of drones, Special Forces and local forces—the costs of this intervention would have been much lower in loss of life and the expenditure of dollars.

**L**ong-distance social engineering (LDSE)—in which one country is seeking to develop, democratize, "reconstruct" or build another nation—also is costly and prone to failure. It should be undertaken only if the conditions are favorable and the financial commitment is strong. Although the need to limit overseas LDSE drives is

increasingly recognized, the United States seems profoundly ambivalent and even confused on the merits and limitations of LDSE.

The Obama administration's 2012 military-budget projections for the next ten years assume much less LDSE. Yet the administration continues to practice it in Afghanistan, and the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*



considers nation building an essential part of its COIN strategy. Study after study shows that LDSE attempts tend to fail in places as disparate as Iraq, Haiti, sub-Saharan Africa and Pakistan. Yet the State Department under Secretary Hillary Clinton continues to treat development as one of its two core missions, and major figures call for a Marshall Plan for the Middle East. As a presidential candidate, George W. Bush mocked nation building; as president, he ordered a major nation-building drive in Iraq. Neoconservatives gained prominence with the argument that social engineering at home is difficult to accomplish but that

what failed in poor parts of Washington, DC, can succeed in Sadr City. The World Bank continues to invest scores of billions in development projects while its own studies show that most of the funds are wasted and contribute to widespread, debilitating corruption.

LDSE is difficult to curb because it reflects liberal idealism—the precept that we should help other people attain what we consider the good life, especially human rights and a democratic form of government. At the same time, it also appeals to American special interests, as U.S. laws require a good part of the funds dispensed overseas to be spent on American capital and consumer goods, services (including consulting) and arms.

The following overview of the demanding conditions under which LDSE may succeed suggests that such endeavors generally should be avoided. It examines the conditions under which the original Marshall Plan, deemed a great success, was implemented; the preconditions for democratization, which is failing

in many places, including the nations of the Arab Awakening; and the reason that COIN runs into difficulties, which has implications for all LDSE missions.

Over the past several years, and particularly since last year's uprisings in the Arab world, it has become common for senior policy makers and public commentators to look to the Marshall Plan for guidance on today's Middle East. As Hillary Clinton said in a June 2011 speech:

Today, as the Arab Spring unfolds across the Middle East and North Africa, some principles

of the [Marshall Plan] apply again, especially in Egypt and Tunisia. As Marshall did in 1947, we must understand that the roots of the revolution and the problems that it sought to address are not just political but profoundly economic as well.

Former national-security adviser and general James Jones and former secretary of defense Robert Gates have expressed similar attitudes. Likewise, the Stimson Center's Mona Yacoubian directly called for a "Middle East 'Marshall Plan'" to "harness these powerful forces of change and ensure that the region embarks on a path toward peace and prosperity."

Such advocates often point to the success of the original Marshall Plan. As General Jones explained, "We learned that lesson after World War II; we rebuilt Europe, we rebuilt Japan." But the experiences in Germany and Japan demonstrate the conditions under which LDSE can succeed. And these conditions are largely missing in the Middle East.

The most important difference concerns security. Germany and Japan had surrendered after defeat in a war, and LDSE occurred only after hostilities had ceased and a high level of domestic security was established. There were no terrorists and no insurgencies.

Second, Germany and Japan were occupied during much of the LDSE drive. Social engineering by America and its allies was hands-on; a Marshall Plan for Libya, Yemen, Somalia or Egypt, on the other hand, would have to be long distance. The people of these nations don't want foreign troops on their soil, and no foreign powers are inclined to send any.

Additionally, there was no danger that Japan or Germany would slip into a sectarian or ethnic civil war, as happened in Afghanistan and Iraq. No effort had to be expended on building national unity, which

was already strong and allowed change to be introduced with relative ease. Competent government personnel and a low level of corruption also contributed to success. Robert A. Packenham has written that "technical and financial expertise, relatively highly institutionalized political parties, skillful and visionary politicians, well-educated populations, [and] strong national identifications" all made LDSE possible. There also was a pronounced culture of self-restraint in both countries.

None of this is surprising. Germany and Japan were strong nation-states before WWII. Citizens closely identified with each nation and were willing to sacrifice for it. By contrast, the first loyalty of many citizens of Middle Eastern nations is to their ethnic or confessional group. Germany and Japan also had strong industrial bases, established infrastructures, educated populations, and vigorous support for science and technology, corporations, business and commerce. In contrast, many Middle Eastern states lack most of these assets, institutions and traditions. They cannot be reconstructed because they were never constructed in the first place.

Social science teaches that cultural values play an important role in determining how a population fares—and that these values are very resistant to change. Max Weber, for example, contended that Protestants were more imbued than Catholics with the values that lead to hard work and high levels of saving, both essential for the rise of modern capitalism. For decades, Catholic countries lagged behind the Protestant Anglo-Saxon nations in development. Weber also pointed to the difference between Confucian and Muslim values, thus predicting, in effect, the striking difference between the very high rates of development in the Asian "tigers"—China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and

*The 2003 invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam's regime were carried out swiftly, with few casualties and low costs. But the nation-building phase that followed was a different story.*

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South Korea—and the low rates in most Muslim states. True, Weber's thesis has been contested over the decades. Sascha Becker and Ludger Woessmann note that Catholics and Protestants do equally well when one controls for the level of education. But the level of education one seeks is itself affected by one's values.

The fact that LDSE succeeds only in some nations and often fails in others is highlighted by studies of foreign aid, which has been considered "intervention lite." It does not entail occupation, sanctions or imposition but seeks strictly to help the recipients. In truth, it is often granted for mixed motives, seldom generates appreciation from recipients and rarely helps much.

In his 2006 book, *The White Man's Burden*, William Easterly observes that despite spending trillions of dollars on foreign aid over fifty years, the West has had little success alleviating poverty. Likewise, a 2008 meta-analysis conducted by Raghuram G. Rajan and Arvind Subramanian evaluated the relationship between aid and growth across a variety of variables, including different "time horizons" (medium and long run), years (1960s through 1990s), sources of aid (multilateral and bilateral), and types of aid (economic, social, food, etc.). "It is difficult to discern any systematic effect of aid on growth," the authors concluded, noting that this held across all examined variables. Finally, a 2009 analysis conducted by Hristos Doucouliagos and Martin Paldam examined ninety-seven studies spanning forty years to determine the effect of aid

on investment and savings, on economic growth and on the quality of a country's economic policy. In all three instances, they "failed to find evidence of a significantly positive effect of aid." The great economic success of the Asian "tigers" demonstrates that aid is not necessary for growth; these countries experienced unusually high economic growth while receiving little foreign aid.

The U.S. commitment to reconstruction after World War II was significantly higher than its current commitment to foreign aid. In 1948, the first year of the Marshall Plan, aid to the sixteen European countries under the plan totaled 13 percent of the federal budget. The United States today spends less than 1 percent of its budget on foreign aid, and not all of it is focused on economic development.

In short, LDSE can succeed only if the conditions are favorable, and most favorable conditions are missing in the Middle East, particularly in Yemen, Somalia and Libya. They also are in short supply in Egypt. Some conditions may be found in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan—but even these nations compare poorly to post-WWII Germany and Japan. If Marshall Plans were initiated for these nations, they likely would fail. The same does not hold for limited and sharply focused LDSE attempts—for example, fixing the oil refineries of Libya, which could be made to work. But these are exceptions to the rule.

**B**efore the recent democratization efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, there were similar attempts in scores of other

nations. Most failed. Although there is little agreement on conditions for success, there is a consensus that certain facilitating and constituting factors can play a positive role. Generally, the more widespread these variables are, the better the prospects for democracy. As the variables support one another, democracy building is more likely to succeed if at least some elements from each of the broad categories are present.

Facilitating factors—conditions that ease the formation of democracy—include: (a) law and order and basic security; (b) literacy, general education and civic education; (c) economic development, separation of economic power from political power and leveling of economic differences; (d) a sizable, developed middle class; (e) the rule of law, independent judges and respect for law-enforcement authorities; and (f) civil society, voluntary associations and communities.

Constituting factors—building blocks of democracy—include: (a) the unencumbered ability of parties to compete for support and votes; (b) set eligibility criteria for public office; (c) assurance of free and fair elections; (d) formulation of a constitutional order and process that ensures power sharing as well as separation of powers, which is essential for checks and balances among the executive, legislative and judicial branches; (e) a low level of corruption and high level of transparency; (f) protection of minority rights; (g) freedom of association; (h) freedom of the press; and (i) enumeration of individual rights vis-à-vis the government.

Note that fair and open elections are not of themselves a sufficient foundation for democracy building. Without the presence of a significant number of the above factors, the result is likely to be similar to what prevailed in Russia in 2012. There, one party prevented others from competing, controlled large parts of the media, and was

complicit in the killing of critical journalists and human-rights activists—although elections were regularly conducted. The corruption of the elections adds to the failure of democracy but is not the only or main factor.

When Arabs in several nations took to the streets in 2011 to protest the authoritarian regimes under which they were living, it generated widespread optimism. Many assumed that democratic regimes would follow and that the West



would help with the transformation. Behind this optimism is the assumption that all peoples freed to follow their own preferences will inevitably favor the same type of regime: a free-market democracy. Hence, social engineers could limit themselves to removing the vestiges of the outgoing regime. For example, in the case of communist regimes, the numerous

forms of state control and regulation were abolished, and collective properties such as state farms, nationalized industries and state-owned housing were privatized. It was assumed that such freeing of the people could be done in short order—a year or two—leading Western economists (notably Jeffrey Sachs) to predict that former communist nations would “jump” into capitalism. Actually, the transition was much slower and took place largely in nations with favorable preconditions (the Czech Republic and Poland) and much less so in those without (Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria).

