

The Sharpened Stick

The Future of American-Russo-Sino Relations

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Executive Summary

- It once looked like the world would be in continual chaos as the power of the United States waned due to its ongoing war against Osama Bin Laden, and Al-Qaeda.
- However since Bin Laden's death many new threats have emerged both national, and transnational. Not the least of these is ISIS, Russia, and China, among others.
- With the American Economy at the strongest it has ever been and no end in sight I think that it's important to take a step back from all of this prosperity and focus on the geopolitical implications of the growth of what I like to refer to as second tier Super Powers or regional Hegemony's, namely Russia, and China.
- Russia intends on building up its military capacity rapidly despite the fact that sanctions and low crude oil prices have taken a hold of their economy.

- *Currently, there is a huge defense buildup that aims to spend \$716 billion between now and 2020 to make the Russian armed forces a competitive high-tech armed force, with 70 percent of its weapons being modern (whatever that category means to Moscow).*

- However development is lagging terribly behind all advanced economies and a lot of middle income countries (MIC's).

- When Russia and China signed an economic agreement earlier this year which basically stipulated oil to china for Russian rubles it was before the U.S., and E.U. had applied sanctions in response to Russia's illegal war in the Ukraine, and before the Russian separatist downed flight MH17 over Ukrainian airspace. That disaster is what ultimately led to the sanctions from the E.U. and U.S. being applied.

- Russia has neo-imperial ambitions that include but are not limited to Russian dominance of the energy markets.

- An equally contentious area of conflict derives from the fact that Russia inherited a gas pipeline infrastructure that transports gas to Europe across territories that are now independent states, mainly Ukraine and Belarus.

- As Gazprom got locked into pricing conflicts with such transit states (such as Ukraine), it rapidly discovered that its own highly lucrative export to the European Union could be held hostage. Deliveries of gas to Ukraine could, for example, not be shut down without also shutting down deliveries to EU member states.

- The conclusion that the transit states must be sidelined was done by building bypass pipelines such as the Nord Stream, which already transports gas directly from Vyborg in Russia to Greifswald in Germany, and the South Stream, which is to transport gas from the Caspian Basin via the Black Sea to south-eastern Europe.
- The primary goal is to exert pre-dominant influence over the foreign and security policies of immediate neighbors so they will either remain neutral or support Russia's international agenda.
- Russia needs to accept that the environment that they operate in is not the same as the one the tsars or even the soviet autocrats maneuvered in.
- Russia now needs a price of somewhere between \$110 and \$130 per barrel of oil to balance its budget.
- If the price of oil were to drop to \$80 per barrel The (Russian) Reserve Fund would last one year.
- In the Soviet era Russia at least had an achievement gap with the rest of the world including China however the Soviet Union's highly uneven achievements in education, science, and technology are being dissipated, and it will be exceptionally difficult to reverse the decline.
- The Chinese have overtaken Germany and Japan to rank second to the United States in publishing articles in international peer-reviewed scientific journals.

- The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is ascendant in much of Asia, and Africa.
- China imported approximately 40 percent of its oil in 2005.
- By 2020, China is projected to have 120 million private cars and to import at least 60 percent of its oil.
- China's oil demand will reach 14.2 million bpd by 2025.
- Economic ties between Russia and China have undeniably played a major role in strengthening cooperation between the two, but there is an increasing ideological element to Sino-Russian relations.
- The crossroads of the global oil trade lay principally in a tiny strip of water called the Persian Gulf.
- Action should be taken before a crisis breaks out in the region that would disrupt global oil supplies and place a heavy burden not just on the U.S. economy but the global economy as a whole. The options are few.
- When OBL died he took with him the expertise and wherewithal of a hardened battlefield soldier. He also took with him the propensity to learn from the enemy and react accordingly.
- Fighting insurgent groups such as the LRA, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab in Africa here and now is a good thing.

- Webster's defines the Doha Development Agenda as a "round of trade talks aimed at helping developing countries whose exportable goods are heavily concentrated among agricultural products develop their international trade."
- Free Market reforms affect the world throughout not just the participating countries.
- Trade barriers in the developing world are substantial so removing them could have a cumulative effect.
- "Insecurity linked to armed conflict remains one of the greatest obstacles to human development. It is both a cause and consequence of mass poverty."
- The following are a couple of positive things which I think came out of the agreement and that are likely to prevent the manufacture of nuclear weapons by the Islamic State of Iran.
- The reconfiguration of the IR-40 Heavy Water Production Plant (HWPP)
- Various parts of other plants are to be stored in Hall B of the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant under IAEA continuous monitoring.
- Most sanctions are equipped with a snapback mechanism for 15 years which doesn't require a U.N. vote.

- A Robust and fair system for logging complaints and settling unresolved issues:
- Iran will have the ability, once the implementation period has begun, and the requisite sanctions have been lifted, to be able to participate in all facets of the world economy including purchasing commercial western airplanes, and banking in Europe.
- The U.S. and E.U. countries will participate with Iran on a raft of nuclear related R&D. Also Iranians will now be able to study nuclear science in the west including the United States.
- Iran will no longer, under threat of sanction, has the ability to acquire software used for nuclear weapons construction.
- It would seem that by Russia's recent incursion into Syria, an order to prop up President Bashar al-Assad the United States options have dwindled.
- The idea that Russia has somehow limited the amount of options for the U.S. and its coalition is somewhat fallacious.
- If a cold war is truly beginning to develop between the United States and Russia, then it seems to me that it would prudent to expect the worst case scenario, as far as Russian intentions are concerned.

- The threat of nuclear war coming from North Korea, or a belligerent China is real and we must do all we can to protect ourselves from such an attack.
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- But we must also work to deploy tactical and strategic conventional military assets in order to balance Russia's significant influence, through coercion in Europe.
- As for the situation in Syria with regard to our allies and vetted militias we must not stand idly by while Russia continues to bomb them.
- The Free Syrian Army no matter how able and well equipped they are simply cannot win the war in Syria on their own.
- With respect to Russia, never before has there been so much agreement between the U.S. and the European Union, and Europe more broadly that Russia in Europe is no longer acceptable.
- When Kim Jong-Un came to power I knew that at that very moment we were going to be dealing with a completely new ball of wax when it came to North East Asia. The approach I recommended was one of engagement and conciliation. And indeed basketball diplomacy has paid some dividends however the specter of a nuclear North Korea (DPRK) led by an unknown thirty something hags over the region.
- The "second track" talks show if there are no deeds to back up the words then any effort on anybody's side is bound to fall flat.

- America must stand strong against possible aggression from all parties named, response to crises on periphery more important than at first observed, response to events crucial, must regain global respect for America, leaving the big wars for the rest while we prepare for the inevitable big test for our country.

- Do not let others dictate American narrative, be prepared for parts of the world to be hostile to the U.S. for the long term, prepare for war but don't initiate it.

- So long as U.S. maintains moral high ground domino effect is obsolete.

Abstract

In this a seminal work for Kevin Miller he takes us through the ends and outs of the coming rise of some of the most powerful nations on the planet, namely the United States, Russia, and China, among others. This tour de force is meant to examine the interplay between the world powers and the threats and ambitions on their periphery. Insightful and thought provoking the author argues that though for the United States some of these threats must be handled with force head-on. It is not necessarily sticks and brute force that will dissuade Russia from expanding eastward for instance, prevent China from attempting to “do something” about the ongoing dispute surrounding

Formosa and certain islands in the eastern pacific, or even the nuclear standoff in now defunct six-party talks to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program. The author instead advocates a policy of engagement and rigidity in order to coax the parties involved to reveal their true intentions thereby allowing for an effective policy to take shape. One that is clear concise and allows for the United States to avoid, what the author believes, based on the principles of Robert Jervis' work on the security dilemma, an inevitable new Sino-Soviet war. In the end the author believes that the genesis of the Sino-Soviet conflict will beget chaos in their "spheres of influence" once the states involved no longer have an explicit reason to fear each other or the prevailing international order.

Introduction

It once looked like the world would be in continual chaos as the power of the United States waned due to its ongoing war against Osama Bin Laden, and Al-Qaeda. However since Bin Laden's death many new threats have emerged both national, and transnational.

Not the least of these is ISIS, Russia, and China, among others. Robert Jervis postulates correctly I believe that *“The lack of an international sovereign not only permits wars to occur, but also makes it difficult for states that are satisfied with the status quo to arrive at goals that they recognize as being in their common interest. Because there are no institutions or authorities that can make and enforce international laws, the policies of cooperation that will bring mutual rewards if others cooperate may bring disaster if they do not. Because states are aware of this, anarchy encourages behavior that leaves all concerned worse off than they could be, even in the extreme case in which all states would like to freeze the status quo. This is true of the men in Rousseau's "Stag Hunt." If they cooperate to trap the stag, they will all eat well. But if one person defects to chase a rabbit-which he likes less than stag- none of the others will get anything. Thus, all actors have the same preference order, and there is a solution that gives each his first choice: (i) cooperate and trap the stag (the international analogue being cooperation and disarmament); (2) chase a rabbit while others remain at their posts (maintain a high level of arms while others are disarmed); (3) all chase rabbits (arms competition and*

high risk of war); and (4) stay at the original position while another chases a rabbit (being disarmed while others are armed)”¹

With the American Economy at the strongest it has ever been and no end in sight I think that it's important to take a step back from all of this prosperity and focus on the geo-political implications of the growth of what I like to refer to as second tier Super Powers or regional Hegemony's. I want to zero in on two in particular: Russia, and China; in what I believe are in a fateful dance which could culminate in what I'm calling the Sino-Soviet War. The following is an analysis of the variables that I see at play in what could become a very dangerous time for the free world, and non-free world alike.

Russia

Russian Intransigence:

Russia intends on building up its military capacity rapidly despite the fact that sanctions and low crude oil prices have taken a hold of

¹ Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma, Robert Jervis, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009958?origin=JSTOR-pdf>, World Politics, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jan., 1978), pp. 167-214, 1978 Princeton University Press

their economy. And according to Dr. Stephen J. Blank in a white paper entitled “POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA: WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR THE U.S. ARMY?” he goes on to say that:

Currently, there is a huge defense buildup that aims to spend \$716 billion between now and 2020 to make the Russian armed forces a competitive high-tech armed force, with 70 percent of its weapons being modern (whatever that category means to Moscow). Yet this system already has shown repeatedly that it cannot deliver the goods and that the attempt to remilitarize at this relatively breakneck speed (relative to other comparable powers) is failing to produce the weapons Moscow wants.²

Russia as recently as November of 2014 proclaimed itself as the most powerful country in the world. However development is lagging terribly behind all advanced economies and a lot of middle income countries (MIC’s). In fact according to Dr. Zibigniew Brezezinski the OECD has:

² Stephen J. Blank Politics in Putin’s Russia, POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA: WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR THE U.S. ARMY? p. 7-8.

*projections by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development for the year 2020 (that) envisage not only China's gross domestic product as approximately four times larger than Russia's, but with India ahead of Russia as well.*³

When Russia and China signed an economic agreement earlier this year which basically stipulated oil to china for Russian rubles it was before the U.S., and E.U. had applied sanctions in response to Russia's illegal war in the Ukraine, and before the Russian separatist downed flight MH17 over Ukrainian airspace. That disaster is what ultimately led to the sanctions from the E.U. and U.S. being applied. This is extremely important from the Russian point of view since according to the *World Bank, Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for the Russian Federation:*

³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Putin's Choice," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, Spring 2008, p. 109.

*Russia's economy is dominated by natural resource extraction under-taken by a few large corporations, a concentration reflected in its output and export structures and its fiscal dependence.*⁴

And in fact it is dominated so much so by natural resources that Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski in the Washington Quarterly goes on to stipulate that:

*No wonder that the World Bank reported in 2005 that fuels, mining products, and agriculture accounted for 74 percent of Russia's total exports, while manufacturing accounted for 80 percent of Russia's total imports.*⁵

This means that although Russia was once a state with a very diverse, though centrally planned economy during the cold war. The economics of today's Russia make it a state which has yet to escape the resource curse.

⁴ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA
Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013 RUSSIAN ECONOMIC REFORM 2012: "DÈJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN" Steven Rosefield p. 39., World Bank, Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for the Russian Federation.

⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Putin's Choice," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, Spring 2008, p. 109.

