



Democracy & Society

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Reassessing Security Threats & the Future of Intervention

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Global Authoritarians and the Arab Spring: New Challenges for U.S. Diplomacy

BY DANIEL BRUMBERG & STEVEN HEYDEMANN

Introduction

As the “Arab Spring” enters its third year, the contours of a new strategic landscape are taking shape in the Middle East. This landscape is far from stable, yet it contains features that will pose significant challenges for U.S. diplomacy. Among them is the role that leading authoritarian states have assumed, notably Russia and China, but also Iran, as critical actors in regional and international diplomacy. Even as these authoritarian actors themselves struggle to absorb the consequences of the Arab Spring — including the uncertain effects of Arab democratization on their regional influence and ambitions — they

have worked to consolidate their standing as a counterweight in the Middle East to the United States and its Western allies.

Efforts by leading authoritarian regimes to enhance their regional influence are unfolding on several levels. How these regimes view the opportunities and constraints posed by the Arab Spring, how they are trying to exploit the former and mitigate the latter, and how their efforts have in turn shaped the strategic calculations of newly elected Arab governments are questions that will dramatically affect the region's emerging strategic architecture. In this paper we will highlight and selectively illustrate the main empirical and conceptual contours **[Cont'd, Page 2]**

D&S Interview: Zbigniew Brzezinski

Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), remains a powerful voice in American foreign policy. Dr. Brzezinski has recently focused on what he calls a “global political awakening”, characterized by societies that are “politically active, frustrated, responsive, filled with conflicting emotions, fanaticism, resentments, and conflicting historical narratives, all wrapped into one”. This reality, in his view, generates new threats to U.S. security, and policymakers must reconfigure U.S. geopolitical strategy to meet the demands of these rapidly changing environments.

Now a trustee with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a senior research professor at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Brzezinski sat down with *Democracy & Society* for an exclusive interview to discuss the “global political awakening” as well as the rise of China, the use of drones for targeted killings, Iran's impact on U.S. security, and U.S. foreign policy post-Afghanistan.

Democracy & Society: *After September 11, 2001, international terrorism was elevated as the largest security threat for the U.S. Do you think that is still true today?*

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of the new strategic-political map that is emerging as Russia, China, Iran, and other like-minded states respond to the political forces unleashed by the Arab Spring.

In setting out this new map, we accentuate two related dynamics: First, the ways in which powerful authoritarian regimes collaborate to advance collective interests in sustaining — or consolidating — institutional and strategic alternatives to Western democracy; and second, their associated bid to use the Arab Spring to mobilize support from regional, democratic powers including Turkey, Brazil, India, South Africa, and others. These states are viewed by global authoritarians as potential allies that might be enlisted in efforts to redefine regional and global security and governance structures, thus complicating the diplomatic and strategic environment in which the United States works to advance its interests.

The thesis that the Arab Spring may be generating changes that are compounding U.S. security and diplomatic challenges in ways that benefit global authoritarians is certainly open to challenge. After all, the region's political rebellions have rung alarm bells in Moscow, Tehran, and Beijing as well. Indeed, Russia and Iran will probably lose one key state ally in the region, see a second leading state ally weakened, and in turn, will have to grapple with the weakening of their key non-state allies — Hamas and Hezbollah. Moreover, the new governments in Tunisia and Libya, and possibly Yemen, not only have a largely favorable view of the United States, they must also look to Washington and its Western allies for support as jihadist groups expand their bases of operation in North Africa and beyond.

That said, other trends could prove favorable for global authoritarians. Escalating conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians, Sunnis and Shi'ites, and emerging Arab democracies and authoritarian status quo regimes are opening spaces for Moscow, China, and even Iran to exercise new leverage. Washington's key Arab ally, Egypt, is now led by Islamist leaders who are profoundly unhappy with if not opposed to the regional order the United States has promoted. Further to east, the escalating civil war in Syria has created new space for radical jihadists, thus raising the possibility that a post-Bashar al-Assad Syria might be led by an Islamist government that will seek to make common cause with other Sunni-Islamist governments or non-state actors. Although such a "Sunni axis" may in theory view Shi'ite Iran as a threat, growing popular dissatisfaction with U.S. policies may tilt that axis against Washington far more than Tehran.

Such a possibility suggests that the fundamental historical-structural challenge facing the United States is not the emergence of new Islamist governments per se: rather, it is *the reassertion of the link between democracy and foreign policymaking in Arab states in response to the Arab Spring*. With newly empowered citizens questioning relationships with the United States, the worldview articulated by Russia,

China, and even Iran may create new opportunities to exert influence. Their critique of U.S. power and an international system dominated by Western states, their resistance to democratization along Western lines, and their economic resources may also be viewed with interest by newly elected Arab leaders. Moreover, because the United States maintains close relations with many Arab autocracies, Arab public opinion will continue to be animated by deep — and in many ways legitimate — concerns regarding U.S. double standards. Global authoritarians will find points of leverage, but they will also encounter limits to their influence, some of which are intrinsic to the internal dynamics of global authoritarianism itself.

Globalized Authoritarianism: Assets and Liabilities

In recent years, political scientists and policymakers have published a range of studies examining what our colleague Charles Kupchan calls the "Rising Rest". While disagreeing as to whether the post-Cold War global order is undermining U.S. power, most admit that Washington must now exercise influence in global and regional strategic arenas framed by elements of lopsided multi-polarity. Four intertwined facets of "globalizing authoritarianism" (GA) merit attention.

First, the three states which constitute GA's inner core — Russia, Iran, and China — do not exercise influence through any overarching formal alliance or a shared vision of authoritarian governance. Because their economic, institutional, and ideological ruling mechanics differ profoundly, *there is little shared basis for a common project to export a distinctively authoritarian model abroad. The globalization of authoritarianism is less about the diffusion of a distinctive ideology or model of governance, than it is about strengthening collective action, enhancing mutual political, strategic, and economic assistance, and sharing lessons about how best to sustain authoritarian systems as viable alternatives to liberal democracy.*

Second, Global Authoritarians are *negatively united* by opposition to the universal norms of democracy, global governance, and human rights promoted by the West and by multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. Their leaders defend *a distinctly status quo or conventional notion of state sovereignty* that is at variance with new global conventions such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Third, all three GA states have an interest in working together to build regional and international institutions that expand authoritarian influence. While their efforts are sometimes buttressed by formal agreements and treaties, the informal or improvised nature of their collaboration equips them to exploit the opportunities and mitigate the constraints that come with shifts on a regional and global plane.

Fourth, the ad hoc nature of global authoritarian collaboration provides a mechanism to mitigate competing or conflicting economic, political, and ideological interests among leading authoritarian powers.

Yet, the very conditions which necessitate flexibility also generate potential conflicts that could limit the capacity for collective action among global authoritarian regimes.

Global Authoritarianism Prior to the Arab Spring

During the decade prior to the Arab Spring, global authoritarianism rose in tandem with the attempts of Arab autocracies to adapt to new domestic and regional challenges. Part of this dynamic included “authoritarian upgrading”, namely regime-controlled processes of economic and/or political liberalization. As the club of semi-authoritarian regimes grew — particularly following 9/11 and the initiation of the “Freedom Agenda” — the United States seemed well placed to sustain its security interests while simultaneously applauding the limited economic and political “reforms” that its closest Arab allies were pursuing in an effort to sustain their rule.

Looking back, however, the (failed) attempt by the United States to balance security and regional reform had two deleterious consequences. First, Washington’s policy accentuated the growing gap between the foreign policies of pro-Western Arab governments and the preferences of their deeply estranged citizens. Second, authoritarian upgrading created incentives for Arab autocrats to diversify their strategic and economic relations by reaching out to global authoritarians such as China.

The consolidation of democratic governments in regionally influential powers such as Brazil, South Africa, and Turkey, combined with the shock of mass uprisings and regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, did not necessarily portend a strategic or political setback for global authoritarians. After all, despite their status as democracies, Turkey, Brazil, and South Africa endorsed much of the global authoritarian critique of Western dominance. Moreover, some of their leaders espoused illiberal or “Third Way” notions of democracy that found an echo not only in Arab states, but also in Beijing, Moscow, and even Tehran. These coinciding — if far from coherent — ideological sensibilities created a field of overlapping opportunities for cooperation between new Arab regimes, regional leaders such as Turkey, and global authoritarians.

Global Authoritarianism in a Transforming Region

The assets of this new authoritarian model are amply balanced by the liabilities. Iran, China, and Russia must contend not only with continued U.S. influence, but also with the contradictions from their different social, economic, and political ties with both the Middle East and the wider international community. Keeping this balance of advantage and constraints in mind, we can point to three key components of authoritarian responses to the Arab Spring:

1. The use of international institutions to obstruct diplomatic initiatives targeting the Arab allies of leading authoritarian regimes.

2. The provision of financial, military, and political support to both existing authoritarian regimes and to emerging autocracies such as Egypt.
3. The manipulation of pervasive anti-U.S. sentiments within Arab societies by articulating a counter-hegemonic discourse while advocating a restructuring of international institutions and norms to provide for a more equitable distribution of power and resources.

Below we will highlight some elements of each of these three strategies, and then consider how the leaders of the Arab world’s emerging (and struggling) new democracies have responded to such efforts.

Global Authoritarianism and International Institutions

The fate of Syria in the UN Security Council (UNSC) is perhaps the most visible recent instance in which global authoritarians have cooperated to stymie diplomatic efforts backed by the United States and Europe — and, in this case, by most member states of the Arab League, an organization not often aligned with U.S. and European diplomacy.

To date, efforts to pass a UNSC resolution to pressure the Syrian regime have been almost entirely unsuccessful. Exploiting their veto power, Russia and China have blocked all relevant resolutions. These vetoes have not only further eroded the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UN, they have also given the Assad regime critical support. Absent UNSC authorization, diplomatic, humanitarian, and even military instruments have been severely constrained.

Moreover, Russia and China have not always acted alone in using UNSC votes to express reservations. In the February 2012 vote calling for Assad to step down, Russia and China stood apart, with the remaining 13 members of the UNSC voting in favor. In a July vote, however, Pakistan and South Africa abstained. Later in October, Brazil, India, South Africa, and Lebanon did the same. These non-permanent members of the UNSC used their votes to offer a symbolic but nonetheless pointed critique of initiatives backed by the United States, its Western allies, and many Arab states.

The justifications offered by Brazil and India for their votes mirrored the rhetoric that Russia and China have used to challenge not only U.S. policy toward Syria, but also the role of the United States in the international system. Their views underscore the importance for these rising regional powers in containing U.S. influence within an international institution, which Brazil and India, like Russia and China, see as tilted in the West’s favor. The core of their arguments, however, focused on the importance they attached to the principles of state sovereignty and protection from the meddling of outside powers.

By couching their opposition to these three UNSC resolutions in such terms, global authoritarians are able to broaden their appeal, advance their own diplomatic objectives, and protect a leading Arab ally from international sanction or intervention.

From Libya to Syria: Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in a Changing Region

In the arena of international discourse, global authoritarians want to disseminate notions of national sovereignty and independence that challenge norms of democratic governance and human rights. However, global authoritarians must also be careful to couch their anti-hegemonic aspirations in language that does not offend the new democratic actors, many of whom share the GA states' purported quest for a more equitable global order, but who also seek to embrace some of the universal democratic norms that global autocracies implicitly or explicitly reject.

THE LIBYAN CRISIS

To get a sense of how this complex game is played, consider the diverse reactions of global authoritarians to the 2011 debate regarding Western intervention in Libya. Because this was the first time that that UNSC incorporated the "Responsibility to Protect" into a resolution, the reactions of the global community to the council's actions took on potentially historic significance.

Iran articulated the most truculent opposition. That resolution, it argued, was nothing less than a Western effort to highjack yet another phase in the Arab world's "Islamic awakening." Thus, while praising the rebellion itself, Tehran condemned any UN-backed resolution authorizing military intervention.

In contrast to Russia and China, Iran was not in a position to stop the UNSC from endorsing intervention in Resolution 1973. Indeed, Moscow and Beijing's veto power was just one of several factors that placed their own global interests — and stature — in some measure of conflict with Iran. These differences help account for their contrasting political and rhetorical responses to the Libya crisis. With oil and economic investments in the country, China hedged its bets, backing UNSC sanctions on Qaddafi while abstaining from the UNSC vote.

Moscow's similarly dissonant response to the Libya crisis was shaped by its multiple economic and strategic interests in Libya and the wider Arab world. Moreover, with Western states joining with Arab and African countries to back a UN resolution, using the old rhetoric of "sovereign rights" would have isolated Moscow and thus ceded global leadership to the United States and its allies.

The later initiation of Western air attacks on Qaddafi's troops provoked a more consistently — and familiar — hard-line approach. In their June 17, 2011 joint communiqué, Presidents Medvedev and Hu Jintao condemned any move that would "allow the willful interpretation and expanded application" of UN Resolution 1973. This statement was preceded by similar protests from Arab League then-Secretary General Amr Moussa, who warned that the Arab League might withdraw its support for Resolution 1973. Although Moussa soon backtracked on this threat, these statements

presaged a backlash that would take full form in the debate over the Syria crisis.

THE SYRIAN CRISIS

The international debate over intervention in Syria was marked by an intensification of "principled" objection to norms of global intervention and human rights protections. Putin probably viewed the situation in Syria as yet another chapter in the color revolutions, which he had earlier asserted were nothing but "a well-tested scheme for destabilizing society". China's leaders insisted that they stood by the principle of non-intervention in sovereign affairs, while at the same time backing a political transition in Syria led "by the Syrian people". The latter caveat, that China backed the idea of a political transition in Syria, was one that Moscow eventually endorsed. This may very well have been little more than a rhetorical sop to the international community and to the Arab world in particular; but it also reflected the desire of two leading global authoritarians to be seen as responsible leaders whose adherence to norms of sovereignty did not, in theory, translate into absolute opposition to some form of democratic change in Syria.