In the Arab world, such slashing of state controls and regulation did not take place. The unsteady progression there makes it clear that democratization requires much more, along the lines of the conditions listed above. Developing these conditions, in turn, takes abundant time and investment. It cannot be rushed by foreign powers, as we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Even a cursory examination of these conditions shows that developing them is a slow, arduous process that is nearly impossible for outsiders to direct. It is overwhelmingly difficult to cultivate respect for the rule of law where little has existed, build a sizable middle class from scratch or reduce corruption where it has run rampant. It took Britain centuries and America generations to develop solidly liberal-democratic regimes, and throughout this time conditions were fundamentally much more favorable than those in the Middle East today.

In a 2003 study, Minxin Pei and Sara Kasper examined U.S. attempts at forced democratization, identifying sixteen U.S. nation-building drives since 1900. They defined nation building as operations that result in regime change or the shoring up of regimes that otherwise would

collapse; deploy large numbers of U.S. troops; and utilize American military and civilian personnel to assist the political administration. By their calculation, only two of the sixteen interventions were “unambiguous successes” (Japan and West Germany). They labeled two others successful (Grenada and Panama) but noted that the small populations in these cases made nation building a much easier task. The remaining eleven cases (excluding Afghanistan, which was too recent for a sound determination) were labeled failures, giving the United States a 26 percent success rate. Pei and Kasper observed, “Historically, nation-building attempts by outside powers are notable mainly for their bitter disappointments, not their triumphs.”

A study by a team from the RAND Corporation, also published in 2003, finds a similar record of American nation-building efforts. Of the seven nation-building drives identified by this study (West Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan), two were very successful, two were not successful, and the remaining three had mixed or modest success (or, as in the case of Afghanistan, were too recent to tell). The authors also note a trend of increasingly far-reaching interventions. “Each successive post-Cold War U.S.-led intervention,” the authors wrote, “has generally been wider in scope and more ambitious in intent than its predecessor.”

More generally, as Thomas Carothers, author of *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, puts it, “The idea that there’s a small democracy inside every society waiting to be released just isn’t true.” And F. Gregory Gause III observes that the “confidence that Washington has in its ability to predict, and even direct, the course of politics in other countries” is both “unjustified” and “problematic.”

Initially, the term Arab Spring (capturing the high level of optimism) was almost universally employed to refer to the 2011 revolutions. By 2012, the term Arab Awakening was more in vogue, reflecting more ambivalence about the kinds of regimes these uprisings would yield. Once again, it became clear that nations have little power to influence the course of events in other countries.

Counterinsurgency is in effect a combination of CT and nation building. Its advocates hold that it has been applied successfully in Iraq, especially during the surge and the Sunni Awakening, as well as in Afghanistan. They generally accept that there are distinctions between fighting terrorists and insurgents but argue that these differences do not affect the fundamental issues involved. Although COIN involves on-the-ground troops in occupied nations, it still has many of the attributes and difficulties of LDSE. That's because the ultimate decision makers are in the United States, the resources committed come largely from Washington and the cultural biases shaping the program are American.

Hence, COIN faces many, if not all, of the difficulties of other LDSE drives. But there is another problem as well: goal confusion. The goals attributed to COIN range from rather limited to very lofty. Often it is unclear which aim is being pursued, as the characterization of the goals fluctuates along with the means of implementation and the metrics for evaluating success.

Limited goals include gaining the goodwill of the people by paying courtesy calls to the local chiefs and handing out soccer balls or candy to children. Then there are "reconstruction" drives that seek



to repair houses or villages damaged by our war efforts. Their aims range from restoring broken doors to repairing irrigation systems.

A more ambitious goal seeks to gain local support in order to collect intelligence about insurgents as well as to encourage locals to refuse safe havens and services to the opposition and—possibly—to join the American and allied forces fighting the insurgents. This goal of collaboration implies inducements, including payoffs in the form of in-kind goods, direct monetary payments (as America provided to the Sunni fighters during the Sunni Awakening) or limited projects (e.g., digging a well for a cooperating village).

Much more ambitious goals are based on the thesis that an American campaign against insurgents cannot be won unless the United States helps local people develop a stable, responsive government with a considerable level of integrity that can ensure security and economic well-being. This thesis, in turn, is supported by the argument that one cannot win the cooperation of the population until the

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foreign forces are withdrawn from the country, or at least the main population centers, and replaced by native forces that the population will consider legitimate and effective rather than corrupt and hapless. Such a strategy effectively combines military means with nation building.

The failure of the COIN strategy in Afghanistan was highlighted by a 2010 report published by the Afghanistan Study Group, comprised of more than fifty foreign-policy experts from across the political spectrum. The report notes:

Instead of toppling terrorists, America's Afghan war has become an ambitious and fruitless effort at 'nation-building.' We are mired in a civil war in Afghanistan and are struggling to establish an effective central government in a country that has long been fragmented and decentralized.

Writing in the *Nation*, Michael Cohen observes that a successful COIN strategy requires an effective and legitimate local government, but "corruption is so bad that the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has estimated that 'drugs and bribes are the two largest income generators.'"

Writing in *Armed Forces Journal*, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel L. Davis says a year's worth of extensive interviews with military personnel at all levels as well as Afghan civilians and security officials reveals an "absence of success on virtually every level." Similarly, a report by Lieutenant Colonel Hugh D. Bair for the U.S. Army War College's Strategy Research Project argues that COIN strategy "is unlikely to prevail in Afghanistan." Furthermore, it is "straining the Armed Forces and the American coffers, and has yet to show enough progress to justify the costs, as measured in dollars and lives."

Some keen observers urge the United States to put its own house in order, pay down its existing and growing debt, and reduce dependency on other nations for energy and financing. They conclude that America needs to do less overseas. Probably. But this is not because we cannot afford humanitarian armed intervention of the kind we saw in Kosovo and Libya or the kind that restored order in Kuwait. Only futile nation building will need to be avoided, under most circumstances, even when the United States is rolling in clover once again. □

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## Reviews & Essays

### The Critique of Pure Kagan

By Christopher Preble

**Robert Kagan**, *The World America Made* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 160 pp., \$21.00.

For nearly two decades, Robert Kagan has opined about U.S. foreign policy. The author of five books and many articles, including a monthly column in the *Washington Post*, he is a fixture in the foreign-policy establishment with bipartisan influence in Washington. A foreign-policy adviser to Mitt Romney today, as he was to John McCain in 2008, he even has found favor in the Obama administration. He also can boast popular appeal: *Of Paradise and Power* (2003) spent more than two months on the *New York Times* best-seller list. Active in small neoconservative organizations, he was one of only two people (the other was his frequent coauthor William Kristol) to have signed all thirteen letters and public statements issued by the Project for a New American Century, and he is on the board of directors of its successor organization, the Foreign Policy Initiative. But he also has managed to thrive within large, established think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International

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Peace and the Brookings Institution, where he is currently a senior fellow.

Kagan's latest offering, *The World America Made*, is a cri de coeur directed at a foreign-policy establishment beset by doubts and a wider public harboring even deeper ones. In both tone and substance, the book is aimed at soothing American anxieties over the nation's fiscal and geopolitical future. In some respects, his diagnosis is sound—the scope of American decline is often exaggerated and not to be celebrated. But in several critical respects, Kagan's prescriptions for the present and future of U.S. foreign policy are shortsighted at best, harmful at worst.

The most important of these is his rejection of calls for the United States to reduce military spending, recalibrate its global commitments and restrain its interventionist impulses. Kagan scorns the suggestion that we are entering a post-American world with multiple power centers as opposed to the single U.S. hegemon. On one hand, dismissing claims that America is in decline, he points to past periods of soul-searching and self-doubt where public sentiment was far more pessimistic and from which America emerged stronger than ever. On the other hand, he challenges those who look upon American decline with equanimity and questions their “expectation, if not assumption, . . . that the good qualities of [the present world] order—the democracy, the prosperity, the peace among great powers—can transcend the decline of American power and influence.”

He advises the United States to continue on its present course, maintain its global



posture, and retain or expand alliance relationships negotiated during the Cold War. But here is a key point: Kagan concedes that Americans could opt for a different course. We could shed our global burdens, focus on rebuilding the country's strength at home and expect—or merely hope—that others will uphold the liberal order as American power retreats. That we are afforded such a choice today is itself a historical anomaly—and something of a luxury. “Someday,” Kagan suggests, “we may have no choice but to watch it drift away.” In the meantime, we don't have to—and he hopes that we do not.

It is a familiar refrain. But, as with Kagan's earlier works, *The World America Made* combines questionable international-relations theory, questionable economics and questionable politics. To the extent that Kagan has had a hand in building today's world, he has constructed it around too much military capacity in the hands of a single power and too little capacity in the hands of nearly everyone else. The result is a wide and growing gap between the promises

Washington has made to protect others from harm and America's political will to honor those promises if they ever come due.

The world is both more complicated and more durable than Kagan imagines. The United States does not need to police the globe in order to maintain a level of security that prior generations would envy. Neither does the survival of liberal democracy, market capitalism and basic human rights hinge on U.S. power, contrary to Kagan's assertions. Americans need not shelter wealthy, stable allies against threats they are capable of handling on their own. Americans should not fear power in the hands of others, particularly those countries and peoples that share common interests and values. Finally, precisely because the United States is so secure, it is difficult to sustain public support for global engagement without resorting to fearmongering and threat inflation. Indeed, when Americans are presented with an accurate assessment of the nation's power relative to others and shown how U.S. foreign policy has contributed to a

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vast and growing disparity between what we spend and what others spend on national security—the very state of affairs that Kagan celebrates—they grow even less supportive.