Russian Oil and Gas Gambit:

Russia has neo-imperial ambitions that include but are not limited to Russian dominance of the energy markets. In fact according to Robert Einhorn and Rose Gottemoeller “Russia is working actively to reinvigorate and expand its nuclear industry and its reliance on nuclear power in the decades to come. Russian technical and political benefits and opportunities under a 123 agreement”⁶, And “These reform efforts are in line with Russia’s broader energy strategy—to expand Russia’s global role as an energy provider, along with Russian technical and political benefits and opportunities under a 123 agreement.”⁷ Though the 123 agreement was meant to expand commercial ties between the U.S. and Russia’s civilian nuclear sectors these plans have presumably been put on hold due to the downing of MH-17, and Russian intransigence in the Ukraine. An equally contentious area of conflict derives from the fact that Russia inherited a gas pipeline

⁶ The U.S.-Russia Civil Nuclear Agreement A Framework for Cooperation, Robert Einhorn Rose Gottemoeller, p.35, May 2008

⁷ The U.S.-Russia Civil Nuclear Agreement A Framework for Cooperation, Robert Einhorn Rose Gottemoeller, p.35, May 2008

infrastructure that transports gas to Europe across territories that are now independent states, mainly Ukraine and Belarus. As Gazprom got locked into pricing conflicts with such transit states (such as Ukraine), it rapidly discovered that its own highly lucrative export to the European Union could be held hostage. Deliveries of gas to Ukraine could, for example, not be shut down without also shutting down deliveries to EU member states. The conclusion that the transit states must be sidelined was done by building bypass pipelines such as the Nord Stream, which already transports gas directly from Vyborg in Russia to Greifswald in Germany, and the South Stream, which is to transport gas from the Caspian Basin via the Black Sea to south-eastern Europe. Both Poland and the Baltic states responded vehemently to what they viewed as a project designed to shut down their energy supplies without disrupting the flow to Germany.⁸ All of this is going on while according to the Clingendael International Energy Programme “In 2012 Russia exported 7.2 million barrels per day of *total liquids*. The vast majority of Russian exports (84 percent) went to Europe. Russia

⁸ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA, ECONOMIC REFORM UNDER PUTIN 2.0: WILL PETRODOLLARS SUFFICE TO KEEP THE SHIP AFLOAT? Stefan Hedlund, p.99, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

thus is dependent on the European market, although it is increasingly diverting crude oil exports to Asia, while also refining more crude at home so it can export more value added products.”⁹

So then when we see the combination of Russia invading Ukraine while simultaneously threatening the rest of Europe with artificial energy shortages these are part of “Russia’s neo-imperial project (that) no longer relies on Soviet-era instruments, such as ideological allegiance, military control, or the implanting of proxy governments. Instead, the primary goal is to exert pre-dominant influence over the foreign and security policies of immediate neighbors so they will either remain neutral or support Russia’s international agenda.”¹⁰

Gazprom may have thought that Liquefied natural gas (LNG) could be safely ignored. It is expensive and does not offer control to the extent that pipelines do. The shale gas revolution, or

⁹ Fact Sheet Russia-Europe: the liquid relationship often overlooked, pg.2, Clingendael International Energy Programme

¹⁰ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA, RUSSIA AS A POLE OF POWER: PUTIN’S REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGENDA, Janusz Bugajski, p.175, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

simply the “shale gale,” changed all that. Following years of massive investment by Qatar, in particular in export terminals for LNG, and by the United States in import terminals for the same, the United States suddenly was no longer in need of imported gas. With its import terminals standing idle, LNG was instead rerouted to Europe, where a gas glut emerged. Gazprom suffered doubly, both from a loss of market shares to the cheaper LNG and from having to agree to demands from its customers that oil-price linkage must give way to spot-market pricing.¹¹ And also according to Stefan Hedlund “...by far the greatest challenge both to Gazprom and to Russia is the arrival of “unconventional gas,” notably shale gas, which has caused a complete change of scenes.”¹²

Russia needs to accept that the environment that they operate in is not the same as the one the tsars or even the soviet autocrats maneuvered in. this begins with recognizing the overwhelming priority among a plethora of things that must be done is to diversify

¹¹ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA, ECONOMIC REFORM UNDER PUTIN 2.0: WILL PETRODOLLARS SUFFICE TO KEEP THE SHIP AFLOAT? Stefan Hedlund, p.104-105, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

¹² POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA, ECONOMIC REFORM UNDER PUTIN 2.0: WILL PETRODOLLARS SUFFICE TO KEEP THE SHIP AFLOAT? Stefan Hedlund, p.103, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

the economy. After 15 years of the Vladimir Putin-Dmitry Medvedev tandem, Russia's economy depends more on hydrocarbons that it did in 1999. Russia now needs a price of somewhere between \$110 and \$130 per barrel of oil to balance its budget. If the price of oil were to drop to \$80 per barrel (as of this writing it hovers around \$45/barrel), the (Russian) Reserve Fund would last 1 year.¹³ However (t)he most serious obstacles are corruption and self-interest in the political system, educational and research institutions, and Russia's epistemic communities.¹⁴

China

¹³ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, AUTHORITARIANISM AND MODERNIZATION IN RUSSIA: IS RUSSIA KA-PUTIN? Harley Balzer p.126-127, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

¹⁴ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, AUTHORITARIANISM AND MODERNIZATION IN RUSSIA: IS RUSSIA KA-PUTIN? Harley Balzer, p.127, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

Chinese Ascendancy on the World Stage:

In the Soviet era Russia at least had an achievement gap with the rest of the world including China however the Soviet Union's highly uneven achievements in education, science, and technology are being dissipated, and it will be exceptionally difficult to reverse the decline.¹⁵ And ...in the 1950s, the Chinese copied the Soviet Union's education and science institutions quite closely. Yet in just 3 decades, the Chinese have overtaken Germany and Japan to rank second to the United States in publishing articles in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. Russian scientists in 2010 published about the same number of articles in international journals as they did in 1990.¹⁶

Earlier it was discussed that Russia had to kowtow to demands that the price of oil and gas in Europe be tied to spot market pricing. The

¹⁵ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, AUTHORITARIANISM AND MODERNIZATION IN RUSSIA: IS RUSSIA KA-PUTIN? Harley Balzer, p.126, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

¹⁶ POLITICS AND ECONOMICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA, AUTHORITARIANISM AND MODERNIZATION IN RUSSIA: IS RUSSIA KA-PUTIN? Harley Balzer, p. 126, Stephen J. Blank Editor December 2013

new oil deal that correlates with the price of the ruble could mean that though the size of the deal helps assure Chinese stability, the Russians may in the end; receive a raw deal in the exchange of oil for rubles with China. The Ruble is lower because the U.S. and E.U. along with an implicit nod from the rest of the world have utterly destroyed the Russian economy. They've done this by utilizing sanctions, and isolating Russia economically, politically and militarily.

This has led Russia to seek out other more dubious partners leading them into the hands of the Peoples Republic of China. However the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is ascendant in the region and much of Asia, and Africa. This has the potential to cause much friction in the relationship between the China and Russia, as the regional super powers project and jockey for hegemonic status in the coming years.

With over 10 million private cars today, China imported approximately 40 percent of its oil in 2005. By 2020, China is projected to have 120 million private cars and to import at least 60 percent of its oil. According to projections put out by the Energy

Information Administration, that percentage would be closer to 75%, with only 3.5 million bpd being produced, while demand is supposed to reach 14.2(million bpd).¹⁷ As Russia enters what is in all probability a recession in their economy due to sanctions, China will begin to cement the exact terms of their historic oil and gas agreement just as oil prices begin to ebb all throughout the world. This I find in particular will become a strong point of contention between the two powers. For you see as per the agreed upon terms of the initial contract the Russians will be paid in rubles. This means that a strong Dollar pegged Yuan will not fit the bill but instead a Yuan-Ruble conversion will take place further cheapening the price that China pays for Russian oil and gas.

(A)ccording to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), China's oil demand will reach 14.2 million bpd by 2025. That same year, net imports are expected to reach 10.9 million bpd. China's oil demand is already a significant factor in world oil markets. Over the past four years, China, the world's second largest

¹⁷ Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "China's Thirst for Oil Gets into Top Gear," *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections*, volume 9, issue # 20, 14 Oct 2004, BBC News, 1 October 2004, <http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/news/h_nts_left.htm> (7 Dec 2004) and "Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment," 12 January 2005.

oil consumer behind the United States, has been the source of close to 40 percent of the total world oil demand growth over the past four years. With economic growth running at a rate of roughly nine percent per year China is no longer able to meet its own consumption requirements through its domestic production of oil and it is now being forced to search for oil elsewhere.¹⁸

Economic ties between Russia and China have undeniably played a major role in strengthening cooperation between the two, but there is an increasing ideological element to Sino-Russian relations. In spite of vastly different historical and cultural backgrounds, there are striking similarities between the maturing ideological foundations that underpin the two countries' respective outlooks on the world and their global roles.¹⁹

What China says may not be a full reflection of what it actually thinks and intends. Certainly, no Western strategy document or

¹⁸ . China's Oil Rush in Africa, IAGS.org, Cindy Hurst, p.3, July 2006

¹⁹ Chinese Soft Power and Its Implications for the United States Competition and Cooperation in the Developing World, releveraging U.S.. power amid sino-russian rapprochement Andrew C. Kuchins, p.118, editor Carola McGiffert March 2009

*force plan has ever met this test, or generally come close to meeting it. It does, however, at least set the stage.*²⁰ China in my estimation will reach a critical mass and will attempt to “do something” about the issues of Formosa (Taiwan) and the various island disputes in the eastern Pacific. Indeed just recently news reports have surfaced of China reclaiming islands in the South China Sea. By doing so the Chinese have blocked shipping lanes, built “thousands”²¹ of acres of landing strips, and caused an international crisis. This incident is similar to the level of challenge that I have been warning here in this paper that would provoke the possibility of confrontation between a regional power and a super power, namely China, and the United States; though I don’t think that this issue rises to the level of magnitude that would be required for China to be openly and rightfully faced down. Once all attempts have been frustrated and America’s resolve has been tested this will be an embarrassment for the PLA and they will need to “do something” to assert that they are still (as they believe) the most dominant actor in Asia... this I believe are the fruits of the Sino-Soviet war.

²⁰ Chinese Military Modernization and Force Development Main Report, Dr. Anthony Cordesman, CSIS, Revised 2006

²¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/08/22/defense-official-china-grabs-50-percent-more-land-through-man-made-islands/>, FoxNews.com, Published August 22, 2015

America

The Middle East: Bugged Down, or Free at Last?

The crossroads of the global oil trade lay principally in a tiny strip of water called the Persian Gulf. Here no less than eight(8) countries Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain; export their highly prized light sweet crude through this small channel of water. And though most are friendly countries, one; Iran, is an outright enemy of the United States. With Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons possibly coming to a head in the near future, the safety and reliability of this pristine waterway comes into question. And with the straits of Hormuz separating the Arabian Peninsula and Iran by just fifteen miles it becomes all the more urgent to guarantee the safety of the resources which run through it. In short, a strategic answer is needed to address the amount of resources emanating throughout the region.

Action should be taken before a crisis breaks out in the region that would disrupt global oil supplies and place a heavy burden not just on the U.S. economy but the global economy as a whole. The options are few. The Syrian civil war which is entering its fourth year of indefinite strife and has claimed in excess of 100,000 lives through both conventional and chemical weaponry. This situation (Syria) on its face may not seem like the most prudent place for America to flex its military might, after all Iraq is Syria's next door neighbor. Syria also has competing factions in it who are all vying for a stake in a post Bashar al-Assad Syria. These parties include the Al-Nusra front, a hard line Islamist faction that is de facto Al-Qaeda branded; the Kurdish peoples of the north who already enjoy a level of autonomy which they have not seen during any of the Assad's reign; and the Free Syrian Army numbering (if you believe reports) up to 80,000 strong. There are also the Al-Assad supporters or ultra royalist as I like to call them that are the Baath party of Syria, and at their most hardcore are Fedayeen, and Hizbollah willing to become human shields to protect the al-Assad family, and Damascus at all cost. Not the most welcoming of situations. Add in the fact that ISIS or Islamic State of Iraq, and

Syria are well defined militarily and taking over swaths of Iraq and Syria including Mosul. This may seem like a desperate situation that perhaps America should not stick its nose into considering the brutality of the Iraq war, it is these very things that cause me to suggest that the stakes are simply too high for not only the future of peace and stability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), but also the energy security of the United States and its allies, and it's not without precedent.

Iraq war 1991:

In 1991 George H. W. Bush was president of the United States and Saddam Hussein had just invaded Kuwait taking control of 1/5th of all oil in the world. George H. W. Bush wanted to act immediately, unilaterally, and without congressional approval but showing jurist prudence he consulted with congress before successfully repulsing Sadaam's invasion of Kuwait, a U.S. ally. Iraq is invaded but Sadaam is not toppled signaling a policy of

deterrence rather than regime change. The war was over in less than 100 days with minimal casualties. However in a sign of miscommunication between the northern Iraqi Kurdish community and the United States an uprising is began with the hopes of establishing a unified autonomous Kurdish state. The U.S. withdraws and Sadaam gases his own people in one of the worst chemical weapons attacks of the latter half of the 20th century. This act does not go unnoticed by the congress of the United States, as the Kurds to the north, and Shiites to the south are soon thereafter, through an act of congress, protected from Sadaam by a no-fly zone.

Iraq War 2003:

After the attacks on the world trade center on 9/11 Afghanistan is soon thereafter invaded by the United States toppling the government of the Taliban and sending the perpetrator of those heinous acts Osama Bin Laden fleeing to Tora bora. In the 2003 State of the Union address to congress, then President George W. Bush; singles out Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an “Axis of Evil”.

Soon thereafter Iraq is again invaded with this time the main goal of preventing Sadaam Hussein from using weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. or any of its allies. Regime change is also one of the goals and is completed in a matter of weeks after the start of the war in March 20th 2003. The oil ministry is captured relatively quickly in the outbreak of war by American and coalition forces and soon the southern Iraqi oil fields resume energy production for Iraq though not at full capacity. Ominously though soon after the toppling of Sadaam an al-Qaeda led Iranian backed insurgency begins in earnest for what would last a total of eight years. Some would say that it still continues under the banner of a group calling itself al-Qaeda in Iraq. This war along with the still lingering war in Afghanistan would sap much need blood and treasure from the United States with very little to show for it. Until May 2011 when Osama bin Laden (OBL) is finally killed in a compound outside of Abbotabad, Pakistan that he shared with his immediate family. It should be noted that several positive things came out of Iraq as well: a brutal dictator was executed along with his sons ending a reign which stretched across several decades. The Iraqi people were finally able to choose their own leaders in a representative democracy. And two

key important things happen in the world of oil transit, two pipelines were built which stretched from the oil rich cities in the north of both Kirkuk and Mosul. These pipelines would extend to in the case of Mosul; Jordan and a port city in Israel, and the Kirkuk pipeline stretched to a port city in Turkey. Both of these pipelines end at the Mediterranean coast avoiding Syria completely.

Syrian War (2011-)

In Syria the “Arab Spring” began to take hold in early 2011 initially as peaceful protest. However soon after a deadly crackdown the mostly Sunni majority took up arms against the Alawite Shiite ruling minority and began to fight back. This back and forth continues to this day and as of the writing of September 2013 there is an agreement between al-Assad ally Russia, and the United States to compile and eventually destroy all of Syria’s accounted for chemical stockpiles. The United States has introduced a resolution at the U.N. which would “Hold Syria to account” should the weapons not be destroyed by mid 2014 as per scheduled. This agreement does

not and should not be construed as an out for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad who has murdered tens of thousands of his own countrymen using conventional and chemical weapons. And as Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was quoted as saying, Assad should be “Held Accountable” for these monstrous acts. Also on the agenda it seems that Iran has initiated a charm offensive and has suggested that talks over a cease fire could possibly take place between Syria and the free Syrian army (FSA) in Geneva, Switzerland.

ISIS 2011-2015: What has been done?

