

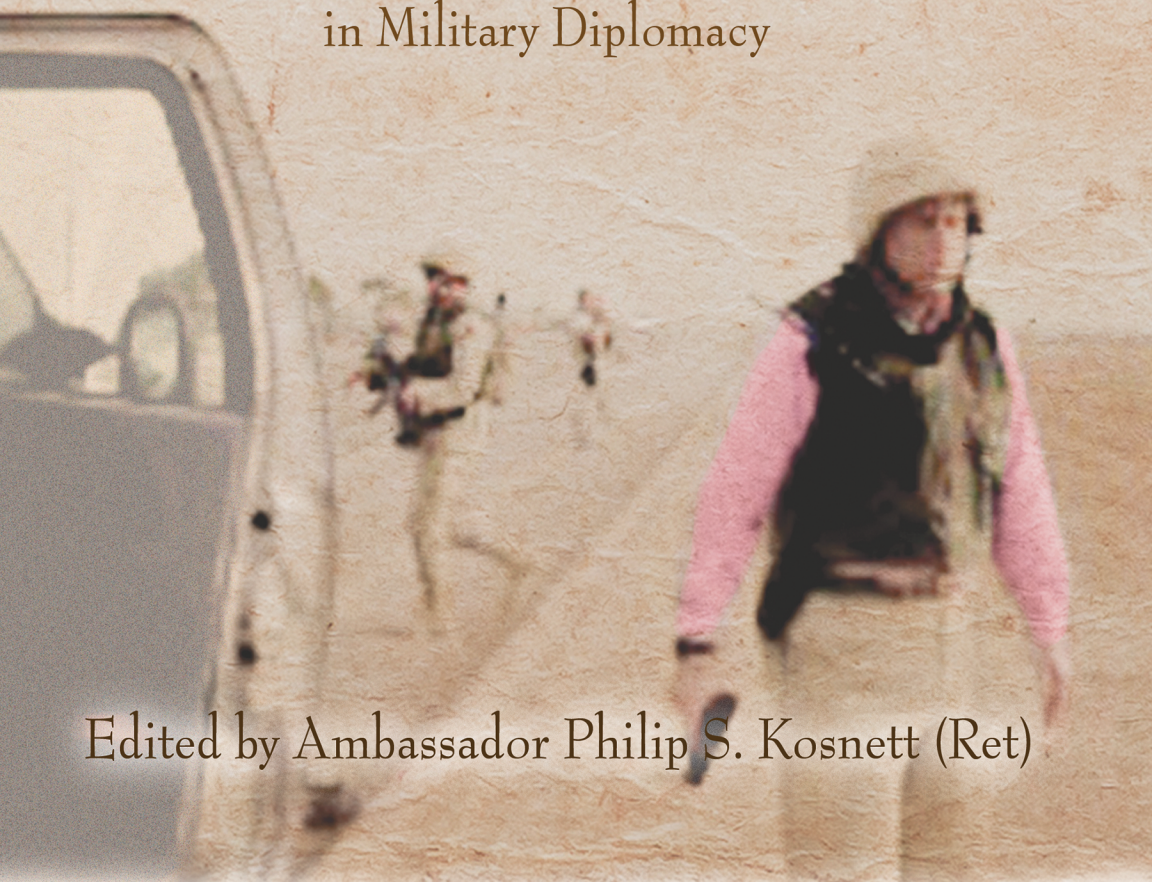
Foreword by General Kenneth F. McKenzie (Ret)

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# BOOTS AND SUITS

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Historical Cases and Contemporary Lessons  
in Military Diplomacy



Edited by Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett (Ret)

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*Edited by Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett (Ret)*

**MCUP**|15<sup>YEARS</sup>

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## ◉ Foreword ◉

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### *Diplomacy and Military Action*

General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., USMC (Ret)

The United States is a global power, with interests in every corner of the world. Some are vital, some are not. We address these interests through the various elements of our national power, and preeminent among them are the diplomatic and the military components.

This is actually a fairly new construct for the United States. Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote that war was the extension of policy by other means.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, too many German generals who were assigned his classic *On War* in their staff schools misinterpreted this to mean that diplomacy and war represented discrete endeavors on the policy spectrum, with diplomats predominating in the former and soldiers in the latter. The apocryphal notion that once the dogs of war had been unleashed, the concerns of diplomats ought not interfere with the generals' pursuit of victory, led the Germans—and millions of others—to disaster and strategic defeat in two world wars and serves still as a salient reminder that, ultimately, the purpose of war is to secure a better peace. Peace itself is a diplomatic construct. The boundaries of any peace that follows a war must be crafted by national leadership.

To this end, the diplomats are at least as important as the generals. Yet, while history is replete with affirmations of Georges Clemenceau's famous dictum that "war is too important to be left to the generals" (*alone*, I would add), it offers fewer illustrations of the inverse proposition: that diplomacy is too important a

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

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business to be left exclusively to the diplomats.<sup>2</sup> Both the diplomats and the military need to be clearly subordinate to, and act at the behest of, political leaders. This is particularly vital in a democracy, where politicians are meant to both lead and represent the popular will.

It is easy to misunderstand this concept, so here is a further refinement: used effectively, the military instrument of national power is also a powerful tool for statecraft, one capable of bolstering diplomacy and diminishing the prospects for conflict by enhancing stability and security. And yet, the military contribution must be in harness, it must be subordinate, and must ultimately yield control and direction to diplomacy and policy. This is not and cannot become a coequal relationship.

Another great military theorist, Sun Tzu, famously wrote that winning “one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill” but rather “to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”<sup>3</sup> Historians today debate whether the true meaning of this passage has been lost in translation, but the desirability of achieving one’s aims without resort to armed force is beyond dispute.

The United States has an even more complicated relationship to parse between the military and diplomatic elements of national power. In the twenty-first century, few American institutions have enjoyed greater public esteem than the armed forces of the United States. Yet, the professionals who lead these forces and learn their history know well that this was not always the case and that, indeed, the nation was founded with a profound mistrust of “standing armies.” The history of Western civilization to that point had shown them to be the tools of tyrants and the enemies of liberty. Wariness toward them was embedded in the Constitution in 1787 and was still evident in the early twentieth century when President Woodrow Wilson was shocked to learn that the U.S. Army staff prepared war plans against hypothetical enemies in times of peace. The prevailing sentiment for the first century and a half of American history was that armed forces were best maintained at anemic levels during periods of peace, expanded dramatically in the event of war, then restored to skeletal levels afterward. The exigencies of the Second World War and the ensuing Cold War compelled the

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Oxford Essential Quotations*, 5th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (New York: Perseus Books, 1994).

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United States to deviate from this model, but the notion that military forces were instruments to be used only in the case of dire emergencies—break glass in case of war—persisted.

The idea, which I submit is too simplistic, that military forces have only one proper function—to fight and win our nation’s wars—is manifest in a pair of canards that gained currency during and after the Vietnam War. The first is that, during wartime, civilians should simply “listen to the generals” and let them win the war. The second, which became commonplace in the 1980s and 1990s, was that armed forces should not be involved in nation building, which was another way of arguing that armed forces should only train for wars and win them, and that any other use of them was inappropriate. The idea that American armed forces have only a single legitimate purpose has proven remarkably resilient, enduring through eras when trust in the military was low (in the early republic and after the Vietnam War) and when it was high (World War II and post-11 September 2001 [9/11]).