Kagan's flawed analysis begins with a fundamental misconception about the international system and the relations of states within it. His worldview perceives two types of countries: those that are congenitally incapable of dealing with urgent security challenges on their borders or in their respective regions; and a crafty, rapacious few who are forever scheming to intimidate, disrupt or simply devour the hapless and the helpless. Within this dichotomy, however, is a third sort of country, the only one of its kind. The United States enjoys a privileged place in the world order, explains Kagan. Its power is unthreatening because it is relatively distant from others. And, according to Kagan, the costs of this power are easily borne by the wealthiest country in the world.

Kagan's world order "is as fragile as it is unique," and "preserving [it] requires constant American leadership and constant American commitment." The message today is consistent with that from sixteen years ago when he and William Kristol first made the case for what they called "benevolent global hegemony."

In other respects, however, the story that emerges from *The World America Made* is subtly different. Anticipating a rising tide of pessimism and gloominess within the American electorate, Kagan at times resorts to the tone of a pep talk. Whereas he once highlighted the "present

dangers" confronting the United States (in a volume coedited with Kristol, published in 2000), he now says the world today isn't as dangerous as it once was—during the Cold War, for example, or at other periods in American history. Looking ahead, he says, China has its own set of problems, is unlikely to make a bid for regional hegemony and is unlikely to succeed if it tries. Likewise, we shouldn't be overly frightened by China's growing economic power, Kagan explains, which will lag well behind that of the United States for years. Other global challenges are more modest still.

The object of these relatively optimistic assessments is to convince Americans that they can manage to hold on to their position of global dominance for many years without bankrupting themselves financially or exhausting themselves emotionally. This line of argument cuts against Kagan's other claims, however, both in this volume and elsewhere, that the United States should spend even more on its military and that Washington should use this military more often, and in more places, than it has in the recent past.

In other critical ways, Kagan's assessment of global politics has remained remarkably consistent, even if the tone of this current volume is slightly less alarmist. In the past, he has argued that the world would collapse into a brutal, Hobbesian hell if the U.S. military were smaller and fought in fewer wars or if the U.S. government were less inclined to extend security guarantees to other countries. Today, he merely suggests such a scenario is possible and

warns it would be foolish to gamble on the outcome.

Kagan's too-casual rejection of any reasonable alternative to American hegemony reveals the crucial flaw in his reasoning, however, given that he predicts we might not be afforded a choice in the future. If the United States can't sustain its current posture indefinitely, a wiser long-term grand strategy would set about—preferably now—easing the difficult and sometimes dangerous transitions that often characterize major power shifts. Rather than continuing to discourage other countries from tending to their security affairs, the United States should welcome such behavior. Kagan's reassuring tone—about China's unique vulnerabilities, for example—actually buttresses that competing point of view. After all, if a distant, distracted hegemon like the United States can manage the challenge posed by China, and if it can do so while preventing wars and unrest in several other regions simultaneously, then Asian nations would be at least equally capable of accomplishing the same task given that they will be focused solely on their own security primarily in just that one region.

**K**agan refuses to consider this possibility. He writes that the “most important features of today's world—the great spread of democracy, the prosperity, the prolonged great-power peace—have depended directly and indirectly on power and influence exercised by the United States.” It follows, therefore, that the world would become considerably less democratic, less prosper-

ous and less peaceful if the United States were to withdraw militarily from Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

Of course, he can't actually prove either claim to be true, and he concedes as much. Instead, he bases his case on a particular set of beliefs about how the world works and about the United States' unique characteristics within that system. Kagan asserts that the world requires a single, order-inducing hegemon to enforce the rules of the game and that America must perform this role because its global economic interests demand it. He also believes that the United States has a special obligation, deriving from its heritage as a “dangerous nation,” to spread democracy and human rights. What's more, America's military might is the essential ingredient that leads to its international influence. The spread of democracy and market capitalism, Kagan claims, is made possible by U.S. power but would retreat before autocracy and mercantilism if that power were seen to be waning. The attractiveness of America's culture, economics and political system—the vaunted “soft power” in Joseph Nye's telling—is fleeting and would dissipate if Americans were to commit what Kagan calls “preemptive superpower suicide.”

How other nations respond to U.S. power also follows a familiar pattern. In Kagan's telling, allies will bandwagon with us if we are committed to defending them but bolt like frightened racehorses at the first sign of trouble. Would-be challengers will back down in the face of U.S. power but rush to exploit opportunities for conquest if Uncle Sam

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exhibits any hesitation or self-doubt. And Kagan simply dismisses any suggestion that other countries might chafe at American dominance or fear American power.

His ideas represent something close to the reigning orthodoxy in Washington today and for the past two decades. Inside the Beltway, there is broad, bipartisan agreement on the basic parameters of U.S. foreign policy that Kagan spells out. This consensus contends that the burden of proof is on those who argue against the status quo. The United States and the world have enjoyed an unprecedented stretch of security and prosperity; it would be the height of folly, the foreign-policy establishment asserts, to upend the current structure on the assumption that an alternative approach would represent any improvement.

But such arguments combine the most elementary of post hoc fallacies with unwarranted assumptions and idle speculation. Correlation does not prove causation. There are many factors that could explain the relative peace of the past half century. Kagan surveys them all—including economic interdependence, evolving norms governing the use of force and the existence of nuclear weapons—and concludes that U.S. power is the only decisive one. But, once again, he concedes that he cannot prove it.

**E**ven those inclined to believe Kagan's assessment of the international system and America's role in it must contend with one central fact that Kagan elides: the costs of maintaining the status quo are

substantial and likely to grow. That is because Washington's possession of vast stores of power—and its willingness to use that power on behalf of others—has created an entire class of nations that are unwilling to defend themselves and their interests from threats. The data clearly show a vast and growing gap between what others pay for defense and what Americans pay to defend them.

The critical question, then, centers on differing perceptions of this capability imbalance. Because U.S. security guarantees to wealthy allies have caused them to underprovide for their own defense, they also have less capacity to help the United States in its time of need—either now in Afghanistan or in a theoretical future contest with China or a resurgent Russia.

Kagan contends other countries will choose not to defend themselves and their interests, but at other times he acknowledges it is precisely the presence of American power that has discouraged them from doing so. In the end, it is clear Kagan doesn't want other countries to defend themselves because, he says, they just can't be trusted to get the job done. Most will be content to let security challenges grow and fester on their borders, or within them, leaving the United States—and the United States alone—with the task of cleaning up the mess. As he sought to explain in 2003, Americans should "be more worried about a conflagration on the Asian subcontinent or in the Middle East or in Russia than the Europeans, who live so much closer," because the harm from other countries'

failure to act will inevitably threaten U.S. security.

Kagan correctly argues that the United States could afford to shoulder the burdens of defending others. The costs of U.S. foreign policy are neither insurmountable nor unprecedented. But his case that we should do so is marred by games he plays with statistics in a transparent bid to strengthen his argument.

For example, citing figures compiled by the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, he argues that the U.S. share of global GDP "has held remarkably

A different data set prepared by the International Monetary Fund paints a more vivid picture of America's relative decline. From a post-Cold War era peak of 32.1 percent in 2001, the U.S. share of global GDP had fallen to 21.7 percent by 2011 and was projected to fall to 21 percent by 2017.

More telling still are the statistics showing how the U.S. share of global military spending has risen from less than 30 percent at the end of the Cold War to nearly 48 percent today. Per capita spending exhibits a similar trend. According to data from the International Institute



steady, not only over the past decade, but over the past four decades." In fact, the U.S. share of global GDP is declining, though modestly. The USDA data set clearly shows that the U.S. share of global output peaked during the post-Cold War period at 28.38 percent in 1999 and has since fallen to 25.48 percent. During that same period, China's share rose from 3.44 percent to just over 8 percent.

for Strategic Studies' annual reports, *The Military Balance*, in 2010 Americans spent 71 percent more (in inflation-adjusted terms) on national security than they did in 1998, whereas other countries have either increased spending only slightly or reduced their spending in real terms over that same period.

Taken together, these trends undermine Kagan's contention that U.S. military

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spending has not grown more burdensome for American taxpayers. Still, as a purely economic matter, such spending isn't unsustainable. The U.S. federal debt and deficit don't require Americans to adopt a more restrained foreign policy. An age of austerity in Washington, should it ever come to pass, would not necessarily translate into a smaller military with fewer missions.

But such a shift would be wise on its merits. A world order that was less dependent on U.S. military power would likely result in a greater number of countries with more military capability and a greater willingness to use it. Most Americans, contrary to Kagan's claims, would welcome this if it meant a more manageable burden for America.

Kagan asserts that despite "their misgivings, most Americans have also developed a degree of satisfaction in their special role." Yet polling data show precisely the opposite: most Americans want desperately for others to shoulder the burdens of defending themselves and their interests. For example, 79 percent of voters told pollster Scott Rasmussen that we spend too much money defending others; a mere 4 percent think we don't spend enough. A CNN survey last year found that just one in four Americans relished the United States' being the world's "policeman," and a separate Rasmussen poll concluded that a mere 11 percent of likely voters support that mission.

But Kagan and other advocates of U.S. benevolent global hegemony contend Americans must play this role of global policeman. It would be irresponsible,

they say, to stake the future of the present world order on the supposition that other countries would assume some of the burdens of global governance that Americans shed. Kagan assumes other countries would not because they have not done so since at least the end of the Cold War. But this ignores the extent to which U.S. foreign policy—Kagan's foreign policy—has discouraged them from doing so, a point he regularly celebrates. He points especially to Germany and Japan, whose choices not to rearm after World War II were heavily influenced by Washington. "Had the American variable been absent," he concludes, "the outcome would have been different."