ISIS is particularly dangerous since they are anti-Western and have filled up the space that al-Nusra and the al-Assad regime have vacated in the north of Syria. They do not recognize modern borders, hence the incursion into Iraq, and they are brutal slaughtering what is thought to be tens of thousands in their brutal campaign of terror. The logical question is what to do about these

heretical Islamic fundamentalist. I've offered some advice previously which I'll share now.

Now that the President has committed in excess of three thousand advisers to Iraq, an order to quell the insurgency in the north of Iraq, and Syria, being spearheaded by ISIS, it seems prudent to have an over arching vision of what is possible in Iraq and indeed Syria in our quest to prevent ISIS from blitzing into Iraq anymore. And marginalize the factional offshoot of al-Qaeda an order to make it as unappealing as possible to future would-be terrorist.

The Iraqi military should be prepared with the help of American military advisers to repel the once rapidly advancing enemy with all the esprit d'corps and tenacity that any other military in the world would possess. The first and main objective for the advisers should be to build this confidence and send ISIS back to the hinterlands of Syria; indeed this is already taking place. The Iraqi army can only go so far in defeating ISIS since their not expected to cross the border into Syria an order to continue the fight. However as a milestone objective the Iraqi army should be capable

of securing the border with Syria and rooting out any ISIS intelligence figures which may have remained in Iraq once the insurgency has been defeated, as far as they're concerned.

The role for the military advisers does not end their though since they must now embed with Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north of Iraq an order to continue the fight into Syria. The Kurds already have a natural base of operations in Northeastern Syria that they can draw from to recruit some of their more hardened warriors who are also more familiar with the tactics of ISIS. Since the beginning of the war in Syria, and the inception of groups such as the Free Syrian Army, and ISIS, the Kurds in Northeastern Syria have been fighting for their own semi-autonomous region in Syria. Since ISIS has over run them I'm sure that they have a bone to pick with ISIS and would be more than eager to settle the score once and for all.

Once the advisers link up with the Kurds and continue the fight into northern Syria the goal should be to inflict as many casualties on ISIS as possible not only to whittle them down, but to stop them from having the cachet to easily recruit and replenish their ranks. This begins with denying them access to oil fields in Iraq and Syria, and killing the main leadership including their leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Air strikes will play a vital role in not only fighting ISIS but also patrolling the badlands which exist on the Syrian, Iraqi Border for possible terroristic elements. It should also not be ruled out that if intelligence comes in indicating where al-Baghdadi (ISIS' de facto leader) is it should not be taken lightly and we should strike with as much force as necessary an order to eliminate the threat.

ISIS is a potent force and should not be taken lightly but as quickly as they have gained territory, so too can they be rolled back to their original position at worst, and extinguished altogether.

By forcing the rebels to come out of their secure positions we open them up for key airstrikes by both the Iraqi's and Americans. Also it seems prudent to free up resources to make sure that the route, be it by air, or land is truly secure and free should evacuations become necessary. All roads coming from Syria in Ninawa province should be sealed off and the dam near Buhayrat al Mawsil should be secured to make sure that no havoc is done as ISIS tries to initiate a counter offensive from Mosul. The road to Mosul is not straightforward and may require a bit of outside the box thinking in order to defeat ISIS in Mosul with minimal casualties. The road to Mosul for the Iraqi Army seems more and more likely to involve not only Syria but Turkey as well, as the map shows. If we are to defeat ISIS in northern Iraq the coup de grace will require a deft tactical hand with a strategic focus. We cannot allow ourselves to show our hand in Ninawa province until the very last moment, while simultaneously circumvallating Mosul for what will perhaps be the final showdown in Iraq, and the most trying trial by fire for both the Iraqi Army and Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

ISIS 2011-2015: What needs to be done?

If ever there were a time for reflection it would be at this crucial time. Though granted ISIS is not entirely defeated in Iraq, they are on the run. And with Syria now looming as a possible battlefield it is appropriate to take a breather from what has just happened, recollect our thoughts, and move forward from there. However it's also wise to perhaps decide not to pursue ISIS into Syria either partially or wholly, if that is the said path that the President chooses to take. If the President chooses to assist Iraqi forces in their fight against ISIS into Syria the inevitable question is what will America's role be, almost assuredly airstrikes, but what about boots on the ground?

With ISIS in peril and al-Baghdadi injured it only makes sense to take the fight to them. This is true. But also it is true that we would be entering Syria as uninvited and unwanted guest of a regime that we once contemplated airstrikes against. And also with Ar-Raqqa being the unofficial hometown of ISIS it seems to make sense that we would then be fighting them on battlefields that are wholly familiar to them while unique to us.

ISIS is in desperate straits right now if the rumors of al-Baghdadi's injuries are true, then it seems that his health is the paramount concern of them at this point. I liken al-Baghdadi to the khanate in the 13th century: if al-Baghdadi dies the whole enterprise will be in jeopardy since he is their leader and figure head, so if he were to die I could envision a sort of splitting of the khanate into smaller fiefdoms and these would in turn fight one another to exhaustion. But make no mistake about it al-Baghdadi dead represents a ceasing of all hostilities against the Iraqis and Kurds since he is their main strategist and tactician, and also the group's main fundraising and recruitment draw. Without a doubt without him there is no longer an ISIS as we know them today. This is why his death should be the main objective of U.S. and Kurdish/Iraqi forces in Syria.

Also there should be a discussion about ISIS and what type of weaponry they have. After all for all we know al-Baghdadi could have chemical weaponry and be making Ar-Raqqa his last stand, much akin to Adolf Hitler in Berlin. Except for in this instance it would be one last release of Saran nerve agent that kills not only

him, but the good soldiers that have him surrounded and would hope to see his reign come to an end.

Terror could also come from the sky. As uninvited guest in Bashar al-Assad's country, the idea of him bombing or dog fighting our forces is a very real predicament. It would behoove the Iraqi's as well as the U.S. if we could get assurances from the Syrian regime that they will not be malevolent proprietor's while we are in northern Syria finishing off ISIS.

As to the idea of the U.S. personally assisting the fight against ISIS with "boots on the ground" I personally wouldn't recommend it if only since that would entail a lot of moving around of pieces which would waste precious time. Why wait to kill al-Baghdadi when the Iraqi's along with American military advisers can do it all by themselves, with airstrikes in tow of course. If it does come down to sending in boots to help the Iraqi's annihilate ISIS it would to me seem more prudent to send in mercenaries from America. This would prevent a heavy military footprint and also it would allow for us to be engaged in the fighting without the risk to our professional military soldiers.

If it comes to a point where al-Baghdadi closes ranks around his self in Ar-Raqqa or any other city in Syria while he attempts to convalesce it would be prudent to siege the town rather than trying to take it outright. This is because it would be difficult for military intelligence to crack that nut, if you will, considering the fierce loyalty that he inspires. What makes more sense is to starve them out of their hidey holes and frustrate all plans that they hatch to try and get out of the city with al-Baghdadi in tow an order to live to fight another day.

To defeat ISIS our number one objective should be to kill al-Baghdadi. I cannot stress enough how important he is to this particular enterprise and what his death will mean for them. Simply put they cannot and will not function without him thus negating the need for a heavy footprint in the region and rather having the threat implode upon itself triggered by the price of oil. With Oil hovering around \$44 a barrel and as reported by CNN the town of Kobani back fully in Kurdish hands, it's easy to see a path forward from here. The fact that ISIS, who derives most of their income from oil revenue would have to deal with a black market price of \$10-\$20

per barrel of oil extracted, that in itself is enough to box the in the organizations ambitions and possibly see the top leadership implode from the bottom up. I don't think that I can stress this enough: if ISIS were to lose their confidence in al-Baghdadi and he were to be eliminated by us or someone in the organization, this would spell the end of ISIS as we now know them today, a blow akin to the death of Osama Bin Laden for al-Qaeda and extremist everywhere.

ISIS-Yemen-Iraq: The End of the End

With the monopoly of force comes the strengthening of the institutions that make a state stable and its people safe and diligent. Without this monopoly there can be no reconciliation or peace within a state that has failed. With this in mind I approach the situation in Syria casting a wary eye. At this juncture I see the Assad regime, and the lack of control that they have over large swaths of Syria. This disheartens, and frankly frightens me. When I see the forces at play in these lawless parts of Syria (Al-Qaeda, Free Syrian Army, Islamic State) I again take pause at what it is that should

happen in Syria. But alas with the American engagement in the situation not only in Syria, but Iraq as well, I begin to see a coherent strategy that can (if executed right) bind up the wounds of the Middle East for the time being if not for the foreseeable future.

The first situation to me that needs to be resolved is the ongoing chaos in Iraq. We have two failed states already in the form of Syria, and Yemen in the region. The last thing that we want to do is provide for another failed state in Iraq, this would be unacceptable. My instincts tell me that we should begin rolling back ISIS in Iraq by cutting off supply lines to the two main cities that they have occupied in Iraq, namely Mosul, and Ramadi. By circumvallating the cities and then choking them off we can avoid large scale military and civilian casualties.

The Iraqi military should be prepared with the help of American military advisers to repel the once rapidly advancing enemy with all the esprit d'corps and tenacity that any other military in the world would possess. The first and main objective for the advisers should be to build this confidence and send ISIS back to the hinterlands of Syria; indeed this is already taking place. The

Iraqi army can only go so far in defeating ISIS since their not expected to cross the border into Syria an order to continue the fight. However as a milestone objective the Iraqi army should be capable of securing the border with Syria and rooting out any ISIS intelligence figures which may have remained in Iraq once the insurgency has been defeated, as far as they're concerned.

The role for the military advisers does not end their though since they must now embed with Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north of Iraq an order to continue the fight into Syria. The Kurds already have a natural base of operations in Northeastern Syria that they can draw from to recruit some of their more hardened warriors who are also more familiar with the tactics of ISIS. Since the beginning of the war in Syria, and the inception of groups such as al-Nusra, and ISIS, the Kurds in Northeastern Syria have been fighting for their own semi-autonomous region in Syria. Since ISIS has over run them I'm sure that they have a bone to pick with ISIS and would be more than eager to settle the score once and for all.

Once the advisers link up with the Kurds and continue the fight into northern Syria the goal should be to inflict as many

casualties on ISIS as possible not only to whittle them down, but to stop them from having the cachet to easily recruit and replenish their ranks.

Air strikes will play a vital role in not only fighting ISIS but also patrolling the badlands which exist on the Syrian, Iraqi Border for possible terroristic elements. It should also not be ruled out that if intelligence comes in indicating where al-Baghdadi (ISIS' de facto leader) is it should not be taken lightly and we should strike with as much force as necessary in order to eliminate the threat.

ISIS is a potent force and should not be taken lightly but as quickly as they have gained territory, so too can they be rolled back to their original position at worst, and extinguished altogether at best.

By supplying weaponry directly to the Kurds in the north and training and equipping Iraqi Sunni tribes who would then take the fight to the Islamic state we can ensure that the frontiers are safe and protected from ISIS spilling over into Iraq. One wild card is the

unpredictability of the Iranians and their sponsored militias. Since we are in direct contact with the Iranians at the highest levels of both governments then it seems prudent to me to at least get on the record an official position from the Iranians about their plans for what would happen if the Syrian regime were to collapse tomorrow and what do they ultimately want from their dysfunctional neighbors. If they want peace on their borders then this would be a worthwhile pursuit. However if they show by their actions that they intend on piecing back together a form of the Persian empire this I think would be dangerous. So long as they're fighting ISIS in Iraq for peace, this I think should be encouraged. But a by proxy of bringing peace to Iraq would mean additional influence in a Shiite dominated government in Baghdad could lead to one more friendly nation for Iran and one less friendly nation for America in the region. Not to mention the reshuffling of strategic priorities countries friendly with the United States in the region (Israel, Saudi Arabia, etc.). So then by exerting influence in Iraq, America can influence the outcome of regional relations between Iran and its neighbors, while simultaneously denying Iran predominant

influence in the affairs of its neighbors, something they desperately want.

When Syria is viewed through the lens of a country dominated by ISIS the picture becomes less clear in my opinion. However when Syria is viewed through the lens of a nation once dominated by the government in Damascus that now has rebel outfits running loose through its countryside though it is a semi functioning failed state, the situation becomes a lot more manageable. The methodology which should be taken with Syria is to treat it as a state which has already failed and so should be treated as such. Which means the first thing to do is to re-monopolize the use of force in the country. In my opinion ISIS is in its last death throes in Syria and so will be the first part of Syria, namely ar-Raqqa and its sphere of influence which will allow for a vacuum to be created. The United States needs to be ready for this eventuality and we cannot simply allow for another power vacuum to be created in Syria without having a say in its outcome. This is why I see arming the Kurds directly as one of the most important things that the United States can do to regain peace in Iraq and Syria. For Syria

this manifest *ipso facto* reality means that the U.S. can and must do what the government in Damascus either cannot do, or chooses not to do which is providing a peaceful, functioning state for its current, former, and future inhabitants. This can't be done by the Kurds alone and the president has for the time being ruled out American troops.

In Jordan the U.S. is training troops from the Free Syrian Army to establish a free Syrian state. This effort should be heavily promoted and accelerated by the administration. These forces in my opinion are the last great hope to prevent Syria from becoming a dead zone that has violence begetting violence in an unending cycle, akin to the European dark ages. It seems prudent to me that once we have ISIS on the ropes and confined to their only respite left (ar-Raqqa), we should take steps such as establishing a no fly zone which will get tighter and tighter around ISIS as they lose ground and also provide air support for FSA forces and Kurdish Militias in the north of the country. When ISIS finally does dissolve we will be prepared with a solid ground game and air support for these forces

which will allow for large swaths of Syria to have order, and the Rule of law established through a monopolization of force.

When encountering Syria it should be noted that again we don't know the exact trajectory of Iranian forces on the ground in terms of what their objectives for Syria are. I believe that this situation though can be resolved through the deployment of United Nations Peacekeeping personnel in Syria which will allow for a change in the calculus for the Iranians when it comes to order, and the rule of law in Syria and the perceived state of *posse comitatus* that currently exist in Syria for not only them but the world as well.

In fact in a paper entitled "The ISIS Defense in Iraq and Syria: Countering an Adaptive Enemy" by Jessica Lewis McFate. The author stipulates in the paper that:

"The only way to defeat ISIS, which is necessary for U.S. national security, is to guarantee a ground force that will occupy, secure, and rebuild Syria, and Iraq to a lesser extent. More limited solutions

are insufficient to shape ground conditions that promote stability and reduce the opportunity for groups like ISIS to remain.