I was commissioned in 1979 and have witnessed firsthand the ebb and flow of popular opinion toward the military, as well as the rationale for keeping it “behind glass.” With the Weinberger-Powell doctrine of the Ronald W. Reagan administration, the U.S. military offered a seductive argument that military forces had only two jobs: prepare for war and prevail in it.<sup>4</sup> This reductionism, while perhaps appealing, is not suited for the complex world that we inhabit today, and we need to look beyond this narrow reading. The most significant area where the military can play a useful role is in the arena of security force assistance. Here, working at the military-to-military level, there are great opportunities to shape the future trajectories of nascent partner militaries. As the commander of U.S. Central Command, I went to great lengths to ensure that our military approaches to the countries in our region were carefully aligned with our diplomatic approaches. There is always a temptation, more prevalent in some countries than others, to seek to prioritize the military-to-military relationship over the diplomatic relationship. I found that the best way to avoid this happening was to ensure my team was linked in at every level with interagency partners. When I visited a country, my first act was always to see the ambassador, and to receive a full briefing from their country team. This was invaluable, first because it allowed

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2007): 79–95.



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me to understand the mission's priorities for the country, and second because it messaged to all concerned that Central Command would be in alignment with our diplomats.

*Boots and Suits* is an excellent step on the path to broadening our view of how the military interacts with diplomats. The historical examples are trenchant and clear, and the contemporary cases are meaningful. Most importantly, the strong contributions from current practitioners are able to apply theory to real situations. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are at a critical time for the United States. The rise of China, the actions of an irresponsible Russia, as well as continued threats from Iran, North Korea, and violent extremists all create a daunting strategic landscape that we must traverse. Protecting our vital national interests will require that we use every tool at our disposal.

To do this means we must have a nuanced and complex understanding of how to integrate the diplomatic and the military elements of our national power—and this collection of chapters will help scholars, practitioners (both uniformed and civilian), and policy makers function in this environment.

## ◉ Preface ◉

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Admiral James G. Foggo, USN (Ret)

**B***oots and Suits* is a testament to the extraordinary civil-military cooperation that exists between our uniformed Joint Forces on the tip of the spear and our expeditionary diplomats who live in the communities of our allies, partners, and in some cases our adversaries.

Having served for almost 40 years as a submarine officer in the U.S. Navy, the first phase of my career was purposefully myopic—my field of view was 32 degrees wide through the lens of a periscope. After graduation from the United States Naval Academy, I went to sea in submarines during the height of the Cold War. As a junior officer, I affiliated only with Navy boots on the deck plate of a submarine. Under only special occasions did civilians accompany us to sea and rarely, if ever, on long deployments.

The world back then, in fact, was a simpler place to operate than it is today. We lived in a bipolar world—the United States of America and her allies versus the Soviet Union and her satellites. My shipmates and I fought in the Third Battle of the Atlantic—not a naval campaign as in WWII, but a long, twilight campaign in which the United States and its allies deployed all the tools of national power to contain and weaken the Soviet Union. This cost-imposing strategy aimed at the Soviet Union ultimately brought the Russians to their knees. Thankfully, not a shot was fired.

The Third Battle of the Atlantic may have been over, but neither the Navy nor the nation realized the peace dividend many imagined would happen. In the summer of 1989, I was struck by the work of a brilliant young State Department officer named Francis Fukuyama, who penned an article entitled “The End of History?” for the *National Interest*. Fukuyama argued that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the imminent disintegration of the Soviet empire, the last vestiges of Communism had been rooted out. Former members of the Warsaw

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Pact sought alternatives to autocratic rule and embraced democracy and liberal reform.<sup>1</sup> The Cold War really was over, I thought, and we won!

Despite the wishful thinking, the decades to follow were indeed full of change brought on by the peace dividend, but Western liberal democracy was not universally embraced. Although many Western democracies thrived in the 1990s and membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union grew in leaps and bounds, many former Soviet satellites clamored to become part of the Euro-Atlantic order, but not all made it in. As markets thrived, the accumulation of wealth became lopsided. The combination of the lack of good governance and growing discontent in developing nations served as a cauldron that fomented violent extremism. Warning signs were missed. Despite the fact that in the twentieth century, the United States of America established itself—from the execution of the Marshall Plan forward—as one of the most philanthropic nations on Earth, the United States became the main target of violent extremists, culminating in the attack of America on 9/11. As the 9/11 report concluded, now more than ever, America needed a whole-of-government approach to the threat of violent extremism.<sup>2</sup> As a nation, we embarked on what would become the “forever wars” in the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

Following my first tour in submarines, I pursued a more liberal education as a student at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and an Olmsted Scholar at the University of Strasbourg in France. It was my first foray into civil-military relations as my classmates and I attempted to understand one another and the different cultures and professions that we grew up in. For me, it was a fulfilling and liberating experience that would impact my decision-making processes for the remainder of my career.

I ultimately returned to the submarine force after my graduate education experience and was one of the fortunate ones to attain command of a fast-attack nuclear submarine, USS *Oklahoma City* (SSN 723), in the new millennium. As we turned the corner on the twenty-first century, the once bipolar world that I felt comfortable in had turned into a more complicated multipolar world. My last deployment under the ice in the Arctic Ocean reminded me of my first deployment during the Cold War.

Going ashore after my command tour, I served as the division chief of West-

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3–18.

<sup>2</sup> *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (9/11 Report) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004).

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ern Europe and the Balkans on the Joint Staff (J-5) in 2003–5. In this role, I found myself thrust into a world where military officers worked side by side with our civilian counterparts in the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the rest of the Interagency. This assignment was a defining experience for me. I traveled to Western Europe and the Balkans frequently, and I found that the most effective combatant and component commanders of four-star rank were the ones who made an effort to collaborate with their civilian counterparts.

In fact, it was Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, commander of Naval Forces Europe, who taught me that ambassadors and their country teams were an essential ingredient in advancing the interests and national security of the United States of America. Admiral Johnson's regional ambassador conferences, which I once had the pleasure of attending, were essential in bridging gaps and solving problems specific to a particular region. I tried to emulate Admiral Johnson's example when I became the commander of Naval Forces Europe, filling his big shoes, 14 years later.

After major command, I returned to the Pentagon for one of the most educational and exciting assignments of my career—as executive assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael G. Mullen. Admiral Mullen served alongside Secretary Robert M. Gates, and although I spent the preponderance of my time with the chairman, I was fortunate to get some exposure to Secretary Gates. Each man had his own particular cause célèbre, but generally speaking they were closely aligned and on the same wavelength. Both subscribed to the fact that our diplomatic corps was an essential but underresourced part of government. While delivering the Landon Lecture at Kansas State University in 2007, Gates cited Mullen's high regard for our State Department colleagues:

I hear all the time from the senior leadership of our Armed Forces about how important these civilian capabilities are. In fact, when Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen was Chief of Naval Operations, he once said he'd hand a part of his budget to the State Department “in a heartbeat,” assuming it was spent in the right place.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Admiral Mullen used to say that he would give up an aircraft carrier—valued at \$14 billion—in order to buy more soft power through the institution of the Department of State.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Gates, Landon Lecture Series, Kansas State University, 26 November 2007.

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I also had the pleasure of traveling with Admiral Mullen in his support of Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, the first special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP), throughout the region of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Iraq. Mullen often used the phrase “expeditionary government” when referring to our foreign service officers and interagency civilians on the front lines. Like Holbrooke, Mullen saw Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) populated by civilians alongside military counterparts as a pathway to peace and stability in these war-torn regions.

After departing the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, my first flag assignment was as the executive officer for the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Admiral James G. Stavridis, at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Headquarters in Mons, Belgium. Like Admiral Mullen, Admiral Stavridis was a master of civil-military relations, as reflected in his numerous books, articles, and media appearances on the subject. After one year at SHAPE, I transitioned to Naples, Italy, as the commander of Submarine Group Eight and deputy commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet under Vice Admiral Harry B. Harris, another great proponent of civil-military collaboration.