By contrast, Iran had no strategic or ideological constraints that necessitated a more nuanced position. Its leaders not only opposed Western intervention by invoking national sovereignty, they placed this argument in an expansive strategic frame. As Supreme Leader Khamanei put it, "Iran will defend Syria because it supports its policy of resistance against the Zionist regime (Israel), and is strongly opposed to any interference by foreign forces in Syria's internal affairs . . . America . . . accepts no nation as an independent one . . . and this should be taken into consideration in the decision-making of Islamic countries".

New Arab Leaders: Leveraging the Diplomacy of Global Autocracy

It is instructive that Khamanei made the above statement during a meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. That meeting marked another escalation in the broader political conflict between Tehran and Istanbul. On a structural level, it reflected the tensions from the efforts of global authoritarians to court emerging democracies, many of whose leaders distrust the international system, but who nevertheless advocate norms of democratic change.

The effort of global authoritarians to navigate these tensions finds its mirror-image in the emerging foreign policies of the Arab world's new leaders. For example, while in his speech before the Non-Aligned Movement conference in Tehran Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi defended the uprising in Syria and condemned the Assad regime — implicitly rebuking Iran — he also argued a case that his Iranian hosts might have found *somewhat* reassuring:

The new Egypt, after the blessed revolution of the 25th of January 2011, is seeking a just international system that brings the

developing countries from the realm of poverty, subordination and marginalization, to the realm of prosperity, leadership and power . . . It's no longer acceptable at all to respect the foundations of democracy on the level of the state and to ignore them on the international level.

We emphasize “somewhat” reassuring only because Morsi makes a familiar Third Worldist argument regarding the international distribution of power, while at the same time defending notions of democracy and pluralism itself. This unfolding dance is further complicated by the multiple and even conflicting interests both within the core circle of global authoritarians, and within the circle of Arab states undergoing political rebellion.

On this score, the different settings that distinguish one Arab rebellion from another are considerable. One crucial question is whether these different rebellions are actually fostering democratic governments, or something else, be it a new authoritarianism or simply state collapse. The answers have huge strategic implications, particularly given the undeniable fact that rebellion or democratization may empower Islamists while isolating non-Islamist or secular groups, as well as religious minorities.

Conclusions: Global Autocracy and U.S. Diplomacy

If the emergence of an electoral autocracy in Egypt would not present the outcome that Washington most wants, it may nevertheless be an outcome that the United States will learn to live with. Given the persistence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the possibility of a U.S.-Iran military conflict, and the clear desire of Egypt's new leaders to redefine the regional and international system, the day of reckoning may eventually come, with serious implications for the region's security architecture.

Working against such an outcome are a host of factors, including the continued influence of Egypt's military as well as Cairo's competition with other regional players. But with the prospects for “strategic drift” looming on the Egyptian diplomatic horizon, GA regimes will be watching closely, deepening their relations with Cairo and other Arab states whenever possible, or avoiding conflict when necessary or expedient. By itself, another electoral autocracy emerging from a hobbled transition will not trouble China, Russia, or even Iran, three autocracies that have learned the art of using elections to defend regime power. Even if Egypt moves in a more pluralistic direction, the pragmatism and allure of global authoritarianism will give any government in Cairo incentive to leverage GA states to enhance Egypt's regional influence.

Egypt and Turkey are the regional diplomatic heavyweights whose policies have enormous implications for both the United States and global authoritarians. But precisely because the origins, nature, and trajectories of the Arab uprisings differ from state to state, the diplomatic and strategic issues facing Washington present distinct challenges.

There is also a broader regional dynamic to which Washington must be attentive. Indeed a regional crisis, sparked by an extended war between Israel and the Palestinians (or Hezbollah), or the outbreak of a sustained military confrontation between Washington and Tehran, could spark popular mobilizations that could enhance the allure of global authoritarianism in both popular and elite circles.

Under these complex conditions, the challenge for U.S.-Middle East diplomacy is manifold. With respect to Arab world domestic politics, Washington will have to work with governments that do not have the luxury of ignoring or defying public opinion. Under these new conditions, the effort to find diplomatic solutions for both the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Iranian nuclear dispute may acquire even more urgency. In short, the United States must craft a multi-dimensional regional policy, one that seeks new relationships with emerging regimes while sustaining effective regional and international coalitions in support of its diplomacy and geostrategic interests. In pursuit of these multiple goals, the United States will have to rely less on institutions such as the UNSC, and instead establish its own counterweights to the economic and diplomatic leverage of global authoritarian regimes. Doing so will also require relying less on military power, and far more on a nuanced, patient, and creative diplomacy.

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INTERVIEW WITH ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI, *Continued from Page 1*

Brzezinski: International terrorism is a broad concept under which many manifestations are covered. I think that is part of the problem. I wrote recently that we must be very discerning as to what we identify as the enemy, and not generalize it too much. If we do [generalize] we might get involved in conflicts which might be avoidable, or at least susceptible to being intelligently handled instead of being increasingly bogged down. And I'm afraid some of the latter has happened [in recent years]. That is another reason why we have to think about international terrorism not as an entirely *sui generis* and independent phenomenon, but as something deeply interwoven into the new reality that I've been writing about for a number of years called "global political awakening". And I think that "global political awakening" has many facets to it, including violence, resentment, and a perhaps intensely bitter historical narrative which motivates people into actions which we simplify by calling them "terrorism".

D&S: *Do you think failed states, which have long been considered ripe for exploitation by various terrorist groups, are still considered security threats?*

Brzezinski: I need to know about the geopolitical situation and its history. Answering generally to a general question, yes, it is possible that they are a threat. But each case is *sui generis*, and we have to decide who is in a position to respond and who should respond. I think it is not an issue in which you can give a generalized response, which then becomes binding, particularly in the case of the United States.

D&S: *In the recent past we've seen a foreign policy approach that tended towards post-conflict state-building. Post-Afghanistan, we see less discussion about the threat posed by weak or failing states. Is there a policy shift happening?*

Brzezinski: When we talk about Afghanistan, we are talking about something related to a phenomenon known in America as 9/11. And that pertains to the use of Afghanistan as a haven for a massive attack on the United States. I don't think that you can generalize what happened in Afghanistan to the rest of the world. Since we had to be involved in Afghanistan, I think it was historically optimistic, and in that sense not fundamentally wrong, to contemplate the possibility of helping the Afghans create a more viable and increasingly moderate state. In the subsequent eight or nine years, we have learned that that is a difficult problem, for historical and cultural reasons. And therefore we have to be cautious about it. But involvement in Afghanistan was precipitated by something very specific that involved us very painfully and very directly.

D&S: *Do you believe that the West pushes forward the concept of sovereignty today as much as they used to before the failures in Afghanistan?*

Brzezinski: We live in an age of increasing interdependency, whether we like it or not, because of changes in mass communications, in the capabilities of outreach, instant transactions, and so forth. Sovereignty is undergoing a redefinition. But obviously, the stronger and more [socioeconomically and politically] viable a state is, the more "sovereignty" it can enjoy. There is no flat rule that applies to all of humanity. Some states are more sovereign than others, even though "sovereignty" as a general concept allegedly is universal.

Everything in life is either imposed by force or by compromise. Look at the United Nations. It is based on the principle of sovereignty. All members of the UN are equal. But some are more equal than others, because they have, for example, veto powers. Even those who don't are in many cases much more influential than others. So we have to use common sense — it is not an abstraction that lends itself to generalization.

D&S: *One of the debates related to sovereignty today is the use of drones, particularly in non-battlefield scenarios. Their use has increased substantially during the Obama administration. Is this part of a new, lighter approach to threats?*

Brzezinski: This has to be dealt with in a case-by-case basis. If we are dealing with a situation in which attacks on us originate from within another state and that state does not have the capacity or the will to end these attacks, what are you supposed to do? Is it better to invade that country with a large army and create a protracted war? Or is it better to seek to eliminate the sources of these attacks as discreetly as possible, though probably unavoidably with some "collateral damage"? That to some extent is a practical judgment. It is not a judgment that lends itself to some moral imperatives.

D&S: *Are there consequences to the use of drones that we have not fully considered?*

Brzezinski: I think there is a problem with the identification of Americans involved as potential victims. My own view is that it ought to be viewed as a military operation. And the closest equivalent to that would be, if there were Americans fighting on the side of the Japanese or the Nazis in World War II, we would feel justified in killing them in combat. Whether we would be justified in seeking to assassinate them individually in other circumstances is a more difficult issue, and one in which one individual — namely the president — should not assume sole responsibility, but should be influenced by some sort of a semi-judicial process, with an emphasis on "semi".

D&S: *Is it a concern that there is not nearly as much oversight over the use of drones today?*

Brzezinski: In terms of collateral damage, which then creates morally dubious situations — namely killing innocents — and can precipitate even greater hostility from the country that is giving hospitality to some acts of terror against us, that is a legitimate issue.

D&S: *Does the lower human cost — for the U.S. — of using drones change the equation?*

Brzezinski: I don't think that makes a difference. I think that the calculation is that it can be done with less direct international collision.

D&S: *Are there moral questions that are not being considered as we expand the military role of civilian bodies like the CIA in targeted killings and similar events?*

Brzezinski: I personally don't think an intelligence agency should be involved in killing. It has a very specific responsibility, the acquisition of intelligence, and if any violence is to be involved [...] it has to be in my view connected with the acquisition of important intelligence. I think deliberate killing is essentially a retaliatory action for which you either have a specialized agency or is an extension of your armed forces.

D&S: *Your book, Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power (2012), is all about long-term strategies to deal with a changing world. Do you believe the current American administration has a long-term view of how to handle the U.S. place in the world?*

Brzezinski: I think the administration is guided by a president who has an unusually good understanding of what is rather unique for this century. He articulates his understanding very effectively, and in the course of articulating he also promotes certain goals. What bothers me is that by-and-large the articulation of such historically legitimate and insightful objectives is not accompanied by comprehensive strategy for implementation. In part, that is due to the fact that the president has been distracted by serious domestic problems and by the needs of re-election. The second term gives him the chance to formulate in a politically fearless context a strategy for implementation. One example is in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and also Iran, North Korea, and other issues which have been affected by [...] the practical restraints [the domestic crisis] has imposed on [Obama's] own involvement and by the need for politically determined compromises.

D&S: *Which of the issues you just mentioned takes precedence, or which do you think should be a priority for the administration?*

Brzezinski: The three I just mentioned are the most urgent. Others are longer-range, but do not demand an immediate

response, such as the long-range relationship with China in an Asia that could slide into a repetition of Europe in the twentieth century, in terms of international conflicts. How do you deal with Russia, which under its present leadership is openly nostalgic for its imperialist past? [It is] very subjectively, emotionally, almost mythologically hostile to the United States [...]. I think these are major issues on the geopolitical level. And then there are huge problems in the social, economic, and financial areas, which are not exactly the traditional part of foreign policy, but would certainly need a response which is strategically far-sighted. For example, I am a strong supporter of the notion of an American-European free trade area, for geopolitical reasons. I think the West would be in a much better position to be intelligently responsive to the dilemmas that we now face.

D&S: *You've mentioned that you feel that the United States missed the opportunity it had in the 1990s, being the only superpower. Given where the United States is today, what are the opportunities that are still present, and are we taking advantage of them?*

Brzezinski: Well we're obviously not taking advantage of them. But we still have the capacity to do so. Even for all of our difficulties, we are by far the strongest nation in the world, and one that most people still rely for the first response. [They then] determine whether it's in their interest to join us, to be sympathetically supportive but passive, or in some cases to oppose us. So that reality is still with us.

Now, it could change. But for the moment, there is nobody like the United States in the world. We have to use our influence much more intelligently. We cannot dictate anymore. We are now in the post-hegemonic era. Unlike the twentieth century, which was a century in which the quest for hegemony [...] produced three major conflicts — World War I, World War II, and the Cold War — in the 21st century, no one can intelligently make hegemony their national objective, because it's an undertaking that is futile in light of everything that has happened. [They must consider] the following realities: destructive new nuclear weapons, which means reliance on war becomes self-defeating; absence of ideological conflict, which is very specifically defined; and of course, what I perhaps emphasize most of all, the reality of global political awakening. This is now a humanity that is politically active, frustrated, responsive, filled with conflicting emotions, fanaticism, resentments, conflicting historical narratives, all wrapped into one.

D&S: *Today, do you think that there's a vacuum of responsibility, considering not only the multipolar world we live in, but also a decentralization of intervention tactics with regional actors?*

Brzezinski: [There is a] vacuum of responsibility, or maybe an inability to overcome complexity. The complexity of the present global scene is so enormous, it's very difficult to

conceptualize it in such a way that you can have intelligent, sustained support from your own population, and that's particularly true of the United States because of two factors. One, we're a democracy. Two, we're a very ignorant democracy. The level of public understanding of world affairs in America is abysmally low. And I think that makes it very difficult for anyone in charge of foreign policy to articulate a foreign policy that sustains genuine domestic support, unless that support is mobilized by fear. Hence, [we have] Jihadism, identification of other countries as enemies, and religious fanaticism, which are [...] propagated by the mass media. I mean, look at the exploitation of the Arab image, Islamic image, in the mass media, and particularly by the entertainment industry. It creates a mental attitude in the American public which is automatically susceptible to prejudice.

D&S: *Something that you've been writing about recently is the issue of Iran. How do you view it in terms of a security threat for the United States?*

Brzezinski: I don't think it's that much of a security threat to us at all. I think it's a challenge, it's a source of instability. It has a fanatical regime, which at the same time is terribly fragmented, and finds it very difficult to make real choices, and therefore finds it easier to drift along fanatical lines. But it's not a serious security threat to us unless we make it so. If we attack it, it will be a security threat because [...] the conflict will spread like wildfire, and we'll be bogged down again for another decade or more, with the rest of the world looking on and some countries specifically benefitting from it.