The U.S. is not a suitable unilateral occupying force in 2015 because anti-U.S. sentiment in these countries has risen to staggering levels.

Iran is also not suitable or capable, as demonstrated by its inability to help the Assad regime win its war in Syria, its tactical inability to clear ISIS from Tikrit in Iraq, its state sponsorship of terrorism, and its strategic objectives to destroy other states in the region.

The Arab coalition currently fighting the Houthis in Yemen is likewise unsuitable, given the likelihood that it would also condone persecution of minority Shi'a populations; it is also incapable, given what little its current air campaign in Yemen has accomplished as of April 2015. The Arab coalition is also risky because it treats Iraq and Syria as battle grounds for a sectarian war against Iran instead of unified state-building missions that are necessary to defeat ISIS and al-Qaeda. U.S. leadership is therefore essential.

Partnership is also essential, because the U.S. is no longer a legitimate ally in the eyes of many populations in the region."²²

This is why allowing U.N. peace keepers in Syria is so important it's the only organization that has the legitimacy of the Arab world to go into Syria and impose peace and it's an organization that once mandated will have the force of U.N. Security Council Sanction that even the Iranians will have to accept.

By not allowing Sanction of force or safe haven for ISIS in Syria we can begin to turn the tables on this vicious group of murderers that wish to see anarchy for the world. By the use of men on the ground and American planes in the skies we can create the type of lasting peace that the Syrian people desire.

Once Iraq and Syria have been resolved I feel that the United States should allow its allies to devote resources to the function of restoring peace in Yemen and denying safe haven to Al-

²² Jessica Lewis McFate, The ISIS Defense in Iraq and Syria: Countering an Adaptive Enemy, <http://understandingwar.org/report/isis-defense-iraq-and-syria-countering-adaptive-enemy#sthash.QMs22Rt2.dpuf>.

Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. I've already gone over the various options that we have in this contested land in a previous paper.

Needless to say the peace process must work itself out however the *stakes* must be held principally by the Saudi government and not the Houthis as the situation now exist. Only then will the negotiating table be a likely rejoinder for the Houthis and their grievances.

However the Houthis will not come to the negotiating table unless they feel that the Saudis have something that they want to negotiate for namely a peaceful place to call home. And though the Saudis were using airstrikes to exact their demands, everyone knows that you can only accomplish so much from the air before you have to go in on the ground and secure territory. It seems likely that this is what the Saudis will have to do in Yemen an order to convince the Houthis that they need to go to the negotiating table an order to sue for peace. By first taking a contingent of the Saudi forces and landing them in Aden the Saudis should be able to draw away from the capital a lot of the forces currently guarding Sana'a. Then by taking Road two and blitzing down the west coast of Yemen from Saudi Arabia you should be able to secure the west coast which is the heartland of Houthi activity. By doing these two things alone

you would have spread the Houthis thin and secured most major transport ports for allies (Egypt, U.S. etc.). The next thing to be executed is the invasion of Sana'a. By moving forces to al-Radah via land and using it as a jump off point into Sana'a the Saudis can accomplish most of what they want in the country from there. Also by parachuting men into the northern enclave of Sana'a just as tanks from al-Radah co-opt them on the ground the airport in Sana'a is an objective that can be completed and from their supplies can be flown in directly into Sana'a for the battle of Sana'a and beyond.

The state of play in current political paradigms has shifted dramatically when speaking about geo-politics and national security. Recently it was announced that the Cameroonian vice Prime Minister's wife had been kidnapped by Boko Haram. this is a return to old world order geo political climate where for instance in the 80's impoverished Mafioso's in Italy would kidnap rich Italian and foreign nationals and demand a ransom payment for their safe return. Or when Jet liners were routinely hijacked an order to demand ransom or cause political chaos. This is a byproduct of the Bin Ladenism of terroristic acts as well as the pervasive Russian

influence in conflicts around the world via arm sales and military training.

One way to define Bin Ladenism is to take the attacks of 9/11 for example. For you see by attacking the U.S. homeland in such a spectacular fashion the bar then became raised for more and more spectacular ways of harming the U.S. and its allies. Think 3/11 in Spain, the attempted shoe and underwear bombers and so on and so forth. Since the death of Bin Laden and with the rise of even more radical strains of Islam (if that's possible) the world has seen terrorist organizations become influence peddlers in the form of cold hard cash. This makes sense, since by having large cash reserves you can declare yourselves to be the true defenders of Jihad, and Islamic fundamentalism. This is evident in recent Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's brash video of earlier this year, ISIS fighters declaring an Islamic state, and Boko Haram kidnapping girls and selling them into slavery.

This odd turn of events should not go unnoticed. We should be extra vigilant in this new paradigm with our diplomats and senior

officials in the government. But we should also seek to make sure that influential individuals in the private sector are protected from kidnapping or worse when flying overseas to potentially hazardous locales. This should come in the form of travel alerts and overseas embassy closings if and when we suspect that a terrorist group may be plotting harm to any overseas westerners.

By taking into account all of the things that I have mentioned previously in this paper concerning Syria, Iraq, and Yemen a coherent strategy becomes a viable alternative to the lack of strategy and policy drift apparent currently in the administration's handling of the wars in the Middle East. If ever there were a time for reflection it would be at this crucial time. Though granted ISIS is not entirely defeated in Iraq, they are on the run. And with Syria now looming as a possible battlefield it is appropriate to take a breather from what has just happened, recollect our thoughts, and move forward from there. However it's also wise to perhaps decide not to pursue ISIS into Syria either partially or wholly, if that is the said path that the President chooses to take. If the President chooses

to assist Iraqi forces in their fight against ISIS into Syria the inevitable question is what will America's role be, almost assuredly airstrikes, but what about boots on the ground?

With ISIS in peril and al-Baghdadi injured it only makes sense to take the fight to them. This is true. But also it is true that we would be entering Syria as uninvited and unwanted guest of a regime that we once contemplated airstrikes against. And also with Ar-Raqqa being the *de facto* of ISIS it seems to make sense that we would then be fighting them on battlefields that are wholly familiar to them while unique to us.

ISIS is in desperate straits right now if the rumors of al-Baghdadi's injuries are true, then it seems that his health is the paramount concern of them at this point. I liken al-Baghdadi to the khanate in the 13th century: if al-Baghdadi dies the whole enterprise will be in jeopardy since he is their leader and figure head, so if he were to die I could envision a sort of splitting of the khanate into smaller fiefdoms and these would in turn fight one another to exhaustion. But make no mistake about it al-Baghdadi dead represents a ceasing of all hostilities against the Iraqis and Kurds

since he is their main strategist and tactician, and also the group's main fundraising and recruitment draw. Without a doubt without him there is no longer an ISIS as we know them today. This is why his death should be the main objective of U.S. and Kurdish/Iraqi forces in Syria.

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Terror could also come from the sky. As uninvited guest in Bashar al-Assad's country, the idea of him bombing or dog fighting our forces is a very real predicament. It would behoove the Iraqi's as well as the U.S. if we could get assurances from the Syrian regime that they will not be malevolent proprietor's while we are in northern Syria finishing off ISIS.

As to the idea of the U.S. personally assisting the fight against ISIS with “boots on the ground” I personally wouldn’t recommend it if only since that would entail a lot of moving around of pieces which would waste precious time. Why wait to kill al-Baghdadi when the Iraqi’s along with American military advisers can do it all by themselves, with airstrikes in tow of course. If it comes to a point where al-Baghdadi closes ranks around his self in Ar-Raqqa or any other city in Syria while he attempts to convalesce it would be prudent to siege the town rather than trying to take it outright. This is because it would be difficult for military intelligence to crack that nut, if you will, considering the fierce loyalty that he inspires. What makes more sense is to starve them out of their hidey holes and frustrate all plans that they hatch to try and get out of the city with al-Baghdadi in tow an order to live to fight another day.

To defeat ISIS our number one objective should be to kill al-Baghdadi. I cannot stress enough how important he is to this particular enterprise and what his death will mean for them. Simply put they cannot and will not function without him thus negating the

need for a heavy footprint in the region and rather having the threat implode upon itself.

The Periphery: the Rise of Binladenism

The state of play in current political paradigms has shifted dramatically when speaking about geo-politics and national security. In July 2014 it was announced that the Cameroonian vice Prime Minister's wife had been kidnapped by Boko Haram. this is a return to old world order geo-political climate where for instance in the 80's impoverished Mafioso's in Italy would kidnap rich Italian and foreign nationals and demand a ransom payment for their safe return. Or when Jet liners were routinely hijacked an order to demand ransom or cause political chaos. This is a byproduct of the Bin Ladenism of terroristic acts as well as the pervasive Russian influence in conflicts around the world via arm sales and military training.

One way to define Bin Ladenism is to take the attacks of 9/11 for example. For you see by attacking the U.S. homeland in such a spectacular fashion the bar then became raised for more and more spectacular ways of harming the U.S. and its allies. Think 3/11 in Spain, the attempted shoe and underwear bombers and so on and so forth. Since the death of Bin Laden and with the rise of even more radical strains of Islam (if that's possible) the world has seen terrorist organizations become influence peddlers in the form of cold hard cash. This makes sense, since by having large cash reserves you can declare yourselves to be the true defenders of Jihad, and Islamic fundamentalism. This is evident in recent Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's brash video of earlier this year, ISIS fighters declaring an Islamic state, and Boko Haram kidnapping girls and selling them into slavery.

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locales. This should come in the form of travel alerts and overseas embassy closings if and when we suspect that a terrorist group may be plotting harm to any overseas westerners.

The current paradigm has seen Boko Haram slaughter over 2,000 people in their native Nigeria and again kidnap tens of people in northern Cameroon. This particular form of what I like to refer to as Bin Ladenism has morphed over to the current situation in Yemen. We have seen the kidnapping of the President of Yemen's chief of staff. And a storming and eventual takeover (read: Coup) of the presidential palace. And though the situation seems to be resolved with the demand for changes to the constitution by Shiite militia men exacted, the president has once again regained power in the country in an imbroglio which has lasted since at least September 2014.

When I look at these incidents I'm reminded of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and how they released a video tape of their new leader surrounded by many terrorist that ended up only getting them killed in the long run as U.S. airstrikes were carried out

soon thereafter. As I looked at the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) propaganda tape I like most of the civilized world couldn't help but question the inane insanity of the enemy that we seem to find ourselves dealing with. While viewing the video from AQAP I thought of what I was able (like most of us) to feel, the shift in paradigm that occurred in the months and years immediately following Osama bin Laden's death (OBL). OBL was the unabashedly, unquestioned head of a organization that was more top down and structured than any of us in the west could've imagined. So when I saw video of al Qaeda's second in command, Nasir al-Wuhayshi talking and hugging the al Qaeda devoted I couldn't help but begin to compare the two. First of all if there's anything analyst have learned during the intermittent time between OBL's death and the apparent crowning of an al Qaeda crown prince it's that this top down organization is not a hydra that will multiply the more we try to disassemble it. Not only can it be disassembled but it can be disassembled permanently. And although Al Qaeda core has inspired many spin off groups (al-Shabaab) and lone wolves (think the 2013 Boston marathon bombings), these tactics or organizations have their drawbacks too.

When OBL died he took with him the expertise and wherewithal of a hardened battlefield soldier. He also took with him the propensity to learn from the enemy and react accordingly. Hence the lack of focus in Al-Qaeda core insomuch as what operations should be carried out, what battlefields are worthy of spilt blood, etc. Now that the Al Qaeda spin off groups have populated the world stage and have been relatively contained. It has become somewhat vogue to assume that these groups will (including AQAP), once decapitated, simply persist without proper leadership. Do not be fooled by this inference. In fact if anything groups in Arabia, and Africa are led by strongmen who control tightly managed, top down organizations that have nebulous at best associations with al-Qaeda core and who usually have the most money out of all of the purveyors surrounding them. In other words once the strongman has been killed off the core of the terrorist group usually fractures permanently into disparate collectives that usually never see the world stage again; if they ever did in the first place. Two: fighting insurgent groups such as the LRA, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab in Africa here and now is a good thing. It's good for our

allies in the region(s) it's good for the United States, and if it's good for the United States it's usually good for the rest of the world. The idea that AQAP can exist without money or any of the other sinews of war is a ridiculous argument on its face. That is not to say that we shouldn't treat them as the existential threat that they are, but we should take care to think smartly about what it is we're dealing with. Too often just like LRA, just like Al-Shabaab were dealing with a moneyed man who has the where withal, but more than that the organizational charisma necessary to rally the requisite amount of followers to their cause. I would posit that this too is true for AQAP and their backers, once the money is drained from an organization like this, that organization ceases to be a potent factor. This is proof that there is no transnational cabal that connects all the guerilla insurgent groups in Africa (or Asia for that matter) to one another or even to outside proprietors.

Al-Wuhayshi may be a character that attempts to emulate the charisma of an OBL but that doesn't mean that his plans will come to fruition. And though he's not the only one with money in the organization what will happen then when he becomes AQAP's sole benefactor. Or what if he should perish in a drone strike; AQAP

would then become just another marginalized terrorist group with ties to Africa.

America: Trade as a tool of peace and weapon of war

Webster's defines the Doha Development Agenda as a "round of trade talks aimed at helping developing countries whose exportable goods are heavily concentrated among agricultural products develop their international trade." The Doha Development Agenda is a trade agreement that could revolutionize the way the world works as we know it. The Doha round or DDA is a trade liberalization agreement that once passed will provide an open and free market for the agricultural products of developing nations. The Doha Development Agenda (DDA) is a complex trade agreement that needs to be passed because it will allow for developing countries to trade with not only each other, but developed countries as well as in a free trade zone. The DDA is a trade liberalization round that if passed will allow for freer trade throughout the WTO. The Doha Development Agenda is beneficial for the countries involved, and the world as well. The WTO is comprised of 150 different countries

across 6 continents. The United States and emerging markets such as China have benefited from WTO membership.