Shortly after my arrival in Naples, Italy, and assumption of my duties as the commander of Submarine Group Eight, commander Allied Submarines South, and deputy commander and operations officer for the U.S. Sixth Fleet, the Arab Spring exploded in North Africa after the self-immolation of Tunisian vegetable merchant Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunis. As the protests spread across North Africa, the Libyan regime conducted a brutal crackdown on dissent inside its sovereign borders. The U.S. Sixth Fleet was charged with conducting humanitarian operations in support of third country nationals fleeing Libya for safe havens in Tunisia or Egypt. After repeated warnings by the UN Security Council to Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi to stop the persecution of his own population sympathetic to the Arab Spring, the United States formed a coalition of the willing and established a no-fly zone over Libya intended to protect the civilian population from the al-Qaddafi regime.

Accordingly, General Carter F. Ham, the brand-new commander of U.S. Africa Command, was tasked to form an interagency Joint Task Force (JTF) called Odyssey Dawn by Secretary Gates. In turn, General Ham delegated authority for day-to-day operations of the JTF to Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, commander, Naval Forces Europe and Africa. I assumed a new role as the Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn operations officer (J-3) and Vice Admiral Harris,



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commander, Sixth Fleet, assumed the role as Joint Force maritime component commander (JFMCC). To establish a no-fly zone and protect the civilian population of Libya, the U.S. Sixth Fleet executed kinetic strikes on Libyan Air Forces, integrated air and missile defense, and the Libyan 32d Brigade.

Remarkably, during the middle of the conflict, an unsung foreign service officer named J. Christopher Stevens arrived in Libya as the U.S. special envoy to liaison with opposition elements of the Transitional National Council.

Stevens and his small team of diplomats and volunteers from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) entered Benghazi not long after U.S. and NATO airpower had pushed regime forces out of the city and farther south to the cities of Brega and Ajdabiya. Nevertheless, it was still a very dangerous and uncertain environment.

One of our roles in Joint Task Force Odyssey Dawn was to provide a means to get Stevens and his team out of Libya if they ran into trouble. There were several courses of action to extract the special envoy and his team. Each one carried with it associated risks. It was our job at JTF headquarters to minimize those risks. For my part, I believed we were overlooking one big factor in our planning: a personal interaction with the guy we were going to have to extract. So, I arranged a phone call with Stevens. There was a lot I wanted to discuss, but I knew he had his hands full. I just wanted to tell him one thing: "Chris, if you need us, the Navy and Marine Corps have got your back!"

It was a great conversation, much longer than I had anticipated. Since no American military boots were allowed on the ground in Libya during the operation and we were starved for real time eyes-on-the-ground information about what was happening in the Transitional National Council, Stevens was a wellspring of knowledge about what was going on. He was direct, candid, and incredibly informed. I was struck by his upbeat tone and tenor and his calm and cool demeanor. He was under a lot of pressure with challenging deadlines to show American support for the Libyan people and the Transitional National Council. The odds were against his mission, but he was full of enthusiasm and hope for the Libyan people's right to self-determination.

Finally, I was struck by how he went out of his way to thank the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps for doing so much to plan for his safety and that of his team. Thankfully, we never had to execute those plans. Stevens completed his mission and his mandate. The Libyan campaign came to a close and the Libyan people earned the right to govern themselves. Free and fair elections took

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place and moderates won the majority in government. Later that year, Stevens was confirmed as U.S. ambassador and returned to Libya. His selection was a no-brainer to me, and I thought to myself, that guy is going to make a difference.

Tragically, Ambassador Stevens's tenure was not long as he was killed in an attack on the American compound in September 2012 in the very city of Benghazi that he helped set free. Ambassador Chris Stevens represents the epitome of the term "expeditionary diplomat." After 9/11, everything changed, and although sending our military forces overseas was necessary, it was by no means sufficient. Along with those forces, on the front line and in the trenches, are members of so many other federal agencies—the ultimate force multipliers. Like sailors, soldiers, airmen, and Marines, our civilians from the State Department and other agencies are operating by our side on the tip of the spear and assuming similar risks.

These lessons were not lost on me when I assumed the duties as commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet from 2014 to 2016 and later as the four-star commander of Naval Forces Europe and Africa and commander of Allied Joint Forces Command in Naples, Italy, from 2017 to 2020. I valued the contribution of our U.S. ambassadors and their interagency senior advisors—known as the country team—in those countries of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East that comprised my area of responsibility. I traveled frequently throughout these regions and I always made it a priority to stop first at the U.S. Embassy and pay a call on the ambassador or *chargé d'affaires* (acting ambassador) and talk to the country team. These visits were always enlightening and, in many cases, I adjusted my schedule and my talking points to align with the subject matter experts in the diplomatic service of our nation.

Likewise, when I could not travel to the region, I borrowed from the playbook of one of my aforementioned predecessors, Admiral Johnson, and set up a series of Regional Ambassadors Conferences in my headquarters in Naples, Italy, coordinated by my State Department political advisor, Ms. Elizabeth Hopkins. The Black Sea, Balkans, and Southern Europe/North Africa Ambassadors Conferences brought together our U.S. ambassadors, U.S. defense attachés, and chiefs of navies from allied and partner countries that convened to discuss regional issues and pool resources to solve difficult challenges in support of collective national interests.

As a naval officer, I have always supported the position of Theodore Roos-

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evelt, who once opined: “A good Navy is not a provocation of war. It is the surest guarantee of peace.” In this light, I value the Navy’s contribution as an extended arm of diplomacy, and this principle guided me during my 11 years as a flag officer. My hat is off to those expeditionary diplomats who helped me during my many tours of duty in the regions of Europe and Africa and associated areas of the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

*Boots and Suits* is an amalgamation of historical case studies and contemporary stories and testimonials that chronicle the incredible teamwork between the uniformed Services and the interagency. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did. To those who still wear boots or those who still wear a suit in the service of our country, I commend the best practices of “expeditionary government” documented in these chapters to your commands and individual agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> These individuals include but are not limited to: Amb Phil Kosnett (Kosovo), Amb Ken Braithwaite (Norway), Amb Geoff Pyatt (Ukraine and Greece), Amb Marie Yovanovitch (Ukraine), Ambs Maureen Cormack and Eric Nelson (Bosnia/Herzegovina), Amb Kyle Scott (Serbia), Ambs Bob Sherman and George Glass (Portugal), Ambs Michael Costas and Duke Buchan (Spain), Amb Jamie McCourt (France), Amb Robert Wood Johnson (United Kingdom), Ambs Hans Klemm and Adrian Zuckerman (Romania), Amb Herro Mustafa (Bulgaria), Amb Kelly Degnan (my former POLAD and now ambassador to Georgia), Ambs Jess Bailey and Kate Byrnes (Republic of North Macedonia), Amb David Satterfield (Turkey), Amb Lew Eisenberg (Italy), Amb James Melville (Estonia), Amb Nancy Pettit (Latvia), Ambs Chris Stevens and Peter Bodde (Libya), Ambs Daniel Rubenstein and Daniel Blome (Tunisia), Amb Larry Andre (Djibouti), Amb Stuart Symington (Nigeria), and Amb Matthew Tueller (Iraq).



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Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett (Ret)

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MCUP's original call for contributions was for an academic volume "aiming to explore contemporary and historical examples of diplomatic uses of militaries." It solicited an enthusiastic response from scholars, whose contributions comprise much of the final product. MCUP board member Admiral James G. Foggo (Ret)—with whom I had worked when he commanded North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in the Mediterranean and Balkans and I was U.S. ambassador to Kosovo—suggested bringing on an editor with real-world pol-mil experience to broaden the scope. I was pleased to come aboard and to tap into the community of military and diplomatic professionals to add additional perspectives, including lessons learned from recent experiences in governance and nation-building. I believe we have succeeded at highlighting enduring themes in military diplomacy as well as some challenges of the civilian-military "whole-of-government" partnership that is increasingly central to the practice of international relations. Respect is due to the diplomats, in and out of uniform, who risk their lives in the often quixotic quest for peace.

