War & Geopolitics in the Middle East:
TODAY & YESTERDAY

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

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War and Violence in the Middle East

Image: Australian Defense Forces patrol a street in Iraq. (Source: Wikimedia)

From Baghdad to Kabul: The Historical Roots of U.S. Counterinsurgency Doctrine

By Peter Mansoor

The recent publicity surrounding the U.S. Marine offensive into the Helmand River valley in southern Afghanistan has once again focused the American public's attention on U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy. "Where we go, we will stay, and where we stay, we will hold, build and work toward transition of all security responsibilities to Afghan forces," Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson declared at the beginning of the operation.

A U.S. Tank in Karbala, Iraq, May 2004. The American experiences in Afghanistan and especially Iraq over the past eight years have forced the U.S. military to rethink how it approaches counterinsurgent warfare. After some successes in Iraq, will the new counterinsurgency doctrine also work in Afghanistan?

This phrase is reminiscent of the Bush administration's belated strategy of "clear, hold, and build" in Iraq, a policy announced by President George W. Bush on March 21, 2006 in the midst of a large spike in ethno-sectarian violence that would

by the end of the year drive Iraq to the brink of a full scale civil war.

Yet, a general understanding of counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy remains elusive. To many Americans, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are confusing conflicts waged by shadowy enemies without the benefit of the clear military or geographic objectives common to more conventional wars.

This lack of knowledge persists despite the fact that our nation gained its independence via an insurgency and has waged a dozen or so counterinsurgency conflicts since its birth. A familiarity with the historical record is essential to understanding the wars our nation is fighting today. What, we should ask, are the historical antecedents of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and how have they shaped American counterinsurgency doctrine and strategy?

Counterinsurgency Strategy – The Global Historical Context

Insurgencies have been around since the dawn of recorded history, as have the means used to suppress them. Until recently, counterinsurgency strategies have focused on the destruction of guerrilla forces, and/or on the control or devastation of the populations and environments from which insurgents gain their subsistence and support.

Imperial Britain used means such as burning villages, seizing livestock, destroying crops, and other measures to quell insurgencies. During the Second Boer War (1899-1902) the British interned 120,000 Boers, mostly women and children, in concentration camps; over 20,000 died in less than two years of confinement, mostly from improper hygiene and medical care.

When faced with an uprising in Kenya in the early 1950s, Britain again concentrated the population to prevent their support for guerrilla forces. By the end of 1954, the British forced more than 75,000 Kikuyu tribesmen into detention camps; and herded another million-plus tribesmen into protected villages to control their movements and activities. Isolated from their sources of supply and recruits and hunted incessantly in their sanctuaries, the British dealt the Mau Mau guerrilla organization a lethal blow.

The Battle of Paseo during the Philippine Insurrection, February 1899 (Source: Wikimedia)

Colonel Pete Mansoor (author) and Personal Security Detachment in Iraq, September 2003 (Source: author)

By 1956 the insurgent movement had collapsed. [Click here for more on recent history in Kenya.]

The United States has its own history of relocating civilian populations to enable the isolation and destruction of guerrilla forces.

During the Philippine War (1899-1902), U.S. forces in Luzon concentrated civilian populations in towns, either through enticements such as improved government services and provision of free education or through forced relocations, to enable military forces to hunt and destroy guerrilla bands in the surrounding hills and jungles.

Map of the Philippine Islands (Source: Milwaukee Public Museum)

During the Vietnam War, U.S. and British advisors worked with the South Vietnamese government to establish the strategic hamlet program, the goal of which was to separate the Vietnamese people from the Communist guerrillas by forcing them into protected villages.

Between 1961 and 1963, over 8 million people were relocated into strategic hamlets, but the poor administration of the program enabled insurgents from the National Liberation Front to overrun or infiltrate most of the villages. The program also alienated the Vietnamese peasantry by driving them away from their ancestral homes, and into the waiting arms of the Communist insurgency.

The French in Algeria also used a variety of population control measures in their efforts to defeat the insurgency that gripped the country from 1954-1962.

In Algiers, the French surrounded the most dangerous part of the city, the Casbah, with barbed wire and checkpoints to force the residents to show identification and submit to searches upon entry and exit. French paratroopers eventually gained the intelligence they needed to break up the terrorist cell responsible for the worst of the bombings in Algiers, but only through the use of torture (including waterboarding) that tainted the French effort with ethical misconduct.

French forces in rural areas of Algeria used a system called quadrillage to divide the country into sectors and positioned permanent garrisons in them to control the population and hunt down the insurgents. From 1957-1960, the French removed over two million Algerians from their villages and resettled them in more easily controlled camps to prevent them from supporting the rebels. They also created heavily patrolled barriers along the borders of Tunisia and Morocco that limited insurgent infiltration from their sanctuaries in these countries.

By 1960 the French had largely secured Algeria in a military sense, only to lose the political will to continue the struggle. In July 1962, President Charles de Gaulle granted Algeria independence, ceding territory that had been proclaimed a part of metropolitan France for over a century.

Another counterinsurgency strategy often employed is to focus efforts directly on the destruction of insurgent forces.

Colonel Pete Mansoor (author) and Personal Security Detachment in Iraq, September 2003 (Source: author)

Infantry search palm groves in Iraq, September 2003

Russian forces in Chechnya used massive firepower to destroy guerrilla forces and sanctuaries in the Second Chechen War beginning in 1999, with over of 25,000 dead, mostly Chechen civilians. The United States, European nations, and the United Nations all roundly condemned the conduct of Russian forces, but the ability of Russian President Vladimir Putin to withstand this criticism enabled Russian forces to execute operations to destroy armed Chechen resistance, with minimal concern for the civilian population. [For more on current Russian history, see the Origins article "After Putin".]

The recent destruction of the Tamil Tiger guerrilla base on Sri Lanka and the attendant dislocation of the population in the process is another case in point

Counterinsurgency warfare does not just harm people. Often, the environment sustains major damage from the military operations designed to isolate insurgents and deny them resources and sanctuary.

Rome sowed salt into the remains of Carthage to ensure that vegetation would no longer grow there. Russians in the 19th century chopped down vast swaths of forest to deny Chechen rebels sanctuary. In Vietnam, U.S. forces used herbicides (Agent Orange) to defoliate jungle foliage in order to deny Viet Cong guerrillas cover and concealment.

Weapons and Ammunition Seized in Karbala, Iraq, May 2004

U.S. Soldier in Karbala, Iraq, May 2004

However, in the absence of precise intelligence and targeting, a strategy focused on the elimination of insurgent forces is only viable provided a counterinsurgent force is willing to accept massive civilian casualties and environmental degradation, along with the negative publicity that results.

Challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan

Today, people and governments in the West have become increasingly reluctant to condone the massive level of violence and collateral damage needed to suppress an insurgency through force once it has grown beyond the embryonic stage.

Political Map of Afghanistan (Source: Wikipedia)

In the 1990s, Saddam Hussein drained the marshes of southern Iraq to destroy the habitat of the marsh Arabs who had caused his regime so much trouble over the years. The Iraqi government today is in the process of restoring the marshes, but it will take decades for the palm groves and marshes of southern Iraq to recover from this ecocide.

As these examples illustrate, once an insurgent movement is established, its destruction has most often entailed extensive use of firepower, widespread devastation of civilian habitats, and strict control of the population, along with the collateral damage, ecocide, and civilian deaths that often accompany such measures.

Even with precision guided munitions and high technology intelligence and surveillance systems, western militaries will rarely be able to target enough of an insurgency's leaders and infrastructure to collapse an organization once it has firmly embedded among the people.

The al-Askari mosque before the 2006 bombing in Samarra, Iraq.
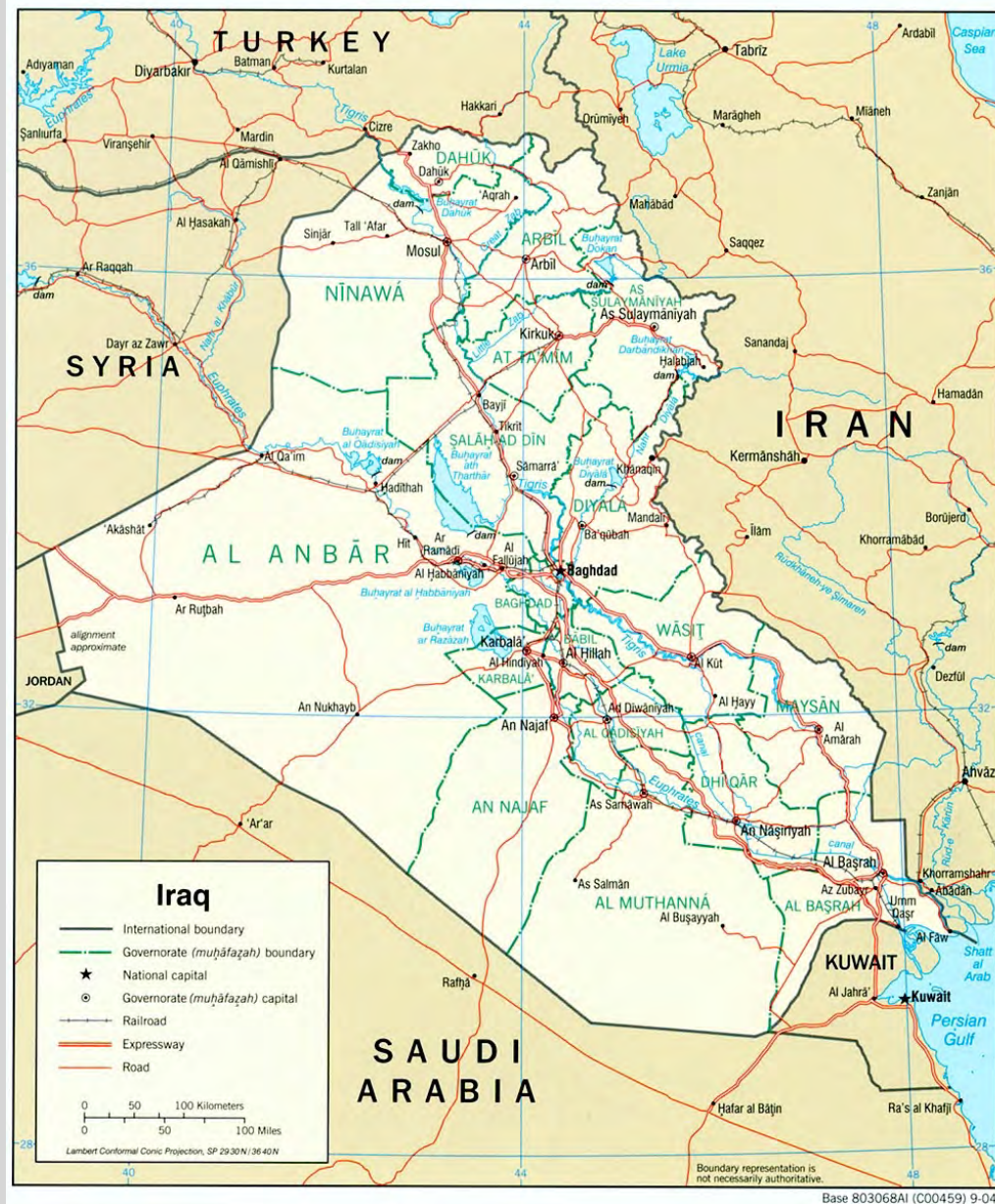
Political Map of Iraq, 2004 (Source: Maps of the World)

Collateral damage and civilian casualties, on the other hand, are magnified through insurgent propaganda and skillful use of the Internet, satellite television, and other media resources to sway popular opinion against the counterinsurgent.

The U.S. military campaigns in Iraq from 2003-2006 and in Afghanistan from 2001-2008 bear out these assertions. During the first year of the Iraq War after the fall of Baghdad in the spring of 2003, the shortage of U.S. ground forces, combined with the disbanding of the Iraqi army by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, meant that there were insufficient troops available to execute a counterinsurgency strategy that focused on the protection of the Iraqi people.

Instead, military forces conducted targeted raids and cordon and search operations to destroy insurgents in their strongholds. Often, U.S. forces vacated areas once they were cleared of an overt insurgent presence, only to discover that the enemy returned to these same areas once military forces withdrew.

Iraqi citizens who had cooperated with the coalition forces were then placed at the mercy of the insurgents, who tortured and killed many civilians for their collaboration with coalition forces.

U.S. Bridgader General Larry Nicholson

Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I), under the command of General George Casey, initially continued this strategy to destroy insurgent forces in Iraq. Beginning in the spring of 2004, MNF-I ordered U.S. forces to withdraw from outposts in Iraqi cities and to position on large forward operating bases on the outskirts.

The thinking was that U.S. forces were a virus infecting Iraqi society, and the only way to prevent the forces of liberation turning into a hated occupation was to remove them from among the people. The lack of trained and ready Iraqi police and army units doomed this policy to failure.

Once U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq's cities, Sunni insurgents and Shi'ite militias took control of a large part of Baghdad and other urban areas. U.S. forces, patrolling in armored vehicles into neighborhoods from their bases on the periphery, could not maintain control or protect the population. [See here for more on the history of the Sunni and Shi'a Muslim conflict.]

In the spring of 2004 Sunni insurgents gained control of Fallujah, requiring a massive offensive operation in November to root them out of their urban stronghold—an operation that destroyed a good portion of the city in the process.

General David Petraeus testifying before the U.S. Congress with Colonel Pete Mansoor
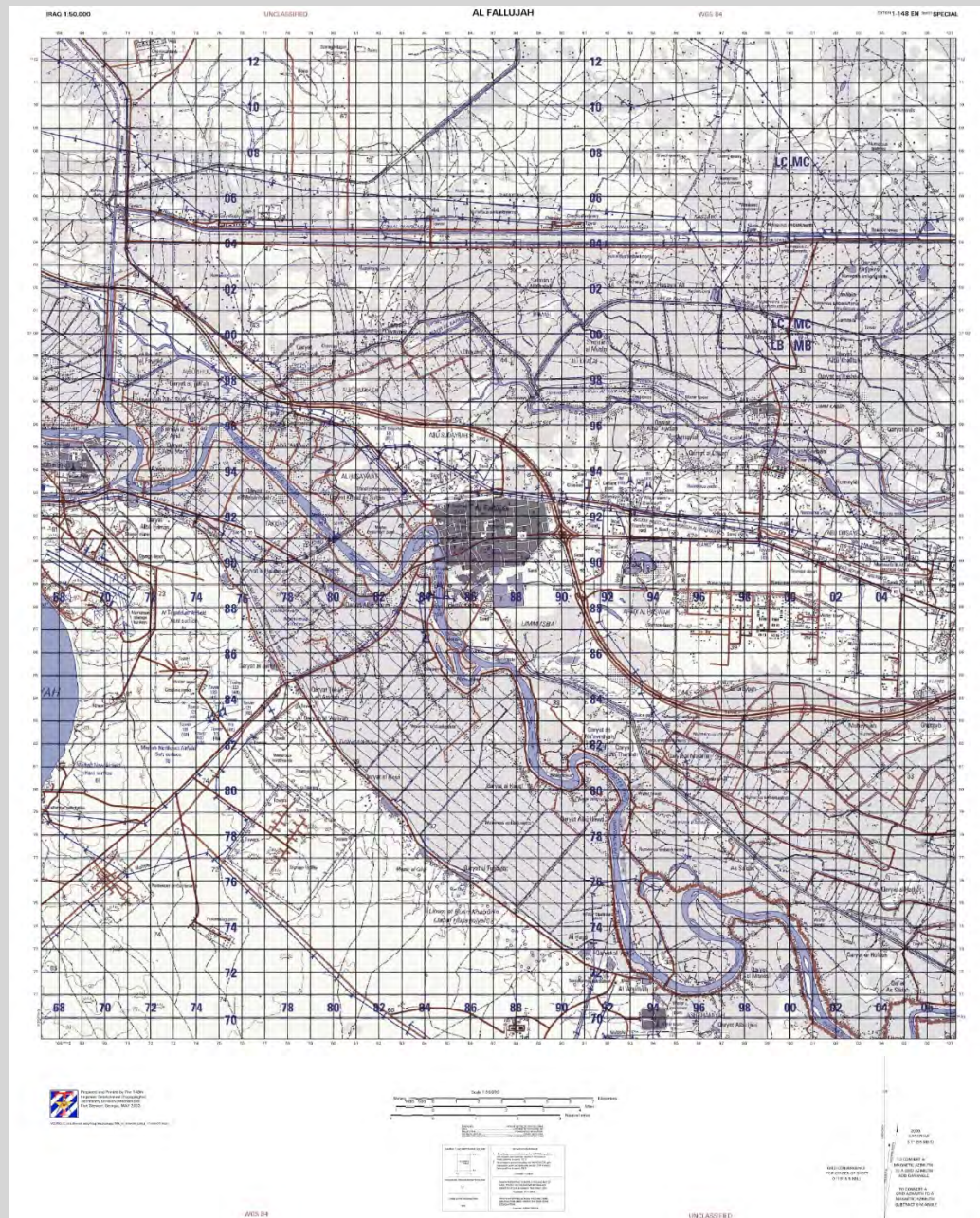
US Military Map of Fallujah, 2003

U.S. General Stanley McChrystal

U.S. Army Colonel H.R. McMaster

General Casey needed an alternative strategy to rescue a failing mission. He seized on the transition of security responsibilities to Iraqi forces as his primary goal, neatly summed up by President Bush in a nationally televised speech, "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."

But the strength and abilities of the insurgency were growing faster than the numbers and capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. The bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra by operatives of Al Qaeda-Iraq in February 2006 fatally undermined this strategy. Iraqi forces, sometimes themselves complicit in ethno-sectarian violence, could not contain the resulting sectarian violence as Shi'ite militias swept through Baghdad and other Iraqi cities.

Sunni insurgents, increasingly under the sway of Al Qaeda-Iraq extremists, gained substantial control of Al Anbar province and several neighborhoods in Baghdad, Baqubah, and Mosul. By the end of 2006, the war was nearly lost as sectarian conflict wracked Baghdad and Iraq teetered on the edge of a full-scale civil war.

The early course of the war in Afghanistan since the U.S. invasion in 2001 has also substantiated the inability of western forces to

destroy an entrenched insurgency through offensive operations. U.S. ground forces launched a number of large unit operations to destroy Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, with mixed results. Despite suffering significant losses to air strikes and ground combat, Taliban forces grew in numbers and capability.

Complicating matters, the Pashtun areas of western Pakistan provided safe havens for Taliban forces. Occasional strikes by armed unmanned aerial vehicles killed a number of Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders, but also produced a backlash among the Pakistani public, who widely condemned the violation of their sovereignty. By 2008 the Taliban had gained control of significant swaths of Afghan territory and put in doubt the outcome of the conflict.

U.S. Colonel Sean MacFarland

U.S. government map of Baghdad, 2006 (Source: Wikimedia)

The Key to Successful Counterinsurgency Warfare – the Population

If destruction of insurgent forces is not today the key to victory in counterinsurgency warfare, then what is?

In a seminal work on counterinsurgency theory written in 1964, French Army Colonel David Galula (who served with French forces in the Algerian conflict in the 1950s) hypothesized the protection of the population as the key to a successful counterinsurgency strategy.

Since insurgents cannot normally win an outright military victory against the conventional forces of a state, they must control and gain the support of the people in order to exercise political power and render the government powerless.

To be successful, the counterinsurgent must contend for the support of the population and protect the people from insurgent violence, intimidation, and coercion. The goal is to make it impossible for the insurgents to live among the people and use them as a base of support; killing or capturing enemy forces is a secondary objective.

If the population is the decisive element in counterinsurgency warfare, then convincing the people that a better life lays ahead is essential to restoring the legitimacy of the governing authority. Often deemed the battle over "hearts and minds"—a phrase used by British General Sir Gerald Templer, Director of Operations and High Commissioner for Malaya, regarding his strategy to defeat the Communist guerrillas in that country in the 1950s—this field of activity is really a contest for the people's trust and confidence.

The people must be convinced that support for the legitimate governing authority is not only preferable to

Iraq Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, 2006 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

support for the insurgent cause, but also clearly in their best interests. Executed properly, civic action and humanitarian assistance are undertaken to require the people to make an active choice in favor of supporting the legitimate governing authority. This choice has little to do with gratitude, which cannot survive first contact with terrorism and intimidation, and much to do with enlightened self interest.

Many armies, configured both physically and intellectually for conventional, high intensity combat, have difficulty adjusting to these realities.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army for several years persisted in applying a conventional war-fighting doctrine to irregular warfare. The resulting strategy of attrition, exemplified by search and destroy operations focused on body counts of dead guerrilla fighters, failed to lessen significantly the strength of the National Liberation Front.

While combat against North Vietnamese Army regiments may have necessitated a degree of high intensity combat, the need to secure the South Vietnamese population from Communist guerrillas required a different approach. The situation only changed after the Tet offensive in 1968 when the new commander of Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, General Creighton Abrams, embraced a revised strategy focused on protecting the population.

Innovation from Below

Regrettably, for three decades after the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. professional military education system all but ignored counterinsurgency operations.

Instructors from the Command and General Staff College, trying to create a course on low intensity conflict in the 1980s, looked in vain for help from the Special Operations School at Fort Bragg. They found that the staff there had been ordered to throw away their counterinsurgency files in the 1970s, since presumably the United States would never fight that kind of war again.

As a result, U.S. military commanders struggled from a conceptual shortfall in the first years after 9/11.

There were exceptions, however. In 2005-2006, the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, under the commander of Colonel H. R. McMaster, conducted an inspired operation in the city of Tal Afar in northwestern Iraq that became a model for operations elsewhere in the country.

When McMaster's unit arrived in Tal Afar in the spring of 2005, the city was under the control of foreign jihadists and their Iraqi allies, who used it as a base of operations and a transit point for men and materiel smuggled into the country from neighboring Syria.

The author, Colonel Pete Mansoor, Commander, 1st Brigade, 1st Armor, 2004 (Source: author)

The insurgents had intimidated the population into submission to their brutal authority. The Turkmen population, divided along Sunni-Shi'a lines, was engaged in horrific sectarian violence. For all intents and purposes, Tal Afar had become a dead city.

McMaster employed a strategy of "clear and hold" to restore Tal Afar to coalition control. His troops first surrounded the city with a berm to force traffic through security checkpoints and thereby isolated the insurgents and terrorists from outside support.

Leaders then spent countless hours engaging the people, sorting out the local power structures, and lending a sympathetic ear to

grievances while slowly turning the narrative from a Sunni-Shi'a civil war to one of all Iraqis against the foreign jihadists who had taken control of and terrorized their city.

Instead of a massive assault to clear the city, as coalition forces had done the previous November in Fallujah, McMaster employed his forces in small combat outposts scattered throughout Tal Afar to provide the people with security against terrorist depredations.

He also worked diligently to recruit both Sunnis and Shi'ites to provide a sectarian balance within the police force. By the time the 3rd ACR departed Iraq in early 2006, Tal Afar was once again under coalition control.

The 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division (the "Ready First Combat Team"), under the command of Colonel Sean MacFarland,

Soldiers of 1-36 Infantry, Iraq, September 2003

replaced McMaster's forces in Tal Afar and continued the campaign to hold the city while restoring government functions and essential services[1].

The desperate situation further south in Al Anbar province, however, forced Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) in June 2006 to move most of the brigade combat team to Ramadi, a city designated by Al Qaeda-Iraq as the capital of its future Iraqi caliphate. With the exception of a handful of Marine bases, Sunni insurgents enjoyed almost complete freedom of movement throughout the area. Jihadists had terrorized the population into submission, and their brutal administration of Islamic law left deep-seated scars on the community.

Faced with a problem in Ramadi similar to that encountered by McMaster in Tal Afar, MacFarland employed similar techniques to clear the city and then hold it against terrorists and insurgent forces.

Units of the Ready First Combat Team challenged terrorists and insurgents in their long held sanctuaries within the city by establishing combat outposts in their midst, occupied by U.S. troops, Iraqi security forces, and civil affairs teams.

MacFarland and his leaders engaged local tribal sheiks, fed up with Al Qaeda violence and their loss of prestige and influence, to solicit their cooperation and to recruit their young men into neighborhood watch units or into the Ramadi police force.

Resurgent Iraqi police and tribal elements raided Al Qaeda safe houses and seized hundreds of weapons caches. Slowly but

surely, the advance of combat outposts, combined with support from the growing Sunni tribal rebellion against Al Qaeda, squeezed the insurgents out of Ramadi.

The Surge

Population security in Tal Afar and Ramadi exemplified the type of operations envisioned in the new, historically-grounded U.S. Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine published in December 2006.

These successes came not a moment too soon; by the end of 2006 the Iraq War was nearly lost as Iraqi society tore itself apart

Iraq school children thankful for donated school supplies, 2004

in a spasm of sectarian bloodletting. Political progress toward reconciliation and an equitable distribution of power and resources among competing sectarian and ethnic groups was not possible until violence diminished.

Belatedly sensing the need for a change of course, President Bush in January 2007 ordered a "surge" of 40,000 troops to Iraq. These forces would conduct operations focused on population security under the leadership of General David Petraeus, who assumed command of MNF-I in February 2007, and Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, who deployed to Iraq in command of MNC-I late in 2006.

The new strategy was more important than the additional forces.

While continuing operations to clear areas of an overt insurgent presence, Petraeus and Odierno ordered U.S. units to deploy off of the large forward operating bases where they had been stationed since the spring of 2004 and to establish smaller joint security stations and combat outposts in Iraqi neighborhoods and communities.

There they would partner with Iraqi security forces, support local neighborhood watch groups (nicknamed the "Sons of Iraq," which grew to over 100,000 strong by mid-2008), and provide much-needed security to the Iraqi people to insulate them from terrorist violence and militia intimidation. From these outposts combat forces would conduct dismounted patrols and thereby benefit from more intimate contact with the people living in their assigned zones.

Middle East Map, 2003 (Source: Wikipedia)

determine local social structures. They also enrolled Iraqis into biometric databases so that soldiers could quickly determine local residents from outsiders.

These measures were a more humane alternative to the use of concentration camps to control civilian movement and make it more difficult for insurgents to live among the people.

The revised counterinsurgency strategy, the improved techniques used by U.S. commanders, and the provision of more security forces served as the catalyst to significantly improve security in Iraq.

The arrival of U.S. reinforcements signaled renewed resolve and assured Sunni tribal leaders that they would not be abandoned once they turned their guns against Al Qaeda-Iraq, as had happened once before in 2005. The tribal rebellion accelerated after the surge forces arrived and U.S. and Iraqi units moved to secure communities by living among the people.

Improved security also led to a loosening of the grip by Shi'ite militias on a number of key areas. Amnesty legislation and local cease fires reduced the number of fighters opposing the government.

Finally, the increase of Iraqi security forces by more than 140,000 troops in 2007 and 2008, along with their improved capabilities, emboldened Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to confront the Jaish al-Mahdi militia in its strongholds in Basra, Amarah, and Sadr City, and to bring the vast majority of southern and central Iraq under Iraqi government control.

U.S. commanders introduced other techniques as well. In conjunction with community leaders, coalition forces emplaced cement barriers to wall off neighborhoods and markets to impede the movement of terrorists, insurgents, and militiamen. Iraqi units manned numerous checkpoints that made terrorist and insurgent movement more difficult.

U.S. units conducted comprehensive censuses to identify exactly who lived in each neighborhood, to catalog their sect and ethnicity, and to gather other important identifiers that could help

By the summer of 2008, violence in Iraq had abated by 85 percent from its peak at the end of 2006. [See the latest statistics on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan at http://www.cnas.org/node/2898] The change in strategy and additional forces provided by the surge made these significant security improvements possible and thereby gave Iraqi leaders the opportunity—if not the certainty—to settle the competition for power and resources through more peaceful political means.

The Future in Afghanistan

It is too early to tell how counterinsurgency operations will play out in Afghanistan. The new commander of U.S. forces, General Stan McChrystal, has stated that protection of the Afghan people will be his top priority, an indication that he intends to implement the population-focused strategy employed successfully by coalition forces in Iraq.

Nevertheless, Afghanistan is a much different country. It lacks Iraq's economic viability, its tribal structure is much more deeply embedded, the Afghan government is even more inept and corrupt than the Iraqi government, and the Taliban insurgents enjoy sanctuary across the border in western Pakistan.

Additionally, the Afghan army and police are woefully undersized and under-resourced for the tasks they must perform. Historically, counterinsurgents are successful when they field 20-25 security personnel for every 1,000 people. The war in Iraq finally turned around when the number of Iraqi, coalition, and tribal security personnel approached this figure.

Today in Afghanistan there are fewer than half the number of security forces needed to reach the desired ratio for population protection. A large increase in the number of Afghan army and police, along with U.S. and NATO advisors to train and assist them, should therefore be one of the most pressing priorities in the near future.

In the meantime, increased numbers of U.S. forces will pick up the slack in the battle against Taliban forces, while American and European civilian advisors assist the Afghan government in improving its governance and capacity to provide for the needs of the people.

All of these factors point to a long slog ahead as U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces battle the Taliban militants in the midst of a substantial and extremely difficult exercise in nation-building.

If history is any guide, in the end the Afghan government and people will play the most important role in determining their own fate. Meanwhile, the struggle for their trust and confidence continues in the river valleys, deserts, and mountains of Central Asia.

The author commanded the Ready First Combat Team in Iraq in 2003-2004, and turned command of the organization over to Colonel MacFarland the following year. ◆

Suggested Reading

Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina* (Stackpole, 2005)

David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Praeger, 2006)

Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (Macmillan, 1977)

David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (Oxford, 2009)

Andrew Krepenevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Johns Hopkins, 1986)

Brian Linn, *The U.S. Army and Counterinsurgency in the Philippine War, 1899-1902* (North Carolina, 2000)

Peter Mansoor, *Baghdad at Sunrise: A Brigade Commander's War in Iraq* (Yale, 2008)

Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds., *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Osprey, 2008)

John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, 2005)

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Tom Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008* (Penguin, 2009)

Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Harcourt, 1999)

U.S. Army/USMC Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency (Government Printing Office, 2006)

The Human Use of Human Beings: A Brief History of Suicide Bombing

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Since the attack on the World Trade Center in on September 11, 2001 the world has grown accustomed to reports of "suicide bombers." They are often portrayed as deluded or crazed, and they hold an almost lurid fascination for their willingness to kill themselves while killing others. This month, historian Jeffrey William Lewis puts what many of us see as a recent phenomenon in a longer historical perspective. He argues that it is more useful to think about suicide bombers as a type of human military technology that is controlled by an organization rather than as a form of individual fanaticism.

(Published April 2013)

By Jeffrey William Lewis

On February 1, 2013, a suicide bomber killed himself and a security guard at America's embassy in Ankara, Turkey. This attack, carried out more than a decade after 9/11, reveals a great deal about the phenomenon we have come to know as suicide bombing.

Hamas claimed responsibility for this 1996 suicide bombing in Jerusalem that killed 26 Israelis in addition to the Palestinian bomber. The phenomenon of suicide bombing remains poorly understood by most Americans. (Source: US Dept. of State, Public Domain)

First, a radical left-wing group with a vaguely Marxist agenda (The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party in Turkey) claimed responsibility, demonstrating that suicide bombing is not the exclusive domain of religious fanatics.

Second, the bomber detonated his explosives before he had the opportunity to enter the embassy complex. This shows that individual initiative and fallibility are important aspects of the organizational process of suicide bombing—a process that requires expertise and practice to be truly effective.

Finally, the attack confirms that suicide bombing will continue to be a dangerous security nuisance for the foreseeable future.

Global Suicide Attacks, 2004-2011 (Source: "Worldwide Incidents Tracking System," National Counterterrorism Center)

A decade after the attacks on the World Trade Center, suicide bombing remains frustratingly mysterious to most Americans. Horror at the devastation caused by such attacks and a lurid fascination with the mindset of suicide bombers have tended to keep most people at an intellectual distance, preventing a deeper understanding.
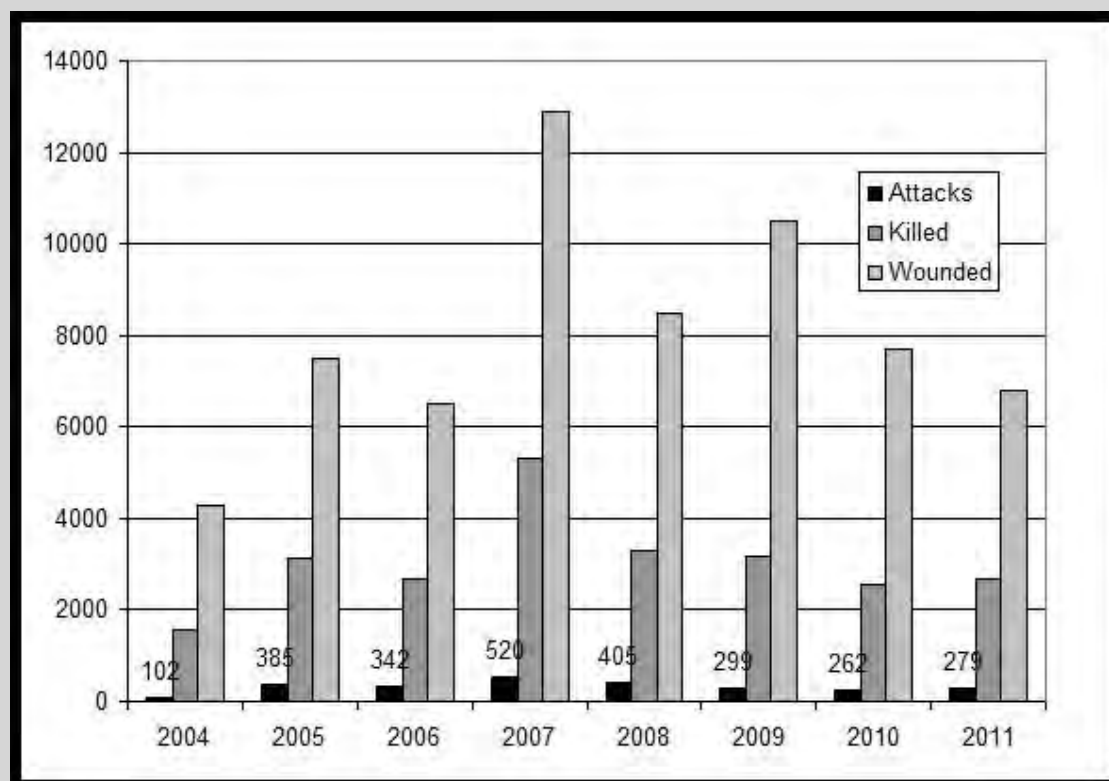
If we step back, however, and examine not only the mindset of the bombers, but the motivations of the organizations that deploy them and the cultures that approve of their violence, suicide bombing becomes understandable as a type of weapon. It is an alternative technology—the systematic mechanization of human beings—that confers upon militant groups many of the same capabilities of the sophisticated weapon systems of advanced states.

Suicide bombing finds its origins in nineteenth century Russia, and has been employed from Japan to the Middle East to Sri Lanka and elsewhere. To succeed, campaigns of suicide bombing need three factors: willing individuals, organizations to train and use them, and a society willing to accept such acts in the name of a greater good.

A Human-Centered Weapon System

The 9/11 attacks provide a useful case in point.

Suicide attacks had been used against American interests previously—for example the bombings of American embassies in East Africa in 1998 and the attack on the USS Cole in 2000. Yet the 9/11 attacks came as a surprise since they completely re-

wrote the rules of airliner hijacking. Until then, hijackings had been theatrical affairs in which the hijackers traded power over their hostages' lives for political concessions.
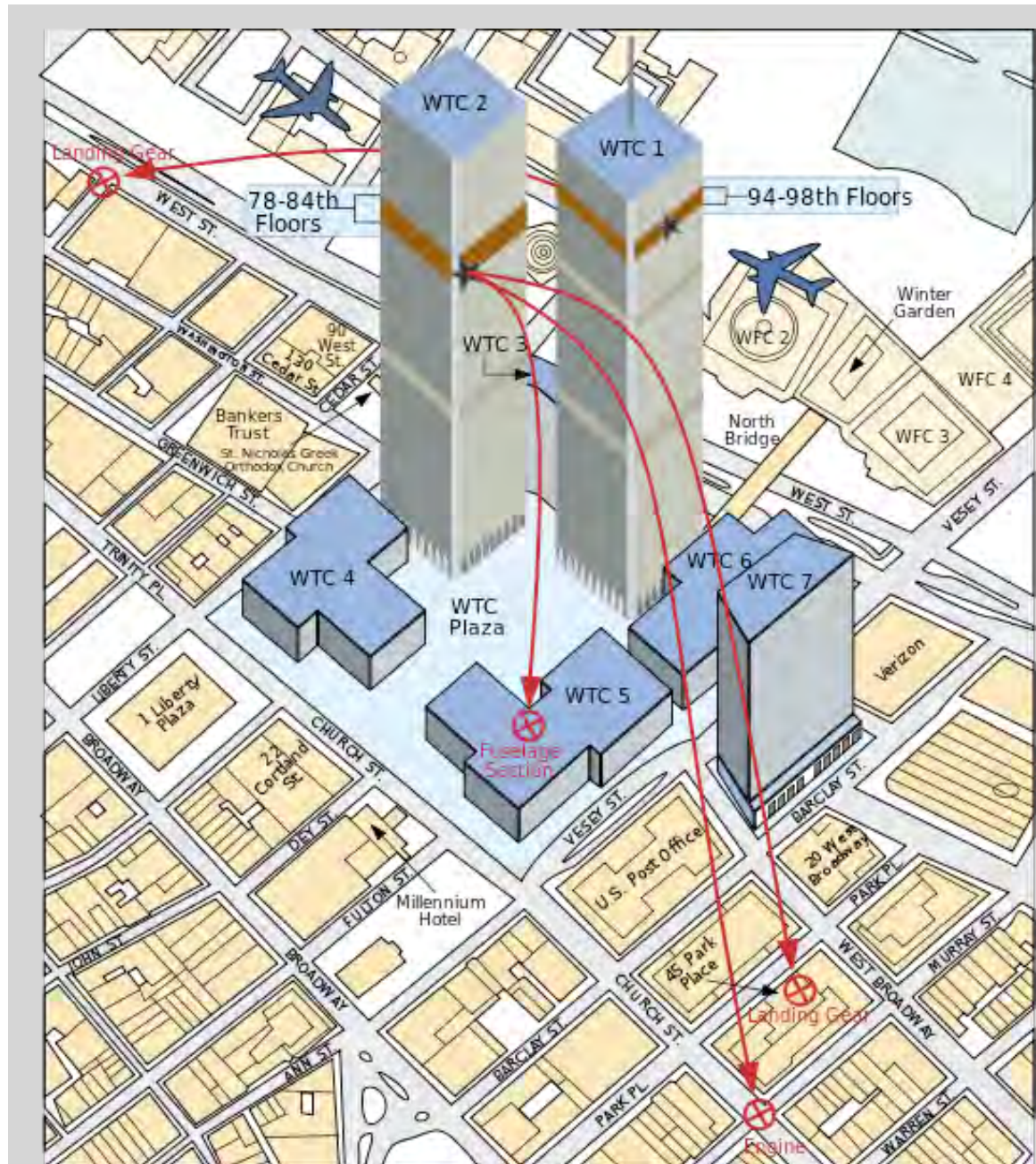
World Trade Center attacks, September 11, 2001, diagram showing how suicide attackers used airplanes as missiles in an attack on New York City, and where debris from the crash fell (Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency)

World Trade Center buildings after 9/11 attack. The south tower just after it was struck by the second plane. (Source: CNN.com)

The September 11 hijackings, however, were about the aircraft, not the people on board. The passengers, in fact, were a liability rather than an asset, as demonstrated by the brave resistance of the passengers on United Flight 93.

The goal of the hijackings was to reprogram the guidance systems of the airliners so they could be used as massive cruise missiles. To direct these missiles to their targets, the hijackers installed their own control systems—human pilots.

Iraq (Source: Central Intelligence Agency)

The September 11 attacks therefore had more in common with America's arsenal of precision-guided munitions than with the history of aviation terrorism.

From such a perspective, the pilots of the four hijacked aircraft were not typical hijackers carrying out a common terrorist tactic. Instead, they were the control elements of a weapon system whose destruction was a necessary and anticipated consequence of a successful mission.

This system—aircraft, "muscle" hijackers, and pilots—was in turn used by other actors who were not even physically present—the al Qaeda leadership that planned and directed the mission. This basic relationship, in which human beings are used by other human beings, is the defining characteristic of suicide bombing.

Since the 9/11 attacks, a host of terrorist groups have used suicide bombers in increasingly innovative and destructive ways. The global number of suicide bombings peaked in 2007, but the use of this weapon has continued at a very high level, regularly wreaking havoc in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Afghanistan suicide bomb attacks, total numbers include bombs not detonated (Source: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan)
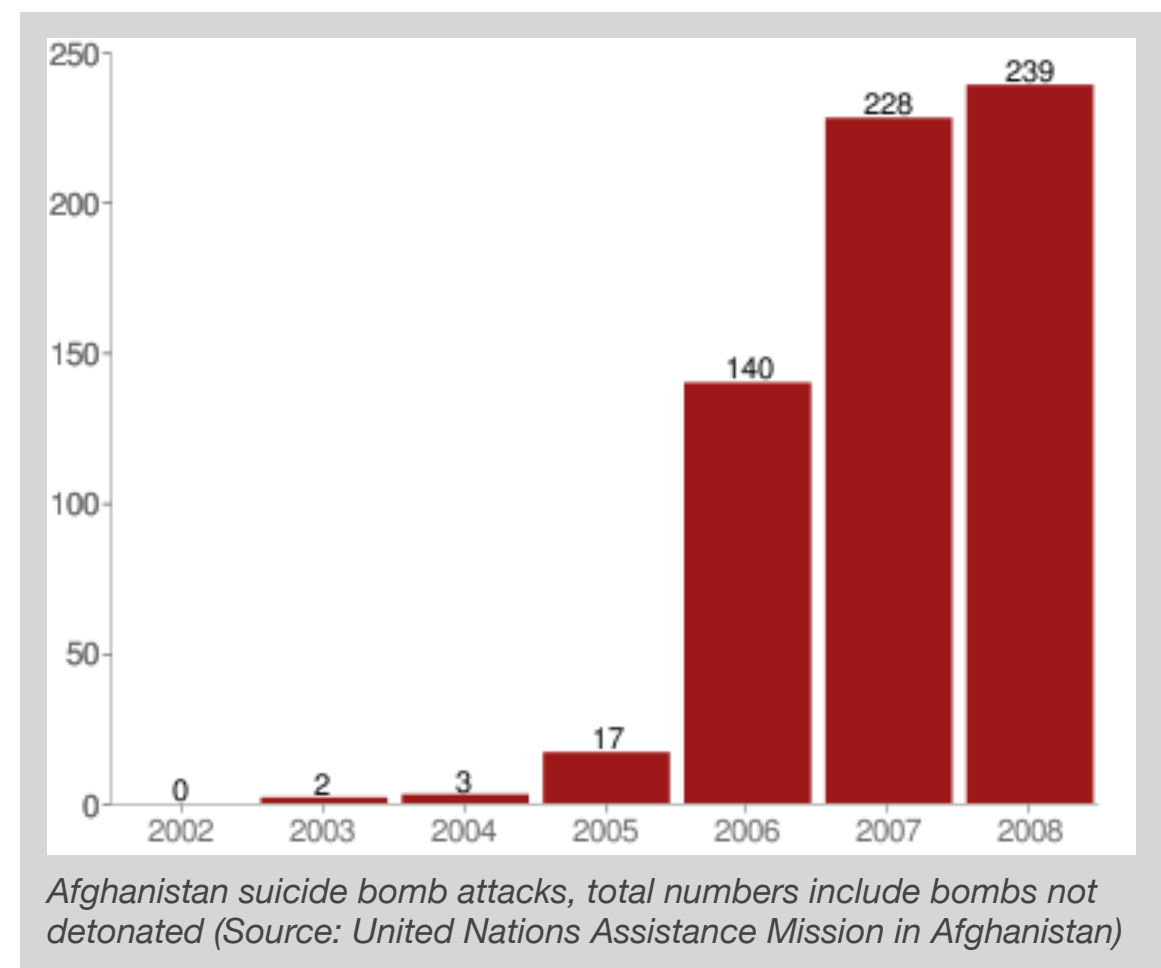
Kamikaze attack. A Japanese Tokkotai operative flies a suicide mission into the side of the U.S.S. Missouri in April 1945. (Source: US Navy)

Mechanizing Humans

Suicide bombing integrates people with material devices to create a weapon both inexpensive and intelligent in the truest sense.

Throughout history, human beings have been used by other humans as components of economic and technological systems; indeed, Aristotle thought of human slaves as "living tools."

Not only human physical labor, but also mental labor, can be exploited in technological systems. By the late 1800s people were used as data processors within extremely sophisticated computational systems. By the Second World War, human and machine elements were integrated into hybrid control systems in which both human and machine were engineered and modified to improve system performance.

One designer of such systems, an MIT engineer, wrote: "This whole point of view of course makes the human being … nothing more or less than a robot, which, as a matter of fact, is exactly what he is or should be."

Suicide bombing therefore draws on a long history of the human use of human beings as the data processing centers in technological systems.

Between Martyrdom and Suicide: What is Suicide Bombing?

Because organizations increasingly sponsor and facilitate suicide bombings, it has become increasingly difficult to understand these events as self-sacrificial violence.

Suicide bombers' communities and sponsoring organizations have understood them as martyrs in the traditional sense of the word—individuals who sacrifice their lives for a cause. Historically, however, martyrs have mostly suffered, rather than inflicted, harm. Since suicide bombing by its nature often inflicts grievous, indiscriminate damage, many analysts now believe that

suicide bombing cannot be understood in terms of conventional martyrdom.

The term martyr is derived from the Greek *martus* which literally means witness. In the early Christian Church, the term was initially applied to the Apostles, signifying their personal witness to the public life and teachings of Christ.

Since such testimony was risky in the Roman Empire of the time, the term quickly evolved to incorporate elements of its current meaning—one who serves as witness at great personal risk to him- or herself. The word now defines the willing sacrifice of one's life on behalf of a larger cause, such as faith or community.

Historically, the decision to die on behalf of others has been the right of the individual. But now, that decision has been at least partially appropriated by the organizations that train and deploy suicide bombers.

By guaranteeing that individual suicide bombers will be remembered as martyrs dying for their communities, organizations play on broad trends of altruism and self-sacrifice that can be found in nearly any community. This use of martyrdom imbues the role of suicide bomber with reverence and heroism, rendering it more attractive to recruits.

The organization thus gains a measure of control over the prospective bombers. Control of this kind should not be understood as "brain-washing," but as a reciprocal process. Prospective bombers exchange the glories of martyrdom for the necessity of their own deaths while retaining a degree of

individual initiative. Indeed, this combination of reliability and creativity is what makes suicide bombers so dangerous.

Since suicide bombing stems simultaneously from individual and organizational motivations, it is indeed different from most historical instances of martyrdom. But suicide bombers, often motivated by community or religious obligation, retain the traditional martyr's willingness to die on behalf of others.
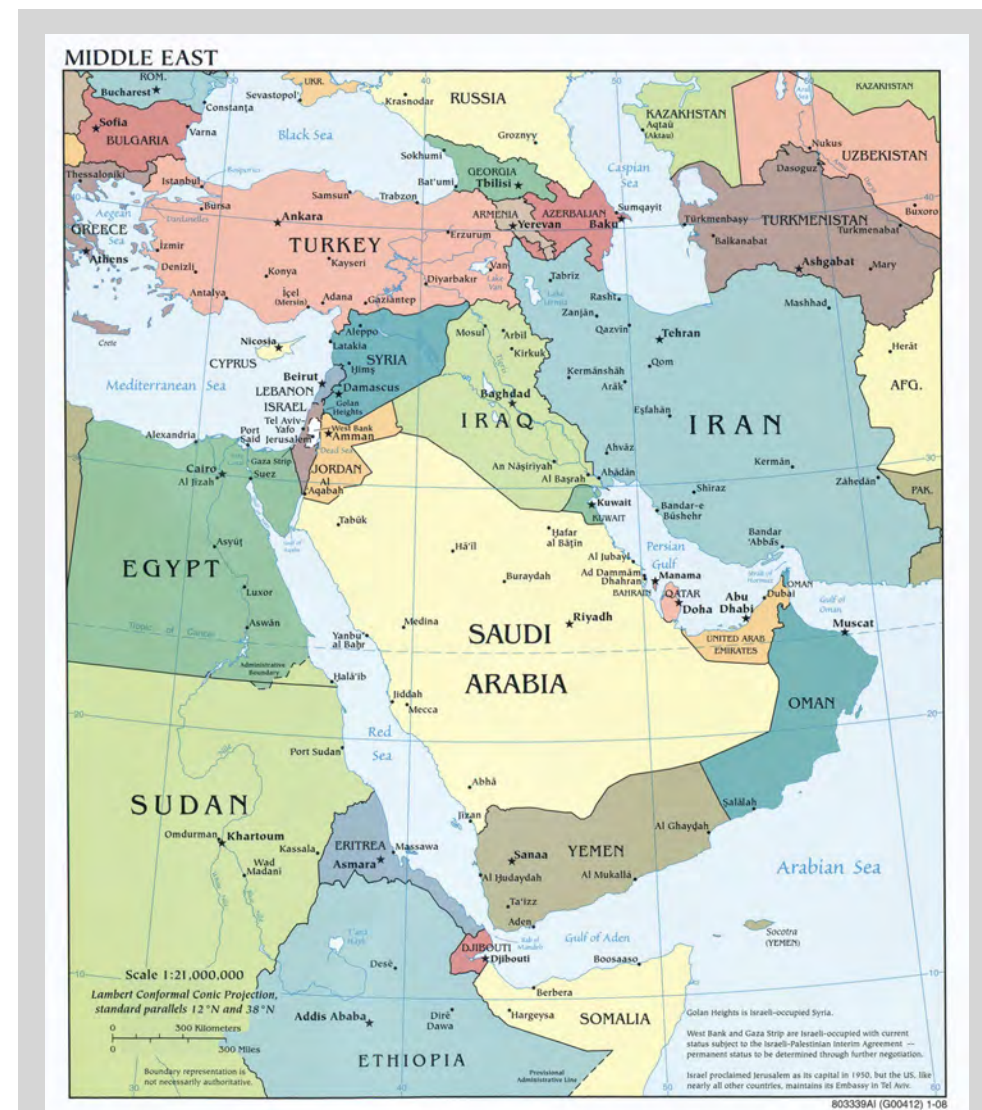
The Middle East (Source: Central Intelligence Agency)

In this new, mechanized form of martyrdom, organizations participate in what would otherwise be an individual act, and in so doing make martyrdom predictable and usable.

Suicide bombers are not individual suicides, moreover, since suicide is lethal self-violence driven by personal rather than social motivations. Certainly some suicide attackers appear to have been motivated by despair, fatalism, and even self-aggrandizement, making their choice selfish, but many are motivated by social causes and most are probably driven by some combination of both.

Suicide bombers therefore do not fit easily into either category. Depending on individual motivations some may fall closer to the ideal of classical martyrdom, while some resemble individual suicide. Neither exactly martyrdom nor exactly suicide, suicide bombing is something different—the human manipulation of human self-sacrifice.

Origins of Suicide Bombing

It is tempting to look for the wellspring of suicide bombing in historical groups such as the Assassins (a group of radical Shiite Muslims active between the 11th and 13th centuries who were characterized by their willingness to die for their beliefs)—tempting, but inappropriate.

Such self-sacrificing zealotry is common in the history of armed conflict, but the use of human beings as guidance systems, rather than as fighters, is relatively novel. The first human bombs did not

arrive on the scene until shortly after conventional bombs were first used by militant groups.

The invention of dynamite in the 1860s presented radical groups with a frightening new weapon nearly twenty times more powerful than gunpowder. Revolutionary and terrorist groups in Europe began using dynamite bombs but soon found that despite their power, technical challenges such as detonating dynamite in the right place at the right time were daunting, making failure more common than success.

Almost by accident, Russian terrorist Ignaty Grinevitsky found that one effective way to use a dynamite bomb was to couple it to a human trigger.

Ignaty Grinevitsky assassinated Russian Tsar Alexander II in a suicide attack with a dynamite bomb. He was a member of the People's Will. (Source: Public Domain)

Grinevitsky was a member of the People's Will, a terrorist organization committed to murdering Alexander II, leader of Imperial Russia. The People's Will tried on numerous occasions to kill Alexander using dynamite bombs between 1879 and early 1881. All of these attempts failed, so by the time Grinevitsky was called upon to participate in a plot to kill Alexander, both he and the organization were desperate.