NAFTA came into effect in January of 1994 bringing freer trade throughout the region. And Mexican and American relations have improved since the inception of NAFTA. U.S. annual incomes are \$1 trillion higher, or \$9,000 per household, due to trade liberalization since 1945.²³ The World Trade Organization was founded in 1947, today with its 150 members the WTO covers all regions of the world looking to expand by two dozen other countries as they seek to join. NAFTA is an increasingly powerful trading bloc. NAFTA has contributed proportionally to the per capita GDP's of the trade bloc members as well as the GDP's of the countries that they trade with. According to the WTO website "U.S. exports of services have doubled over the past 12 years, generating a \$72 billion surplus in 2006 on exports of \$414 billion." Together the NAFTA countries are the largest trading bloc in the entire world.²⁴

²³ The Doha Round, http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dda_e/dda_e.htm, Date accessed: 6/22/2010

²⁴ Ibid 1

Free Market reforms affect the world throughout not just the participating countries. World trade fell by 70 percent in the early 1930s; throwing tens of millions out of work, deepening the Great Depression, and fuelling the political tensions that helped give rise to World War II. Before the WTO high tariff laws were passed like the Smoot-Hawley which restricted trade and led to the polarized world of World War II. Today one in three acres in the U.S. is planted for export. Since the 1990s, freer trade has helped raise U.S. national economic output by nearly 50 percent, and, over the same period, the U.S. economy added nearly 20 million jobs.²⁵

Trade barriers in the developing world are substantial so removing them could have a cumulative effect. This is why Doha needs to be ratified immediately. According to the WTO website “Dismantling government barriers to trade allows individuals access to the world’s supermarket for food, clothing, and other manufactured goods...”, And furthermore, “Empirically, expanded trade has been essential to economic growth and wealth for both

²⁵ Ibid 2

developed and developing countries.”²⁶ This is especially true for African countries, as well as South East Asian countries. By allowing these countries to trade without tariffs inhibiting their growth between one another, this will allow for the reestablishment of the Silk Road. With no tariffs and a high volume of durable goods and commodities being traded that means that critical issues like Africa’s lack of affordable and consistent power would become moot points. While at the same time allowing for more money to flow freely between the two continents giving much needed development assistance to Africa (which happens to be the least developed inhabitable continent in the world). In fact Tony Blair’s Blair Commission on Africa says that “Raising Africa’s share of world trade from 2% to 3% would provide export revenues of \$70 billion, nearly three times the amount that sub-Saharan Africa receives from global aid donors.”²⁷ By convincing African countries to remove their tariffs, there would be a boom in much needed export revenue in Africa on a scale that no aid program has provided thus far.

²⁶ Ibid 3

²⁷ Blair Commission for Africa, <http://www.commissionforafrica.info/2010-report>, Tony Blair, accessed 6/22/2010

At issue for the majority of the African countries in question is the fact that their income is mostly derived from tariffs. This makes an economic as well as psychological barrier to preventing these countries from agreeing to the DDA. This is probably the most crucial issue that hasn't been addressed by the western countries like the U.S. that are adamant about the DDA becoming a reality. One solution is that perhaps by partially subsidizing the sub-Saharan African countries that use these tariffs for revenue, with aid, we would be able to convince them to perhaps adopt the DDA protocols fully without exception.

By allowing for trade barriers such as tariffs to be abolished in the countries that need it the most is what Doha is all about. Doha is a trade agreement that once ratified will allow for greater opportunities to those countries that have the greatest to gain. African, Middle Eastern, and South East Asian countries are all regions that would benefit from the Doha Development Agenda to become international law and I believe they should sign onto the agreement immediately.

When the President met with African leaders last year I thought that it was an exceptionally important to tee up the Doha round as it is important to the region, and can be incorporated into the wider world. The Doha Development Agenda (DDA) is a multilateral trade regime which once implemented will free many developing nations from tariff ridden import-export policies and instead replace them with a free trade regime that will allow for countries as diverse as Kenya, Qatar, and Malaysia to trade with one another regardless of former barriers to trade which impeded prosperity.

The Doha agreement is of special importance to Africa as many countries rely on tariffs as a main source of revenue for the state. However with Doha implemented these states would no longer receive monies from tariffs but instead would derive most of their state revenue from taxable commerce from the businesses which would be created by freeing up trade. The Blair Commission on Africa has indicated through their own research that “Raising Africa’s share of world trade from 2% to 3% would provide export revenues of \$70 billion, nearly three times the amount that sub-

Saharan Africa receives from global aid donors.”²⁸ This is not a small amount of revenue generated for these countries, and with Africa set to be the bread basket of the world, this trade deal figures prominently for Africa. To see the possible success for Africa one need look no further than the United States. In the 1930’s the Republican Party was one made up mostly of isolationist. However once high tariff laws like Smoot-Hawley were repealed the United States began to come out of the depression and after World War Two the United States stood alone as far and away the richest most powerful country on the face of the Earth.²⁹ It’s no wonder then that the World Trade Organization (WTO) labels the loosening of free trade policies as one of the number one factors for how well a country will grow in the future.³⁰ No wonder the Bush administration tried though to no avail to get DDA ratified on several occasions.

Doha is particularly important now since by allowing trade to flow freely between the DDA countries the resource curse can

²⁸ Ibid, Tony Blair

²⁹ Wikipedia.com, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smoot%E2%80%93Hawley_Tariff_Act, Accessed 6/22/2010

³⁰ Doha Round, <http://www.wto.org/english/tratope/ddae/ddae.htm>, Date accessed: 6/22/2010

once and for all be broken and revenues can diversify and increase. This will lead to greater opportunity for the countries involved (particularly African countries. One byproduct of healthy economies that is oft overlooked is a decrease in radical fundamentalism, be it Muslim or otherwise. These are the dividends of peace, and free, and fair markets. If the United States hopes to one day be rid of radical Islam then securing a viable and peaceful future for not only Africa, but the Middle East should be a priority.

Iran: Where we've been, where we are, where were going

The Iran episode as of the writing of this paper, in terms of the Possible Military Dimensions of the Iranian nuclear program, may be coming to a fitful resolution. For my part I have been live blogging the results of the meetings between the Iranians, and the P5 + 1. Below I talk about the possible outcomes of the Geneva meetings, and then talk about the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) Agreement, which was agreed to in Switzerland July 14th 2015. As of the writing of this paper the United Nations has agreed to the JCPoA agreement, however the U.S. congress is still holding hearings on the particulars of the agreement. Below is a

quick run through of Geneva, and then I take the time to point out some of the good marks I believe are present in the agreement. :

Now that the permanent members of the Security Council (U.S., China, U.K., Russia, France) plus Germany (P5+1), have gotten Iran to the negotiating table in Geneva it seems that it is incumbent of the United States to state its case in detail to not only Iran, but also the world. By keeping the public at least partially informed of the negotiations their and the implications thereof we will be able to exert the maximum amount of pressure on the Iranians and their undoubted quest for nuclear weapons. The Iranians have been dealt a crushing blow for the past decade by way of sanctions. To the point where their economy is so crippled that they are unable to refine their own oil, and when leaving Iran, Iranian assets such as airlines are unable to refuel due to the scope of sanctions. This is the pressure the Security Council as well as unilaterally, the U.S. and its partners have placed on Iran. It's time now for the strategy of choking them off economically, to pay dividends of peace for the region. The new Iranian president (who is still directed by the Supreme Leader Khomeini) has been offered a window of

opportunity in these talks that will permit the Iranians to rejoin the world community.

The terms are lenient and correspond with only one aspect of their internal politics; the ceasing of production and subsequent enrichment of not only uranium but plutonium at the various nuclear facilities scattered throughout the country. The Iranians by the sheer amount of pressure placed on them by the U.S. and our allies should be enough of a stick to the Iranians that they decide to peacefully dismantle their nuclear program, completely, and allow for nuclear inspectors from not only the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but also inspectors from the U.S. to verify dismantlement. If Iran continues to play games with the U.S. and offer only token concessions over its nuclear program (as it did today in negotiations in Geneva), the consequences could be dire. Israel, a staunch ally of the U.S. and chief proponent of military strikes in Iran, have already drawn a metaphorical redline in the sand that Iran mustn't cross. Else face the possibility of tactical nuclear strikes at various facilities in Iran related to their nuclear program.

The United States, however, not to be outdone, has according to reports, drawn up its own plans for how to handle a recalcitrant Iranian policy. Let it be clear, if Iran does not resolve this issue peacefully in Geneva, there is a real possibility that it will be resolved violently, strategically, and with nuclear weapons being dropped on Iranian soil. For the Israelis the choice is clear. The anti-Semitic regime in Iran must not be able to get anywhere even close to acquiring nuclear weapons. Erstwhile in Washington the main objective of protecting its regional partners and preventing a region wide arms race are the foundations of American foreign policy over the last twenty plus years.

So as Geneva continues and the talks go on, we as Americans should not forget the very real stakes that are on the table. As well as the very real consequences of not being able to come to a reasonable reckoning with the Iranians on not only their nuclear program, but the regimes xenophobic attitude toward its regional arch nemesis, Israel. If we are to prepare a world for our children, and children's' children that is safe and free from the type of threats in not only Iran but North Korea too then the time is now

to begin that long and arduous task ahead of us an order to protect the civility and comity which right now exist between nations.

It has been reported that Iran's proposal has been accepted by the international community. In part the proposal forces Iran to discontinue certain parts of its nuclear program, and allow outside international observers to monitor the partial dismantlement. In return the west will relax some of the crippling sanctions against Iran that forced them to the negotiating table in the first place. Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed his disgust with the proposal, reportedly, and urges the U.S. to reject the current proposal on the table.

Personally I think that Iran is approaching these negotiations in good faith but I think that the urgency on their side is not there. After all there were negotiations about a range of topics including the nuclear program back in 2007. I believe that this is really it for Iran. We have reached a fork in the road and its Iran's path to choose.

They can option one: agree that their nuclear program is not going down a path that is for peaceful purposes and give up their quest for nuclear weapons. This will allow for a freer and safer middle east that will be less antagonizing and more cooperative with one another.

Or option two: go down a path that is not conducive to peace and prosperity for either the Iranian people or the Middle East in general. This will cause much suspicion amongst the allies of the U.S. and much consternation for the people of Iran. The results could be catastrophic for Iran and would put them in a position where Iran as it exists now may not exist in the future.

The choice is Iran's and Iran's alone. They must understand that this is not the beginning of a process but rather an end to a very long and convoluted dispute. These talks in Geneva are meant to end the conversation over Iran's nuclear program, not prolong a process that in their minds may just be beginning. The past decade has revealed that stability is only attained when the U.S. speaks not only to its friends but to its enemies as well. In the case of Iran, this is especially true. These talks in Geneva, for the U.S.,

represent the ending culmination of a process that has taken at least six presidents to conclude. Again, the choice going forward is Iran's, and Iran's alone.

On Tuesday an agreement was reached by the P5+1 powers with the Islamic Republic of Iran to curtail their nuclear program through the JCPoA agreement which will have to be signed onto by both Nations, and the U.N. Security Council. The following are a couple of positive things which I think came out of the agreement and that are likely to prevent the manufacture of nuclear weapons by the Islamic State of Iran.

- **The reconfiguration of the IR-40 Heavy Water**

Production Plant (HWPP): The reconfiguration of the IR-40 Heavy Water Production Plant (HWPP) or the Arak HWPP, is a very positive step in my estimation. By Iran being forced to for one totally scrap the main enrichment component of the plant by removing the enrichment components. Or destroying them with injections of epoxy resin, leaving it's only further use for Isotope research, this plant which will be the only Heavy water plant that Iran

will have will allow for peaceful research with a non-weaponized component. When the reconfiguration of the plant is complete this will make it that much harder for the Iranians to backslide and will allow for the International community to have its trust built up about the Iranians intentions going forward.

- **Various parts of other plants are to be stored in Hall B of the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant under IAEA continuous monitoring.** This is also positive since the removal of weaponized components of the Plants and the continuous monitoring of these items will allow for verification and further safeguarding by the IAEA of anything which could be misconstrued for a weaponized function of the former Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of the Iran nuclear program.
- **The Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant:** Natanz will be the only plant that will have fuel enrichment capabilities for R&D purposes, and will be neutered to be de-weaponized with all weaponization materials stored in Hall B of the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant under IAEA continuous

monitoring. This means not Fordow, not Parchin, or any other fuel enrichment plant (FEP) will have fuel enrichment capabilities for at least 15 years guaranteeing a severe limiting of the amount of nuclear related sites which will have the hallmarks of R&D for the purposes of nuclear fuel enrichment.

- **Most sanctions are equipped with a snapback mechanism for 15 years which doesn't require a U.N. vote.** The ability to have the sanctions come back into place is a powerful one since by having this available to them the United States can further leverage future negotiations concerning the PMD of the Iranian nuclear program. Also in the event that a situation arises that requires the Dispute Resolution Mechanism the U.S. should worse come to worse can rely on their own judgment an order to determine whether or not Iran is compliant with the JCPoA
- **A Robust and fair system for logging complaints and settling unresolved issues:** The Dispute Resolution Mechanism guarantees that the games that Sadaam Hussein

played with the world before the Iraq War in 2003 cannot be played this time against the backdrop of possible nuclear war. By agreeing before hand as to what conflict resolution will look like the powers involved have guaranteed that any sort of chicanery by the Iranians will be short lived and will lead to nothing but the snap back of sanctions, or even the specter of war.

- **Iran will have the ability, once the implementation period has begun, and the requisite sanctions have been lifted, to be able to participate in all facets of the world economy including purchasing commercial western airplanes, and banking in Europe.** I think this is an important aspect of the agreement since it allows for Iran to participate in the western economy and they can then begin to become suffused with western ideas and customs in the Iranian government and amongst the Iranian people. This will mean that if Iran does indeed decide to backslide that they will be unable to extricate themselves from the world economy as quickly as they may have thought that they would be able to. Also this will prevent them from

attempting to backslide in the first place since they will have panoply of reasons manifest in front of them not to even attempt.