On that note, I would like to recognize my wife, Alison Kosnett: development professional, battle buddy, advisor, and conscience. Alison and I represented the United States side by side in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia for two decades, including several years in Iraq and Afghanistan. While I spent most of my time in the detached atmosphere of military headquarters and embassy compounds—endeavoring alongside civilian and military colleagues to develop plans



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to stabilize countries most of us little understood—Alison volunteered for tough service downrange on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

Gratitude, and much more, is due to Iraqi and Afghan colleagues best left unnamed. The United States owes a debt to those who served alongside us and trusted our promises of a better life—particularly the thousands of Afghan colleagues who still face maddening bureaucratic and political hurdles to evacuation and resettlement in the United States. America’s mission is not over until we fulfill our pledge.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ◉ Glossary of Select Terms, ◉ Abbreviations, and Acronyms

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ACTTA	anticrime training and technical assistance
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
AUKUS	Australia-UK-U.S. defense pact
CAT	U.S. Civic Action Team
CENTCOM	Central Command
CERP	Commanders Emergency Response Program
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation
CJTF-OIR	Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve
CNAS	Center for New American Security
COCOM	combatant command
COFA	Compact of Free Association states
COM	chief of mission
CSA	Confederate States of America
CSO	Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations
DAO	Defense Attaché Office
DAS	Defense Attaché Service
DATT	defense attaché
DCM	deputy chief of mission
démarche	a policy message
DODEA	Department of Defense Educational Activity
DV	distinguished visitor
EU	European Union
EDA	excess defense articles
ERI	European Reassurance Initiative
EXBS	export control and related border security
EEZs	exclusive economic zones
EFP	NATO Enhanced Forward Presence

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EUAA	European Union Association Agreement
FETÖ	Fethullahist Terrorist Organization
FMF	foreign military financing
FMS	foreign military sales
FSA	Free Syrian Army
FSO	foreign service officer
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HIG	Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin
HIMARS	High Mobility Artillery Rocket System
HN	host nation
IAD	Institutional Analysis and Development
IUU	illegal, unreported, and unregulated
IMET	international military education and training
IRGC-QF	Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force
ISAF	NATO's International Security Assistance Force
JMTG-U	Joint Multinational Training Group–Ukraine
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JTF-Haiti	Joint Task Force–Haiti
KCC	Kunar Construction Center
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MAP	NATO's Membership Action Plan
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Turkey)
MIT	<i>Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı</i> (National Intelligence Agency of Turkey)
MOD	Ministry of National Defense (Turkey)
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operations
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation
ODM	Organizational Decision Making
OPC	Operation Provide Comfort
ORGF	Operational Group of Russian Forces

## GLOSSARY

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OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PMESII-PT	political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time
PRTs	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
POLAD	State Department foreign policy advisors
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
SDO	senior defense official
SFD	strategic foresight and direction
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TIDEP	Tactical Intelligence Defense Exchange Program
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UAS	unmanned aerial system
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UCAV	unmanned combat aerial vehicle
UFSA	Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in the Sudan
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
YPG	People's Defense Units ( <i>Yekîneyên Parastina Gel</i> )

## GLOSSARY



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# BOOTS AND SUITS

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## ◉ Introduction ◉

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Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett (Ret)

Before digging into the book, we should define our terms. *What is military diplomacy?* For that matter, *what do we mean by diplomacy?* *Encyclopedia Britannica* offers this definition of the latter term:

*Diplomacy*, the established method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence. Modern diplomatic practices are a product of the post-Renaissance European state system. Historically, diplomacy meant the conduct of official (usually bilateral) relations between sovereign states. By the 20th century, however, the diplomatic practices pioneered in Europe had been adopted throughout the world, and diplomacy had expanded to cover summit meetings and other international conferences, parliamentary diplomacy, the international activities of supranational and subnational entities, unofficial diplomacy by nongovernmental elements, and the work of international civil servants.<sup>1</sup>

The *Britannica* definition is an accessible starting point but incomplete. It highlights traditional diplomacy—the world of conference tables and cocktail parties that most people have seen in the movies and associate with diplomacy, if indeed they think of it at all. Today’s diplomacy covers a lot more ground (and water).<sup>2</sup> In more general parlance, “diplomacy” can also refer to “skill in

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<sup>1</sup> “Diplomacy,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 28 September 2022.

<sup>2</sup> The *Britannica* definition is also a tad Eurocentric: interstate diplomacy long predates the European state system, albeit the “tactics, techniques, and procedures” of different cultures have varied. The diplomatic credentials carried by envoys of the Mongol Khans, for example, declared “I am the emissary of the Khan. If you defy me, you die.” Useful, that. See “Mongols Invented the World’s First Diplomatic Passport,” citizenship by investment, 19 April 2019.



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handling affairs without arousing hostility,” whether in the workplace or among family and neighbors.<sup>3</sup> Ironically the pursuit of national interests by diplomats is often a transparently “undiplomatic” endeavor, especially when negotiations involve threats of force. Perhaps the best-known quotation on American diplomatic practice comes to us from President Theodore Roosevelt, whose philosophy—“speak softly, and carry a big stick”—has reached deep into the popular culture.<sup>4</sup>

During the last few centuries, it has become practice for countries to maintain diplomatic representations abroad, usually referred to as embassies, to pursue their national interests. To further these aims, embassy staff may engage with host governments, opinion leaders, the media, and other contacts. A less frequently discussed purpose of embassies is to model and promote national values, which may be less transitory and transactional than national interests. For the United States, this should include the values America claims to stand for—such as peace, justice, personal freedom, human rights, and democracy. Few nations can afford to maintain embassies in the capitals of all the countries with which they maintain relations, but the largest and wealthiest—e.g., the United States and China—endeavor to do so. Other countries may rely on regional embassies, or use their mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York to serve as a hub for diplomatic contact with other countries via their own UN missions. Or, today, conduct international diplomacy by Zoom or FaceTime.

Next question: *Who conducts diplomacy in the modern world?*

In the U.S. system, most diplomats are career civilians—foreign service officers (FSOs), foreign service specialists (FSS), and locally employed staff (LES) employed by the Department of State.<sup>5</sup> An embassy is led by a chief of mission, normally an ambassador. This means either a career officer who has climbed the ladder at the State Department (or, rarely, another federal agency) or a noncareer “political appointee.”

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<sup>3</sup> “Diplomat,” Merriam-Webster, accessed 29 September 2022.

<sup>4</sup> As discussed, for example, by the political philosophers Bugs Bunny and Yosemite Sam in the 1951 *Looney Tunes* cartoon “Ballot Box Bunny,” directed by Friz Freleng, written by Warren Foster, aired 6 October 1951, 7:35.

<sup>5</sup> “Department of State” is a confusing bit of nomenclature, analogous to what most countries call a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or MFA. Indeed, the State Department—the oldest federal department—was originally known as the Department of Foreign Affairs until Congress changed the name in 1789, a regrettable decision that has led to generations of State Department employees having to explain to neighbors that, no, we do not work for the State Department of Motor Vehicles.

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An American ambassador is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate; when there is a gap between confirmed ambassadors, an acting ambassador known as a *chargé d'affaires*—with the same responsibilities but generally less clout and access than a confirmed ambassador—performs the same duties. Other countries follow similar models, although the appointment of ambassadors often bypasses national legislatures.