D&S: *Perhaps the largest security threat is America's perception of threats abroad?*

Brzezinski: I wouldn't put it that way. If you want to look at specific threats, right now the combination of irrationality and actual possession of nuclear weapons [in North Korea], and probably soon reliable delivery systems for them, is a serious problem. Not just for us, it's more of a problem immediately for the South Koreans, who might be its immediate victims. It's a serious problem potentially for the Japanese. It's a serious problem for the Chinese, who are concerned about what might happen, but at the same time feel like they have a vested interest in Korea being divided, and in any case not being reunified under American control. So that is a security threat.

D&S: *Given the crucial role you had in relations with China, are you disappointed with the path of the U.S.-Chinese relations?*

Brzezinski: I wouldn't want to overdramatize the problems. I think they stem to some extent from two miscalculations. One, by the United States — the fact that the United States is a Pacific Ocean power and intends to remain so was publicly

presented with great fanfare — and [two], the use of the word "pivoting", and the reassignment of military forces and naval power to the Pacific. The president said explicitly — in a private conversation, but he did say it, not just to me — that he never used the word "pivot". But it was given this militaristic interpretation by somebody, somewhere in the U.S. government. Then the Chinese concluded that this was designed against them. And some neighbors — small, vulnerable neighbors of China — concluded that this was a wonderful opportunity to latch onto the United States as a protector of their interests against China, and I think that's thereby escalated things.

But I think fundamentally, at this stage at least, the leadership of China and the United States know that we're not in a global contest. It's not like America and Russia. There is no official Chinese ideology that is threatening us. Their ideology is to emulate us, and to do better than us, and that's certainly not an ideological conflict. And they know well, and we know well, that if we get into some sort of self-defeating conflict, we'll both suffer [...]. So yes, it's too bad that the friction at the surface was ineptly handled a little bit on both sides. My expectation and hope is that the U.S. and the Chinese — and particularly the top leaders once they've stabilized and [...] no longer have to worry about the near term political future — will get serious about it.

D&S: *Are there any lessons you may have drawn from your time as National Security Advisor, particularly dealing with Iran, Afghanistan, and China, that may be applicable today?*

Brzezinski: I drew different lessons at different stages. Shortly after what was described as our historical victory in the Cold War, I wrote a short little book — which actually was generally ignored — entitled, *Out of Control*, arguing that the next century was going to be a century of enormous human potential for changing things, but in a manner in which the result was going to be loss of control. We would be able to do too many things at the same time, and lose control over what is important to preserve in terms of basic values. Subsequent to that I wrote a book entitled, *The Global Chessboard*, in which I argued that America can act intelligently to protect its hegemony, and should do so to create global stability. But I concluded by saying that this is the last time there was going to be a global hegemon, and if we don't succeed, then within a couple of decades we won't be able to do it anymore because we're moving into a different age.

Well, unfortunately we did some very stupid things, particularly under Bush II. We lost 10 to 20 years, and we lost our standing in the world and damaged our influence. So now we have entered that next phase earlier than I thought we would. And in this context, what I advocate is essentially a policy that would try to create larger global platforms for stabilizing the world, [for us] and the Europeans. Try to suck in Turkey and eventually Russia into the western orbit, where they will be serious players. In the far east, we will recognize Chinese primacy on the mainland, but maintain

a position off-shore, and act like Great Britain toward Europe during the nineteenth century — a balancer, but not an intervener — and thereby create stability in that part of the world. And on the basis of that, try to create some sort of global response to the problems which are not traditional but are new — the Arctic, for example. Climate. Not to mention all of the injustices that are increasingly intolerable in the human condition, including poverty, deprivation, gender discrimination, and so forth. That’s basically my message.

D&S: *Would you have done anything differently as National Security Advisor, knowing what you know now about Afghanistan following the Soviet military intervention?*

Brzezinski: In Afghanistan, I think we did the right thing. We had to help them, because if we didn’t, we would have had a much more expansive, self-assured Soviet Union at a time when Iran was falling apart. [...] We failed, however, once the resistance prevailed in not helping Afghanistan stabilize itself. That permitted the Taliban to come in, and al-Qaeda appeared on the scene roughly ten years later and then struck us. Once they struck us, we had no choice. I probably would not have recommended this nation-building or democracy-building undertaking. In fact, in my recommendation to [former secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld when [former secretary of State Henry] Kissinger and I were called in to consult how we should respond [to 9/11] — I said, look, we have to respond. We have to go in, knock out the Taliban, knock out al-Qaeda — and then leave. I can claim that I was right on that, in the sense that doing more proved to be too much. But then I could have been wrong, because if we had left, maybe the whole thing would have fallen apart. One will never know.

ENDNOTES

1. This interview was conducted by D&S editors Andrea Murta and Josh Linden at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC.

Going All-In: Comprehensive State-Building in Sierra Leone

BY JENNIFER RAYMOND DRESDEN

What is the appropriate scope of international involvement in countries emerging from civil war? Since the release of

“Agenda for Peace” in 1992, support has increased for comprehensive peace operations that go well beyond the scope of traditional peacekeeping.¹ Simply putting an end to violence in the short-term has been viewed as inadequate for generating the conditions that would prevent relapses in conflict. Transforming political and economic systems is now seen as the surest path towards a “positive peace” that would remove the causes of political violence, rather than simply suppressing its exercise. After the events of September 11, 2001, with much of American foreign policy oriented towards the new War on Terror, bolstering weak states took on an entirely new importance, as transnational security threats were seen to be rooted in the ungoverned territory of failing states.

Yet not all assessments of this type of peacebuilding have been positive. Recent scholarly analysis has noted that political and economic liberalization — core components of the standard approach to comprehensive peacebuilding — are processes that can actually create or exacerbate tensions in divided populations.² In the policy realm, analysts considering the likely political future of Iraq and Afghanistan may yet conclude that billions of dollars in political and economic support amounted to money well-wasted. Serious questions persist about the prospects for success of political and economic support to weak states after conflict, with doubts as to the benefits for both recipients and providers of assistance. For recipients, it might foster counterproductive dependency on international money and technical expertise. For donors, the risks include misappropriation of aid by corrupt officials and dissatisfaction among voters in cases where results are ambiguous, particularly in a climate of global financial crisis.

Yet if powerful states have a vested interest in bolstering the stability of weak states — lest they too become havens for terrorist networks, drug cartels, neighboring insurgent groups, or other transnational threats — what are the alternatives to this comprehensive approach? It might be that providing support to the security apparatus of a weak state, particularly its military, would be adequate to secure donors’ core interests. If economic and political development assistance is ineffective at best and fosters dependency at worst, perhaps military aid is the best strategy for cultivating autonomous state development.

The trouble with this argument, however, is that military assistance in the form of material support and/or training is rarely enough to foster *either* security or state strength in weak states, particularly those emerging from conflict. Security assistance alone does not provide the kind of institutional and normative incentive structures that are actually needed to both combat transnational threats and strengthen the state. This is true of various types of security-focused interventions. Research has shown that peace enforcement missions alone are less successful in promoting “durable, democratic peace” than more robust peacebuilding missions.³ Direct military aid and training for weak states’ militaries, as the United States frequently provides, has not

prevented military coups d'état and continued social instability in states like Mali.

The alternative to military-focused support is comprehensive state-building, which integrates military, economic, and political aspects by providing support for the building of local institutional capacity in each of these areas. Common elements of this approach include security sector reform, economic development support in the form of project financing and technical assistance, and political capacity building such as support for governance institutions and electoral processes. While this approach is unquestionably expensive and invasive, it can in some circumstances provide a stronger basis on which to promote the security interests of both the assisting and assisted states. This is particularly true where major civil war or prolonged political decay have left the state with little or no institutional capacity. Indeed, this form of state-building has become integrated into the broader peacebuilding strategies of the last twenty years. Of the roughly \$210 million expended by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund between 2007 and 2011, \$57.3 million was in the area of "Security", but nearly \$47.4 million was expended under "Democracy and Governance", \$18.4 million was in support of projects to support "Public Administration", and \$26.6 million went to various economic development projects in areas such as "Power and Energy" and "Youth Empowerment and Employment".⁴ These projects included training on local government finance for civil servants in the Democratic Republic of Congo, developing a National Youth Service Programme in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Liberia, and renovating court buildings in Comoros. Current peacebuilding practices have thus emphasized the need to support and engage a functioning state.

A Theoretical Case for Comprehensive State-Building

Why might we believe that comprehensive assistance is necessary for international security and domestic stability in extreme cases of weak states? The answer boils down to the fundamental nature of the state and the co-dependent nature of political, economic, and military institutions. Non-state actors that pose both domestic and transnational threats operate in the spaces between state authority structures. They thrive in ungoverned spaces, in border regions, and in no-go neighborhoods for police. Reducing the threat from these clandestine organizations requires that they be denied the space and support networks that enable them to survive. This can be attempted by coercion, inducement, or some combination of the two. Coercion on a level adequate to the task is difficult and often drives the populace into the arms of the very clandestine networks meant to be targeted. Inducement — promising the population and would-be combatants some version of political voice and economic growth — is a long-term strategy that often lacks short-term credibility.

Supporting and reforming security forces — military, police, and intelligence — are necessary but insufficient parts of state-building. Without a security sector capable of securing a country's borders and policing its territory, a weak state with a recent history of conflict is likely to be the target of renewed attacks or new threats. Yet strengthening the coercive capacity of the state must also be accompanied by strengthening its political and economic capacity. Without a stable political system to ensure accountability and economic development that expands the proportion of the population empowered to monitor performance, support to the security sector alone cannot prevent that sector from abusing the citizens it was meant to protect or falling victim to the kind of corruption that leaves police officers in the pocket of drug cartels. Where it touches on all three sectors, support to weak states may provide a bulwark against the kinds of threats that often motivate Western powers to intervene in the first place.

State Weakness in Sierra Leone, from Authoritarian Rule to War

The state in Sierra Leone has never fit the Westphalian ideal type particularly well. Partially owing to the legacy of a British colonial system that distinguished between the colony (the capital, Freetown, and its immediate surrounds) and the protectorate (the more rural and removed districts), governance has always been uneven. Early experiments with post-independence democracy gave way to military coups and, eventually, to two decades of single-party rule. Dissatisfaction with political and economic marginalization spread during the later 1980s and early 1990s, sparking pressure for multiparty elections from both domestic groups and external donors. At the same time, however, a small group of Sierra Leonean youth received military training in Libya and found support from Liberia's Charles Taylor to seek change by a more violent route. In 1991, this group, calling themselves the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), initiated a civil war that would last a decade.

The conflict that followed is often seen as one of the most brutal wars of the post-Cold War period. Massive human rights violations were committed by multiple parties to the conflict, with the forced recruitment of child soldiers and the amputation of civilians' limbs becoming two of the disturbing hallmarks of the war. Coups d'état in 1992, 1996, and 1997 resulted in a series of civilian and military administrations that left government institutions even weaker than before and limited the central government's ability to prosecute the war. Despite important contributions by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the subsequent arrival of United Nations peacekeepers, violence was only seriously quelled after intervention by British forces beginning in 2000.

Once the military threat from the RUF was finally neutralized, international efforts to support disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and broader reconstruction

began in earnest. Sierra Leone's state infrastructure had all but collapsed, its economy was in shambles, and the military had been largely replaced in the later phases of the war by militia groups and foreign forces. Even after an elected government was restored to power in 1998, the administration was severely limited in its capacity to govern. Foreign direct assistance to Sierra Leone nearly doubled from 2000 to 2001 (see Figure 1) as the international community sought to secure peace. In January 2002, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared an official end to the conflict. Multiparty elections held later that year returned Kabbah and the Sierra Leone People's Party to power with a resounding majority. With the war firmly ended, international efforts to institutionalize the peace continued apace.