- **The U.S. and E.U. countries will participate with Iran on a raft of nuclear related R&D. Also Iranians will now be able to study nuclear science in the west including the United States.** By intertwining the R&D of Iran with western countries on a whole host of subjects ranging from isotope, and cancer research, to fusion technologies, I think this is a positive step since as I said earlier this will allow for the Iranians to be comfortable with the idea of cooperating with the west and will intertwine them so to the point that they will not want to backslide on the agreement making the likelihood that less probable.
- **Iran will no longer, under threat of sanction, has the ability to acquire software used for nuclear weapons construction.** Under the JCPoA Iran cannot acquire ballistics modeling software an order to be used for the exclusive purpose of building a nuclear bomb. The sanction

speaks for itself – Iran can longer model explosions with certain software under the JCPoA for any reason whatsoever.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is not a perfect document in terms of concessions from the Iranians but it is a far broader and wide reaching document than some of the skeptics would care to admit. I believe that by pursuing this plan of action we can ultimately win the day which is why I feel compelled to support this line of reasoning.

Russian Privateering in the Developing World

“Insecurity linked to armed conflict remains one of the greatest obstacles to human development. It is both a cause and consequence of mass poverty.”³¹

When the United States unceremoniously dethroned Qaddafi, a dictator of unimaginable brutality, a people were finally free to choose their own destiny. And the Russians lost one of their

³¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005: International Co-operation at a Crossroads*, 2005, New York: UNDP, pp. 151–154.

largest arms smugglers in the region. After all it was Qaddafi who, with the help of the Russians, imported massive amounts of Kalashnikov rifles and rocket propelled grenades among other panoply of war. These were given to Qaddafi at a steeply discounted price. Qaddafi in turn sold these weapons to rebels and the governments which were trying to quell their rebellions at enormous markups. We know this because of the serial numbers that accompanied the weapons (as well as the story of Viktor Bout). By the time the 2000's had come around war was endemic in large swaths of Africa (Sierra Leon, Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire, Central African Republic, etc.)³², and Qaddafi had created his own veritable cottage industry. This cycle of weaponry for diamonds and gold came to a screeching halt when in the summer of 2011 Qaddafi was killed in a brutal manner by the people that he oppressed for over 40 years. This weapons vacuum which has yet to be completely filled by any one entity has left the Russians with few options to make up the surge the likes of which was found in Qaddafi, until Syria arrived.

³² The Usual Suspects, Global Witness, March 2003, pp. 3-4

Syria acts as one of the most successful conduits of Russian weapons systems and small arms since the end of the Cold War. By most estimates Bashar al-Assad has purchased in excess of \$1 billion in weaponry from Russia since the wars beginning, as his economy lies in ruins. Numbers like this however are chump change when you consider the amount of possibly unfulfilled deliveries to countries such as Algeria which, as of 2009, had \$5.2 billion in unfulfilled orders from the Russians this includes some of their most advanced air defense systems as well as Jet fighters. If this is any indication of how sales are going in Africa alone, business must be good indeed, though not good enough, since the Russians have since sent some of the same advanced air defense systems to the Syrians who are in the middle of a brutal civil war. The strategic interest in Tartus, a sea port, for the Russians can't be discounted; however the amount of prestige that they have expended on Al-Assad could come at a price even heavier than the Russians can handle down the road.

They can find new end markets outside the North Africa and the Middle East (MENA) region however sanctions and

emerging super powers such as China make that a difficult proposition. Russia recently stated as its goal to become the world's largest arms supplier. And though statements such as that come as a welcome respite to African despots, guerilla insurgents, and petty tyrants, I'm sure that when that was read aloud in the West a collective rolling of the eyes was no doubt the first reaction in their respective capitals. Assessments aside, the current negotiations in the Security Council, for a use of force measure to be included in the currently debated resolution needs a proper amount of leverage in order to arm twist the Russians to agreeing to it. That's why I propose that the U.S. in concert with its allies find a way to impede Russian arms sales not just in Syria, but throughout the world. As I mentioned earlier Algeria has \$5.2 billion in pending orders with the Russians if they can somehow be persuaded to cancel, postpone, or possibly even renege on prior agreements and buy European weaponry, that would go a long way in this arm twisting business with minimal effort. One point of cooperation which may convince the Russians to cut their losses is the proposed North Korean-South Korean Pipeline or PNG. This pipeline would supply gas to South Korea from Russia via North Korea; its worth is estimated at \$100

billion dollars. This is just one of the examples of how U.S.-Russian cooperation can be fruitful for both sides.

The conclusion is this: Russia must not be allowed to make a mockery of the international order, indeed international norms and common law. If we hope to prevent al-Assad's mass graves and prevent the sort of internecine conflict that we've seen in Sierra Leone for instance a la Qaddafi we must be prepared to confront the Russians at all stages of statecraft and convince the world to reject Putin's autocratic bent in favor of a more prescient and tangible American path. While at the same time it's also important to understand that cooperation is possible between the two powers but only when by working hand in hand and not pitting one against the other can we make the world a safer place for all of God's creations.

Russia in Ukraine: Choices and Consequences

One thing is for certain there are indeed Russian forces on a third “Southern” front in Ukraine, and these forces consist of tanks, heavy artillery, and multiple rocket launchers. The following is a list of choices and the consequences of these choices which the President, in my opinion, should keep in mind when looking forward to the future of American-Russo-Sino relations.

- **The First Choice:** The first choice is that he can reassure NATO allies of the U.S.’s commitment to their security under the NATO umbrella and help the Ukrainian army monetarily in order to have them stand up and defend themselves against the Russian incursion.
- **The Problem:** This choice is probably the most tempting and least chaotic of the choices in the short term but is flawed on two principles. The first is that by not directly engaging Russia with forces on the ground, or in the air this avenue seeks to only embolden the Russian threat to other eastern European countries (including Georgia) and create space for China to begin “settling” its claims on south

china sea islands, as well as Taiwan. This option is also flawed since by emboldening Russia we are drawing China, and Russia closer together and allowing for other nation states to be scared into seeing them as a viable alternative to the American world order. This option pulls it's weight however since were able to show that we will protect NATO allies by not actually putting anything on the line (besides money) also by taking a wait and see approach were able to test Russian resolve as they engage in battle against a far inferior but scrappy nonetheless opponent in their own backyard.

- The Second Choice: provide American weaponry and support to the Ukrainian government.
- The Problem: this choice is flawed on multiple fronts since by providing weaponry to the Ukrainian's from the U.S. or even from other allies this precipitates a long held belief in

the west about the Ukraine that there is a “hole” in their “weaponry pocket”. That is to say whatever we give them expect to end up fully intact and capable in the hands of Russia, China, and anyone else who has the funds to acquire such technology. And even when not fully functional from battlefield use, these machines of war can be reversed engineered by the Russians and Chinese and could then end up on future battlefields against the west.

- The Third Choice: Bomb Russian positions with U.S. drones and warplanes.
- The Problem: This choice requires the sort of intestinal fortitude that few in Washington currently have. This choice would have the dimensions of a game of chicken to it. This is because the Russians have capabilities far beyond any enemy we have faced down since the end of the cold war including battleships in black sea ports. So by cherry

picking what we would bomb there's no guarantee that the Russians would likewise cherry pick only drones, and planes, and besides this idea puts our fighting men and women at great risk for little reward. Though it is a choice that truly displays the resolve of our capabilities to our allies throughout the world, however there are better less dangerous ways of doing this.

- The Fourth Choice: Deploy a NATO contingent to Kiev.
- The Problem: this choice to me actually seems like a good idea since we could display resolve and comfort allies, without actually doing anything. Though by drawing a line in the sand for Russia to cross we are daring them to siege it, the reckoning on this idea should be that if they were willing to go all the way to Kiev now, that means they were going to attack it anyway so it's a good thing that were already here.

- The Fifth Choice: do nothing and call for Russia's ouster from the U.N. Security Council before the opening of the U.N. General Assembly.
- The Problem: this choice though lacking in muscularity is actually a robust version of diplomacy. This is a choice that I can get behind if only because Russia shot MH-17 out of the sky and is bound to do something similar though I can't say that this choice, and this choice alone will comfort our allies in the region.
- The Sixth Choice: Hold NATO exercises on Russia's border with fellow NATO allied countries.
- The Problem: this is a choice that the administration has already made and though I can't see it paying dividends of

peace, I do agree with the strategy if only to buy some time in the short and long term.

America: An Indictment of Russia

Since the early 2000's Russia has gone out of its way to make life harder for the United States anyway it knew how. The following is an indictment of the Russian federation and their leadership when it comes to their engagement with the world and how they have manipulated situation after situation to strengthen their own hand and leave in their wake death destruction and questions of why these things are being done by supposed "responsible partners":

- In the early 2000's throughout to Col. Qaddafi's ouster then President Vladimir Putin supplied small arms and ammunition to the Libyan dictator. He then in turn supplied these weapons to rebels in Sierra Leone and to Liberian dictator Charles Taylor during their respective civil wars;

for conflict diamonds. These wars in turn killed and maimed millions and displaced millions more.

- Vladimir Putin has been accused of assisting Victor Bout in his arms sales around the world which totaled in excess of \$1 Billion. These arms later fueled tensions and wars in Kashmir, Thailand, armed the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and started wars in Central African Republic, and Congo among others.
- Vladimir Putin has been accused of funneling monies and arms to the sons of Col. Qaddafi and fomenting terrorism in Nigeria, and Mali via Boko Haram, violence in Central African Republic, and South Sudan, Uganda, as well as the conflicts in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Somaliland, and Kenya).
- Vladimir Putin it has been proved supplied Russian made S-300 surface to air missiles to the Bashar al-Assad regime

in which helped to further strengthen his hold on the country, and give him the confidence that he needed an order to gas his own people indiscriminately with Saran and VX nerve agents.

- In the summer of 2008 Vladimir Putin gave the go ahead to his forces to invade another sovereign country (Georgia) an order to prevent them from moving closer to their western allies, in violation of international law.
- Under his direct orders Vladimir Putin had Aleksander Litvenenko Poisoned, and killed him with Polonium 210, an irradiated substance in London, a case for which still nobody has been brought to justice.
- Also under his direct orders Vladimir Putin Poisoned Victor Luschenko a Ukrainian former President while he

was campaigning against the Kremlin's wishes to become President. No one has been brought to justice for this crime against humanity either.

- In July of 2014 a Malaysian Airliner that had departed Holland en route to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was shot down by Russian backed Ukrainian Dissidents over eastern Ukraine killing all 298 on board.

When taken as a whole these actions prove that Vladimir Putin poses a grave risk to the international community and these actions must be taken as the way that new Russia acts. And since we're dealing with a new potent and growing threat then it must be contained, indeed isolated as part of a larger vision to secure the international community against international terrorist like the Russians. That is why the only actions which make sense at this point are to declare Russia as an international sponsor of terrorism. And also to work with the UN to suspend at least temporarily if not

permanently the Russian Federation's Permanent seat with veto powers on the U.N. Security Council.

America: Courting Russian Isolation

Earlier in the year president Obama made an equivocation that he would “Court” isolation for Russia over its pariah status due to the crisis in Ukraine. Less than six months later he may finally be getting the opportunity to completely isolate Russia from the international community. With the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 by Russian equipped Ukrainian rebels using a Russian made SA-11 surface to air missile launcher. Russia has been coming tantalizingly close to becoming a pariah state without actually being designated so. That's not to say that they have not done good things in the interim whether it be Iranian nuclear talks, Syria chemical weapons destruction, or even the timely supplying of Iraq with

soviet made Sukhoi fighter jets. But when those 298 civilians in Malaysian air MH17 fell from the sky in a blazing inferno, well the tape on the entire newscasts speaks for itself.

The tragedy is worse enough be it on purpose or not but for Russian television to insist that Ukraine was aiming for President Vladimir Putin's plane, but accidentally hit the Malaysian Air flight this to me is arrogance on the level of courting war. In 2008 Russia thought that it could turn war on and off with Georgia like a water faucet. But that war (which was began by the Russians) was not stopped by them but rather by the fast wheeling and dealing diplomacy of the Bush administration. So then now fast forward to immediately following the Sochi Olympics in 2014 and Russia intervenes in Ukrainian politics by sending in masked gun men to foment revolution amongst the mostly Russian speaking citizens of eastern Ukraine, and Crimea. Again Russia treats this war as though they can turn it on and off as they wish. I'm here to tell you today that Russia may be able to control their variables when it comes to

starting a war, but nowhere by no one is it possible to control the variables that will end a war, at a place and time of their choosing.

So then the logical question then is what is next? Well for one the U.S. can start by sending in American Special Forces that will work alongside Ukrainian Special Forces to safely and quickly secure the crash site which stretches some five miles. They can also do well to secure a route of safe passage for the NTSB, FBI, and international organizations that need to get to the crash site to conduct investigations. After the wreckage has been secured and everyone of import no longer needs to be there we can then begin to gain the popular support which is needed to not only defeat the Russian incursion into Ukraine, but also to isolate Russia on the world stage. Russia as of late has become a State Sponsor of Terrorism. This represents a grave and growing threat to the United States of America and its allies. By labeling the Russian Federation a state sponsor of terrorism this will allow for the U.S. and its allies to impose stricter sanctions on Russia and its public private entities. This is the first step towards isolation of Mr. Putin and his allies, and the making of Mr. Putin into a pariah. The second step is to

announce at the United Nations during the opening of the general assembly this summer that the United States along with its allies are going to be taking steps at the U.N. to, barring a change in leadership, remove Russia first temporarily then permanently from the U.N. security council.

I think that these are the most prudent steps that we can take short of war. Russia cannot and will not be allowed to shot down commercial airliners as it wishes. These are extremely dangerous times and with Russia actively engaging in preventing the U.S. from ameliorating the conditions in countries in the Middle East to Europe this is something than cannot and shall not be accepted. I pray for those that were aboard MH17 as well as their family members and I also pray that may God have mercy upon Vladimir Putin's soul for equipping the Ukrainian dissidents with technology that can blow a Boeing 777 filled with close to three-hundred people out of the sky.