This expansive global role that Kagan champions may have made sense during the early days of the Cold War, when the countries of Western Europe and East Asia were shattered and we were confronting a common enemy. But the world has changed. The strategy Kagan advocates has needlessly and unfairly burdened Americans with the costs of maintaining global peace, and it could—and should—have been altered long ago. Yet if Robert Kagan has his way, it never will be.

As noted above, Kagan is anxious to emphasize that our military power is not particularly costly. His preferred technique for demonstrating this fact is to refer to military spending as a share of GDP. And it is true that the United States has in the past sustained a higher level of military spending when measured against the nation's total output; likewise, military spending as a

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share of the federal budget has traditionally been far higher than it is today.

But there are times when even he must admit that global hegemony isn't cheap. For one thing, in inflation-adjusted dollars, the base military budget for 2012, \$531 billion (excluding the cost of the wars), exceeds the average annual level of Pentagon spending during Ronald Reagan's eight years in office, \$524 billion, and is well above the post-Cold War average of \$452 billion. When confronted with such facts, Kagan reverts to a different sort of argument; maintaining our current posture might be costly, he avers, but the likely alternative world that would emerge after U.S. retrenchment would be costlier still.

Indeed, if Kagan were to have his way, the United States likely would spend even more on its military than it has over the past two decades. How much more? We can't know for certain, but he is advising Mitt Romney, who has pledged to spend at least 4 percent of GDP on the Pentagon's base budget, plus whatever more is needed to fight the occasional wars. According to my calculations based on five-year defense plans and ten-year OMB projections, Romney's budget would result in \$2.5 trillion in additional spending over the next ten years. Military spending, pegged to 4 percent of GDP in 2022, would top \$1 trillion, 60 percent higher than under President Obama's latest budget projections.

Kagan is correct to point out that the defense budget didn't cause the deficit and that cutting the defense budget wouldn't cure it. But he goes too far when he argues that military spending is all but irrelevant

to the nation's fiscal crisis. U.S. military spending, including war costs, officially peaked in 2010 at \$690.9 billion. A more complete accounting of all security-related spending in that same year, including the Departments of Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs, totaled above \$800 billion, or 23 percent of total federal spending—hardly an insignificant share.

But it is the vast disparity between what Americans spend and what others spend, and the clear trends showing a widening gap between the two, that poses the greatest challenge to Kagan's world order. American hegemony isn't economically unsustainable, but it might be politically unsustainable.

In Robert Kagan's world, most of what Americans spend on the military isn't intended for their defense but rather for the defense of others. It is no wonder, then, that most Americans are deeply dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. But the discontent goes deeper. Some Americans are fearful of global trade or suspicious of foreigners who would come to the United States to "steal" American jobs. Kagan, to his credit, is an advocate for global trade and is anxious to turn back the xenophobia and bigotry that drive some Americans to want to cut off all access to the outside world. Other aspects of this backlash against U.S. foreign policy are driven by a lack of understanding of the issues and confusion around some basic facts—for example, the widespread though mistaken belief that foreign aid constitutes a large share of the federal budget.

Correcting these misperceptions is, or at least should be, a central goal for a public



intellectual. When presented with the facts, however, Americans grow less supportive of Kagan's foreign policies. For example, while foreign aid in the form of direct payments to foreign governments or NGOs is often counterproductive, the sums are relatively small. Accordingly, people's attention is now shifting to how our massive military budget acts as a different form of foreign aid: the security guarantees we dispense to wealthy, stable democracies have allowed them to avoid paying for their own security.

Meanwhile, the greatest threats to the nation's long-term fiscal outlook are rising health-care costs, entitlements and other mandatory spending, but Kagan doesn't spell out how to mobilize the political will to cut from these programs in order to cover the price of a larger and more costly military. When he argues that Americans could choose to forego the benefits that now three generations have come to expect as a birthright, he is looking past present-day political reality. And his contention

that Americans should be willing to do so in order to ensure that people in other countries can continue to enjoy even more generous retirement benefits defies common sense.

**I***deas Have Consequences*, declared the title of a 1948 book by the conservative writer Richard M. Weaver. Not so, says Robert Kagan in 2012: "The better idea doesn't have to win just because it is a better idea. It requires great powers to champion it." Likewise, the liberal order, he predicts, "will last only as long as those who imposed it retain the capacity to defend it." Near the end of *The World America Made*, the man who is so quick to celebrate America's many virtues reduces them down to just one that matters:

What has made the United States most attractive to much of the world has not been its culture, its wisdom, or even its ideals alone. At times these have played a part; at times they have been irrelevant. More consistent has been the attraction of America's power, the manner in which it uses it, and the ends for which it has been used.

On the surface, this is a curious assertion for someone who seems to revel in ideology, particularly one who professes such faith in the transformative power of democracy. Kagan's writings over the years, including *The World America Made*, amount to a full-throated endorsement of democratic-peace theory.

In other respects, however, Kagan's dismissal of ideas and ideology is consistent

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with another recurring theme in his work: the utter disdain for an American foreign policy that leads by example. Ronald Reagan famously, and often, spoke of America as a shining city on a hill. The mere suggestion elicits scorn from Kagan.

In a telling passage from a 1996 article entitled, ironically enough, “Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy,” Kagan and William Kristol savaged John Quincy Adams’s suggestion that America ought not go “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” Kagan and Kristol declared:

Because America has the capacity to contain or destroy many of the world’s monsters, most of which can be found without much searching, and because the responsibility for the peace and security of the international order rests so heavily on America’s shoulders, a policy of sitting atop a hill and leading by example becomes in practice a policy of cowardice and dishonor.

Kagan returns to both this theme and Adams’s quote in *The World America Made*. America’s conception of itself as the reluctant sheriff, unwilling to go out in search of trouble but willing to defend the town only when called upon, “bears no relation to reality,” he explains. “Americans have used force dozens of times, and rarely because they had no choice.”

But the world is too complex to be policed by a single global sheriff, and it need not be. Instead, the many beneficiaries of the current order should contribute to the preservation of that order at a level, and in a manner, that is consistent with

their interests. By that standard, the United States would retain military power that was at least three or four times greater than that of its closest rivals, but it would no longer presume to be responsible for countries that can take care of themselves.

Americans must learn to embrace their relative security and face down their lingering fears. Until they do so, the fear of the unknown works in Kagan’s favor. It is difficult to disentangle the many different factors that have contributed to relative peace and security over the past half century, and it is impossible to know what would have happened in a world without America. The future is even more inscrutable. In this latest book, Kagan surveys all the explanations for what may have contributed to global peace and prosperity—including the spread of democracy, liberal economics, nuclear weapons, and evolving global norms against violence and war—and returns to his refrain from sixteen years earlier. “American hegemony,” he and Kristol wrote in 1996, “is the only reliable defense against a breakdown of peace and international order.” Fast-forward to 2012, and nothing, it seems, has changed:

There can be no world order without power to preserve it, to shape its norms, uphold its institutions, defend the sinews of its economic system, and keep the peace. . . . If the United States begins to look like a less reliable defender of the present order, that order will begin to unravel.

He didn’t prove that case before, and he doesn’t now. □



## The Great White House Rating Game

By *Alonzo L. Hamby*

**Robert W. Merry**, *Where They Stand: The American Presidents in the Eyes of Voters and Historians* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 320 pp., \$28.00.

**N**o one can accuse Robert Merry of thinking small. On top of a long and distinguished career in high-level Washington journalism (including the editorship of this magazine), he is the author of a fine biography of Joseph and Stewart Alsop, a cautionary tract on “missionary zeal” in American foreign policy, and a well-received volume on James K. Polk and the war with Mexico. Borrowing from the title of the latter book, one might describe him as a writer “of vast designs.” His latest work is a relatively slender book about a big topic: the way in which we view and remember our presidents—or, as he calls it, “The Great White House Rating Game.”

Serious attempts at comprehensive presidential rankings are relatively recent and have tended to reflect the views of noted scholars, prominent journalists and

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eminent biographers. The first such survey was published by Harvard historian Arthur Schlesinger Sr. in 1948; the second also was conducted by Schlesinger in 1962. Both had fifty-five respondents. Over the next half century, several others appeared. Merry showcases efforts by the historian David Porter in 1981, journalist Steve Neal for the *Chicago Tribune* in 1982, historians Robert Murray and Tim Blessing in 1982, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in 1996 and the *Wall Street Journal* in 2005. These were hardly the only such efforts. Neal did another in 1995 for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and C-SPAN conducted notable surveys in 2000 and 2009. (I admit with neither pride nor chagrin to having participated in perhaps a half dozen of these exercises.) I wish Merry had included at least one of the C-SPAN polls in his reference list. These were based on ten relatively distinct, if occasionally vague, criteria. Nonetheless, his sample is sufficiently representative of the change and continuity that characterize the ratings game.

Just who gets asked? The answer seems to be mostly academics who have written on presidents or the office of the presidency. C-SPAN drew on scholars who had participated in the network’s remarkable *American Presidency* series. They likely were about as liberal and Democratic as the academics in Merry’s sample. Most of the professors asked to participate in the ratings game have been intellectual products of either the New Deal or the Great Society and members of a rather cozy liberal, academic establishment. A few contrarians aside, they tended to rank

according to their political preferences. Two liberal Democratic politicians—Governor Mario Cuomo and Senator Paul Simon—participated in the Schlesinger Jr. effort.