Scope of Support

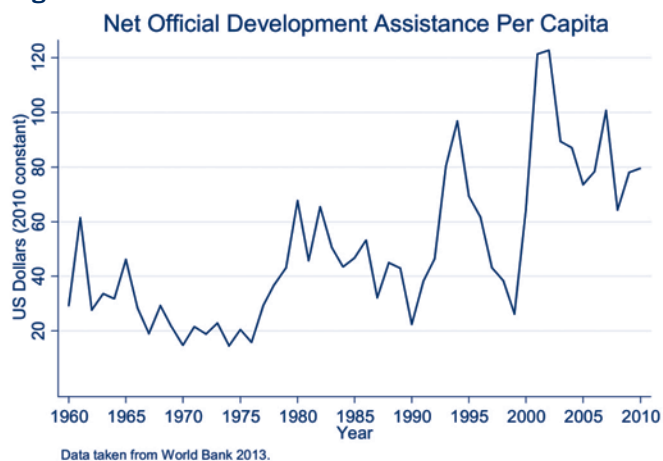
For a country of its size, Sierra Leone has received a disproportionate amount of international aid. A decade of war and several decades of economic and political stagnation had left the state without the capacity to collect taxes, police its territory, or organize elections. Since the end of the civil war in 2002, the country received an average of \$447.67 million per year in official development assistance.⁵ While this figure has varied widely over the years, the scope of support provided by the international community has been consistently broad and deep. Bilateral, multilateral, and not-for-profit assistance has touched nearly every aspect of life in Sierra Leone. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) work with Sierra Leonean government ministries and agencies to implement policies on matters ranging from sanitation and clean water, to childhood vaccination, to voter education. Some of these NGOs are privately funded, while others work on the basis of grants from foreign governments, effectively operating as semi-autonomous agents. The scale of this work should not be under-estimated. In 2007, development and capacity-building assistance from donors funded 80% of Sierra Leone's national budget.⁶

In addition to humanitarian assistance intended to feed, educate, and heal a population devastated by war, foreign governments and NGOs made a drastic commitment to build the capacity of the government for the long-term. International democracy promotion organizations provided crucial support to the National Election Commission in organizing the 2002 and 2007 national elections, as well as the 2004 and 2008 local elections.⁷ The World Bank funded projects ranging from infrastructure development to combatant reintegration programs in an effort to assist the civilian government in building a functioning state and resurrecting an economy whose GDP shrank by an average of 4.26% a year during the 1990s.⁸ Seeking to enhance and reform the emerging state's monopoly on force, donors embarked on a massive program of security sector reform, an initiative that today is seen as having been successful on a number of fronts.⁹

While some commentators have raised concerns about this kind of assistance, one of its most striking features in

Sierra Leone is the depth and breadth of the enterprise. Led by the United Kingdom, a circle of international donors appears to have come to the conclusion that anything less than going "all in" on Sierra Leone's reconstruction would be a waste of money and effort. When the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission agreed to make Sierra Leone one of the first two countries ever to benefit from its new Peacebuilding Fund, the framework agreed to by the government and the Commission highlighted the "critical and inter-dependent priorities for risk reduction and peace

Figure 1



consolidation" that included youth employment, security sector reform, and good governance.¹⁰ It also noted that peace in Sierra Leone is dependent on a broader question of peacebuilding in the sub-region, and that instability in Guinea, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone is linked because "instability in one country has spilled over to its neighbors and border areas have in many instances served as safe havens for armed militias".¹¹

What the international community appears to have decided in Sierra Leone is that none of these elements of state-building — security, economic, or political — can be neglected without bringing down the entire project. Without extensive demobilization and a reformed and professionalized army and police force, the country would lack the capacity to secure its territory and enforce state authority in a region with a history of cross-border instability. Without accountable and democratic institutions to oversee these forces, the risk for abuse of their position would be high. Sierra Leone's history of military intervention in national politics would be exceptionally difficult to overcome and the risk of future coups would be a dangerous reality.¹² Without inclusive economic development to empower a broader base of the population and provide broad-based revenue to the state, democratic institutions' effectiveness would be limited to a small elite. In a country with longstanding economic inequality and often unbalanced center-periphery relations, leaving meaningful political power to a small band of urban elites would be a recipe for rural instability.

None of this is to say that Sierra Leone's recovery has been an unmitigated success. The country remains desperately poor eleven years after the official end of the war. Municipal electricity, even in the capital, is unreliable. Corruption is widespread and outside of Freetown anecdotes circulate about crime victims being required to pay for police cars' fuel before officers will investigate and arrest suspects.

Yet Sierra Leone's successes are not to be overlooked. The country managed the first peaceful electoral transition in its history in 2007, when the SLPP accepted defeat and Ernest Bai Koroma of the All People's Congress won the presidency. A peaceful electoral transition within a decade of civil war is a rare accomplishment among post-conflict states, and its significance should be noted. The challenge now for the government is to intensify anti-corruption measures and ensure that the gains in democracy are strengthened and consolidated. A host of home-grown NGOs, though still largely dependent on external support, are committed to ensuring this. The police have shown themselves to be responsible partners in this process, actively pre-empting localized electoral conflicts by referring them to political mediation and conflict resolution bodies.¹³

Conclusion: Going All-In

What does the Sierra Leonean case tell us about the prospects for success for internationally supported comprehensive state-building programs? It is clear that where state collapse has been near absolute and war has caused the deterioration of the majority of state institutions, focusing on a single sector is inadequate. The greatest hope for security and development in Sierra Leone lies in the fact that assistance has been so multi-faceted and that a growing constituency of Sierra Leoneans are committed to the project. Without the breadth of assistance provided, the level of political instability in the country would almost certainly have been higher. Instead, that assistance has bought an opportunity for peacebuilding, democratization, and development to succeed together, when they might very well have failed individually.

To be sure, Sierra Leone has benefited from other factors. The willingness of national leaders to partner with the international community across these areas, the concurrent improvements in regional security, and the gains to be had from vast mineral resources all support Sierra Leone's progress towards a stronger state. Indeed, the relative absence of regional security threats and the presence of figures capable of providing national leadership are not present in all cases. Countries which lack any national cohesion at all or which see negative interference from their neighbors may not be good candidates for the state-building aspects of peacebuilding.

For a decade, Sierra Leone has quietly plodded along as a test case for international state-building. If the next five-to-ten years see national institutions beginning to shed their reliance on international support, if revenues from re-

newed mining activities are used to support more inclusive economic development, and if politics remain competitive enough to ensure that elections really do provide the prospect of accountability for leaders, Sierra Leone can continue on the path to forging a stable state capable of anchoring security and stability in West Africa. None of these outcomes is assured and the challenges and room for failure are significant. Despite this, Sierra Leone has the potential to be a long-run success story for the "all in" approach to international state-building.

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In Defense of Obama's Drone Policy

BY DANIEL STEIMAN

The Obama administration's strategy in fighting al-Qaeda is less a break from the Bush administration than an evolution and improvement on the previous administration's tactics. During his first term, President Obama narrowed the scope of his predecessor's war on terrorism from one with overtones of clashing civilizations to a more focused war against al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Gone were the notions of "draining the swamps" by spreading democracy through regime change. Believing that the war in Iraq distracted the U.S. from destroying al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and allowed the Taliban to rebuild power and influence, the current administration emphasized a renewed focus on annihilating al-Qaeda's senior leadership, as well as the leadership of its regional affiliates.

Ironically, considering his criticism of President Bush's counterterrorism policies during his first presidential campaign, Obama has gone far beyond the Bush administration by greatly expanding the controversial use of drone strikes in Pakistan and elsewhere. Of the nearly 450 strikes since 2004, the Bush administration launched only 49.¹ Scholars have put forward many persuasive arguments that condemn Obama's use of drones on legal, moral, and pragmatic grounds. However, this essay argues that the benefits of drones to kill al-Qaeda operatives outweigh the negative consequences, simply because they accomplish a primary goal: weakening al-Qaeda's ability to launch international attacks against the United States.

First, I will relate this present situation to others where a democratic state confronted terrorism, showing that the lack of a viable political solution with al-Qaeda leaves continuous armed conflict as the only available option. Second, I will demonstrate that the targeted assassination of terrorist leaders is an effective tactic in crippling a terrorist organization, including al-Qaeda. Third, I will highlight several negative arguments against the use of drone strikes, and explain how some of these arguments are misleading or offset by the benefits.

Context of America's War Against al-Qaeda

Islamist terrorism against the U.S. and its allies is distinct from most terrorist campaigns in other political contexts. Although Osama bin Laden and his followers have issued specific political grievances against the United States (its support for Israel, the stationing of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, among others), al-Qaeda's terrorist campaign is primarily an ideological struggle based upon a belief in the

supremacy of the Islamic faith, along with a rejection of U.S. global hegemony and Western values.² This means that al-Qaeda's terrorism was not born from a domestic political struggle of a people against a perceived or real oppressive state, such as the Irish Republican Army campaign against the United Kingdom, Kurdistan Workers' Party terrorism against the Turkish government, or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam against the Sri Lankan state.³ Al-Qaeda at its core is a nihilistic, millenarian organization with no realistic political platform or long-term goals except for the ultimate defeat of their enemy — the U.S. and its Western allies — and the victory of their ideology around the world.

This belief in a worldwide confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims was deeply influenced by Sayyid Qutb, the famous Egyptian thinker and radical Islamist. In his seminal work, *Milestones*, Qutb wrote, "Whenever Islam stood up with the universal declaration that God's Lordship should be established over the entire earth and that man should become free from servitude to other men, usurpers of God's authority on earth have struck out against it fiercely and have never tolerated it. It became incumbent upon Islam to strike back and release man throughout the earth from the grip of these usurpers."⁴

His arguments for a global struggle against "usurpers of God's authority" were adopted by al-Qaeda's current leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. In his memoirs, al-Zawahiri argued: "It is not possible to incite a conflict for the establishment of a Muslim state if it is a regional conflict ... We must prepare ourselves for a battle that is not confined to a single region but rather includes the apostate domestic enemy and the Jewish-Crusader external enemy."⁵ Bin Laden, himself, described al-Qaeda's campaign as "a war of destiny between infidelity and Islam" and a "third world war."⁶

Such evidence demonstrates that the U.S. war with al-Qaeda is unlike the experience of Northern Ireland or Eastern Turkey. The U.S. cannot reach a peaceful, political solution to the problem of jihadist terrorism because the U.S. can never satisfy any of al-Qaeda's objectives. Therefore, a military solution is the only available option for the U.S. to defeat al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

The Efficacy of Targeted Killing

The strategic importance of assassinating al-Qaeda leaders is demonstrated through the Israeli government's own experience with targeted killing. For decades, Israel has engaged in the assassination of terrorist leaders. Some well-known cases include: the targeting of Black September leaders in 1970s; the assassination of PLO military chief Abu Jihad in Tunis in 1988; the killing of Hezbollah leader Abbas Musawi in 1992; and the killing of Yahya Ayyash — chief Hamas bomb-maker — by a cellphone bomb in 1996.

During the Second Intifada, which lasted roughly from 2000 to 2006, Israel implemented a more persistent policy of targeted assassination to combat the Palestinians' armed campaign against Israel that had killed hundreds of Israeli

civilians. This policy is credited with helping to bring an end to the Second Intifada. It was not a permanent political solution to the conflict (which will likely be accomplished only by a peace agreement between both sides). Still, targeted killings helped Israel decrease the ability of Palestinian militants to launch devastating attacks against the Israeli people.

Daniel Byman, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and professor at Georgetown University, argues that the benefits of Israel's policy significantly outweighed the consequences.⁷ Yet, these consequences are worth discussion. Many leaders killed by Israel became martyrs, which inspired more Palestinians to join terrorist groups and renewed the resolve and popular legitimacy of these organizations.⁸ The strikes also led to the accidental killing of numerous innocent Palestinian civilians. In particular, the hit on Hamas leader Salah Shehadea in 2002 also killed 14 civilians (nine of whom were children) and led to international condemnation, including from the United States.⁹ The use of targeted killings also raises significant questions about their legality under international (as well as Israeli) law.¹⁰

While the moral and legal questions are important, this article will primarily focus on the policy's overall efficacy in preventing terrorism. A frequent objection to targeted killings, particularly drone strikes, is that they "create more terrorists" and thus increase the risk of retaliation. To this point, it is worth quoting Byman at length:

Contrary to popular myth, the number of skilled terrorists is quite limited. Bomb makers, terrorism trainers, forgers, recruiters, and terrorist leaders are scarce; they need many months, if not years, to gain enough expertise to be effective. When these individuals are arrested or killed, their organizations are disrupted. The groups may still be able to attract recruits, but lacking expertise, these new recruits will not pose the same kind of threat.¹¹

One needs considerable training and expertise in order to orchestrate an event like 9/11. Groups like Hamas or al-Qaeda may receive many new recruits after a targeted assassination, however these groups will not maintain the same operational effectiveness in launching attacks if the new members do not possess the same skill level as those they replace. In Israel's case, the killing of experienced terrorist leaders coincided with a drop in the lethality of Palestinian attacks during the Second Intifada.¹²

This point applies to current U.S. drone policy. By targeting al-Qaeda's core leadership, the U.S. has taken out numerous intelligent, well-trained, experienced, and charismatic terrorist leaders. One such individual is Abu Yahya al-Libi, an extremely charismatic al-Qaeda deputy who was viewed as the organization's future leader, but was killed by a drone strike in June 2012.¹³ The killing of the American-born Anwar al-Awlaki — leader of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) — in September 2011 (though highly controversial from a legal standpoint) is another example. His death, along with the targeted killing of 28 other core

members of the group, has decimated AQAP, leading Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi to praise drone strikes at the UN General Assembly.¹⁴

Byman argues that another benefit from Israeli targeted killing policy was the short time span between attacks. The fast pace forced groups to devote more time and resources toward protecting their leadership, which upset their flow of information. It also placed pressure on groups to quickly find and train competent replacements, which often proved difficult.¹⁵

During the Bush administration, the killing of terrorist and militant leadership was infrequent and rare. In contrast, Obama's relentless use of drone strikes, similar to the Israeli example, has limited the ability of Islamic militants in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region to organize and plan attacks. Even Osama bin Laden acknowledged the effectiveness of drone strikes on al-Qaeda's operational capacity by highlighting the importance of safeguarding al-Qaeda's leadership:

It is important to have the leadership in a faraway location. When this experienced leadership dies, this would lead to the rise of lower leaders who are not as experienced as the former leaders and this would lead to the repeat of mistakes.¹⁶

The widespread use of drones under Obama puts al-Qaeda constantly on the defensive and prevents their ability to reorganize and quickly train a new cadre of leaders.

The Pros and Cons of U.S. Drone Strikes

The U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia faces many of the same criticisms as Israel's policy in the 2000s. Many question its legality and high number of civilian casualties. In a recent article, La Salle professor Michael J. Boyle gives a great outline of pros and cons of U.S. drone warfare, arguing that the costs outweigh the benefits.¹⁷

One legitimate criticism is that Obama's drone policy has expanded its targets beyond the militant leaders to anyone affiliated with these groups, including low-level fighters. This, of course, is bad policy. Targeting all levels of fighters increases the risk of civilian casualties and creates more anger among the population, with far less benefit than if a leader was killed.¹⁸ However, this criticism only means that drone policy must be narrowed to focus on the leadership, not abandoned outright.