A modern U.S. embassy or other diplomatic post (e.g., a mission to an international body such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] or the United Nations) comprises an interagency team, with staffing and makeup depending on the nature and importance of U.S. relations with the host country.<sup>6</sup> A career State Department officer serves as the ambassador's alter ego and chief operating officer—the deputy chief of mission (DCM). In theory, the ambassador is focusing on managing up (participating in and shaping policy deliberations back home) and out (engaging with the hosts and traveling in country) while the DCM coordinates operations at the embassy. Embassies can be as small as a single digit number of Americans plus local colleagues, or it can run into the thousands.

State Department elements include sections covering political and economic affairs and public diplomacy; management and security units that facilitate diplomatic operations; and sometimes additional specialized sections dedicated to science, environmental, and law enforcement cooperation. The largest State Department element is frequently the consular section that adjudicates visa applications and assists tourists and other nationals in distress. Indeed, ordinary citizens are most likely to encounter an embassy, if they ever do, via its consular section.

A large embassy may include officials from many agencies. For example, it can include the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, Justice, and Treasury; law enforcement agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Drug Enforcement Administration; or scientific agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Prominent on the embassy interagency leadership staff reporting to the ambassador—the “country team”—will be military elements: the Defense Attaché

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<sup>6</sup> An informative, readable description of the work of American diplomats in the field can be found in Shawn Dorman, ed., *Inside a U.S. Embassy: Diplomacy at Work*, 3d ed. (Washington, DC: Foreign Service Books, 2011).

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Office responsible for relations with host country militaries, and sometimes an Office of Defense Cooperation with the more specialized task of running military assistance programs. All executive branch personnel outside the United States are considered under the authority of the chief of mission, with the exception of military personnel reporting to a geographic combatant commander.<sup>7</sup>

An embassy in a large country may have branch offices—consulates or consulates general—in cities outside the capital, both to maintain contacts outside the capital bubble and to provide consular services. The heads of these posts—consuls and consuls general—report to the ambassador and serve on the country team. Finally, personnel who visit from Washington or elsewhere in temporary duty status come under the authority of the chief of mission.

The day-to-day practice of diplomacy has evolved considerably since I began my foreign service career as a junior political officer at U.S. Embassy Ankara in the 1980s, when the focus was on government-to-government diplomacy pursued via engagement with host officials. A typical day might have started with the overnight receipt of cabled instructions from Washington to deliver a policy message—a “démarche”—to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), perhaps asking Turkey to sign onto a U.S. initiative at the UN, or calling for calm after a tense incident involving Turkey and a neighboring country. That meant preparing on a typewriter a clean written version of the message to leave behind—a “nonpaper”—then driving over to the MFA to deliver the message to a host counterpart in a leisurely chat over Turkish coffee; then going back to the embassy to write up the response in a cable for Washington. If an issue was defense related, the defense attaché might engage with host country defense contacts in parallel with my démarche to the MFA. The rest of the day might be filled with tedious internal meetings and perhaps lunch with an opposition politician or other local contact.

Fast forward three-plus decades to my tours as chief of mission in Ankara and Pristina in Kosovo, and the “operational tempo” of embassy work had greatly broadened and accelerated both for the chief of mission and the rest of the team. It was still normal to meet new contacts in person and break bread to build trust,

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<sup>7</sup> Since 1997, the Departments of State and Defense have had a formal process to track all military personnel stationed in a country and agree on which are under the authority of the regional combatant commander (COCOM) and which under chief of mission authority. A key reason for this exercise is to ensure that force protection responsibility does not fall between the cracks. The 1996 Khobar Towers bombing of a U.S. Air Force housing compound in Saudi Arabia led directly to this process. Maj Thomas W. Murray Jr., *Khobar Towers’ Aftermath: The Development of Force Projection* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University, n.d.).

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but communication with established contacts was increasingly by email, text, or telephone to save everyone time (a practice accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic). There was more engagement with nongovernmental actors now, more visits to schools and businesses and local officials, and much greater emphasis on public diplomacy via TV interviews and social media. The tedious internal meetings, I confess, remained a mainstay.

Washington was now ever-present. The overnight cable take—the dump of instructions and requests from Washington—has been replaced by the endless flow of emails and texts. Like other white-collar institutions, embassies today struggle to balance the desire of leaders to react to events 24/7 with the desire of staff to have lives.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to note that embassy work is only one avenue of diplomacy. Headquarters officials based in the capital often engage directly with foreign counterparts, a practice made more common by the invention of the telephone, the airplane, and email. In the U.S. system, members of Congress also travel abroad to engage in diplomacy—usually but not always coordinated with the administration with the support of the embassies. This coordination is time-consuming but having the secretary of State or other senior executive branch officials—or a visiting congressional delegation (CODEL)—weigh in on issues (especially when the CODEL is bipartisan and can demonstrate unity of effort transcending politics) can be enormously helpful.

So, back to our starting point: *How do we define military diplomacy as a subset of diplomacy?*

I do not believe there is an agreed definition, which is one reason the range of contributions to this book is so engagingly broad. I would submit that the term embraces the following lines of effort:

On the *strategic level*, military diplomacy involves the pursuit of diplomatic aims by civilian as well as military personnel in relation to military topics: for example, the threat or conduct of hostilities, peace talks, the establishment and maintenance of military alliances, and cooperation such as arms sales and Joint exercises with partner countries. Several chapters of *Boots and Suits* focus on military diplomacy at the strategic level.

In “Diplomacy through Arms Sales: The Case of the U.S. and the Ottoman Empire, 1865–1880,” Dr. Bestami S. Bilgiç highlights the nineteenth-century

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<sup>8</sup> I take this opportunity to acknowledge those dedicated former employees who may have found my sensitivity to work-life balance wanting. *C’est la guerre. Je ne regrette rien.*

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efforts of the fading Ottoman state to tap into American defense industrial expertise to strengthen their defense.

In his chapter on “The Kenner Mission and the Confederate States of America’s Failed Military Diplomacy,” Dr. David Campmier describes how Jefferson Davis’s rebel government attempted to forestall defeat by gaining British support for the war effort through a desperate effort to recruit enslaved people into the Confederate Army.

Dr. Kyle Balzer’s “U.S. Military Diplomacy and the Imperial State of Iran” details Washington’s Cold War emphasis on military cooperation to seek to establish Iran as an unassailable regional ally, only to see the arrogant imperial regime fall to domestic forces. In “Replacing the Pillar: U.S. Policy on Military Aid to Egypt from Carter to Reagan,” scholar James Bowden recounts how Washington reacted to this failed effort not by rethinking the concept, but by attempting the same play with a different regional player.

“The Evolution of U.S. and European Policy on Security Assistance to Ukraine” by Frank T. Goertner, Edward Hunter Christie, Dr. Eugene M. Fishel, and Dr. Yaropolk Taras Kulchycky demonstrates the complex diplomatic and political environment in which the U.S. and other NATO powers responded to Russia’s challenge to Ukraine between its first invasion in 2014 and the renewed aggression of 2022.

Intriguingly, many of the themes of the chapter on U.S.-Ottoman defense engagement are echoed in the chapter on “Turkish-U.S. Defense Diplomacy in the Twenty-first Century” by Dr. Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç and American diplomat Stal-lion Yang. Most notable is the Turks’ work to leverage their role as customers to obtain the maximum degree of technology transfer. This desire is not unique to Turkey, certainly, but reading the two chapters in tandem provides a reminder that “*dün nasılsa bugün de öyle*”—literally, however yesterday was, today is the same—more loosely, there is nothing new under the sun.