The years 1981–1982 constitute a midpoint of sorts for the evaluations Merry selected; three were conducted during this brief period. At that point, thirty-eight men had preceded Ronald Reagan in the presidency. However, William Henry Harrison and James A. Garfield were not ranked because of the brevity of their tenures in office. Those who grade on a curve might assume bottom and top quartiles of eight presidents and a broad center of twenty. The 1982 Murray-Blessing poll, with its 846 participants, might be presumed to have more validity than the 1981 Porter endeavor (forty-one participants) or the 1982 Neal/*Chicago Tribune* survey (forty-nine participants), but the variations were inconsequential. In all three polls, one finds the same eight names at the top—Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, Andrew Jackson and Harry Truman—with only slight discrepancies in precise order. The bottom eight are also consistent—Millard Fillmore, Calvin Coolidge, Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Franklin Pierce, Richard Nixon, James Buchanan and Warren Harding. This congruence seemed to reveal a wide consensus, or at least similarity of impressions, among students and observers of the presidency.

Thirty years later, little had changed. The 2009 C-SPAN poll takes Wilson and Jackson out of the top eight and replaces them

with John F. Kennedy (sixth) and Dwight D. Eisenhower (eighth). The top three—Lincoln, Washington and FDR—remain undisturbed, with Theodore Roosevelt not far behind them. The bottom eight display a bit more turnover. Hoover escapes only because C-SPAN ranked and gave a very low slot to William Henry Harrison. Grant, Coolidge and Nixon make it to a low-average rank.

If nothing else, the game proves that scholars and political junkies have opinions—or suppositions—about our various presidents and that these can change somewhat with time. But what are the evaluations based on?

**I**n 1962, President John F. Kennedy declined an invitation to participate in the second Schlesinger Sr. survey. He expressed his reasoning to Schlesinger Jr., who was serving as one of his White House aides: “How the hell can you tell? Only the president himself can know what his real pressures and real alternatives are. If you don’t know that, how can you judge performance?” Some “great” presidents, Kennedy believed, were acclaimed for decisions to which there was no realistic alternative. Others were beneficiaries of timing. Lincoln presided over victory in the Civil War, then was spared by death from having to manage the impossible problems of Reconstruction. Some were just plain overrated, Kennedy thought. Woodrow Wilson’s foreign policy had been a botch from start to finish. And just what did Theodore Roosevelt have to offer in the way of concrete accomplishments? (A strange query that seemed to

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ignore the origins of twentieth-century antitrust policy, a path-breaking conservation program, railroad legislation, the Pure Food and Drug Act, the Panama Canal and his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize.)

Kennedy's points, however exaggerated, suggest an even larger problem. How can anyone, however learned, authoritatively discuss, occupant by occupant, a position that has been held by forty-three individuals over a span of 223 years? And how can one juggle the problem of performance against the changing capabilities of an office that has grown from a single aide or two to a staff of thousands? How can one compare the presidency of the fledgling republic of 1789 to that of the global superpower of 2012? The only honest answer would seem to be that presidential evaluators are engaged in an imprecise and impressionistic endeavor, albeit one in which it is possible with diligent effort to muster plausible impressions.

Merry illustrates the point well. He obviously is well-read in American history and the presidency but less than comprehensively prepared. His bibliography ranges from authors he (and I) probably first read as students in college or graduate school many years ago—among them Henry Adams, Allan Nevins, Vernon Parrington and Benjamin Thomas—to recent names such as Stephen Ambrose, Robert Dallek, Joseph Ellis, David McCullough and Jon Meacham. He leans toward authors who write serious works for a wide audience. As a research base, this seems more serendipitous than systematic. James MacGregor Burns gets no listing,

for example, as either an authority on the presidency or a major biographer of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Nor do the younger Arthur Schlesinger's great, if overly reverential, works on *The Age of Roosevelt* appear. And surely a book of this sort needs to come to grips with Richard Neustadt's influential *Presidential Power*. All that said, the author's sources constitute a wide-ranging and solid group of studies.

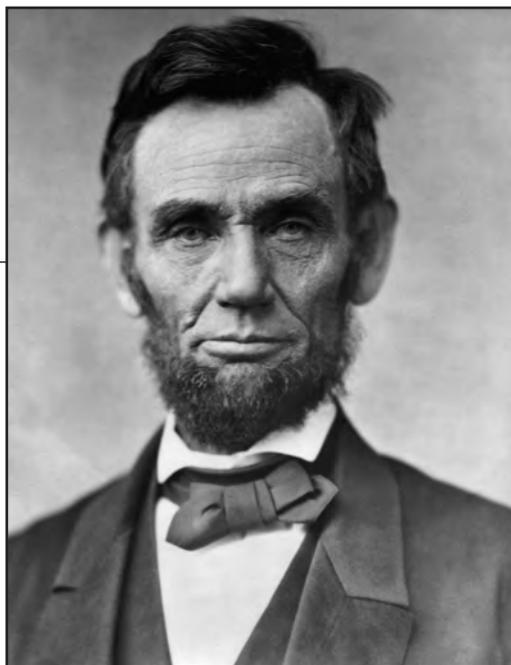
Just what is his purpose? Adopting a light, conversational tone, Merry asks, "Wanna play?" The game that follows is one in which rules seem to be made up as we go along. But it is entertaining, and many readers will find it enlightening. At no time, however, does the author give us his own comprehensive list of ranked presidents. The exercise seems to be more about throwing darts (or javelins) at the evaluations of others. Many of the impalements seem well deserved.

Perhaps Merry's most impressive achievement is an eight-page chapter entitled "The Making of the Presidency," which explains the origins of the office at the Constitutional Convention. Our Founding Fathers, he tells us, created a chief executive who was less than an absolute monarch but more than a prime minister. Drawing authority directly from the people (as filtered through the mechanism of the Electoral College), the president was independent of the Congress and possessed the moral authority of a democratic mandate, albeit through a mode of selection that presumably would reject a Caesarist demagogue.

“What emerged was a matrix of shared powers binding the two branches and forcing them to work together in the course of governing,” he tells us. He also quotes Woodrow Wilson’s observation that if a president can win the admiration and confidence of the country, “no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him. . . . If he rightly interpret the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible.”

Such an achievement, Merry tells us, would be immensely difficult, but its possibility would be the essence of a challenge “that has beckoned and diminished and elevated so many ambitious and forceful Americans absorbed by the call of destiny and the lure of greatness.” Surely, it was a challenge successfully met by most of the presidents who have been labeled great.

Merry’s fundamental approach to presidential achievement is a “referendum” touchstone. The judgment of scholars and journalists, burdened by political and ideological commitments, attempting to burrow from the present into a distant past, he asserts, is less useful than the contemporary verdict of the people themselves. Reprimanding journalists who cover election campaigns by emphasizing tactics and ephemeral day-to-day events, he believes that the electorate takes a broad view. Presidential elections, he argues, are usually decided on the basis of approval or disapproval of the incumbent’s performance. A president who is reelected thus has a presumptive claim to a superior ranking. A two-term president whose



designated party successor wins election has to be considered for greatness. Still, the twelve who have met this criterion—Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Jackson, Lincoln, Grant, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Coolidge, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan—will strike most of us as a mixed lot.

**I**n the chapters that follow, Merry rakes over the reputations of numerous presidents, giving us his own take on what the historians got right and unhesitatingly telling us when he thinks they erred.

Take the conventional view of James Madison, customarily revered as the father of the Constitution but dismissed as at most a mediocre chief executive incapable of exerting the strong presidential leadership exemplified by his friend and predecessor Thomas Jefferson. In large measure, Merry tells us, Madison was the victim of a hit job by Henry Adams—great-grandson of John Adams and grandson of John Quincy Adams—in his magisterial *History of the United States of America*

*The judgment of scholars and journalists, burdened by political and ideological commitments, is less useful than the contemporary verdict of the people themselves.*

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*During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.* Madison, as Merry sees him, was a resolute defender of American rights against British encroachment on the high seas and a determined foe of British designs to seize control of the northwestern United States. He was a principled Jeffersonian liberal who waged the War of 1812 without persecuting its opponents and a flexible pragmatist willing to back those elements of the opposition agenda (such as a national bank and a mild protective tariff) he thought the country needed.

Or how about Ulysses S. Grant, rated dead last alongside Warren G. Harding in Schlesinger Sr.'s 1948 survey but the beneficiary of a "miniboomlet" in more recent years? (The 2009 C-SPAN survey placed him twenty-third, squarely in the middling category.) Merry attributes this to a current trend in academic liberalism that lauds rather than condemns Radical Reconstruction and points to recent favorable biographies. Presidential surveys do in fact reflect changing fashions in academic liberalism, and Grant is an excellent case study of a process worth a bit more attention.

For at least three-quarters of a century, American populism and progressivism bought into fundamental intellectual and cultural compromises that reunited the nation after the Civil War. In return for Southern acquiescence in the maintenance of the Union and the canonization of Abraham Lincoln, a Northern intelligentsia accepted the Confederacy as an honorable, if misguided, insurgency, accepted the

proposition that blacks were not and might never be ready for full citizenship, and conceded that Radical Reconstruction was an especially odious form of Northern oppression. The martyred Lincoln was off limits, but Grant was a convenient scapegoat. As commander of the Union forces, he had enabled Sherman's march through Georgia and compelled Lee's surrender. As president, he was the chief enforcer of Reconstruction and suppressor of the Ku Klux Klan.