Grinevitsky and another bomber planned to ambush Alexander using small, hand-thrown bombs with a

Russia (Source: Central Intelligence Agency)

Over the next several decades numerous other Russian revolutionaries severely injured and in some cases killed themselves to attack their targets at close range. These suicidal and near-suicidal missions amounted to a tiny percentage of the overall terrorist violence against the Russian state, but they were among the most dramatic and memorable attacks.
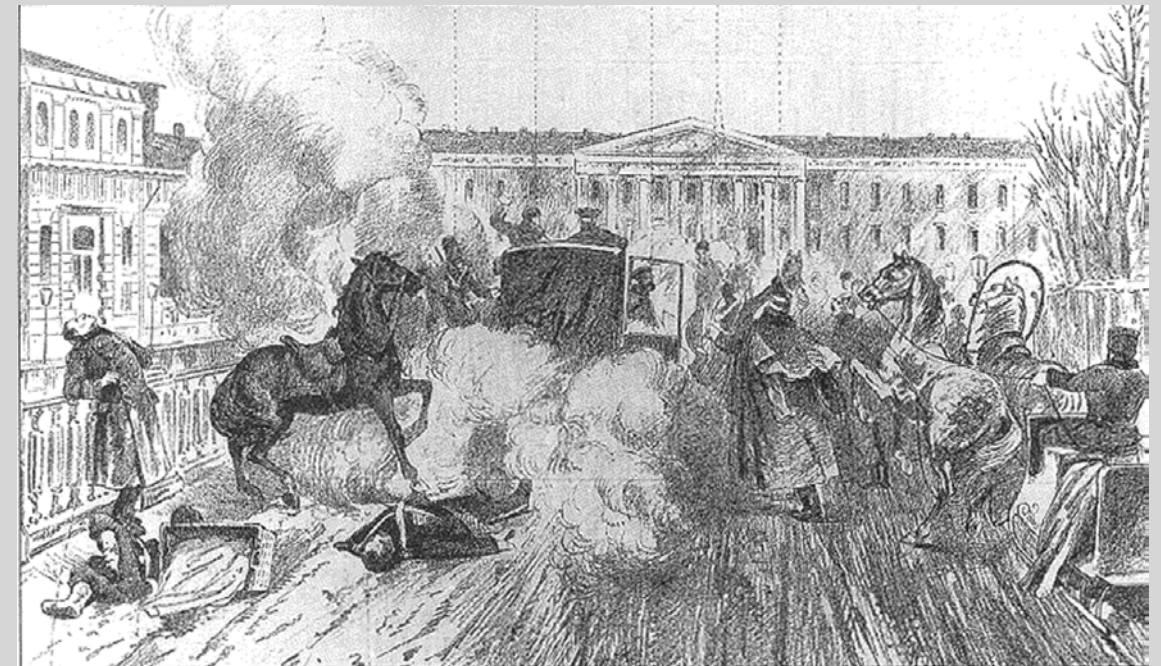
During an 1881 suicide attack on Russian Tsar Alexander II by members of the People's Will, two suicide bombers struck. The first attack, pictured here, resulted only in arrest, but the second, moments later, killed Alexander and bomber Ignaty Grinevitsky. (Source: Public Domain)

lethal area of about one meter in diameter. The first man threw his bomb from a short distance away, damaging Alexander's carriage and forcing it to stop. He was immediately arrested.

Inexplicably, Alexander remained in the area, allowing Grinevitsky to get very close to him and throw the small bomb he had been carrying against the ground, causing it to detonate and kill both men.

We shall never know what Grinevitsky was thinking at the fatal moment, but we do know that by opposing Alexander he had already accepted that his life was no longer his own. The night before the attack he wrote: "It is my lot to die young, I shall not see our victory, I shall not live one day, one hour in the bright season of our triumph, but I believe that with my death I shall do all that it is my duty to do, and no one in the world can demand more of me."

They also anticipated the suicide bombing of the late twentieth century in two significant ways. First, the missions inevitably required the death of the attacker. In all of these cases, the bomb thrower died as a consequence of the mission, either during the course of the mission or through arrest and execution afterward.

The second important similarity is that the terrorists themselves became control elements rather than agents of violence. Their physical prowess and proficiency with weapons were irrelevant. Instead, what mattered was their ability to recognize the precise time and place to detonate their weapons for maximum effect.

From Russia to Japan: Suicide Bombing Becomes Organized

The organizational level characteristic of suicide bombing today never emerged in Imperial Russia. None of these groups developed managerial structures for recruiting, indoctrinating, and deploying more bombers or for exploiting the public spectacle of their suicide attacks. The decision to die, or at least to risk death, remained in the hands of the individual bomber rather than with the organization.

During World War II, the use of human guidance systems was coupled with a powerful, coercive organizational apparatus producing the most prolific suicide bombing complex yet seen, the Japanese Kamikaze.

The government of Imperial Japan launched more than 3,000 human bombs—known more properly as the Tokkotai, short for Tokubetsu Kogekitai (special attack units)—against American naval forces during the last year of World War II.

The Tokkotai were conceived in desperation. Japan's navy was completely destroyed in the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, and the Japanese homeland was subject to increasingly brutal aerial bombardment. The Tokkotai were meant to have an impact

Young Tokkotai pilots. Corporal Yukio Araki, 17, holds a puppy and poses with members of his squadron the day before his death in a suicide attack on a U.S. ship in May 1945. (Source: rarehistoricalphotos.com)

on the battlefield, but more importantly, they were meant to send a message of fanaticism and determination to Japan's foes in order to make the prospect of a full scale invasion of Japan more intimidating.

Cost efficiency characterized the Japanese effort. The government built stripped-down aircraft that were little more than flying bombs to convey the men to their targets. Regular pilots with formal training were deemed too valuable for such missions, so the government compelled young men from outside the military to participate as "pilots." Many of these young men had no desire to die, but saw little alternative in the context of wartime Japan.

Some were perceptive enough to see that they were being used as disposable components of disposable weapons, not as soldiers in a war. The night before his mission, Uehara Ryoji wrote: "As Special Unit Pilots we turn into machines once we board our airplanes … We become a machine whose function is to manipulate the control-column."

Tactically, the impact of the Tokkotai was insignificant. They simply were not a large enough or effective enough force to offset American naval superiority. They did, however, send a powerful psychological message of intimidation that has remained a hallmark of suicide bombing.

Suicide Bombing Comes to the Middle East

American military forces again received just such a chilling message on October 23, 1983. At 6:45 that morning a smiling

young man driving a Mercedes truck crashed his vehicle into the operations building serving as a base for Marines deployed as peacekeepers to Lebanon.

A couple of seconds after the vehicle came to a stop, the driver detonated the tons of explosives inside, destroying himself and the building and killing 241 U.S. military personnel. Seconds later a second bomber struck French paratroopers stationed five miles north, destroying their operations building and killing 58.

Attack on the American embassy in Lebanon. The explosion of the Marine Corps building in Beirut, Lebanon on October 23, 1983 created a large cloud of smoke that was visible from miles away. (Source: Wikipedia)

These bombings, and several high-profile blasts before them, were the handiwork of Shiite militant groups sponsored by Iran, which would coalesce in the mid-1980s into Hezbollah (Party of God).

Like the Kamikaze, Shiite use of suicide bombers was motivated by desperation. Lebanon had been devastated by a multi-front civil war beginning in 1975. In 1982 Israel launched a full-scale invasion to destroy Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon. The Shiites of south Lebanon, already reeling from civil war, were caught in the middle and desperate for a retaliatory weapon.

A member of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) stands next to a poster celebrating an Islamic Jihad operative who executed a suicide bombing in a shopping mall in 2003. The social support represented here is an essential quality of suicide bombing. (Source: International Development Fund)

The government of revolutionary Iran organized and enabled systematic use of suicide bombing by Lebanon's Shiites, just like the government of Imperial Japan had driven the Kamikaze. Iran's leaders glorified the idea of self-sacrifice on the part of the community, legitimized suicide bombing more specifically, and provided expertise and explosives that made massive vehicular bombs a reality.

Hezbollah's turn toward suicide bombing therefore did not just happen, nor was it purely the result of religious fanaticism. It was an organizationally mediated form of attack that drew on both desperation and fanaticism, using them to great effect.

The Spread of Suicide Bombing

The media spectacle of Hezbollah's suicide bombing quickly inspired other groups in Lebanon, including Christian and secular militant groups, to try it as well. The number of attacks grew rapidly in the mid 1980s before declining near the end of the decade.

In 1993, Palestinian groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad began using suicide bombers against Israeli targets in an effort to derail the Oslo-Cairo peace process, then taking place between the Israeli government and the PLO. Hezbollah trained many of the radicals in how to use suicide attacks from late 1992 to early 1993.

This use of suicide bombing was relatively controlled, with a few attacks during any given year, interspersed with relatively long periods of cessation.

In 2001, when the peace process collapsed entirely, a massive intensification of Israeli-Palestinian violence ensued in which Palestinian militants, now including members of Arafat's own Fatah, used suicide bombings in a completely uncontrolled and indiscriminate manner, launching hundreds of attacks against Israeli targets.

Thousands of miles away, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a guerrilla movement in Sri Lanka, began its own use of suicide bombings in the late 1980s.

The LTTE was a nationalist group with a vaguely left-wing agenda. Its objective was the creation of a state for the Tamil people in the northern and eastern portions of the Island of Sri Lanka. The LTTE was disciplined and centralized. Its leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, exercised extraordinary control over the group's rank and file.

Members of the group pledged loyalty first to Prabhakaran personally and only secondarily to the cause of Tamil statehood. Thanks to Prabhakaran's cruelty and absolutism the LTTE used suicide bombers more often and more effectively than any other group in the 1990s, earning them the epithet "masters of suicide bombing."

Velupillai Prabhakaran was the founder and leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a militant group that came to be known as the "masters of suicide bombing." When he died, the organization fell apart. (Source: FactsandDetails.com)

The example of the LTTE demonstrates that suicide bombing and religious fanaticism need not go hand in hand. Suicide bombing requires individuals ready to fight and die for a cause, secular or religious, but more importantly it requires an organization ready and willing to use these people's lives without reservation.

The centrality of organizational leadership for suicide bombing was driven home by the defeat of the LTTE in 2009. During the last stages of the fighting Prabhakaran was killed. He left no
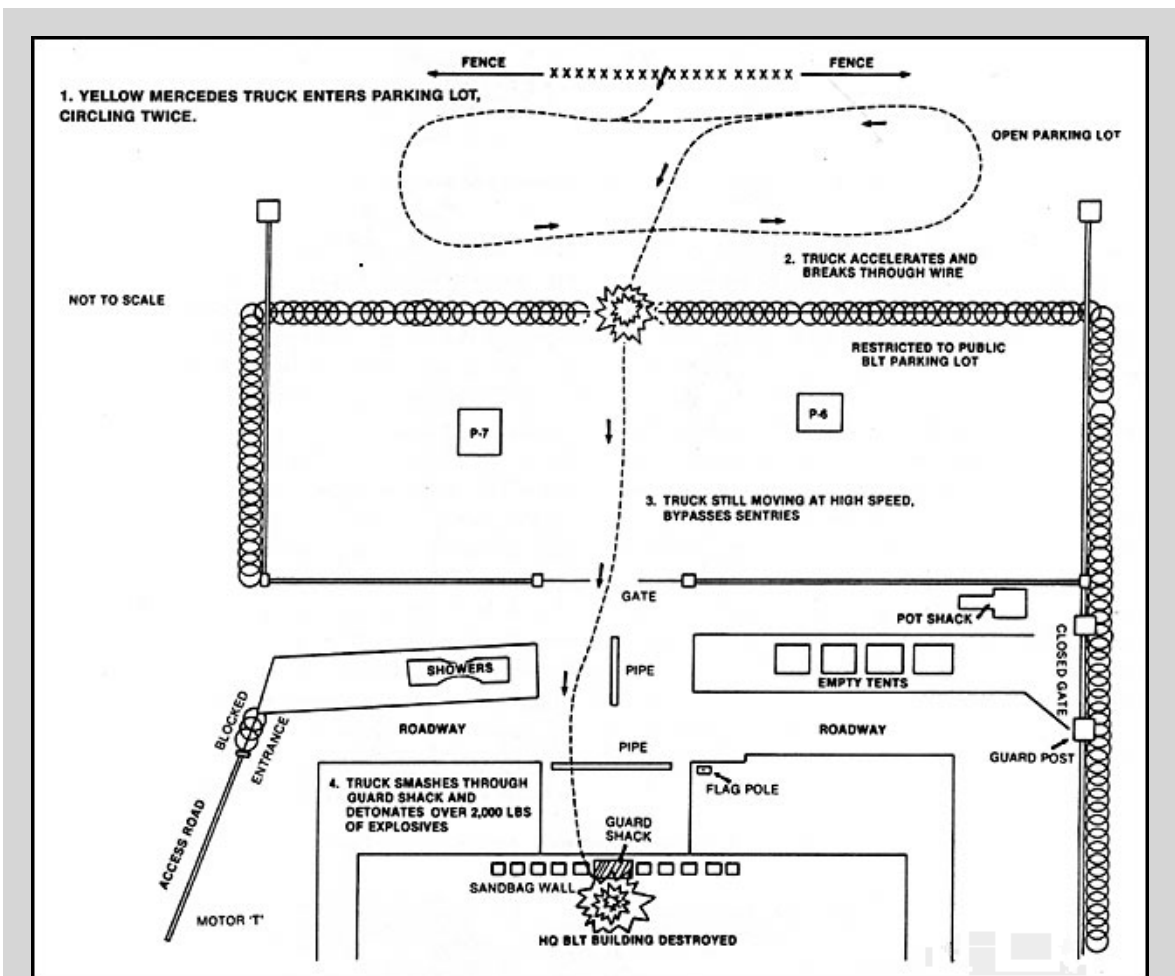
Map of Beirut barracks bombing. This map of the route taken by the suicide bomber at the American Marine barracks on the morning of October 23, 1983, was included in a report on the incident by the Department of Defense. (Source: Department of Defense)

Sri Lanka (Source: Central Intelligence Agency)

bombing to become a firmly established phenomenon rather than the product of one particular organization's agenda. This factor is a culture and society that is willing to embrace suicide bombers as heroes, to support the organizations that deploy them, and to give up its sons and daughters for suicide missions.

Social support cannot be taken for granted and is therefore one of the strongest constraints on the organizational use of suicide bombers. When the members of a society feel threatened, for example, they are more willing to support desperate measures.

LTTE suicide bomb attack, Sri Lanka. In this screen shot of video footage taken by a local resident, a suicide bomber sent by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam detonates a bomb during a ceremony at a mosque in Akuressa, Sri Lanka, in 2009. Thirteen were killed. (Source: The Telegraph)

successor; indeed, he was probably too paranoid to trust a subordinate with such status. Consequently his death destroyed the discipline that held the group together and made suicide bombing possible.

The use of suicide bombers simply stopped with the destruction of the LTTE and has not been resumed in the nearly four years since.

Culture and Society: The Last Leg of the Tripod

The end of Tamil suicide bombing in the aftermath of the LTTE demonstrates one last factor that is necessary for suicide

Car bombing aftermath. The aftermath of a suicide car bombing in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2007, the year suicide bombing peaked globally. (Source: Wikipedia, photo by Jim Gordon)

But absent this pressure—or when the use of suicide bombers yields no appreciable political or social benefits—their support wanes.

For example, the indiscriminate use of suicide bombers by Palestinian radicals in the early 2000s brought no tangible political benefits. Quite the opposite: by 2003, Israeli officials were intercepting the overwhelming majority of bombers before they could complete their missions, making a long stay in an Israeli jail rather than "martyrdom" the most likely outcome for prospective bombers.

Accordingly, Palestinian groups effectively stopped using suicide bombers after 2006. In this case, the organizations, leaders, and prospective bombers remained, but what changed was social willingness to pay the human and political prices of suicide bombing when it was becoming increasingly ineffective.

The Future of Suicide Bombing

This brings us back to the suicide bombing by the radicals of Osama bin Laden's global jihadi network. In the new millennium radicals from this movement brought suicide bombing with them to new areas of conflict around the world, resulting in the

This Navy photo shows the USS Cole after a suicide attack by an Al Qaeda operative in 2007. (Source: US Navy)

exponential increase in suicide bombing noted at the beginning of this article.

At the same time, the radicals have remained outsiders in all of these societies. They have provoked and intensified conflict without regard to the costs and in so doing have alienated

Afghanistan (Source: Central Intelligence Agency)

themselves from the populations that are necessary for global jihadism to become a political force rather than a bloody, nihilistic menace.

Accordingly, after more than a decade of suicide missions the elusive goal of suicide bombing's most enthusiastic users—restoration of Islamic governance in the form of a new Caliphate unifying the world's Muslims—is no closer.

Instead of marking progress toward the goal, the hundreds of attacks the movement has mustered have tended to serve shorter-term goals such as publicizing the movement, giving it a claim for defending the Islamic community, and gaining recruits. This emphasis on short-term rather than long-term goals has cut the jihadis off from nearly all sources of social support.

The jihadis, therefore, have only two of the three mutually reinforcing relationships necessary to make suicide bombing work both tactically and politically. They have the leadership and radical ideology necessary for suicide bombing but are only weakly connected to their communities, limiting their political impact. Jihadi over-use of suicide bombing has thus become an incomplete form of attack, more like sequential mass suicide than the use of self-sacrifice for an achievable political goal.

This complex phenomenon is unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Groups such as Palestinian Islamists or Hezbollah certainly are capable of resuming use of suicide bombers if conditions should lead their communities to favor such attacks. Global jihadis will continue to use suicide bombing for its tactical benefits regardless of whether or not it helps them politically.

However, by seeing suicide bombing as the product of multiple factors we can better understand why it has ended in particular areas in the past and develop strategies that are likely to minimize its use in the future.

At the very least, by understanding it as an organizational phenomenon in which the human propensity for self-sacrifice on behalf of others has been reduced from a noble character to a tool, we can strip away the mystery that still seems to make suicide bombing inexplicable and intimidating, and begin undoing the psychological damage of the 9/11 attacks. ♦

Suggested Reading

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With a Little Help from Our Friends?: The Costs of Coalition Warfare

By Patricia Weitsman

During the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, 14 Australian Hornet pilots defied the orders of their American commanding officers. These pilots independently aborted 40 bombing missions at the last minute because they believed that the objects of attack were not valid military targets or that dropping their bombs would result in an alarming number of civilian casualties. Australian authorities reprimanded none of the pilots—they were following Australian rules of engagement. Had they been American they might well have been court-martialed.

British PM Tony Blair and U.S. President George W. Bush meet in November 2004. One of America's most recent attempts at coalition warfare, Operation Iraqi Freedom, included the British as one of Bush's biggest allies. Mismanagement of that conflict nearly cost Blair his job, as his party suffered from negative public views of both the Bush administration and the effort in the Middle East. The costs of coalition warfare have been even higher in the United States. (Source: Wikipedia)

Later that same month, just north of Basra, two American A-10 fighter pilots mistook a four vehicle British reconnaissance patrol for the enemy, even though the vehicles were decorated with bright orange panels to signal that they were

coalition forces. Diving from 10,000 to 4,000 feet, the pilots bombarded the convoy with more than 500 rounds/second of armor piercing shells. The British tried in vain to raise the pilots on the radio, screaming for them to stop, but got no response—the Americans were on a different frequency. The planes turned and headed unwaveringly back towards the convoy, strafing their coalition partners a second time. The American pilots never saw —or understood—the red smoke released by the British, another coalition identification device. The "blue on blue" incident killed one British soldier and wounded another.

These two incidents are cautionary tales. They remind us that coalition warfare may both be far more costly in terms of human lives and material outlays than fighting alone.

On the surface, coalition warfare would seem to be far preferable to unilateral strategies. States share the burdens of fighting, increase the likelihood of prevailing by having more troops and resources available to prosecute the war, while simultaneously enhancing the legitimacy of the operation. Yet these benefits may not actually be real: coalition warfare may increase the burden of fighting to the United States and decrease the likelihood of winning, while not enhancing the legitimacy of the operation at all.

Ironically, at the very time the United States faces substantial criticism at home and abroad for being overly unilateralist, more resources than ever have been committed to coordinating operations, strategy, and weaponry with U.S. coalition partners and allies.

American military personnel assist Coalition partners in urban warfare training near Baghdad. (Source: Department of Defense)
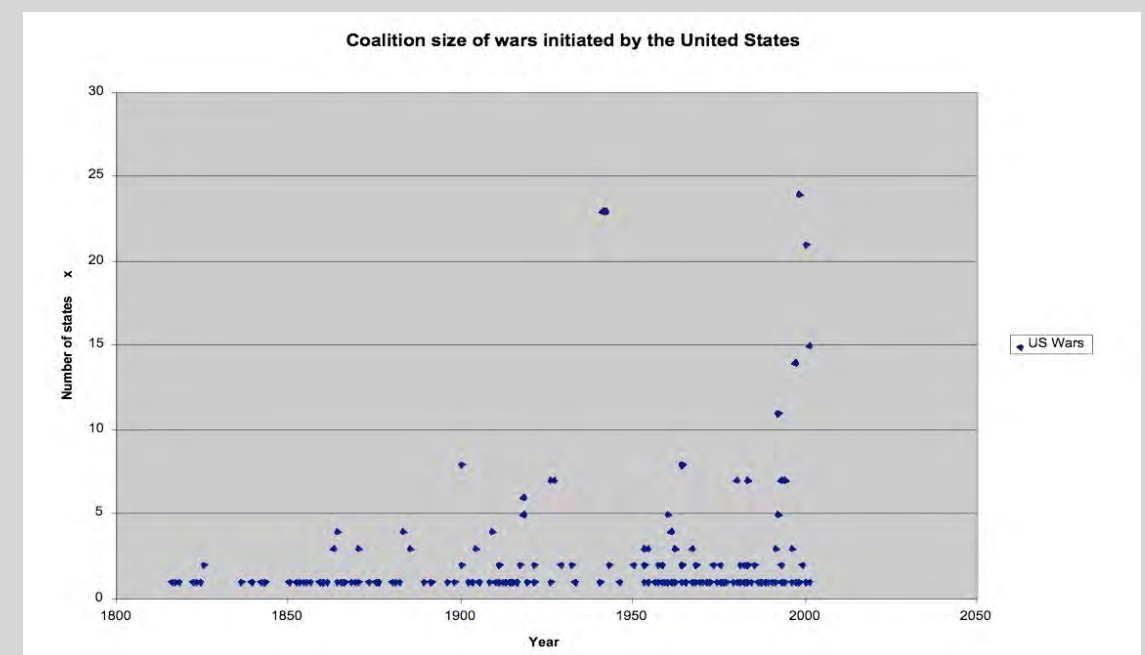

Chart showing the size and number of coalition war efforts by the United States (Source: Author (Weitsman) and Eli Asher Balkin of Ohio University)
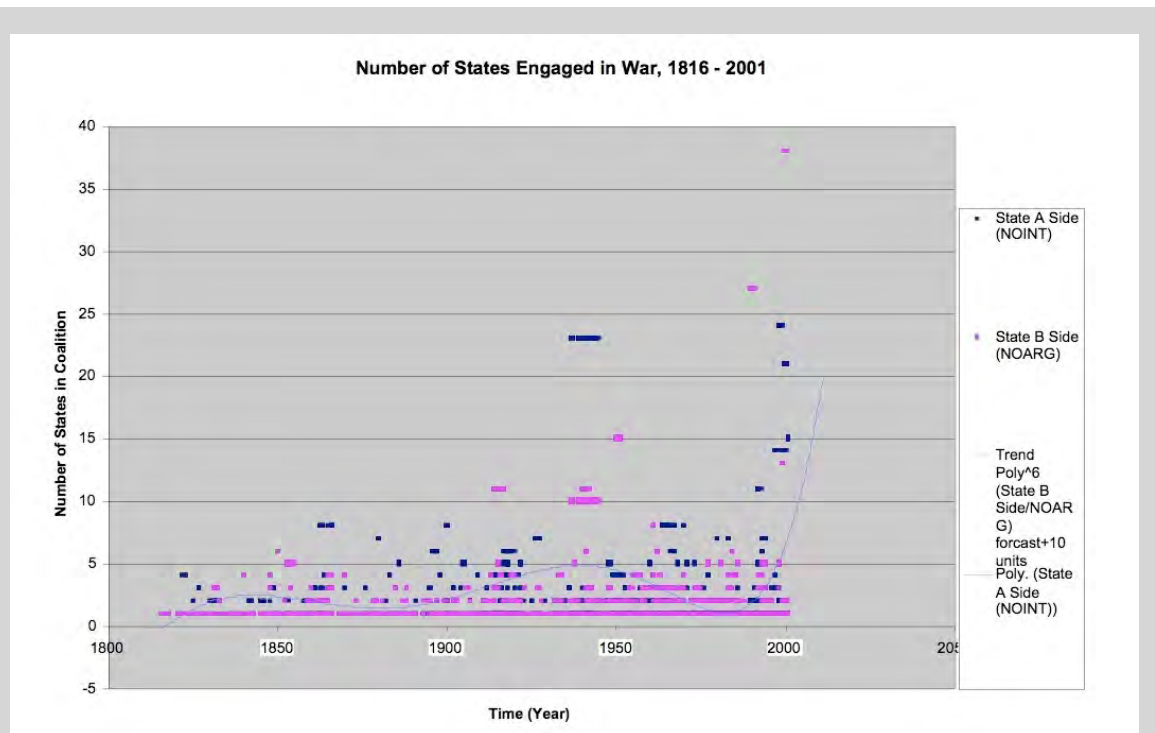
Chart showing the size and number of coalition war efforts around the world, with different estimates (Source: Author (Weitsman) and Eli Asher Balkin of Ohio University)

In the 2006 National Security Strategy, George Bush stated that confronting the "challenges of our time" through multinational efforts with other democracies is one of the paramount pillars of U.S. security policy. These were not empty words: the coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq were, at their respective peaks, among the largest ever forged to fight alongside the American military.

"Coalitions" and "wartime alliances" are two types of what we call "multinational operations," which may also include other forms of multilateral cooperation, such as peacekeeping missions. By "coalition warfare" we mean wars fought by ad-hoc multinational forces that are forged to undertake a specific mission and then dissolved once that mission is complete. Coalitions operate in similar ways to "wartime alliances," although the latter may have

a greater degree of institutionalization and may pre-exist a specific wartime operation. In some cases, coalition partners are largely symbolic—such as the Moldovans in Iraq who have 12 troops on the ground. Sometimes the contribution is more significant, like the NATO partners in Afghanistan where there is more parity with U.S. troop deployments (see the accompanying chart from NATO).

The Norm of Coalition Warfare

The size of U.S. coalitions has grown dramatically in the post-Cold War era. At the same time, the norm of fighting alongside others has become deeply entrenched. In the mid 1990s, these


Australian Ship Newcastle in the background, during a deployment passing near the USS Nimitz in the Persian Gulf (Source: Department of Defense)

norms became increasingly institutionalized with the evolution of U.S. military doctrine to deal with the complexities of multinational operations. For example, in October of 1996, doctrine governing the U.S. Armed Forces in joint operations, and for U.S. military involvement in multinational and interagency operations, was established under the direction of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—a document that continues to be updated and revised.

Jointness became the au courant idea in the American military with the landmark Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. At its core, the preoccupation with

Geographic breakdown of U.S. and Allied Forces in Iraq, from a Pentagon briefing, April 1994 (Source: Department of Defense and NATO)

Soldiers assigned to Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, before an air assault into an outlying village of Baqouba, Iraq, June 18, 2007, part of Operation Arrowhead Ripper (Source: Department of Defense)
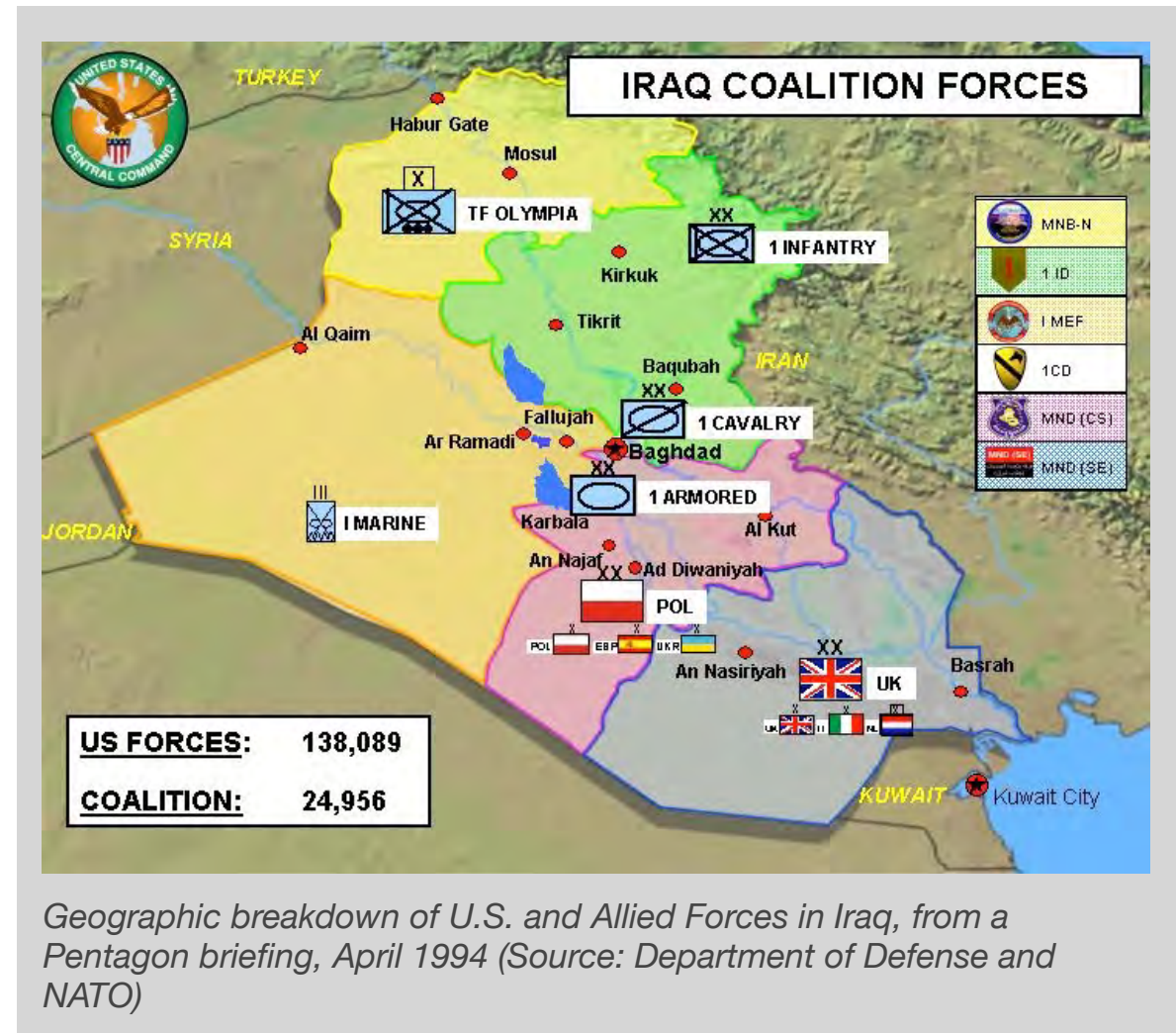
jointness was a commitment to coordinating the different branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Yet, the jointness preoccupation spilled over into the arena of multinational operations as well, since at the same time that the military was changing, the number of multinational operations was on the rise. Hence, dealing with increasing jointness meant heightened operational coordination and integration with alliance and coalition partners.

The preoccupation with jointness in the U.S. military is not an altogether bad thing. Clearly, interoperability issues are critical,

and above all, inter-service coordination is imperative to any military success. The problem is that it has left a legacy of our uncritical acceptance of the trend to larger and not necessarily more effective coalitions.

The Burdens of Friendship

Over the past two centuries, democracies have been more likely than non-democracies to fight via coalition, and indeed, the United States has never fought a major war single handedly. Yet, the transparency in democracies means that coalition dynamics become all the more intricate.

When countries such as the United States decide to fight alongside their friends, they must balance the twin objectives of maintaining support for the war at the domestic level, while keeping their partners in arms happy as well. Policy has to become distinctly Janus faced: domestic and international constituencies must both be appeased. In democratic states, where there is electoral accountability, this can be especially difficult. The dictates of alliance or coalition cohesion may come at the expense of the domestic will, or vice versa.

In maintaining close ties to the United States, for example, British Prime Minister Tony Blair undermined his own political career, and wreaked havoc on the Labour Party. Involvement in Iraq almost brought down the Spanish government, which the Spanish people replaced with a new one committed to withdrawing their forces from the Iraq coalition. In Poland, widespread domestic opposition to the war in Iraq has created a thorny political landscape for the leadership. In 2007, the war crimes case

against seven Polish soldiers for killing Afghani civilians heightened already strident domestic criticism of Poland's troop deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. In October of 2008, Poland withdrew its 900 remaining troops from Iraq.

The added complexity of coalition warfare derives also from the prerequisites of developing a coherent multinational fighting force. Harmonized military strategy is hard enough to design on paper, let alone to execute. States must use common or compatible doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures, which

Afghan National Army Brigadier General Gul Aqa Naibi salutes the Australian soldiers of the Reconstruction Task Force who helped build Forward Operating Base (FOB) Locke in Afghanistan. The base has been named in honor of Special Air Service (SAS) soldier Sergeant Matthew Locke. (Source: Department of Defense)

International Security Assistance Force

ISAF EXPANSION

STAGE 1 (NORTH) 2004
STAGE 2 (WEST) 2005
STAGE 4 (EAST) 5 October 06
STAGE 3 (SOUTH) 31 Jul 06

NATO Mission In Afghanistan: On 9th August 2003, NATO assumed authority for the ISAF mission. The NATO mission consists of 5 phases:
• Phase 1   Assessment and Preparation, including operations in Kabul (completed)
• Phase 2   Geographic expansion (completed)
• Phase 3   Stabilization
• Phase 4/5 Transition / Redeployment

Expansion: In October 2003, the UN Security Council authorized the expansion of the NATO mission beyond Kabul. In October 2004, Stage 1 of the expansion to the North was completed with Stage 2 in the West following in September 2005. Stage 3 of the expansion to include the South was completed on 31 July 2006 and Stage 4 to include the East occurred on 5th October 2006, at which stage the geographic expansion phase was completed.

Troop Contributing Nations (TCN): The ISAF mission consists of the following 40 nations (the troop numbers are based on broad contribution and do not reflect the exact numbers on the ground at any one time).

Albania	140		Finland	80		Lithuania	200		Spain	780
Australia	1080		France	2660		Luxemburg	9		Sweden	290
Austria	1		Georgia	1		Netherlands	1770		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*	135
Azerbaijan	45		Germany	3220		New Zealand	155		Turkey	725
Belgium	390		Greece	130		Norway	420		Ukraine	3
Bulgaria	460		Hungary	200		Poland	1130		United Kingdom	8380
Canada	2500		Iceland	8		Portugal	40		United States	17790
Croatia	200		Ireland	7		Romania	730			
Czech Republic	490		Italy	2350		Singapore	0		Total (rounded)	47600
Denmark	750		Jordan	0		Slovakia	70			
Estonia	120		Latvia	70		Slovenia	70			

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name

Current as of 1 September 2008

Map of Afghanistan showing Coalition responsibilities (Source: International Security Assistance Force and NATO)

require a significant amount of coordination. In other words, there must be interoperability—not just in terms of weaponry, but also in terms of language, communications, doctrine, and the exchange of information. Planning for interoperability requires a considerable degree of familiarity with one another's commanders and staff, visits, the creation of liaison teams, multinational training exercises, and an assessment of the logistical interoperability among partners.

Coalition partners must communicate effectively at all levels to prevent the accidental killing of other allied units, which occurs all too frequently in coalition warfare. In the first Persian Gulf War,

Press Conference with the major American government officials associated with the Coalition, NSA's Condoleeza Rice, Sec of State Colin Powell, President George Bush and Sec of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. (Source: Executive Office of the President of the United States)

A Royal Air Force gunner kneels next to his machine gun on a flight over Basra, Iraq-Oct. 27, 2008. (Source: Department of Defense)

nearly a quarter of the American troop fatalities were a consequence of friendly fire. In addition, American troops killed nine British soldiers—as many as the enemy did.

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan has had several fatal incidents. The Americans have killed about 10% of the Canadians who have thus far perished in Operation Enduring Freedom, including an Olympic contender killed by American forces who accidentally strafed their own NATO allies in 2006. Friendly fire fatalities have become a significant source of friction between American troops and their Canadian and British counterparts.

In order to contain the number of such fatal incidents, the exchange of intelligence and information in coalition warfare is crucial. Yet, few militaries are quick to pass on such sensitive knowledge to representatives of other states. Even during NATO's 1999 Kosovo campaign, the United States withheld information about missions involving the use of advanced weapons systems to prevent leaks from allies. This created potentially dangerous situations when, for example, U.S. aircraft showed up on NATO radars without advance notice. During unilateral missions the chain of command and procedures is well established. Developing and coordinating and utilizing such structures effectively to facilitate the exchange of intelligence and information during multilateral operations is not always so easy.

Coalition warfare—and indeed multilateral operations in general—also requires harmonizing military equipment. If any of the U.S. coalition partners has out-of-date equipment ill-suited for joint operations, it often falls to the United States to provide it for them, or at least help provide it. For example, the United States paid approximately $240 million to Poland to be used for equipment, meals, transportation, and medical supplies when Poland first deployed troops to Iraq in 2003. In the 2005 Fiscal Year, the amount the United States paid the Czech Republic came to about $43,478 per soldier.

The costs of coalition warfare are not always balanced by the rewards. The 138 total Czech troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2005 hardly affected the security needs in either country. Further, because the United States is one of the few countries in the world with significant airlift capacity, the burden of flying in allies falls to the United States as well.

Spc. Jason Curtis, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 151st Infantry Regiment, pulls security while leaders of a medical civil action project searched for a suitable site in Parun, Afghanistan, 2008. (Source: Department of Defense)

The complicated nature of multinational operations often reduces the speed and flexibility of forces in responding to any action on the ground. It also reduces autonomy in action. This can severely hinder wartime operations, as it did in NATO's war in Kosovo. The cumbersome decision-making structure in the conduct of that war made it a war by committee. The alliance was less efficient and effective as a consequence.

Costs of the Iraq Coalition

For all these drawbacks, the norm of fighting via coalition is so deeply embedded in the military practice of the United States that even the Bush Administration did not feel it could advance on Saddam Hussein without a broad-based coalition. Here, though, the coalition was not to augment power. Partners were bought to give the appearance of international support for the invasion, and the U.S. was prepared to pay dearly for this facade.

The United States offered numerous incentives to entice states to join the cause in Iraq—making cooperation generously worthwhile for partner states. The United States reportedly lobbied India with promises to sanction the sale of the Arrow 2 missile defense system by Israel, and to relax restrictions on the purchase of other state of the art military equipment. Pakistan was offered over $3 billion in military and economic aid. Turkey received $1 billion in aid and $8.5 billion in U.S. loan guarantees (it was originally offered $6 billion in aid and $24 billion in loan guarantees before the Turkish Parliament voted on March 1, 2003 to reject U.S. troop access to Turkish bases). U.S. contracts to help rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure were also among the enticements offered to its coalition partners.

Allies and partner states contributed troops at the United States' behest because the side payments make it worthwhile. For example, Moldova's troops to Iraq earned it a visit from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who thanked the country for its contribution to the war on terrorism and promised support in face of continued Russian military presence in the Transnistria region of Moldova. Poland has earned an anti-missile shield, and additional U.S. pledges of support in the event of an attack on it by a third party. In the Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) coalition in particular, small states that bring few military capabilities to the

table have won disproportionate leverage over the most powerful country in the international system.

Local resident with daughter at a medical clinic in Hasan ad Daryush run by Iraq and Coalition forces-January 2008 (Source: Department of Defense)

In short, coalition fighting requires both political dexterity and logistical complexity. Fighting together may have benefits, but those certainly come at a price.

Winning the Wars

If coalition warfare has been costly to the United States in the contemporary era, then has it increased the likelihood of prevailing? The fundamental purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces, according to JP-1 (Joint Publication-1 of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), is "to win the Nation's wars."

The jury is still out in Afghanistan where there is more balance in the contributions of coalition partners—non-U.S. NATO troops in ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force) number about 29,810 to the United States' 17,790. In Iraq, however, where coalition forces number less than 7,000 to the United States' 146,000 it appears at this point that fighting via coalition has not enhanced the likelihood of victory. In fact, fighting via coalition may have actually undermined the ability of the U.S. to win.
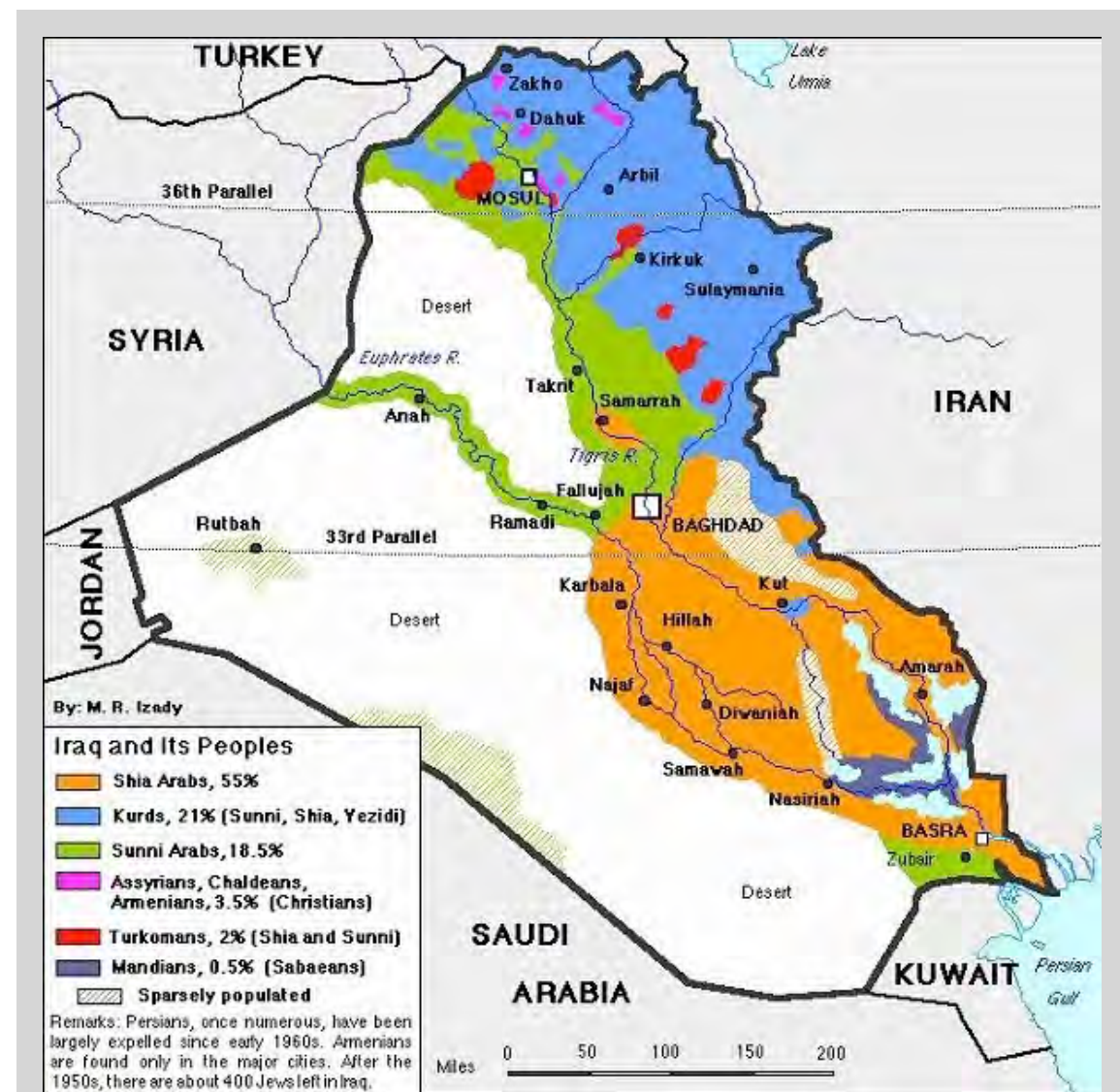
Map of the Peoples of Iraq (Source: Wikipedia)

From the United States' perspective, leading a war with dozens of coalition partners heightens the chance that one or more partners will abandon the alliance as the operation unfolds. This may happen despite the incentives offered by the U.S. to keep its partners happy. If coalition members do exit the war, it creates serious problems for the countries staying the course.

In Iraq, for example, as countries draw down troops or leave the coalition altogether, the United States has to keep its troops in Iraq longer than anticipated. This has a profound effect on combat motivation. Morale in the United States armed forces is at an all-time low, and the suicide rate, particularly among troops in Iraq, is at an all time high. In fact, the suicide rate of American soldiers in Iraq doubled from 2004 to 2005.

Concerns about the suicide rate in Iraq in late 2003 prompted the creation of a mental health advisory team, which reported its findings in December of that year and again in 2006. One of the findings of the report was that many soldiers felt hopeless and helpless. The single most important factor in contributing to those feelings was not knowing when they would be going home.

Every time an ally leaves the Operation Iraqi Freedom coalition, it underscores the war's unpopularity internationally and in the U.S. This is true, even if the number of troops in question is insignificant. If Moldova were to withdraw its 12 troops from Iraq, it would not likely affect the situation on the ground, but it would nevertheless represent one more country abandoning the coalition. Of the number of countries contributing troops to Iraq, 16 have already left the alliance while 23 remain.

Canadian Troops load a coffin into a transport plane in Afghanistan. (Source: Canadian Government)

Most countries that use coalition warfare are democracies, and it is precisely democracies that are especially vulnerable to the fear that others might abandon their coalition. Coalition cohesion is theoretically transparent in democratic states and the political leadership is electorally accountable. When states withdraw from a war effort, their actions affect public opinion in other countries adversely. As the public reads about states leaving the coalition, the sense of unfair burden sharing is heightened and the will to fight and win wanes (so too does support for the government in power). Spain's withdrawal from the OIF coalition had a backlash effect on public opinion in the United States and the United

Kingdom. Troop reductions by the United Kingdom in Iraq have affected discussions of American troop levels as well.

All of these factors undermine the war fighting capability of the United States, and, as a consequence, the ability to prevail in the operation. Fighting via coalition, in other words, has not increased the chance that the United States will succeed, especially in Iraq.

The United States' effort to forge military coalitions as a means to achieve international consensus have proven problematic. Worse, the legitimacy it hoped to garner has not materialized. In fact, the United States is widely regarded as unilateralist—both at home and abroad—despite its paying billions of dollars to keep its partners at its side.

Moreover, the coalition operation in Afghanistan has been tainted by Operation Iraqi Freedom. It has become increasingly difficult to get states to send the necessary troops to fight the ongoing Afghan insurgency, and the faults of Iraq have made the Afghan war seem less legitimate now than it once was.

Still worse, former friends now see the U.S. as a growing threat to world peace. A poll released in September 2007 by the Pew Foundation found that of all of the

U.S. Army Element of Iraq Coalition - Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (The seven pointed star stands for the Sunni, Shia, Kurd, Turkoman, Assyrian, Yazidi and Armenian peoples of Iraq.) (Source: Department of Defense)

A Bosnian and Herzegovinan explosive ordinance disposal unit prepares to explode a stash of Iraqi artillery found in Asal Belly, east of Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq-Feb 2008. (Source: Department of Defense)

Middle Eastern countries surveyed, Turkey (a primary American ally in the region) has by far the largest percentage of people naming the United States as the country that poses the greatest international threat—nearly two-thirds (64%) of Turkish respondents named the United States as the most threatening state in the world system. This is just one indication that garnering legitimacy via coalition warfare is not working.

The problems associated with contemporary coalition warfare are, to a large extent, general characteristics inherent to the nature of fighting in multinational operations. Difficulties with

coordination, command, and control are intrinsic to the process. However, it is also clear that in the case of Iraq in particular, the Bush administration holds special accountability. By not doing the hard work of diplomacy to ensure that all allies and coalition partners are not only fighting on the same side, but are united in their mission, the crisis in legitimacy has deepened. Differences over questions of torture, human rights, and the status of enemy combatants have all wrought havoc on coalition cohesion.

In contrast, George Bush Sr. was highly successful at forging coalition cohesion in the first Gulf War. George H.W. Bush used personal diplomacy and on-going relationships with world leaders

Map of Afghanistan showing demographic differences amongst regions (Source: Wikipedia)

to bring the member states together. Almost 50 countries contributed to the first Gulf War in some capacity.

By the end of the operations (both Desert Shield and Desert Storm), 38 countries including the United States contributed nearly 800,000 troops to the coalition. There were over 300 combat and combat support battalions, over 225 naval vessels and nearly 2800 fixed wing aircraft. Many countries contributed to the coalition financially—in addition to billions in economic aid to affected countries, an estimated $54 billion was given to the United States to offset the projected incremental costs of $61 billion. [endnote 20]

In short, the First Gulf War in its entirety cost the United States less than what it spends in a month in the ongoing war in Iraq. Diplomacy matters powerfully in successful coalition operations.

Balance of Power or Balancing Act?

The United States is struggling to effectively prosecute its wars and maintain its position in the international system. But the burden is not only combating enemies, but managing friends. As pundits and scholars alike foretell the demise of American hegemony as a consequence of overextension and imperial overreach, the part of the story that is neglected is the enabling role U.S. allies play.

The Bush administration's ability to put together a coalition to fight the war in Iraq made it easier for the government to justify the operation. Even if key American allies were against Operation
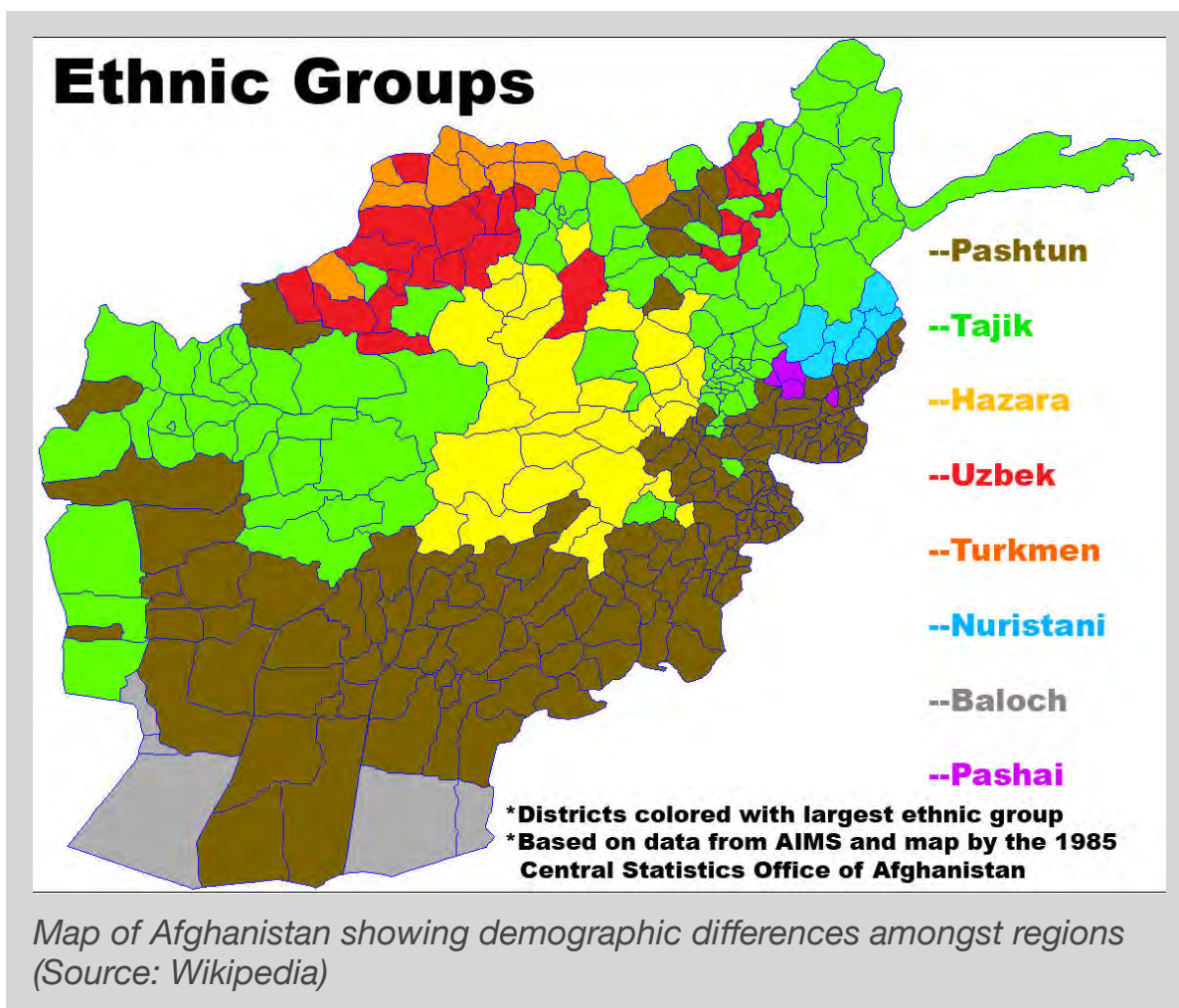
Iraqi Freedom, the 40 odd states that contributed two or more troops gave the appearance of a true multilateral venture.

As we debate whether Iran is really continuing its nuclear ambitions, or whether or not the latest National Intelligence Estimate is correct, we should also be thinking about strategies of confrontation that work.

Tremendous intellectual energy has been devoted to uncovering how best to develop and implement counterinsurgency operations (COIN), to design strategies to counter terrorism, and to build weapons systems that will allow American power to prevail. Similar energy needs to be devoted to understanding when alliances and coalitions are best suited to win the wars. We cannot afford to continue to accept blindly the idea that more partners equals better fighting capacity.

Military alliances, during wartime, should be constructed when they augment fighting power and enhance the likelihood of prevailing. During periods of peace, alliances to manage relationships among signatories work well; during wartime they produce a tenuous balancing act that undermines war fighting capability as well as domestic morale.