Not all this peacetime action is peaceful. Recent years have brought attention to the use of military covert action/low-intensity conflict to shape the battlefield for eventual overt hostilities. Of particular interest in light of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is Dr. Ipshita Bhattacharya’s study of “Understanding Hybrid Warfare as a Strategic Policy Tool: Russia as a Case Study,” which describes Russia’s 2014–22 use of “little green men” and other tools in an effort to destabilize Ukraine and other neighbors in preparation for a decisive blow.

*Operationally*, military diplomacy can be manifested in the practice of

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government-to-government negotiations by defense officials. This could include engagement by the secretary of Defense and other top Pentagon officials with foreign counterparts, or visits by combatant commanders (European Command, Central Command, and so on). When the system is working, these engagements are coordinated by National Security Council staff working with the Pentagon, State Department, et al. to ensure different agencies are pursuing the same goals and delivering the same messages. “Foreign Policy Advisor 101: Civ-Mil Partnership in the Global War on Terrorism” by foreign service officers Joanne Cummings and Heather Steil discusses the operational advisory role of State Department foreign policy advisors (FPAs, a.k.a. POLADs) in military headquarters and how commanders can best make use of them as force multipliers in diplomatic engagement.

Another operational form of military diplomacy is the pursuit of messaging but through peacetime action. Examples include the practice of deploying warships into contested waters to defend the right of navigation in international waters, or conducting ship visits to friendly ports to show the flag.

Operational peacetime use of the military to demonstrate state power features in the following chapters. “The U.S. and Chinese Struggle for Influence in the Pacific” by Ambassador John T. Hennessey-Niland (Ret) highlights the growing Chinese challenge to American ties to Pacific nations and the U.S. whole-of-government response. In “Military Diplomacy Conceptualized from a Small State’s Perspective,” Lieutenant Colonel Mirjam Grandia Mantas, PhD; Hester Postma; and Colonel Han Bouwmeester, PhD, detail how small nations like the Netherlands can employ hard power to play a meaningful role in great power competition.

I would consider Joint military engagements such as “show the flag” ship visits and training exercises with foreign counterparts to be a form of diplomacy, one that both builds confidence and personal relations.<sup>9</sup> This includes the practice of government-to-government negotiations and program management by

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<sup>9</sup> Not all such engagements are with allies, since creating new ties of friendship is as important as maintaining existing ones. For example, in recent years European Command has maintained an extensive program of exercises and engagements with Russian-aligned Serbia—neither a NATO ally nor a member of NATO’s associated Partnership for Peace program—in line with the NATO/European Union (EU) goal of drawing Serbia closer to the West.

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military personnel in an embassy.<sup>10</sup> Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Michael Skaggs (Ret) describes the roles of the Defense Attaché Office in “The Military Attaché: Adapting to Foreign Cultures.” And not all the foreigners are outside the walls of the embassy. Written in the form of a letter of instruction to a new attaché, this chapter offers a window into a world most readers will not experience directly.

Finally, military diplomacy at the *tactical* level is a common aspect of warfare in the twenty-first century, where military commanders and civilian partners may find themselves negotiating not just with governments but with armed groups, political parties, or nongovernmental organizations such as humanitarian agencies. This is a major aspect of the work of military forces and civilian counterparts in counterinsurgency and governance operations—which can involve much drinking of tea in the course of efforts to establish trust with local leaders both friendly and unfriendly.<sup>11</sup> Scholar Sara Belligoni describes the differing approaches of UN peacekeepers and U.S. troops in Haiti as a case study in “Improving Civil-Military Operations in Humanitarian Emergencies.” (Spoiler alert: one group is better at listening to the locals, which Belligoni argues is less *efficient* but makes operations more *effective*.) Foreign service officer Alison Storsve offers a detailed view of the two quite different programs in Afghanistan in “The Provincial Reconstruction Team Programs in Afghanistan and Iraq,” where American and allied troops and civilians sought with varying success to engage local populations to strengthen governance and stability.<sup>12</sup> In “Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan and Iraq,” Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann (Ret) discusses the critical role of senior military commanders and embassy lead-

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<sup>10</sup> A personal example: in 2006, I was deputy chief of mission in Reykjavik when the United States and Iceland concluded negotiations to mothball the U.S.-run facilities at Naval Air Station Keflavik, a vital antisubmarine warfare facility in the World War II and Cold War days but which no longer seemed needed for the defense of the Atlantic sea lanes. The decision was not universally popular in Iceland, a NATO member without its own defense forces. Days after the U.S. flag came down at Keflavik, we brought in a major U.S. warship—the amphibious assault ship USS *Wasps* (LHD 1)—for a port visit, to demonstrate the U.S. ability to provide support in the case of a military challenge or natural disaster. The visit had the desired public diplomacy effect, as well as providing a boost to Iceland’s hospitality sector (the bars, at least).

<sup>11</sup> Or, as legendary Marine general, later Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis is renowned for advising his Marines in Iraq, “Be polite. Be professional. But have a plan to kill everybody you meet.” Madeline Conway, “9 Unforgettable Quotes by James Mattis,” *Politico*, 1 December 2016.

<sup>12</sup> I regret it was not possible to include in this book an al-Qaeda or Taliban perspective on our operations. That day will come, just as interchange between American and Vietnamese scholars has improved our understanding of our shared history.

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ers in ensuring civ-mil unity of effort in the sometimes-disjointed U.S. civ-mil endeavors in those countries.

As you read, I would encourage you to keep the following questions in mind for discussion with colleagues or classmates:

- Do the differing perspectives and organizational cultures of military and civilian officials affect their approaches to diplomatic problems?
- How might the United States or other powers learn from past experience—in particular, from past failures—to reshape both their operational and strategic approaches to military diplomacy?
- Should the United States and other powers rebalance their use of hard and soft power as tools of diplomatic influence?
- How do other actors—including nonstate actors—approach these issues?
- Former secretary of the Air Force and later Senator W. Stuart Symington (D-MO) said in 1981, “I believe the military should be wary of diplomacy until war is declared; then the State Department should keep its nose out and let the military do whatever is necessary to win. Then we would not get into these ‘non-win’ wars. Try to stay out of wars, but, once in, do what is necessary to win.” What do you think?<sup>13</sup>
- How has the U.S. Global War on Terrorism—including military endeavors not just in Iraq and Afghanistan, but as far afield as Libya, Mali, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines—affected global attitudes toward the United States and its Western security partners? As an example, have the events of this period undercut Western efforts to seek global cooperation to counter Russian aggression in Ukraine?

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<sup>13</sup> W. Stuart Symington, interview with James R. Fuchs, 29 May 1981, transcript (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, MO).







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# PART ONE

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HISTORICAL  
EXPERIENCE



# ◉ Chapter One ◉

## Diplomacy through Arms Sales

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### *The Case of the United States and the Ottoman Empire, 1865–1880*

Bestami S. Bilgiç, PhD

American-Turkish relations have recently been going through a tumultuous phase due to a number of issues. One of the most troublesome of those is the American decision in 2020 to implement certain military sanctions against Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally for almost 70 years, due to the latter's purchase of Russian air-defense missile systems. Turkey clearly drew the ire of the Americans by this unwelcome initiative. Americans believe that Turkey's actions of this sort are detrimental to the NATO alliance.

Nevertheless, this is not the first time that a resort to military sanctions has been made in American-Turkish diplomatic bargaining. During the second half of the 1970s, the U.S. Congress voted on an arms embargo on Turkey due to the latter's military intervention in Cyprus in the aftermath of a Greek-sponsored coup d'état that toppled the Greek-Cypriot Makarios regime in July 1974.<sup>1</sup> As a response to the American arms embargo, the Turkish government shut down and/or suspended the activities of all American military bases in Turkey. Bilateral relations remained strained well into the 1980s.