Boyle also contends that drone strikes destabilize the Pakistani and Yemeni governments. Allowing the U.S. to operate with impunity, he claims, weakens the legitimacy of these governments in the eyes of their citizens, and also fuels strong anti-American sentiments. This argument misconstrues the actual relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan, and ignores the Pakistani government's own role in the country's destabilization. Elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence services have long supported elements of the Afghan insurgency and Pakistani-based jihadist groups as part of its general strategy against India.¹⁹ Islamic extremism

was also a persistent and growing problem in Pakistan long before the drone strikes began.²⁰ These factors are likely more significant than drone strikes in the decreasing legitimacy of the Pakistani government.

In terms of anti-Americanism, Pir Zubair Shah, a reporter and native of the Waziristan region of Pakistan, argues: “In reality, the country’s worsening anti-Americanism is driven more by the portrayal of the drones in the Pakistani media, which paints them as a scourge targeting innocent civilians, than by the drones themselves. Few Pakistanis have actually visited the tribal areas or even know much about them.”²¹

Yet, the idea that the Pakistani media is using drone strikes to enflame the people of Pakistan might be overblown. First, anti-Americanism in Pakistan is not new, and it cannot be attributed solely to the U.S. drone policy. In 2002, two years before the first reported drone strike in Pakistan, a Pew poll found that 70% of Pakistanis disapproved of the United States.²² Other studies have shown widespread anti-Americanism going back as far as the 1960s.²³ Second, a recent study shows that given the high rates of illiteracy and lack of access to education, only 35% of Pakistanis have any knowledge of the drone policy, while 43% state that they know nothing of the program. The same poll demonstrates that those Pakistanis who are aware of the program tend to be male, educated, and have access to the internet.²⁴ This is likely because educated Pakistanis who tend to support drone strikes have greater access to more nuanced analysis of drone strikes and terrorism in the Pakistani press (particularly Pakistan’s English-language media). This stands in contrast to less educated Pakistanis who tend to only have access to the more jingoistic Urdu-language press, and are generally more opposed to drones.²⁵ It is therefore unlikely that drone strikes are driving anti-Americanism through all sectors of Pakistani society.

There also seems to be a dividing line of opinion between people who live in the region where drone strikes actually take place — the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) — and the rest of Pakistan. One study shows that drone strikes enjoy considerable public support in the FATA. A majority of survey respondents in these areas did not believe that the strikes caused anti-Americanism.²⁶

In the case of Yemen, Boyle similarly argues that drone strikes weaken the legitimacy of a government already facing a Shiite insurgency to the north and secessionist movement to the south, while more and more Yemeni citizens support the AQAP in opposition to U.S. drone strikes. However, author Christopher Swift notes that political leaders across the spectrum in Yemen, including some Islamist politicians, favor drone strikes as a weapon that targets the al-Qaeda insurgency. The source of the antipathy towards the drone campaign, therefore, is nationalism: Yemeni resentment that strikes against al-Qaeda are being conducted by an outside power (the U.S.), rather than Yemen’s own government. Further, as stated above, the president of Yemen himself has publicly endorsed drone strikes against AQAP, indicating that he does view drones as a destabilizing force. Those

Yemeni recruits that do join AQAP often do so for economic reasons rather than from anger at drone strikes. AQAP provides substantial salaries and builds needed infrastructure in some of the most desperately poor areas of Yemen.²⁷

But Doyle’s critique also fails to adequately address a central question: how else is the U.S. expected to respond to a group like the AQAP, which is committed to launching destructive international terrorist attacks? Boyle argues that in countries where the U.S. is not officially at war (like Yemen, Pakistan, and Somalia), realistic alternatives to drones “range from diplomatic pressure to capacity-building to even covert operations.”²⁸ However, there are few, if any, diplomatic methods to pressure these governments to take meaningful action when groups like the Pakistani Taliban, AQAP, and al-Shabaab in Somalia operate in areas beyond the sovereign control of the central government. These areas — such as the FATA tribal regions — are the primary focus of U.S. drone policy. Few strikes have been launched in areas under full sovereign state control.²⁹

Boyle’s second argument contends that building capacity in weak states can serve U.S. security objectives. This is a noble endeavor, but capacity building is a long process that does nothing to stop terrorist groups in the short-term from launching attacks. In Africa, nearly ten years of U.S.-funded institution-building and military training in countries like Mauritania and Mali failed to halt the progress of Islamist extremists, as demonstrated by the takeover of northern Mali by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other Islamist groups in 2012.³⁰

His mention of “covert action” is also curious. Drone strikes are already covert actions, involving extensive levels of spycraft and intelligence.³¹ If Boyle means Special Forces, the U.S. already uses them when feasible. Saleh Ali Nabhan, an al-Qaeda member implicated in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings, was killed in a U.S. Navy SEALs operation in Somalia in 2009.³² Osama bin Laden, of course, was famously killed by Navy SEALs in a raid on his compound on May 1, 2011.

Yet, drone strikes should remain the primary method. Unlike operations with Special Forces, drones do not put American soldiers in harm’s way. They also create fewer civilian casualties than traditional aerial bombardments.³³ This may partly explain the relative support for drone strikes among residents of the FATA region, where many prefer them over the alternatives.³⁴ Further, deploying Special Forces into these regions, rather than drone strikes, is no less of an infringement of the sovereignty of Yemen and Pakistan. Pakistan’s reaction to the Osama bin Laden raid is an example of how sensitive governments are to foreign troops on their soil.³⁵ Drones are a way to avoid these interventions.

Conclusion

The use of drone strikes to assassinate terrorist leaders should not be viewed as a clean and completely moral endeavor. It is a dirty business, and innocent people will

unavoidably suffer. However, in a battle against an enemy that vows to wage unrelenting war, with no viable political solution, drones are a necessary, if undesirable, tactic. Targeted killings can weaken the core leadership of al-Qaeda and its affiliates, which disrupts and limits their operational capacity.

This is not to say that the Obama's drone program is not without serious flaws. Targeting any militant in Pakistan, regardless of rank or importance within their organization, is counterproductive. The program also needs more transparency regarding the selection of targets, as well as a greater conformity to U.S. and international law. The recent Department of Justice memo justifying the targeted assassination of U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki, from a constitutional standpoint, is particularly troubling in this regard.³⁶

There is no magic bullet that can end the war against an enemy with an uncompromising, apocalyptic ideology, and the U.S. will likely continue this fight until the ideology of radical Islam is no longer a salient current within certain societies. In fact, al-Qaeda's appeal has been fading as Muslim populations, particular those who have experienced al-Qaeda's violence, are rejecting their message and brutal methods. Iraqi Sunnis revolted against al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2007 for this reason, as did the Tuareg population in northern Mali in 2013 during the French intervention to recapture territory from al-Qaeda-linked fighters. While al-Qaeda may gain recruits by tapping into the deeply felt grievances of the Muslim world, it cannot sustain itself indefinitely as a long-term movement because it offers violence instead of a political platform.³⁷

In the meantime, the U.S. must limit the threat posed by al-Qaeda and its affiliates through the use of any tactic (within reason and in basic conformity with the law) at its disposal. Given the nature of the enemy, this must include the targeted killing of their leadership.

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U.S. Drones in Pakistan: The Information Problem

BY SARAH COCHRAN

Perhaps the most controversial foreign policy legacy of the Obama administration will be its use of the "Unmanned Aerial Vehicle" (UAV), or "drone". No single 21st century war tool challenges more our contemporary notions of ethical warfare, the preponderance of military and cultural hegemony, standards of international law, humanitarian codes of engagement, and the quest for transparency in the information age. Modern warfare is far more complicated in a globalizing world paradigm, where perceptions are influenced by the availability of multiple perspectives and several channels of mass communication during conflict.

It is in this environment that the efficacy of drones as a means for eliminating threats has become a central question — one that focuses on the broader challenges of a shift from traditional armed combat toward more technically advanced, less troop-intensive, "light footprint" warfare as a new answer to addressing conflict. The overall costs and benefits of remote-controlled wars are not easy to assess, as the drone question quite amply highlights.

This paper analyzes the particularities of drone attacks in Pakistan and concludes that, in that context, they do more harm than substantiated good. While it is difficult to assess the actual success of drone use on Pakistani soil, it certainly raises the question of an increase in the threat of al-Qaeda and Taliban attacks against the U.S. in the long-run due to their physical and psychological impact on an already vulnerable civilian population.

Two sides of the question

While surveillance drones have been used for some time and continue to be vital (their most effective use happened during the Balkan wars of the 1990s)¹, after September 11, 2001, the U.S. shifted to a heavy focus on drones as weapons of combat, especially for operations against Taliban forces and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. As the Obama administration chose to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan and Iraq, it indulged in the largest increase in drone attacks (some 600%) in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the last 11 years, with 122 strikes in Pakistan in 2010 alone. By comparison, the Bush administration launched about 50 total drone strikes during its entire 8-year tenure.²

Recent media uproar presented both criticism and defense of the president's policy in Pakistan, revealing two opposing arguments: (1) that because drone strikes effectively eliminate influential members of the Taliban and al-Qaeda and disrupt operational capacity, they are worth the investment and the overall losses incurred; and (2) that U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan are unlawful, unethical, and too destructive to be worth the potential benefits of mitigating enemy operations or eliminating a small percentage of significant targets. Furthermore, they lead to an ideology of animosity toward the U.S. that increases the risk of future violent extremist attacks.

The argument presented here is that drone strikes in Pakistan, while capable of halting terror attacks in the short-term, increase their likelihood in the long-term given the collateral loss incurred in the form of civilian killing/maiming, infrastructure destruction, and psychological trauma. The Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda can capitalize on anti-U.S. sentiment and potentially mobilize, whether to promote violent extremism or to create and spread an ideology based on retribution, anti-Americanism, or cultural violence, among others.

There are more issues to consider. Many argue that the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda are already on the decline,

and the threat that these groups pose to the U.S. is not high enough to justify running the risks inherent to drone attacks. Their threat level, in fact, has been continuously overestimated relative to random acts committed individually by sympathizers. Moreover, many question whether drones are an effective tool in and of themselves or if they are only useful when used in tandem with other counterterrorist strategies such as financial and ideological tactics, cyber activities, covert operations, and diplomatic talks focused on mediation and negotiation.

Drones in Pakistan: the target issue

There are two primary types of drones that are used by the U.S. military and NATO allies: the reconnaissance drone, or “Reaper”, used for aerial surveillance and information gathering; and the “Predator”, which is armed with missiles and bombs and used to target enemies.³ Drone activity and its consequences in Pakistan have raised ethical issues surrounding the secrecy of drone policy and the legality of extrajudicial killings by the U.S. government. The administration has introduced a new dimension to the issue by enlisting the CIA — a non-combatant, civilian organization — in drone warfare controlled remotely from Las Vegas and California. This reflects a new U.S. trend to reduce military combat personnel and replace soldiers with civilian intelligence actors and unmanned drones.⁴ The Obama administration’s assessment of political and strategic gains relative to military losses in Afghanistan, together with its disdain for the local government, influenced this “light footprint” approach in the rough terrains of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, the administration calculates that fewer service member casualties would directly prevent loss of domestic support for the War on Terror.

The covert nature of drone attacks in Waziristan and the difficulty of categorizing targets as “terrorist”, “militant”, and “civilian” are important considerations when discussing the efficacy of drones as deterrents to Pakistan’s extremist threats against the U.S. In fact, the attacks are often counterproductive when civilian casualties create new enemies out of those affected by killings and injuries.⁵ Therefore, the main foundational challenge of U.S. drone policy in Pakistan is tied to the issue of ascertaining the accuracy of data from what are largely secret operations. Confusion is further exacerbated by the numerous sets of information available on drone attacks in Pakistan, emanating from various Pakistani media outlets, Western outlets, research institutes (such as the New America Foundation), and data collection agencies such as the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ).

Many groups have the platform to push their respective agendas or create their own narratives by presenting their own information around these secret missions. Therefore, care must be taken to assume a level of bias from the sources on the topic. Data from the Foundation for Defense of Democracy and its conservative anti-terror statistics in the “Long War Journal”, for instance, clearly exhibits bias in

presenting a small number of civilian casualties (4) among 300 Taliban/al-Qaeda casualties in Waziristan in November 2012.⁶ When statistics on the number of “militants” and “terrorists” are listed by the Foundation, the definitions are based upon relative descriptions of anyone from virtually all combat-aged males to suspected militants to actual militants. More liberal assessments question of “high-value” versus “low-value” targets, the latter presumably posing no security threat to the U.S. at all and raising issues of the legality of drone attacks.⁷

Legal Criteria

According to Christopher Swift, Professor of National Security Studies at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, assassinations and targeted killings violate the Geneva Conventions of International Law. However, some supporters view Article 2, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution as providing legal justification for drone strikes, provided they are used in instances of self-defense and imminent danger. Swift suggests the proper use of objective criteria for what are known as “signature strikes” and best use of links-based analyses to ensuring attacks are as transparent and as accurate as possible. “Objective criteria” is defined as the actions of a potential terrorist — such as an individual visibly seen planting an improvised explosive device, someone taking positions on high ground in order to attack allied targets, or a person carrying a mortar or a rocket-propelled grenade. These are all clear indications of an imminent threat that could justify drone strikes because they identify real actions, and not just a general target profile. In the case of links-based criteria, Swift suggests that each link in the chain that leads to the terrorist target must be reliable and strong in order for targets to be considered legitimate.⁸

Nonetheless, there are opposing views regarding the ethics of striking an area largely populated by civilians in order to reach one or a few individuals. Two central issues in this ethical argument are the statistics on civilian casualties and injuries (which vary by data source, as discussed above) and the definition of the word “militant”. Both raise questions of perceived and subjective justice, and are vital to explaining why, in the long run, the U.S. is endangering itself by creating new ideological and cultural enemies who either join the Taliban and al-Qaeda or create their own spin-off groups.