Where to From Here?

In 1796 George Washington cautioned his fellow countrymen against the perils of becoming too intertwined with the fates of other nations. He warned that entangling alliances could ultimately undermine the national interest of the fledgling country that is today the mightiest nation on earth. Over two hundred

years later, it is useful to revisit and revamp Washington's warning.

The contemporary problem with entangling alliances is not the worry that the United States will be entrapped into a war situation on behalf of an ally. Rather, it is that the United States is finding it increasingly difficult to fight wars alone. Despite the fact that the proportion of coalition warfare to all warfare has remained constant from Washington's era to today, the United States' overall participation in multinational operations is at an all time high—more since the end of the Cold War than in the century that preceded it.

A chart showing the deployment numbers of coalition members of Operation Iraqi Freedom (Source: screen capture from the article "Operation Iraqi Freedom" on Wikipedia)

This may appear at first glance to be a positive trend. It makes sense that as the strongest nation on earth, the U.S. would be involved in military conflicts around the globe. It also makes sense that the United States would want to fight with allies by its side instead of alone. This should be a way of augmenting troop strength and enhancing the likelihood of victory while simultaneously decreasing costs.

But the United States has engaged in multilateral operations in a way that has decreased the likelihood of success while simultaneously increasing costs. In Iraq in particular, the United States is using coalition warfare in a way that undermines the national interest.

Fighting with friends enables the U.S. to engage our enemies more often than would otherwise be the case. If Americans want to undertake a mission with its allies or build a coalition to prosecute a war, there must be more attention paid to the optimal fighting size and the objectives of the coalition. Does the U.S. have to pay its friends to fight with it? If so, how much? Is it worth it? If a military mission has international legitimacy, then the U.S. should be able to build a coalition without paying allies to participate. If it is necessary to pay coalition partners, then perhaps the U.S. should not undertake the military operation at all. There are many ways that multinational jointness can be effective without deploying troops together.

Certainly, the tide should be turned from large coalitions populated by countries that contribute little yet reap significant gains. The United States should pare down its coalition partners and alliance members with which it is opting to fight. A coalition should be an efficient fighting tool, not an unwieldy force that undermines effectiveness and ratchets up costs. Coalition warfare can be an extremely effective instrument of statecraft, but only when it is used wisely. ◆

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Top Ten Origins: The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)

By Peter Mansoor

(Published November 2014)

1. What is ISIS?

Official ISIS flag (Source: Wikipedia)

ISIS, or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, is a Sunni jihadist group based in northeastern Syria and northwestern Iraq. It is one of the rebel groups fighting to topple the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad. In 2014 ISIS expanded its goals by invading Iraq and seizing large portions of al-Anbar, Saladin, and Nineveh provinces in the northwestern portion of the country.

2. What are its origins?

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi known to his supporters as Amir al-Mu'minin. Caliph Ibrahim is emir, proclaimed as caliph, of ISIS. (Source: Wikipedia)

ISIS is the successor group to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a Sunni jihadist organization that fought as part of the Iraqi insurgency after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. The surge of U.S. forces to Iraq in 2007-2008 and the accompanying counterinsurgency strategy along with a Sunni tribal "Awakening" defeated and largely destroyed AQI, which retreated into Syria to regroup. The Syrian civil war that erupted in 2011 created ungoverned spaces that ISIS has used to regenerate its combat power with an infusion of new recruits, financing, and weapons.

3. What are its goals?

Map of the caliphate to which ISIS aspires (Source: The Washington Institute)

ISIS aims to establish an Islamic caliphate in the Levant, a region spanning Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian territories. Once this area is secured, ISIS aims to expand its control throughout the Islamic world and into territories once controlled by Islam (e.g., Spain). ISIS believes the consolidation of a caliphate in the Islamic world is a prelude for a global struggle to bring the entire world under Islamic rule.

4. What is a caliphate?

Umayyad Caliphate in 750 (Source: Wikipedia)
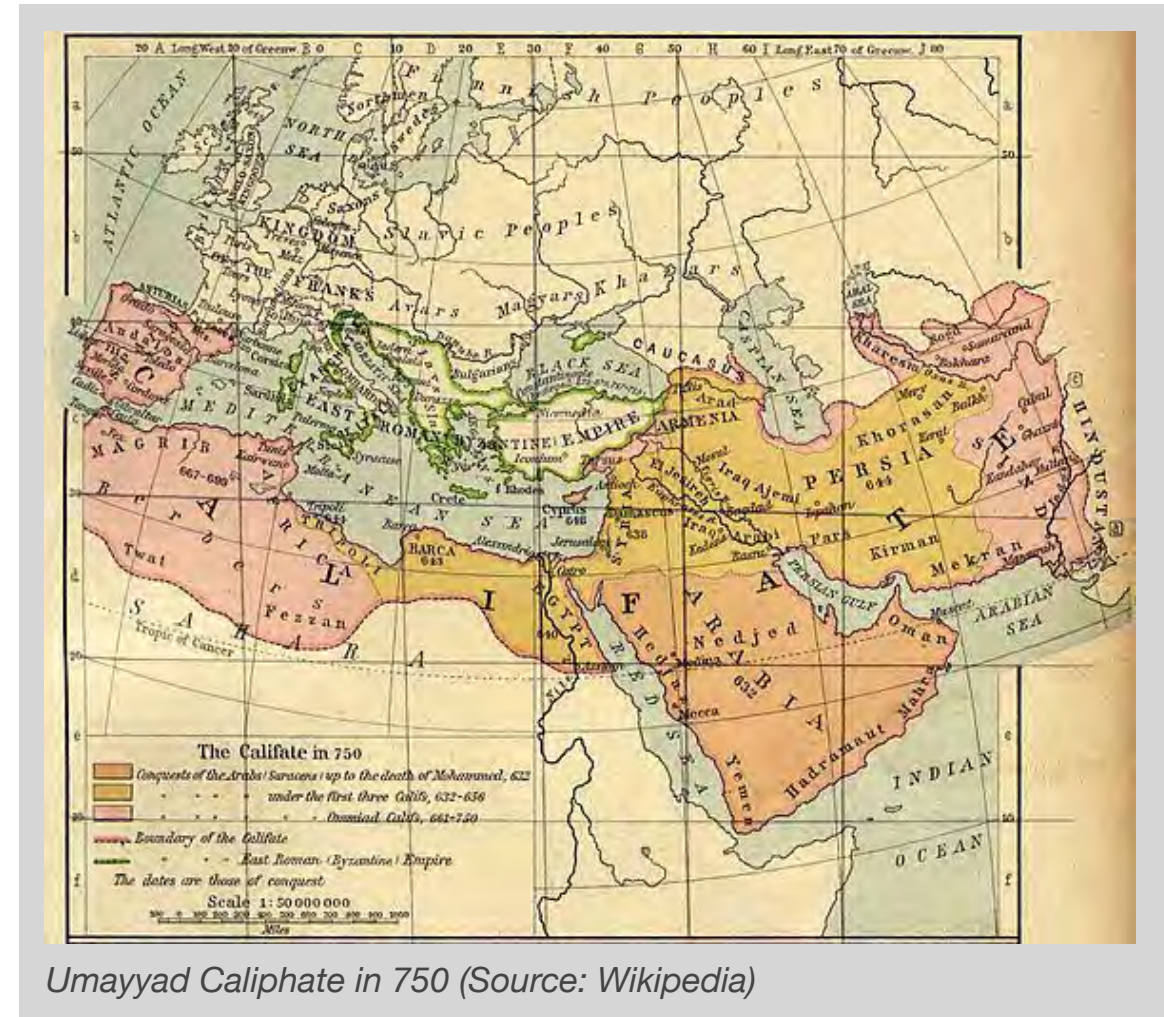
A caliphate is an Islamic form of government headed by a caliph (a successor to the prophet Muhammad) who possesses supreme political and religious power. Various caliphates dominated the Islamic empire for several hundred years following the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 CE. From 1453 to 1924 the caliphate was formally claimed by the Turkish Ottoman sultans who controlled the Ottoman Empire. As part of his reforms secularizingTurkey following World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk formally abolished the institution.

5. What is the attraction of ISIS to jihadi recruits from around the world?

Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo, Syria (Source: Wikipedia)

ISIS believes in a fundamentalist brand of Islam that emphasizes strict adherence to Shari'a law (an Islamic religious code) and jihad (holy war) against apostates and unbelievers. Globalization has left Muslims behind, so the thinking goes, because they have veered from the true path of Islam and failed to defend the faith. This thinking appeals to a small minority of Muslims around the world, some of whom have traveled to Syria to join ISIS.

6. Why does ISIS kill other Muslims as well as persecuting Christians and other minorities such as the Yezidis?

A Rendering of the Battle of Karbala (Source: Wikipedia)

ISIS believes that Shi'a Muslims are apostates who have wavered from the true faith and therefore are deserving of death. This belief stems from a battle over succession to the mantle of leadership of the Islamic world in the 7th century CE. In short, Sunnis believe that the umma (the Islamic people) should be ruled by the most competent person, while the Shi'a believe that the ruler of Islam should be someone in the blood line of the Prophet. Ever since the Battle of Karbala (680 CE), when Islamic forces loyal to the Umayyad caliph Muawiyah annihilated a small group of supporters and relatives of Muhammad's grandson, Hussein ibn Ali, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims have differed (sometimes violently) on who should rule the faithful.

7. Why does ISIS oppose the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad?

Bashar al-Assad (right) is an Alawite and therefore in the eyes of ISIS an apostate. Alawites make up a minority of the Syrian people, but they have control over the organs of the state and its armed forces. Assad and his late father, Hafez al-Assad, have ruled Syria as a dictatorship since 1971. Sunni Arabs are fighting Assad and his supporters to gain a greater share of the power and resources of the state. ISIS and other jihadist groups add a religious dimension to this struggle.

*Syrian President Bashar al-Assad
(Source: Wikipedia)*

8. What makes ISIS so dangerous?

ISIS fighters with captives

ISIS is the best equipped, most lavishly financed, and most heavily armed terrorist group in the world today. It is a hybrid force, with the trappings of a conventional army (such as artillery and armored combat vehicles) to complement its experienced fighters and jihadists willing to kill themselves in suicide attacks. This combination of conventional and irregular fighting capabilities has historically been a potent combination on the battlefield.

9. Why was ISIS able to seize so easily much of northwestern Iraq this year?

A U.S. Navy F-18E Super Hornet receives fuel from a KC-135 (Source: Wikipedia)

Stratotanker over Iraq before conducting an airstrike, Oct. 4, 2014. The aircraft are supporting operations against ISIS (sometimes also called in English the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL). U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Shawn Nickel

After former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was reelected in 2010, he embraced sectarianism in his dealings with the minority Sunni Arabs. Many Sunni Iraqis had sided with U.S. forces in their battle against al-Qaeda in Iraq, but after U.S. forces departed Iraq at the end of 2011 they were left to the mercies of the government in Baghdad. By severely mistreating the Sunni minority, Maliki reignited the civil war that had been all but extinguished after the success of the surge in 2007-2008. Many Sunnis have sided with ISIS as the lesser of two evils, paving the way to ISIS victories in Sunni regions of Iraq.

10. Can ISIS be defeated?

The key to defeating ISIS in Iraq rests in a new political accommodation between the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Sunni Arab minority. If the tribes once again turn against the jihadists (as they did during the surge of 2007-2008), then ISIS's days will be numbered. Such an accommodation will be difficult to achieve, however, as many Iraqi Shi'a favor retributive justice rather than accommodation with the Iraqi Sunni minority that ruled over the state for more than eighty years. The role of neighboring Iran, which has deep ties with the Iraqi government and control over various Iraqi Shi'a militias, also makes such an outreach difficult at best. Destruction of ISIS in Syria will require resolution of the Syrian civil war, an unlikely prospect for many years to come. ◆

Shortly after air assaulting into a farm field, U.S. Army Private First Class Kenneth Armbrister, assigned to Company A, 1-30th Infantry, scans for enemy activity during surge operations in Arab Jabour, Iraq, January 20, 2008. Note the participation of the Sons of Iraq (in Arabic headdress) in the operation. (Source: US Army photo by Sergeant Luis Delgadillo)

The Long Shadow of the June 1967 War

By Peter L. Hahn

(Published June 2017)

The Arab-Israeli War of June 5-10, 1967 (known in the West as the Six Day War) was a brief but momentous military clash that

Israeli and Egyptian forces clashing during the Six Day War, 1967 (Source: Wikimedia)

reshaped the Arab-Israeli dispute, redirected U.S. relations with key states of the Middle East, and resulted in territorial and political changes that remain consequential on this month's 50th anniversary of the war.

The 1967 armed contest was the third in a series of Arab-Israeli international wars. It was preceded by a conflict in 1948-49 in which Israel secured its independence by defeating invading armies from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq and suppressing internal resistance from indigenous Palestinian Arabs; and by an unsuccessful 1956 gambit by Israel, in collusion with Britain and France, to secure its southeastern border by invading Egypt and causing the downfall of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

While diplomats of the United States and other members of the United Nations (U.N.) arranged ceasefires in 1949 and 1956, they failed to resolve the complex underlying Arab-Israeli controversies over territorial boundaries and sovereignty, the status of Jerusalem, the disposition of Palestinian refugees who had been uprooted by the 1940s warfare, control of the precious fresh water of the Jordan River, international trade, and other political and economic issues.

Map of Israeli borders before and after the Six Day War of 1967 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Festering disputes over these issues set the stage for the 1967 war.

Tensions along the Israeli-Syrian border led to dogfights in early April in which Israeli military jets downed Syrian aircraft, and to violence in northern Israel that prompted Israeli threats to occupy Damascus in early May. President Nasser of Egypt ordered U.N. peacekeeping forces that had been embedded in the Sinai Peninsula since the 1956 ceasefire to evacuate that territory. Egyptian troops occupied the U.N. military bases and closed the Straits if Tiran to Israeli shipping, threatening to choke trade routes vital to Israel. The leaders of Israel threatened to use force to reopen the waterway and otherwise deal with Egyptian threats. On June 5, they made good on such threats by preemptive military action aimed initially at Egypt.

U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson attempted to resolve the mounting crisis by appealing to Nasser to rescind his moves against Israel, by cautioning Israel to rely on peaceful means to ensure its interests, and by organizing a multilateral Western initiative to break the Egyptian blockade through assertive means including naval force. These maneuvers faced numerous political and tactical obstacles, however, and they failed to dissuade Nasser from his confrontational approach or to deter Israel from escalating the hostilities.

Scholars have debated whether Johnson, in the days preceding hostilities, continued to discourage or perhaps even secretly authorized the Israelis to take offensive action. Memoirs by Israeli officials and snippets of archival evidence make it plausible that the president, frustrated by Nasser's policies and calculating U.S. domestic political factors, diminished his opposition to Israeli military action.

The Lyndon B. Johnson White House situation room during the Six Day War (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Yet other archival evidence indicates that numerous U.S. diplomats in the Middle East continued to counsel peace on all states, consistent with policy directives sent by the State Department, and that Johnson privately expressed regret about the war's outbreak and expected repercussions.

Israeli troops examine destroyed Egyptian aircraft, June 1967 (Source: Wikipedia)

This debate among scholars might be resolved in part by recognizing that officials in the multi-layered U.S. government communicated a range of messages including some statements that were construed by Israeli leaders, who faced profound security threats, as encouragement to take up arms.

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a series of military attacks beginning with a surprise aerial assault that demolished Egyptian airpower. In succeeding days, the Israeli military inflicted decisive military defeats not only on Egypt but also on Jordan and Syria.

By the time the U.N. brokered a ceasefire on June 10—after six days of combat—the Israeli military occupied vast swaths of Arab territory including the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula (taken from Egypt), the West Bank (from Jordan), and the Golan Heights (from Syria). Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including many who had fled to those territories as refugees in the 1940s, were uprooted and forced to flee across the international borders of historic Palestine.

Map of Israeli movement into the Jordan salient June 5-7 (left) and the Sinai Peninsula, June 7-8 (right) (Source: Wikipedia)

Whatever the consistency of U.S. opposition to the outbreak of war, the Johnson administration moved quickly to end the fighting and contain the resulting instability.

U.S. officials secured the U.N. Security Council ceasefire resolution and pressured the belligerents to accept it. Johnson sought to prevent Soviet political gains by pressuring Moscow to

The June 1967 war dramatically recast the political dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israelis became euphoric that they had survived the seemingly-mortal threats arrayed against them, scored a huge victory, and captured land that they could use as bargaining chips to shape Arab behavior.

Arab leaders were devastated by their catastrophic defeat, and made false charges that U.S. military forces assisted the Israeli assault on Egypt. The war would prove to be a watershed in Arab politics by discrediting secular nationalist leaders such as Nasser and thus contributing to the rise of radical and religious ideologies and leaders.

IDF paratroopers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem after its capture (Source: Wikipedia, photograph taken by David Rubinger)

Meeting of the United Nations Security Council on June 7, 1967 (Source: UN photo by Teddy Chen)

accept U.S. ceasefire terms and by moving U.S. naval ships into the Eastern Mediterranean after the Soviets threatened vaguely to intervene militarily on behalf of the Arab states. In late June, the U.S. president met Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in an impromptu summit meeting in Glassboro, New Jersey in an effort to de-escalate superpower tensions that had been aggravated by the war.

These consequences perpetuated the territorial outcome of the 1967 war and hindered diplomatic initiatives to promote a permanent peace settlement. Bitter anger among Arab leaders and an attitude of superiority among Israeli leaders created poor conditions for postwar peacemaking.

In November 1967, the Johnson administration achieved passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which called for a peace settlement including Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in June and Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist as a state.

That resolution, however, included two crucial ambiguities. First, it provided that Israel would withdraw from "territories" rather than "the territories," a loophole that gave Israel legal footing to claim permanent retention of some of the land it had occupied. Second, the resolution failed to specify whether Israeli withdrawal should precede or follow Arab recognition. These ambiguities strictly limited the eventual effectiveness of U.N. 242 as a basis for permanent peace agreements.

The 1967 war also strained U.S. relations with the belligerent states. Although U.S. officials rejected the accusations by various Arab leaders that U.S. warplanes had participated in the Israeli attacks against them, anti-U.S. passions soared in Arab countries. Mobs threatened the safety of U.S. nationals, and Arab governments severed diplomatic relations with the United States.

U.S.-Israeli relations experienced temporary strain during the war after Israeli warplanes attacked the U.S.S. Liberty, a naval intelligence-gathering ship sailing off the coast of Egypt, killing 34 U.S. sailors, on June 8. Israeli resistance to postwar diplomacy to

Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula following the 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty

Palestinians during the first intifada, 1987 (Source: photo by Peter Stepan)

achieve permanent peace agreements also irritated U.S. officials.

Offsetting these U.S.-Israeli tensions, however, Israel enjoyed surging support in U.S. public opinion and in subsequent years, U.S. officials came to identify it as the most stable and reliable state of the region.

The 1967 war has cast a prominent shadow over fifty years of Middle East history. The scale of Israel's battlefield victories burnished its enduring reputation as the region's foremost military power. From such a position of strength, Israel used the prospective return of the occupied territories as levers in peace negotiations with Arab states, with a range of results.

On one hand, Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for diplomatic recognition by Egypt under the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979, the first-ever Arab-Israeli settlement. On the other hand, Israel remained in the Golan Heights amidst perpetual deadlocks in Israeli-Syrian peace talks and persistent border tensions. In fact, Israel announced the formal annexation of the Golan in 1981 (a move not recognized by the United States and most other countries) and in subsequent years promoted the settlement of thousands of Israeli citizens on the disputed territory as a way of solidifying its Israeli character.

Israel's control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remain highly contentious in 2017. Jordan (which in 1994 became the second Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel) and Egypt relinquished their respective claims over the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinian inhabitants of the territories.

Yasser Arafat, who rose to prominence in the 1960s by organizing violent resistance to Israel among the stateless Palestinians, began exhibiting statesmanlike behavior during a late 1980s Palestinian uprising known as the intifada. That transition, as well as such global dynamics as the end of the Cold War in 1989-91 and the Gulf War of 1990-91, set the stage for the U.S.-brokered, Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the 1990s.

Based on the "land for peace" formula of U.N. Resolution 242 of 1967, the peace process brought Israel and the Palestinian community to the verge of a treaty that would establish a Palestinian state in portions of the West Bank and Gaza, a state that was committed to recognition of and peaceful coexistence with Israel.

By 2000, however, the peace process collapsed short of a final settlement over irreconcilable differences between the two camps on such matters as the actual borders between Israel and Palestine, the property rights of Palestinian refugees, and the prospect that Jerusalem could serve as the capital city of both countries.

The deadlock of the peace process helped spark a second, more violent intifada by Palestinians in the occupied territories, which Israel suppressed with severe security measures. Falling increasingly under the sway of their citizens who opposed yielding the West Bank, Israeli officials took two steps to make permanent their control of that territory.

First, they promoted massive construction of settlements, housing hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens, in West Bank locations with strategic, cultural, and political significance. Second, they erected a concrete and barbed-wire wall to shield the settlements (as well as Israel proper) from violence or rebellion —in the process disrupting the mobility of peaceful Palestinians as well. Both measures had the subtle effect of solidifying the Israeli identity over and attachment to substantial portions of the West Bank, making it tactically more difficult to effect a land-for-peace deal.

In Gaza, Israeli officials faced acute violence perpetrated by religiously-inspired Hamas militias. In 2005, Israel withdrew its settlers and occupying forces from Gaza, although on several occasions thereafter it intervened militarily in Gaza to suppress Hamas and eliminate its leaders.

Ma'ale Adumim Israeli settlement in the West Bank (Source: Fickr photo by Trocaire)

Fifty years on, the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War continues to reverberate across the Middle East: in Israel's military superiority to its Arab neighbors and its expansive territorial aspirations in the West Bank and Golan; in the political instability of several Arab states and their strained relationships with the United States; and in the statelessness and resultant deprivations of the Palestinian people. ◆

On the Armenian Genocide

By Ronald Grigor Suny

(Published April 2015)

On April 24, 2015, much of the world will commemorate the centennial of one of the most highly contested events of the twentieth century: the Armenian Genocide.

In the midst of World War I and as the Ottoman Empire suffered through what we now know were its last years, Turkish officials oversaw the deportation and massacre of anywhere between several hundred thousand and 1.5 million Armenian people. The result was the physical annihilation of the Armenian communities that had lived in the Anatolian peninsula for more than 2500 years.

Yet, although Pope Francis recently called the killing of Armenians "the first genocide of the 20th century," recognition of the 100th anniversary will not take place in Turkey, which has steadfastly refused to call the Armenian deaths a "Genocide."

For far too long two distinct stories about 1915 have been told: an Armenian history largely for Armenian readers; and a Turkish and Turkophilic history for Turks and their friends. The two

Official symbol of the Centennial; The City Hall of Los Angeles colored purple in commemoration of the Genocide 2015 (Source: Wikipedia)

literatures talked to the already converted; they confirmed what people wanted to believe and did not challenge assumptions with which people had grown up.

The two narratives were mutually exclusive, and dialogue between them was nearly impossible. One affirmed the genocide and lay blame squarely on the Turks. The other denied genocide and blamed the killing on war, civil war, or Armenian provocation.

The Armenian version was content to see the Genocide as giving all agency to the Turks and none to the Armenians, who became

American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, decried Turkey's actions in this telegram to the State Department. (Source: Wikipedia)

in this scenario passive and blameless victims. The Turkish version, which has been very successful in muddying the waters and in convincing many non-Armenians that the facts of the matter are in doubt, said something absurd, like "There was no genocide, and the Armenians are to blame."

The Armenian version became sanctified and resistant to change or reinterpretation. The Turkish version has to the present time been supported by state authorities and state-supported writers who work assiduously to render the Armenian Genocide controversial. Their latest efforts are centered at the University of Utah and its press.

Despite more than eighty years of writing on the Armenian Genocide, key questions of why and when the Ottoman authorities ordered the deportation and massacre of hundreds of thousands of their own subjects remain unclear. Turkish state-sponsored efforts to cover up or deny a policy of genocide have been diligently countered by efforts by scholars to recover lost historical memories and collect documentary evidence in order to assess fairly the events of 1915.

Some successes are notable: a broader recognition and knowledge of the events of 1915 among the general public and among Armenians and Turks themselves; the establishment of institutes and programs to study systematically the Genocide; a number of official resolutions recognizing the Armenian Genocide; and an impressive amount of research and publication, a small fraction of which uses documentation from Turkish state archives.

One of the most effective efforts to expand our knowledge on the Armenian Genocide has been WATS (Workshop for Armenian-Turkish Scholarship) that from 2000 to the present has brought Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and other scholars together to discuss and write on the Genocide.

Until recently, neither version spent much time on causation, on explanation of why these events occurred. Armenian energy has been spent trying to create a factual record of the events themselves, to find indisputable documentation, little of which is reflected in Turkish versions.

An Armenian woman leans over her dead child near Aleppo, Syria,1915. (Source: Wikipedia)

Even Turkish scholars who find the more politicized accounts distasteful tend to avoid discussion of the Armenian massacres and deportations. For far too long historical research dealing with the period of the war, the end of the Ottoman empire, and the foundation of the Turkish Republic managed to do so without any serious investigation into the removal of hundreds of thousands, upwards of a million or more, people.

Rather than arguing that the Genocide was planned long in advance and was continuous with the earlier Ottoman policies, I contend that the brutal policies of killing and deportation (*surgun*) that earlier regimes used to keep order or change the demographic composition of towns and borderlands must be distinguished from the massive expulsions of 1915.

The very scale of the events of 1915, as well as their intended effects—to rid eastern Anatolia of a whole people—made the Genocide a far more radical, indeed revolutionary, transformation of the imperial setup.

Armenian children deported or escaped from Eastern Anatolia find refuge in Aleppo, Syria. (Source: Wikipedia)

As in earlier and later massacres of Armenians, victims and victimizers were of different religions, but these mass killings were not primarily driven by religious distinctions or convictions. Membership in a religious community (*millet*) was an important marker of difference, and religion closely corresponded to ethnicity, even in many cases to class.

But the motivations for murder were not spontaneously generated from religion or even ethnicity but were driven by a cascade of influences: decades of hostile perceptions of the "other" and a Turkish sense of losing social status and wealth to Armenians , insecurity in the face of perceived dangers, and the positive support and encouragement of state authorities for the most lawless and inhumane behavior.

The Armenian Genocide was also not primarily a struggle between two contending nationalisms—Armenian and Turkish—

one of which destroyed the other. Such a scenario presupposes that two well-formed and articulated nationalisms already existed in the early years of the war.

Among Armenians, divided though they were among a number of political and cultural orientations, identification with an Armenian nation had gained a broad resonance. Yet Turkish identity was not clearly focused on the "nation." Turkish nationalism was still weak and mixed in with Islam, Pan-Turanism, and Ottomanism.

Two Armenian refugees, a woman and her son (Source: Wikipedia)

The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, the Young Turks) elite was not so much engaged in creating a homogeneous ethnic nation as it was searching, unsuccessfully—flailing around —to find ways to maintain its empire.

Deporting, killing, and forcefully converting Armenians were parts of a major, deliberate effort to that end, but not in order for the Young Turks to create a "Turkey for the Turks" or a homeland for the Turkish nation, something that in the next decade would become the hallmark of the Kemalist republic.

This map depicts locations of deportation stations and routes as well as escape routes. (Source: Wikipedia)

The imperial mission of the CUP still involved ruling over Kurds and Arabs, as well as Jews, Greeks, and even Armenian survivors, in what would essentially still be a multinational Ottoman Empire. In the vision of some, like Enver Pasha, that vision was now greatly expanded to include the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus and possibly Central Asia.

Even as some thinkers, notably 'Turks" from the Russian Empire advocated an empire in the more ecumenical civic sense of the Ottomanist liberals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the policies of the Young Turks never were purely Turkish nationalist but remained Ottoman in fundamental conception. In a word, they were primarily state imperialists rather than ethnonationalists.

Most analysts agree that in the first decade of the twentieth century there was a significant shift among the Young Turks from an Ottomanist orientation—in which emphasis was on equality among the millets within a multinational society that continued to recognize difference—to a more nationalist position in which the superiority of the ethnic Turks and their privileged position within the state was more explicitly underlined.

This steady shift toward Turkism presented the Armenian political leadership with an extraordinarily difficult choice—remaining in alliance with the increasingly nationalist Young Turks or breaking decisively with the government. The leading Armenian political party, the *Dashnaktsutiun*, decided to continue working with the Young Turks in the last years before World War I, while the Armenian Church leaders and the liberal *Ramkavar* party distanced themselves from the government party.

Ottoman Interior Minister Talat Pasha (L); American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau (R) (Source: Wikipedia)

Even when the Marxist *Hnchaks* denounced the Young Turks for their steady move away from Ottomanism toward Turkism and their failure to carry out agricultural and administrative reforms, the *Dashnaks* maintained their electoral alliance with the CUP.

When war broke out in 1914, the Ottoman *Dashnaks* pledged to fight for the empire and to urge Ottoman Armenians to join the Ottoman army, while across the border Russian Armenians, also influenced by the *Dashnaktsutiun*, volunteered for the tsarist army.

Armenians found themselves in armies on both sides of the Caucasian Front, and high officials of both empires harbored suspicions of Armenian disloyalty. But only one government decided to act preemptively to rid itself of its Armenian "problem."

The argument often employed by Turkish leaders to the Western and German diplomats who inquired and protested against the

treatment of the Armenians was that the precarious condition of the empire and the requirements of self-defense of the state justified the repression of "rebellion."

In a telling interview with the American ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, Minister of Interior Talat conveyed the complex of reasons that influenced the decision to eliminate Anatolian Armenians.

"I have asked you to come to-day," began Talat, "so that I can explain our position on the whole Armenian subject. We base our objections to the Armenians on three distinct grounds. In the first place, they have enriched themselves at the expense of the Turks. In the second place, they are determined to domineer over us and to establish a separate state. In the third place, they have openly encouraged our enemies."

In his own terms the Minister spoke of the status reversal of Armenians and Turks ("they have enriched themselves at the expense of the Turks" and "are determined to domineer over us"), the government's fear of Armenian separatism and the breakup of the empire, and the collaboration of Armenians with the Russians.

The deportation and mass murder of Armenians was not motivated primarily by religious fanaticism, though distinctions based on religion played a role. While most victims of the massacres were condemned to deportation or worse because of their ethno-religious identification, there were many cases in which people were saved from death or deportation when they converted to Islam. The identity of Armenians for the Ottoman elite and ordinary Turks and Kurds was not as indelibly fixed as

the identity of Jews would be in the racist imagination of the Nazis.

This structure, known as Tsitsernakaberd, is Armenia's memorial to victims of the Genocide. (Source: Wikipedia)

In the end, Ottoman leaders and ordinary subjects lived within and were influenced by what I call an "affective disposition"—an emotional and cognitive environment—that had been created over time.

In that pathological emotional universe the Armenians were seen as grasping and mercenary, subversive and disloyal. They were turned into a alien and unsympathetic category that not only could be eliminated but had to be annihilated in order to save the empire.

Genocide occurred when state leaders determined that state security required the physical elimination of hundreds of thousands of their subjects. ◆

Suggested Reading:

Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Goçek, and Norman Naimark, *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Ronald Grigor Suny, "They Can Live in the Desert But Nowhere Else": *A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton University Press, 2015).

For a discussion of the efforts to deny the Armenian Genocide by constructing a theory of Armenian provocation, see Robert Melson, "A Theoretical Inquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894-1896," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XXIV, 3 (July 1982), pp. 481-509; and "Provocation or Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry into the Armenian Genocide of 1915," in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (New Brunswick and Oxford: Transaction Books, 1986), pp. 61-84.

For a firsthand account, see Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Page, 1918), pp. 336-337

Middle East Remains Unstable 30 Years after Attacks on Peacekeepers in Lebanon

By David P. Hadley

(Published October 2013)

At 6:22 a.m., October 23, 1983, a massive explosion ripped through the barracks of the battalion landing team (BLT) of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit at the Beirut International Airport.

Originating from a truck that had rammed through the marines' perimeter, the detonation struck with the force of 21,000 pounds of TNT. 240 U.S. servicemen and one Lebanese custodian were killed in the attack. It was the greatest single-day loss of life for the Marine Corps since the first day of the Battle of Iwo Jima in February 1945.

The building is shown here before and after the attack. (Source: Wikipedia)

A short time later, a second explosion at a French barracks in Beirut killed 58 French paratroopers.

The deadly attacks happened 30 years ago this month; from then until now, U.S. policy has continued to struggle to find a clear, consistent policy to achieve stability in the Middle East in the face of a complex, multi-faceted challenges. With atrocities now piling up in Syria, and the question of U.S. intervention hovering, the events leading up to the 1983 barracks bombings remind us of the difficulties of finding a way to quickly and cleanly intervene in the Middle East.

The American and French forces were serving in Beirut as part of a multinational peace-keeping force. Sectarian political and religious groups had clashed in Lebanon for years.

Founded after World War I under French control, Lebanon included Maronite Christians and Muslims (divided between Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Druze). The Maronites held the majority by a thin margin at that time. The Muslims, however, tended to want to be a part of Syria, currently also coalescing under French rule.

Following independence from France in 1943, the Muslim factions agreed to maintain a unified Lebanese state, the Maronites agreed to accept the essentially Arab nature of

Lebanon, and the "National Pact" was established. The sides agreed that a Maronite would be president, a Sunni prime minister, and a Shi'ite speaker of the Parliament. A ratio of 6.5 to 1 Maronites to Muslims would be maintained in Parliament.

By 1958, cracks developed in the Pact, as President Camille Chamoun attempted to change the constitution to exceed his limit of one term; the resulting chaos led to the first U.S. Marine intervention there.

By the 1970s, although demographic changes had made the Maronites only a third of the population while the Shi'a became the majority, the Maronites opposed Shi'a demands for political reform to reflect this reality. Several Maronite leaders, most notably Pierre Gemayel, formed militias to protect the status quo.

To make matters worse, the Palestinian Liberation Organization used Beirut as its main base after being expelled from Jordan. Welcomed by Lebanon's Muslims, the Maronites objected to their presence. When violence broke out in 1975 after an unidentified gunman killed several Maronite militia members, an escalating series of reprisals led to all-out civil war.

At the height of the violence, as many as twenty-five distinct armed groups divided by religion and political ideology fought with one another as the Lebanese government collapsed under the strain of the violence. Lebanon was also occupied by foreign powers seeking to support their proxies and maintain their position in the fragile Middle Eastern power system. Syria occupied the Bekaa valley in eastern Lebanon in 1976, ostensibly to stabilize the civil war; Israeli invaded in June 1982, in order to

finally dislodge the PLO from its base of support amongst the Palestinian refugee population.

Following the Israeli incursion, the multinational peacekeepers were deployed in an attempt to restore stability. Early indications that the peacekeepers' presence led to greater stability were promising. Thomas Friedman, then based in Beirut as a reporter for The New York Times, reported that some civilians were actually beginning to replace their shattered windows, a sure sign of hope.

By September 1982, international forces had withdrawn. However, a subsequent massacre of Palestinians, largely non-combatants, by a Maronite militia led to the redeployment of the peacekeepers in an open-ended stabilization mission.

The peacekeepers' mission was to project a sense of stability but not to actually engage in combat operations. Meanwhile, while a combined U.S. Army/Marine unit trained the nucleus of a national Lebanese army. U.S. long-term plans remained only partially formed and reactive to events on the ground. The U.S. settled on supporting the government of Maronite Amin Gemayel, largely because Gemayel won Israel's support by opposing the Palestinians.

Rather than act as the national leader Washington hoped for, Gemayel continued to act as a factional leader. He pursued the interests of the Maronite minority over those of the other sectarian communities and the country as a whole. Now, however, he was as a factional leader with the support of a powerful friend.

Despite some initial optimism in the United States and Lebanon, the situation began to deteriorate. Violence was increasingly targeted at the U.S. presence.

In April 1983, a truck bomb exploded outside the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. Dozens were killed, including several key members of the CIA station, hampering effective intelligence activities for months to come. Sporadic attacks followed, killing several Marines, and wounding dozens.

When Col. Timothy Geraghty took command of the Marines on May 30, 1983, however, he was still given to understand his mission was not primarily a combat one. Marines in the guard stations around their increasingly insecure base at the Beirut International Airport kept their weapons unloaded unless a direct threat presented itself. As the main threat to the Marines at the airport was random attacks from rockets, artillery, and small arms, Geraghty increased the number of marines billeted in a fortified building that became the home of the Marine Battalion Landing Team, the main combat unit of 24th Marine Amphibious Unit.

Increasingly identified by the various factions in Beirut as aligning with Gemayel's faction, the peacekeeping forces remained officially neutral.

However, in September, during particularly heavy fighting between the American-trained Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and various militia groups, U.S. Ambassador Robert McFarland requested that the U.S. provide direct air and naval support to the LAF.

Geraghty, with the support of senior Army and Naval officers, blocked these requests, fearing they would be tantamount to a renunciation of U.S. neutrality. Reflecting later on the repeated calls for intervention against the Shi'a militias, Geraghty reported that he "wondered if anyone else realized where this f——— train was headed." The strikes were eventually carried out over his objections.

While there can be no direct link drawn between the decision to directly aid the LAF and the October 23 bombing, it is clear that the by the time of the bombing the Marines' situation was substantially changed from its original parameters. While their basic stated purpose was neutral peacekeeping, specific plans for a long-term settlement remained elusive.

The Marines also faced the danger of militia groups supported by Syria and Iran. The president of Syria, Hafez al-Assad, wanted to establish Lebanon as a buffer between Syria and Israel. Iran wanted to export its Islamic revolutionary movement.

Though officially it was a group called "Islamic Jihad" that carried out the attack on the Marine Barracks, elements of Hizbāllah were deeply involved. Rather than a secular, Arab nationalist group like the PLO, Hizbāllah ("The Party of God") was a pro-Iranian Islamist organization that accepted the Iranian call for warfare against the West in general and Israel and the United States in particular.

Recently declassified material has shown that on September 26, 1983, the NSA intercepted an Iranian message to their ambassador in Damascus, directing him to "take spectacular action against the American Marines." That intercept was not

passed along to Col. Geraghty, who after the attack was reprimanded for concentrating his men so closely and not taking steps to prevent the truck bomb, though such a massive bomb had been unprecedented.

The bombing led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Beirut early in 1984. President Reagan did not want to have to fight Congress for a further commitment. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger had opposed the intervention from the start.

The fallout of the Marine intervention was the direct cause of Weinberger and General Colin Powell cooperating to develop what would eventually be referred to as the Powell Doctrine. Also deeply influenced by the American experience in Vietnam, the doctrine called for the commitment of U.S. troops only in cases of vital national interest, assured public support, and clearly defined and attainable goals.

Geraghty is pictured here at left; at right, a sketch of the attacker's route into the barracks (Source: Wikipedia)

In the thirty years since the bombing, U.S. policy has struggled to find clear objectives and the means of obtaining them in the Middle East. The diffuse, unpredictable terrorist organizations like Hizbāllah came to overshadow earlier, secular groups like the PLO. Following the Marine withdrawal, an emboldened Hizbāllah continued to act aggressively in the region. Geraghty, among others, later argued that a failure to retaliate against Hizbāllah only further emboldened the movement.

The sectarian divisions that the peacekeepers sought to transcend in Beirut but which ultimately engulfed them remain a fact of life in many conflicts throughout the Middle East and the world. Such is the case currently in Syria, in which an Alawite government, supported by a predominately Shi'a government in Iran and by other minority groups in Syria, faces a diverse opposition from the majority Sunni population that includes some groups affiliated with al Qaeda.

In calling for intervention in Syria to punish Hafez al-Assad's son, Bashar, for using chemical weapons against his opponents, President Obama struggled to define his actual objectives. Though halted for the moment after Assad agreed to destroy his chemical weapons stocks, the situation remains terribly unstable.

Whatever the outcome of the current crisis in Syria, the tragedy in Beirut should serve as a stark reminder of the complex, unexpected, and dangerous results that can stem from open-ended and poorly defined intervention in the Middle East. ♦

The U.S. Invasion of Iraq, 10 Years Later

By Jonathan Romaneski

(Published March 2013)

On March 20, 2003, a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq. A decade on, how do we—and how should we—remember this war?

Tactically, it was one of the most successful military operations in history, but many Americans will not remember the war as an overwhelming victory. Within only twenty-one days' time, an enemy army of some 400,000 men dissipated in the face of an invasion force just over half its size. (In the photo below, Marines enter one of Saddam Hussein's palaces on April 9.) The coalition ended an oppressive, murderous regime and occupied the country at the cost of approximately 155 U.S. soldiers killed. Yet, despite this initial military success, Americans are more likely to remember it as a tragic war—a near loss at best, a debacle at worst.

It will also likely be remembered as George W. Bush's war: a war that he initiated almost unilaterally, with a willful misleading of the public, and a war that committed a democratic nation's armed forces to a strategically disastrous regime-changing invasion. To color the war in such a way may be emotionally satisfying, but it oversimplifies a much more complicated picture. All three branches of the U.S. government within its system of checks and balances approved the war and, as a poll from the Pew Research Center indicates, a majority of Americans cheered as the first bombs fell.

U.S. Marines enter a palace in Baghdad. (Source: Wikimedia, photographer Kevin C. Quihuis Jr.)

President Bush's decision to invade Iraq was first approved in Congress and then upheld in federal court.

In October 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the Iraq War Resolution, authorizing the President to use military force against Saddam Hussein. In the February 2003 lawsuit Doe v. Bush, which attempted to strike down the Iraq War Resolution as unconstitutional, the plaintiffs cited Thomas Jefferson and argued that a formal congressional declaration of war is beneficial because it "slow[s] the 'dogs of war'…Congress, the voice of the people, should make this momentous decision."

Bush is pictured here introducing the resolution two weeks before its passage. (Source: Wikipedia, photographer Paul Morse)

The plaintiffs' rhetoric was ironic in two ways. For one, Thomas Jefferson was the first U.S. president to commit military forces to the Middle East without a formal declaration of war. Undeclared wars are not therefore recent in U.S. history, nor is it clear that they are contrary to the Founding Fathers' intent. Second, the plaintiffs failed to realize that Congress, the voice of the people, had indeed made the momentous decision by approving Bush's resolution.

The U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals summarily struck down Doe v. Bush, thus ruling the Iraq War constitutional. President Bush continued to press his case for war now that he was legally unfettered, despite flagging U.N. support and deteriorating international popular opinion. In the late evening of March 19, 2003, he announced the beginning of the invasion that Congress had authorized.

In a rush of patriotic enthusiasm that ensued in the wake of the initial military successes, many supporters failed to appreciate the tragic irony of Bush's May 2003 "Mission Accomplished" speech. With a flourish, President Bush arrived aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in a full flight suit and then, appearing in a more traditional suit and tie, proudly gave Americans a thumbs-up. In the coming years, another photograph of a U.S. soldier, Lynndie England, giving a thumbs-up of her own next to naked Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, would embarrass Americans and darken a popular mood already spiraling downward as the war dragged on.

The war was a diplomatic nightmare, effectively squandering post-9/11 international sympathy and support. A far more deleterious effect of the Iraq invasion was that it distracted

American resources from Afghanistan. It did not occur to American leaders or to most of the American public that diverting between 125,000 and 158,000 American troops to Iraq would seriously degrade the security-building effort in the highly porous, decentralized country of Afghanistan.

It did not occur to a majority of congressmen, either. Congress had supported the President because its members failed to ask

In this photo taken during the surge, in February 2007, wounded U.S. soldiers are evacuated. (Source: Wikipedia, photographer Scott Reed)

the difficult questions, such as: What is the imminent threat? Even if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, how does that make it any different from Iran, Syria, or North Korea? How would a

"second front" in the Global War on Terror affect the primary campaign against the group directly responsible for the 9/11 attacks?

Today, we are still groping for ways to provide security to the Afghan people after the Taliban resurgence, which took place precisely during the "Surge" campaign in Iraq, when U.S. troop levels were at their highest.

The March 2003 invasion was no constitutional failure, since the Iraq War Resolution served as an ersatz declaration of war. It was certainly a leadership failure on President Bush's part, but it was also a failure of all too many American citizens to think critically and strategically and to press their congressional representatives to do the same. On this anniversary of the 2003 Iraq war, we remember that Americans must learn to consider the strategic implications of U.S. military actions in the Middle East, and they must work to keep the legislative and executive branches accountable. ◆

Armenians, Turks, and the Genocide Question *(Podcast)*

Ottoman soldiers march Armenian civilians to a prison. (Source: Wikipedia)

April 24, 2015 marks the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Beginning in 1915 in the midst of the strains of World War I, Ottoman officials oversaw the deportation and massacre of anywhere between several hundred thousand and 1.5 million Armenian people. The result was the physical annihilation of the Armenian communities that had lived in the Anatolian peninsula for more than 2500 years. But labeling it as a "genocide" has proven controversial and unacceptable for the Turkish Republic. Join your History Talk hosts Leticia Wiggins and Patrick Potyondy as they interview Ronald Grigor Suny, Ayse Baltacioglu-Brammer, and John Quigley to discuss

what is now known about the history of these events, the meaning of the legal and historical label "genocide," and why coming to terms with mass atrocities is so difficult today. (April 2015)

(Play from: *Origins* web site, iTunes, or Soundcloud)

A group of Armenian refugees (Source: Pullman Herald, 1919, Public Domain)

The Terrors of Suicide Bombing *(Podcast)*

A Japanese pilot flies into an American ship during World War II. (Source: Wikipedia)

Many consider suicide bombing an exclusively recent or even novel phenomenon, carried out by crazed individuals that defy all reason. But is this actually the case? When and why did suicide bombing begin? Are there similarities among Russian anarchists of the nineteenth century, kamikaze pilots, and today's suicide bombers? How can the history inform policy decisions to try and prevent such acts? Join your hosts Leticia Wiggins and Patrick Potyondy who interview guests Corbin Williamson, Jonathan Romaneski, and Jeffrey Lewis as they tackle these and other tough questions on the terrors of suicide bombing. (June 2014)

American marines found these materials for making suicide bombing vests hidden in a school room chair. (Source: Wikimedia, by Master Sgt. Buzz Farell)

(Play from: *Origins* web site, iTunes, or Soundcloud)

The Syrian Civil War: Alawites, Women's Rights, and the Arab Spring *(Podcast)*

Protests in Syria (Source: Wikipedia, Photo by shamsnn)

Co-hosts Leticia Wiggins and Patrick Potyondy interviewed guests Ayse Baltacioglu-Brammer and Patrick Scharfe on the the civil war in Syria, which continues to dominate headlines across the globe. As negotiations and fighting continue, Leticia and Patrick spoke with the two historians of the Middle East to explore the nation's diversity, the role of women in the Arab Spring, intervention, and the way forward. (January 2014)

(Play from: *Origins* web site, iTunes, or Soundcloud)

The Arab Spring Begins. (AK Rockefeller/CC BY-SA 2.0)

Six Days that Shook the World

Book review by

Markus Schoof

(Published April 2017)

When Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping in May 1967 and built up troops along Israel's border, Israel responded with preventive strikes against Egypt launching the Six-Day War. It is fair to say that even fifty years later the dust has still not settled from that war.

*by **Guy Larson** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)*
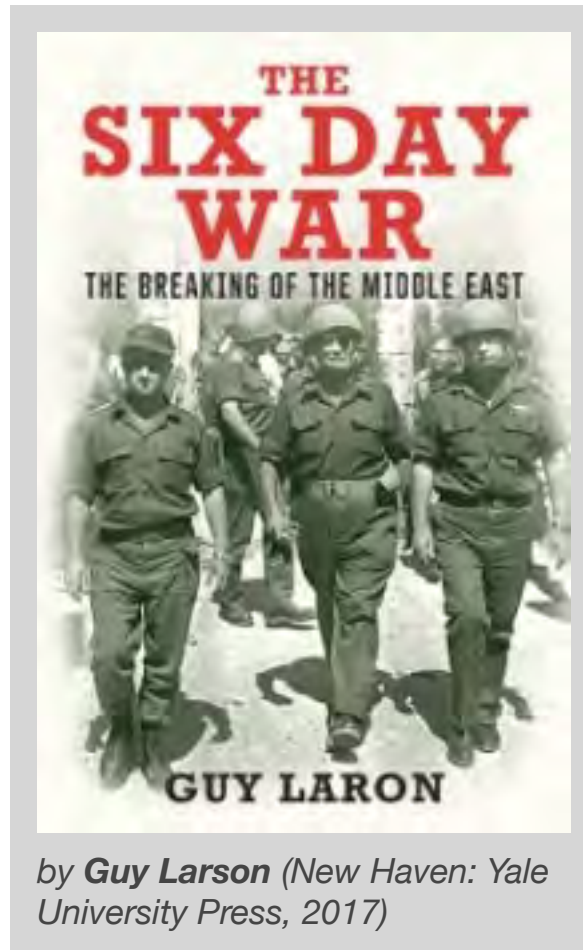
Writing with eloquence and providing much detail, Guy Laron, a scholar of international relations at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, offers a broad contextualization of the origins of this war. Drawing on a variety of Israeli, American, British, German, Russian, and East-European archives, *The Six-Day War: The Breaking of the Middle East* demonstrates that in addition to the

conflict over the Straits, the war also resulted from economic turmoil, military domination of civilian governments, and insufficient pressures by the U.S. and Soviet superpowers to deter regional military violence.

Laron discusses how the economic turmoil in Syria and Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s created the conditions for military coups and for administrations that deemed the application of force a welcome distraction from domestic problems. At the same time, Laron emphasizes that Egypt's regime under Abdul Gamar Nasser, Syria's Baath Party, and Jordan's King Hussein rarely spoke with one voice. In fact, Syria had previously grown tired of Egypt's claims to speak on its behalf. Jordan (and Saudi Arabia), meanwhile, had given significant military aid to the royalists in North Yemen's Civil War (1962-1970) at the same time that Egypt's overextended commitment of troops to North-Yemen's republicans had produced what came to be known as "Egypt's Vietnam."

What finally united the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian regimes in an uneasy coalition against Israel in 1967 was the general realization of Israel's military superiority and a reliance on bad Soviet intelligence about an alleged Israeli troop build-up near Syria. Such intelligence, Laron shows, had resulted from

deliberate Israeli attempts to deceive, but also from the Syrian fabrication of evidence intended to draw Egypt and potentially even the Soviet Union into the conflict.

The fact that Nasser's hawkish Egyptian military leaders kept him out of the loop, moreover, not only facilitated the escalation of conflict but also laid the foundation for Israel's devastation of Egypt's air force. His inability to control the military and the resulting decisive Egyptian defeat discredited Nasser, the erstwhile hero of the 1956 Suez Crisis and most famous advocate of Arab nationalism.

On the Israeli side, military leaders of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) proved similarly influential over civilian authorities who still hoped to use diplomacy to reopen the Straits of Tiran. Chief of the General Staff Yitzhak Rabin and Major General Ariel Sharon—both of whom would garner glory in the conflict and become Prime Minister—proved particularly adroit in pushing Israel toward war.

Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's position was weakened by well-publicized attacks by Israel's founder Ben Gurion and the broader Israeli perception that he was unprepared for any Arab attack. Such pressures, then, coupled with Israeli frustrations that its neighbors encouraged and selectively supported the newly-founded Palestinian Liberation Organization, helped sway Prime Minister Eshkol to move from a defensive to an offensive mindset —"Rabin's Schlieffenplan," (145) as Laron coins it in pointed allusion.

Crucially, however, Israel would not have acted without American permission. Laron's analysis of what some have called the "red-light, yellow-light, green-light" debate is remarkable. Providing a trove of evidence, Laron leaves little doubt that President Lyndon B. Johnson and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow surreptitiously gave Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban the green light to act unilaterally against its neighbors. The White House did this with the

Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, who was pushed from all sides to implement a preventative strike against Arab neighbors. (Source: Wikimedia)

backing of the CIA and the Pentagon but against the will of the State Department which presciently foresaw the long-term complications that could arise for the United States in the Middle East. Just as importantly, this support behind the scenes likely helped to convince Israel to hold on to the newly-gained territories. Israel had originally intended to return those territories--, including the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and the Golan Height-- in exchange for security arrangements after the war.

Rabin's "Schlieffenplan:" an early Israeli western offensive against Egypt followed by an eastern strike against Syria and Jordan (Source: Wikimedia)

Finally, the Soviet Union assumed a determinedly ambiguous role in the conflict. Torn between Soviet hawks and doves, the Brezhnev administration, never one to replicate Khrushchev's enthusiasm for Third-World commitments, sent mixed signals to Egypt and Syria. The Soviets expressed their support and provided arms and tactical doctrine to Egypt and Syria. But, they also acted cautiously to avoid an all-out escalation of a conflict that could have resulted in war with the United States.

Clearly, the Six-Day War's multiple domestic and international dimensions make for complicated analysis, and Guy Laron succeeds in tracing the manifold developments of this convoluted conflict. His arguments are convincing and substantiated through his impressive incorporation of archival materials.

Yet, Laron's greatest weakness lies in the book's story-telling, which often make it exceedingly difficult to see the forest for the trees. Overwhelming the reader with detail and sporadically neglecting to connect the various chapters and themes, Laron can make events difficult to follow.