Yet, a cursory glance at the history of American-Turkish relations, from the time of the Ottoman Empire to today's Turkish Republic, suggests that such episodes of tension in the military relationship are not a norm and are a rather

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<sup>1</sup> For more on these events, see, for example, Edward J. Erickson and Mesut Uyar, *Phase Line Attila: The Amphibious Campaign for Cyprus, 1974* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.56686/9781732003088>.

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recent development. Particularly during the initial phases of American-Turkish diplomacy, military collaboration was a facilitating factor. Almost immediately after the official commencement of bilateral relations in the 1830s, both the United States and the Ottoman Empire sought avenues for cordial relations including military cooperation.

In particular, the Ottoman Empire was closely following the strides the Americans were making in arms production in the nineteenth century and later purchased large amounts of weaponry from the United States, which it rather desperately needed to ward off formidable Russian expansionism to its detriment, particularly during the second half of the century. This aspect of American-Turkish relations has thus far received considerably less attention compared to other topics such as American religious and philanthropic activities in the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, military cooperation between the Americans and Turks seems to be treated as a feature of the bilateral relations in the post-World War II era. This chapter aims to show that already during the nineteenth century, military collaboration between the United States and the Ottoman Empire had become an important facet of the bilateral diplomacy. The discussion is confined to the period between the 1830s, when the official diplomatic relations commenced, and the early part of the 1880s, when the arms trade came to almost a complete halt.

## THE INITIATION OF OFFICIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In the immediate aftermath of the emergence of the United States as an independent republic, American merchants expanded their trading activities into the Eastern Mediterranean, a region that was largely if not completely under the administration of the Ottoman government in Istanbul. The main trading post, however, was Izmir. American ships began to anchor off this bustling port town in the late 1790s. American trading activity in the Ottoman world was happening at a time when the United States and the Ottoman Empire were yet to recognize each other diplomatically.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the lack of formal diplomatic relations between these two countries,

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<sup>2</sup> Orhan F. Köprülü, "Tarihte Türk-Amerikan Münasebetleri," *Belleten* 51, no. 200 (1987): 927–29; and Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United State and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

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American merchants had to conduct their activities through British consuls in the Ottoman Empire. In return for their services, the British charged the American traders rather heavily. In an attempt to relieve their compatriots of this fairly costly nuisance, American leaders decided to send an official envoy to the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, in 1799 William Smith, the American envoy in Lisbon, Portugal, was instructed to set out for the Ottoman Empire. However, he could not make it to the Ottoman capital.<sup>3</sup>

The next year would see America's first official envoy arrive in the Ottoman court—in the blue uniform of a naval officer rather than the black suit of a civilian State Department official. Commodore William Bainbridge arrived at Istanbul aboard the frigate *USS George Washington* (1798), albeit inadvertently. He was originally commissioned to make a payment to the dey of Algiers—a vassal of the Ottoman sultan—so that the Algerians would leave the American merchant ships sailing off the northern African coast alone. North African statelets had made a habit of attacking and confiscating American ships. Bainbridge disembarked in Algeria, only to be told sternly by the dey to proceed to the Ottoman capital to deliver his annual tribute to the sultan. Bainbridge grudgingly agreed to perform this task.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, Bainbridge reached Istanbul. He was warmly welcomed by Ottoman dignitaries. After delivering the Algerian dey's consignment, Bainbridge held talks with Ottoman officials on various matters related to American trade with the Levant as well. Nevertheless, the parties did not sign any official document as to the regulation of the ongoing American-Ottoman trade.<sup>5</sup> American merchants had to be content with being dependent on the good offices of British consuls until 1830.

Bilateral talks between the Americans and the Ottomans for an official treaty commenced in early 1830, and the parties were able to conclude a treaty in May of the same year. The Americans appointed David Porter as their first plenipotentiary in the Ottoman capital. Thereby, official diplomatic relations

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<sup>3</sup> Nurdan Şafak, *Osmanlı-Amerikan ilişkileri* (İstanbul: OSAV, 2003), 36–37.

<sup>4</sup> Şuhnaz Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800–1952: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 11–12; Leland James Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey, 1830–1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), 7; Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United State and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 175–76; and Roger R. Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey, 1830–1930*, 7–8.

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between the United States and the Ottoman Empire finally began.<sup>6</sup> The treaty regulated trade and consular affairs between the United States and the Ottoman Empire, and it formed the basis of the future relations between the two countries for a very long time.<sup>7</sup> American merchants must have received the news with relief and joy. However, they were not the only Americans who would benefit from the commencement of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire. There were many American missionaries who had already begun their evangelical activities in the Ottoman Empire since the early part of the 1820s. Yet, they were carrying out their mission without any formal diplomatic protection. With the signing of the treaty, they would also obtain the much-needed American diplomatic assistance in their dealings with the Ottoman authorities. In fact, toward the middle of the nineteenth century, the missionaries expanded the scope and the territorial breadth of their endeavors. By the end of the century, they were able to establish hundreds of schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and other philanthropic institutions all across the Ottoman Empire. The relationship between the American missionaries and the Ottoman authorities were mostly free of trouble. Nevertheless, toward the end of the nineteenth century, certain problems arose due to the Ottoman concerns that the missionaries might have engaged in or at least abetted politically subversive activities against the Ottoman government, and the American diplomatic representatives had to intervene on their behalf to protect them from Ottoman reprisals. At times, the bilateral relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire soured due to certain disagreements they had over the activities of the missionaries.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon, *American Relations with Turkey, 1830–1930*, 10–12; and Yılmaz, *Turkish-American Relations, 1800–1952*, 17.

<sup>7</sup> Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914–1939*, 5–6.

<sup>8</sup> There is extensive literature both in English and Turkish on the American missionary activity in the Ottoman Empire. For a few examples of published works in English, see Esra Danacioglu Temur, “Early Missions and Eastern Christianity in the Ottoman Empire: Cross-Cultural Encounter and Religious Confrontation, 1820–1860,” in *American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Culture, 1830–1989*, ed. Nur Bilge Criss et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 35–47; Samuel T. Dutton, “American Education in the Turkish Empire,” *Journal of Race Development* 1, no. 3 (1911): 340–62; Justin McCarthy, “Missionaries and the American Image of the Turks,” in *Turkish-American Relations: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Mustafa Aydın and Çağrı Erhan (London: Routledge, 2004), 26–48; Justin McCarthy, *The Turk in America: The Creation of an Enduring Prejudice* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010); Cemal Yetkiner, “After Merchants, Before Ambassadors: Protestant Missionaries and Early American Experience in the Ottoman Empire, 1820–1860,” in *American Turkish Encounters: Politics and Culture, 1830–1989*, 8–34.

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## THE AMERICAN-OTTOMAN ARMS TRADE

The 1830 treaty had a secret clause that was separate from the main text of the treaty regarding American naval ship sales to the Ottoman Empire. In return for the Ottoman benevolence of granting the Americans certain capitulatory privileges, the American side pledged that the Ottomans would not pay a higher price than the American government if they purchased naval ships from the United States. Apparently, the Ottoman Empire was very much interested in American naval ships as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. The insertion of the secret clause, nevertheless, had caused disagreement among the American negotiators. Two of the three American signatories signed the treaty reluctantly. Charles Rhind, the chief negotiator, found this initiative harmless, however. It was merely a gesture on the part of the Americans for Ottoman goodwill in assenting to grant certain privileges to Americans doing business and engaging in philanthropic activities in the Ottoman Empire. Even if President Andrew Jackson rejected it, the treaty would have moved forward without it, and the Ottomans would have had to live with it.<sup>9</sup> Rhind took a lot of chances here. Eventually, the president submitted the treaty to Congress without any modifications. To the dismay of the Ottomans, the U.S. Congress rejected this secret clause and ratified the treaty without it.<sup>10</sup>

The U.S. president immediately sent a letter to the sultan through David Porter, the American representative in Istanbul, explaining that due to the nature of the American administrative system, his government was bound by Congress's decision. Porter presented a note to the Ottoman government in which he recounted how the American administration would do its best to assist the Ottoman Empire in any way it could within the powers it had.<sup>11</sup> The treaty eventually came into force without the secret clause.