Northern intellectuals could buy into these complaints with few qualms while detesting the rampant industrialization of America during the Gilded Age and the rise of a crass new elite concerned only with money and power. Here also, one finds the hand of that displaced patrician Henry Adams holding a bloody dagger: "The progress of evolution from President Washington to President Grant was alone evidence enough to upset Darwin."

This worldview in which Grant's reputation was caught up changed slowly. It was not until the 1960s that major cracks began to appear as liberal intellectuals committed themselves more fully to civil rights and a revolutionary change in a racist Southern society. It became possible to see the Grant presidency as a mixed achievement—its first term was marked by an economic prosperity that grew out of the industrial surge the Henry Adamases of the world found distasteful; its second term was marred by a financial crash and the emergence of scandals Grant handled poorly. To probably a majority of Americans, however, Grant remained a hero

who likely could have had a third term had he chosen to run for one.

Merry concludes, fairly enough, that a judicious evaluation of Grant's successes and failures would merit an average standing. He also underscores another, more urgent motivation for Grant's rise when he quotes Princeton historian Sean Wilentz's defense of the general as "one of the great presidents of his era, and possibly one of the greatest in all American history." Professor Wilentz was contesting a suggestion that Grant should be evicted from the fifty-dollar bill and replaced by Ronald Reagan.

Grant's one-time partner at the bottom of the heap, Warren G. Harding, also gets a case for a qualified upgrade. Some of his appointments were corrupt or mediocre, but others were outstanding. Inheriting a severe recession from Woodrow Wilson, he allowed the economy to heal itself and was presiding over a strong recovery at the time of his death in 1923. It is widely conceded that he was a popular chief executive. Only afterwards did the Teapot Dome scandal and other examples of bad behavior by his appointees besmirch his reputation.

Merry mentions in passing Harding's alleged affair with Nan Britton, who claimed after his death that Harding was the father of a daughter they had conceived during a tryst in a White House broom closet. He also tells us that Harding had one long-running extramarital affair before he became president, but he seems to have broken that off prior to his nomination. (His backers financed a leisurely trip to Japan for the lady in question, Carrie Phillips; it took her

out of the country for the duration of the 1920 campaign.) As for Britton, historians have failed to discover any tangible evidence for her claim, which, even if true, would make Harding seem positively monogamous compared to John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson or Bill Clinton. No matter, Merry concludes. Fairly or otherwise, "Harding's position in history probably won't change anytime soon, notwithstanding his high regard with his constituency during his presidency."

The case for Calvin Coolidge's consistently below-average evaluation, the author believes, is very weak. "He presided over peace, prosperity, and domestic tranquility for nearly six years, and he effectively cleaned up the scandal bequeathed to him by Harding." Coolidge, he suggests, was a victim of his own laconic personality and his rejection of presidential activism. Recent polls may reflect Merry's sense that "Silent Cal" has been underrated; the *Wall Street Journal* (2005) and C-SPAN (2009) give him an average standing.

Who, then, were the real failures? Merry writes at some length about Herbert Hoover, conceding his many virtues and talents but stoutly rejecting "average" evaluations in five of the seven surveys this book spotlights. He believes Hoover helped bring on the Great Depression by signing the Smoot-Hawley tariff, made it worse with stiff tax increases and was overwhelmed by the tidal waves of bank failures that brought the economy crashing down. Much of the personal vilification he received was unfair, but "American presiden-



tial politics wasn't designed to be fair. . . . In times of turmoil the people can become harsh and unfeeling in their sentiments." Their contemporary judgment, "brutal and insensitive as it was, captures the man's performance more accurately than those academic surveys."

Lincoln's two predecessors, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, widely classified in the failure category, seem to Merry easy calls. Both men, through a combination of inactivity and deviousness, facilitated the outbreak of the Civil War. Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, long was a beneficiary of the post-Civil War worldview and considered a victim of persecution by vindictive Radical Republicans. Merry thinks he probably belongs in the failure category, "in part, it can be argued, because he was on the wrong side of the issues but also because he lost control of the country he was supposed to lead."

Most surprisingly, Merry suggests serious consideration of Woodrow Wilson, an almost universal "near-great" pick, for a "failure" designation. His argument bypasses Wilson's impressive progressive

accomplishments on the domestic scene and focuses on his diplomacy, which he finds seriously flawed by a sanctimonious self-righteousness: Wilson took the United States into World War I with a faulty rationale, then refused to compromise on an impractical peace settlement. (He finds a similar pattern in the presidency of George W. Bush.)

In general, the author believes foreign policy must focus on the world as it is and advocates the pursuit of national self-interest, even if (as with James K. Polk or William McKinley) it leads into naked imperialism. Who today would seriously propose the return of the southwestern United States to Mexico, or national independence for Hawaii or Puerto Rico?

**W**ho were the greats, and how do we discern them? Here things seem to get a bit mushy. Merry avoids the term "great." Instead, he lists six "Leaders of Destiny" who possessed premier qualities of political perceptiveness, a broad transformative vision and political adroitness. They are the standouts of the dozen presidents who served two terms and were succeeded by a member of their own party: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Early in the book, the author identifies FDR and Ronald Reagan as the two greatest presidents of the twentieth century and tells us near the end that he personally believes that Reagan was a Leader of Destiny. All the same, he punts on applying the label and comments that "history has yet to render a clear judgment on his place in the presi-

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dential pantheon.” Why, then, all the other challenges to conventional ratings wisdom throughout this book?

The six “Destinarians” were perennial choices as great or near great in the various polls referenced, yet they are too prominent to require detailed discussion. Two have slid a bit in recent years. The C-SPAN polls of 2000 and 2009 both rate Jefferson seventh, an adjustment that probably reflects growing awareness of the disastrous nature of his second term. They also put Andrew Jackson at thirteenth, likely a reaction springing from growing consciousness of both the way in which he ruthlessly persecuted Native Americans and the damage done by his primitive policies regarding money and finance.

One phenomenon cuts across the author’s categories—the difficulty of serving two unblemished terms. Nineteen men have served more than one term as president. Their collective experience demonstrates that it is very difficult to negotiate more than four years in the office without significant challenges.

Consider Jefferson, whose first term was marked by the Louisiana Purchase and a general sense of national progress. He was reelected overwhelmingly but saw his second term engulfed in the maritime tensions with England that grew out of the Napoleonic wars. Or take his designated successor, Madison, who, Merry’s stout defense notwithstanding, was dragged into a war that went badly in many ways—the failed invasion of Canada, serious losses at sea, the British raid on Washington, the near secession of New England—until the

successful defense of Baltimore and Andrew Jackson’s triumph at New Orleans provided an appearance of victory.

Move up three-quarters of a century to Grover Cleveland’s second term and the severe economic depression that broke out just months after his inauguration, leaving him presiding over national misery for the remainder of his presidency and repudiated by his own party in favor of William Jennings Bryan.

Or fast-forward to Woodrow Wilson, who brought the progressive movement to a peak during his first term (an achievement considerably undervalued by Merry), won reelection, and then found himself taking the nation into a war for which it was unprepared and that he handled poorly. Or Franklin D. Roosevelt, who seemed at the end of his first term on the way to beating the Great Depression and transforming American politics, only to see his second term give rise to a new economic collapse and the folly of the court-packing plan.

Or Harry Truman, who, after initial stumbles, committed the United States to containment of the Soviet Union and the Marshall Plan, backed civil rights more strongly than any Democratic president before him and won election in his own right only to be caught up in the Korean stalemate, McCarthyism and small-bore scandals. (Merry, I think, exaggerates when he categorizes Truman as a failed war president. It is fair to say his administration bungled policy toward Korea before the North Koreans invaded, but today’s free and prosperous South Korea provides sufficient moral vindication for Truman’s

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decision to go to war. A political failure is not necessarily a historical one.)

Some second-termers who ran into trouble—Nixon and Clinton come to mind—need only look in the mirror to affix the blame. Others were capable men blindsided by events beyond their control. Popular majorities rarely make distinctions. Historians should. Most presidencies of consequence are mixtures of failure and achievements that require a difficult sorting out.

In the nature of things, Merry cannot—and should not—attempt a summary discussion of every single president, but he at least touches on most of them. One omission, however, is extraordinarily puzzling. He says next to nothing about John F. Kennedy, telling us that JFK “never had a chance to leave a substantial stamp upon the nation.”

Is that really the case? Kennedy was among the most charismatic of presidents, provided exemplary leadership through the most dangerous nuclear confrontation in human history and aligned the Democratic Party squarely with the cause of full civil rights for African Americans. He was in office for nearly three years. His death was a national trauma. Three generations later, his party has failed to produce a leader with a similar combination of substance and popular appeal. General public-opinion surveys tend to rank him among the greatest ever. The C-SPAN respondents, mostly academics, placed him eighth in 2000 and sixth in 2009. The latter survey put him ahead of Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson and Andrew Jackson.

Surely his presidency deserves a page or two of evaluation.

One concludes that this edition of the ratings game is still a trifle uncertain about the rules. The forty-two-person list, neatly divided into five grading categories, never materializes. There is no attempt to discuss the skills required for a successful presidency. How important, for example, is executive experience? (Five of the six Leaders of Destiny served either as governors or commanding generals, although Jefferson’s tenure as governor of Virginia was lackluster, and Lincoln, the one exception, is widely considered the greatest of them all.) Quite a number of presidents are discussed trenchantly, but a few make only cameo appearances. The Leaders of Destiny are a reasonable approximation of a greatness list, but even here one can raise questions. Jefferson and Jackson, for example, may have been great men, but they also were advocates of small government, slave owners who believed in a decentralized agrarian republic, and hostile toward industry and capitalist finance. Did they actually grasp their nation’s destiny? Was Lincoln really a shrewd political manipulator or, as he himself insisted, a leader who was controlled by events he muddled through?