A lack of narrative cohesion notwithstanding, this work stands out through Laron's brilliant insights and eloquent writing. Undoubtedly, a perusal of *The Six-Day War* will prove useful to scholars of international relations and the Middle East across a variety of disciplines but also offer rewarding reading experiences to public audiences with much patience and stamina. ♦

Restoring the Origins of the First Crusade: A Medieval Chronicle Written in the Twenty-First Century

Book review by

Kyle Shimoda

(Published July 2013)

Peter Frankopan's *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* is a provocative piece of scholarship. The author of the book proposes essentially to rewrite - or perhaps restore - the history of the origins of the First Crusade. Frankopan's argument is that the First Crusade - though it has traditionally been regarded in western scholarship as a pious call to European knights for military pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the behest of Pope Urban II - occurred as the result of a direct appeal to the West for military aid by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos. Frankopan then goes on to show exactly
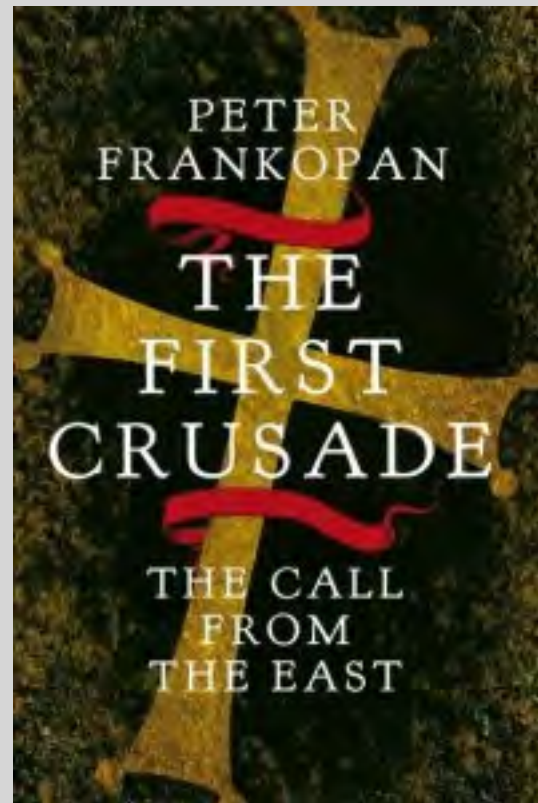
*by **Peter Frankopan** (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012)*

why and how Alexios, cooperating with Urban, kindled the fire of crusading spirit in the souls of westerners, and how Alexios and Urban together coordinated the entire military enterprise of the First Crusade together as best they could. Frankopan then goes on to show why and how Alexios' role in the First Crusade was eventually - and he argues deliberately - washed out of the narrative of the conquest of Jerusalem. He attributes this whitewashing of history to the figure of the western "hero" of the First Crusade, Bohemond I of Taranto, who attempted to conquer Byzantium after the conclusion of the First Crusade.

The book's first five chapters survey the political and military situations of Western Europe and Byzantium prior to the First Crusade. Here Frankopan sketches the political web that ultimately united Alexios and Urban and resulted in the call for crusade. Urban was in desperate need of an ally, even if that ally came from schismatic Byzantium. Frankopan's biggest argument in these opening chapters, however, is his assertion that in the East, Byzantium was not in fact teetering on the brink of disaster when Alexios came to power in 1081. Instead, the devastating loss of Byzantine Asia Minor is held to have in fact occurred during Alexios' reign, which explains why the First Crusade did not take place until the last decade of the Eleventh Century.

Alexios, desperate to save his beleaguered empire, found in Pope Urban perhaps his most important ally. Urban likewise saw an opportunity to strengthen his own position through alliance with Byzantium, and so he and Alexios came to an understanding. Urban would send out a call throughout western Christendom for soldiers to come to Alexios' aid by appealing to the western desire to undertake pious pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which had been conquered by the Muslims in the Seventh Century. But while Alexios and Urban saw the crusaders as soldiers fighting for Byzantium, the crusaders themselves were mainly concerned with fighting for Jerusalem.

Alexios, however, eventually came to be slandered and largely written out of the narrative of the crusade's origins. Frankopan argues that initially the crusaders enjoyed a relatively stable relationship with Alexios. But as they marched forward and eventually succeeded in retaking Jerusalem, Alexios came to be seen with hostility by the crusaders. In the final chapters of this book, Bohemond of Taranto rises to prominence. Frankopan traces Bohemond's story in the crusade as the prince went from being Alexios' enemy, to his closest ally, and eventually to his enemy once again. Throughout this narrative, Bohemond also becomes a heroic figure among the crusaders, renowned for his courage and military fortitude.

Alexios, meanwhile, came to be viewed by westerners with suspicion when the emperor failed to keep his promise to march to Jerusalem with his army alongside the crusaders. Instead, Alexios had his faithful lieutenant Tatikios accompany the crusaders after the conquest of Nicaea, and when the crusaders

were on the brink of defeat during their expedition, Alexios, they said, failed to send them any military relief. Although the crusaders ultimately did succeed in taking Jerusalem, the damage to Alexios' reputation was already done. As one reads the book, however, one gets the feeling that one of Frankopan's less explicitly stated objectives is to rehabilitate the image of the emperor Alexios Komnenos in western historiography. Frankopan does this, for example, by stating several times throughout the book that Alexios had not in fact failed in his obligations to the crusaders, and he adduces evidence from the sources to support his claims.

Finally, Bohemond, the hero of the crusade, eventually sought to conquer Byzantium, and so attempted to rally support in the west by portraying his designs on Byzantium as almost a new crusade. Frankopan demonstrates that this resulted in the slandering of Alexios by showing that much of the literature recounting the narrative of the First Crusade was written as Bohemond was preparing his expedition against the Byzantines. Bohemond ultimately failed to conquer Byzantium, but in the West he never lost his image and reputation as a great hero of the First Crusade, and likewise Alexios was to be seen as a treacherous figure in the West evermore. Pope Urban, minus his ally Alexios, thus became the key figure responsible for the glorious military pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Provocative and engaging as the book is, Frankopan is making an argument from silence. While his analyses do seem reasonable and insightful, many of his arguments rest on conclusions about how things *may* have happened - and why events did unfold that

way is often a matter of Frankopan suggesting reasons that they may have been excluded from the narrative. In many cases, it seems possible that another scholar could suggest an alternative reason for why an event was removed from the sources - if indeed such an event even did occur. Ultimately, though, it seems reasonable to at least consider Frankopan's interpretation of the First Crusade's origins as valid and plausible, though readers of the book should be aware of its limitations, and may certainly wish to dispute individual points of Frankopan's argument along the way.

It is worth noting that one of the most interesting features of the book is its presentation. Frankopan weaves his arguments into a grand narrative of the First Crusade that recounts the entirety of the campaign in reasonable, but not overwhelming, detail. Hence the title of this review: what Frankopan seems to have done, essentially, is to write an account of the First Crusade that could be stylistically compared to a medieval narrative chronicle. This suits the overall tone and objective of the book quite admirably. ◆

The Crime That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Book review by

Charles Carter

(Published July 2012)

In 2007, Arat Dink and Sarkis Seropyan, two Turkish journalists of Armenian descent, were given a one-year prison sentence. Their crime: they had used the term "genocide" in reference to the Ottoman treatment of Armenians in 1915. In the name of "national security," the Turkish legal system criminalizes the use of such language. Indeed, Turkey has denied the existence of the genocide, and the number of Ottoman scholars, both within that country and abroad, who have had the courage to privilege truth seeking and challenge the official narrative of the Turkish government has been limited.

*by **Taner Akçam** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012)*
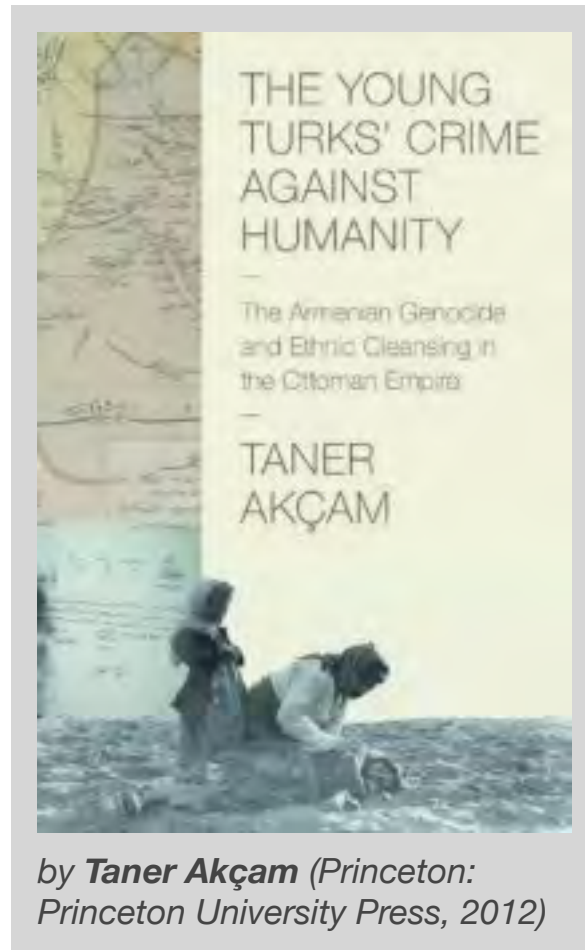
There are repercussions, both personal and professional, for courage.

Into this controversial subject, with bold strides, has walked once again Taner Akçam. Building on his previous book *A Shameful Act* (2006), Akçam's the *Young Turks' Crime against Humanity* is the culmination of his long-time study of the Armenian Genocide. This work, based on more than six-hundred new documents from Ottoman archives, sheds new light into the mindset of the masterminds of the event.

Given the genocide's occurrence amid the First World War, the official historiography within Turkey has portrayed the deadly Armenian relocation policy (beginning in 1915) as an unfortunate part of war. But Akçam's view is different: "wartime policies of the Ottoman government toward the Armenians were never, as has been frequently claimed, the result of military exigencies (p. xix). " Rather, Akçam presents a series of factors that fed into the causal matrix to produce genocide. These include the Young Turks' intense commitment to the homogenization of Anatolia (a development that pre-dated the Great War), deep Ottoman resentment over the Armenian Reform Agreement with Russia (Feb. 1914), intense Ottoman frustration with military defeats in

WWI, and, above all, a belief that Ottoman "national security " demanded a permanent solution to the Armenian problem.

A striking and well-developed contribution is Akçam's emphasis on the role of religion, not simply ethnicity, as a major component in the homogenization policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the Young Turks' governing body responsible for the maltreatment of the Armenians.

On the one hand, the CUP valued science and progress and, to some extent, secularism. On the other, the CUP's broader goal of creating a homogenous society in Anatolia had an important religious element. Islam was central to Turkification, so the CUP privileged Muslims and marginalized Christians. Thus, in the homogenization process, Christians received much harsher treatment than non-Turkish Muslims such as Arabs and Kurds.

In the later deportation waves, Armenian Christians were forced to resettle by foot to the deserts of modern-day Syria and Iraq. Without supplies, the process turned into death marches in which men, women, and children succumbed. By contrast, Kurds and Arabs, who also faced deportation, were not sent to the deserts, but rather dispersed among the Turkish population and encouraged to assimilate.

A major factor for the CUP's anti-Armenian policies, Akçam shows with ample documentation, was the Armenian Reform Agreement with Russia (Feb. 1914). This agreement between the Russians and the Turks undermined Ottoman national sovereignty. The reform, which was not immediately implemented because of the Great War, called for Armenians to have greater political control of their lives. A Russian representative had called the reform, which also mandated foreign inspection into the two eastern provinces that had sizable Armenian populations, the "first step toward rescuing Armenia from Turkish oppression (p. 130)."

But with this reform in place, when the Ottomans suffered defeats on the Russian front, the Armenians became easy scapegoats onto whom to channel national frustration. After all, Armenian Christians were widely portrayed as having Russian loyalties, a fact that was to some extent true. As a result, anti-Armenian propaganda emerged, calling for the immediate removal of Armenians from Anatolia.

Deportation is one thing, but ethnic genocide is quite another. The Young Turks' "concern for national security, " Akçam writes, "was what gave the policy toward Armenians its genocidal character (pp. xvii-xviii). " According to the reform agreement, the eastern provinces of Turkey with sizable Armenian populations had to allow these populations to take part in local administration on an "equal basis. " For the Young Turks, this was incompatible with their goal of Turkish homogenization.

For this reason, the CUP embarked on a population dispersal process to dilute Armenian political power. This process included the arrest and execution of many prominent Armenians. It also included the "5 to 10 percent principle, " a key discovery that Akçam finds in the new documents and repeatedly highlights. This principle prohibited more than five to ten percent of any local population to be comprised of Armenian Christians. It was this principle, Akçam demonstrates, that laid the foundation for the

genocide. Some of the Armenians were relocated successfully, but many died in the process mostly from thirst, exhaustion, hunger, and sickness. The Ottoman government criminalized the distribution of aid.

Akçam details how, for those deportees who made the journey to Syria, life was anything but pleasant. Many had difficulties in adapting to life in detainee camps. More frightening, it soon became clear that the Armenians had been rounded up to be massacred. In the summer of 1916, the Ottomans waged a campaign of ethnic cleansing designed to rid northern Syria of the Armenians. On the orders of Talat Pasha, massacres of Armenians in Der Zor, Syria occurred (p. 277).

One final thought-provoking feature of the book is Akçam's discussion of "cultural genocide " — the annihilation of Armenian Christian customs and identity. Early on, Armenians had the choice of converting to Islam or deportation. Yet, because such large numbers pledged to convert, the Ottoman leadership questioned their sincerity and ended the conversion option. Amid the deportations, children sometimes received the opportunity to convert to Islam, an action that saved many lives. But afterward, they were stripped of their cultural identity and forced into arranged marriages.

The major strength of Akçam's work is both his research and analysis. He examined materials from more than twenty Ottoman archives, especially the important Prime Ministerial and Cipher Office archives. Additionally, he makes ample use of documents from Austria, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Equally significant, Akçam's multi-causal explanation of

the genocide is highly convincing. Readers with interests in Middle Eastern history, human rights, and peace studies will glean significant knowledge of the Armenian genocide from Akçam's book. ◆

The Battle For 1948

Book review by

Paul Chamberlin

(Published October 2008)

During the Arab Revolt of 1936-39, Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion warned: "We must see the situation for what it is. On the security front, we are those attacked and who are on the defensive. But in the political field we are the attackers and the Arabs are those defending themselves. They are living in the country and own the land, the village. We live in the Diaspora and want only to immigrate [to Palestine] and gain possession of [lirkosh] from them."1 This basic opposition between the perspectives of Palestinian Jews and Arabs has fueled the decades-long conflict over the land of Palestine. It has also generated a historical debate between scholars who accept the Zionist narrative of Israeli history and those who tend to be more sympathetic to the Palestinian

by **Benny Morris** (Yale University Press, 2008)
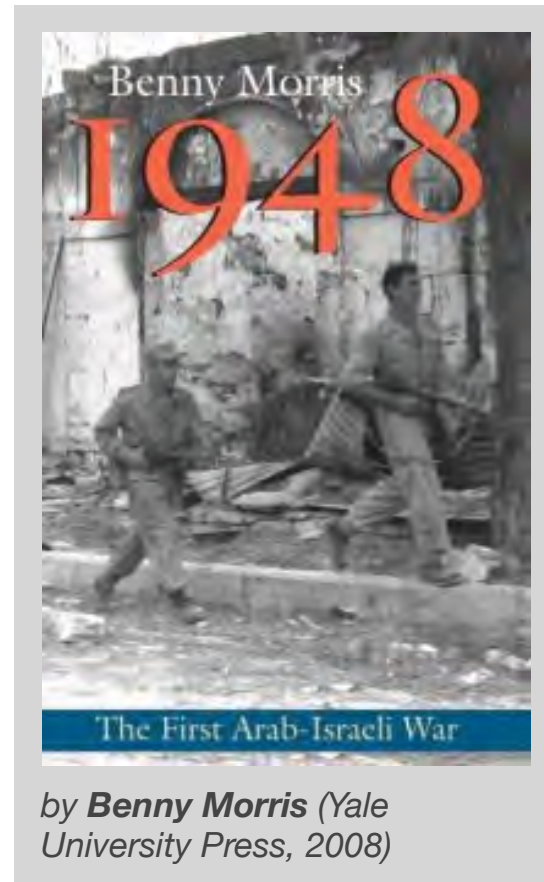
position. The events of 1948 are understood, for the former, as the Israeli War of Independence; for the latter, they are referred to asal-Nakba, the catastrophe.

Benny Morris has been at the center of this academic debate since the appearance of his book, The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem in 1987. Morris joined a group of Israeli scholars known as the New Historians who challenged earlier Zionist interpretations of Israeli history that tended to downplay the Palestinian perspective. Along with scholars like Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé, Morris used newly-opened archives to expose the blemishes of Israeli history, writing a more critical version than their predecessors. The author's singular contribution was to document the Israeli role in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem in 1947-48. For this, he was the subject of attacks by scholars like Efraim Karsh whose Fabricating Israeli History (1997) sought to debunk many of the arguments made by this new generation of Israeli scholars. This controversy – combined with his scholarship, popular writings, and political protest – soon transformed Morris into one of Israel's most prominent public intellectuals.

Morris's latest book, 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War, lives up to the author's controversial reputation. The book is, first and foremost, a thorough and detailed rendering of the military and diplomatic events surrounding the Israeli War of Independence. Although the author pays a good deal of attention to the various Arab perspectives, the greater part of the book and its research are focused on the Israeli side. Those interested in an Arab or Palestinian perspective on al-Nakba would do better to look elsewhere. Likewise, much of the diplomatic story that Morris relates is familiar; the book's principle contribution lies in hundreds of pages of operational history based on the author's research in Israeli state and military archives. 1948 will be most useful for readers in search of an authoritative military history of the war.

As one would expect from one of the New Historians, Morris debunks the myth of the emerging State of Israel as David facing the Arab Goliath in the 1948 war. Put bluntly, "the Yishuv had organized for war. The Arabs had not."[2] Despite seemingly overwhelming demographic advantages, the Arab states were not prepared for conflict. Jewish forces consistently outnumbered Arab armies – often by a factor of two-to-one – enjoyed better access to arms, maintained shorter supply-lines, and were far more experienced than their opponents having fought against and alongside British forces under the Mandate and during World War II, respectively.

The Arab states, in contrast, were fighting their first-ever war; the Palestinians, for their part, were almost totally disorganized. Thus, from a purely military standpoint, a Jewish/Israeli victory was all-but-assured.

Similarly, Morris challenges the notion of 1948 as a noble war: a story of Israeli heroism against the forces of evil. Rather, the author explains that the conflict – like nearly all wars – involved atrocities, massacres, and war crimes on both sides. Moreover, Morris asserts, the Israelis were guilty of a greater number of transgressions simply due to their success on the battlefield. Civilians were slaughtered and raped, towns were looted, and POWs were executed. Jewish terrorists from the Irgun and the Stern Gang continued their Mandate-era operations in the post-independence period until forced to disarm by mainstream Israeli leaders.

Zionist forces were, furthermore, guilty of widespread ethnic cleansing or "transfer" of Arab Palestinians during the war. Here Morris draws from his earlier work on the creation of the refugee problem. From early on, Zionist leaders supported the idea of clearing the Arab population of Palestine to open more land to Jewish settlement. During the war, ethnic cleansing became a matter of military expediency according to Morris. Morris thus disagrees with his fellow New Historians who have argued that the notorious Plan D called explicitly for the systematic expulsion of Palestinians as well as with the conventional Zionist historiography that has accused Arab leaders of inciting the Arab exodus from Palestine. Israel's refusal to allow the majority of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in the wake of hostilities functioned as the final straw in the transformation of the

immediate crisis into the longest ongoing refugee problem in modern history.

While the first ten chapters of the book read as an authoritative and scholarly account of the conflict, Morris's final chapter, "Some Conclusions," stands alone. In it, the author offers a number of provocative and often-strident judgments on the historical events that he has described in the preceding pages. In addition to the arguments regarding the comparative military advantages of the Jewish population heading into the conflict, Israeli conduct during the war, and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, Morris presents a number of observations about the Palestinians and Israel's Arab neighbors. The author explains his opinion that "Historians have tended to ignore or dismiss, as so much hot air, the jihadi rhetoric and flourishes that accompanied the two-stage assault on the Yishuv." Although he does not identify any of these historians, Morris does argue several pages later that the Palestinians have yet to "face up to their past and produce a serious historiography."[3] In contrast to these experts, Morris takes much of the Arab rhetoric at face value, suggesting that the Arab attack should be understood as being religiously motivated. This is a highly contentious conclusion that requires a great deal more attention and evidence than the author provides. This reviewer is hesitant to accept the author's interpretation over that of many area specialists who would disagree with him.

Nonetheless, 1948 is an unflinching and unapologetic history of the Israeli War for Independence that stands as one of the most comprehensive war chronicles available. Make no mistake, the book, while generally objective, is not exactly neutral; the fundamental contradiction between Arab and Jewish positions laid out by Ben-Gurion some 70 years ago hold's true in Morris's work. Readers seeking a thorough account of Palestinian perspectives on 1948 will not find it here, but those searching for a critical – though ultimately sympathetic – Israeli version of the war would do well to read Morris' 1948. ◆

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1 Benny Morris, 1948 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 393.

2 Ibid, 398.

3 Ibid, 394, 400.

The Middle East and The World

Image: Visitors to the Hagia Sophia. (Source: Wikimedia)

A Century of U.S. Relations with Iraq

By Peter Hahn

Under a cloak of early morning darkness on December 18, 2011, some 500 U.S. soldiers at Camp Adder in southern Iraq boarded 110 military vehicles and drove off quietly into the night, without having notified their local Iraqi colleagues of their departure. On heightened alert, the convoy maneuvered steadily to the south and reached the border of Kuwait some five hours later.

The statue of Saddam Hussein topples in Baghdad's Firdos Square on April 9, 2003. (Source: Wikipedia)

This departure of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Cavalry Division of the U.S. Army—conducted in secrecy in hope of avoiding any opportunistic attacks by local adversaries—marked the end of a nearly nine-year-long U.S. military adventure in Iraq.

Although the final convoy departed Iraq without incident, it left behind a legacy of a war that was controversial in origin, costly to Iraqi civilians and American soldiers, and inconclusive in outcome.

The 2003 U.S. military invasion of Iraq and the extended occupation that followed were certainly the most dramatic and significant events in the long history of U.S. relations with Iraq. During the nine decades since Iraq was established as a

separate state in the aftermath of World War I, the policy of the United States towards it can be divided into five phases.

In each period, the United States pursued distinct goals in Iraq—goals that reflected the growing interest of the United States in the Middle East, the increasing political and military influence of Iraq, and the evolution of U.S. interests in a rapidly changing international context.

I. Genesis of U.S.-Iraqi Relations, to 1958

Prior to World War II, the U.S. government took very little interest in Mesopotamia (Greek for "land between the rivers," in reference to the basin between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and a name used before World War I for the territory that generally formed modern Iraq).

The first Americans to encounter the region were evangelical Christian missionaries who swarmed across it beginning in the 1830s and who built hundreds of churches, schools, and medical facilities by the turn of the twentieth century. In 1880-1920, archaeologists from American universities
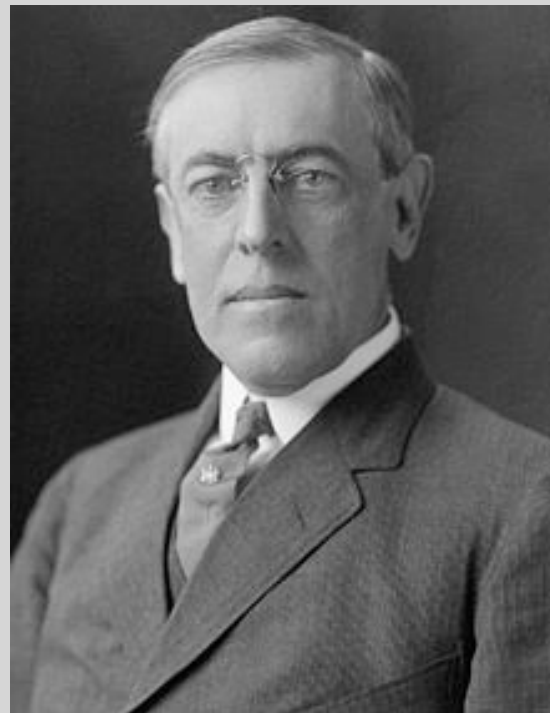
U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (Source: Wikipedia)

conducted field work in Mesopotamia in the hope of discovering physical artifacts that would corroborate Biblical history.

U.S. oil corporations began probing Mesopotamia for commercial opportunities in the 1910s, gaining a 23.75 percent share in the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1928. Within a decade, the IPC discovered a massive oil field near Kirkuk and built a network of wells, pipelines, and production facilities that earned it considerable wealth.

U.S. government involvement in early Iraq was limited. President Woodrow Wilson envisioned a liberal post-World War I political
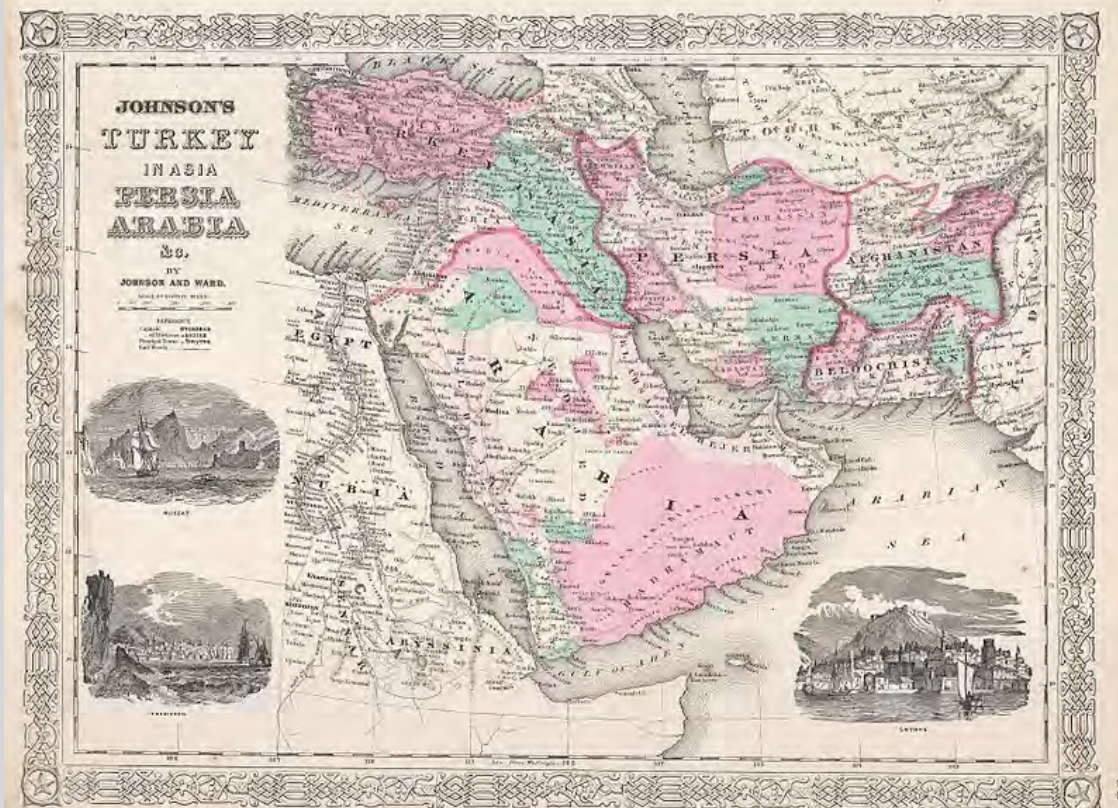
Map of the Middle East in 1866 (Source: Wikipedia, photo by A.J. Johnson)

Oil spouts from the ground in the Kirkurk district of Iraq in the 1930s. (Source: Wikipedia)

Pro-Nazi Iraqi prime minister Rashid Ali al-Gailani served three brief stints in 1933, 1940, and 1941. (Source: Wikipedia)

Post-World War II international dynamics gradually drew the United States into a deeper political relationship with Iraq. The onset of the Cold War raised fears in Washington about Soviet expansionism into the Middle East and generated a determination among American leaders to prevent the spread of communism in Iraq.

Financially drained by the world war, Britain proved unable to maintain its position of imperial dominance in the country. Intra-regional tensions, most notably the conflict over Palestine that erupted as the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49, also destabilized the region. The emergence of anti-Western nationalism—a reaction to the legacy of British imperialism and U.S. support for

system that would include self-determination for Iraqis and other peoples of the former Ottoman Empire, but he was unable to promote that vision effectively.

In the 1920s and 1930s, U.S. diplomats generally deferred to British officials, who managed Iraq as a League of Nations mandate, demarcated its national borders, and built it into a pro-Western monarchy.

When a threat developed that Nazi Germany might gain political dominance in Baghdad during World War II, U.S. diplomats endorsed the British military suppression of Rashid Ali al-Gailani, a pro-Nazi Iraqi who briefly occupied the position of prime minister. With American backing, the British restored the monarchy, which cooperated with Allied war aims and strategy.

An Iranian soldier wearing a gas mask during the Iran-Iraq War (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Israel, among other factors—undermined the local popularity of the pro-Western monarchy in Baghdad.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, U.S. officials sought to stabilize Iraq. They helped to negotiate a withdrawal of Iraqi military forces from the Palestinian theater as part of a broader plan to end the first Arab-Israeli war. They encouraged the IPC to increase oil production and to share a larger portion of revenues with the Iraqi government. They provided economic and military aid to the Iraqi government.

By 1955, the United States enlisted Iraq as a charter member of the Baghdad Pact, an anti-Soviet defense partnership linking Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Britain, with informal U.S. backing.

Gamal Abdel Nasser, second president of Egypt (Source: Wikimedia)

U.S., French, Qatari, and Canadian fighter jets during Operation Desert Shield (Source: photo by Staff Sgt Corkran F. Le)

U.S. and Kuwaiti troops close the gate between Kuwait and Iraq after the last military convoys pass through on December 18, 2011. (Source: photo by Cpl. Jordan Johnson)

The last convoy of U.S. service members enters Kuwait from Iraq, Dec. 18, 2011. (Source: photo by Staff Sgt. Lynette Hoke)

Kurdish-controlled area of Iraq (Source: Wikimedia)

Briefly, it appeared that the United States had found a formula for ensuring the long-term stability and anti-communism of Iraq.

But that appearance evaporated quickly in July 1958, when a coalition of Iraqi military officers, disillusioned by the monarchy's subservience to the West and inspired by revolutionary leader Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, overthrew the king in a bloody *coup d'état* and instituted a new regime with a distinctly anti-western flavor.

In reaction, President Eisenhower sent U.S. Marines into Lebanon to avert a copycat rebellion there, but he rejected the notion of military intervention to reverse the revolution in Baghdad as too difficult tactically and too risky politically.

Members of the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact: Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Britain (Source: Wikimedia)

The Iraqi revolution of 1958 clearly marked the failure of the U.S. quest to align the pro-Western, British-built, royalist government of Iraq on the Western axis in the Cold War.

II. Managing Chronic Instability, 1958-1979

The second phase of U.S.-Iraqi relations was defined by the political instability in Baghdad that came in the wake of the fall of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958.
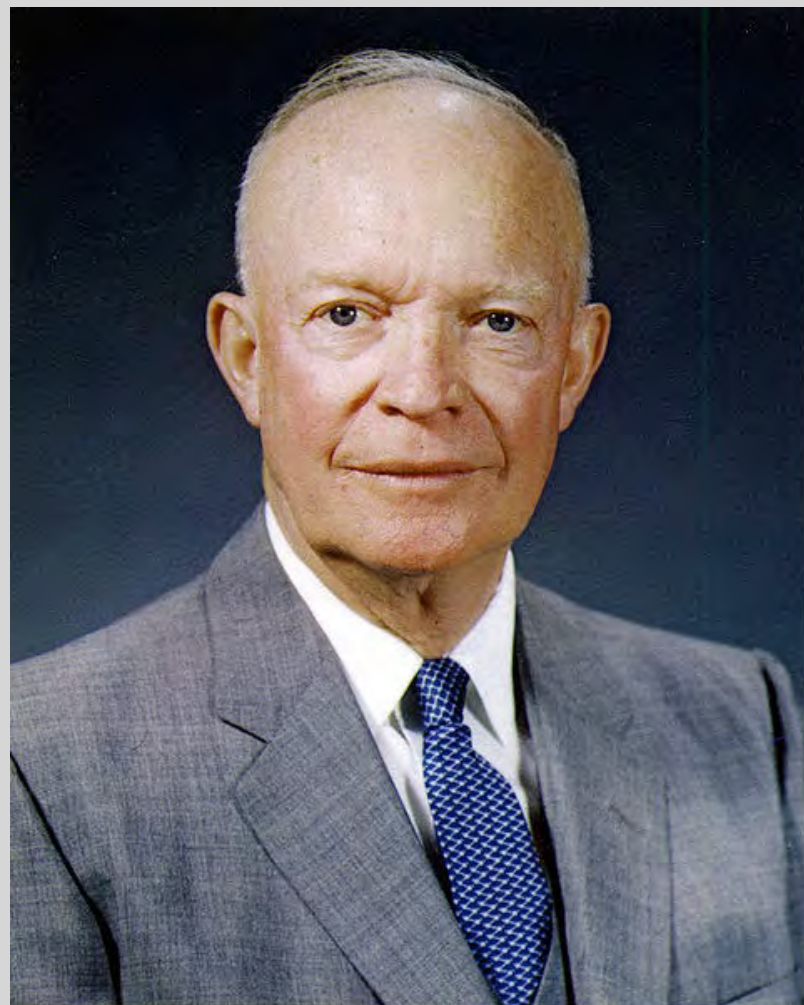
U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower (Source: Flickr)

The revolution of 1958 was followed by others in 1963, 1968, and 1979. Other revolts reportedly were attempted along the way and political and ethnic-cultural conflicts generated persistent strife throughout the era.

Nationalists aiming to remove the vestiges of foreign imperialism clashed with indigenous communists who sought political influence. The Kurdish population of northern Iraq resisted the authority of Arabs in Baghdad.

Although internally unstable, Iraq emerged as an independent power on the international stage. Its government pursued neutralism in the Cold War and flirted with the Soviet Union and

The Imam 'Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq; the Mosque is third holiest site for followers of the Shi'a branch of Islam. (Source: Wikimedia)

other communist states. It also sought political influence among Arab states and contested Egyptian dominance of the Arab community of nations. Iraq remained technically at war and occasionally skirmished with Israel. Management of the delicate Kurdish problem in the 1970s led Baghdad into alternating conflict and cooperation with Iran.

In the 1958-1979 era, the United States pursued interlocking goals in Iraq. On behalf of U.S. political and economic interests in the country and the region, U.S. officials sought a stable political relationship with the government in Baghdad, aimed to prevent the rise of communism within the country and to deny the Soviet Union influence there, and strove to prevent Iraq from becoming a source of regional conflict or war.

Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq from 1979 to 2003 (Source: Getty Images)

U.S. leaders showed little support for democracy in Iraq or the advancement of its people, eschewing any such liberal political goals on behalf of the primary objective of keeping Iraq free of communism.

For several years after the 1958 coup, U.S. officials accrued some successes in achieving its goals. They maintained diplomatic relations, negotiated the peaceful termination of the Baghdad Pact, averted conflict in an Anglo-Iraqi showdown over Kuwait in 1961, dispensed foreign aid to Iraq, and promoted business opportunities there. In light of evidence that the Soviet Union backed Iraqi Kurds, officials in Washington did nothing to alleviate the Iraqi suppression of that ethnic group.

Shiite Arabs
Sunni Arabs
Kurds
Assyrians
Yazidis
Turkmen

Major ethno-religious groups in Iraq (Source: Wikimedia)
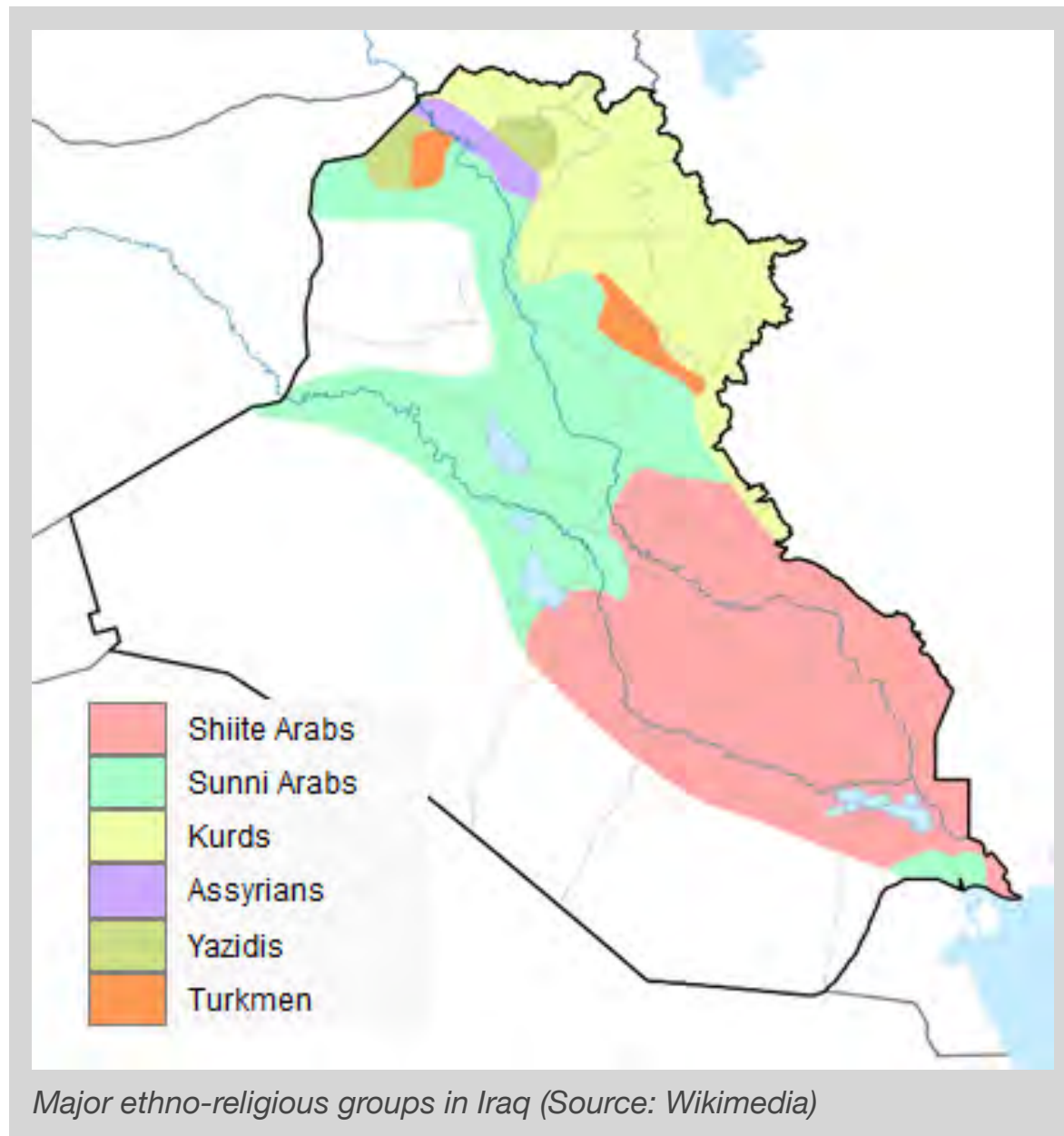
President George W. Bush gives the thumbs-up during his infamous "Mission Accomplished Speech" on May 1, 2003. (Source: Public Domain)

Nonetheless, U.S.-Iraqi relations declined in the late 1960s.

Iraq severed diplomatic relations in 1967 because it considered the United States complicit in Israeli military conquests during the so-called Six Day War of June 1967. In the early 1970s, Iraq nationalized U.S. petroleum interests and partnered with the Soviet Union to develop its oil capacity.

U.S. officials covertly equipped Kurdish rebels in order to weaken the Iraqi government. Although Iraq neutralized the Kurdish problem through diplomacy with Iran, it criticized foreign powers that backed the Kurds and it displayed renewed anti-U.S. tendencies in its approach to Arab-Israeli issues in the late 1970s.

III. The Initial Challenge of Saddam Hussein, 1979-1989

The third phase in U.S.-Iraqi relations opened in 1979, when Saddam Hussein seized power in Baghdad. Quickly, Hussein brutally suppressed all domestic rivals and thereby built internal stability in Baghdad, ending decades of political turmoil.

A secularist, Hussein also positioned himself as a vital bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, where the Ayatollah

An American soldier arrives in Saudi Arabia during Operation Desert Shield in 1992. (Source: Wikimedia, photo by Staff Sgt Corkran F. Lee)
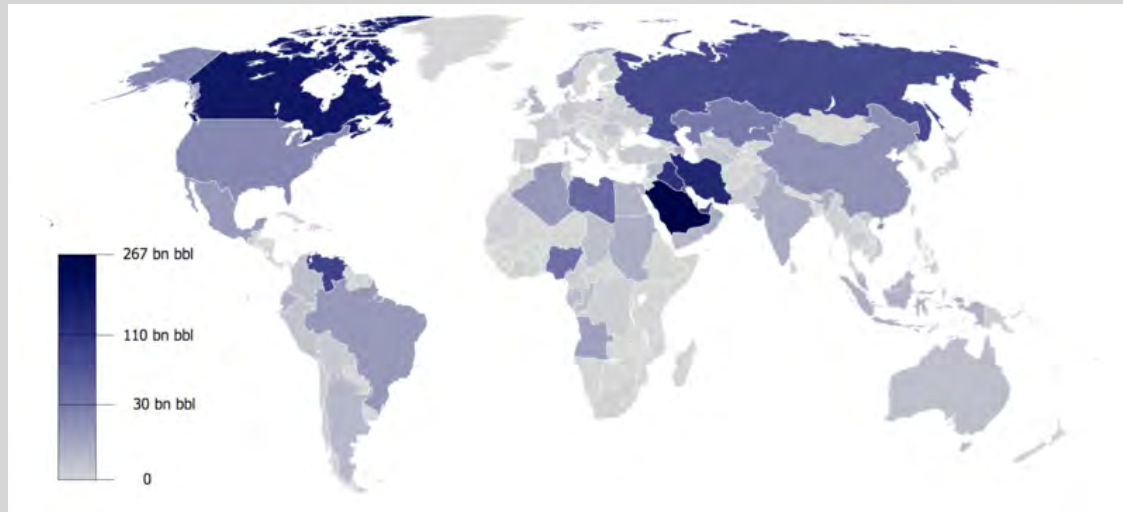
Worldwide oil reserves (Source: CIA World Fact Boo)

Ruhollah Khomeini took power in 1979 and declared an intention to export his revolutionary ideals across the region.

Mounting tension between the two gulf powers erupted into war in September 1980, when Hussein ordered the Iraqi army to launch a full-scale invasion of Iran. Iraq initially occupied 10,000 square miles of Iranian territory before Iran stymied the Iraqi thrust. Iran then gradually recaptured its territory, leading to a stalemate in the battle front by 1982.

A series of massive land offensives proved to be ineffective at breaking the deadlock. Yet the war ground on, widened by missile attacks on cities and by mutual assaults on oil tankers on the Gulf. By 1988, the two states together counted more than one million casualties.

President Ronald Reagan gradually led the United States into involvement in the Iran-Iraq War. Initially, Reagan continued the policy he inherited from Jimmy Carter of practicing strict

neutrality in the conflict. By 1982, however, the government in Washington began to shift toward a position of supporting Iraq.

Iran's military advances worried U.S. officials that it might gain political influence across the region and its support of anti-

Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi (left), Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, and President Sheikh Ghazi Ajil al-Yawar make their farewells after a ceremony celebrating the transfer of full governmental authority to the Iraqi Interim Government, June 28, 2004, in Baghdad, Iraq. (Source: Wikimedia)

American kidnappers in Lebanon soiled its reputation in the West. Despite Hussein's political despotism, U.S. leaders reinterpreted

Iraq as a more benign power and as a vital bulwark against Iranian expansionism.

Firefighters attempt to extinguish a fire at the Rumaila Oilfield in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 27, 2003. (Source: photo by Pfc. Mary Rose Xenikakis)

Thus the Reagan Administration provided Iraq with economic aid, restored diplomatic relations, shared intelligence information about Iranian military forces, and otherwise engaged in what it called a "tilt" toward Iraq designed to ensure its survival. U.S. officials also suspended their protests of Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction against Iranian troops and domestic rivals.

By 1987, the Reagan Administration even assumed limited military involvement in the war on behalf of Iraq. When Iran

attacked oil tankers carrying Iraqi oil to world markets, Reagan ordered the U.S. Navy to patrol the Gulf and protect those tankers. Armed clashes occurred between U.S. and Iranian naval vessels, peaking in late 1987 and mid-1988.

Taking advantage of the relaxation of Cold War tensions, Reagan also worked with Soviet and other world leaders to fashion a United Nations ceasefire resolution that provided a legal framework for ending the hostilities. Iraq promptly accepted the ceasefire but Iran refused, demanding that Iraq first must agree to pay war reparations. Pressured by the U.S. Navy, however, Khomeini eventually accepted the ceasefire in July 1988.

From the U.S. perspective, the Iran-Iraq ceasefire promised to restore a semblance of stability to the Gulf region for the first time in a decade. Peace on the battlefields would end the bloodletting

U.S. President George H. W. Bush (Source: Wikimedia)

U.S. President Ronald Reagan (Source: Wikipedia)

Troop movements during Operation Desert Storm (Source: U.S. Army)

Subsequent events would demonstrate that such U.S. officials unwisely built a Middle East strategy on the unstable foundation of the Hussein regime.

IV. The Gulf War and Containment, 1989-2003

The fourth era in U.S. policy toward Iraq featured a short, indecisive war between the two states followed by a "long decade" of consequential complications.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iranian religious leader and politician

between the two belligerents and restore lucrative commerce. At the same time, the dramatic improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations diminished the traditional U.S. concern that communism would sweep across the region.

With Khomeini contained, U.S. officials hoped that Saddam Hussein would lead his country and the Middle East into an era of peace, prosperity, and moderation. Yet, U.S. officials refrained from addressing Hussein's dreadful record of human rights abuses, his aggressive tendencies, and his political despotism; nor did they take steps to curb the Western thirst for Middle East oil.

An International Atomic Energy Agency inspector at a factory in Iraq during weapons inspections in 2002 (Source: International Atomic Energy Agency)

The military clash originated in Saddam Hussein's decision, in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War, to seek territorial and economic gains at the expense of Kuwait. In 1989 and 1990, Hussein signaled a growing intention to use force to against the tiny emirate.

Hussein's aggressiveness was prompted by multiple incentives: a desire to capture lucrative oil assets and thus relieve the financial burdens incurred in the war against Iran; a quest to achieve stature among neighboring leaders and to rally domestic public opinion behind his regime; and a hope of capturing land that, many Iraqis believed, had been misappropriated to Kuwait decades before.

The George H.W. Bush administration reacted to the mounting tensions by using the relatively stable relationship that emerged during the 1980s as a brake on Iraqi recklessness. Viewing Iraq as an important counterweight against Iranian expansionism, Bush offered political friendship and economic incentives to lure Hussein into proper behavior.

An Iraqi prisoner attached to electrical shocking devices at Abu Ghraib (Source: Washington Post)

When tensions rose and Hussein moved 100,000 troops to the Kuwait border, Bush also bolstered the U.S. naval presence in the Gulf and warned Hussein against instigating military action.

Yet Bush continued to deal with Hussein constructively—while ignoring his abysmal human rights and foreign policy records—on the calculation that firmer measures might actually provoke the very aggressive behavior that the United States hoped to prevent.

Iraq's full-scale military invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 clearly demonstrated Hussein's reckless aggressiveness and the futility of Bush administration efforts to deal with him on friendly terms.

As Iraqi units quickly overran the country, U.S. officials resolved to contest the occupation. If left unchallenged, U.S. officials

A burning oil field in Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm (Source: photo by Jonas Jordan, United States Army Corps of Engineers)

feared, Hussein might continue his military advance into Saudi Arabia. They further reasoned that allowing Hussein to consolidate his hold on Kuwait would garner him enormous political prestige and economic wealth and destabilize the international order that was emerging in the post-Cold War era.

President Bush resolved that he would take necessary steps, up to and including military force, to reverse the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait. And his decision to contest Iraqi expansionism resulted in two strategic initiatives, one centering on deterrence and the second on military action.

A Kuwaiti M-84 main battle tank crosses a trench during a capabilities demonstration at a Kuwaiti outpost during Operation Desert Shield. (Source: photo by H. H. Deffner, Wikipedia)

First, under Operation Desert Shield, Bush positioned American soldiers in Saudi Arabia as a deterrent against any Iraqi military move into territory beyond occupied Kuwait. Second, in partnership with numerous allies, Bush amassed military forces along the borders of Iraq and Kuwait as pressure on Hussein to abandon Kuwait.

When Hussein refused to leave, the allied militaries launched Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, featuring about five weeks of punishing aerial assaults on Iraqi military, political, and communications targets followed by a ground invasion that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi control.

Bush then made the important and controversial decision to halt his forward advance after the liberation of Kuwait, resisting the temptation to occupy Iraq and depose Hussein. Bush reasoned that a march to Baghdad would fragment his international alliance, exceed the mandate authorized by the United Nations, incur unacceptable U.S. casualties, and lead to a costly, prolonged occupation.

The U.S. president also called for an insurrection against Hussein from within Iraq's Sunni elite, but this move backfired badly, as Kurds and Shiites rebelled instead, prompting a brutal Sunni repression that actually bolstered Hussein's domestic position and power.

As the postwar situation stabilized, Bush and his Oval Office successor William J. Clinton gradually imposed a multi-faceted containment policy against Iraq.

Under Operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch, they established "no-fly zones" over Iraqi territory north of the 36th parallel and south of the 31st (eventually 33rd) parallel, designed to protect Iraq's Kurdish and Shiite populations from military repression and to prevent Hussein from massing his army on his international borders.

U.S. leaders also persuaded the United Nations to maintain the international financial restrictions imposed during the Gulf War until Hussein complied with all U.N. resolutions, including one calling for Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

U.S. officials also promoted international inspections of Iraqi military and scientific facilities designed to ensure compliance with the disarmament expectations. Both U.S. presidents also used occasional military strikes to punish Iraq for violating the U.N. resolutions, challenging Western warplanes, or inhibiting arms inspections. They hoped essentially to keep Hussein's power in check until his capacity and inclination for trouble-making eroded.

The containment policy, which lasted until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, achieved its immediate goal. Although Hussein remained in power in Baghdad, he proved unable to provoke another regional conflict, attack his own Kurdish or Shiite peoples living under the protection of Western military aircraft, or down a single one of those aircraft. The Iraqi economy remained stressed.

By hindering international weapons inspections, Hussein stoked fear that he again was developing WMD, but in reality—as confirmed by Western arms inspectors after 2003—Iraq's WMD program remained dysfunctional and impotent.

These achievements notwithstanding, the containment policy had an uncertain long-term prognosis.

Retired General Jay Garner, who attempted to organize elections in post-war Iraq. (Source: photo by R.D. Ward, Wikipedia.)

British troops enter Baghdad during World War I. (Source: Twitter)

As time passed, the no-fly zones became politically problematic, as Hussein exploited the situation to bolster his domestic political authority and to win world sympathy for the civilian victims of Western airstrikes. Effective arms inspections ended in December 1998. Hussein blamed the suffering of his people on the economic sanctions (rather than his own non-compliance with U.N. resolutions), and such powers as France and Russia wavered in their commitment to enforce sanctions.

In 1998, the terrorist Osama bin Laden cited the U.S. assaults on Iraq from airbases in Saudi Arabia as one cause of his declaration of war against the United States. Clinton bolstered containment in 1998 by embracing the concept of "regime change"—meaning

that he would favor the overthrow of Hussein—but even that step had limited ability to guarantee security interests.

Whether the enhanced containment policy would have worked remains a matter of speculation. In hindsight, however, one could reasonably conclude that the maintenance of the containment approach into the new century had a fair chance of preserving essential U.S. interests in the Middle East during Hussein's lifetime at a small fraction of the costs incurred in the alternative approach implemented by Clinton's successor in the Oval Office.

V. War and Reconstruction, 2003-2011

The fifth era of U.S. policy toward Iraq centered on war and reconstruction.

President George W. Bush, unnerved by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, launched a military invasion of Iraq designed to destroy Saddam Hussein's brutal regime.

Insecurity stemming from the 9/11 assaults, which was compounded by a series of anthrax attacks inside the United States in late 2001, led Bush to reinterpret Saddam Hussein—given his legacy of military expansionism and his apparent efforts to restore his WMD capabilities—as a dire threat to American security.

Hawks such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld encouraged this reinterpretation, gaining the president's ear at the expense of Secretary of State Colin Powell and other advisers who were reluctant to wage war.

Shell-shocked by the terrorist attacks of late 2001, Congress and the American people gave the president wide latitude to pursue a policy in Iraq centered on ousting Hussein by any means including force.

For 18 months following the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration gradually led the United States to the brink of war. Speeches by leading officials portrayed the Hussein regime as a mortal danger to the security of the United States and other countries by suggesting that Iraq would likely supply WMD to terrorist groups, with catastrophic consequences. Administration officials also argued that the containment policy launched in 1991 had faltered, enabling Hussein to restore his antebellum capacity to do harm to his neighbors and his own people.