Some argue that drone strikes are ethically sound and do not induce support for terror against the U.S. These assertions are based on data received by their own sources. Christine Fair of Georgetown University’s Security Studies Program states that “high-level Pakistani officials have conceded to me that very few civilians have been killed by drones, and their innocence is often debatable.”⁹ The Foundation for Defense of Democracy claims that civilian casualties are almost negligible. Farhat Taj, a Pakistani journalist with apparent firsthand knowledge of ground occurrences, states that because casualty counts are statistically unreliable — in

light of the deceit and lies of Taliban and al-Qaeda operatives in targeted areas — drone strikes are justified.¹⁰

Amid these arguments favoring drones, the Pakistani government itself has high-level agreements with the United States. One such practice is known as “deconfliction” — a process whereby tacit consent for the use of airspace takes the form of a fax from the CIA to the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) outlining the area of planned attack, followed by a return receipt fax from the ISI that does not endorse the plan but clears the airspace over the area to prevent mid-air collisions.¹¹ Thus, the argument that drone strikes threaten the sovereignty of Pakistan is challenged by the behavior of the Pakistani government itself, which ultimately allows the attacks.

On the other hand, there has been a spike in allegations that the U.S. is not adhering to ethical standards and should be held accountable for inciting more support for al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Proponents of this view believe that their data on casualties shows the potential to promote recruitment into extremist groups. Most prominently, a joint NYU-Stanford University study¹² established that high-level targets constitute only 2% of casualties and that “even the most rational people will calculate that targeting Americans with violence in response is just and necessary to deter further aggression.”¹³ The U.S. was also blamed for “targeting rescuers who arrive to provide aid to the victims of the original strike.” Perhaps the most damning of all is the report’s claim that the word “militant” was being used indiscriminately by various U.S. and Pakistani media in the tallying of casualties. Essentially, any group of individuals exhibiting “remote patterns of life” could be categorized as militants or suspected militants if they are “military-aged males in a strike zone.”¹⁴ According to a CNN report by Pakistani lawyer and human rights advocate Mirza Shahid Akbar, “Pakistan has experienced a spike in suicide attacks when there has been a surge in drone attacks,” and every assassinated militant leader has “been replaced with a more ferocious and extremist” one.¹⁵

An assessment of the available data shows the following¹⁶:

- A disproportionate civilian to terrorist casualty ratio (10:1).
- No coherent and verifiable data on how many civilians are actually affected, not just by death but also by injury and mental trauma.
- No clear definition for the term “militant”.
- The covert nature of the issue means that actual statistics may vary greatly from what is reported, leaving no means to verify accuracy.
- There is often selection bias in the pools of individuals surveyed, either because researchers have limited access to the affected areas or because of tainted agendas by media and political actors.

Beyond these data, it is necessary to ask what drones are actually stopping or causing. Within the rugged terrain of Waziristan, an area largely out of the reach of the Pakistani government laws, the relative deprivation of indigenous

tribes and centuries of war have fortified entrenched tribal values, including those of economic survival and subsistence. The view of the U.S. as the materialistic enemy with more resources and power creates a sense of “fraternalistic deprivation” among terror groups, and prompts them to engage in collective action.¹⁷ When drone attacks in Waziristan disproportionately kill and maim civilians, the question becomes whether this collective action translates into a rise in threats to the U.S., as well as possible long-term problems for overall U.S. counterinsurgency strategy.¹⁸

The Way Forward

Perhaps with growing criticisms, the promotion of an engagement that includes diplomacy, dialogue, and development-based incentives while surgically rooting out leaders of terror movements through proven evidence and legally transparent means will render the question of U.S. drones less controversial.

Experts like Christopher Swift argue that more reliable link-based information and better objective criteria for signature strikes are vital in securing more effective results for U.S. drone policies. But the likelihood of having reliable oversight and access to accurate information in order to determine objective criteria and links-based trails within terror chains is a conundrum in and of itself. The terminology used and the categorization of information on deaths are insufficient as they currently stand. Given all the possible pitfalls in how data are gathered and used to continue drone attacks, we can arrive at the conclusion that in today’s context it is exceptionally challenging to ascertain the overall strategic and security value of drones to the United States.

At the very least, drone attacks paralyze communities while reaching the intended target in only a fraction of instances. And at the very most, they instill immediate fear in those hostile to the U.S., and even more so in innocent Pakistanis.

The overall effect is long-term erosion in trust, respect, and support for the United States and its policies against terror. Suggested approaches include: more rigorous use of underutilized strategic resources (such as local and regional allies, the U.S. Pakistani diaspora, and extensive education and training on Pakistani culture); creative negotiating efforts that include the local Taliban leadership in processes of conflict transformation that reduce the need for hard power approaches; a more critical approach to the rampant corruption within all levels of Pakistan’s leadership; and an overall dose of humility in a concerted effort to study closely and accurately the people and environments in which the U.S. opts to conduct war.

But until such approaches seriously present themselves, the mere exercise of measuring¹⁹ the effects of drone strikes in Pakistan will continue to be riddled with challenges beyond the scope of current data handling — perhaps one that serves al-Qaeda and Taliban objectives just as much as it allegedly does the U.S.

Figure 1: U.S. Drone Strike Statistics in Pakistan, by the New America Foundation (As of June 8, 2013)

Year	Number of Attacks	Number Killed	
		Min.	Max.
2004	1	5	8
2005	3	12	13
2006	2	90	102
2007	4	48	77
2008	36	219	344
2009	54	350	721
2010	122	608	1,028
2011	72	366	599
2012	48	222	361
2013	14	73	87
Total	337	1,908	3,225

Figure 2: U.S. Drone Strike Statistics in Pakistan, by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (As of June 8, 2013)

- Total strikes: 370
- Total reported killed: 2,548 – 3,547
- Civilians reported killed: 411 – 884
- Children reported killed: 168 – 197
- Total reported injured: 1,177 – 1,483

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State Fragility, Transnational Crime & External Intervention in Guatemala: Regional Security as a Governance Challenge

BY BRENDAN HALLORAN

Over the past decade, Central America's Northern Triangle — El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala — has become the most violent region in the world. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's 2011 statistics, all three countries are in the top ten nations with the highest homicide rates, with Honduras occupying the number one spot.¹ Geography seems to have cursed this region by placing it between the main areas of narcotics production in South America and the principal market for the consumption of illegal drugs, the U.S. The onslaught of drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), combined with the rise of extremely violent *mara* youth gangs, threatens the already fragile stability and democratic governance of these countries. This crisis has generated a significant response from the U.S. and other donors in the form of aid and cooperation aimed at combatting DTOs and reducing violence in the region. However, if donors seek to promote sustainable improvements in countries such as Guatemala, they will have to increase their focus on the weak governance framework that allows organized crime to flourish. This entails prioritizing political analysis and politically informed interventions to strengthen democratic governance and state capacity.

Guatemala's Insecurity as a Governance Challenge

Experts estimate that some 90% of the cocaine that enters the U.S. passes through Central America. Mexican cartels, such as the Zetas, have moved aggressively into countries like Guatemala to establish control of territory and transportation routes. This has led to violent clashes, both among the Mexican cartels, and between these groups and Guatemalan criminal organizations. Although drug-related killings are concentrated in Guatemala's border regions, the spillover has affected all areas of the country. In recent years, malls, restaurants, and hospitals in wealthy parts of Guatemala City have all seen major drug-related violence: murders, attempted murders, shootouts with police, etc.

Adding to the challenge presented by DTOs, *maras* have expanded in Guatemala over the past decade. They are concentrated in marginalized communities in the capital city region, but are active in other urban centers throughout the country as well. *Maras*, such as the Mara Salvatrucha and the 18th Street Gang, were born in the Latino immigrant neighborhoods of Los Angeles in the 1980s and arrived in the Northern Triangle when members were deported to their countries of origin beginning in the 1990s. Guatemala is home to an estimated 400 gangs and some 15,000 gang members.² *Maras* are involved in extortion and other criminal activity, as well as violent conflicts over territory, and opinions as to the linkages between *them* and DTOs vary widely.

The rise of organized crime in Guatemala led to a spike in the murder rate, which nearly doubled between 1999 and 2009, surging from 24 to 46 per 100,000.³ National leaders sought desperately to stem the tide of violence, yet repressive approaches have not showed concrete results in the region. Even the government of former army general Otto Perez Molina, elected in 2011 promising an "iron fist" against crime, has begun to address violence prevention. Perez Molina has also vocally supported alternatives to the "war on drugs": he has proposed "decriminalization" in various international fora, although he has yet to provide specific details of his proposal.

In addition to specific policy responses, analysts of citizen security in Guatemala have highlighted the need to address the core governance challenges that allow organized crime to flourish in the country. Political analysis has highlighted Guatemala's incomplete transition to democracy in the 1980s and the pact that established a weak and limited state that could be controlled by the economic elite as a driver of the current situation.⁴ The lack of capacity and accountability of Guatemala's state institutions undermine the government's ability to respond to the needs and demands of its citizens and constitutes the root cause of the rising criminal activity and violence in the country.⁵ It is this state weakness that must be addressed if DTOs and criminal organizations are to be effectively combated.

Jose Miguel Cruz argues that the U.S. and other donors should focus more on strengthening the democratic ac-

countability and rooting out corruption and illicit activity of Guatemalan institutions:⁶

Despite the fact that corrupt institutions have played a role in the region's ever-increasing levels of violence, the current policy debate aimed at tackling crime in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador revolves almost exclusively around drugs and gangs and ignores the importance of institutions.

Cruz suggests that political factors are critical in addressing crime and violence in the region, citing the successful police reform in Nicaragua that “has to do more with political decisions than just resources”.

Guatemala's governance situation

Unfortunately, addressing Guatemala's state weakness and governance challenges is a daunting proposition. The country has a long history of inequality and state capture by elites. These two mutually reinforcing factors have left a legacy of fragile and unaccountable public institutions that are unable to secure the basic rights of the majority of the country's citizens, notably the provision of justice and security. This situation was exacerbated by the country's internal armed conflict and the legacy of violence and impunity it left behind. The weak and porous nature of Guatemala's public institutions and democratic processes has facilitated their continuing control by elite and, increasingly, illicit actors (particularly organized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking), resulting in a vicious cycle of corruption, inefficiency, and underfunding within security and justice sector institutions.

According to the U.S. Department of State, “money from the drug trade has woven itself into the fiber of Guatemalan law enforcement and justice institutions.”⁷ Despite several reforms of security and justice sector institutions, corruption and inefficiency are still prevalent. The process of modernizing Guatemala's police force, which began in the 1990's and has benefited from millions of dollars of donor assistance, has failed to create a professional and effective institution.⁸ The country's institutional weakness and failed reform processes are reflected in the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators for Guatemala. The country scored 15 out of 100 on rule of law, while accountability, state effectiveness and control of corruption ranged from 28 to 36.⁹ These marks have shown little sustained improvement over the past 15 years.

Although more funds alone are not the answer, the governance problems are exacerbated by the fact that Guatemalan institutions face serious constraints on their ability to act against well-financed criminal organizations. Guatemala collects only 12% of its GDP in state revenue, leaving it behind nearly every other country in the region in that category. Moreover, Guatemalan political parties are weak, fragmented, and serve primarily as vehicles for personal advancement, with opaque financing that likely includes money connected to the drug trade.¹⁰ Reform efforts in these

two areas have had little success. These and other governance challenges must be addressed if Guatemala is to make sustained progress in the struggle against organized crime in the country.

Efforts to Strengthen Security in Guatemala

The U.S. has a long and complicated history of intervention in Guatemala, which includes backing a coup that toppled a democratically elected government in 1954. Since Guatemala's return to formal democracy in 1985, the U.S. has sought to consolidate and stabilize elections and democratic institutions.¹¹ With the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 that ended Guatemala's 36-year civil war, the U.S. and other donors began to increase foreign aid to the country, especially to the growing civil society sector. U.S. engagement in the mid-2000s was also shaped by the negotiations around and implementation of the Central America Free Trade Agreement, of which Guatemala was a member. The ratification of this agreement provoked controversy in both the U.S. and Guatemala.

U.S. foreign assistance to Guatemala has climbed further in recent years, doubling between 2007 and 2011. Additionally, the country recently became eligible for funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation's threshold program. Although much of the funding growth is related to health, nutrition, and agricultural programs, funding for citizen security strengthening activities has increased dramatically as well, including approximately \$50 million in direct military aid between 2006 and 2010, the majority of which was destined towards countering drug trafficking.¹²

The main instrument of financing for U.S. efforts to improve security in Guatemala is the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), which grew out of the 2008 Merida Initiative aimed at combating drug trafficking in Mexico and Central America. CARSI has five principal objectives:¹³

1. Ensure Citizen and Community Safety
2. Disrupt DTO activities
3. Strengthen state capacity and accountability
4. Re-establish effective state presence and security in communities at risk
5. Enhance regional security cooperation

According to the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government has allocated nearly half a billion dollars to CARSI since 2008.¹⁴ CARSI funds are executed by a number of U.S. agencies, especially the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development. With CARSI and other funding sources, U.S. agencies have supported numerous initiatives to strengthen the justice sector, promote government transparency, address violence and crime at the community level, and build capacity in Guatemalan institutions to tackle drug trafficking and organized crime.

Among its initiatives, the U.S. provides significant financing for the International Commission against Impunity (*Comision Internacional contra Impunidad in Guatemala*, CICIG) in Guatemala. The CICIG was created in 2007 and is funded by international donors and implemented under the auspices of the United Nations. It investigates cases of corruption and impunity and presents evidence to the Guatemalan Attorney General's office, which brings charges against the implicated parties. The CICIG also provides recommendations on structural reforms to combat impunity in the country, few of which have been successfully implemented.