Systematic analysis is not Robert Merry’s game. Delighting in provocative observation, he seems more attracted to horseshoes and hand grenades than to analytical political chess. Most readers of this thoughtful and readable volume will find something in it to provoke them—and likely enjoy the provocation. □



# The Man They Called Ibn Saud

By Sandra Mackey

**Michael Darlow and Barbara Bray**, *Ibn Saud: The Desert Warrior Who Created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012), 608 pp., \$29.95.

He was a giant, physically and politically. He was an extraordinary leader who took the bedouin ethos and wrapped it in the puritanical sect of Wahhabi Islam. He was the legendary Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, who in the first quarter of the twentieth century linked together the disparate tribes of the Arabian Peninsula to create the country of Saudi Arabia.

Michael Darlow and Barbara Bray have collected the facts, assembled the myths and illuminated the mysteries of this man, pulling it all into a compelling biography titled *Ibn Saud: The Desert Warrior Who Created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. The book presents a vivid portrait of a leader who rose out of the wilderness of central Arabia to reign over a frail state to which Westerners today, whether they know it or not, owe a measure of their lifestyle and security.

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The prime example of how little Westerners know about this man is reflected in the title, *Ibn Saud*, which means “son of Saud.” In Saudi Arabia, he is known as Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud. Yet to reach a Western audience, the authors evidently succumbed to the name assigned to him by British imperialists—Ibn Saud. But to the Saudis, this is the equivalent of referring to each of the founding father’s successors—Saud, Faisal, Khalid, Fahd and Abdullah—as Ibn Abdul Aziz. Still, bowing to Western ignorance does not detract from the value of the book or its explanation of why Abdul Aziz now ranks as an important figure of the twentieth century.

Darlow and Bray approach the life of Abdul Aziz from two perspectives—first, the internal challenge of molding a country out of the competing families and tribes of the vast Arabian Peninsula; and, second, the external challenge of balancing the outside forces exercising their power in a weak, poverty-stricken and isolated region. Surmounting both, Abdul Aziz secured his kingdom, but his heirs still face the challenges of unity and governance as well as of the world beyond their wealthy desert kingdom.

The Najd, the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, is an ancient land. For centuries, it was starved for resources, which threatened the survival of even the fittest. Individuals found their security not in government but within their families and tribes. After the seventh century CE, religion, while failing to provide security, established a moral and legal system embraced by most.

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Islam came out of Mecca, a town that sat at the juncture of two important trade routes. One ran south to north from Yemen into Syria, while the other extended east to west across the Arabian Peninsula, from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf. There, the Prophet Muhammad called those outside the elite to social justice, compassion and community in the name of Allah, the one true god. Thirteen centuries later, Abdul Aziz would issue the same call.

Yet Abdul Aziz's story is more the story of his family than of religion. At some point in the late fifteenth century, his ancestors moved from the western coast of the Persian Gulf to Diriyah, an oasis within a wadi not far from today's Riyadh. Acquiring wells and date gardens as well as engaging in small trade and finance, they prospered. Gaining in stature, they acquired a distinguished family name—Al Saud. In 1745, the emir, Muhammad Ibn Saud, the reigning head of the family, joined his interests with Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a wandering theologian crying out against the degeneration of the social order due to deviation from the fundamental doctrines laid down by the Prophet. By the 1790s, Muhammad Ibn Saud, campaigning under the absolute dictates of Wahhabism, controlled most of the Arabian Peninsula. In 1803, he and his religious warriors took Mecca, the holiest site in Islam. But soon they were ejected by the Ottomans.

The empire of the Al Sauds reached its apogee in 1810, when their Wahhabi warriors once again held Mecca, took control of much of the western coast of the Persian Gulf, advanced deep into Yemen,

and marched toward the gates of Baghdad and Damascus. By 1815, the Ottomans had once again torn their empire apart. They took the leader of the Al Sauds to Istanbul, where he was publicly beheaded and his body thrown into the Bosphorus. In 1846, his son, Faisal Ibn Turki al-Saud, resurrected the empire. It collapsed in phases between 1871 and 1876, as Faisal's four sons fought each other over the right to lead. These two periods—one of empire, one of disintegration—shaped the vision of Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud.

Abdul Aziz was born in Riyadh in 1880 amid the bloodletting among his uncles. Following the death or exile of his older brother, Abdul Aziz's father, Abd Rahman, emerged as the head of the Al Saud family. But he could not hold on. In the dark of night in 1891, Abd Rahman put ten-year-old Abdul Aziz in a bag slung over the back of a camel and fled Riyadh to escape a coming attack by the Rashids, a rival family allied with the Shammar tribe of the northern peninsula. (To add to the name confusion, under the style now used by his successors, Abdul Aziz would be Abdul Aziz Ibn Abd Rahman al-Saud.)

The family eventually settled in Kuwait, the sheikhdom on the Persian Gulf under the protection of Britain. Yet Abdul Aziz spent his adolescence with the nomadic Al Murra tribe that lived in and around the Rub'al Khali, the forbidding Empty Quarter. Riding and raiding with the Al Murra, he internalized the bedouin life, learning its strengths and weaknesses, codes of conduct, skills, tactics and attitudes.

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He also learned from the Al Murra how a bedouin leader without money could exercise his authority by presiding over a well-ordered tribal community.

By 1896, Abdul Aziz had come out of the desert to sit at the feet of Mubarak, the sheikh of Kuwait. As part of Mubarak's campaign against the Rashids, Abdul Aziz in 1902 seized his family's ancestral capital of Riyadh and established himself in the small walled town in the heart of the Najd. The young Abdul Aziz's authority stemmed in part from his stature. At six feet four inches tall, he stood a foot above those he sought to lead. Beyond size, he radiated genuine charisma, pulling people to him like a magnetic force. Bundling it all in the theology of the Wahhabis underwrote his legitimacy. Calling the religious leaders together, he announced:

You owe nothing to me. I am like you, one of you. But I am appointed to direct the affairs of our people in accordance with the book of Allah. Our first duty is to Allah and those who teach the Book of Allah, the Ulema. I am but an instrument of command in their hand. Obedience to God means obedience to them.

As Abdul Aziz extended his territory northward toward Qasim, the challenge of bringing followers to his flag became more difficult in an atmosphere of competing tribal loyalties. Employing Islam, Abdul Aziz used religious conquests to secure his political conquests. Religious scholars and the *mutawwa*, the zealous enforcers of Wahhabism, proselytized Wahhabi theology and rituals in preparation for

Abdul Aziz's claim to political authority. In return for their service, he put the ulema and the *mutawwa* on salary and recognized their absolute authority in all religious matters. The religious leaders, in turn, acknowledged his absolute discretion in political matters. Little has changed since then.

Nevertheless, tribal politics remained the essential element in rebuilding the empire of the Al Sauds. When not fighting wars, Abdul Aziz toured the far-flung parts of his growing domain. Traveling with his treasury stowed in a tin trunk, he delivered gifts, moderated disputes and fed his subjects, all acts that rendered his authority tangible. Still, between 1908 and 1910, tribal revolts broke out in his northern territories. Upon losing a battle to Abdul Aziz, his rebelling subjects expected vengeance. Instead, he gathered his opponents and addressed them as beloved subjects who had strayed. He promised that so long as they remained loyal to him, he would ensure they would be protected and live in peace. He frequently took wives from among the virgins of the tribes. After the wedding night, he usually sent the bride and everyone else back to their families and villages to recount what they had seen of his justice.

During the first decade of his rule over Riyadh, there was another force at work in the Najd. A group of roughly fifty men from the Mutair and Harb tribes, two of the noblest bedouin tribes, established an agricultural community based on a communal life and strict adherence to the teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-

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Wahhab. They became the “Ikhwan,” or “the brethren.”

Abdul Aziz quickly recognized the potential of the Ikhwan as an element of stability. Communities of settled farmers could be expected to put a much higher value on stability than nomadic bedouins eking out an existence by wandering the desert and raiding rival tribes. Thus, he began making grants of money, seed, equipment and building materials to new Ikhwan settlements. He also paid for additional preachers and religious instructors. But just as Abdul Aziz provided for them, he expected them to reciprocate by supplying him with conscripts for his territorial battles. In October 1924, components of the Ikhwan, without direction from Riyadh, claimed Mecca for Abdul Aziz. But soon the Ikhwan became a force unto itself. In the Hejaz, the zealots harassed pilgrims making the hajj whose behavior and customs didn't comport with Wahhabi practices. In the East, Ikhwan raiding parties charged over the borders of Iraq and Kuwait, disrupting Abdul Aziz's relations with regional powers.

Acting as the sheikh of a tribe, Abdul Aziz summoned the leaders to Riyadh. Over weeks, he tirelessly received his dissident followers in his majlis, plied them with food and reached into his tin trunk to gather coins to meet their requests. In the end, most—but not all—Ikhwan leaders returned to their settlements as loyal subjects. Having pacified the majority, Abdul Aziz struck the rebels.

In early 1929, central and northern Arabia became the scene of widespread

guerrilla warfare as the rebelling Ikhwan attacked villages, caravans and tribes loyal to the king until Abdul Aziz defeated them in the last great traditional bedouin battle fought from the backs of camels and horses. Although mechanized warfare would soon thereafter come to the Arabian Peninsula, Abdul Aziz continued to rule as a tribal sheikh. His majlis was where his subjects came to bring their grievances and collect their due as members of their king's tribe. To hold the system together, Abdul Aziz physically appeared in all parts of his kingdom, putting enormous demands on his time and limited resources.