The United States secured U.N. Security Council resolution 1441, which censured Iraqi behavior and warned of serious consequences if it remained defiant. (The United States later claimed that this resolution provided a legal basis for war, a claim that France and other powers disputed.)

The Bush administration openly doubted the assurances of U.N. officials, who hastily resumed arms inspections in Iraq in an effort to avert war, that Iraq was free of WMD. U.S. leaders also rebuffed the advice of other countries, including such allies as France and Germany, that war was unnecessary and improper.

The build-up to war climaxed in early 2003 when the United States invaded Iraq.

On March 17, the Bush Administration issued an ultimatum to Hussein to leave Iraq within 48 hours or face the wrath of the American military. When Hussein, as expected, defied the ultimatum, Bush ordered the Pentagon to attack Iraq on March 19.

Current flag of the Republic of Iraq (Source: Wikipedia)

Some 125,000 U.S. soldiers, bolstered by 20,000 British and 500 Australian troops, launched aerial and ground operations that quickly resulted in a military victory. In combat operations lasting some 500 hours, the invading forces defeated and scattered the Iraqi army of some 400,000 soldiers, occupied the country, and demolished its regime, at a cost of 139 U.S. and 33 British fatalities.

The luster of the military victory over Hussein's forces would soon be tarnished by the Bush Administration's flawed policy for the postwar period.

For starters, the post-invasion discovery that Hussein had actually lacked WMD capability eroded U.S. credibility given the administration's emphasis on the WMD threat in the build-up to war.

The Ottoman Empire in 1914 (Source: Wikimedia)

News about the grotesque abuses of Iraqi detainees by U.S. soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison further undermined the public image of the United States around the world. Domestic and foreign opponents of the original decision to invade Iraq rallied in criticism of U.S. policies.

The Bush administration also blundered in political decisions about the post-combat phase of the invasion.

In the rush to war, top Pentagon officials generally neglected initiatives in the State Department to plan for postwar occupation. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld refused to increase the size of the U.S. occupation force, despite requests for more troops from top uniformed officers, and the occupation forces proved unable to stymie a wave of lawlessness and violence that destabilized the country in the weeks following the downfall of Hussein.

The Pentagon sent retired General Jay Garner to Baghdad to organize popular elections for a new government within 90 days, a mission that failed miserably.

In May 2003, President Bush belatedly established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under former Ambassador L. Paul Bremer in hope of stabilizing the country. But Bremer erred massively when he issued CPA Orders Number 1 and 2, which disbanded the Baath Party and dissolved the entire Iraqi government.

In that dual stroke, Bremer eliminated the viable prospect of using vestiges of the Iraqi administrative infrastructure to govern the country and lead it into a brighter future. Instead, the orders

alienated the elite, including many who had shown no loyalty to Hussein, rendering them unemployed and without purpose and thus vulnerable to an emerging anti-U.S. armed insurgency.

Indeed, within months of the military victory over Hussein, the United States faced a debilitating insurgency across Iraq. The armed opposition seemed to have three distinct sources: Sunnis who had been tied to the Hussein regime; Shiite militias, like the Mahdi Army led by Muqtada al-Sadr, who sought to attain political influence in the post-Hussein era; and non-Iraqi Islamists who infiltrated Iraq in pursuit of the opportunity to bloody the American military.

By December 2003, suicide attacks, sniper fire, car bombs, and roadside bombs had killed some 300 U.S. soldiers, more than double the number who died in the initial invasion. The death toll among G.I.s soared past 1,000 by September 2004 and 3,000 by January 2007.

The annual costs to the U.S. Treasury also rose dramatically, from $51 billion in 2003 to $102 billion in 2006. The security situation worsened through 2006, when anti-U.S. attacks occurred at nearly double the frequency and lethality as in 2005.

As the insurgency mounted, the Bush Administration labored to build a democratic government in Iraq and made steady if halting progress.

The first breakthrough came in 2004, when the Bush administration abandoned its initial quest to build a new state on the foundation of Iraqi expatriates, notably Ahmad Chalabi, who

Iraqi expatriate Ahmad Chalabi (Source: Wikivisually)
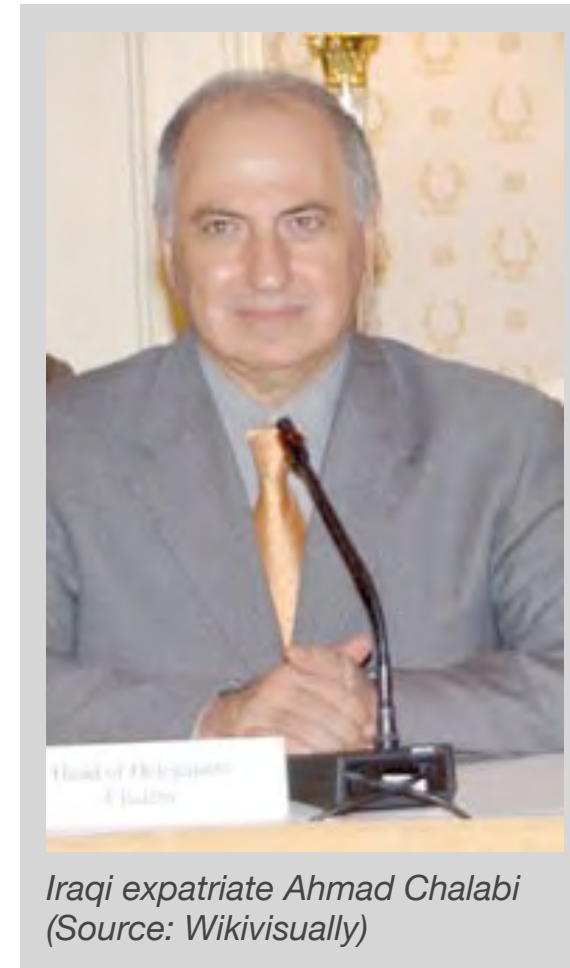
had proved woefully inadequate to the challenge. In addition, recognizing that the dominance of the CPA generated political backlash, Bremer dissolved the authority in June 2004 and established a multi-ethnic Iraqi Transitional Government to preside over the establishment of a permanent government.

In January 2005, millions of Iraqis participated in a democratic election that established a 275-member Transitional National Assembly, which set out to write a permanent constitution. A second democratic election, held in December 2005 under the new constitution, established the permanent Council of

Representatives (that replaced the Transitional National Assembly) and a coalition government.

The inherent clash between the growing insurgency and the quest to democratize Iraq came to a head in 2006. Domestic critics of the Bush administration—including a growing number of members of his own Republican Party—pressured the president to withdraw immediately from Iraq even if that step would result in complete collapse of the new government. Democrats captured majorities in both the House and Senate in the midterm elections of 2006 and in 2007 the new congressional leaders called for prompt demilitarization of the U.S. effort in Iraq.

Current map of Iraq (Source: CIA World Fact Book)

President Bush resolved instead to escalate and reform the military mission in Iraq. In a strategic initiative known as the "surge," he increased the number of G.I.s in Iraq from 120,000 to 160,000 and he ordered them to reform their modes of operation from using overwhelming firepower (which caused collateral damage and negative political repercussions) to restraining firepower and engaging in political initiatives designed to gain goodwill.

U.S. forces also skillfully used diplomacy, persuasion, and financial aid to mobilize various Iraqi factions to fight against insurgent groups. By 2008, the surge seemed to succeed. The insurgency faltered and the military and political situations stabilized.

Taking office in January 2009, President Barack Obama gradually terminated the U.S. military presence in Iraq. He ended U.S. combat operations in Iraq in August 2010 and, consistent with a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed in 2008, he withdrew all combat forces from the country in December 2011.

Obama pledged to transfer responsibility for Iraq's future to the Iraqi people and to engage in regional diplomacy to ease external pressures on the country. By the end of the U.S. occupation, the war in Iraq had left nearly 4,500 U.S. soldiers dead and more than 30,000 wounded and had drained more than $1 trillion from the U.S. Treasury.

As U.S. forces departed the country in late 2011, Iraq's future remained precarious.

Sectarian violence spiked, killing at least 250 civilians within a month of the U.S. withdrawal.

The democratic foundations of the government teetered, as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, took steps to solidify his influence over Sunni legislators and as Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi fled to Kurdistan to escape arrest for allegedly having ordered assassinations some years before.

Having endured 24 years of brutal rule by the Hussein regime, Iraq also bore scars of the U.S. invasion, including some 100,000 Iraqis killed and two million displaced in 2003-2011 alone and its financial and physical infrastructures badly stressed.

The Way Forward: Iraq and the United States in the Aftermath of War

The 2010s will mark a century since World War I, the global conflict that resulted in the construction of Iraq from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and also stimulated the rise of the United States to great power status.

During that century, both the United States and Iraq grew in size and stature, the former as a global great power committed to projecting power in defense of national interests in every region, and the latter determined to achieve dominant regional power and influence.

U.S. policy toward Iraq shifted dramatically during that century, from its original posture of relying on Britain to stabilize Iraq on behalf of common Western interests.

World War II, the Cold War, and the decolonization of the British Empire unleashed international dynamics that compelled U.S. officials to shape polices toward Iraq ranging from cooperation and rapprochement to major conflict and two rounds of warfare.

U.S. policy became most complicated in the early 21st century, when President Bush ordered the invasion and occupation of Iraq in an attempt to rebuild the country on a democratic, peaceful, and progressive foundation.

While this latest effort to remake Iraq achieved certain markers of success, it also generated political problems and unanticipated consequences that sowed the seeds of future trouble. Developments still to unfold in the 2010s and after ultimately will reveal the wisdom and effectiveness of U.S. policy toward Iraq during the first century of the relationship. ◆

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Viewpoint Iran: The Past and Present of the U.S.-Iran Standoff

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and the taking of American hostages that year, Americans have tended to see the Iranian regime as dangerous, reckless and irrational. Recent concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions and anti-Israel declarations have only underscored the sense many Americans have that Iran is a "rogue" nation, part of an "axis of evil." There is another side to this story. This month historian Annie Tracy Samuel looks at American-Iranian relations from the Iranian point of view, and adds some complexity to the simplified story often told.

(Published October 2013)

By Annie Tracy Samuel

The victory of moderate cleric Hassan Rouhani in Iran's June 2013 presidential elections generated hope that the thirty-year standoff between Iran and the United States might be resolved.

During his first press conference after being sworn in as president, Rouhani declared that he was open to direct talks with the United States, while a White House statement released after Rouhani's inauguration offered him a "willing partnership."

Those conciliatory words, however, were accompanied on both sides with qualifications, skepticism, and antagonistic gestures. Congress continued to push new sanctions aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, and the Obama administration conditioned any partnership on Iran taking steps to meet its "international obligations."

On the Iranian side, Rouhani emphasized that the United States must take "practical step[s] to remove Iranian mistrust" before he would be willing to engage

This Iranian postage stamp commemorates the shooting down of a commercial passenger flight, Iran Air 655, by a U.S. Navy cruiser in 1988. The memory of the history of foreign intervention in Iran casts a long shadow on its current relationship with the United States. (Source: Wikipedia)

Attacks on civilian areas of Iran, Iraq and Kuwait during the Iran-Iraq War (Source: Wikipedia)

in dialogue. His focus on Iran's mistrust is not simply rhetoric but reflects what Iran sees as the long history of U.S. enmity.

While Americans understand relations with Iran in terms of its nuclear program and incendiary anti-Israel homilies, Iranians see the relationship as part of a long and troubling history of foreign intervention and exploitation that reaches back into the nineteenth century. Iranian leaders argue that if interactions between Iran and the United States are to improve, this history will have to be addressed and rectified.

The past is very much part of the present in Iran. A profound consciousness of history informs Iran's political and strategic outlook, its conception of itself and its position in the world, and its non-relationship with the United States.

As both sides cautiously explore today's opportunities to reset their fraught relationship, American policy-makers should take note of how Iran perceives the history of its relations with the United States, particularly the U.S. role in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88.

The Legacies of European Imperialism

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, Great Britain and Russia fell upon the country then known as Persia in their contest for imperial and economic domination. Though Persia promised different things to the different powers—control of the Caspian Sea and the long-sought warm water port for Russia; security of India for Britain—they sought to achieve their goals by weakening and controlling the country.

Poster depicting the members of the first Majlis, or parliament, of Iran (Source: Wikipedia)

This Persian Gulf Command map depicts the corridor through which the Allies supplied the Soviet Union during World War II. (Source: US Army)

After several decades of invasion and imposed stagnation, combined with the profligacy and incompetence of Persia's Qajar shahs, Britain succeeded to a large extent in doing both. In two separate concessions granted in 1872 and 1891, British citizens secured monopolies over almost all of Persia's financial and economic resources.

Iraq and the western part of Iran, contested during World War II, circa 1941 (Source: Wikimedia)

Mosaddeq, the democratically elected premier, tapped into nationalist sentiment among Iranians to challenge the Shah's elite rule in the early 1950s. (Source: Wikipedia)

According to British Foreign Secretary George Curzon, this was "the most complete and extraordinary surrender of the entire industrial resources of a Kingdom into foreign hands that has probably ever been dreamt of, much less accomplished, in history."

Neither concession was fulfilled, however.

In some of the earliest instances of successful popular protests in the Middle East, Iranians rallied against the measures and eventually forced their cancellation.

The movements united the Iranian nation and paved the way for the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Having witnessed the

shah's penchant for selling off the country to foreign powers, Iranians forced him to create a legislative assembly (Majlis) and grant a constitution.

In Iran, then, the history of foreign intervention is bound together with a tradition of popular protest and defense of the nation. And this pattern repeated several times in the twentieth century.

During World War I, Iran declared neutrality but became a battlefield for the European belligerents nonetheless. Following the ceasefire, Great Britain took advantage of the weakened and sundered country to impose a highly unfavorable treaty that essentially turned Iran into a British protectorate.

Young anti-Shah protesters, many in Western attire, march in Iran in December 1978. (Source: Public Domain)

A Soviet armored vehicle drives through the streets of Tabriz during the Anglo-Soviet invasion of 1941. (Source: Wikipedia)

Once more, however, the increase in foreign intervention generated a movement for national independence, which culminated in the suspension of the agreement, the ouster of the Qajar dynasty, and the establishment of the Pahlavi monarchy in 1925.

During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-41), outside interference in Iran became much less direct. Until World War II his government was able to maintain a level of independence unprecedented in the country's modern history.

Then, in 1941 the Allied Powers decided the sitting monarch's pro-German sympathies and weak defenses were an intolerable threat. Led by Great Britain and the Soviet Union, they invaded Iran, forced Reza Shah to abdicate, and placed his young son on the throne.

Enter the United States

Like his abrupt rise to power, Mohammad Reza Shah's reign owed much to the contrivances and support of foreign powers. In particular, the coronation of the second and last Pahlavi Shah was accompanied by the appearance of the United States as an important player in Iranian affairs.

Although America's interest in Iran came comparatively late, Iranians view it as part of the longer history of foreign exploitation.

During the first decade of Mohammad Reza's rule, social conflicts, economic problems, and foreign interference were acute. Together these crises generated demands for political and economic change and a powerful nationalist movement in the Majlis (parliament).

One of the main demands was for the revision of Iran's concession to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which exploited the country's oil wealth. After negotiations with the AIOC produced a highly
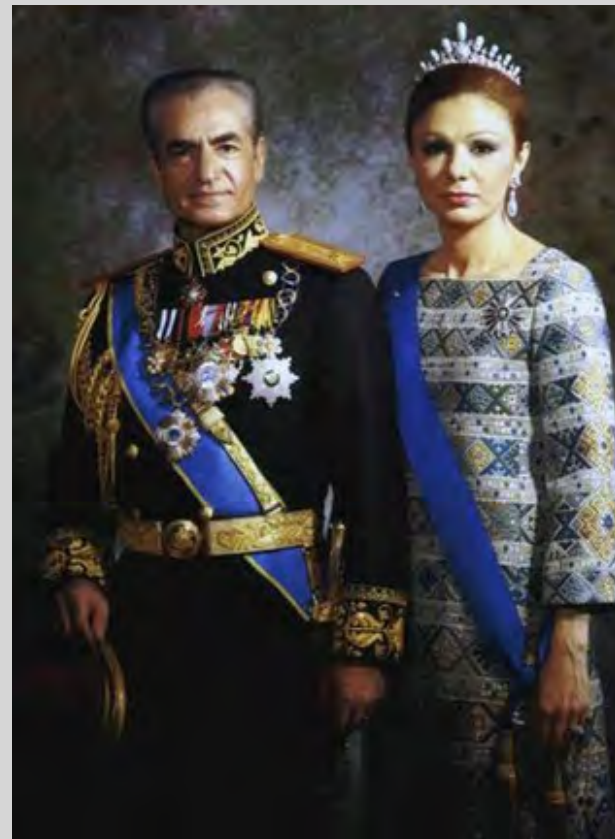
Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and his wife, Queen Farah, came to power in 1941 with the help of the United States and Britain. They aimed to modernize and Westernize Iran. (Source: Wikipedia)

unfavorable supplementary agreement in 1949, opposition to the company and to Iran's subservience to foreign interests intensified, leading to popular demonstrations and, in March 1951, to the nationalization of the oil industry.

Anti-American mural on the wall of the former U.S. embassy in Tehran (Source: Wikipedia)

The nationalization efforts in the Majlis were led by Mohammad Mosaddeq, a veteran politician committed to freeing Iran from imperial domination.

As premier, Mosaddeq worked to curb the power of the shah, particularly over the armed forces. He refused to relinquish Iran's control of its oil, and he allowed the Communist Tudeh Party, which had grown in popularity with the rise of anti-Western sentiment and which supported Mosaddeq (at this time), to operate more openly.

This map of the border between Iran and Iraq during the war shows the extent of Iraqi advances 1980-82 (purple), and Iranian advances 1985-88 (orange). (Source: Wikipedia)

An Iranian youth takes up arms against Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War. (Source: Wikipedia)

Opposition to Mosaddeq's rule grew in the United States and Britain, which viewed the premier's intransigence as the primary obstacle to procuring a new oil concession. In the context of the Cold War, Mosaddeq was portrayed in the Western countries as moving dangerously close to the Soviet Union.

In August 1953, therefore, British and American agents successfully engineered Mosaddeq's overthrow and restored the shah's control of the country.

To this day, Mosaddeq stands as a symbol of Iran's nationalist ambitions and the role of outside powers in extinguishing them. His legacy is commemorated annually on 29 Isfand and on 28

Murdad, the dates on the Iranian calendar that correspond to the nationalization of the oil industry in 1951 and the overthrow of Mosaddeq in 1953, respectively.

Iranians brandished his portrait when they demonstrated against the shah in 1978-79, and they did so in 2009 when they collectively called out to their potentates, "Where is my vote?" The fact that the leaders of the Islamic Republic also extol Mosaddeq as a martyr of imperialism is testament to the broad significance of his legacy.

A monograph published by a government agency in the early 1980s illustrates how Iranians view the role of the United States at this turning point in their modern history.

The 1953 coup removing Mosaddeq, the book asserts, was "executed by the direct intervention of the U.S., [and] imposed once again the Shah over the Iranian nation. There followed a dictatorial monarchy which would repress and oppress the nation for the twenty-five years to come. The Shah had no chance to return without the coup; he had also no chance of sustaining his faltering regime without military and financial support from America."

The Shah: America's Friend in Tehran

Once back in power with the support of the United States, Mohammad Reza Shah devoted his energies towards two ends: preserving his power and regime; and yanking Iran into the modern world. The shah equated modernization with Westernization and secularization, and to make Iran modern he

sought support from American officials and advisors, encouraged American investment, imported American goods, and purchased loads of American weaponry.

In 1964, for example, the Majlis, now less independent, passed one bill to grant diplomatic immunity to American military advisors and a second authorizing a $200 million loan from the United States for the purchase of military equipment.

Iranian troops celebrate atop a destroyed Iraqi vehicle during the Iran-Iraq War. (Source: on Pinterest by Kadir Aksoy)

The bills were "publicly and strongly denounced" by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leader of the opposition against the shah and the future leader of the revolution that would overthrow him. Khomeini characterized the measures as "signs of [Iran's] bondage to the United States." After his attack was published and circulated as a pamphlet in 1964, the shah exiled Khomeini from Iran.

In subsequent years, the shah ruled through repression and violence and employed his internal security organization, SAVAK,

Iran-U.S. Cooperation; the Shah of Iran, left, meets with U.S. officials including President Jimmy Carter in 1977. (Source: Wikipedia)

which received aid from the CIA, to jail, torture, or kill those who opposed his rule. He enriched and empowered a small, Westernized elite, which became increasingly alienated from the rest of Iranian society.

By 1978, those outside the small aristocracy bore manifold, if differing, grievances against the shah's rule—a regime that had been made possible by U.S. support, carried out with U.S. wealth and weaponry, or modeled on U.S. culture. As the vast majority of Iranians grew more anti-shah, therefore, they also grew more anti-American.

The 1979 Revolution and the Great Satan

As a result of the United States' support for the shah, the Iranians who opposed his reign and took part in the revolution that overthrew him in 1979 made diminishing American power a key part of their platform.

In the first months of the Islamic Republic, Iran's relations with the United States were a subject of debate in Tehran, with some favoring the maintenance of normal, though less substantial, relations and others favoring severing all ties with Washington.

The Carter administration's decision to admit the shah into the United States for medical treatment in October 1979, however, gave credence to the latter group's contention that the United States was actively working to subvert the new regime.

It also led to the event that continues to shape U.S. views of the Islamic Republic: the occupation of the American Embassy in Tehran by supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, during which they held hostage the Americans they found inside for 444 days. (The 2012 Academy-Award-winning film *Argo* is the most recent revisiting of these events in American culture.)

Almost immediately, the takeover of the embassy became a potent and lasting symbol in Iran of the revolution's determination to confront and curtail U.S. involvement.

In 1980, the Islamic Propagation Organization, a new government agency, published *Fall of a Center of Deceit*, "a report on the crimes of the Great Satan (The United States) in Iran and on the fall of the espionage center, prompted by the Muslim students following the line of Imam Khomeini."

It describes how these "revolutionary students took the initiative to occupy the American Embassy, or rather, the American spy den," with "clear and definite" objectives: "put an end to spying and sabotage activities, stop American interventions in Iran's

domestic affairs, force the extradition of the Shah and recuperate funds stolen from the Iranian nation by the criminal Pahlavi family."

The book includes pictures and excerpts from documents found in the embassy, including a torn-up portrait of a grinning President Carter with the caption "no more smile for you Mr. Oppressor."

Like the nationalization of the oil industry and the coup against Mosaddeq, the takeover of the embassy is celebrated annually in Iran, and is used as an occasion to reinforce the image of the United States as a foreign oppressor.

On the 33rd anniversary of the event in 2012, Mohammad Reza Naqdi, the commander of Iran's paramilitary Basij force, addressed the crowd assembled outside the embassy and called the United States "criminal" and "the worst [regime] on earth."

The leader of Friday prayers in Tehran also addressed the crowds and described the importance of the event: "The first thing that our revolution did was to crush the prestige of the United States in the world and … nullified all the values … which the United States was propagating."

The Iran-Iraq War

Like the embassy takeover, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) is viewed in Iran as part of its struggle against the United States.

Unlike the hostage crisis, however, the Iran-Iraq War does not arouse strong emotions among Americans, if it is remembered at all. Most are unfamiliar with both the direct involvement of the United States in the conflict on the side of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and with the extent to which the war shapes Iranians' views of the United States today.

The Iran-Iraq War began in September 1980 when Iraq invaded Iran. Relations between the neighbors—who have a long history of animosity—had steadily worsened since the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

Khamenei succeeded Khomeini as Supreme Leader of Iran and is still in power today. (Source: Wikipedia)

Aside from a few dramatic turns—particularly Iran's expulsion of Iraqi forces and its invasion of Iraq in 1982—the eight-year war was dominated by and concluded in stalemate.

Though the figures are highly uncertain, estimates suggest that the war caused hundreds of thousands of casualties and severe damage to Iran's economy and infrastructure. The conflict was particularly brutal because of Iraq's use of chemical weapons and airstrikes on civilian population centers and major cities.
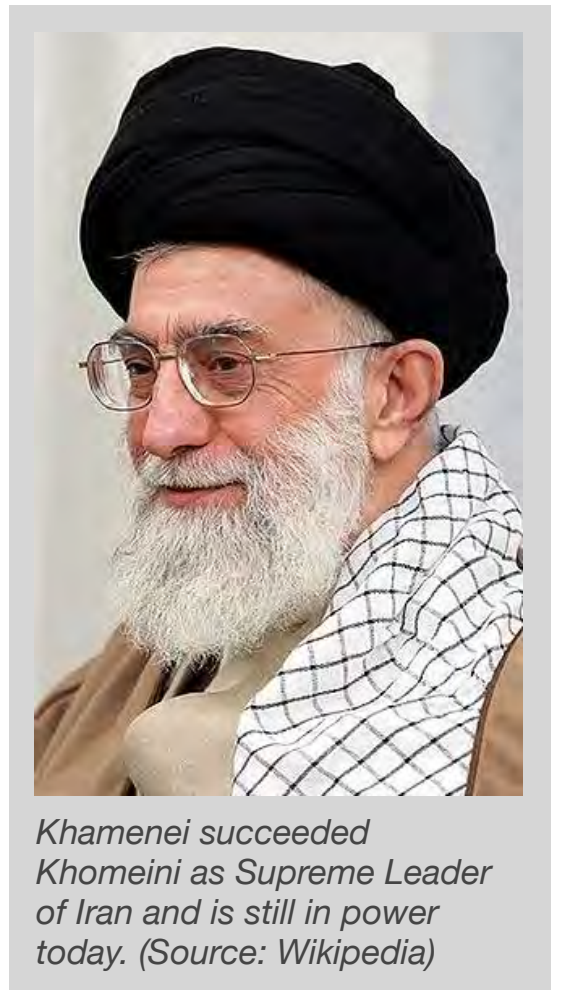
Over the past thirty-three years, both during and after the war, Iranian leaders and publications have consistently emphasized that U.S. support for Iraq demonstrates its determination to confront and contain the Islamic Republic. And they have disseminated a historical narrative of the war as a foreign-backed and existential assault on Iran. The way Iran refers to the conflict —as the Imposed War or Sacred Defense—demonstrates its significance.

According to this narrative, the Iraqi invasion was directly tied to U.S. opposition to the revolution, and to the revolution's opposition to the United States. During the war, emphasizing American involvement served to rally support for the war effort by heightening the stakes of the conflict.

For example, *Passage of Two Years of War*, a book published in 1983 by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), the powerful military organization charged with defending the Islamic Revolution and Republic, characterizes "Saddam's Imposed War against our revolution, which occurred with the funding and management of America, [as] a sign of the power of this revolution. [The war] is presenting a new way to confront all those who share the hope of defeating the Islamic Revolution."

It goes on to describe how the war allowed the Islamic Republic to identify and defeat its enemies: "During this war the villainous faces of all the American mercenaries have become known and their masks of deception and lies have been permanently removed. Our nation has become fully united knowing that the leaders of evil and blasphemy and the adherents of the Great Satan will be completely destroyed."

Iranian histories written after the end of the war also contain that narrative, though Iran's confrontation with the United States is usually described in political and economic, rather than religious or ideological, terms.

For example, a book on the war published in 2001 by the IRGC describes the beginning of the war in this way: "The Islamic Revolution of Iran clearly announced its opposition to the domination of the two great powers,

Anti-American graffiti in Tehran (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

particularly America. … The idea that the Islamic Revolution and its spread would endanger the interests of the West all over the world and especially in the Middle East deprived America and its allies of serenity."

Today, Iranian leaders describe the war in the same manner. Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, former commander of the IRGC and current senior advisor for military affairs to Supreme Leader Khamenei, said in an interview on the anniversary of the Iraqi invasion in 2007, "Western powers, which were worried about the influence of the Islamic Revolution on regional Arab countries, encouraged Saddam to attack Iran."

Persian Gulf hostilities during Iran-Iraq War. The Iranian frigate IS Sahand is attacked by aircraft of U.S. Navy Carrier Air Wing 11 after the guided missile frigate USS Samuel B. Roberts struck an Iranian mine, April 1988. (Source: Wikimedia)

Similarly, in 2004 an IRGC spokesman stated, "It is well documented that Saddam was the aggressor in the war against Iran, but it was the great powers, particularly the United States, which guided Saddam."

While the perception of the United States urging Saddam to invade Iran does not reflect the historical record, Iranian contentions regarding U.S. backing of Iraq and its impact on the course of the war are well-founded.

After the invasion, the United States actively aided the Iraqi war effort. Along with other countries, it provided Iraq with extensive diplomatic, economic, and military support. Iranian leaders often describe how, with the help of the United States, Saddam Hussein was "armed to the teeth."

They also argue that the development of their weapons programs —and their desire to protect themselves from outside domination —developed from the unfavorable position in which they found themselves during the Iran-Iraq War.

Almost every article on Iran's military achievements that appears on Fars News, a website affiliated with the IRGC, notes that Iran "launched an arms development program during the 1980-88 Iraqi imposed war on Iran to compensate for a US weapons embargo."
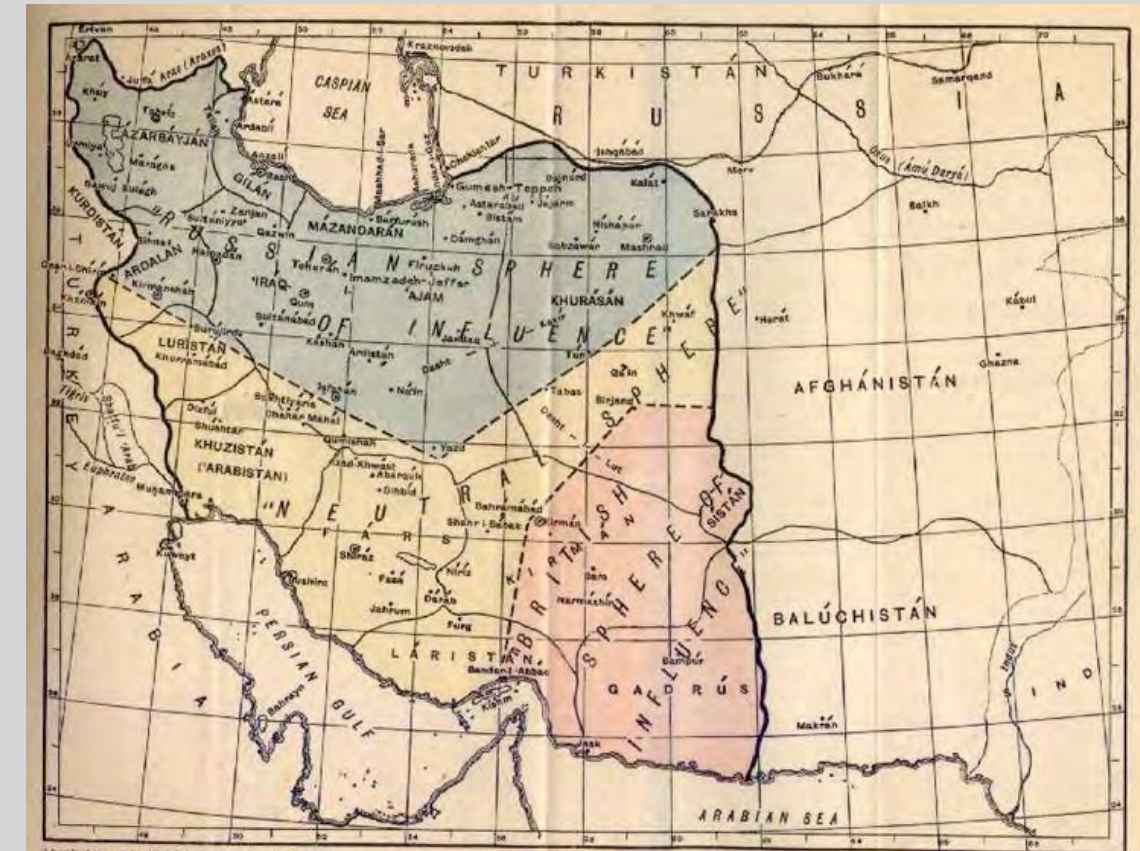
This map shows the spheres of influence and a neutral zone dividing Persia between Britain and Russia according to a 1907 agreement. (Source: Wikimedia)

The articles also stress that Iran's efforts to expand its defensive capabilities should not be viewed as a threat to other countries but are the product of the lessons learned during the war and are intended to prevent an attack like the one that initiated the conflict.

A current political map of Iraq (Source: Wikipedia)

In addition to helping Iraq maintain its military superiority, in 1987 the United States moved its naval forces into the Persian Gulf to support Iraq and protect oil tanker traffic. The move led to direct confrontations between Iranian and American forces, which lent credence to the belief that the United States was leading the charge to defeat the Islamic Republic and that Iraq was merely its pawn.

After one encounter in October 1987, in which an attack by the United States on Iranian patrol boats killed three sailors, an IRGC commander stated, "The best response to America is to continue the war because Saddam's fall means an end to all wishful hopes of America in the region."

In October 2011, at a ceremony to honor the Iranians killed in that attack, the commander of the IRGC Navy, General Ali Fadavi, stated, "During the Sacred Defense we were defending against the Iraqis who were the endpoint of the arrow of world arrogance (the US), but in the last [year] of the war, we were in vast and direct confrontation with the Americans in the Persian Gulf."

While Iranians saw the United States' active involvement in the Gulf as proof of U.S. hostility, they viewed its latent support for Iraq—the refusal to name Iraq as the aggressor or to condemn its use of chemical weapons in the war—as particularly caustic evidence of American malevolence. Iranian statements after the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq tend to point out the hypocrisy of the United States in supporting and then ousting Saddam Hussein.

Iranians continue to suffer from the effects of chemical weapons used against them during the war, which, along with the bodies

that continue to be unearthed and the mines that still explode along the border, are powerful reminders of the horrors of the conflict.

Iranian leaders assert that U.S. involvement in the war in support of Iraq prevented Iran from attaining victory. According to an IRGC publication, Iran's advances in Iraq after 1982 shifted the political and military balance of the war in Iran's favor. In response, the United States again increased its support for Iraq, which allowed Iraqi forces to retake the territories Iranian forces had occupied.

Ultimately, according to the same source, the continuation of Iraqi offensives, the fear that Iranian cities would be attacked by chemical weapons, and the shooting down of an Iranian passenger airplane by the United States, killing the 290 people onboard, "placed the Islamic Republic in a difficult position for which it had no appropriate measures to overcome" and forced it to announce its agreement with U.N. ceasefire resolution 598 on July 18, 1988, which ended the war.

A War without End

Even though the Islamic Republic was prevented from winning a decisive victory, Iranian leaders emphasize that the country grew stronger through its experience in the war and celebrate the Sacred Defense as a source of Iran's current power.

This assertion reflects an effort to transform the conflict from an unfortunate consequence of the Islamic Revolution into a blessing that ensured its success.

It also reflects the idea that the United States failed to curb the power of the Islamic Republic in the war.

In the words of former IRGC commander Yadollah Javani, "All [enemy plots against Iran] ended in failure. A clear example of that was the [Iraqi] imposed war. … The enemy believed it could defeat the Islamic Revolution through war, but it was the Iranian nation which emerged victorious."

A current political map of Iran (Source: Wikimedia)

However, in this view, the Islamic Republic's victory in the war did not lessen the determination of its enemies to confront it. As a result, the war is ongoing, and the Sacred Defense continues.

During a May 2011 conference for veterans of the war, IRGC commander and head of the armed forces social security organization Hossein Daqiqi declared, "The war has still not ended, and today the enemies are waging a soft war against Iran."

Similarly, in 2010 former IRGC commander Safavi asserted, "Certain countries, with the United States in the lead, which could not realize their hostile plot against Iran during the 1980-1988 war with Iraq, are making efforts to create problems for the Islamic Republic" today.

The idea that the war is still being imposed on Iran reflects the way Iranians tend to bind together in the face of a common enemy. Indeed, for much of the eight years that the war with Iraq was actually being waged, a divided Iranian population did come together to confront the external aggressor.

In a manner not unlike that of other revolutionary states, the Islamic Republic has used the threat of foreign aggression and a focus on past injustice to forge support for the government and to unite the people under its mantle.

The Past and the Way Forward

The notion that the war is ongoing also demonstrates the importance of understanding current events in Iran in historical perspective. In Iran, the past is part of the present because the past is unresolved. Iranians are not satisfied with the past, have not come to peace with the past, and so have a need to keep the past open and alive in the hope that by doing so it can somehow be dealt with, improved, and settled.

Though reestablishing relations between Iran and the United States will, of course, require much more, appreciating how the other side views history can contribute to that goal.

Iranian leaders make that point explicitly. A foreign ministry spokesman said in November 2012, "The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that only respect for the rights of the Iranian nation, as well as a fundamental and practical reconsideration of the US government's wrong policies in the past could reduce the Iranian nation's distrust towards the US administration."

The Supreme Leader has also emphasized the bitter legacy of the United States' past interactions with Iran—overthrowing Mosaddeq, buttressing the shah, and supporting Saddam in the Iran-Iraq War in particular—and their continued importance in Iran today.

Too often this history is either forgotten or relegated to the past, when in fact its bearing on the present could not be more fundamental to any resolution to the U.S.-Iranian standoff. ◆

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Frenemies: Iran and America since 1900

By Douglas Little

American eyes have been riveted on North Africa and the Middle East these past months. The popular protests that rocked Tunis, Cairo, and Tripoli, and so many other cities during the "Arab Spring" of 2011 evoked memories of the violent confrontation between Iranian dissidents and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Islamist regime in the streets of Tehran eighteen months earlier.

As in Tunisia and Egypt, Facebook and Twitter helped spread the word in June 2009 that Iran was teetering on the brink of revolution, and as in Libya, the ruling elite cracked down instinctively with brutal force. Unlike Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, however, Ahmadinejad stopped short of unleashing the Iranian air force against his opponents.

Yet, some Americans nevertheless expected that Iran's recent quest for nuclear weapons, its support for Islamic radicals like Lebanon's

President Jimmy Carter offers a toast to Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, calling Iran 'an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.' The 1977 New Year's Eve toast came to symbolize decades of American friendship with a repressive regime that Iranians increasingly despised. Little more than a year later, animosity toward the Shah and U.S. policies culminated in the Shah's ouster, the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and the beginning of decades of animosity between Iran and the U.S. (Source: Jimmy Carter Presidential Library)

Hezbollah, and its destabilizing influence on the geopolitics of the Persian Gulf would eventually require U.S. military intervention.

Speaking off the record, one of President Barack Obama's top advisers recently confirmed that the Tomahawk missiles that the U.S. Sixth Fleet launched against Libya were also intended to send a message to Iran.

Shah Mozaffar al-Din
(Source: Brooklyn Museum)

In fact, relations between the United States and Iran have been complicated and edgy as long as anyone can remember.

America's initial diplomatic encounter with Iran, or Persia, as it was called a century ago, did not go well.

On 9 March 1904, Kurdish bandits robbed and murdered Benjamin Labaree, a 38-year-old American missionary, not far from Mount Ararat in the no man's land just inside Iran's border with Ottoman Turkey.

Outraged by what the U.S. ambassador labeled an act of "religious and race hatred," the State Department demanded that Shah Mozaffar al-Din arrest the killers, pay Labaree's family an indemnity of $50,000 in gold, and assure "the civilized world" that Iran would prevent such atrocities in the future. Although the Shah of Iran was insulted by Uncle Sam's impertinence, he had little choice but to accept the U.S. demands.

Over the following decades, time and again a constantly shifting cast of Iranian and American leaders would butt heads over issues as diverse as oil wells, religion, and atomic bombs.

Much has changed over the years, of course, but to a very great degree, the United States and Iran today still frame their mutual antagonism as a clash between civilization and barbarism, much as they did when Benjamin Labaree was gunned down in a mountain pass 500 miles northwest of Tehran in 1904.

Oil and the Fate of Modern Iran

At the dawn of the twentieth century, Americans would have recognized Iran as an important imperial buffer between Russia and India, twice the size of Texas and famous mainly for exporting Persian rugs.

Then in 1901, the British-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company secured an exclusive concession from Shah Mozaffar al-Din and his Qajar dynasty. Seven years later, the firm discovered a huge pool of petroleum at Masjid al-Suleiman in southwestern Iran, and the future of that country was transformed.

After World War I erupted in 1914, Anglo-Persian would satisfy the Royal Navy's rapidly expanding appetite for diesel fuel by pumping oil from the world's largest refinery at Abadan, near the headwaters of the Persian Gulf.

Mozaffar al-Din's successors accepted the small but steady stream of royalties that flowed into their coffers until 1925, when Reza Khan, an Iranian cavalry officer, overthrew the Qajars, proclaimed himself Shah, and established the Pahlavi dynasty.

Reza Shah's coronation in 1926 (Source: Public Domain)

A hard-headed nationalist, Reza Shah tried unsuccessfully to seize control of the oilfields from the recently rechristened Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in 1932 and flirted with Nazi Germany later that decade in an ill-advised effort to counterbalance Britain's influence. Troubled by the specter of a Berlin-Tehran axis, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin secretly agreed to depose Reza Shah in August 1941, replacing him with his 20-year-old son Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. They also announced that their two nations would jointly occupy Iran for the duration of World War II—Britain in the south and Russia in the north.

A bust of Howard C. Baskerville, an American Presbyterian missionary, who died in 1909 fighting for a constitutional monarchy in Iran. The bust, which is housed in downtown Tabriz, bears the legend: 'Patriot and Maker of History.' (Source: Wikimedia, by Vathlu)

Fearing that Iran might be carved up into permanent spheres of influence, Washington quickly secured pledges that both London and Moscow would withdraw their troops six months after the war ended. Meanwhile, America's stock rose in the eyes of many Iranians as U.S. advisers helped the young Shah plan the economic infrastructure essential for postwar modernization and development.

The Spoils of Oil: the U.S., Mossadegh, and the Cold War

As the Cold War heated up during the late 1940s, the Truman administration embraced Mohammed Reza Pahlavi as an important partner in the informal anti-Soviet alliance emerging in the Middle East. This partnership was complicated, however, by mounting Iranian resentment against Britain and AIOC, which exported millions of barrels of oil and made huge profits while paying Iran next to nothing.

In October 1949, Mohammed Mossadegh, a long-time critic of the Pahlavi dynasty who insisted that Iran had a right to control its own oil industry, founded the National Front, a broad coalition that included both middle-class moderates as well as firebrands from the left-wing Tudeh or "Workers" Party.

Mossadegh and his supporters soon held the balance of power in the Majlis, the Iranian parliament, where they called for AIOC to split its profits with Iran on a 50-50 basis, as other multinational oil firms operating in Venezuela and Saudi Arabia had recently agreed to do. Backed by the British government, AIOC refused even to consider such an option. On 15 March 1951, the Majlis responded with legislation nationalizing the Iranian petroleum industry.

Six weeks later, Mossadegh became prime minister and announced plans to wrest control of Iran's oil fields and refineries from Britain as soon as possible. American officials, who had urged the British to accept a last-minute profit-sharing compromise, were appalled. "Never have so few lost so much so

U.S. President Harry S. Truman and Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, 1951 (Source: Truman Library)

British forces pulled out of Iran on schedule, but when the Soviets refused to honor the March 1946 deadline, President Harry S. Truman decided, as Secretary of State James Byrnes put it, "to give it to them with both barrels," censuring the Kremlin at the United Nations and making thinly veiled nuclear threats. Stalin finally withdrew the Red Army two months later, but only after receiving assurances from Iranian Prime Minister Ahmed Qavam that the Soviet Union would have access to oil fields in northern Iran.

stupidly and so fast," Dean Acheson, Truman's secretary of state, recalled long afterward.

When Mossadegh moved forward with the nationalization of AIOC, the British government pressed the Shah to overrule his prime minister, sought American support for an international embargo on Iranian oil, and secretly began to plan a coup d'état in Tehran.

The MI6, Britain's overseas intelligence service, had developed a covert network of contacts among Iranian politicians and military officers and was quite confident that Mossadegh could be deposed with little bloodshed, provided the United States had no objection.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) maintained close ties with MI6 in Iran and was well aware that British intelligence was working closely with General Fazlollah Zahedi, Mossadegh's former interior minister, who was eager to overthrow his old boss. Neither the White House nor the State Department, however, was enamored of the MI6 plot, especially after Mossadegh learned most of the details in October 1952 and expelled Britain's

The Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and his wife Farah Pahlavi (Source: Public Domain)

diplomats and spooks from Iran.

Just two months before handing the keys to the Oval Office over to Dwight Eisenhower, Harry Truman insisted that all covert action in Tehran be put on hold. "We tried to get the block-headed British to have their oil company make a fair deal with Iran," Truman complained privately, but "no, no, they could not do that."

President Eisenhower and his top advisers regarded the crisis in Iran very differently from their predecessors. Ike's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, was a rabid anti-communist who dismissed Mohammed Mossadegh as a Russian stooge and who saw the Tudeh Party as the entering wedge for a Kremlin takeover

Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh and his daughter look out an airplane window following a 1951 trip to the United States. (Source: U.S. Department of State)

in Tehran. Allen Dulles, the new CIA director and John Foster's younger brother, was an avid proponent of covert action with close ties to Britain's MI6 and had few qualms about meddling in the internal affairs of Iran or any other nation deemed vulnerable to Soviet subversion.

Iranian troops surround the Iranian parliament, 1953. (Source: Wikipedia)
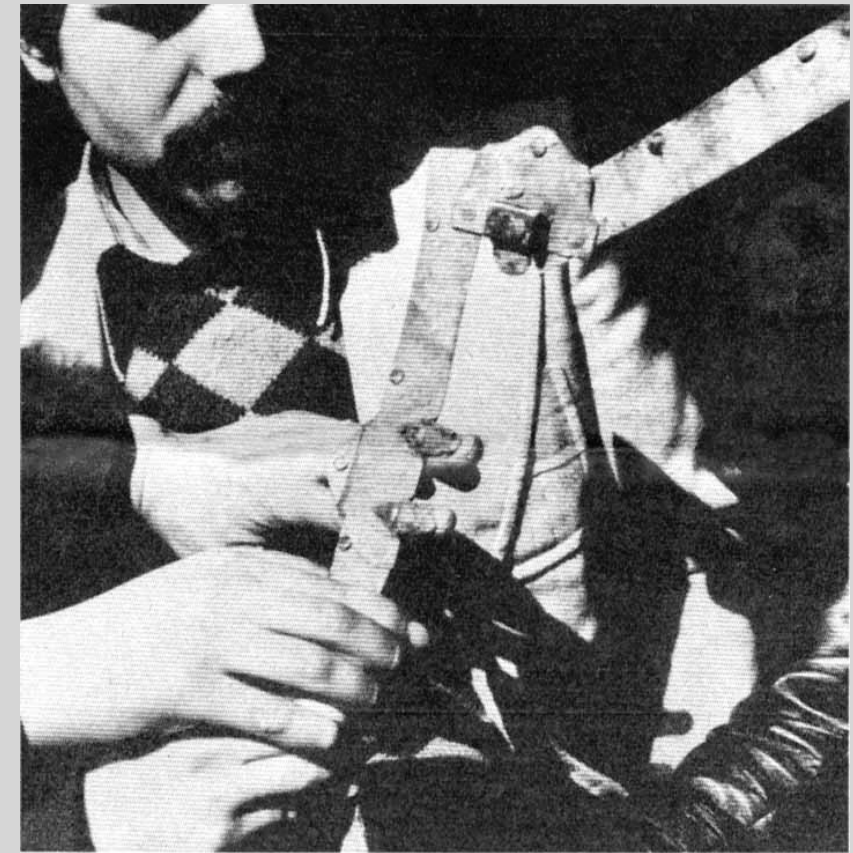
A torture device used by SAVAK, the shah's secret police, to pull out fingernails of detainees (Source: Wikimedia)

With Eisenhower's blessing, the Dulles brothers resurrected the dormant plot to topple Mossadegh and sent Kermit Roosevelt, a veteran CIA covert operator—whose grandfather Theodore had once sat in the White House—to Tehran in the spring of 1953 to make the necessary arrangements.

Roosevelt's plan, code-named "Operation Ajax," was really quite simple. In exchange for strong assurances of U.S. support, the Shah of Iran would issue a royal decree demanding that Mossadegh step down as prime minister and turn power over to

General Zahedi, who would outlaw the Tudeh Party and negotiate a settlement in the ongoing oil dispute.

When the Shah announced the change of government on 16 August 1953, however, Mossadegh ignored him and responded instead by issuing a warrant for Zahedi's arrest. Not long afterward, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi flew to Rome for an unscheduled vacation, Zahedi went into hiding, and the CIA went back to the drawing board.

Forty-eight hours later, Kermit Roosevelt orchestrated what he later termed "a counter-coup" against Mossadegh. With help from Britain's MI6, Roosevelt distributed a quarter-million dollars in bribes to mobilize hundreds of pro-Shah mercenaries, who stormed into the streets chanting anti-government slogans and staged violent clashes with Mossadegh's supporters. Meanwhile, General Zahedi and right-wing military officers moved to restore order, rounding up Tudeh Party militants, arresting Prime Minister Mossadegh, and inviting the Shah to return to Tehran in triumph.

Having convinced themselves that Iran was about to fall to communism, Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers had encouraged pro-American forces to overthrow a democratically elected Iranian leader and place an increasingly autocratic ruler back on the Peacock Throne.

"Throughout the crisis the United States government had done everything it possibly could to back up the Shah," Ike confirmed in his memoirs many years later. "Indeed, reports from observers on the spot in Teheran during the critical days sounded more like a dime novel than historical fact."

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi distributes land ownership documents to women during his "White Revolution," 1963. (Source: Wikimedia)

Partners: The Shah and the United States

From the American standpoint, Operation Ajax had a very happy ending. In June 1954, the Shah resolved the oil dispute amicably by establishing an international consortium that included AIOC and three U.S. petroleum giants, who would distribute the output from wells and refineries that were to remain under Iranian control.

A year later, he agreed to join the Central Treaty Organization, an anti-Soviet pact sponsored by the Eisenhower administration, and permitted the United States to establish electronic surveillance posts along Iran's border with Russia.
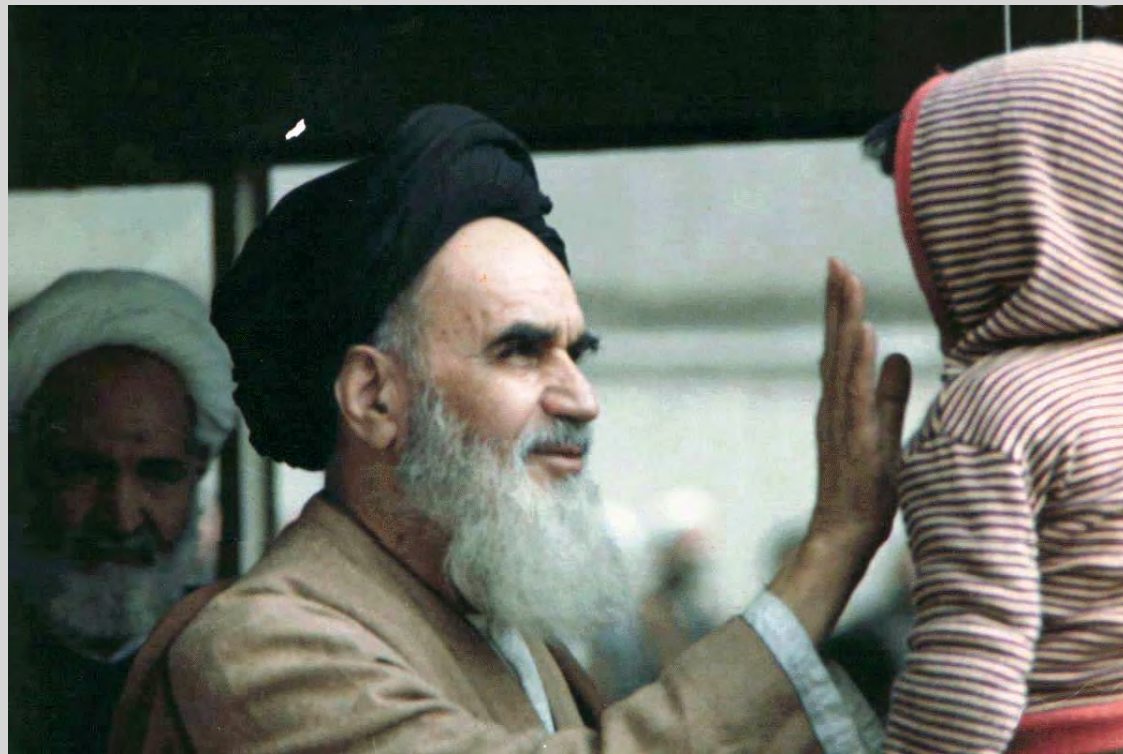
Ruhollah Khomeini with an Iranian child (Source: Wikimedia)

Then in 1957, the Shah established the SAVAK (a Farsi acronym for State Information and Security Organization), which, with help from the CIA, systematically silenced all opposition, imprisoning and torturing thousands of anti-Pahlavi activists.

The Shah sealed his partnership with the United States during the early 1960s, when Iran aligned itself with Israel under American auspices to curb Soviet influence among Arab nationalists like Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Searching for Stability

America's Iran watchers worried, however, that the Shah's repressive domestic policies might backfire, sparking an anti-

Western backlash against a regime that was spending too many of its petro-dollars on guns and too few on butter.

Just ten weeks after John F. Kennedy moved into the White House, riots erupted half way around the world in Tehran. In May 1961, the new president established a National Security Council (NSC) task force to study the crisis in Iran.