Act I: Russia in Syria

If the goal of the United States involvement in Iraq, and Syria is to defeat ISIS and bring peace and stability to the region, all while maintaining a predominant position in middle eastern affairs. It would seem that by Russia's recent incursion into Syria, an order to prop up President Bashar al-Assad the United States options have dwindled. And while it is true that the Russians have somewhat limited the coalitions options, and are rightfully so a force to be reckoned with, the idea that the United States has completely run out of options is simply a fallacy. When Russia began its incursion the first thought that came in my head was that this was probably the end of major American involvement in the affairs of Syria and Iraq, at least for the time being. It also occurred to me that Russia is trying to make a strong play for power and prestige in the region-- indeed the world, and was largely successful at it. It also struck me as a rather naïve move that Russia, a waning power by all accounts, but a power no less was making what I would consider a blunder of historical proportions. Yet with all their inanity they had won the

day in Syria. I expected for the U.S. to withdraw eventually if not immediately from the battlefield and perhaps leave things to the Turks to take care of. However upon closer inspection I realized that the Russians, whom are under a lot of pressure economically couldn't keep up this breakneck pace of events indefinitely. I was right. The Russians got to Syria and immediately began bombing rebel factions friendly to the Coalition such as Tajammu Alezzah, and the Free Syrian Army (FSA). And though they struck Islamic State positions as well, the damage was done, the goodwill which was afforded them by the international community at the beginning of the campaign, was squandered fighting forces which only immediately threatened Assad's positions in the west of the country. The Russians by doing so have opened up what I believe to be two lanes of opportunity for the U.S. and its coalition partners. The first lane that I believe that has been opened up by the recent fighting is the idea of being able to counter Russia's influence in the Baltic by now moving men and military materiel into the Baltic states an order to work as a bulwark against further Russian aggression. You can see it in the court of public opinion, as of now the European continent couldn't be more decisive in their discontent with Russian

policies not only in Syria, but the added on effect of Ukraine and the greater Baltic's as well. By moving troops into one or more of the occidental countries in the Baltic's we can guarantee safety from further Russian aggression with an added plus of having a casus entente for exactly the reason of why we should do such a thing.

The second avenue which has opened up is the fact that now there is a casus belli for Iraq to enter Syria for the first time since the wars beginning. The explicit surrendering of the airspace of Iraq, by Iraq to Russia at first seemed to be a quid pro quo. But with Russia not bombing targets immediately the U.S. can now say that Russia has precipitated the necessity for ground troops to be present in western Syria. I don't talk of American ground troops but rather the professional army of Iraq. By Russia conceding that the Islamic State are indeed terrorist, and considering the amount of heft that they have put into the fight, it seems logical that Iraq would want to protect the integrity of its borders, and remain a contiguous state by eliminating once and for all the Islamic State. And since the Russians refuse to field their army in the west of Syria, it seems

incumbent upon Iraq (with the backing of U.S. air controllers of course) to eliminate the threat in not only Iraq, but Syria as well.

The idea that Russia has somehow limited the amount of options for the U.S. and its coalition is somewhat fallacious. By balancing Russian air power with U.S. air power, and relieving the stress on Syrian coalition brigades, by the used of the Iraqi army. We can assure the eventual destruction of Islamic State, and continue the marginalization of the Syrian government and Russia as well.

If a cold war is truly beginning to develop between the United States and Russia, then it seems to me that it would prudent to expect the worst case scenario, as far as Russian intentions are concerned. We as a nation cannot allow ourselves to fall prey to Russian coercion in any part of Europe. The situation in Donetsk and Crimea is unacceptable. We must counter Russian aggression with robust plans for the long haul in Eastern Europe. With Russia's incursion into Syria and the subsequent blowback throughout the world to their actions we must seize this opportunity to affect change in the European countenance toward Russia. At no time

since the end of the cold war has there been such unity in Europe against Russia. This does not mean that Russian aggression toward the rest of Europe will abate on its own. Quite the contrary, if we are to see meaningful change in Russia's disposition which can carry us through many generations of good will and comity between the U.S. and Russia, then we must prepare to defend Eastern Europe from the grave and growing threat of Russian intransigence. It is imperative on America's part to gain the upper hand, and initiative where we can, and when we can with regards to Russia.

The idea of the phase adaptive approach, or PAA is not new with regards to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). However the idea of if or where we should deploy it has been under debate for some time. The threat of nuclear war coming from North Korea, or a belligerent China is real and we must do all we can to protect ourselves from such an attack. In terms of a ballistic missile threat on our pacific coast from said states I believe that it is secure. As we've unfurled PAA an order to counter threats in the world from nuclear capable states we have also run into strong opposition not just from our enemies but from our allies as well. For our allies there

idea of PAA has changed dramatically with Russia's increasingly bellicose maneuvers. In recent months and years however the threat of so called hybrid warfare has increased exponentially from Russia. This is why I'm proposing that we consult with our allies and friends in the Baltic's an order to negate the threat that Russia poses to Europe, both conventionally, and strategically. By speeding up the process through which the PAA is adopted by nations we can better get a handle on the unique threat which Russia now poses to the region.

It must not end with simply installing radar and deploying SDI to the requisite regions an order to counter Russian ballistic missile threat in Europe. But we must also work to deploy tactical and strategic conventional military assets an order to balance Russia's significant influence, through coercion in Europe. And while the idea of defending Europe with weaponry is important it's also important to realize that weaponry alone will not allow America a free hand in its defense affairs. It was not long ago that Ukraine and the rest of Europe were caught flat footed when Russia decided to no longer deliver vital liquefied natural gas (LNG) deposits to

Europe in the winter by shutting off its pipelines. This is a situation which must not be allowed to subsist. This is why I'm recommending today that we build a pipeline to Europe across the North Atlantic Sea. By opening U.S. oil and LNG to Europe we can thereby affect a strategic advantage over Russia. By doing this we allow for a more even playing field by creating parity between Europe and Russia when it comes to economic and diplomatic issues.

As for the situation in Syria with regard to our allies and vetted militias we must not stand idly by while Russia continues to bomb them. On October 10, 2015 it was reported that Turkey shot down a Mig-29 that encroached upon that sovereign nation's (and NATO allies) airspace when anti aircraft guns were able to lock on. The idea that the United States can go into combat with Russian jets in Syria is an implausible concept. The United States has recently been fielding vetted Free Syrian Army militias (FSA) in the fight against Assad, and the Islamic State. These fighters are very good at what they do as they've seized the initiative against the Assad Regime and IS. However the idea that these fighters can make

further gains while being bombed in conflict while the United States stands by is folly. Would we allow U.S. men and women to operate in Iraq with no forward air support while Russia bombed them with laser guided weaponry? The idea of this disgust me and whomever came up with it, should be ashamed of themselves.

So then the next logical question then is what should be done. The Free Syrian Army no matter how able and well equipped they are simply cannot win the war in Syria on their own. They are simply outgunned and the United States is too deep in the hole to come at in any other way than this. The FSA needs to be relocated to an offshore country (preferably America) where they can be further vetted and trained up for the inevitable aftermath of the Assad regime, as well as the Islamic State. The United States has been fighting in the Middle East at least since 2003 while Russia has just started. It therefore makes sense that Russia does not have the wealth of knowledge, wisdom, or experience that the United States has had since being in the region following the attacks of 9/11. But what about the Islamic State you may say? How are we supposed to fight them without our trained militias in the area? The best hope

that we have is that the Iraqis will pick up their arms and fight for the future of their own country, with the blessing of the American government. And when I say Iraqis I don't talk of the Kurdish rebel groups, there being bombed by turkey and Russia currently. Instead I mean the official Iraqi army that the U.S. government spent so much blood and treasure propping up and training during the war with Osama Bin Laden, and Al-Qaeda. Yes, that Iraqi army. It is the only way that we can have troops in Syria, who will only fight Islamic State, and not worry about being bombed by Assad, Russia, or the Turks for that matter.

Also while we're on the subject of Russian intransigence, and the future of our relations in Europe, with respect to Russia, never before has there been so much agreement between the U.S. and the European Union, and Europe more broadly that Russia in Europe is no longer acceptable. The first thing that needs to be done to solve the Russian question is energy independence. That means that Russia can longer have the ability to at any day and time to turn off the spigot of oil, and liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe for any reason whatsoever. And if they can it should make such an

insignificant dent in the daily Europeans life that we would hear not so much as a whimper from them. How do we get to such parity, one might ask? Well the obvious answer would be to funnel oil into Europe from a secondary source nearby. However with relations recently souring with Azerbaijan, and Central Asia as a whole it becomes much more difficult lately to secure any sort of oil and gas deal with them that Russia couldn't easily block or manipulate for their own gain. And getting oil and gas deposits from the Middle East to Europe will prove logistically challenging with the many wars that are currently being waged in the region, with no end in sight. Africa is distant and likewise as unstable as the Middle East in many terms. The recent shale boom in the U.S. and Canada assured a glut of oil for the U.S., and it is currently being debated as to what should come of it. This is why I'm proposing that a pipeline be built that would send oil from the U.S. and Canada to Europe. This pipeline would be on land from the shale fields of North Dakota, and Saskatchewan to the eastern coast of Nova Scotia. The oil would then move northward to cross the Davis Strait into Greenland where it would again hit land. Then at the southern tip of Greenland it would again cross the Atlantic into Iceland. Then next

down to the United Kingdom and eventually to Europe via additional pipeline to France, and Germany. This Infrastructure will solidify a new era of peace and cooperation between the U.S. and Europe, particularly in the economic sphere.

The countering Russia's aggression in Donetsk, Crimea, and Syria is a noble calling that must be heeded by the United States, and its partners in Europe. We can begin by nurturing our relationship with the FSA by bringing them to America, and coddling them until the time comes for an appropriate Syrian Putsch. However the fight must not end. By utilizing American airpower, and allowing for the Iraqi army to take the lead, we provide safe cover for the United States through a country that we're all too familiar with. The Iraqis will provide the ability to fight the Islamic state, without fighting Assad, and all while not being bombed from any side concerned. Not the Russians, not the Syrian army, and not Turkey. By taking a step back and regaining our composure we can see that there are many things within Europe which we can do, that will affect the outcome of relations in Syria. These things include, but are not limited to, allowing for the

construction of pipeline from the American and Canadian Midwest, to Europe via Greenland, and Iceland. We can also bring into the fold a hastening of the PAA and SDI into Eastern European countries. This will allow for a further rebalancing of the U.S. relationship with Russia. It should also be noted that we should seek to strengthen our ties with Eastern Europe by moving soldiers, and military materiel into the Baltic's which will provide for the defense of these countries against an already strategically committed Russia. This is not the end of the road, but by taking these first steps and more I believe that we just might get there.

North Korea: The Wild Card

When Kim Jong-Un came to power I knew that at that very moment we were going to be dealing with a completely new ball of wax when it came to North East Asia. The approach I recommended was one of engagement and conciliation. And indeed basketball diplomacy has paid some dividends however the specter of a nuclear

North Korea (DPRK) led by an unknown thirty something hangs over the region.

North Korea: The Beginning of Kim Jong-Un's rise

The following is an excerpt from a newspaper column I wrote on Kim Jung-Un in August 2010 entitled "North's relationship with U.S. contingent on Aid":

Though a transition in the North Korean leadership seems imminent in the near future this should not necessarily be viewed as a negative development. Kim Jong-IL who is severely ailing after a purported 2008 stroke has rarely been seen in public since and has had his propaganda apparatus issue decrees on the imminence of a possible successor taking over, the twenty-six year old son of the reclusive leader Kim Jong -Un. The most recent evidence of this has been the much covered media harbinger, a visit by the North Korean leader, along with Kim Jong-Un to China while former American

President Jimmy Carter attempted to secure the release of an American hostage in North Korea. The most obvious explanation that I can think of as to why the “Dear Leader” didn’t remain in North Korea possibly introducing his son to former president Jimmy Carter is so that Kim Jong-Il or his son that is, has more latitude in his official foreign policy dealings with the outside world.

The trip served a purpose of many fold, since it allowed for the North’s leadership also to cultivate an understanding between them and the Chinese leadership that will serve them well if possible reunification talks go forward for the peninsula as the incoming Jong-Un sees fit. Though the Dear Leaders son is young his popularity in both North, and South Korea should not go unobserved. He is known for his intellect than for his military exploits and his proximity in age to the nascent intelligentsia in South Korea makes him a popular figure in the south. In South Korea the aging ruling class who still harbor resentment toward the North over the Korean war will still control the reins of power at the time of the North’s plenary session which is rumored to be the

official handing over of power to the younger Kim, and for the foreseeable future.

This doesn't mean that unification talks won't take place while there still in power, but it does mean that there will likely not be complete unification between the two countries until the south hands over the reins of power to the younger ruling class. The unpredictability of the North's leadership will not be lessened by this change in leadership either. Some are certain that from Thanksgiving of 2006, when the north first detonated a nuclear device, to roughly the present that there has been a high stakes contest between certain elements within the North's leadership to rule the country, a contest which Jong-Un by his elevation by his father is assumed to have won.

It also doesn't help that these contest of will have also coincided with extremely provocative acts by the North such as the testing of a new longer range missile, the Tae-Po Dong three, and the detonation of nuclear devices in underground laboratories. It's also worth noting that these provocative measures have ebbed and flowed according to the "Dear Leaders" sporadic health scares. A

destabilized Korean peninsula is in no one's self interest, and if six-way party talks are to resume an emboldened, yet conciliatory Jong-Un may be the correct way to go. The Koreans are currently suffering through one of the worst food shortages in their history. This should be taken as an opportunity of rapprochement with the North, and also to test the revolutionary ideals, and east wind vs. western allies' latitudes of the newly installed leadership. By being gracious and forthcoming with food aid for the north we not only ingratiate ourselves with the leadership, but the arrival of new stores of food for the jubilee celebration for his ascendancy will no doubt be a lesson to the younger Jong-Un that if he hopes to do more than survive, but prosper within the stringent international world order that he should take care to reciprocate kind for kind with the U.S.

If we take one thing away from the North Korean leadership's recent harbinger in China it should be this. That the north sees itself on par with the Chinese and hopes to project that stance throughout the world. We can facilitate that point of view but only if they're willing to compromise in the agreed nuclear

*framework. A policy that is heavy on carrots and light on sticks will serve us well in the opening salvos of the nascent government's beginnings. A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*³³

North Korea: Kim Jong-Un Secures His Throne

The following excerpt is taken from an article written by me in January 2014: New Year North Korea:

As the New Year has officially begun I'd like to take this time to reflect on two years of Kim Jong-Un being in control of North Korea. Never in my lifetime has there been a more perilous moment in my estimation, in North Korea, than during these two years. We have seen a nuclear detonation, the murder of Kim Jong-Un's uncle... by him, failed basketball diplomacy on the U.S.'s behalf, and saber rattling to begin 2014 that seems bound to promote more

³³ North's relationship with U.S. contingent on Aid, The Lancer Newspaper, Kevin M. Miller, August 09,2010

disorder on the Korean Peninsula. Kim Jong-Un has been basking in the spotlight of his new found fame while others have plotted behind his back. When his father's administration was threatened early on in its outset this led to a vicious purge by him and a society even more isolated from the world, let alone the United States.