Due to the political nature of its role, the CICIG has often been at the center of controversy in Guatemala. The first director of the institution resigned in 2010 to protest against the appointment of a Guatemalan attorney general whom he accused of being linked to organized crime; Guatemala's president removed the attorney general soon thereafter. The CICIG's support has also led to a number of high-profile convictions and recently produced evidence against 18 judges for allegedly promoting impunity in the justice system.¹⁵ Despite opposition in some sectors, the Guatemalan government has extended the CICIG's mandate several times, most recently through 2015.

The Guatemalan government has increased its spending on security and justice over the past several years and created national policy frameworks around justice, security, and peace. Justice and security sector institutions, particularly the police and public prosecutors, have improved their coordination somewhat as well. Government actors have implemented local interventions, such as the installation of public lighting and security camera systems. Together, these efforts are achieving some positive results. From 2009 to 2012, murder rates in the country fell nearly 25%, to 34 per 100,000. Impunity rates are declining as well. According to one study of the Guatemala City Prosecutor's Office for Homicides, resolved cases increased from 5% for 2006-2008 to 28% for 2009-2011, due to improved investigative procedures.¹⁶

However, Guatemala's security situation has not been resolved. The decline in the murder rate has stalled and partially reversed over the past year. This demonstrates the fragility of security gains that do not address the corruption and parallel structures embedded in security and justice institutions. Furthermore, efforts by the Perez Molina administration to promote transparency, improve state finances, and advance police reform have faced political and structural obstacles. Despite apparent interest from the government in strengthening the state to combat insecurity, the underlying dynamics of state penetration and capture by powerful groups remains a threat to any gains that have been achieved.

Moving Forward

Experts contend that improving governance is primarily a political matter, directly involving the interests and incentives of power holders, and thus requires political analysis

and politically informed interventions.¹⁷ However, lessons about the primacy of political factors have been difficult for donors around the world to put into practice.¹⁸ Often governance interventions focus on technical inputs such as training and equipment, and do not adequately focus on addressing the political dynamics that drive poor governance and weak public institutional capacity.

The U.S. and other international donors must further emphasize the political drivers of insecurity in Guatemala. Donors must analyze the political dynamics that underlie state weakness and take politically informed actions. Successful examples of this include the creation and financing of the CICIG and support for civil society oversight of the selection of justice-sector officials, which led to the selection of an excellent attorney general. Donors could also play an increased role in fomenting broad coalitions to support anti-corruption efforts and political reform. Such efforts are risky, given the powerful interests opposed to strengthening the Guatemalan state, and short-term successes may be few. Yet given the human costs of insecurity and the scale of the resources being invested in improving the situation, donor efforts must be focused on directly addressing the drivers of Guatemala's chronic state weakness. Making sustainable progress towards a secure, stable, and democratic Guatemala depends on renewed attention to governance, particularly its challenging political dimensions.

The U.S. and other donors have a unique opportunity to focus international efforts on political and governance facets of the problem. This emphasis is in line with the objectives of the CARSI program, which include addressing governance and state strengthening in addition to taking action against DTOs and *maras*. Moving the locus of U.S. efforts towards strengthening governance and state capacity, through politically informed interventions, would represent a shift in U.S. strategy to improve security in Guatemala. But this approach could provide a model for addressing security challenges in the region going forward.

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Between State Failure & Endurance: Challenges to the Mexican State

BY PABLO ESTRADA

Mexico is a country of contrasts. On one hand, it is a remarkable success story—in 2011, it ranked as the 14th largest world economy as measured by GDP.¹ Unlike the crises of the 1980s and 1990s that marked the end of the authoritarian regime, there are now sound macroeconomic institutions and policies that allow control over inflation and the currency exchange rate, facilitating a quick recovery after the 2008-2009 world recession.² Mexico has also been a more active participant on the international stage, recently hosting two major multilateral events—the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference and the 2012 G-20 Leaders Summit—drawing praise from participants for the efforts of President Felipe Calderón and his cabinet in facilitating international agreements.³

As this remarkable political and economic progress was occurring, however, approximately 83,000 Mexicans were killed in confrontations between and against drug cartels and criminal organizations.⁴ During Calderón's administration (2006-2012), the Freedom House rating for Mexico fell from 2.0 (free) to 3.0 (partly free), largely because of human rights violations committed by security forces, the vulnerability of politicians and local governments to the power of drug organizations, and the limits to press freedom imposed by this violent environment.⁵ These grim statistics led the United States Joint Forces Command to suggest that the Mexican state was at risk of a "rapid and sudden collapse."⁶

This article will explore one idea that can help explain the apparent contradiction of Mexico, which shows traits of both an emerging international power and a rapidly weakening state. It will begin with a brief theoretical background of state building, followed by the elaboration of the main argument—that unlike democracy or economic performance, the "security theme" was never on the agenda of state reforms implemented in the last 20 years in Mexico because it did not represent a major challenge to the state. However, once the status quo of criminal organizations was altered by a shift in Mexico's anti-drug policy, officials realized that the state did not have sufficient capacity to confront the unexpectedly powerful cartels. With growing firepower and economic resources, these criminal organizations are infringing the authority of the Mexican state.

Moreover, their presence in the United States, Central America, and elsewhere is increasing as they establish in-

ternational drug trafficking networks, thus raising the regional and international stakes and spawning a discussion on ways to strengthen domestic and regional capacity to face this issue. The final section of the paper will examine some implications of the Mexican case for the general discussion of state failure.

Challenges and State-Building

Two complementary characterizations provide perspective on what a state is and what a state is expected to do. Max Weber's classic definition states that "it is a human community within the limits of an established territory [...] claiming for itself the monopoly of the legitimate physical violence"⁷ Alternately, there is Theda Skocpol's view, by which a state is a "set of administrative, political, and military organizations, headed and more or less well coordinated by an executive authority"⁸ Hence, by means of an ensemble of interrelated agencies, states are expected to impose authority over a defined territory, recurring to force if necessary.

States exhibit differences along two general lines: scope, or the array of activities a state seeks to accomplish; and strength, or the ability to enforce its own policies and laws.⁹ Why do those differences exist? In a nutshell, the features of each particular state are a function of the challenges and needs it faced throughout its history. In 16th and 17th century Western Europe, for example, several polities strived to control the relatively scarce land and resources. This could be achieved with military operations, which necessitated a stable flow of income, offices to administer that income, laws to explain subjects' obligations, and a security force to enforce them. These activities became the scope of the polity, and only those communities that had the necessary resources to carry them out (strength) succeeded in defeating their peers, thus becoming states.¹⁰ In a similar way, polities in pre-colonial Africa were concerned with controlling population — the scarcer resource — rather than territory, which existed in abundance. Hence, a major component of the scope of state activities was to establish bonds between individuals and a larger community.¹¹ Among other factors which contribute to the definition of the scope and strength of states are the institutional legacies of previous policies, which affect the orientation of political elites on current debates and the acceptance of new policy approaches.¹²

The core of this argument is not to understand how states acquire a particular configuration of scope and strength, but rather to illustrate that states which adjust their scope and strength to the challenges they face are more likely to survive. If an issue is not considered to be problematic, or if it is thought of as unworthy of policy intervention, then there are no incentives to adjust state institutions. Yet, overall institutional preparedness contributes to state endurance in times of crisis. Without the necessary capacity, problems are more difficult to address, and may ultimately challenge the survival of the state if it succumbs to the power of private or foreign actors who are able to impose their authority over a

territory. In the next section, I will discuss this problem in relation to the security challenges faced by the Mexican state.

Mexico, the State, and Organized Crime

The Mexican state faced a series of challenges throughout the 1980s and 1990s that reshaped its institutions. A major foreign debt crisis, devaluation, and inflation led to the professionalization and granting of political autonomy to agencies charged with implementing fiscal and monetary policies. Accusations of electoral fraud gave momentum to the creation of an independent electoral management body. Finally, the perception that all decision-making structures were centralized around the PRI prompted administrative decentralization and the opening of spaces for opposition parties.¹³

In contrast to the political and economic reforms, the Mexican state has not concerned itself enough with security issues to modify its strength or scope to meaningfully attend to them. Although the army has had an important role in combating drug production and smuggling since the 1970s and bilateral anti-crime operations with the U.S. occur with relative frequency, these actions have not translated into structural reforms.¹⁴ One major reason for this is that prohibitionism was the underlying logic for all actions against organized crime. This meant that efforts were concentrated mostly in eradicating drug crops and seeking and detaining leaders of criminal organizations.¹⁵ In other words, the goal was to forestall drug trafficking, not to combat its roots. Accordingly, diverse intelligence and law enforcement agencies were created during the 1990s, mostly within the existing secretariats (specifically that of the Interior and the Attorney General's office).¹⁶

Prohibitionist policies continued even in the first post-PRI government, under Vicente Fox (2000-2006), who aimed at increasing the strength of the state by creating more agencies for security affairs.¹⁷ Those reforms aimed at increasing the capacity of the state, but drug trafficking organizations were far from neutralized. For instance, many crimes that the new agencies were supposed to combat actually increased, such as possession of illegal weapons, fiscal fraud, kidnapping, money laundering, piracy, and drug trafficking.¹⁸ Bureaucracy increased, but it did not translate into more state strength.

The old prohibitive policy, which was kept in place, was no longer adequate in response to the level of sophistication and power that criminal organizations acquired. Many of the new agencies were infiltrated by drug trafficking cartels, which bribed or threatened officials to share information about their intended interception and eradication operations.¹⁹ Even more threatening, in some parts of the country, criminal organizations became the only real authority, with the state unable to repress them.

In 2006, Felipe Calderón took office as president of Mexico, introducing the idea of a "face-to-face combat" against organized crime, as opposed to the previous prohibitionist

approach. The idea was to use military operations to wipe out criminal presence in some parts of the country. However, as criminals moved from location to location, entering territory controlled by enemy groups, confrontations began between cartels and the government was unable to control the consequent violence.²⁰

It is debatable whether or not this represents a shift in the strategy or in the scope of state activities. Some analysts suggest that the goal of Calderón's policies was still to disrupt the activities of organized crime, rather than attacking its roots (poverty, the lack of state presence in all the territory, etc).²¹ Others stress that its novelty relies on the institution-strengthening component (professionalization of security forces, polygraph tests to officials, or re-engineering of security agencies) and in targeting the sources of power of criminal organizations.²² In either case, the inability of the government to control the violence of criminal organizations suggests that the state had not previously adjusted its scope and strength to face such an opponent because the problem it represented was kept at bay with the existing resources. However, once drug cartels acquired more power, it was clear that the state was unable to cope, thus necessitating a reform in security scope and strength. Moreover, some domestic and international voices suggested that the inability of the state to deal with the security problem indicated that Mexico was a failing state: drug cartels exercised full authority in some regions, borders were not sufficiently controlled to prevent organizations from receiving or shipping illegal drugs, weapons, or revenue, law enforcement officials were co-opted by criminals, and the number of deaths related to violence was so high that it surpassed the investigative capacity of the courts.

State Failure and Endurance

In spite of the problems posed by drug cartels and the state's inability to transform bureaucratic reforms into true capacity improvements, Mexico shows many signs of success, as stated at the beginning of this piece. Nevertheless, cartel-related violence in Mexico represents a major challenge to the state, which has not been able to protect the lives of tens of thousands of citizens. In spite of this weakness, the strength of Mexico's other political, judicial, and economic institutions still serve as a buffer to protect the state from failing.

Despite their plentiful resources, criminals cannot penetrate these political, judicial, and economic institutions to the point of weakening them at a national level. But they keep trying. These efforts reach beyond Mexico to the U.S. and Central America as well. Although Mexico should not be defined as a failed state, the regional effects of not addressing their security problem are similar to those of a failed state — spilling violence and criminal activity over its borders.

Mexico's neighbors have a range of concerns with the ongoing violence. To the north, the U.S. is a world power. But it is also where most of the drugs trafficked by Mexi-

can organizations are consumed and where many of their weapons are legally purchased. Several American diplomatic and law enforcement officials have been killed on the job in Mexico at the hands of cartels. Furthermore, there are indications of a close relationship between these criminal groups and street gangs in many cities of the southwestern U.S. Cartel-related crime has spilled across the border.

To the south, Central America faces a different set of challenges. Although there are differences among these nations, some of them, like Guatemala, still strive to rebuild their institutions after dictatorial governments and civil war, making them especially vulnerable to the power of criminal organizations. In this sense, the origins and consequences of Mexico's security problem are not restricted to domestic institutional preparedness, but also to the existence of opportunities for criminal organizations in other countries.

Due to the history of the region, and in spite of the severity of this problem, the option of a U.S. intervention in the area has not been seriously considered. Instead, there are bilateral and multilateral cooperation programs formed to enhance institutional strength. One of the most important is the Merida Initiative (MI), agreed on by President Felipe Calderón and President George Bush in 2007 at suggestion of the former. Within this framework, U.S. law enforcement agencies transfer equipment and technology to their Mexican and Central American counterparts, according to the needs identified by the receiving countries. Additionally, intelligence sharing and coordination of bilateral security operations has improved. The assistance provided by the U.S. is not aimed at rebuilding state capacity in Mexico, but rather at providing added value to ongoing Mexican operations.

The success of anti-narcotics policies, both at a domestic and a regional level, is beyond the scope of this paper. There have been intense debates on whether punitive policies (as opposed to those legalizing the consumption of some drugs) are the ideal way to reduce the power of criminal organizations. In any case, states threatened by the presence of organized crime within their territory are supported by the establishment of partnerships with their regional neighbors. Furthermore, it can be argued that building institutional capacity, both domestically and with external help, will help to protect the state from the challenges posed by internal threats.