Before the year was out, JFK's advisers concluded that the Iranian turmoil was home-grown, not communist-inspired, and feared that unless the Shah embraced economic modernization and political reform, his days were numbered. In April 1962, President Kennedy invited Mohammed Reza Pahlavi to Washington, where the two leaders reviewed a blueprint for stability in Iran.

A map showing Iran, which borders Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Source: Wikimedia)

Nine months later, the Shah unveiled his bold new "White Revolution," a set of "top-down" reforms designed to avert radical "bottom-up" change like Fidel Castro's "red revolution" in Cuba. Land reform, industrial growth, women's rights, and better schools were quite popular among Iran's emerging middle class, as were the U.S. Peace Corps volunteers who began arriving in the spring of 1963 to preach modernization.

Iranian landlords, on the other hand, felt threatened and resisted the White Revolution, as did clerics like Ruhollah Khomeini, a 61-year-old ayatollah who ridiculed the Shah as a U.S. puppet and denounced the American-backed reforms as "Westoxification." Most American officials, however, regarded Khomeini as little more than an annoying Islamic rabble-rouser and welcomed the Shah's decision in November 1964 to send him into exile, first to Turkey and then to Iraq.

By the late 1960s, Iran seemed to be a real success story for U.S. foreign policy at a time when Lyndon B. Johnson was increasingly preoccupied with the quagmire that he had inherited from JFK in Vietnam. Hundreds of U.S. corporations were investing in the Shah's economic miracle, thousands of Iranian students were flocking to the United States to attend college, and millions of barrels of oil were flowing from Iran to America's Cold War allies in Japan and Western Europe.

Convinced that the White Revolution was irreversible, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi vowed to make Iran a regional superpower and hosted a garish celebration in October 1971 to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. Seven months later on his

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the future supreme leader of Iran, returns to Iran following his exile abroad, February 1979. (Source: Wikimedia)

way home from a summit meeting with Soviet leaders in Moscow, President Richard Nixon, LBJ's successor, stopped in Tehran, where he made the Shah an offer he could not refuse.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan in the Oval Office with Caspar Weinberger, George Shultz, Ed Meese, and Don Regan discussing Reagan's remarks on the Iran-Contra affair. (Source: Ronald Reagan Library)

As the war in Vietnam wound down, Nixon and NSC adviser Henry Kissinger explained, the United States was looking to scale back its military commitments in places like Southeast Asia and the Middle East. If Iran was willing to become America's partner and assume responsibility for ensuring political stability in the Persian Gulf, Nixon would permit the Shah to purchase any non-nuclear weapons system in the U.S. arsenal, including helicopter gunships, jet fighters, and guided-missile frigates.

An American protests during the Iranian hostage crisis in November 1979. (Source: U.S. Library of Congress)

The Shah embraced the new "Nixon Doctrine" enthusiastically. Indeed, between 1972 and 1977, he bought $13 billion worth of American military hardware and paid for it from the increased revenue generated by skyrocketing oil prices following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the ensuing embargo imposed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The oil boom proved to be a mixed blessing for OPEC members like Iran, however, touching off an inflationary spiral that caused the cost of basic necessities to rise sharply and widened the gap between Iranian haves and have-nots.

When dissidents took to the streets to protest wasteful military spending, to appeal for better jobs, and to demand democratic

reforms, the Shah unleashed a brutal crackdown and authorized the SAVAK and the Iranian army to use lethal force if necessary to quell the unrest. From his exile in Iraq, the Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the bloodshed and called for the overthrow of the American-backed tyrant.

The U.S. and the Iranian Revolution

President Jimmy Carter, who assumed office in January 1977, was highly skeptical of the Nixon Doctrine and deeply disturbed by the Shah's repressive policies, which ran counter to his own campaign promise to make human rights a central pillar of post-Vietnam U.S. foreign policy.

After Iranian exchange students chanted anti-Pahlavi slogans and clashed with local police outside the White House during the Shah's visit to Washington in late October, Carter took his guest aside and urged him privately to change course. Yet when Carter visited Tehran on New Year's Eve 1977, he felt obliged to offer a well publicized toast to Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, whose realm was "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."

No American could make such a toast one year later.

Mass protests in Iran in 1978 (Source: Wikimedia, by sajed.ir)

Mohammed Khatami, Iran's former president (Source: World Economic Forum)

Banners criticizing the shah, during the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Source: Raphael Saulus)

On 8 January 1978, Iranian troops fired into a noisy pro-Khomeini crowd in the holy city of Qom, killing two dozen demonstrators and wounding more than 100 others. Much to the dismay of the Carter administration, the protests soon spread throughout Iran, bringing together an unlikely coalition of mullahs, merchants, and middle-class students who could only agree on one thing—that the Shah must go.

When heavily armed soldiers killed 400 protestors and injured 4,000 more in Tehran's Jaleh Square on 8 September, most observers expected him to go sooner rather than later. In early November, U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan drafted a cable informing Carter and his advisers that the time had come for "Thinking the Unthinkable"—an Iran without the Shah.

U.S. President George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union address, in which he labelled Iran part of an "Axis of Evil" (Source: White House)

The end came quickly. After briefly exploring the possibility of a pro-American military regime, in which the Shah would have been reduced to little more than a figurehead, the Carter administration quietly encouraged the man who had ruled Iran for almost forty years to pack his bags.

On 16 January 1979, Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi boarded a Boeing 707 at Tehran's Mehrabad airport and headed off for exile in Egypt. Two weeks later, the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran for the first time in fifteen years vowing to cleanse the country of all remaining influence of "the Great Satan," as he called the United States, and promising to establish an Islamic Republic.

Americans held hostage in Iran return to the United States on January 27, 1981 (Source: Department of Defense)

A memorial at Arlington National Cemetery to members of the U.S. armed forces killed in a failed attempt to rescue Americans held hostage in Iran. (Source: Flickr, by bobafred)

Raised in a secular American society that was threatened by a secular Soviet menace, few U.S. policymakers expected Islam to play a significant role in Iranian politics, and fewer still understood Khomeini's brand of Shi'ism.

Uncertain about what the future held, U.S. diplomats worked with Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan and other moderate leaders in Tehran to prevent a rupture in Iranian-American relations throughout the spring and into the summer. Meanwhile, Khomeini's youthful supporters organized themselves into battalions of "revolutionary guards" who harassed members of the old regime and denounced all things American.

On 23 October 1979, the White House confirmed that the Shah of Iran had checked into the Cornell University Medical Center in New York City for surgery on the lymphoma that would eventually kill him. Although Jimmy Carter insisted that this was a purely humanitarian gesture, it evoked bad memories of Operation Ajax a quarter-century earlier, when the CIA had conspired with the Shah to overthrow Mohammed Mossadegh.

Twelve days after Mohammed Reza Pahlavi arrived in Manhattan, Iranian students fiercely loyal to the Ayatollah Khomeini stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and captured 53 American diplomats, whom they would hold hostage for 444 days.

The hostage crisis poisoned Iran's relations with America, making Islam a dirty word and dominating the political discourse on Main Street and inside the Beltway.

Khomeini had not known about the embassy takeover in advance, but because this blow against "the Great Satan" was quite popular throughout Iran, he was able to use the crisis to build support for an Islamic Republic. Frustrated by the Ayatollah's unwillingness to negotiate, Carter approved a complex hostage rescue mission on 24 April 1980 that literally

crashed and burned in the desert 300 miles southeast of Tehran, killing 8 American GI's and dooming the incumbent president's bid for reelection the following November.

A few minutes after President Ronald Reagan took the oath of office on 20 January 1981, Iran finally released the American hostages, but relations between the new administration in Washington and the Islamic Republic in Tehran remained frosty.

Antagonists: Iran and the U.S. since 1981

By the time that Reagan settled into the Oval Office, Khomeini's Iran was already locked in an increasingly bloody war with Saddam Hussein's secular Ba'athist regime in Iraq that would last eight years and claim half a million lives, two-thirds of them Iranian.

Clearly determined to stymie Iran's influence in the region, especially in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, and doubtless also eager to settle old scores, the Reagan administration tilted toward Iraq, providing Saddam Hussein with satellite reconnaissance of the battlefield, "dual-use" aircraft easily converted to military purposes, and $1.1 billion in agricultural credits.

For their part, the Iranians resorted to human wave assaults against Iraqi fortifications and channeled covert support to Islamic radicals like Lebanon's Hezbollah or "Party of God," whose operatives killed 241 U.S. Marines in a bombing at the Beirut Airport in 1983 and took seven American civilians hostage in the Lebanese capital during 1985.

Iranians remember Neda Agha Soltan, whose death in 2009 rallied the Iranian opposition. (Source: Wikipedia)

A year later, President Reagan was humiliated after Hezbollah revealed that the White House had approved a half-baked "arms for hostages" deal with the Khomeini regime that came to be known as the Iran-Contra Affair.

The Iran-Iraq War ended in stalemate in August 1988, and many observers believed that Reagan's retirement to California the

following January and Khomeini's death four months later would herald a new era in Iranian-American relations.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Source: Agencia Brasil)

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 provided a painful reminder to Reagan's successor, George H. W. Bush, that "the enemy of my enemy is not always my friend." The United States was able to defeat Iraq in February 1991 without any help from Iran, whose efforts to export Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Middle East continued to make it a pariah in Washington.

Bush lost his bid for a second term a year and a half later less because of dissatisfaction with recent U.S. decisions in the Persian Gulf than because of the electorate's unhappiness with the state of the U.S. economy.

From the End of the Cold War to the Clash of Civilizations

More interested in fixing what was broken domestically than in rethinking American diplomacy, President Bill Clinton adopted a policy of "dual containment" that employed economic sanctions and military threats to prevent either Iraq or Iran from making trouble.

This approach resonated nicely with the notion, popularized by Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, that the post-Cold War world was witnessing "a clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West.

Clinton's rigid policies in the Persian Gulf, however, left America unprepared to make the most of remarkable developments in Tehran, where Iranian voters weary of two decades of political and religious turmoil elected

Mohammed Khatami, an Islamic moderate, as president in May 1997.

Iran's new leader proceeded to stand Samuel Huntington on his head by calling for "a dialogue of civilizations."

Yet despite Khatami's eagerness to restore diplomatic ties with the United States severed during the earlier hostage crisis, and despite his denunciation of terrorism, the Clinton administration insisted that Iran must also halt its nuclear research program and cease its support for Islamic extremists in Lebanon and elsewhere.

A few hours after al-Qaeda brought down the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Mohammed Khatami sent condolences to Clinton's successor, George W. Bush, while thousands of young Iranians held a candlelight vigil in the streets of Tehran.

"Dubya" welcomed these good will gestures, but early in the new year he was outraged by an abortive Iranian attempt to run guns to Hamas, a Palestinian Islamist group that favored armed resistance against Israel. He was also disturbed to learn that Iran was moving ahead with plans to build a nuclear reactor capable of producing weapons-grade uranium at Bushehr.

Although Khatami reiterated his desire to improve relations, President Bush branded Iran a terrorist regime during his state of the union address on 29 January 2002 and made the Islamic Republic a charter member of "the Axis of Evil," along with Iraq and North Korea.

When the U. S. troops invaded Iraq fourteen months later to depose Saddam Hussein, it was Khatami's turn to condemn America. By late 2003 Iranian intelligence was working closely with Moktada al-Sadr and other Shi'a militants in Iraq, who were waging a guerrilla war against the American-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad.

In June 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a founding member of Khomeini's revolutionary guards and a two-term mayor of Tehran, won an upset victory in the Iranian presidential elections. A hard-line Islamist who was critical of Mohammed Khatami's moderate domestic and foreign policies, Ahmadinejad called for a jihad against America and Israel, vowed to make Iran a nuclear power

as soon as possible, and claimed that the Holocaust was a hoax perpetrated by an international Jewish conspiracy.

Although the United States had its hands full combating an ever-widening insurgency in Iraq, some of George W. Bush's top advisers, including Vice President Dick Cheney, privately welcomed the prospect of an Israeli preemptive strike against

A political map of Iran (2001) (Source: Wikimedia)

Iran's Bushehr nuclear complex and publicly hinted that regime change in Tehran should be next on America's "to do" list.

Cooler heads prevailed, but by the time that Bush left office in January 2009, American relations with Iran were colder than at any time since the hostage crisis thirty years earlier.

Obama and the Call for New Beginnings

During his 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama urged Americans to reexamine their attitudes toward Islam and

indicated that if he were elected, he would consider meeting with anyone, including Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in the interest of improving U.S. relations with the Muslim world.

While President Obama did not travel to Tehran, he delivered a stirring speech at Cairo University on 2 June 2009, in which he called for "a new beginning" in the troubled encounter between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East. Obama did not mention Mohammed Mossadegh by name, but he did acknowledge that "in the middle of the Cold War, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian government."

He also pointed out that "since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S.
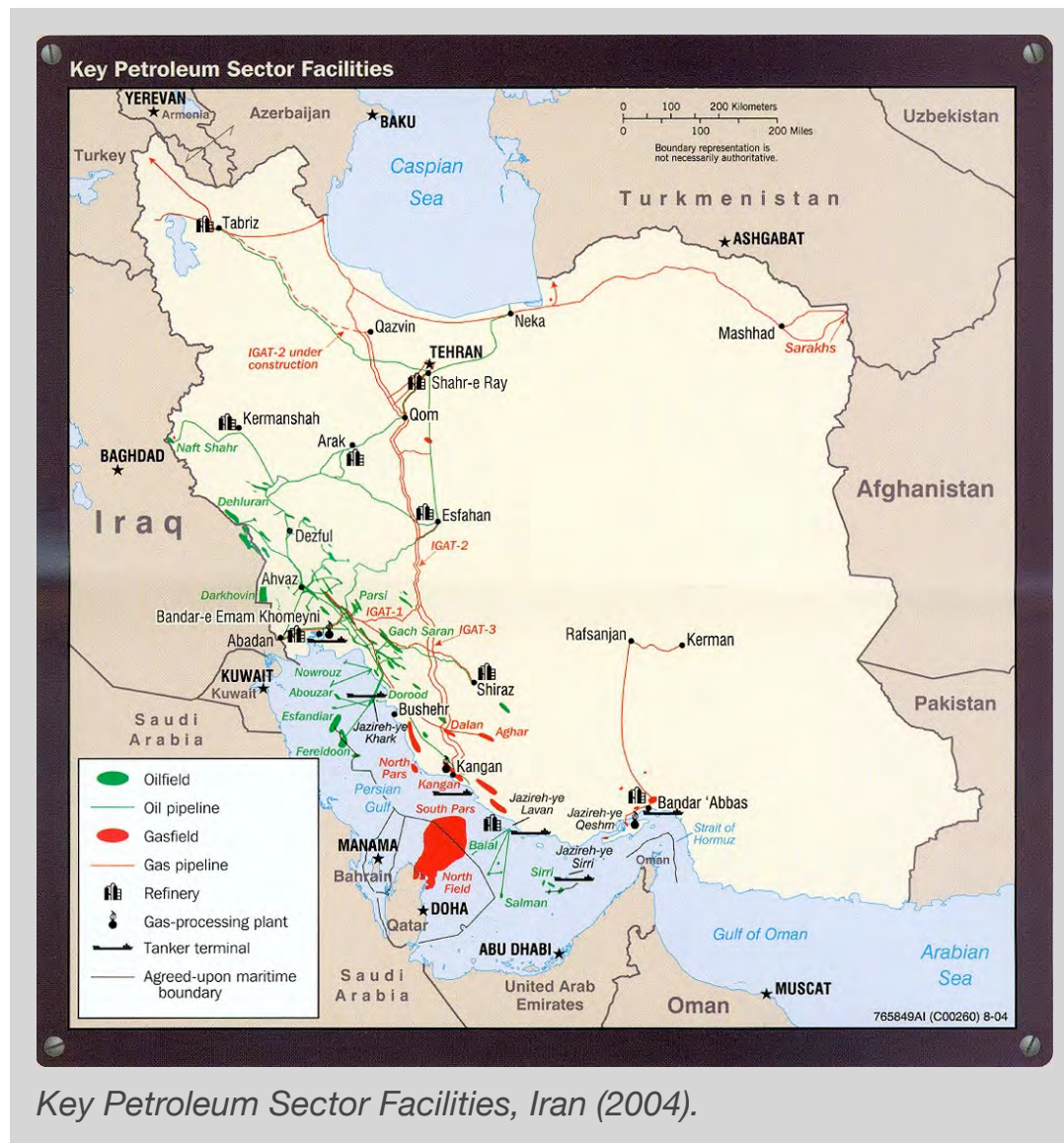

A map showing ethnic and religious groups in Iran (Source: Wikimedia)

U.S. President Barack Obama's speech at Cairo University on 2 June 2009, in which he called for "a new beginning" in relations between the United States and the peoples of the Middle East (Source: Flickr/ Official White House Photostream)

Key Petroleum Sector Facilities, Iran (2004).

His opponents thought otherwise and hoped to derail his reelection campaign later that month. As election-day drew near, throngs of young people surged into Tehran's Jaleh Square to support Mir Hossein Mousavi, a charismatic Islamic reformer supported by Mohammed Khatami and other moderates.

Pro-government thugs took to the streets with knives and guns, however, savagely assaulting Mousavi's supporters, one of whom, 26-year-old Neda Agha Soltan, bled to death in an awful scene captured on a cell phone video that went viral on YouTube.

When the votes were counted in late June, Ahmadinejad was declared the winner, even though neutral observers detected unmistakable signs of wholesale electoral fraud. Barack Obama professed to be "deeply troubled" by events in Iran, but critics condemned him for not doing something more substantial.

Yet the painful truth was: What could he have done? Any form of U.S. intervention would quite likely have discredited Mousavi's "Green Revolution" in the eyes of many Iranians, who remembered the story of Operation Ajax all too well.

Moving Forward

Little has changed since June 2009. The American media continue to depict Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as a barbaric madman —Dr. Strangelove in a turban—while U.S. policymakers are beginning to worry that if the Stuxnet computer virus doesn't disable Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor, the Israeli air force will.

troops and civilians." Despite all this bad blood, however, Obama insisted that the United States was now "prepared to move forward" toward a better relationship, if Iran was willing to reciprocate.

Thousands of Iranians watched Obama's speech over the Internet, and they heard this message loud and clear. President Ahmadinejad, on the other hand, dismissed the speech as mere rhetoric.

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Meanwhile, Iranians remain badly divided about the United States, with most men and women in the street favorably inclined toward the American people but deeply troubled by American policies toward the Muslim world, which Ahmadinejad continues to denounce as hypocritical and barbarous.

As they did throughout much of the twentieth century, the governments of America and Iran continue to view each other with fear and suspicion well into the second decade of the new millennium.

Yet reconciliation between these proud two nations is not impossible to imagine, even in an era dominated by the incendiary rhetoric of George W. Bush and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

One hundred years before Neda Agha Soltan was shot to death in Tehran and five years after Benjamin Labaree was murdered near Mount Ararat, Howard C. Baskerville, a Presbyterian missionary born in North Platte, Nebraska, died in faraway Tabriz on 20 April 1909 fighting alongside Iranian revolutionaries who eventually forced Shah Mohammed Ali Qajar to establish a constitutional monarchy.

Few Iranians and fewer Americans realize that at Constitution House in downtown Tabriz, there is a bust of Baskerville bearing the legend: "Patriot and Maker of History." ◆

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The Hajj and Europe

By Eileen Kane

The hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, is a central ritual of the Muslim faith and one of the largest and oldest gatherings of people in the world. Pilgrims perform the hajj over three days during the last month of the Muslim lunar calendar (the date shifts every year, in reference to the Gregorian calendar).
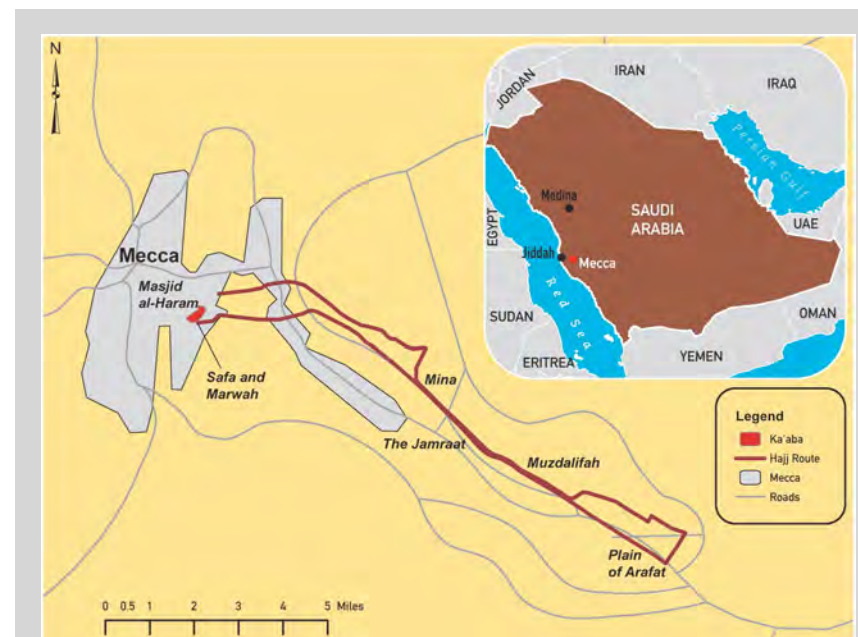
Location of Mecca and the route of the hajj

Pilgrims carry out a specific sequence of rituals at a constellation of sites, recalling activities of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam's seventh-century founder. Unlike other major world pilgrimages, the hajj is obligatory. In making the pilgrimage to Islam's holiest city —Muhammad's birthplace and the site of God's revelations to him—Muslims fulfill one of the five pillars of their faith.

For Saudi Arabia, the modern state that is home to Mecca, the hajj is both a lucrative industry (hajj revenues are 3% of GDP) and a mass event the kingdom must oversee at enormous cost. Last year the Saudis received about 2 million hajj

Aerial view of the Jamarat Bridge, 2009 (Source: Flickr, by Omar Chatriwala)

A global phenomenon, the hajj must also be managed by the many nation-states that send citizens to Mecca each year as pilgrims. Today, the world's 1.6 billion Muslims live everywhere. They negotiate access to Mecca through their countries of citizenship, which issue hajj visas based on the Saudi quota system. (Generally, the Saudis allot countries one spot on the hajj per 1,000 Muslim citizens.)

The process of deciding who gets a hajj visa—as well as how to ensure pilgrims' safety, and how much states should subsidize the ritual—is complicated. In many countries, demand for hajj

pilgrims, a number kept artificially low by a quota system they introduced in the 1980s to control crushing crowds.

To manage and streamline the annual pilgrim traffic, the Saudi government has invested billions of dollars in a hajj infrastructure that includes two dedicated hajj air terminals, sanitation and health facilities in and around Mecca, as well as highways and tunnels connecting these sites.

Even so, last year's hajj witnessed tragedy when a construction crane collapse in Mecca killed more than 100 and a stampede outside the city left several thousand dead.

Pilgrims circle the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, 2008. (Source: Wikimedia)

Crowds travel to the Jamarat Bridge during the hajj, 2011. (Source: Wikimedia)
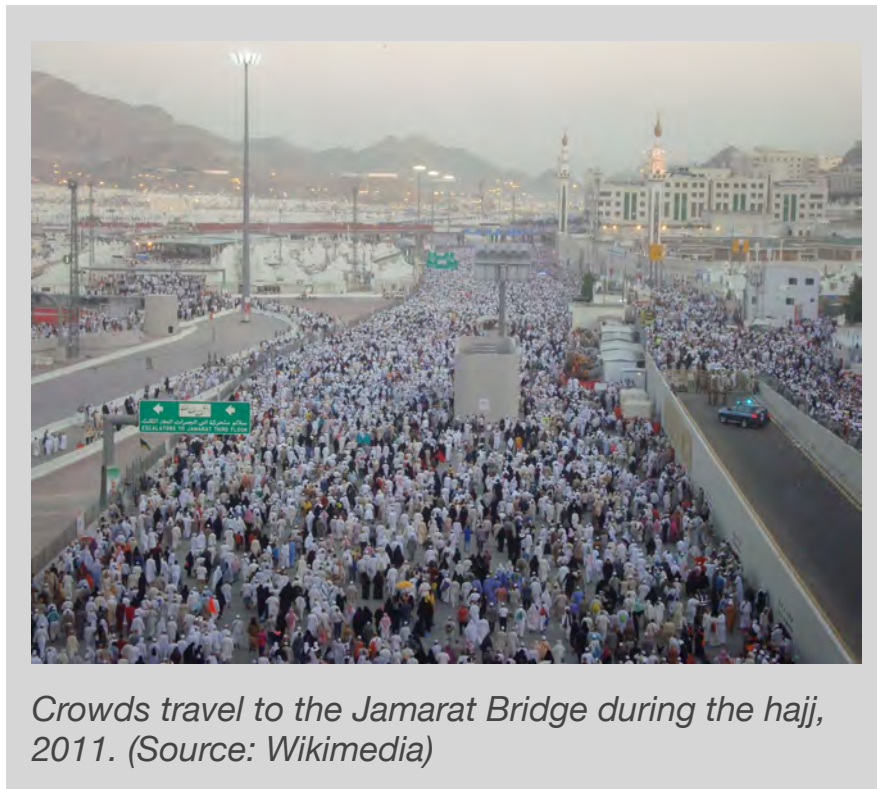
visas regularly exceeds supply, and there are long waiting lists, especially for those without political connections.

And, to a degree that many would find surprising, European nations are deeply connected to this annual Muslim event and have been for nearly two centuries.

At a time when mass Muslim migration to Europe is fueling divisive politics and reviving old fears and stereotypes about Islam as a conspiratorial faith that threatens "Western" ways of life, it is important to remember Europe's earlier interest and involvement in the hajj and its role in shaping the modern history of this sacred Islamic ritual.

Europe as a Center of the Global Hajj

Europe today is a center of the global hajj both as a source of pilgrims and as a transportation hub.

Large-scale Muslim immigration to Western Europe and the fall of communism in the east have caused Europe's Muslim communities to grow. More than 40 million Muslims live in Europe today, representing 6% of the overall population.

At least 100,000 European citizens make the pilgrimage to Mecca annually, and their numbers are rising in line with the growth of Muslim communities in Europe, accelerated this past year by the
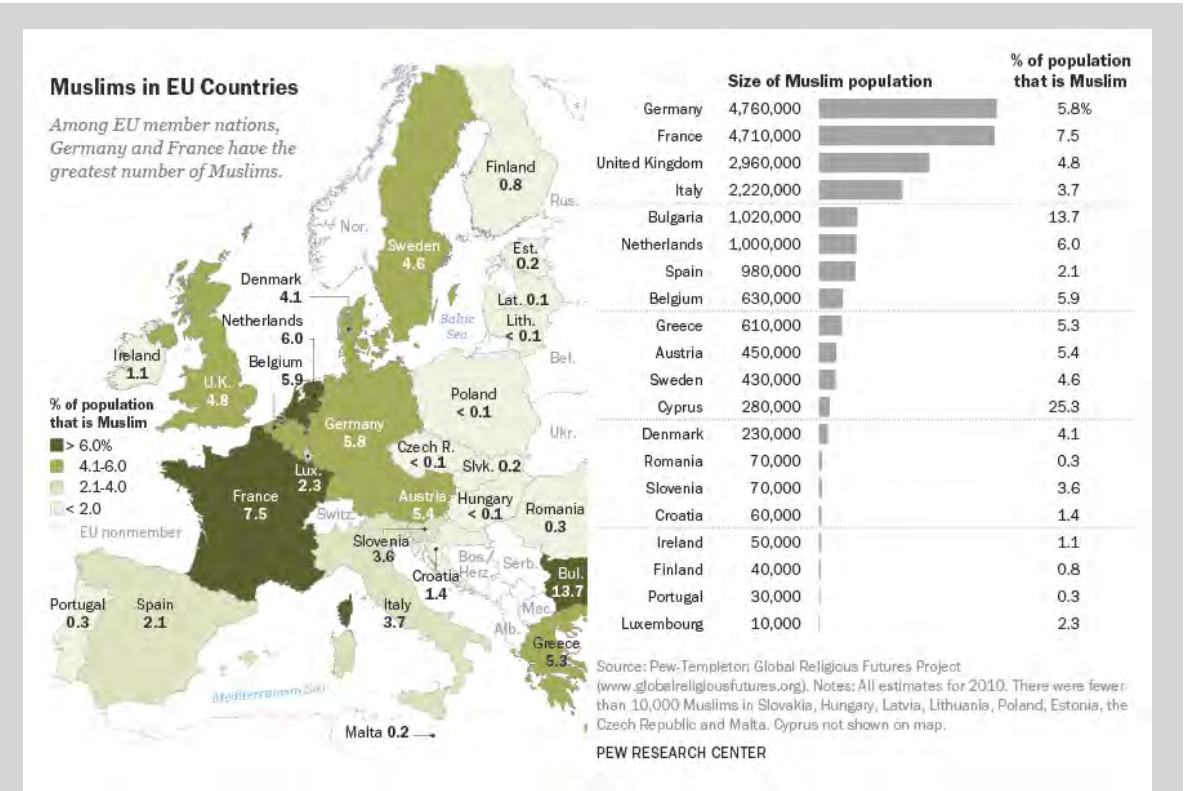
A chart of European Muslim populations by size and percent (Source: Pew Research Centers Forum on Religion & Public Life)

On the left, officials meet for the October launch of the 2011 British Hajj Consular Delegation. On the right, the British Hajj Delegation, which provides consular services, travel information, and medical services to travelers. (Source: The Council of British Hajjis on Twitter)

flights to Jeddah during hajj season on Aeroflot, the state airline. A state-created hajj liaison office arranges visas and transportation.

And in a new twist last year, after annexing Crimea from Ukraine, Russia offered Crimean Tatars generous hajj subsidies ($1000 per person, about a third of the cost of an economy package tour) in an obvious attempt to cultivate their loyalties toward Moscow and away from Kiev.

arrival of over a million migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Africa.

In response to their integration into global hajj networks, European governments have been steadily, if rather quietly, sponsoring the pilgrimage.

In Britain, for instance, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2000 helped fund the British Hajj Delegation to provide consular support and medical services for its citizens on the ground in Saudi Arabia. Despite being officially secular, the French government posts a consul in Jeddah to help French nationals making the hajj. The most recent consul, a convert named Lewis Blaine, performed his job largely on motorbike, zipping around Mecca and the holy sites to assist French citizens.

Russia—which has 14 million Muslim citizens, the largest population of any European country—has perhaps done the most to support its citizen-hajj pilgrims. Since the early 2000s, under the Putin government, Russia's Muslims have enjoyed discounted

Depiction of Mamluk-era caravan to Mecca by al-Hariri of Basra, 1237 (Source: Wikimedia)

The Hajj during the Era of European Colonialism

Europe's deep involvement with the hajj began during the era of global European imperialism.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Europe's imperial powers had colonized much of Asia and almost all of Africa, and brought most of the world's Muslims under colonial rule. (Of the world's Muslim states, only Persia, Afghanistan, and the Ottoman Empire escaped European colonization.) In the decades before World

Pilgrim camp outside of Mecca, 1889 (Source: New York Public Library)

Map illustrating stages of Ottoman imperial expansion until its peak in 1683 (Source: Wikipedia)
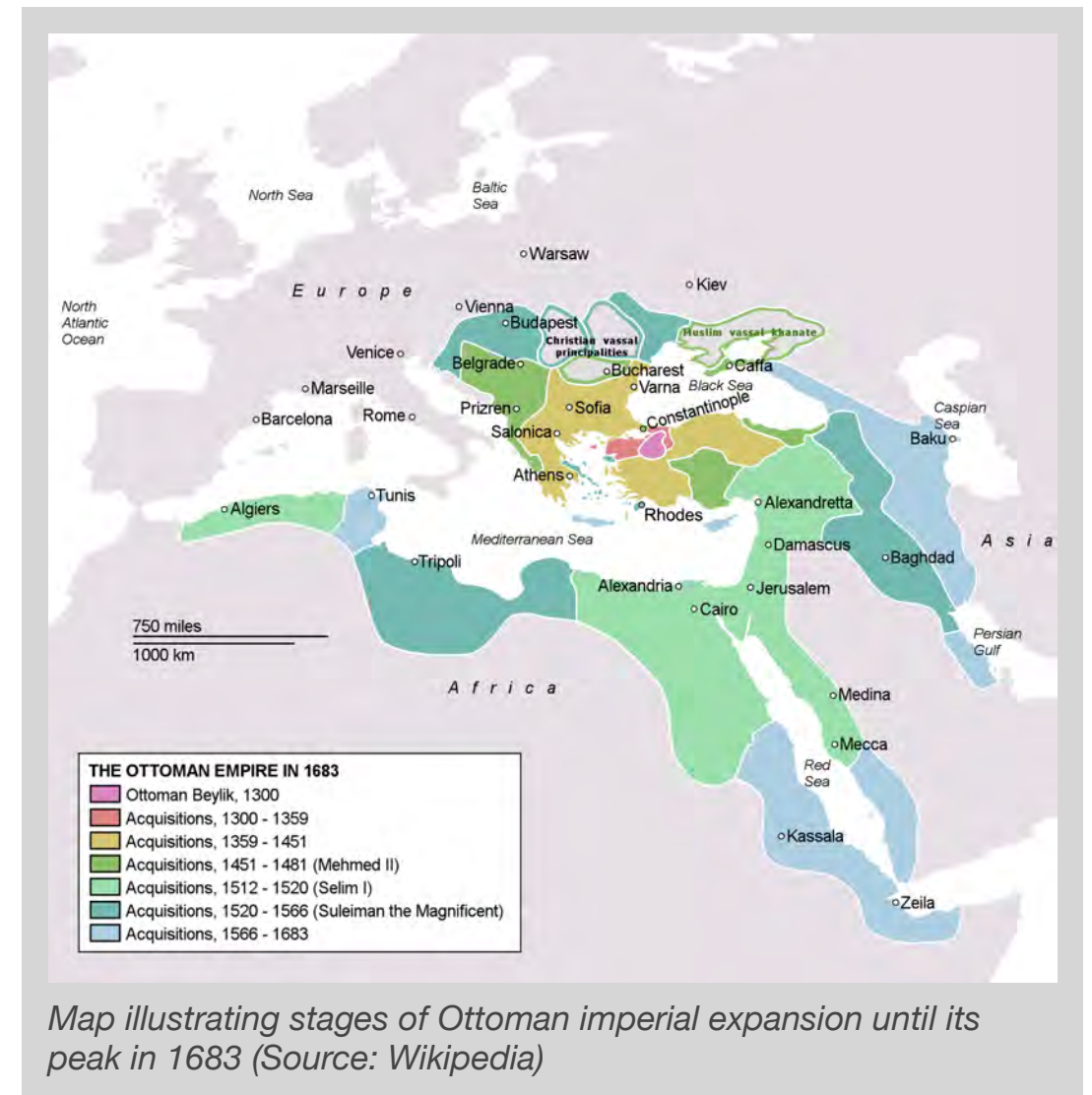
War I, each of the leading imperial powers of the day—the British, Dutch, French, and Russians—ruled more Muslims in their empires than did any single independent Muslim state.

One effect of colonial domination of Muslim-majority lands was that the hajj came under European influence and control for the first time in history.

From its eighth-century beginnings after the birth of Islam, the Meccan pilgrimage had been performed almost exclusively under

Ottoman construction of the Hijaz Railway connecting Damascus to Medina, 1908 (Source: British Museum)

The Grand Mosque and the Kaaba, 1907 (Source: Wikimedia)

MECCA

Grand Mosque
Safa and Marwah
Jamaraat [Bridge]
Mina
Muzdalifah
Mt. Arafat

0
2
4
8
12 km

Hajj Rituals (by day)

1. Most pilgrims arrive at **Mina** on foot or by bus, and are housed in air-conditioned tents.

2. At dawn, pilgrims walk 14.4 km from **Mina** to **Mount Arafat**, where they spend the day praying and reading the Quran. After sunset, they walk 9 km from **Mount Arafat** to Muzdalifah and sleep in the open air.

3. At sunrise, pilgrims collect pebbles at **Muzdalifah** and carry them to **Mina**. During the ritual of Stoning of the Devil at **Jamaraat**, pilgrims throw 7 tiny pebbles at each of 3 white pillars, before returning to **Mina** for the night.

4. Pilgrims travel from **Mina** to the **Grand Mosque** in **Mecca** and perform a tawaf, circling the Ka'aba 7 times. Pilgrims may also perform sa'i, walking or running 7 times between **Safa and Marwah,** before they return to **Mina**.

5. Pilgrims leave **Mina** for the final time, travel to the **Grand Mosque** for the last tawaf, after which they leave Mecca, ending Hajj.

Route of the hajj with descriptions of associated rituals by day (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

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the patronage of Muslim rulers, through Muslim-ruled lands, and with the help of Muslim officials along the way. Hajj pilgrims' ultimate destination—the Holy City of Mecca—was (and still is) closed to non-Muslims.

Before the era of global European imperialism, Muslims made the Meccan pilgrimage under the auspices of Islamic empires. The Mamluk, Mughal, and Ottoman imperial governments all spent large sums to support hajj pilgrims making the long and often treacherous journey to Mecca through their empires, along land and sea routes.

Abdürreşid Ibrahim and his children (Source: Wikimedia)
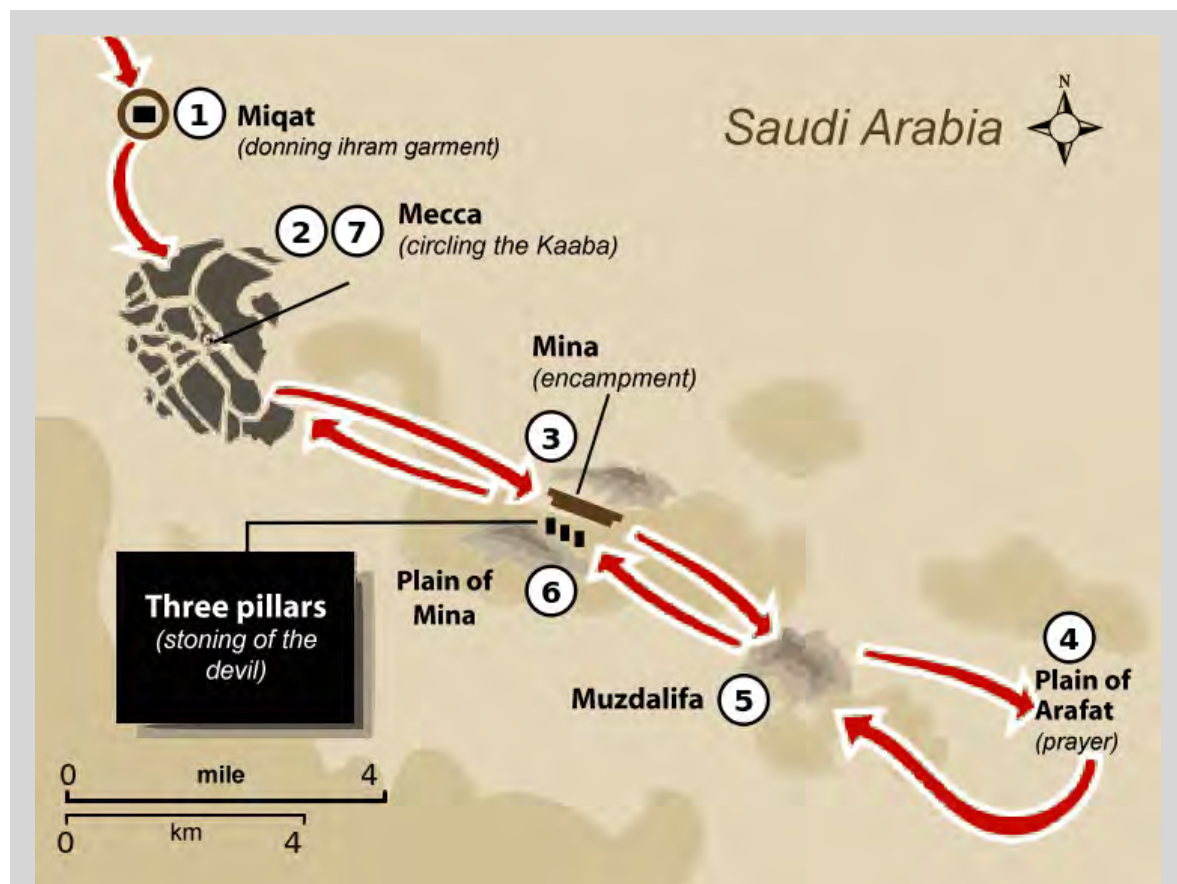
Route of the hajj in Mecca and locations of associated rituals (Source: Wikimedia)
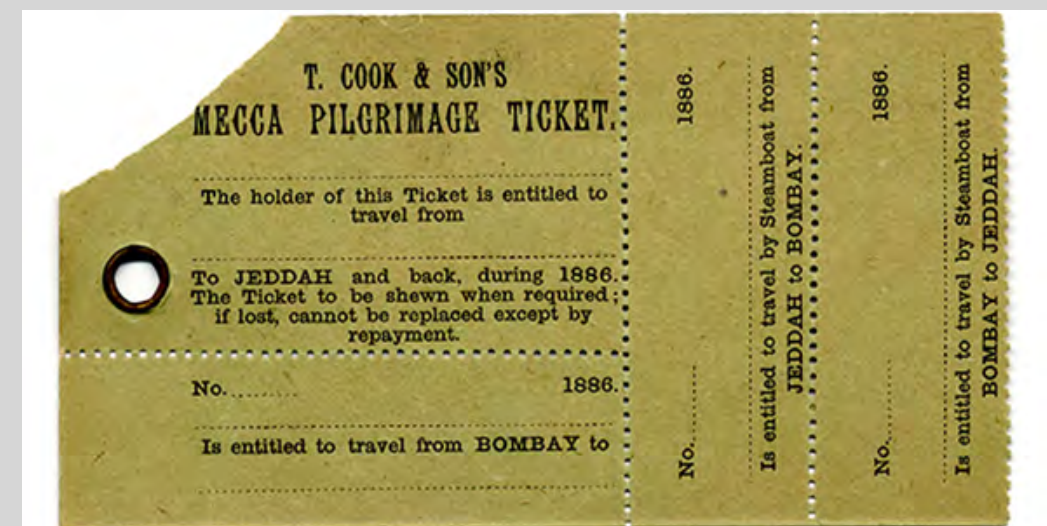
19th century British hajj ticket granting travel from Bombay to Jeddah (Source: University of Cambridge)

The Ottomans were perhaps the most ambitious as hajj patrons. Each year, they sponsored imperial hajj caravans along major land routes to Mecca. These were enormous affairs of people and animals, led by military escort, and included as many as 50,000 pilgrims by the early 1800s.

Map of the Ottoman Hijaz Railway connecting Damascus to Medina; Construction on the route began in 1900 in order to facilitate the travel of pilgrims and strengthen the empire. (Source: Wikimedia)

A map of The King's Highway; From the Muslim conquests of the 7th century until the 16th century, the King's Highway served as main the pilgrimage road (darb al-hajj) connecting contemporary Syria and Iraq to Mecca. (Source: Wikipedia)

To secure the caravan from attacks by bandits, and organize the hajj traffic under their supervision, the Ottomans fortified desert routes linking Damascus and Cairo to Mecca, building fortresses, wells, and cisterns along them.

The Ottomans built their elaborate and expensive hajj infrastructure for both symbolic and strategic reasons. Hajj patronage was expected of the Ottoman sultan, as imperial ruler (after the sixteenth century) of the Muslim Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina and, with this, his claim to be "protector" of hajj pilgrims and "caliph of all Muslims."

Religious Composition of Immigrants in the European Union

Percentage and estimated number of all immigrants in the European Union by religious group

Christian
26,370,000
56%

Other Religions
1,430,000
3%

Unaffiliated
4,570,000
10%

Jewish
140,000
<1%

Buddhist
930,000
2%

Hindu
790,000
2%

Muslim
12,670,000
27%
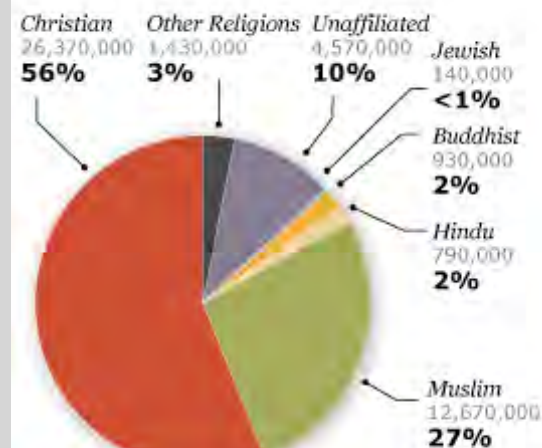
Percentage and estimated number of immigrants in the European Union (excluding migration within the European Union) by religious group

Christian
13,170,000
42%

Other Religions
1,390,000
4%

Unaffiliated
2,490,000
8%

Jewish
110,000
<1%

Buddhist
910,000
3%

Hindu
770,000
2%

Muslim
12,290,000
39%

Population estimates are rounded to ten thousands. Percentages are calculated from unrounded numbers and may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The 27 European Union countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life • Global Religion and Migration Database 2010

Charts illustrating the composition of European Union immigrants (Source: Pew Research Centers Forum on Religion & Public Life)
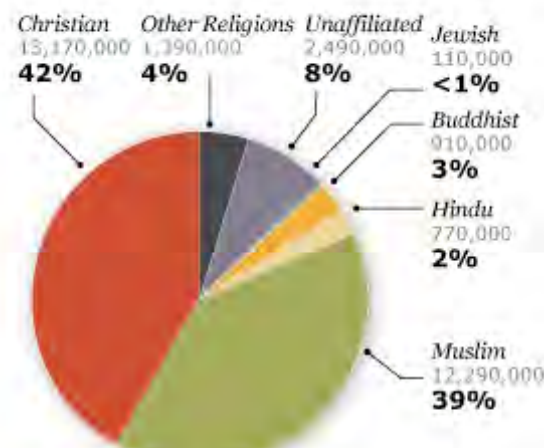
At the same time, the Ottomans were able to station troops and officials in their far-flung Arab provinces through the hajj infrastructure that they built and the ceremonies they staged around the annual caravans. They were also able to demonstrate the sultan-caliph's power and benevolence to local subject populations, as well as foreign Muslims.

This situation slowly began to change in the sixteenth century. As Europeans pushed into the Indian Ocean and parts of Asia, they conquered Muslim-majority lands and brought long stretches of traditional hajj routes under their direct control. As European empires grew, especially in the nineteenth-century, so did their interest and involvement in the hajj.

By the turn of the 20th century, most hajj pilgrims who showed up in Mecca were colonial subjects. They arrived in unprecedented numbers—as many as 300,000 a year—due to the global mobility revolution that European imperialism had also brought.

Across European colonies, the introduction of railroads and steamships had transformed the Meccan pilgrimage from a small-scale ritual performed mainly by elites into a mass annual event dominated by the rural poor, who packed onto the decks of Arabia-bound steamers on third- and fourth-class tickets. Their wretchedness at the hands of greedy ship captains made headlines in Europe, and provided the moral scandal at the heart of Joseph Conrad's 1900 novel *Lord Jim*.

Sponsoring the Hajj

Having inherited a hajj tradition with their colonial conquests, Europe's imperial powers had to decide what to do with it.
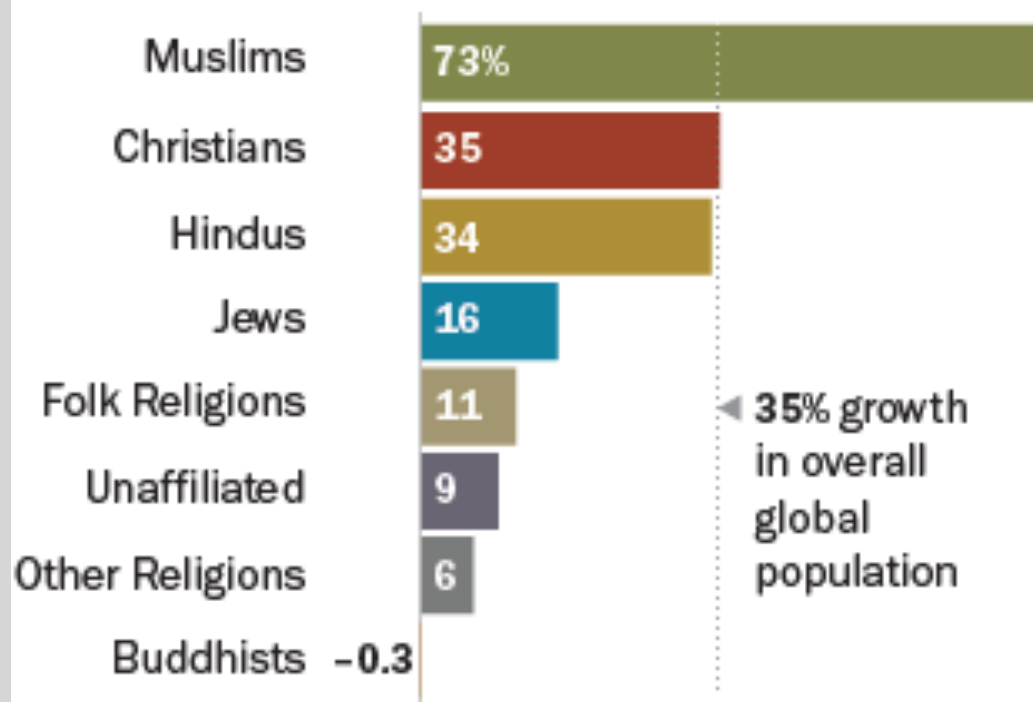
In the mid-nineteenth century, as hajj traffic between European colonies and Mecca began to grow, colonial officials were essentially of two minds about the hajj. At a time of growing anxiety about burgeoning Islamic political movements as a threat to empire, and fears of the hajj as a spreader of cholera and other infectious diseases, some suggested banning the hajj.

Islam Growing Fastest

Muslims are the only major religious group projected to increase faster than the world's population as a whole.

Estimated change in population size, 2010-2050

Religious Group	Change
Muslims	73%
Christians	35
Hindus	34
Jews	16
Folk Religions	11
Unaffiliated	9
Other Religions	6
Buddhists	−0.3

◄ 35% growth in overall global population

Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Chart showing the projected global growth of various religions between 2010 and 2050 (Source: The Pew Research Center, The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050)

This was especially true after 1865, the year a massive cholera outbreak in Mecca became a global epidemic, spread far and wide by dispersing crowds of hajj pilgrims. After this epidemic—which killed more than 200,000 people worldwide in cities as far away as New York City—the European powers convened the first in a series of conferences that identified the hajj as a sanitary and security threat to empire. But attempts to ban the hajj proved impossible: as a pillar of Islam, and a duty for Muslims, the hajj could not be easily banned or stopped.

Increasingly, as European control of Muslim populations grew over the nineteenth century, colonial officials began to see potential benefits in sponsoring rather than restricting or prohibiting the hajj. In the early 1800s, colonial officials began to experiment with hajj patronage as a way to win the support of recently colonized Muslim subjects, while also monitoring their contacts with Muslims from other parts of the world.

In the Russian-ruled Caucasus, tsarist officials in the 1840s started subsidizing hajj journeys for local Muslim elites they were trying to integrate into the emerging Russian administration. Similarly, in French West Africa in the early 1850s, the colonial government offered to pay for the hajj trips of select "friends of the colonial regime," as part of a broader effort to advertise the toleration of French colonial rule.

By the end of the nineteenth century, and for various reasons related to the desire to preserve empire and cultivate Muslim loyalties, all of the European powers began to sponsor the hajj. They subsidized travel between their colonies and Arabia during hajj season, opened foreign consulates along routes to Mecca,

On the left, pilgrims arrive in Jeddah by boat in 1957. On the right, pilgrims sit in the modern hajj terminal in Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport. (Sources: On right, photo by Fayez Nureldine)

and passed new laws to protect pilgrims from physical harm and financial scams.

By the eve of World War I, European empires were involved in virtually all aspects of the hajj. Most Muslims would have found it impossible to make the Meccan pilgrimage in this era without interacting with European officials.

In Jeddah, the Dutch had set up a multi-service "Hajj Bureau." The British ran a medical dispensary out of their consulate, run by the vice-consul, a Muslim doctor and British subject from India. And European doctors and nurses staffed the two main quarantine facilities set up to screen hajj pilgrims in El Tor (at the bottom of the Sinai peninsula) and on Kamaran Island (in the Red Sea).

By sponsoring the hajj, European colonial powers were not simply trying to control it or contain the problems it created as a mass, annual movement of people. Instead, they were seizing an opportunity created by imperial conquests to tap into and co-opt

the hajj, a global Islamic network, as a mechanism of imperial integration and expansion.

Through sponsorship, they sought to turn the hajj into an instrument of imperial integration. This was part of the broader process underway across European empires over the nineteenth century through which colonial governments institutionalized

Map showing the location of Mecca in Saudi Arabia (Source: Wikimedia)

Islam and Islamic practices to advance their own imperial agendas.

European involvement in the hajj shocked many Muslim observers, who did not expect to be greeted in Ottoman Arabia by Europeans. Abdürreşid Ibrahim, the pan-Islamic intellectual and activist from Russia, was surprised when he showed up at the Kamaran quarantine station in 1908 and was greeted at the door of the disinfection building by a Christian woman. "Aren't we in Ottoman territory?" his equally stunned travel companion asked him, to which he replied, "I don't know."