This cycle seems to be playing itself out once more as Kim Jong-Un finds himself with a family in tatters after his uncle's shootout with forces loyal to the young Kim, and the replacement afterwards of anyone he deemed not properly educated in his family's leadership style. He also seems to be isolating himself even more by building private ski runs for the elite, recalling ambassadors who were deemed loyal to his uncle, and warning the united states and its allies on New Year's Day that he would start a nuclear war with the U.S. should hostilities commence on the Korean peninsula. Coincidentally it seems to me that if he hopes to preserve his own rule that he should open up more to the U.S. instead of threatening it with nuclear war. This is evidenced by the true story of his uncle's treachery being revealed to the world. It was only when the U.S. and its public was told about the gunfight

before his execution that a modicum of pressure was released around the young Kim. By further opening up he can look to gain more stability and assurance in his reign.

This route is contrary to his predecessors who were stalwarts against any sign of perceived weakness leaking outside of the country; that is to say they insisted upon a unified front. With Kim Jong-Un however he does not have the luxury of being able to lie and suppress the news an order to keep his reign secure, he simply does not have the reservoir of trust in his leadership qualities, or the fiat of the old guard under his belt, yet. Simply put he does not have the suzerain his father once had, let alone his grandfather. This means that an order for survival he will have to allow for his country to be inserted into the new world order taking their place no matter the consequences. Nuclear disarmament is the natural course of action that comes to mind when you think of the world order and North Korea. But let's also remember the lingering possibility of the reunification of the peninsula is on everybody's mind. It seems like only a matter of time until it happens, however distant that time may be.

One conciliatory step the U.S. can do to make this happen is to do away with basketball diplomacy altogether and to replace it with a high level back channel between the two countries. This will allow for further pressure to be relieved for the young Kim by making it seem as though he has won concessions on bread and butter issues for the North Koreans like recognition, and survival. This may seem like a stretch now considering the saber rattling of yesterday(literally) but let's not forget that a new regime is in effect in Korea, that is to say, this is not Kim Jong-Un's stilted and unwavering father that were talking about. Also the reverse situation seems catastrophic. Imagine: a failed North Korean state that convulses on a daily basis with hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing over its borders and factional infighting being engaged upon all while a small but weighty nest egg of nuclear tipped ICBM's hangs in the balance on the once proud Korean Peninsula.

This cannot be allowed to happen and the current administration should do everything in its power to prevent it from happening. Nuclear war has never been an option on the Korean

*Peninsula and a failed state even more so. The idea of a failed state on the Korean peninsula should scare even the most hard-boiled North Korean Analyst. The Current administration should secure a relationship with the North If not for their selves, then for their children.*³⁴

North Korea: Rapprochement or Revanchist

Kim began taking a hold of power before his father's demise which is how I knew that he was someone that had his father's respect (he made him a four star general), and the respect of those around him. However it wasn't long before tumult began to creep into the Korean government Vis-a-Vis Kim Jong-Un's uncle Jang Sung Taek. The coup plot was discovered after Jang's allies had a fire fight with forces loyal to Kim. Soon thereafter Jang was on trial for "counter –revolutionary" ideals or treason and summarily executed for said crimes. This began to worry not only the west but China, and North Korea's neighbors.

³⁴ "New Year, North Korea", www.kevinpoliticalblog.wordpress.com, Kevin Miller, January 2nd, 2014

About eleven months before Jang was executed in December of 2013, the North and so then by proxy Kim Jun-Un conducted his first nuclear test. This was most likely what may have frightened Jang and quite frankly the North's closest ally China into wanting to marginalize him or strip him of power completely hence the coup attempt. However by Jang doing this he only strengthened the hold that Kim Jong-Un has on the regime and by not having Jang around there was another power vacuum (the first being the death of his father) that Kim could fill with his own cadre. China has been hemming and hawing over the row concerning Jang's death due to his proximity to the Chinese leadership. This has strained relations between the two but I do not see disengagement or even a beginning of discussions for the DPRK to return to six party talks. As of January 2015 the idea of reunification talks at the "highest levels" have been promulgated by both the DPRK; Kim Jong-Un in his New Year's address, and the Republic of Korea; a formal announcement by President Park. Also in January of 2015 according to press reports "second track" talks between the U.S. and North Korea have concluded with little to no progress to show for the effort. All of these new initiatives sound promising but as the

“second track” talks show if there are no deeds to back up the words then any effort on anybody’s side is bound to fall flat.

Conclusion

America: Engagement or Rigidity

For its part America must wade into these difficult times with caution and a combination of carrots and sticks for all parties involved. This has already been shown with the heavy handedness that the administration has rebuked countries such as Russia, and North Korea with sanctions targeting their elite. Beijing’s increasing power and influence in Asia, and the arguably growing danger of a serious crisis emerging in the near to medium-term over volatile issues such as Taiwan, North Korea, and several territorial disputes

along China's borders.³⁵ America must stand strong against possible aggression from all parties named, response to crises on periphery more important than at first observed, response to events crucial, must regain global respect for America, leaving the big wars for the rest while we prepare for the inevitable big test for our country, prepare for counterpoised organizations to the United States' New World Order, do not let others dictate American narrative, be prepared for parts of the world to be hostile to the U.S. for the long term, prepare for war but don't initiate it. So long as U.S. maintains moral high ground domino effect is obsolete much as we saw in the 1980's with Russia in Afghanistan. We should, however, prepare for large parts of Asia, and Africa to be in world conflict which will be Sino-Soviet in nature and will have absolutely nothing to do with the United States.

Let the principles of Robert Jervis and his metaphor for the security dilemma as it relates to Jean Jacques Rousseau's stag hunt dilemma wherein he says: *"The lack of an international sovereign*

³⁵ CHINESE NATIONAL SECURITY DECISIONMAKING UNDER STRESS, Edited by Andrew Scobell Larry M. Wortzel, CHINESE CRISIS MANAGEMENT: FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS, TENTATIVE OBSERVATIONS, AND QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE, Michael D. Swaine, p.5, September 2005

not only permits wars to occur, but also makes it difficult for states that are satisfied with the status quo to arrive at goals that they recognize as being in their common interest. Because there are no institutions or authorities that can make and enforce international laws, the policies of cooperation that will bring mutual rewards if others cooperate may bring disaster if they do not. Because states are aware of this, anarchy encourages behavior that leaves all concerned worse off than they could be, even in the extreme case in which all states would like to freeze the status quo. This is true of the men in Rousseau's "Stag Hunt." If they cooperate to trap the stag, they will all eat well. But if one person defects to chase a rabbit-which he likes less than stag-none of the others will get anything. Thus, all actors have the same preference order, and there is a solution that gives each his first choice: (i) cooperate and trap the stag (the international analogue being cooperation and disarmament); (2) chase a rabbit while others remain at their posts (maintain a high level of arms while others are disarmed); (3) all chase rabbits (arms competition and high risk of war); and (4) stay

at the original position while another chases a rabbit (being disarmed while others are armed) ”³⁶

China views itself as an aspiring yet nonaggressive great power, increasingly confident yet also acutely sensitive to domestic and external challenges to its stability and status. China’s leaders, and many ordinary Chinese citizens, possess a strong memory of the nation’s supposed historical victimization and manipulation at the hands of stronger powers. Thus, they are prepared to go to significant lengths to avoid the appearance of being weak and “giving-in” to great power pressures, or of engaging in predatory or manipulative behavior themselves. Chinese leaders also evince a very strong commitment to specific basic principles and core interests, especially those principles and interests associated with the defense of China’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, both of which are related closely to national dignity. This viewpoint is apparently also shared by many ordinary Chinese citizens.³⁷

³⁶ Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma, Robert Jervis,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009958?origin=JSTOR-pdf>, 1978 Princeton University Press

³⁷ CHINESE NATIONAL SECURITY DECISIONMAKING UNDER STRESS, Edited by Andrew Scobell Larry M. Wortzel, CHINESE CRISIS MANAGEMENT: FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS, TENTATIVE OBSERVATIONS, AND QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE, Michael D. Swaine, p.16, September 2005

North Korea is a victim of their own system; toxic alliances such as Syria, and possibly China will be a negative mitigating effect on North Korea as a whole. If there is no rapprochement with South Korea there could be much suffering in North Korea and eventual undoing from Sino-Soviet war as they are forced to choose sides through coercion from both the Chinese and Russians. Expect for trend of celebrities engaging in politics to continue (think North Korea); expect mostly celebrities from Hollywood, and the American and European Political intelligentsia, to be disgruntled by new administration in U.S., will take to spying and openly soliciting foreign governments (besides North Korea) with so-called expertise a la Edward Snowden, should not be a problem so long as U.S. has positive narrative.

In the end it will ultimately be up to America to chart its own destiny. We can be confrontational and get caught up in the Sino-Soviet sphere of conflict. Or we can take the high road and refuse to give into Russian, and Sino intransigence while simultaneously solving some of the world's most dangerous issues

such as the North Korean Question, Pakistani-Indian relations, and the Middle East. By not Kowtowing to pressures from either the Russian's and their neo-imperial ambitions, or the ascendancy of a less than peaceful China, America can act as a beacon of light and a counter weight to these two very real, and significant second tier powers whose Hegemonic designs will eventually lead them to confrontation. I would like to end with a quote from a paper Robert Jervis wrote for *World Politics* in 1978: "*The security dilemma is at its most vicious when commitments, strategy, or technology dictate that the only route to security lies through expansion. Status-quo powers must then act like aggressors; the fact that they would gladly agree to forego the opportunity for expansion in return for guarantees for their security has no implications for their behavior. Even if expansion is not sought as a goal in itself, there will be quick and drastic changes in the distribution of territory and influence.*"³⁸

In the Director of National Intelligence's Global Trends 2030 Report the idea of relative U.S. decline is noted. Indeed it states "The replacement of the United States by another global

³⁸ Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma, Robert Jervis, Pg. 187, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009958?origin=JSTOR-pdf>, 1978 Princeton University Press

power and erection of a new international order seems the least likely outcome...” And goes on to say: “The emerging powers are eager to take their place at the top table of key multilateral institutions such as UN, IMF, and World Bank, but they do not espouse any competing vision. Although ambivalent and even resentful of the US-led international order, they have benefited from it and are more interested in continuing their economic development and political consolidation than contesting US leadership. In addition, the emerging powers are not a bloc; thus they do not have any unitary alternative vision. Their perspectives—even China’s—are more keyed to shaping regional structures.”³⁹

This likelihood is the precedent that I cite for my reasoning as to why I foresee a U.S. that is still relatively much more powerful than either China, or Russia, but is unable to control their actions any longer due to the rise in technological prowess, as well as military advancements. When the time comes where Russia, and China begin to build multilateral institutions for their exclusive

³⁹ DNI.Gov, Office of The Director of National Intelligence, “Global Trends: 2030: Alternative Worlds”, <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/global-trends-2030>, Accessed September 15th, 2015

benefit (as is already the case), and they feel that they are no longer subject to the global political and economic institutions of the status Quo global order. This is when we can begin to see the unraveling of regions in which you see the aforementioned states' dominance is most felt. This unraveling could entail anything from a virtual wall of fact distortion placed by the dominating state over itself and any cooperative satellites; to a physical travel restriction by these states against U.S. allied countries, similar to the iron curtain during the cold war; to the onset of war between Russia, it's satellites, and China, and its satellites, with the United States playing the role of mediator between the two, while unable to travel to those countries in the world due to the enactment of trade, cultural, and travel barriers between the warring factions, and the United States and its allies.

In a September 17th, 2015 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, Admiral Harry Harris was asked by Senator Thom Tillis, (R - NC), about the time at which the United States' qualitative advantage, in a "unfair fight" would be matched or exceeded, by the Peoples Republic of China's quantitative

advantage. In the hearing Admiral Harris said that they would have capability, assuming that the United States continued on its current trajectory, sometime in “The mid-twenty-twenties.”⁴⁰

This assertion plays into the ideas that Robert Jervis has previously postulated and that I bring up here in relation to China, and Russia, when I say that once they no longer have anything to fear, there is the possibility of real trouble in whatever parts of the world that China and Russia consider to be in their de facto sphere of influence. This is something that will surely become a test to the American Administration at the time as China would use its economic influence to foment revolt, while Russia can jump into the fray and militarize further conflicts which may have seemed at first to require only a deft hand at crisis management. In fact we are able to see this panoply of more options available to Russia and China as we have seen China Militarize the South China Sea, and Russia use its military advancements to invade Ukraine, and to support the Assad regime in Syria by providing military matériel, knowhow,

⁴⁰ C-SPAN.org, Admiral Harry Harris, “Hearing on Maritime Security Strategy in the Asia-Pacific”, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?328185-1/hearing-us-maritime-security-strategy-asiapacific>, Accessed September 17th, 2015

and placing boots on the ground. These extra judicial steps have been taken; China by claiming territorial rights over international waters; and Russia, inviting itself to Syria under the guise of the war on terrorism. This is only the beginning of something that has the potential to become much more serious, namely, a global confrontation between the east and the west. All hope is not lost though for the United States, we were able to successfully find hunt and kill Osama Bin Laden, we have limited our role in Iraq, and we will be withdrawing from Afghanistan by the end of 2016. So then what role can the United States play in this increasingly more dangerous security paradigm: Cautious and Prudent. We as a nation cannot allow ourselves to be caught in the trap of mission creep and further conflict management issues, namely war. We must buttress our moral consistency for this long hard slog that we could potentially see ourselves going through. We must be vigilant and be able to project strength. This means that we cannot be tied down in a recurring litany of what some might call small wars. But we also can't get lost in the abyss of a large conflagration. We must on the one hand protect our allies, and project strength. While on the other hand we cannot and will not allow ourselves to be manipulated by

Chinese, and Russian hawks, and generals. This will not be easy and will take an American Administration that has the intellectual knowhow and political savvy requisite to deal with these emerging threats. Who or what this Administration will look like, this author will leave up to the American public to decide.