**B**eyond tribal politics, Abdul Aziz also faced the challenge posed by great-power rivalries of the Ottoman Empire and Britain in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Mubarak of the small sheikhdom of Kuwait reigned as a master of manipulation, playing off one great power against another. When Abdul Aziz returned to Kuwait from his years with the Al Murra, Mubarak invited him to sit in on his audiences. In his role as protégé, he met traders, merchants and travelers as well as government representatives from England, France, Russia, Germany and the Ottoman Empire. In expanding his education beyond religion and tribal rivalries, he also sharpened his perceptions of the imperial powers—their aims as well as their relative strengths and weaknesses—as he watched Mubarak skillfully play one against the other. One thing became clear: if Abdul Aziz wanted to restore the

empire of the Al Sauds, he would need the goodwill and protection of the British along the west coast of the Persian Gulf. At the same time, he came to understand that he must avoid provoking armed intervention against him by the Turks. Consequently, in the years prior to World War I,

Abdul Aziz continually kept the region's two established great powers in confusion. The Turks knew Abdul Aziz was courting Britain along with themselves, and the British knew that every time he approached them for support, he had, at the same time, pledged to the sultan of the Ottoman Empire his unswerving loyalty.

Abdul Aziz benefited from a string of British imperial officers responsible for the Persian Gulf who considered him the most gifted leader of the interior of the Arabian Peninsula. None acted as a greater advocate for Abdul Aziz than the young William Shakespear, who came to Kuwait as political resident in 1909. On meeting Abdul Aziz for the first time, Shakespear discovered that he displayed none of the xenophobia or narrow-minded fanaticism commonly associated with Wahhabis. He also recognized that Abdul Aziz was a political realist.



Although Abdul Aziz sought British naval protection, London's goal on the Arabian Peninsula was not another protectorate. It was to maintain good relations with Turkey and thus thwart German, French or Russian designs on Britain's Indian

empire. London also feared that any friction with Turkey and the caliphate might inflame anti-British sentiment among Muslims in India. In this thinking, Abdul Aziz seemed merely the weak ruler of an isolated minor statelet.

But in 1913, Shakespear warned his superiors that Abdul Aziz intended to move out of the Najd into Hasa and Qatif. Since both fronted on the Persian Gulf, Britain would be forced into relations with him whether London wanted them or not. As predicted, Abdul Aziz did take Hasa in 1913. With it came the continuing need to balance one great power against the other. To Turkey, he gave his personal assurance that he remained "an obedient servant of the Sultan," promising to maintain order in the province and expressing his willingness to serve as governor on the sultan's behalf. To Britain, he said his ambition was to reclaim his family's ancestral lands, not

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interfere with the coastal emirates with which Britain had treaties. Again he asked Britain to give him financial and naval protection from the Turks. London refused.

In March 1914, Britain and the Ottoman Empire reached an agreement in which the two imperial powers divided the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. London took the territory running southwest from Qatar in the East, across the Rub'al Khali and along the northern borders of Yemen and the Aden protectorates to the Red Sea. Everything to the north of the line, including all of the Najd, Hasa and the Hejaz, belonged to Istanbul. With London determined to reach an agreement with Turkey that would protect Britain from the Persian Gulf to India, the British wooed Abdul Aziz to Kuwait, where he was cornered and forced to submit to the Anglo-Ottoman Treaty.

Then fate intervened in the form of World War I. Britain and the Ottoman Empire now were on opposite sides, and Whitehall sent Shakespear to enlist Abdul Aziz as an ally. Rather than joining the British war effort, wily Abdul Aziz decided to play for time. Shakespear reported to London that Abdul Aziz would not move to make matters "either easier for us or more difficult for the Turks as far as the present war is concerned, until he obtains . . . some very solid guarantee of his position, with Great Britain practically as his suzerain."

By December 1915, the two parties, which had been dancing around each other for a decade, now reached out to each other. Abdul Aziz needed British protection against the Ottomans, the Hashemites and

the Rashids. He also needed British arms and money to deal with tribal revolts inside his territory. Britain needed to neutralize any potential ally of Turkey in the face of appalling casualties on the western front and the disaster unfolding in the Dardanelles campaign. Yet, when London decided to back the Arab revolt, it turned to the sharif of Mecca, not Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud.

In 1908, the Ottoman sultan had appointed Husayn Ibn Ali as sharif of Mecca. For eight hundred years, the post of sharif, protector of the two holy cities and the holy places, had been filled by a member of the Hashemite family. As strife between the Young Turks and the sultan escalated in the lead-up to World War I, Husayn continued in his post, exercising considerable autonomy. Thus Britain judged him the most effective face of the British-financed Arab revolt against the Turks. Once more, Abdul Aziz's position dropped from a significant force to a minor figure within the game of great-power politics. Worse was to come.

After World War I, the British put the Hashemites, rivals of the Al Sauds, on the thrones of Transjordan and Iraq. They also continued to maintain their protectorates along the Arabian Peninsula's eastern coast. France seized Greater Syria. With no other countervailing weight to put on the scales, Abdul Aziz feared for the independence of his kingdom. Then the oil prospectors came calling in the 1930s. Turning his back on mighty Britain, Abdul Aziz placed his potential oil resources in the hands of America, a country far away that carried

*Turning his back on mighty Britain, Abdul Aziz placed his potential oil resources in the hands of America, a country far away that carried little history of imperialism.*

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little history of imperialism. Throughout the remainder of his reign, the United States provided Saudi Arabia the protective cover Abdul Aziz needed to ensure his kingdom's sovereignty.

**A**bdul Aziz Ibn Saud died at his palace in Riyadh on November 9, 1953, at the age of seventy-three. He carried into death all the scars of his battles to build and defend a kingdom encompassing most of the Arabian Peninsula, from the southern borders of Iraq and Jordan to the northern border of Yemen, and from the east coast of the Red Sea to the west coast of the Persian Gulf, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He left it to the Al Saud name, his forty-three sons and the Wahhabi ulema. He also bequeathed the wealth that his negotiations with international oil companies had delivered and the security that the United States provided.

But he also left his country, his people and his heirs with the flaws of his legacy. Abdul Aziz never made the transition from tribal sheikh to head of state. Nor did he ever differentiate between the resources of the sheikh and the resources of the government. Tormented by the fear of family infighting that destroyed the first Al Saud empire, he established a system of succession to the throne that today endangers the very family it was designed to protect. On the death of the founding father, his oldest son, Saud, became the king. Since then, Saud's brothers, one by one, have succeeded to the throne through a byzantine system operated by the family and legitimized by the Wahhabi

establishment. Although the House of Saud has avoided a rupture, the system has proved problematic. Saud, weak and corrupted, was forced out by the family. Faisal, the most revered of the kings who followed Abdul Aziz, was assassinated by his nephew. Khalid, regarded by his subjects as a kindly sheikh, reigned while his brother Fahd ruled. As crown prince and king, Fahd pushed development and shunned the bedouin ethos and religious piety of his predecessors. It is the current king, Abdullah, combining the attributes of a great bedouin sheikh, pious Wahhabi and cautious reformer, who comes closest to the model of Abdul Aziz. He is now in his late eighties and in poor health. Through his death, the House of Saud escaped the succession of the long-time defense minister, Sultan, who was detested by most Saudis. That leaves Prince Nayef to succeed Abdullah if the pattern holds. As head of the dreaded security services, he claims neither the charisma nor the respect earned by Abdul Aziz, Faisal and Abdullah. He is also seventy-nine years old.

If not after the death of Abdullah, then soon the House of Saud must move to the next generation. That will let loose all of Abdul Aziz's fears about family conflict. Who will lead this next generation? Where will his legitimacy come from, since the Wahhabi ulema are now seen as servants of the state, not defenders of the faith? How strong is the tribal system after four decades of rapid development? How willing are the Al Sauds to open up the political and economic system in which they have always operated as the state itself? How strong are

those who trace their theology back to the Ikhwan?

In 1979, the heirs of Abdul Aziz faced their own Ikhwan revolt when religious militants seized the Grand Mosque at Mecca. Another modern rendition of the Ikhwan came to life on September 11, 2001, when fifteen of the nineteen hijackers who brought down the towers of New York's World Trade Center and hit the Pentagon were Saudis striking the protectors of the House of Saud. Others have inflicted and continue to plot acts of terrorism against the kingdom and its ruling family.

The heirs of Abdul Aziz face their founding father's same imperative to balance internal pressures against external forces. The long-standing defense alliance

with the United States rid Saudi Arabia of the threat of Saddam Hussein in 1990–1991, but the presence of American forces in the kingdom also required that the House of Saud lessen its security dependence on its long-time protector. In response to internal opposition, American forces have been pushed farther beyond the horizon and out of sight of those who adhere to strict Wahhabism. With Iraq removed as a counterbalance to Iran by the 2003 American invasion, the House of Saud now also faces the threat of Shia Iran, whose population is three times that of Saudi Arabia. The Islamic Republic has ties to the Shia in the kingdom's eastern province and an ideology that calls into question the whole concept of monarchy in a Muslim state.

To grasp the character of Saudi Arabia and what the future might hold for it, any thinking Westerner must understand Abdul Aziz. Darlow and Bray have brought him to life for those who perhaps know the name Ibn Saud but not the man who forged one of the pivotal countries in the world today out of the rock and sand of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia's importance is not only due to its oil; the kingdom's history as the birthplace of Islam and its geographical position astride so many of the world's major trade and communications routes render the Saudi Arabia of today, unlike in the time of Abdul Aziz, a vital player in a strategic region. □





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