Europe and the Hajj, Lessons from the Past

In many ways, the hajj as we know it today bears little resemblance to its early twentieth-century counterpart. Airplanes long ago replaced sea and rail travel and transformed the itinerary of the hajj from a multi-site, months-long journey into a rapid, direct journey between home and Mecca.

A time traveler from 1900 would barely recognize Mecca: the Saudis have bulldozed Ottoman-era buildings and holy tombs around the city to make space for new shopping malls and luxury hotels. And today's hajj crowds number in the millions, not the hundreds of thousands.

And yet, in an interesting parallel, the hajj today has again become a European phenomenon, as a result of global events and processes connected to European imperialism. Post-colonial migrations since the mid-twentieth century, the result of various push and pull factors, have brought millions of Muslims from former colonies to the European continent.

At the same time, the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990s—hailed by many as the belated collapse of the last of the European empires—also freed millions of Muslims from state-mandated atheism and brought about a resurgence of Islam in Russia and surrounding former communist states.

Major European airports are now hubs along global hajj routes. In the days leading up the scheduled hajj rituals in Arabia, at airport departure gates in London, Berlin, Paris, and Moscow, crowds of Muslim pilgrims gather and pray before boarding flights bound for Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport.

Construction surrounding the Grand Mosque in Mecca, 2010 (Source: Wikimedia)

Map showing the percentage of the population that is Muslim in countries around the world (Source: Wikimedia)
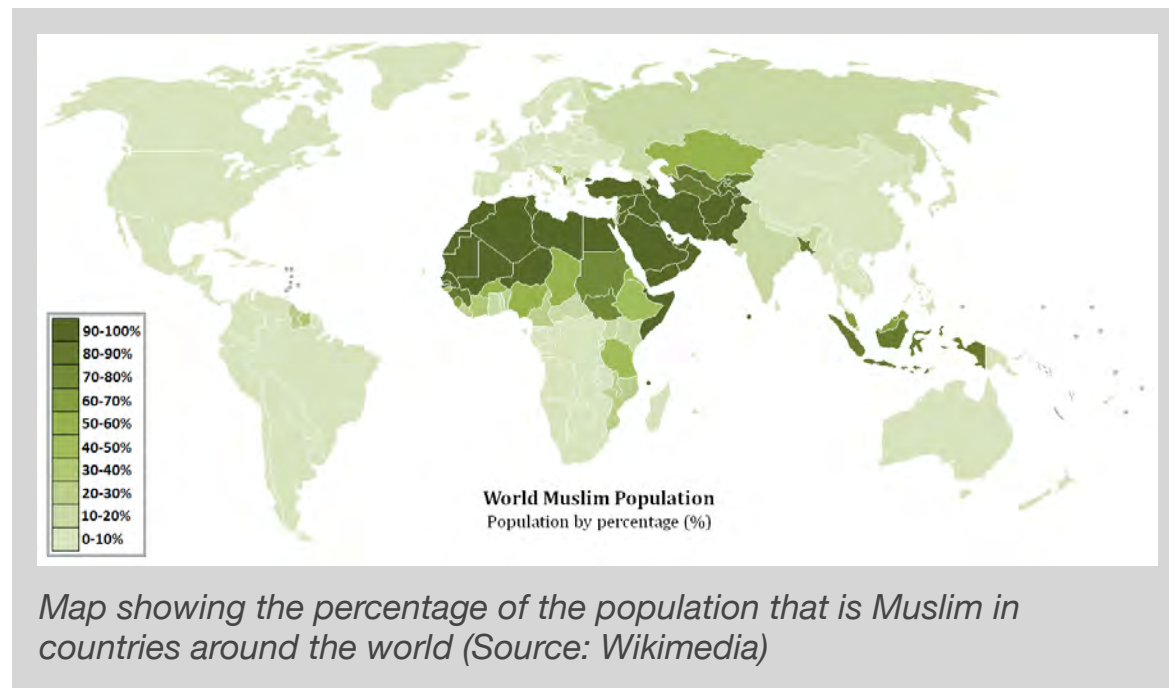
As today's European states grapple with their own inheritance of a hajj tradition and how best to manage it, history can offer lessons as well as cautionary tales. The history of how Europe's imperial powers embraced hajj patronage as part of their broader efforts to integrate Muslim populations in their empire has resonance today.

The case of the Russian Empire is perhaps most relevant to the situation of today's European states. For the British, Dutch, and French empires, the hajj was largely an external issue, located in far-away overseas colonies, and not a domestic matter. Russia was different. A land-based empire, Russia had large Muslim populations living inside its borders, and hajj routes that cut through its central Slavic-speaking lands and busy Black Sea ports, and so it had both internal and external interests in the hajj.

For Russia, then, the hajj was not a matter limited to faraway regions and populations, invisible at home and separate from domestic issues. Instead, it was a highly visible, mass, annual event that happened largely within the empire's borders, and was bound up with domestic issues such as state revenues, identity politics, and the integration of Russia's 20-million-strong Muslim population (about 15% of the empire's overall population in 1900). In the early twentieth century, Russia struggled to reconcile its historic identity as an Orthodox Christian empire with the reality of its large and increasingly mobile Muslim populations, whose loyalties, it feared, may have belonged to the neighboring Ottoman sultan, not the tsar.Many Russian officials wanted to restrict the hajj for many reasons. But how could they do this without appearing to intervene in Muslim practice and violate religious freedom? Conversely, how could they extend patronage to the hajj without upsetting the Russian Orthodox Church and losing its crucial institutional support for the regime?

Many of these same questions confront European officials, including in Russia, as they struggle to manage the hajj and accept it as part of their evolving national cultures. These are not so much new questions as old ones, rooted in Europe's colonial past and made urgent for the European powers during the first wave of globalization in the late nineteenth century.

By exploring Europe's overlooked, ambivalent, and complex role in the history of the hajj, we can begin to see that present-day discussions of Islam in Europe have a deeper history, and that perceptions about Muslims today are in many ways colored by stereotypes and prejudices refined in the late nineteenth century.

Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting with members of the country's Muslim religious leadership, 2002. (Source: Wikimedia)

For instance, many European colonial officials in the early 1900s feared Mecca was a center of clandestine, conspiratorial, and anti-colonial plotting. But no great anti-colonial revolt was ever plotted in Mecca. And firsthand accounts by more than one Pan-Islamic activist reveal how disappointed they were by hajj pilgrims' indifference to politics. Abdürreşid Ibrahim, a leading Pan-Islamic thinker and activist, lamented that he was unable to engage the simple, pious Muslims he met in Mecca in political discussion.

It remains to be seen how Europe will adapt to its new and growing role as a center of the global hajj. The context today is very different, and yet there are lessons to be drawn from history. The European embrace of hajj patronage was certainly opportunistic and imperialistic; the aim was to protect empire and, by accommodating Islam, subdue and integrate Muslim colonial subjects.

At the same time, there was a certain optimism to this policy that we should note: European officials did not simply fear Islam and its global dimensions, exemplified in the circular migration of Muslims between the colonies and Mecca. In the Russian case especially, there was a widespread belief that the Islamic inheritance of the hajj offered opportunities, not just dangers, and could be remade, not just suppressed, into a Russian tradition.

Today the hajj raises difficult questions for European nations that seek to reconcile national, secular identities with a need to respect the religious freedom of large and growing numbers of Muslim citizens, while also developing new strategies for integrating these citizens into the nation. ◆

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Building a New Silk Road? Central Asia in the New World Order

By Sebastien Peyrouse

Central Asia may be the most important part of the world we know the least about.

The five countries of the region—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—are not usually headline news. There is the occasional story about the ongoing problems of the disappearing Aral Sea or a review of Kazakhstan's charming, Cannes award-winning film Tulpan, but otherwise, most Westerners probably cannot distinguish one "stan" from another.

A marooned boat on what used to be the shore of the shrinking Aral Sea. After their 1991 independence, there was a guarded optimism surrounding the five countries of Central Asia. Today, despite the region's strategic and petroleum importance, the future of these new states appears beached by struggling economies, corruption, authoritarian politics, and the global drug trade. (Source: Author)

Certainly, the current intensive debate between Kyrgyzstan and the United States over the future of the American air base in Manas, just outside the capital of Bishkek, remains out of the spotlight (despite the importance of the base to U.S. activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan).

This obscurity does not match up with the region's global importance. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia has become an increasingly important pivot in international relations and economic development.

These states represent new and unintended threats as well as important possibilities. They are sites for a potential rise in radical Islam; for a freer circulation of drugs, conventional weapons, and nuclear materials; and for greater regional unrest, and border and ethnic conflicts. At the same time, they are lands of economic opportunity—especially in oil, gas, uranium, cotton, and other

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev with President George Bush, 2005 (Source: U.S. Government)

President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev (1990-Present) (Source: Wikipedia)

agricultural trade—and many promoters tout the idea of recreating the old Silk Road.

Most immediately, this region is crucial to the Obama administration's plans to deal with a revived war in Afghanistan, and with an increasingly volatile Pakistan. For their part, Europe, Russia, and China all want stability in the region, and both Russia and China are actively nurturing economic and diplomatic ties with the Central Asian countries.

Almost two decades after these five nations achieved independence, they can no longer remain unknown to us.

Central Asia: People and Places

Central Asia is a large, landlocked region, with fewer than 60 million people spread over a generally desert and mountainous terrain. For centuries, the famous Silk Road passed through Central Asia bringing goods between China and Europe. Those trading routes also brought Islam, and places like Bukhara became globally renowned centers of Islamic culture and learning.

However, with the great European maritime discoveries of the fifteenth century, overland trading caravans were increasingly eclipsed by boats. By the seventeenth century, the formerly illustrious and powerful Uzbek khanates had all but been reduced to distant peripheries of the expansive Russian, British, and Chinese empires.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, Central Asia had entered into the sphere of influence of Russia, which had become the main power in the region. The focus of Russian imperialism, like in other European colonies, was the exploitation of natural resources. Raw materials (especially cotton) were sent to the metropole; administrators and finished products were sent back.

Uzbekistan's leader Islam Karimov. (Source: Wikipedia)

1878 Political Cartoon showing Central Asia between the Great British Lion and the Russian Bear (Source: Public Domain)

Political map of Uzbekistan (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev in 2008 (Source: kremlin.ru)

Political Map of Central Asia (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

Russian domination only increased after the 1917 Revolution. For Central Asian societies, modernity arrived through the political and social experience of Soviet communism. The Soviet experiment involved massive investment in education and literacy (including the alphabetization of the major languages), opportunities for local elites to assume leadership positions as part of Soviet "affirmative action" campaigns, and the creation of the states we know today through the laying down of administrative borders for the republics.

The Soviet years also involved forced settlement of nomadic peoples, waves of ruthless destruction of official Islam, arrests and banishment as a tool of governance, economic relations that privileged Moscow not Central Asia, and an unending litany of ecological disasters.

Opium poppies in South Kyrgyzstan, 2004 (Source: author)

Kyrgyzstan President Kurmanbek Bakiyev (Source: Wikipedia)

Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon (Source: Wikipedia)

The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia

When the Central Asian states were thrust into independence in 1991, they felt abandoned by Moscow and the "Slav republics" (Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus). It was a generally unwanted independence, given to them in an unstable and largely unfavorable context. Their elites were ill-prepared, their economies dependent on Russia, and their borders complex.

Still, in the 1990s, there was much cause for optimism concerning the region's potential development.

Central Asia inherited many assets from the Soviet regime. Each state was equipped with a relatively well-developed industrial and/or agricultural sector (such as cotton in Uzbekistan)—even if the end of Moscow's subsidies for unprofitable factories put the local economies in a very difficult position.

The region also enjoyed literacy rates close to one hundred percent, as well as a relatively high level of education, particularly in the technical sector. The health system was also well developed and endemic diseases had generally been wiped out during the Soviet period. It was taken for granted that women were in the workforce, and child labor remained minimal.

Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan had a vast wealth of raw materials—gas and oil in particular, but also strategic minerals such as uranium. Many international investors looking to reduce their dependence on the politically unstable Middle East became very interested in the Caspian Sea petroleum resources.

Thus, immediately after independence, Central Asia managed to avoid the typical problems that afflict many less developed

Kyrgyzstan President Kurmanbek Bakiyev with then Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, 2006 (Source: US Government)

Political Map of Tajikistan (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

Former Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev (1990-2005) (Source: American Government)

A Merchant selling carpets in Tolkuchka, Turkmenistan, 2008 (Source: author)

countries. Most significantly, the Central Asian states (with the exception of Tajikistan from 1992-1997) have successfully managed to prevent their societies from sliding into civil war or violent interethnic clashes of the likes seen in the Caucasus [For more on recent violence in Georgia, see "Clash in the Caucasus"].

Finding Its Place in a Complex World

Upon independence, all five countries tried to free themselves from Russia's influence. They initially established relationships with states considered culturally similar, like Turkey and Iran, or with Islamic powers, like Pakistan and the Gulf countries.

But these ties did not last very long. Fearing danger from a burgeoning and uncontrolled Islam, the Central Asian authorities restricted their links with Arab countries as early as the mid-1990s. In addition, trade with Turkey turned out to be less profitable than the two parties had imagined in the heyday of their "renewing of ties" in 1991-1992. The economic structures of the

The main medresse in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, 2005 (Source: author)

The Pamir Mountains Tajikistan, 2004 (Source: author)

new states made it difficult for them to exit the Russian sphere of influence, and Moscow remained their primary partner in many sectors.

Indeed, Moscow has recently made a return to the region and is now considered a legitimate strategic and political ally. Even though Russian politicians at times speak with grand references to the imperial legacy, Russia's actual economic and security practices are doggedly pragmatic. Russia's ability to co-opt rather than coerce Central Asian elites, its political legitimacy, and its cultural values all comprise significant factors that work in favor of its continued dominance in Central Asia.

In the past few years, China has also gained significantly in importance in Central Asia and is now in a position to pose a threat to Russian preeminence, particularly on a commercial level. Perceived as the number one enemy at the time of independence, China is gradually winning sympathizers among the Central Asian political elites. A feeling of mistrust about Beijing's "hidden" objectives remains and there is no shortage of public critiques of the Chinese presence. Yet, many regional leaders can barely conceal their admiration for Beijing's dynamism.

Shortly after independence, most Central Asian states turned markedly toward the European Union and the United States. The U.S. and EU were keenly interested in the process of

Small businessmen in Tolkuchka, Turkmenistan, 2008 (Source: author)

An example of urban desertification in industrial areas, Zhanatas, Kazakhstan, 2004 (Source: author)

denuclearization and in the region's vast oil and gas resources. They were also happy to gain sway in a region formerly in Russia's sphere.

Nevertheless, economic relations remained relatively weak and cooperation gradually shifted to the military domain. This was particularly true after September 11, 2001 when the U.S. installed two bases in the region, one in Karshi in Uzbekistan and the other in Manas in Kyrgyzstan.

As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan drag on, however, the United States' influence in the region is waning. By 2005, Washington had become increasingly disenchanted with Uzbek authoritarian

Center of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2008 (Source: author)

New national pantheon-Somoni in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 2008 (Source: author)

Political Map of Kazakhstan (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

Chinese bazaar in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 2008 (Source: author)

policies. At the same time, under pressure from Moscow, Bishkek has demanded the closure of the last American base in the region (although negotiations continue). The European Union's strengthened presence since 2006-2007 has not been enough to provide western countries with any meaningful influence compared to that of Moscow and Beijing.

Political Power and Corruption

After that initial period of post-independence optimism, Central Asian nations have reverted to the worst aspects of one-party dictatorships.

Over the past few years, citizens in all five states have seen a reduction in their political freedoms. Opposition parties have either been placed in very difficult situations (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan) or are unable to exist (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). The media has also had limits placed on its freedom of expression. Reports of human rights abuses are widespread.
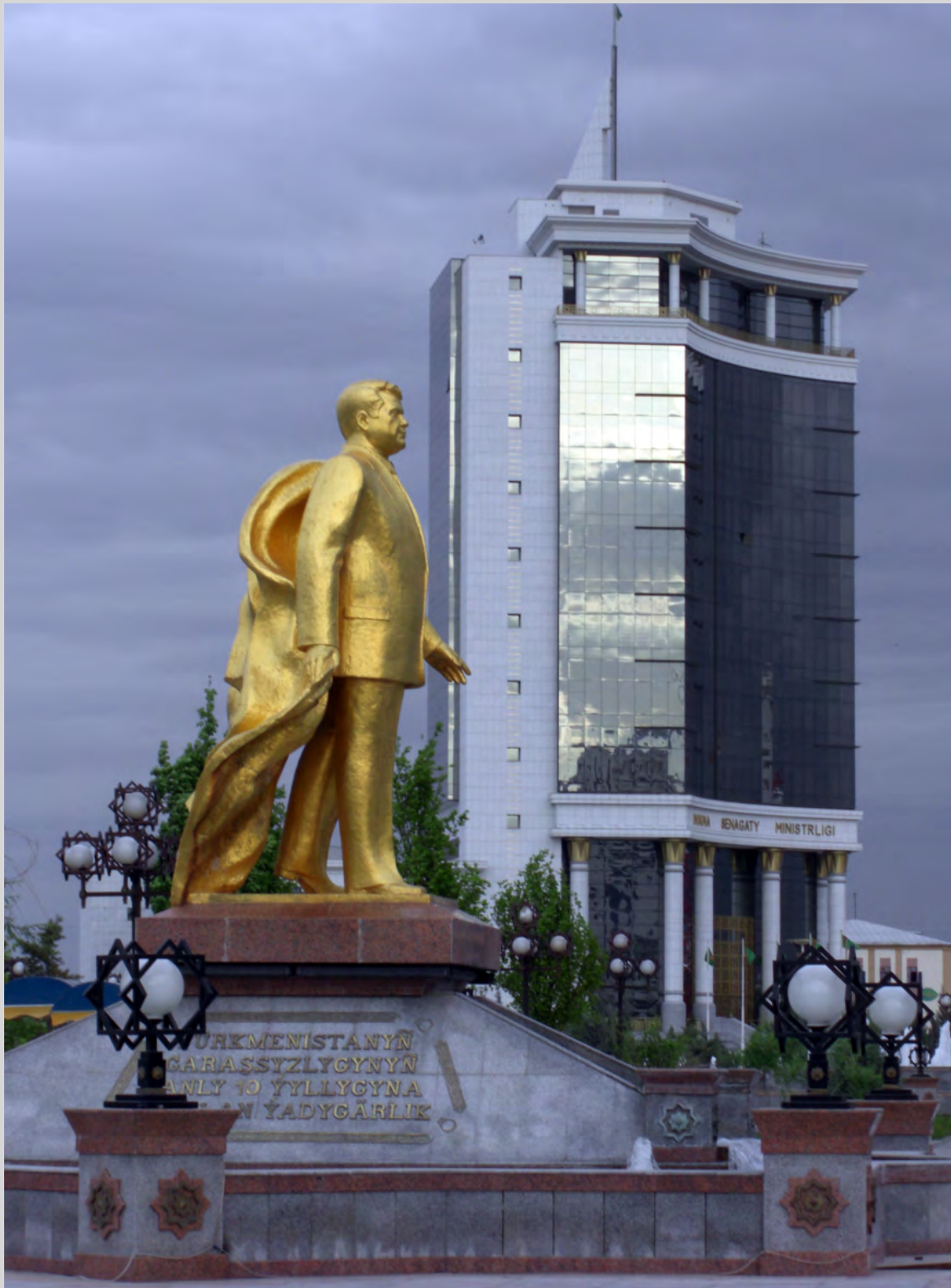
*Gold statue of former Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov
(Turkmenbashi) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan (Source: author)*

*The Neutrality Arch in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan features a gold-plated
statue of former President Niyazov which rotates 360 degrees every 24
hours. (Source: Wikipedia)*

New administrative city in Astana, Kazakhstan, 2008 (Source: author)

All the heads of state, many of whom were former first secretaries of the Communist Party of their respective republics, have used and abused the principle of the referendum to extend their presidential mandates.

Multi-party elections, when they occur, are largely devoid of any democratic meaning. The fairness of most elections held in the region since 1991 has been challenged by foreign observers, particularly by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Central Asian heads of states have also succeeded in securing power for their own families and favorites. All the presidents have personally misappropriated a part of the country's resources, and have charged foreign investors exorbitantly for the privilege of doing business.

This patronage-based system, deeply rooted in the daily reality of Central Asia, contributes to widespread corruption at all levels of society. All administrative posts have to be bought, not only in key fields such as justice and the police but also in small public services, education, agriculture, and industry. The population can be charged for even the smallest administrative procedure, and the financial demands of the police are particularly feared. As for teachers, they compensate their mediocre wages by bribing pupils at exam sessions.

Rural poverty in Khorezm, Uzbekistan, 2004 (Source: author)

Reghistan center of Samarkand, 2008 (Source: author)

Islam and Authoritarian Secularism

Once a locus of Islamic learning renowned the world over, the Central Asian states now struggle to find a place for religion—and Islam in particular—in their new political and social frameworks. Hoping to have their cake and eat it too, they have worked to construct a secular framework that expunges Soviet atheism, and privileges Islam while simultaneously keeping a grip on certain Islamic practices.

Almost immediately, Central Asian states were quick to restrict religious freedoms when confronted with religious movements that the regimes deem "dangerous" to social and political stability, "extremist," or "terrorist."

In particular, the last ten years have been marked by multiple attacks against so-called "Wahhabi" Islam, a derogatory name used to condemn any politicized movement or any Muslim community that refuses to submit to the "Spiritual Boards," the official institutions of religious control.

Ironically, the events of September 11, 2001 and the American-led international "war on terror" have made it easier for the ruling elites to justify greater repression of religion. Central Asian leaders

Political Map of Kyrgyzstan (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

have encouraged not only the international community but also their own populations—which are fearful of the possibility of civil war or the coming to power of religious extremists—to turn a blind eye to the regimes' abuses of power.

In Uzbekistan in particular, any form of opposition, even secular, has been liquidated on the pretext of religious fundamentalism. The authorities have officially banned external signs of religiosity, such as wearing a beard for men or a scarf for women. They also put pressure on state employees by forcing them not to join religious associations if they hope to be promoted.

Primary School Team in Samarkand, 2002 (Source: author)

Propaganda Poster in Tashkent, Uzbekistan: "It is the duty of every citizen to defend the Republic of Uzbekistan." (Source: author)

These harsh tactics have often not achieved the government's aims—and, quite the opposite, have served to link Islam with popular strivings for greater political participation and power.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov's government is locked in confrontation with Islamist parties. Uzbekistan, which was considered the most stable state in the region throughout the 1990s, has become a cauldron whose explosive potential is feared by everyone. With every act of opposition or political destabilization, state repression has increased.

Drug Trafficking and Narco-States

Until the end of the 1990s, Central Asia played only a transit role in the global drug trade, but this situation has changed. Today the

five states are also becoming sites of production, refining, and consumption.

If Central Asians aspire to reconstruct some new version of the trade networks of the old Silk Road, so far they have found

Drug seizures and arrests in Central Asia, 2008 (Source: United Nations Office of Drug and Crime)
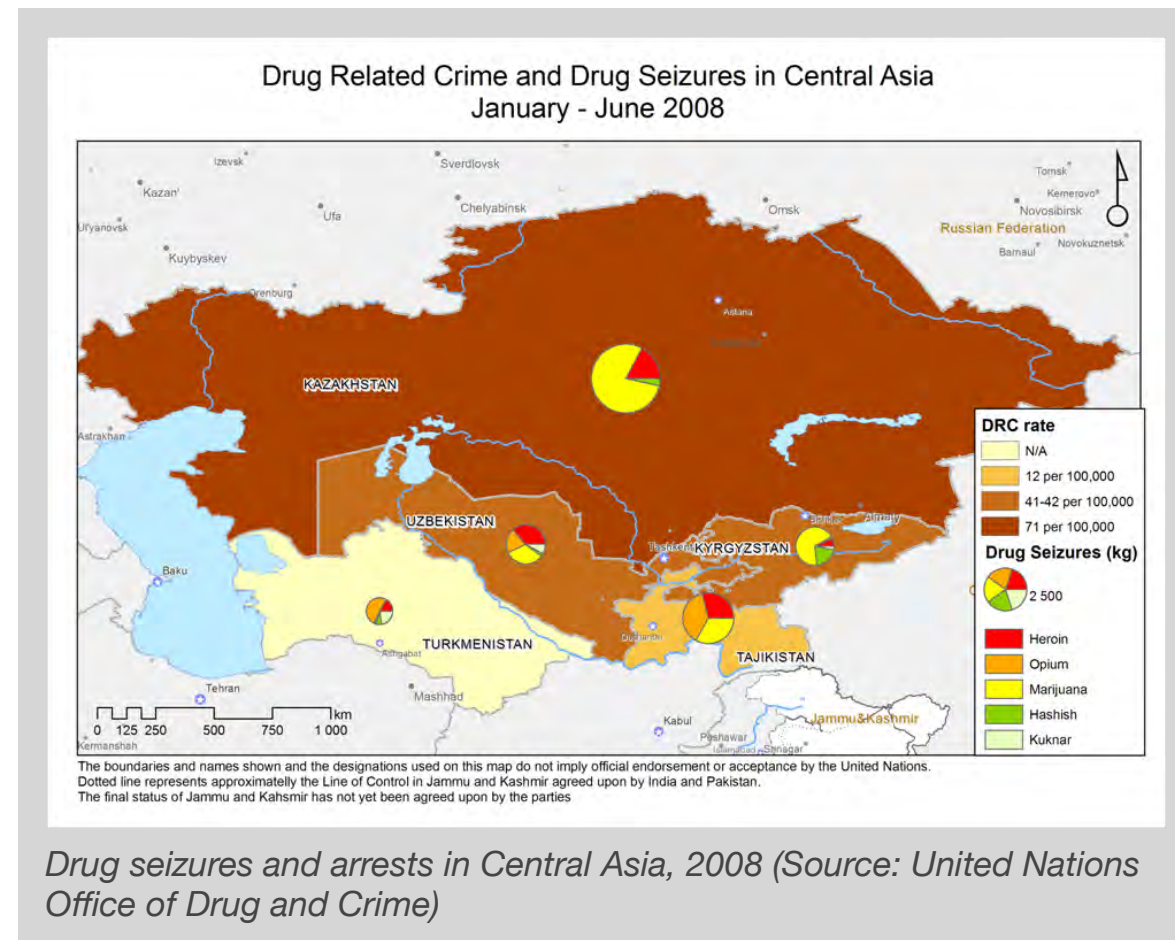
themselves caught instead in the middle of a "drug road." More than one third of the record-levels of opium grown in Afghanistan reaches Russia and Western Europe via one of the two major Central Asian roads.

Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and even more so Tajikistan can in fact be classified as "narco-states." State representatives, at each

Chart showing the energy consumption of Central Asia (Source: Source: I. Atamuradova, V. Yemelin, P. Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRID-Arenda, regional report for the UN Development Report)
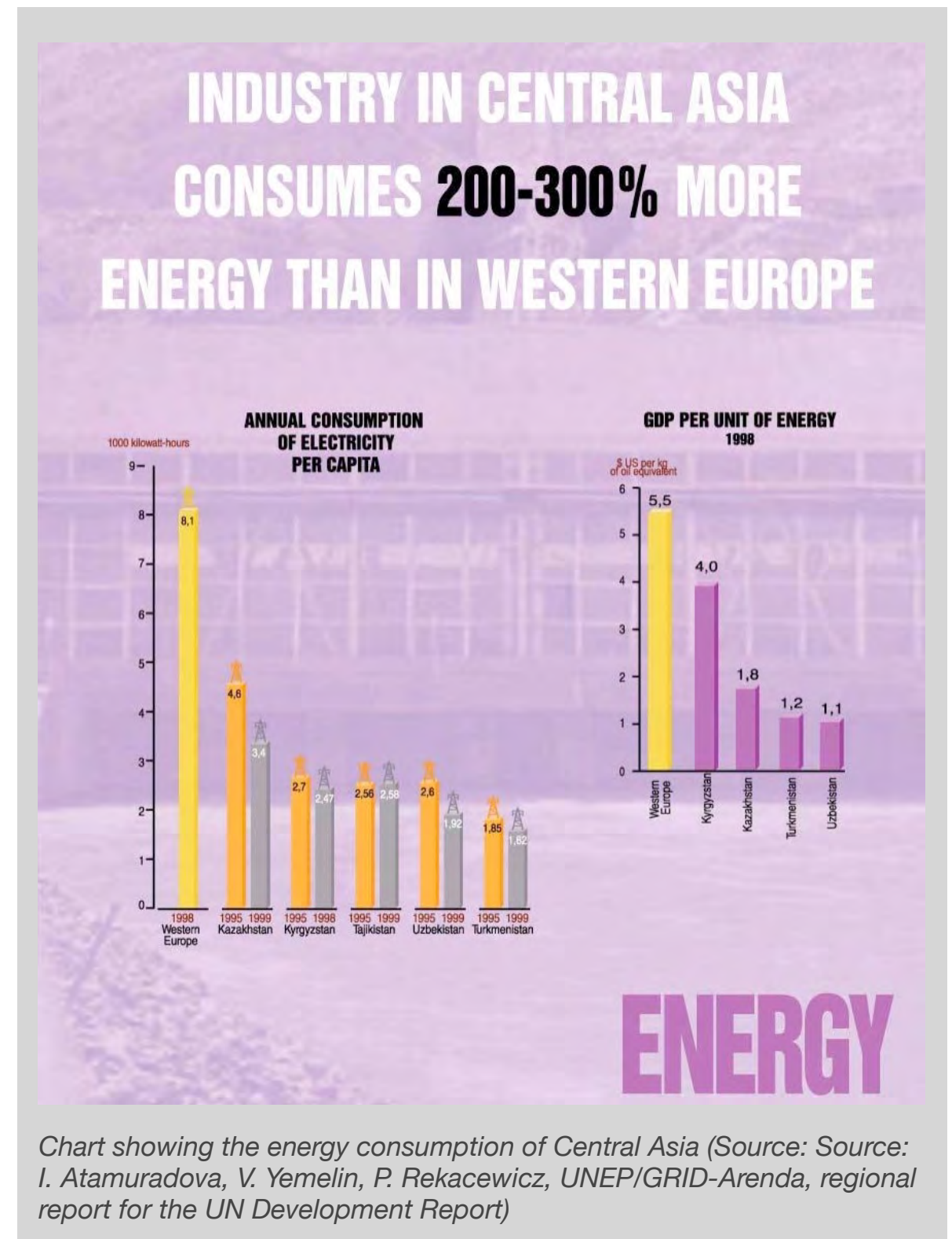
administrative level, from the directors of collective farms to regional authorities and the highest-ranking state officials (i.e. the presidential families), are directly involved in the drug trade. It has corrupted the entire state structure, in particular customs officers and the police corps.

The fact that both the political leadership and the oppositional Islamist circles receive considerable revenues from the drug trade makes it difficult for anyone to apply effective counter measures.

With the Soviet Union's policing authority gone, drugs that previously had been limited to traditional and local usage have

Map of Central Asia with borders representing different geographic definitions of Central Asia (Source: UNESCO)

Chart showing the different levels of poverty in Central Asia (Source: I. Atamuradova, V. Yemelin, P. Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRID-Arenda, regional report for the UN Development Report)

Political Map of Turkmenistan (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

tons of hashish, as well as more than 2,000 hectares of poppies capable of yielding 30 tons of opium per year. The four other states have followed suit.

Refining laboratories are sprouting up rapidly in Central Asia, making it possible to rake in huge profits prior to sending stocks to Russia and Europe. More than a hundred opium processing laboratories, each capable of producing twenty kilograms of heroin per day, are reportedly active.

The trade boom with China has played a major role in the development of these laboratories, since the Chinese chemical industry was the first to furnish the chemical products necessary for the transformation of opium into heroin, notably acetic anhydride.

Map showing the geographic break up of ethnicities in Central Asia (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)
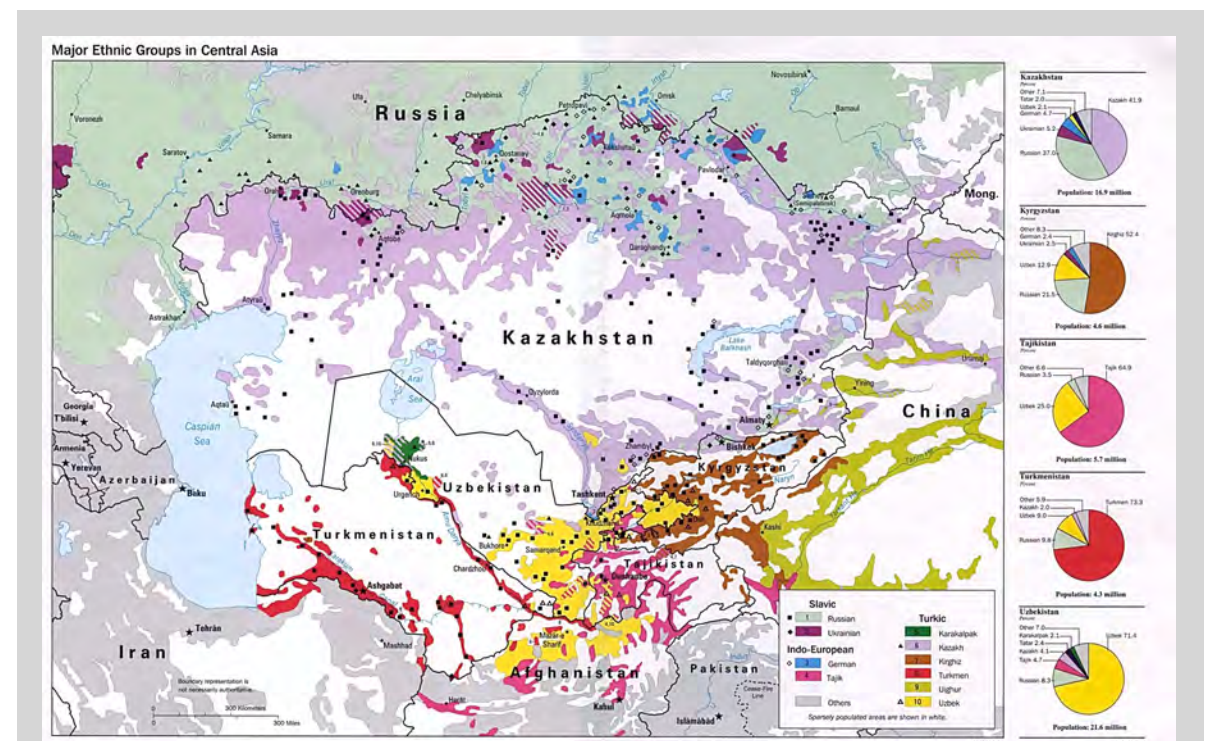
been commercialized as big business and controlled by organized criminal groups. These crime networks have developed into highly integrated commercial ventures, managing transport networks, chemical and pharmaceutical products, money laundering companies, and banking structures.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Chui valley is reported to grow close to 5 million tons of hemp, which is capable of producing nearly 6,000
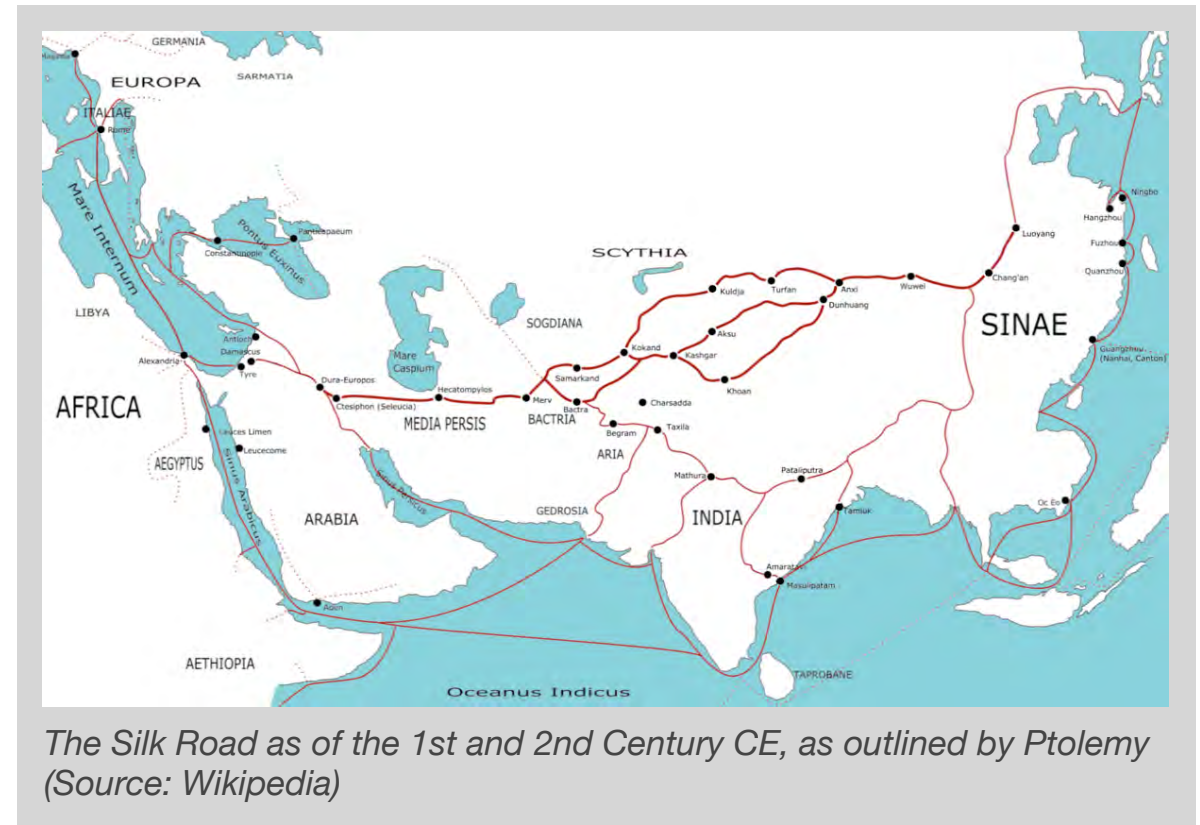
Central Asia has also become a zone of drug consumption. The few figures available indicate that urban jobless youth are not the only users, but that the scourge has also affected rural milieus and in dramatic proportions. This is particularly so in Turkmenistan, where over 100,000 people are affected, but also in the Uzbek part of the Fergana valley, in the south of Kyrgyzstan, and throughout practically all of Tajikistan.

The Poverty of Independence

Drug trafficking, corruption, and repressive politics have led predictably enough to the impoverishment of Central Asia's people.

The implementation of a market economy has been accompanied by a radical disengagement on the part of the state in key sectors

The Silk Road as of the 1st and 2nd Century CE, as outlined by Ptolemy (Source: Wikipedia)

Petty trade at the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border, 2003 (Source: author)

such as social protection, the health system, and public education. The result is massive pauperization that only Kazakhstan is currently in a position to address. Land redistribution efforts have also been generally ineffective at improving conditions in rural areas.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rank among the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per inhabitant of approximately USD$350 per year. According to UN figures, approximately 70 percent of Tajikistan's population lives below the poverty line on less than a dollar per day. Entire regions of people suffer malnutrition and even near-famine. In Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan this figure drops to 50 percent, but numerous zones remain on the verge of economic strangulation.

The 2008 world financial crisis has dramatically weakened these already fragile economies, and intensified general social discontent. In particular, the large numbers of Central Asian migrants (nearly three million Tajiks, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks) that go to work in Russia and Kazakhstan each year, mostly on construction worksites, returned to their countries of origin this year without the expected money.

In some sense, the Central Asian economies are still based on the colonial model: over-dependent on the export of natural resources. Kazakhstan is reliant on its oil, which represents more than 20 percent of its budget revenues and 58 percent of its exports; Turkmenistan on its gas, which accounts for 57 percent of its exports, while its cotton makes up 25 percent of state

Oil and gas reserves and pipelines in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea, 2001 (Source: Perry Castenada Map Library at the University of Texas)

revenues; and Uzbekistan on its cotton and its gold, which represent 17 and 25 percent of its exports, respectively.
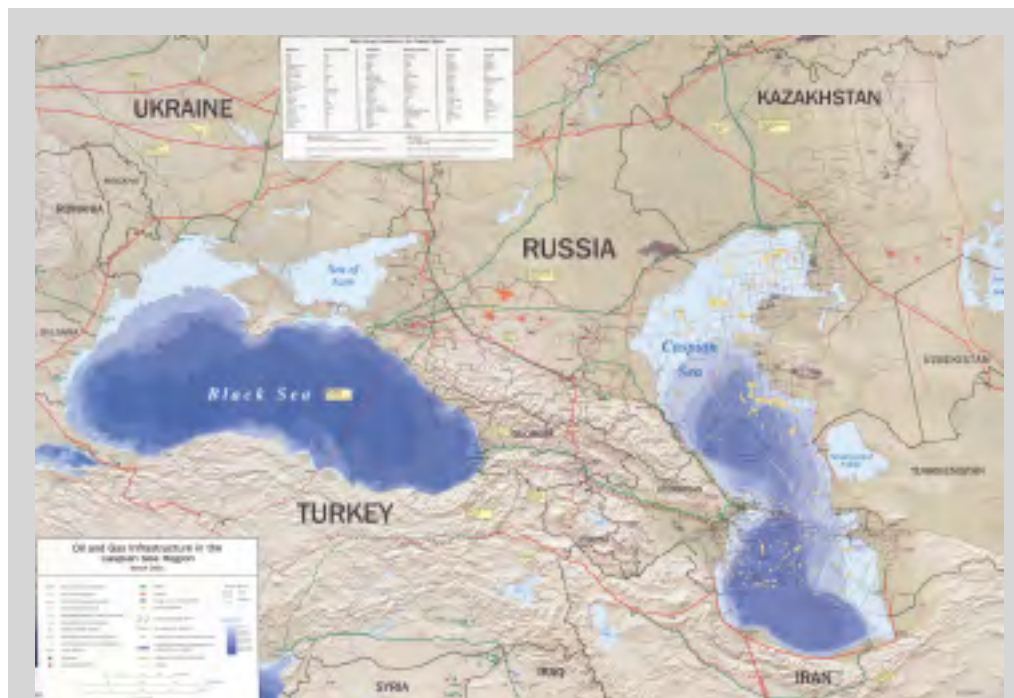
The two poorest states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have neither hydrocarbon reserves nor exportable agricultural products, and have to make do with a few mono-productions of precious metals. The region's development is thus subject to the ups and downs of world prices of oil, gas, metals and cotton.

The poverty is made all the worse by a widening gulf of social inequalities, weak administrative structures, and an absence of either real legal constraints or institutional mechanisms to ensure that economic decisions are made in the public interest.

Kazakhstan is the only state to have any real economic dynamism, primarily in oil production. Its rates of growth, which have reached between 5 and 8 percent a year since the beginning of the 2000s, have made it possible to half the number of persons living beneath the poverty line (the figure has lowered to about 20 percent) and a GDP per inhabitant estimated at US$9,400 in 2006.

A Central Asian Future

The great international fear of the 1990s that Central Asia would slide into a mafia-style economic system financed by drug traffic networks, and characterized by the connivance between the ruling political circles and clandestine economic structures—into which radical Islam is trying to insert itself—appears to have become reality.

Though the risks of civil war—which were real after the disappearance of the USSR—have seemingly faded, the political and economic achievements of the region remain far from outstanding. With the exception of Kazakhstan, the Central Asian states have been sliding steadily into economic crisis.

In addition, again with the sole exception of Kazakhstan, political stability ought not to be regarded as a certainty in the region, despite the authoritarian nature of the regimes.

Kyrgyzstan is probably the most troubling case. The Kyrgyz state only exercises limited authority over its territory, is divided into clans defending particular interests, and is undermined by the shadow economy, while in the country's south Islamists publicly preach to the Uzbek and Kyrgyz minorities, and some of the youth are rapidly radicalizing.

In Uzbekistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir—an international, pan-Islamic Sunni political party—is taking root by setting up clandestine structures that make up for the lack of state presence: it gives financial aid to pauperized rural milieus, to single mothers with children, for free education, and for the organization of political discussions to develop criticisms of the established authorities.

The domestic tribulations of the Central Asian states could reverberate throughout the entire region, foremost in Afghanistan, but they could also have a negative impact on Pakistan, Iran, Chinese Xinjiang, and Russia. The effect of "losing" Central Asia will likely be detrimental to world politics for years to come.

Though they seem remote and poverty-stricken, it has never been so urgent that we pay greater attention to these poorly understood places. ◆

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What They Left Behind: The Soviet Union in Afghanistan

By Sabauon Nasseri

(Published December 2014)

In late December 1979—thirty-five years ago this month—the Soviet army entered Afghanistan to stabilize the pro-Soviet Afghan government and offer support in its fight with rebel forces. After almost a decade of occupation, in February 1989—twenty-five years ago—the Soviet Union completed withdrawal of its combat forces across the Friendship Bridge from the Afghan city of Hairatan into Termez, Uzbekistan.

The last Soviet forces leave Afghanistan via Friendship Bridge in February of 1989. (Source: Pinterest)

The Soviet leadership's initial plan for a short intervention lasting six months turned into a long and bitter engagement because in the context of the Cold War, losing Afghanistan, in the words of the Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko, would mean a "sharp setback to our foreign policy."

As the United States haltingly finishes up its long presence in Afghanistan, there is much to learn from the Soviet experience

Prefabricated concrete residential complexes known as mikrorayons in Kabul with the Hindu Kush mountains in the background (Source: Wikipedia)

about the type of legacy that the U.S. will have on the country and its people. One of those legacies will surely be architectural. Though the Soviet Union departed Afghanistan 25 years ago, its decade-long presence left the country's capital, Kabul, with an abundance of yellow Soviet-made Volga cabs, a spate of new industrial enterprises, and an increase in the number of medical clinics, academic institutions, and urban transportation infrastructure.

It also left a rebuilt skyline.

Kabul's skyline, as seen here in 2010, is sure to be transformed once again since American and NATO intervention. (Source: photo by Robert Sanchez)

A six-story, Soviet-built mikrorayon in Kabul, 2010 (Photo by Michal Hvorecky). (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Today, the most visible remnants of the Soviet era in Kabul are the prefabricated concrete residential complexes known as mikrorayon (from the Russian). They stand alongside mud houses clinging atop mountains and the traditional brick and wood houses of the inner city. And they were designed as a means to use architecture—especially architectures of living spaces—to transform the social and cultural practices of Afghans to match Soviet visions of modernity.

Mikrorayon construction came in two waves: four-floor apartment buildings built beginning in the 1960s (when the Soviet Union began investing heavily in Afghanistan) and then six-story

buildings that grew up into the sky in the 1980s during the invasion.

Initial construction of the buildings in the 1960s in Kabul, which the American architect Ada Louise Huxtable (in a New York Times piece) fondly called "an architectural sputnik," took place in a time of relative peace. Inhabited not only by the elites and the growing (bureaucratic) middle-class but also by members of the working classes, these buildings were to be "a reflection of the new society" and "at the same time the mold in which that society was to be cast."

The Soviet modernist architect Anatole Kopp wrote that "new architecture is born not only of the experimental and inventive spirit of its creators, not only of technical advances but, above all, of the problems with which history suddenly confronts society." Kopp saw the Bolshevik Revolution as an event embodied in modernist architecture, but also facilitated and constructed by it. Similarly, throughout the Soviet occupation, Kabul was under construction and transformation, with the mikrorayon complex meant to serve as the reflection of a new society.

Later, in the late 1980s, a New York Times reporter described the building of the mikrorayons as the development of "a miniature Moscow that is the center of a separate and reclusive world occupied by thousands of Soviet civilians."

Soviet leaders expected that these developments would show the local population in Soviet-occupied Kabul that there was a

Stanikzai City is one such example of the new luxury development taking place. These are found 3km from downtown Kabul. (Source: Golden City Afghanistan)

positive side to accepting their rule. Of course, these modernization attempts were poor compensation, in the eyes of the majority of Afghans, for the havoc brought by the war. The war quickly confronted the residents of Kabul with unanticipated problems. If the apartment complexes started as signs of social change and progress, with the arrival of the Soviet military and the increased shelling of the city, they had to be adjusted to conditions of regress wrought by war.

Running water and electricity were only intermittently available and almost completely unavailable with the start of the civil war in 1989. Residents had to dig water wells or travel to other neighborhoods that contained them. Due to rocket shelling, windows had to be taped to prevent injury from glass shards, and basements came to function as (civilian) bunkers. Cheap, but not

always safe, traditional heating systems (or sandali stoves), sunlight, and gas or kerosene lanterns replaced electric equipment.

The U.S. architectural legacy will be quite different. Since American and NATO intervention, the Kabul skyline has gradually become dominated by an eclectic assortment of high rises, new shopping centers, and skyscrapers built by the country's super rich.

The new buildings are towering expressions of individual tastes, and stand as a stark contrast to the grey mikrorayon apartment buildings that were initially meant as "a public statement" to illustrate "the collective spirit" and to provide modern forms of housing to a large group of Kabul's urban dwellers.

Of the luxury high-rise buildings in Kabul, a South African urban planner, Jolyon Leslie, recently said, "looking at these awful buildings . . . kills me as an architect, but from an economic point of view it seems to be quite a vote of confidence."

If architecture is, in any way, indicative of individual tastes, then these buildings are certainly signs of individuality, in addition to economic growth. Instead of exemplifying the "transforming of mankind," Kabul's skyline now expresses a spirit of urban individualism, even if "awful" and indifferent to the masses making as little as $1 a day. ◆

A Postcard from Thessaloniki, Greece

By **Stacey E. Holden**

(Published January 2018)

The people of Thessaloniki, Greece embrace the enigmatic White Tower as their city's landmark. Seventy-five feet in diameter, the earth-colored structure of stone and mortar stands over 100 feet tall. The arrow slits in its cylindrical walls as well as the crenellation of the rooftop and its turret exemplify a medieval military fortification. Its image illustrates postcards, coffee mugs and magnets commemorating this relaxed, yet urbane port on the Aegean Sea.

Views of the White Tower in Thessaloniki, Greece (Source: author)

This fortress now presides over an ahistorical waterfront plaza that provides a gathering place for Thessalonians on sunny days. African and Greek traders lay down blankets brimming with black market sneakers or set up flimsy wagons with cheap jewelry. Young men hawking balloons walk by the tower, while children chase pigeons nearby. Parents sit on the stone walls that

The Rumelian Castle Complex in Istanbul, commissioned by Sultan Mehmed II in the mid-fifteenth century (Source: Author)

embrace landscaped plots of greenery accessorizing the plaza. Bikers whiz along a carefully defended bike lane, and joggers dodge the fisherman casting off into the Aegean Sea.

There is nothing in Thessaloniki that allows visitors to know that a cluster of cylindrical drums much like this landmark exists in the European suburbs of Istanbul, Turkey. Heading on a ferry west down the Bosphorus Straits, the Rumelian Castle Complex seems for all the world like the White Tower's lost cousins. The Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II commissioned them in the mid-fifteenth century in order to secure Istanbul and end the Byzantine Empire.

The Macedonian Regional Offices, a former residence where Sultan Abdulhamid II was under house arrest after being deposed in 1909. (Source: author)

The Ottoman Empire captured Thessaloniki in 1430 and ruled it until 1912. A young man from Istanbul tells me all Turkish students learn that this city was "the Ottoman door to Europe." As such, the port became one of the Ottoman Empire's principal trading centers.

The late Ottoman villa of Jacob Modiano and his son; the building now houses the Folklore and Ethnological Museum. (Source: author)

By the early-twentieth century, an imperial census counted 160,000 residents in Thessaloniki. Sephardic Jews were the most numerically and economically significant group. 61,500 residents were Jewish, and thirty-eight of the city's fifty-four trading companies belonged to Jewish merchants.

About twenty-eight percent of the city was Muslim, and their numbers were on a par with the 50,000 Balkan Christians who would eventually be counted as "Greek." This nationalist transformation occurred in 1912, when troops from Athens and

other areas of the south beat the Bulgarians to Thessaloniki by one day and effectively incorporated the city into Greece after the First Balkan War.

A fire destroyed much of the downtown area in 1917, but remnants of late-Ottoman elegance can still be detected through discerning inspection. The palatial home of Jacob Modiano and his son Ellie is a three-story structure of brick with at least a dozen windows. It now houses the Folklore and Ethnological Museum.

The residence where the deposed Sultan Abdulhamid II remained under house arrest is the Macedonian Regional Offices, and its broad staircase leads to an embellished three-story building behind a wrought iron gate. Now the headquarters of the Macedonia Regional Offices, you can walk inside it, peering out the windows, wondering if the authoritarian Abdulhamid II looked through the same as he dreamt of regaining his throne. A forced population exchange after the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1920) emptied the city of its Muslim residents. Still, there remain three buildings that once served as mosques. However, Greek nationalists tore down the distinctive minarets that defined an Ottoman skyline in the 1920s. The desacralized New Mosque became the Archaeological Museum, thus propagating an era that predates Ottoman history. And the Hamza Bey Mosque became a movie theatre that showed porn up until the 1980s.

The Jewish population, too, disappeared, and a commercial arcade in the old city center now houses a Jewish Museum.

The exterior of the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki (Source: author)

Broken headstones displayed in the foyer of the Jewish museum of Thessaloniki (Source: author)

Dating to the late-Ottoman era, the stately exterior belies the shock and dread one must process within the building.