The lesson, then, seems to be the following. We can ascertain with some degree of confidence that capacity building is a useful strategy to protect states from failing. Additionally, strength in some institutions could compensate for weakness in others. In Mexico, strength in the economic or legislative front, for instance, has compensated for the weaknesses in the security sector. The question that remains is what kind of institutions must be built, given that reforms take time to prove their effectiveness, while challenges tend to grow very quickly. Clearly, this has been the case in Mexico. Professionalization of the police corps has been underway for over a decade, yet in some areas of the country, the police remains so weak that the army is in charge of public safety.

Are key institutional strengthening activities missing from Mexico's agenda? Were previous institutional reforms implemented poorly? Or do effects simply take much longer to be evident than originally expected? These questions are neither new nor limited to Mexico. International anti-narcotics assistance has worked under similar assumptions about institution strengthening, with results not so dissimilar to those in Mexico; consider the still-active guerrillas and drug cartels in Colombia, even after the implementation of Plan Colombia's reforms. These ideas serve as a reminder of the need to have a frank debate about all available options and their effectiveness in helping failing states.

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A Flawed Strategy: The U.S. Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation and Legal Political Representation

BY MATTHEW GUCKENBERG

The September 11th attacks propelled terrorism to the front page of newspapers worldwide and created a new policy priority for the U.S. and its allies. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq intensified this focus on Islamic and Middle East-based terrorism. Today, some of these groups that are designated as transnational terrorist organizations participate as legal political representatives in government. Unfortunately, the U.S. lacks a true understanding of the nature of many of these organizations, and its broad application of the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation fails to recognize the predominantly national or regional objectives of some of these groups.

Some traditional opposition organizations designated as FTOs, or with terrorist elements, are becoming co-opted into governments in the Middle East. Hezbollah is one example of co-optation into a government that already exists in Lebanon, while Hamas was elected to form a new government in Gaza. These organizations have a national interest as their core concern and some have achieved a legitimate role as elected representatives. Yet, the FTO designation limits available U.S. options for constructive engagement, leaving a flawed strategy toward these organizations that ultimately makes the U.S. vulnerable to increasing threats. In order for the U.S. to effectively meet foreign policy objectives in the Middle East, particularly a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it must have a high degree of flexibility in its policy toward different organizations and governments. In the current environment, with FTO constraints in place, this is not possible. Lifting FTO restrictions for organizations that are legitimately involved in legal governments does not mean that the U.S. should abandon its pressure on these organizations to abandon violent activities. However, legitimate involvement in a legal government demands an adapted strategy that uses a combination of engagement and pressure to achieve political and diplomatic objectives — such as Middle East Peace — while lowering chances for violent and destabilizing activity as a means to achieve political goals.

Legal Designation versus Practical Application

In order for an organization to be designated by the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), it must meet three criteria: (1) It must be a foreign organization; (2) The organization must engage in terrorist activity or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism; (3) The organization's terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security, national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests of the United States.¹

Although the FTO designation itself is not inherently flawed, the manner in which it is applied to organizations that have ties to national governments undermines its effectiveness. The designation limits U.S. options to engage with organizations that are involved in legitimate governments, and neglects to identify the differences between different organizations by applying a uniform policy to all FTOs. Below are restrictions placed on designated organizations:²

- It is unlawful for a person in the United States or subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to knowingly provide “material support or resources” to a designated FTO.³
- Representatives and members of a designated FTO, if they are aliens, are inadmissible to the United States, and may be subject to deportation.
- Any U.S. financial institution that becomes aware that it has possession of or control over funds in which a designated FTO or its agent has an interest must retain possession of or control over the funds and report the funds to the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

While these restrictions do not limit the ability of the U.S. government to communicate with the organizations, they do restrict options for engagement. It might be more useful to reassess this strategy toward FTOs that have utilized legitimate political means — through elections or other methods — to influence governments in their home countries.

Case Studies

As the Arab Spring brings Islamist movements into new governments, the U.S. approach to these new regimes should take into account flawed policies toward two other Islamist movements, both of which have utilized a combination of violence and legitimate political activity. Hamas and Hezbollah are both designated as FTOs under U.S. policy. Yet, these two FTOs have been directly involved in their respective governments long before the Arab Spring, and have held on to their roles even as their neighboring countries fell into turmoil.

HAMAS

Hamas was founded in Gaza around the time of the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987. Hamas itself is an Arabic word that means “zeal,” but is also an acronym for “*Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah*”, or the Islamic Resistance

Movement.⁴ The organization began as a Palestinian affiliate of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, which had the goal of eliminating the Israeli state and replacing it with an Islamic state that would include all of the historical lands of Palestine.

Hamas presented a political alternative to the most powerful party of the time, the Palestinian Liberation Organization — particularly its Fatah faction.⁵ Yet, it remained relatively weak following the 1987 *intifada*, seen only as one of many Islamic opposition movements to the secular Fatah. Following the 2000 *intifada*, however, the movement's popularity grew at a persistent rate. Several strategies allowed Hamas to increase its traction and influence within the Palestinian community: shifting blame for a failed peace process onto Fatah; claiming credit for Israel's withdrawal from Gaza; and distributing social services. Hamas also displayed a clean image, in contrast to the perceived corruption elsewhere in Palestinian politics. As a result, many Palestinians began to view Hamas as efficient and honest.⁶ This popularity translated into electoral success for Hamas, giving the group a legitimate position as the governing body of Gaza.

Currently, Hamas is listed as an FTO — the same category as al-Qaeda — which means that the U.S. government views its attacks on Israel as a form of international terrorism that threatens U.S. interests as well.⁷ However, while its methods certainly utilize violence as a political tool, Hamas does not carry international aspirations. It is at its core a nationalist movement, with evidence of this character in two areas: ideology and political action.

The Hamas ideology is seen in its founding charter, which states that, “homelands revert [to their owners], calls for prayer be heard from their mosques, announcing the reinstatement of the Muslim state. Thus, people and things will revert to their true place.”⁸ Hamas wishes to return the land of historic Palestine, which includes the state of Israel, to its “true owners.”⁹ As Are Knudsen, senior researcher for the Chr. Michelsen Institute, argues, “The novelty of Hamas's ideology is the amalgamation of nationalism (*wataniyya*) and Islam which has become the organization's trademark.”¹⁰ This idea expresses the uniqueness of Hamas' nationalism.

On a political level, Hamas won the 2006 parliamentary elections in the Palestinian territory, creating a new majority in the Palestinian parliament.¹¹ When opposition movements, such as Hamas, participate legally in government through free and fair elections, citizens who elect them increase their capacity to hold them accountable. This may have a moderating impact on their more destructive behavior. Despite the change in political circumstances and the lack of elections since 2006, the foundation of legal political participation continues to exist for Hamas.

Current U.S. policy does not take into account these nationalist objectives and legitimate political roles of Hamas in Gaza. Instead, the U.S. emphasizes isolating the organization from the country in which it operates.¹² Yet, isolating a legitimate political representative of a state creates conditions for the undesirable and violent activity that the U.S. is seeking to curb. Changing U.S. strategy toward Hamas

could help lower hostility toward the U.S. in the region. This does not mean that the U.S. must ignore the terrorist actions of Hamas. However, since Hamas is now the legitimate government in Gaza, the U.S. might find it useful to adjust its strategy to allow for diplomatic negotiation to take place. In a time when the peace process has stalled, and the region around Palestine is falling deeper into turmoil, a diplomatic relationship with the legal representatives of the Gaza territory is paramount to negotiating a peaceful solution to the conflict. Hamas is an influential stakeholder, and by isolating the organization, the U.S. is losing a valuable chance to improve the circumstances for both sides, even if only slightly.

HEZBOLLAH

Formed in the early 1980s during Lebanese civil war, Hezbollah — whose name means “Party of God” — represents the Shi'a Muslim population in Lebanon. The organization emerged when a number of prominent individuals left the popular Shi'a movement Amal.¹³ For much of its early history, Hezbollah was disorganized, lacked any significant power, and was seen as simply one of many Shi'a organizations operating in Lebanon. However, Israel's protracted military operation in Lebanon during this period began to attract many disenchanting Shi'a Muslims to Hezbollah's nationalist agenda.¹⁴ According to Augustus Richard Norton of Boston University, Hezbollah's strength increased substantially after the Lebanese civil war: “By the 1990s ... Hezbollah was certainly the best organized political phenomenon and enjoyed the largest base of popular support.”¹⁵

Hezbollah became well-known both for its rocket strikes against Israel and its attacks orchestrated inside Lebanon against external actors, including the 1983 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and Marine base, as well as the attacks against French-led multinational forces.¹⁶ This history has led some to suggest that Hezbollah contains the capacity and will to strike international targets, an argument made in 2002 by then-Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.¹⁷ However, viewing Hezbollah as a global, or transnational, terrorist organization fails to consider its true objectives and ideology.

Despite international funding and operational support from Iran and Syria, Hezbollah's mission concentrates on Lebanon.¹⁸ Hezbollah's founding document outlines their nationalist ideology with three objectives:

1. To expel the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land;
2. To submit the Phalanges to a just power and bring them all to justice for the crimes they have perpetrated against Muslims and Christians;
3. To permit all the sons of our people to determine their future and to choose in all the liberty the form of government they desire. We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic government, which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty

for all. Only an Islamic regime can stop any further tentative attempts of imperialistic infiltration into our country.¹⁹

Although these objectives include confrontation with foreign nations, they are solely in the service of Lebanese interests as a sovereign nation.²⁰

To further their national objectives, Hezbollah demonstrates legitimate political action, much like Hamas. Lebanon's political system is deeply rooted in sectarianism, expressed in its confessional government. The political system is based on the sectarian composition of the society, which allocates parliamentary seats and government positions according to religious confession.²¹ Lebanon's political system consists of two major political alliances, March 8th and March 14th. Hezbollah plays a major role within the March 8th alliance, which has partnered with other blocs to constitute a majority in the parliament.²² Hezbollah derives most of its legitimacy and support from its social welfare programs — the construction of hospitals, schools, and housing for the traditionally lower class Shi'a.²³ While this support is concentrated in the Shi'a populations, Hezbollah expanded its network across sectarian lines following the 2006 war with Israel.²⁴ However, this support has recently waned following increased sectarian tensions after the outbreak of the Arab Spring.

Flawed U.S. strategy toward Hezbollah is similar to the flawed strategies toward Hamas. Treating Hezbollah in the same manner as al-Qaeda ignores its national objectives and legitimate political participation. The U.S. might benefit from adjusting its strategy toward Hezbollah to reflect the organization's aforementioned attributes. Limited engagement with Hezbollah gives the organization recognition as a legitimate political movement within Lebanon, and can move Hezbollah away from violent resistance to a strictly political organization, in line with the terms of the Taif Agreement.²⁵ Without any adjustment, constructing correct strategies to disarm or remove the threat Hezbollah poses to the U.S. is impossible.

Potential Concerns with Engagement

The issue of engagement is delicate and controversial for good reason. Israel, the closest U.S. ally in the region, will not support U.S. engagement with organizations that attack its citizens and seek the destruction of its state. There are certainly risks when engaging with organizations that do not hold liberal principles and have the potential to commit violent and terrorist acts in a region where the U.S. is trying to repair its image. However, the U.S. has in various contexts engaged productively with regimes that commit violent and illiberal acts against their own citizens. And any strain this policy may have on the U.S. relationship with Israel is outweighed by the potential positive outcomes from engagement with the political sides of these organizations, such as reducing the incentives for terrorist activities and facilitating disarmament.

An Evolved Approach for U.S. Policy

The transnational terrorist attacks against the U.S. over the past decade intensified U.S. attention to Middle Eastern terrorism. This increased attention, in turn, led to aggressive government policies to deal with terrorist threats. However, in the case of some prominent organizations in the Middle East, the FTO designation produces flawed U.S. strategy. While their organizations have violent wings, both Hamas and Hezbollah express uniquely national goals and are legal elected representatives of their home communities. Yet, both organizations receive the same treatment as organizations like al-Qaeda.

Although the FTO designation serves a vital purpose to U.S. national security by identifying and sanctioning organizations that pose a threat to the U.S. or its interests, the uniform U.S. policy towards FTOs constrains the available options for engagement with organizations that participate legitimately in governments. While the participation of FTO organizations in governments may pose problems for the U.S. — strategically and ideologically — it is important to recognize those organizations that participate in the government in a legitimate manner. A more productive approach would include adjusting U.S. policy to reflect this reality by allowing for limited engagement with the political representatives of the organizations. This will create opportunities for productive dialogue on issues that are important to U.S. strategic objectives in the region, such as the Middle East peace process.

Furthermore, by recognizing the legitimate political activities of the organizations, the U.S. can develop a path toward disarmament and the disaggregation of violence from politics. While disarmament may not be direct or immediate, engagement builds a dialogue with the political side of the organizations that can begin to give the movement a sense that their objectives are attainable through formal political processes. This, in turn, can remove incentives for violence and build broader political legitimacy.

The U.S. might profit from adopting a strategy similar to Britain's approach, which distinguishes between Hezbollah's political and security wings.²⁶ This would allow the U.S. to engage with the political representatives of the organization while still holding true to the ideological principle of isolation of terrorist organizations. This policy can also apply to Hamas, crafted to fit the specific situation of the Palestinian territory. The U.S. would be able to engage with the legal political representation of Hamas over the issues within the Palestinian territories and the conflict with Israel, while still maintaining the isolation and denouncement of the terrorist activities of the organization. However, engagement does not limit the ability of the U.S. to use the traditional isolation tool if the organization does not cease its use of violence or terrorist activities. It will show what can come from engagement, and potential gains will deter the organization from political violence or abandoning the system. Without greater engagement with democratically elected FTOs, the

U.S. will not achieve its diplomatic objectives throughout the Middle East.

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ENDNOTES

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