The curators compel visitors to acknowledge antisemitism and the violence wrought by World War II. The German army and their Greek collaborators sent 43,850 Thessalonian Jews to concentration camps during World War II. They razed the Jewish cemetery to expand the city eastward. After desecrating at least 300,000 graves, they used the headstones to pave the streets of the new urban quarters. These broken headstones now line the foyer of the museum, forcing the visitor to begin and end his tour of the building with remembrances of death.

The former New Mosque, which is now the Archaeological Museum (left), and the Hamza Bey Mosque (right) (Source: Wikimedia)

A 1907 postcard showing the White Tower before the First Balkan War (Source: Wikipedia)

The urban fabric of Thessaloniki today puts forth a distorted narrative, one that largely elides the Ottoman past. A postcard dating to 1907 shows the White Tower as it was just before the First Balkan War. It is surrounded by signs of urban prosperity, cobbled streets, cable cars, street lights, and shop windows.

Thessalonians today often conceal relics of Ottoman prosperity within the nooks and crannies of their city, tacitly denying the dynamism brought by the rule of an Islamic power from the East. ◆

A Postcard from Jerusalem

By **Sara Halpern** and

Ella Israeli

"The Cardo," Jerusalem's ancient main street, runs north-south, typical of ancient Roman cities, and now traverses all areas claimed by Muslims, Christians and Jews. Since the 6th century CE, the Cardo has witnessed continuous trading among merchants and peddlers, and been used by travelers and residents as they walk between the Damascus and Zion Gates.

The New Testament not only narrates Jesus Christ's childhood in Jerusalem, but also describes his walk up a path now named Via Dolorosa (Way of Sorrow) for his crucifixion. Christians believe that
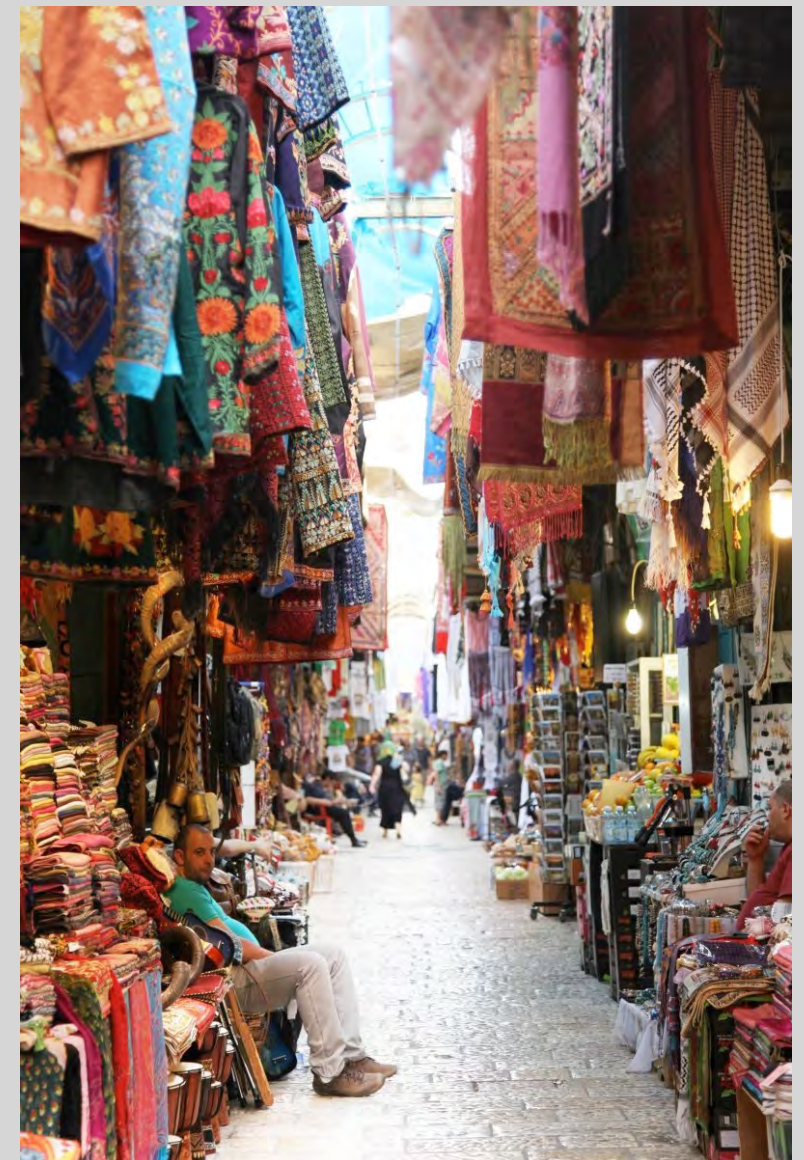
A shopkeeper sits outside his store in the Cardo waiting for tourists and residents to stop in. (Source: authors)

Christian pilgrims kneel to pray where it is said that the body of Jesus Christ was anointed before burial. (Source: authors)

his crucifixion and tomb lay near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Built in 335 CE and rebuilt in 1048 CE after a demolition by a Fatimid Caliphate ruler in 1009 CE, the church serves as one of many major pilgrimage points. The interior of the Church has been split as different denominations claimed worship spaces. Syrian, Ethiopian, and Armenian Christians, Roman Catholics, and Greek Orthodox now each have a section. Visitors can observe processions of monks, priests, nuns, and pilgrims of different denominations walk by one another mostly in peace, though with occasional conflict.

A narrow stairway leads to Dier Es-Sultan, a contentious site atop the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It now houses an Ethiopian monastery but it was not always this way. Ethiopians have lived in Jerusalem since 4th century CE. Then, in the 18th century, an Egyptian Coptic monk with his eight slaves came to take the site. In 1852, the Ottoman Empire made Dier Es-Sultan one of nine holy sites under the Status Quo, forcing Jews, Christians, and Muslims to share ownership of various sites with agreement to "leave things as they are." At that time, the Copts wielded more power on that site than the small Ethiopian population and claimed that site as theirs. In April 1970, when the Coptic monks departed the site for Easter worship, the Ethiopians staked a majority claim with the help of the Israeli government.

Ethiopian monks relax in the courtyard of Dier Es-Sultan monastery. (Source: authors)

Jewish women pay for their produce at the Shuk. (Source: authors)

A glimpse into the renovations at the First Station with tracks still preserved. (Source: authors)

Orthodox men pray at the Western Wall on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which marks both the wheat harvest and commemorates the day God gave the Torah to the Jews. (Source: authors)

An ultra-Orthodox mother pushes her child while an ultra-Orthodox man walks by on his phone on Mea Shearim Street. (Source: authors)

Residents of Silwan gather for a celebration at their community center. (Source: authors)

Elderly women sell produce near the Damascus Gate entrance. (Source: authors)

Nestled in the southwest quarter of the Old City, the Armenian Quarter has been inhabited since the 4th century when Armenians adopted Christianity and monks came to settle. Informally, they consider their quarter to be part of the larger Christian quarter but their language and culture separate them from their Latin, Greek, and Russian counterparts. Stores, schools, shops and other facets of Armenian life cluster around St. James Church.

The quarter also acknowledges more recent history: the genocide of 1915-1917. After the genocide, Jerusalem experienced an influx of Armenian refugees. Posters line its main street and Jerusalem-born residents tell their families' stories. One shopkeeper said that his grandfather came to Jerusalem as a toddler when his family fled from their homeland. Another

Shopkeeper and his shirts, including an Ohio State one! (Source: authors)
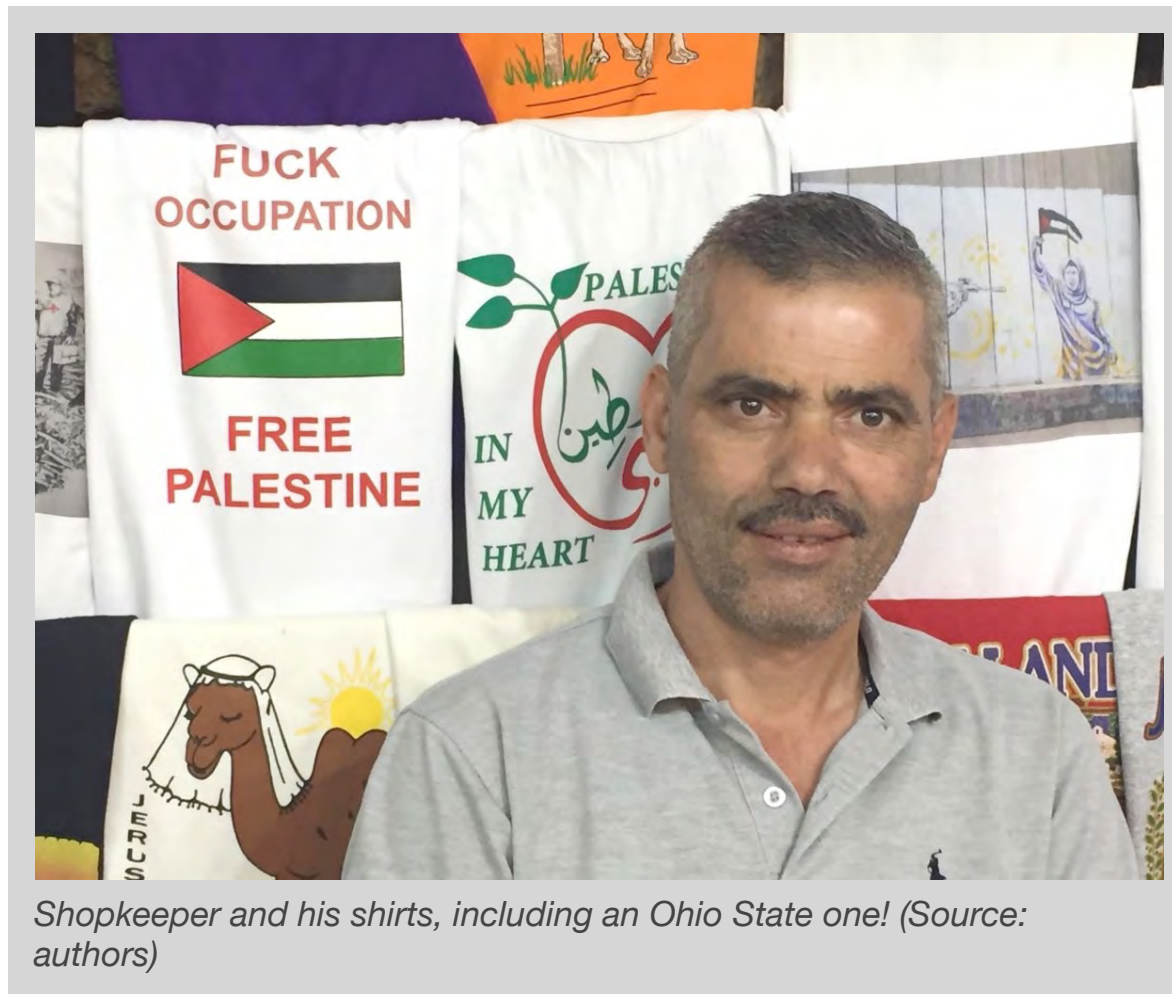
shopkeeper told of his family's arrival in the 1920s from western Armenia (now part of Turkey). Recently, this shopkeeper observed, Armenians have been emigrating not to Israel but to Australia, Canada, and elsewhere. With only 2,000 residents left in Jerusalem, he still hoped that Armenians will continue to claim their presence in this small quarter.

Through the Damascus Gate, one descends the steps with hordes of tourists and residents to the lively Muslim Quarter's bazaars, the Dome of the Rock, and the Al-Aqsa mosque. In the eyes of Islam, Prophet Muhammad journeyed to here and prayed

before ascending to heaven from a stone in the Dome of the Rock, making this site the third holiest in the world after Mecca and Medina.

Right where Via Dolorosa meets El-Wad ha-Gai Street sits a shop owned by a Palestinian. Standing by his favorite shirt, he explains that it has been a "challenge" economically and politically to live

Map of the Old City in Jerusalem (Source: Encyclopedia Brittanica)
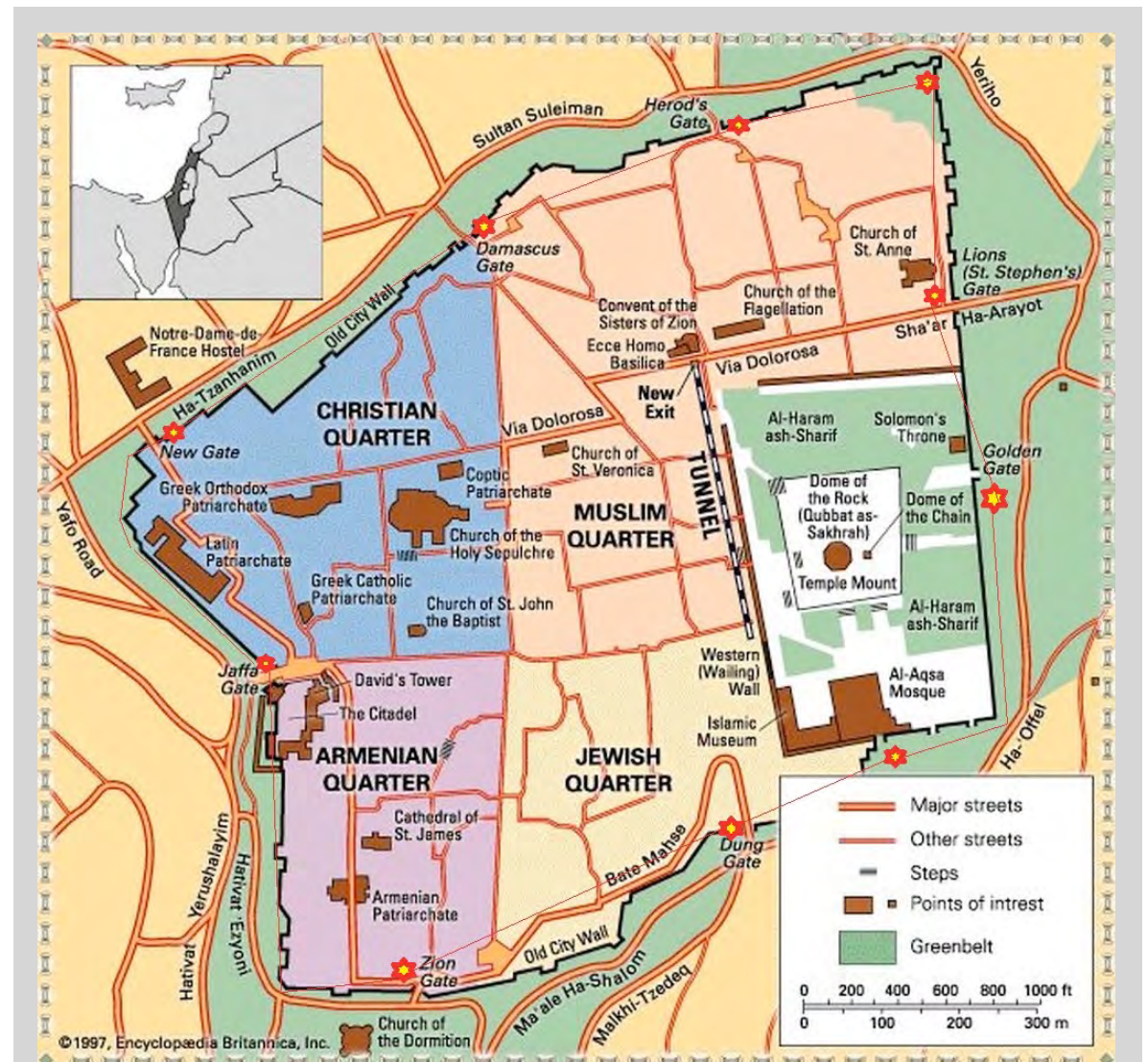
in Jerusalem because of his Palestinian identity. Yet, he stresses that living in Jerusalem for many Palestinians like him provides a reason to be alive: to see the return of his homeland to Palestinian hands. His family has lived in the Old City for generations: where else could they go if not Jerusalem, their home?

This is the same question the Palestinian residents of Silwan ask themselves in East Jerusalem. The community members gathered one evening for a celebration at their community center, which houses activities for kids ranging from art to computers. Giant plates of rice, salad, and meat were passed around. Children danced dabke, a Palestinian dance, for their guests. Music blared from one large speaker upstairs. "Our existence here is a form of resistance," Zuhair, the community center's founder said. From the upstairs of the center, you could see the walls of the City of David, an archeological site revered by Jews. This close proximity creates a threat to their neighborhood.

The Struggling Remnants and Revival of the Jewish Presence

Orthodox men pray at the Western Wall on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which marks both the wheat harvest and commemorates the day God gave the Torah to the Jews. Jews have lived in Jerusalem since the rule of King David in 10th century BCE. While many Jews fled Jerusalem after the Romans' destruction of the Second Temple in 72 CE, a small population remained in this quarter and survived under many occupations.

For Jews, the "Western Wall," one of many walls of the Temple Mount (Dome of the Rock) has served as a holy site for prayers. Muslims continue to control the property on the other side of the wall, including the Dome of the Rock.

A poster and the Armenian flag hang outside a restaurant to remind passersby of the Armenian genocide. (Source: authors)

Nestled one kilometer from the Old City sits the second oldest Jewish neighborhood, Mea Shearim. When the first settlers arrived here in 1874, they read Genesis 26:12 where Isaac reaped hundredfold and God blessed him. Today men dress in black frocks of the Polish nobility from the 16th century and women don dark, modest outfits. The residents strictly adhere to the laws of the Torah. Two young women responded "Because of Ha-Shem (God)" when asked why they chose to live here. Their community desires to be close to Mount of Olives, where the Torah proclaims that the Messiah will rise. These Jews hope that their chosen lifestyle will permit them to be among the first to greet the Messiah. Despite their cultural outlook, they can be found chatting away on their smartphones alongside secular Jews on the streets.

Further south from Mea Shearim is Jerusalem's first train station, built in 1892, now transformed into an entertainment space. On Shabbat, the holy day of rest in Judaism, secular Jews come to play and eat at one of several cafes, some of the few opened in the city on that day.

In the heart of West Jerusalem sits Machane Yehuda Market, also known as the shuk in Hebrew. Locals and tourists shop for produce, tea, spices meat, and baked goods and bright clothes, especially on Fridays, the day before Shabbat. Vendors yell bargains while yellow posters promote Chabad, an Orthodox movement, as people sample dried fruits, nuts, and halva, a sesame cake.

Like the Cardo in the Old City, the shuk has witnessed transformations. Founded in late 1800s by Arab merchants, the market expanded under the Ottomans. Then during the British Mandate (1917-1947) the authorities cleared the market and built permanent stalls and the market was named "Mehane Yehuda," a reference to its neighborhood. In the 1930s, Iraqi Jews began to sell produce there; this specific section of the market is now referred to as the Iraqi Market.

The shuk has not always witnessed peaceful gatherings: it suffered from two terrorist attacks, one in 1997 and another in 2002. As tourists shied away in fear, renovations arrived. Cafes and bars now sit alongside vendors, making the market still a wonderful place to people-watch, day and night. ◆

Iran Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power

Book review by Zeb Larson

(Published January 2015)

Arthur Schlesinger wrote The Imperial Presidency in 1973 in a climate of concern over the unchecked growth of presidential power. While many members of Congress placed restraints on the executive branch, there were conservative politicians who believed that the president had sole control over the foreign policy of the United States.

*by **Malcolm Byrne** (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2014)*

Indeed, Malcolm Byrnes believes that conflict helps explain the Iran-Contra scandal in part because President Reagan "was viscerally opposed to congressional attempts to limit the 'imperial presidency'" (xxi). Byrne, who is the Deputy Director for the National Research Archive, challenges the oft-accepted idea that Iran-Contra was a "policy dispute" rather than a criminal act, and that Reagan was unaware of what was going on. Virtually the

entire administration, from Vice-President George Bush to Secretary of State George Schultz to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger knew that their actions were illegal.

When Reagan was elected president in 1980, he and his advisors saw Moscow's influence on the rise in Latin America, particularly

FDN & ARDE Frente Sur Commandas in the Nueva Guinea zone of Southeast Nicaragua, 1987 (Source: Wikipedia)

in Nicaragua. However, Congress was not easily swayed to provide aid for the counter-revolutionary Contras. The Boland Amendment was passed to end any overt military U.S. support for the Contras, and by October of 1984 all forms of U.S. support to the Contras had been banned. This did not mean that the Reagan administration ended their support to the Contras, for whom "legal considerations seemed of little interest" (45). The administration then turned to Lt. Col. Oliver North. North is one of the most colorful characters in this narrative: deeply patriotic, fervently dedicated to Reagan, and with a "pronounced tendency to fabricate" (46). North was tasked with building a supply network for the Contras that could operate off the books.

U.S. relations with Iran were also at a nadir in the mid-1980s. The Reagan administration was desperate for an opening with the Iranian government, yet conventional diplomacy seemed untenable after American hostages were taken in Lebanon in 1984. These kidnappings struck an emotional chord with Reagan, who according to Byrne was determined to return the hostages at any cost (40).

Iran had its own priorities as it fought a grueling war with Iraq even as it was cut off from Western arms manufacturers. Israel emerged as one of Iran's unlikely allies and sought to sustain its war effort. Here, one of the shadier characters in this sordid drama emerged: Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian arms dealer and former agent of SAVAK, the Shah's secret police. Ghorbanifar approached the Israeli government in 1985 and claimed to represent a moderate faction of the Iranian government seeking

missiles for the war against Iraq. The Israelis then approached the United States to ask for assistance in delivering weapons. National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane approached Reagan about the deal, and Reagan replied that the Iranian "moderates" had to use their influence to return the American hostages.

Ghorbanifar's story was nonsense. The CIA had previously listed him as an unreliable source, which the Israelis and the NSC decided to ignore. Eventually, even Washington policymakers such as Robert McFarlane acknowledged that Ghorbanifar was an unrepentant liar, though only after the scandal had been fully played out.

From left to right: Caspar Weinberger, George Schultz, Edwin Meese, Don Regan, and President Ronald Reagan read notes before a telecast regarding arm sales to Iran on November 25, 1986. (Source: Gilder Lehrman)

Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North's (of the National Security Council) Mugshot, following his arrest (Source: Wikipedia)

These two disparate incidents were joined together when Oliver North suggested to the National Security Council that future arms deals happen directly through the United States and that a portion of the proceeds be used to fund the Contras. Though virtually all of this activity was illegal, the proposal received Reagan's approval. Administration officials focused on how to conceal the operation and protect themselves and the administration if events came to light (83).

All of this came tumbling down when a Nicaraguan soldier shot down a Contra resupply plane in October of 1986. The pilot admitted to be in the employ of the CIA. One month later, a Lebanese magazine published allegations about the arms-for-hostages deal, which the Iranian government confirmed. After North and other actors did their best to destroy documentary evidence that could have implicated Reagan, there followed the Tower Commission, a congressional inquiry, and the Office of the Independent Counsel. The Independent Counsel's convictions of administration officials were overturned by presidential pardon or by appellate courts.

Byrnes concludes by noting continuities between the Reagan administration and the second Bush administration. Dick Cheney figures into the background of this story as one of Reagan's few strong supporters on Capitol Hill. Cheney was part of a minority of Republican congressmen who dissented with the congressional inquiry. In a written minority opinion, he and others opined that the Iran-Contra dealings had been legal. Rather than limiting executive powers, the dissenters instead believed that congressional oversight over the executive needed to be lessened. This report continued to play a role in Cheney's thinking, as Byrne writes that "In later years, Cheney, while serving as vice president in the George W. Bush administration, cited the report as a blueprint for his thinking on presidential power" (304).

The play-by-play description of the arms deals and North's dealings with the Contras are livened up by the absurdities of the affair. In one telling, when Robert McFarlane went to Tehran in the hopes of negotiating with the Iranian "moderates" (who themselves had been duped about McFarlane's intentions), he brought a cake in the shape of a key. He hoped that the gift would help "unlock" U.S.-Iranian relations (195). Unsurprisingly, the gesture was lost on the baffled Iranian delegation. In another example, Reagan failed to read important briefings for the Williamsburg economic summit and instead stayed home to watch The Sound of Music. Without these moments, the minutiae presented here can feel overwhelming to a general reader.

One of the implicit questions in this book is why Iran-Contra didn't generate the anger that the Watergate Scandal had. Byrne addresses a number of reasons why the events diverged: "Reagan was much more popular personally than Nixon, the political landscape had changed substantially as a result of declining economic conditions…and Congress had largely shed its reformist posture of the 1970s" (279). Byrne's account would be fuller if the failure of Senate Democrats factored into the narrative more strongly.

Deception is one of the powerful themes of this book. Virtually all of the major actors lie or distort the truth as it suited their needs. The NSC put up with Oliver North's lies and fabrications, Ghorbanifar lied to the Americans and Iranians, and Reagan was at the very least disingenuous about trading arms for hostages. People didn't just lie to each other, for that matter, but they lied to themselves as well. It turns out that hearing only what you want to hear is dangerous in foreign policy.

Byrne's book is all the more instructive if one keeps in mind the foreign policy of the last two presidential administrations. The power of the president to conduct foreign policy without oversight has become the norm in the United States. The imperial presidency was in place long before Reagan, but its current proponents all got their start dealing with Iran-Contra. ♦

The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire

Book review by

Mason Watson

(Published August 2015)

On October 29, 1914, the Goeben and Breslau—a pair of battleships that together constituted the Mediterranean division of the German Imperial Navy—opened fire on a Russian gunboat and a mine-laying vessel. The sinking of two Russian ships by a German task force under the command of a German admiral improbably marked the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War. Within a week, the Ottomans were at war with three great powers (and the vast empires under their control). The continued survival of the Ottoman Empire, which in

*by **Eugene Rogan** (New York: Basic Books, 2015)*

1914 had stood for over six-hundred years, hinged on the military fortunes of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

The general outline of the First World War in the Middle East is relatively well-known. Movie-going audiences are familiar with the dashing exploits of T. E. Lawrence as depicted in the Academy Award winning film, Lawrence of Arabia. Numerous historical works have been written which examine events from the perspective of the victorious powers.

Relatively few historians, however, have attempted to depict the course of the Great War from the Ottoman perspective. The reasons for this, as Eugene Rogan suggests in The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, are fairly simple. In the first place, according to Rogan, very few western historians possess the language skills necessary to read the wide range of available primary sources. Furthermore, the Turkish government severely restricts access to the materials held in the Turkish Military and Strategic Studies Archive in Ankara. The Fall of the Ottomans seeks to remedy this imbalance to some degree, providing a synthesis of recently published secondary research on the Ottoman involvement in the First World War. Drawing on a

range of recent works, as well as a narrow selection of archival sources, Rogan's study is intended to help "restore the Ottoman front to its rightful place in the history of both the Great War and the modern Middle East" (xvii).

The Ottoman Empire's earliest campaigns in the First World War, as Rogan explains, met with unqualified disaster. An attempted encirclement of Russian forces in the Caucasus Mountains (in the depths of winter)—organized by the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha—failed spectacularly. Likewise, an ambitious bid to

Dominion soldiers on the beach of ANZAC Cove, one of the principle Entente landing sites on the Gallipoli peninsula

seize the Suez Canal from the British achieved very little. By the spring of 1915, the Ottoman Empire had fallen on the defensive.

It soon faced an existential threat in the form of the Anglo-French operations in the Dardanelles, the narrow strait dividing the Aegean Sea from the Sea of Marmara (and hence from the Ottoman capital of Constantinople). The Gallipoli campaign, as it became known, was one of the largest amphibious operations ever attempted. British and French soldiers, together with sizable contingents from the British Dominions, landed on the Gallipoli peninsula with the goal of overcoming the Turkish defenses blocking naval access to the Black Sea.

Rather than quickly driving the Ottoman defenders from their positions, the allied force quickly became mired in trench warfare that was comparable to the fighting on the Western Front. Repeated attacks failed to dislodge the Ottoman defenders, and the allied force was ultimately compelled to withdraw. Shortly after the conclusion of the Gallipoli campaign, the Ottoman Empire achieved even greater military success in Mesopotamia. Ottoman forces isolated and destroyed an exhausted and overextended Anglo-Indian division under the command of Major-General Charles Townshend. The surrender of 13,000 soldiers at the Iraqi city of Kut was unprecedented in British history. The hopes that allied strategists once entertained of knocking the Ottoman Empire out of the war with a single decisive blow seemed increasingly unrealistic.

General Edmund Allenby entering Jerusalem on December 11, 1917. Allenby dismounted as a sign of respect for the holy city. (Source: Wikipedia)

Faced with a string of major setbacks, the British and their allies were willing to explore a variety of unorthodox strategies aimed at undermining the Ottoman Empire. Foremost among these was support for the nascent Arab Revolt, which was headed by the rebellious Sharif of Mecca, Hussein bin Ali. Tapping into Arab nationalist dissatisfaction with Turkish rule, the British hoped to undermine the foundation of Ottoman power in the Middle East. They furthermore hoped to reduce the religious authority of the Ottoman Sultan, who – as the holder of the Sunni Caliphate – had called for a worldwide jihad against the Entente powers. By aligning themselves with the Sharif of Mecca—a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad—British leaders believed that they could placate their empire's vast Muslim population and defuse the threat of a religious violence.

British support for the Arab Revolt proved remarkably successful. Advised by a small contingent of British Army officers, including the archaeologist-turned-intelligence-agent T. E. Lawrence, Hussein and his followers successfully seized many of the major cities in the Hejaz—Arabia's Red Sea coast. At the same time, the British undertook large-scale operations aimed at removing the Ottoman threat to the Suez Canal. Working in concert, the British and the Arabs ejected the Ottomans from Jerusalem and its environs by the end of 1917. Ottoman counterattacks achieved little. British forces under General Edmund Allenby, together with the Arab rebels commanded by Emir Faysal (Hussein's son and the future king of Iraq), stormed northwards, occupying Damascus in October. The Ottoman government collapsed and sued for peace shortly thereafter.

Rogan's account of Ottoman experience in the First World War is competently written and—for the most part—comprehensive. Rogan's narrative is peppered with eyewitness accounts taken from a range of published memoirs written by soldiers on both sides of the conflict, although there is very little material taken directly from archival sources. His work follows a strictly chronological narrative; there is little in the way of sustained analysis or argumentation. The few arguments that Rogan does advance nevertheless merit attention.

In the first place, Rogan suggests (reasonably) that the Ottomans were by no means predestined to fight in the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. On the contrary, the Ottoman government proposed to enter into an alliance with Russia even after the outbreak of fighting in Europe in early August. The Young Turks, while misguided in many respects, apparently recognized the Ottoman Empire's very real military, economic and industrial limitations, and sought to enter the war only under the most favorable circumstances.

With regard to the British conduct of the war, Rogan argues that Winston Churchill has often received a too-large share of the blame for the Gallipoli fiasco. The responsibility for the failure of the Dardanelles expedition, in Rogan's estimation, rests mainly on the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener. While there is some truth to this, it is nevertheless undeniable that the Admiralty must bear a large share of the blame for what was originally envisioned as a purely naval campaign.

Enver (center) and Wilhelm (second from left) survey the battlefield of Gallipoli in 1917. The Ottoman Empire may have been a net drain on the German war effort.

Finally, students of modern Middle Eastern history may be interested to learn that Sykes-Picot agreement, according to which the Ottoman Empire's Arab territories were divided into British and French spheres of influence, did not create the borders of the modern Middle East. Indeed, as Rogan argues, "the map as drawn by Sykes and Picot bears no resemblance to the Middle East today" (286).

Although Rogan's narrative is generally excellent, the author nevertheless misses several opportunities to deal with comparatively neglected (yet still important) elements of the

history of the Ottoman Empire's role in the First World War. Most notably, Rogan devotes remarkably little attention to the Russo-Turkish conflict in the Caucasus, despite the fact that this theater was undoubtedly central to the Ottoman war effort.. Rogan instead emphasizes campaigns that have already received substantial attention in English-language historiography, including the Dardanelles expedition and the Arab Revolt. Additionally, Rogan provides few details concerning the Ottoman Empire's relations with its European allies. The Ottoman Empire's place within the Central Powers is itself a fascinating topic that has too often been overlooked.

While The Fall of the Ottomans does not include every possible detail about an (admittedly vast) topic, it nevertheless provides a useful and extremely readable guide to the course of the First World War in the Middle East. Rogan's volume serves as an admirable starting point for anyone seeking to better understand the Ottoman Empire's participation in the First World War. ◆

Between the East and the West

Book review by

Rapp Crook

(Published August 2009)

Though Eurasia is the world's largest unified landmass, Eurasian history has traditionally been marked by its disunity. Historians have written histories of the Greeks and Romans, and of the Arabians, Indians, and Chinese, but were the stories of these neighboring regions and peoples as disconnected as history books imply?

In Empires of the Silk Road, Christopher Beckwith unites the history of the peoples of the world's largest landmass into a

by **Christopher I. Beckwith**
(Princeton University Press 2009)
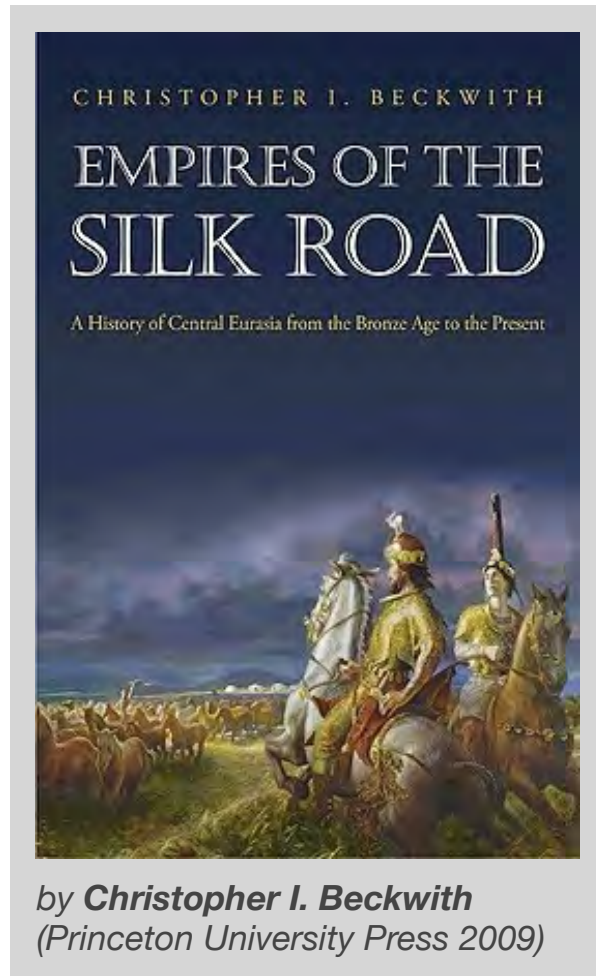
remarkable history of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present.

His goals for the book are twofold. First, he aims "to write a realistic, objective view of the history of Central Eurasia and Central Eurasians" (xii). He martials impressive research in primary sources to provide a picture of Central Eurasians from within. Secondly, Beckwith hopes the inevitable gaps in his wide-ranging history will inspire young historians into the spacious field of Central Eurasian history.

Throughout Empires of the Silk Road, Beckwith argues against the popular notion of Central Eurasians as barbarian nomads. He argues that "successful warlike behavior is what defines a hero throughout history in every Eurasian society" (353), but the victors' historians have created a false dichotomy between the heroic victors and the barbaric losers. Beckwith portrays the humanity of Central Eurasians throughout history—"[they] were urban and rural, strong and weak, ... good, bad, and everything in between, exactly as all other known people on earth" (355).

In the absence of textual and material sources, Beckwith employs linguistic analysis to describe the first Central Eurasian

diaspora, arguing nearly all the civilizations around Central Eurasia were conquered by Indo-European chariot warriors of Central Eurasia. He then unifies these geographically separated peoples with the "Central Eurasian Cultural Complex." The crucial element of the Complex is the ruler and his comitatus, a group of warriors sworn to their leader. In exchange for their loyalty, the ruler lavishly rewarded them. Maintaining such a system required significant resources, which were most efficiently obtained through trade and tribute. Central Eurasians were willing to wage war to maintain access to markets and keep tribute payments flowing.

Beckwith conceptualizes Central Eurasian history in terms of the continental and periphery. He sketches a historical pattern in which a Central Eurasian people build a trade-based empire whose economic and cultural achievements attract the attention of regional powers on the periphery. When the regional powers expand inward, they disrupt the trade networks that maintain comitatus-based societies; having conquered Eurasia, the regional powers gradually decline themselves, and the cycle repeats.

Chronologically, Beckwith divides his narrative into four regional empire periods. The first period begins when the Chinese and the Romans each invaded the prosperous Scythian steppe empire in the first millennium. This aggressive foreign policy destabilized Silk Road commerce, which may have contributed to the decline of the Roman and Chinese empires. In the subsequent "Great Wandering of Peoples," Germanic Huns moved westward into the declining Roman empire. Beckwith describes medieval feudalism, characterized by the special status of the warrior class and trading cities, as another form of the Central Eurasian Cultural Complex.

Beckwith argues for a much broader understanding of the Silk Road than the ancient superhighway conjured up in the popular imagination. He sees it as "the entire Central Eurasian economy, or socioeconomic-political-cultural system" (264). During the early Middle Ages, the Türk brought most of Central Asia under their rule and reestablished the Silk Road, thus reconnecting the regional empires on the periphery. In this period, the Eurasian states developed political protocol, adopted world religions, and supported the spread of literacy and learning. Beckwith sees Central Eurasia as the nexus of this vibrant intellectual activity. But as the empires on the periphery grew during this Second Regional Empire Period, Central Eurasia increasingly became a battleground. This period, too, closed with rebellions and dynastic changes in the regional empires.

In the late thirteenth century, Chinggis Khan again reunited the steppe and expanded Central Eurasia to Russia, Persia, Tibet, and China, making the Mongol Empire the world's first superpower. In the Pax Mongolica that followed, Central Eurasia flourished commercially and culturally. After the devastating Black Death of the fourteenth century, the Timurids restored Central Asia to the cultural and political center of Eurasia.

The Third Regional Empire Period begins with the voyages of discovery during the Renaissance. Continental and littoral trade networks had long coexisted, but after de Gama's circumnavigation of southern Africa, the littoral system developed into an independent economic sphere and the continental Silk Road system gradually declined. As the coastal European powers developed port cities in South, Southeast, and East Asia, wealth and power shifted to the Littoral System. Maritime powers jostled for control of markets around the globe, as the periphery again dominated Central Eurasia. Beckwith considers World War I as a war in which "the Littoral powers—England, France, and their allies in Europe and America, and Japan in Asia—defeated and punished the continental powers..." (290). (This interpretation seems overly simplistic given the complex genesis of the war, and the fact that the eastern front pitted against each other two continental powers.) After both world wars, political revolutions proliferated; millions of Central Eurasians suffered under Soviet and Chinese regimes.

To Beckwith, the conquest of Central Eurasia in the modern period has been calamitous because of the inherent destructiveness of Modernism, which he describes as a "permanent revolution", a "continuous rejection of the traditional or immediately preceding political, social, artistic, and intellectual order" (289). Modernism unquestionably replaced traditional political systems with "democratic" variants, and it also destroyed traditional art forms: "Central Eurasian culture suffered the most of any region of the world from the devastation of Modernism in the twentieth century" (288).

The Fourth Regional Empire Period begins at the end of the twentieth century, with the collapse of the USSR, and the rise of the European Union as a new peripheral power. In this new period of Central Eurasian history, Beckwith hopes the new Central Asian states will recover economically and culturally, and eventually "create an enlightened, liberal confederation like the European Union" (313).

In Empires of the Silk Road, Beckwith writes about Central Eurasia with the love of a man who has spent over thirty years studying his subject. His clear writing and helpful system of notes make this book especially appealing to both general and academic audiences. He is at his best describing the Central Eurasian Cultural Complex and its manifestations across time and space, but his wide-ranging critique of Modernism fails to consider the benefits of modernity, such as health and communication technologies. One also wishes he had outlined a more realistic vision for the development and recovery of Central Eurasia. But who is to predict the future of Central Eurasia? In any case, Beckwith is to be thanked for his fresh look at world history, and one can only hope that it will indeed attract more interest in his field. ◆

Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge

Book review by

Mary Sitzenstatter

(Published February 2007)

Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge is an important book. Its author, Roxanne L. Euben treads easily between historical periods, and languages. Her command of her own discipline, political theory, and other disciplines, including history and literature, is remarkable. Yet Euben's most important and most impressive undertaking is her deft analysis of relationships, both real and imagined, between Islam and the so-called West. Contemporary political discourse, according to Euben, locates the "West" as knowledgeable and cosmopolitan, and Islam as
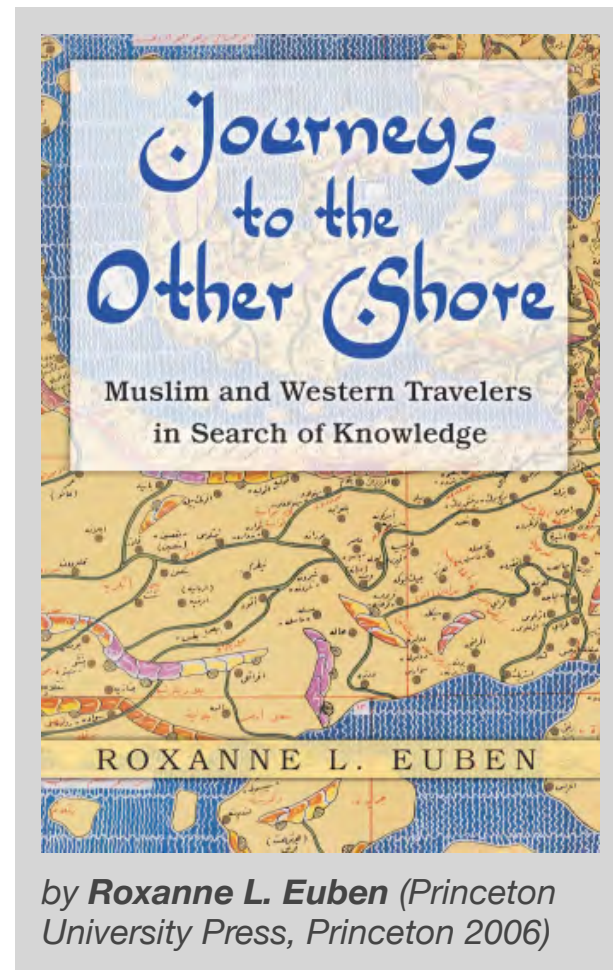
*by **Roxanne L. Euben** (Princeton University Press, Princeton 2006)*

the opposite of cosmopolitan – a discourse whose only travels take place in the form of violent jihads. Journeys to the Other Shore, then, displaces the contemporary political narratives by focusing on the genre of Islamic travel writing and by arguing, persuasively, that travel and cosmopolitanism have informed not only Western, but also Islamic forms of theorizing and knowledge production throughout history.

At the beginning of the text, Euben is careful to point out that a dichotomy between the "West" and "Islam" is quite problematic. To write of a monolithic West as much contemporary political discourse does, erases regional, religious, racial, and ethnic differences within the West. Euben also complicates the idea of a singular Islam and instead explains that Islam emerges in multiple contexts, geographic regions, and is practiced differently in varying historical periods. Because of this Euben argues that to speak of a singular Islam obliterates the diversity of various Muslim communities in varying historical and geographic contexts. Ultimately, within Journeys to the Other Shore Roxanne Euben writes against what she calls the "master signifier" of "Islam versus the West." She instead argues that Islam and the West are not diametrically opposed – cosmopolitan versus jihadist – but instead both terms emerge in

multiple contexts and contain much more complexity than is usually articulated within political politics.

Journeys to the Other Shore is a direct response to the growing body of literature on Western travels to the non-West. In recent years, several works have emerged that document how "Western" travels to the "non-West" impacted the creation of a Western identity, propelled the process of Empire building, and aided in the production of knowledge about both Western selves and non-Western others. Euben responds to this growing literature in Journeys to the Other Shore by pointing out that travel to other regions was not limited to Westerners; Muslims frequently engaged in the process of travel and, during that process, also created knowledge about both themselves and others. Yet Euben insists that her recuperation of Muslim travel narratives is not merely an act of pluralization; instead, within Journeys, she argues that her engagement with Islamic travel writings is "part of a wider effort to recuperate a more capacious understanding of political theory than one defined in terms of a parochial mapping of Western answers to fixed questions posed by a pantheon of (almost exclusively) Euro-American philosophy" (10).

In Journeys to the Other Shore Euben not only grapples with relationships between Islam and the West, but she also explains how political theory is, itself, a comparative enterprise. In her previous works, Euben makes the case for the comparative study of political theory. Political theory is, to Euben, an inherently comparative enterprise and she argues that theorizing "involves

examining and making explicit the assumptions and commitments that underlie everyday actions, a practice on which no time, culture, or institution has monopoly" (10). Thus because theorizing involves making explicit the conditions that surround what Euben calls "everyday actions," theorizing is not an exclusively Western construct – despite the fact that political theory is considered by many to be an exclusively Western enterprise.

To illustrate the comparative nature of political theorizations, Euben offers an analysis of "traditional" Western political theory with the Islamic travel writing, particularly the rihla, a genre of Islamic travel narratives that document travels in pursuit of knowledge. Euben examines the ways in which both traditional political theory and Islamic travel narratives produce knowledge about selves and others comparatively. She also explains how travel writings, and travel itself, are both acts of theorizing, theorizing that creates representations not only of racial, religious, ethnic, regional, and gendered differences, but also of commonalities between various manifestations of Islam and, also, various manifestations of what Euben calls the West.

Journeys to the Other Shore is organized conceptually and while Euben sometimes explores connections between texts from similar historical periods, she also offers comparisons across epochs. In Chapter Three, for example, she looks at the similarities and differences between Herodotus's Histories and the rihla of the famous fourteenth-century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuna. Euben also looks at texts from similar periods. Within

Chapter Four, "of Journeys" she documents how Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America and the rihla of Rifa a Rafi al-Tahtawi, Takhlis al-Ibriz ila Talkhis Bariz (The Extraction of Gold from a Distillation of Paris, 1834), both exemplify travel in the search of "practical" knowledge. Euben's organizational approach makes sense, but at times leaves one to wonder how a broader attention to historical context – politics, economic, and social life – would impact Euben's arguments and enhance the text as a whole.

Journeys to the Other Shore, while interesting and innovative, is written in a way that will appeal to specialists, and not a general audience. At times her language is convoluted and her arguments are unclear. Yet this one small critique. What makes Journeys so important is its analysis of relationships between Islam and the West, an undertaking that is all too urgent in this contemporary moment. ◆

Islamic Imperialism: A History

Book review by

Leif Torkelsen

(Published by December 2006)

Many scholars tend to see the West acting upon indigenous people in other parts of the world, without paying much attention to the agency of those people themselves. Efraim Karsh attempts to counter-act this trend with this book. It is a serious attempt to understand Middle Eastern geopolitics from the perspective of the inhabitants, through an analysis of the role of Islam within the region's political culture. The author's thesis is that an appreciation of the millenarian imperatives of Islam is essential to understand the geopolitical dynamic of the region, as well as the region's relationship with the larger world. The result is a compelling, albeit incomplete,

by **Efraim Karsh** (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006)
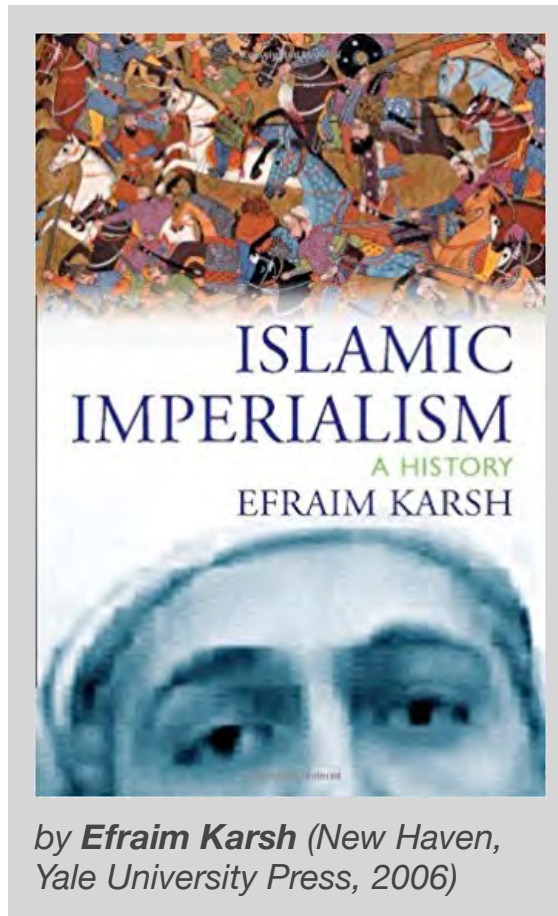
portrait of politics in a region of long-standing strategic importance.

Of the major world religions, three have been distinguished by ambitious proselytizing: Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. All of these religions also periodically augmented their missionary agenda with military conquest and the rise of Islam is intimately connected with military and spiritual conquest. Mohammed himself served as a religious, political and military leader. This experience, Karsh argues, served to distinguish Islam from all other major religions in its imperialistic attitudes, as only Islam has its genesis in armed conflict.

With the conquest of Arabia, the armies of Islam swept forth and established the vast, but short-lived, Umayyad caliphate. For Karsh, the establishment of the new caliphate was an unabashedly imperialist venture, "in which Islam provided a moral sanction and a unifying battle cry rather than a driving force." (22) Karsh argues that the Umayyads' policy of religious toleration originated from selfish motives, as their empire was run strictly for the benefit of the Arab conquerors who were more interested in tribute than spreading the new faith.

Even subject peoples who converted to Islam were relegated to the status of second-class citizens, known as Mawali. So jealously guarded were the privileges of the new Arab elite, and so at odds with the egalitarian aspects of Islamic theology, that they eventually provoked a violent reaction from the Mawali, who overthrew the Umayyad caliphate and replaced it with the Abbasids. However, this victory unleashed centrifugal forces that were to rend the political landscape of the Middle East until the rise of the Ottoman Turks.

In the book, Karsh identifies a handful of archetypal Islamic leaders. These archetypal leaders are distinguished by their conscious and skillful manipulation of Islamic political culture. This political culture is schizophrenic in nature, characterized by a dichotomous blend of pan-Islamic unity and acute regional identities. Traversing the two concepts remains the high wire act of Middle Eastern politics. In this context, the modern nation-state functions as a dilapidated halfway house between the two antipodes of Islamic political culture.

The language of Islamic expansionism subsequently provided the rationale for the last of the great Islamic empire-builders, the Ottomans. By the early 16th century, they had unified much of the Islamic world and had acquired the title of caliph. However, they ultimately succumbed to the intrinsic centrifugal forces of the region, becoming the "Sick Man of Europe" by the 19th century. However, Karsh argues vehemently against portraying the declining Ottoman Empire as a victim. Instead, he describes a clever and aggressive policy by the sultans to manipulate the Western powers to Ottoman advantage.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire restored the Arabs to political dominance in the Middle East. While much has been made of the "betrayal" of the Arabs at Versailles, the full extent of their territorial demands was extreme. However, it is in this context, Karsh argues, that one must understand the Arab rejection of the Jewish right to statehood. The competing territorial claims of the Zionists were being recognized by the Western powers just as the pan-Arabist claims were being rejected. Zionism was, in effect, a direct challenge to the Arabs' territorial ambitions. Accordingly, the rejection of the Jewish state on principle has consistently been of greater concern to Arab governments than the actual welfare of the Palestinian Arabs.

For Karsh, the archetypal modern Arab leader was Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser skillfully blended the competing demands of Egyptian nationalism and pan-Arabism. Egypt was portrayed as the savior of the Arab world, while other Arab countries were castigated as artificial "imperialist stooges" of the West. He attempted to supplant the religious aspect of regional political culture with its secular twin, socialism. The formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958, a nominal political union between Egypt and Syria, was Nasser's high-water mark.

There are three significant events in recent Middle Eastern history, according to Karsh, which represent the dawn of a new era in pan-Islamicism. The first was the triumph of radical Islam in Iran in 1979. The second was the demise of pan-Arab secularism with the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War. The third event was the failure of the Oslo peace accords. For Karsh, the Oslo agreement is perhaps most symbolic of the relationship

between the West and the Islamic world. Arafat's speeches before, during and after the peace made it abundantly clear that he had no intention of honoring any peace with Israel. However, Western leaders chose to ignore this, preferring to cling to their own idealized vision of diplomacy. For the West, the Palestinian issue is a "root cause" of the Middle East's problems, whereas it is merely one symptom of the larger struggle between Islam and non-believers to most Arab observers.

In a certain sense, Karsh's thesis presents very little that is new. Nonetheless, that should not distract from the elegant simplicity and clarity of Karsh's argument. The problem with Karsh's book is that its evidentiary base is simply too narrow to sustain his thesis. Karsh overwhelmingly relies on diplomatic history to make its case without presenting a more thorough investigation of Islamic theology, its "honor culture," or an explanation of the failure of secular thought in the Islamic world.

Karsh's book is timely, and it represents a valuable addition to our understanding of the Islamic world. It provides a succinct model of Islamic political culture in its geopolitical context. Most importantly, however, the book restores agency to the peoples of the Middle East. Contrary to popular belief, non-Western peoples are not simply an inert mass, responding only to external pressures from the rapacious West. Instead, they are active participants in forging their own political destinies. In this vein, Karsh persuasively argues that the see-saw of Middle Eastern politics has tilted decisively towards a very aggressive pan-Islamicism. ◆

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