The Ottoman disappointment with Congress's decision was assuaged by the visit of Henry Eckford, a naval shipbuilder, to Istanbul with the assistance of the U.S. administration in August 1831. One of the first things he accomplished was the sale of the very warship he sailed with to the Ottoman capital. Furthermore, when the Ottoman government asked him if he could help them with their

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<sup>9</sup> James A. Field, *America and the Mediterranean World, 1776–1882* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 150–51.

<sup>10</sup> Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914–1939*, 7; and Turgay, "Ottoman-American Trade during the Nineteenth Century," 209–11.

<sup>11</sup> Çağrı Erhan, "1830 Osmanlı-Amerikan Antlaşması'nın Gizli Maddesi ve Sonuçları," *Belleten*, no. 234 (1998): 461–63.



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own naval ship construction program, Eckford agreed. However, he could not be of much assistance due to his rather sudden death in Istanbul the next year. Yet, the Ottomans were able to secure the services of Eckford's adjutant, Foster Rhodes, who helped the Ottomans a great deal in building modern naval ships until the end of the 1830s.<sup>12</sup>

Naval ships were not the only military war materiel that the Ottoman Empire needed around this time. They were interested essentially in every sort of weaponry they could think of. The Ottomans had lost a large part of their capability of domestically producing sufficient quantities of arms by the middle of the nineteenth century, and they had to rely heavily on imports from foreign powers. Before the 1860s, the Ottoman Empire had imported not more than 20,000 rifles in total from abroad. In 1864 alone, however, it purchased 50,000 rifles from Austria and another 50,000 from England. Other suppliers included Belgium and France.<sup>13</sup> Since the Ottomans now almost exclusively depended on foreign suppliers, they became vulnerable to the foreign pressures. Cognizant of this sort of a contingency, the Ottoman government was trying to find ways to diversify the suppliers.<sup>14</sup>

Relying on one supplier had caused problems for the Russian Empire earlier during the Crimean War of 1853–55. In 1854, the Russians ordered around 60,000 rifles from Belgium. Belgian manufacturers attempted to take advantage of the precarious plight of the Russians due to the war and increased the price for their rifles. Furthermore, Prussians closed their borders for arms transfers to Russia. Eventually, merely 3,000 rifles reached Russia. To make things worse for the Russians, they were inferior in quality to the ones Russians had originally ordered.<sup>15</sup> A similar situation befell the Ottomans in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War. Toward late 1856, the Ottoman government inquired with an English manufacturer about the price of artillery. They had previously purchased artillery from the same company. This time, they were quoted a higher price. Ot-

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<sup>12</sup> Trask, *The United States Response to Turkish Nationalism and Reform, 1914–1939*, 7; and Oral Sander and Kurthan Fişek, *ABD Dışışleri Belgeleriyle Türk-ABD Silah Ticaretinin İlk Yüzyılı (1829–1929)* (İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1977), 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ersoy Zengin, "Tophane-i Amireden İmalat-ı Harbiye'ye Osmanlı Devleti'nde Harp Sanayii (1861–1923)" (PhD diss., Erzurum, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 2015), 4–21.

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan Grant, "The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854–1914," *Journal of Military History* 66, no. 1 (2002): 10, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2677343>.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Bradley, *Guns for the Tsar: American Technology and the Small Arms Industry in the Nineteenth Century Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990), 51.

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tomans believed that the English company increased the price arbitrarily. They looked for a different manufacturer. Nevertheless, their endeavors failed. They had to accept the English company's price begrudgingly. The Ottomans were also wary of fraudulent transactions by European suppliers. In the summer of 1854, they had to deal with a Frenchman who tried to sell the Ottoman government large quantities of old rifles hidden among new rifles ordered by the Ottomans. The Sublime Porte (a.k.a. Ottoman government) had to cancel a transaction with another French arms dealer later in the fall of the same year due to the failure of the latter in honoring their contractual commitments. Furthermore, the European balance of power was constantly changing. The Ottomans did not want to completely rely on European powers in arms procurement because the latter could use this as a leverage against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>16</sup>

Initially, the Ottoman attempts to find multiple sources of arms were motivated by their desire to procure economically convenient arms. Political concerns would loom large after 1870 when the Russian Empire unilaterally renounced those clauses of the Treaty of Paris (1856) that limited Russian sovereignty in the Black Sea, and the European powers played along. When the Ottoman government inquired with the British ambassador in 1871 what the reaction of the British would be in the case of an Ottoman-Russian war, the latter responded that except for giving the Ottomans a few old rifles, the British government would not do much.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, when the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 broke out, the Ottomans found themselves alone, unlike what happened during the Crimean War when European powers came to the assistance of the Ottomans. The war ended catastrophically for the Ottoman Empire. It lost large chunks of territory. Furthermore, the war brought about tremendous financial ruin. The British seriously reconsidered their decades-old policy of helping the Ottomans preserve their territorial integrity. For them, the Ottomans were on the verge of demise, which the British had only a slim chance of averting. Thus, in the wake of the disastrous war with the Russians in 1877–78, the Ottomans needed another friendly foreign power that would supply both arms and the much needed political support in the face of further Russian encroachments.

In the second half of the 1860s, the United States appeared to be a partic-

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<sup>16</sup> Serdal Soyler, "Osmanlı Silah Sanayii'nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876)" (PhD diss., İstanbul, İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2013), 117–18, 201, 254–55.

<sup>17</sup> Zengin, "Tophane-i Amireden İmalat-ı Harbiye'ye Osmanlı Devleti'nde Harp Sanayii (1861–1923)," 24.

ularly convenient option for the Ottomans because American arms were both cheaper than and of at least the same quality as their European counterparts. Moreover, since Americans were not part of the European power games and their actions were not dictated by the course of intra-European power shifts, they appeared to be more reliable suppliers of arms for the Ottomans than Europeans. In fact, from 1865 to the early part of the 1880s, the Ottoman Empire would be the foremost market for the American rifle manufacturers.<sup>18</sup> For the Ottomans, Americans were the chief supplier of rifles in this interval. Imports in small arms and ammunition from the United States amounted to more than 90 percent.<sup>19</sup>

At the height of the Crimean War in 1854, when the Ottomans desperately needed arms for their troops fighting against the Russians, they had been able to procure a significant amount of rifles from a certain Mr. Pock, evidently an American arms producer.<sup>20</sup> It appears that they purchased small arms from the American Samuel Colt in the 1850s as well.<sup>21</sup> However, these were not sizeable transactions. American-Ottoman arms trade did not reach significantly higher levels until after the end of the American Civil War. After 1865, American arms producers would prove to be the major suppliers of arms for the Ottoman Empire. Mostly thanks to the large Ottoman purchases, American rifle producers would dominate the world trade in rifles until the early 1880s.<sup>22</sup>

The American Civil War of 1861–65 propelled the arms production in the United States. Small arms manufacturing by armories including the national arsenal in Springfield, Massachusetts, reached unprecedented levels in a short time.<sup>23</sup> This was a noteworthy development because before the Civil War, Americans had imported large quantities of arms from abroad.<sup>24</sup> To address the exigencies of the Civil War, Americans had invested heavily in national arms

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<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Grant observes that even though American rifles were sold during this interval to various countries in Europe, Asia, South America, and the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire was “the single biggest customer.” See Jonathan A. Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money: The Global Arms Trade in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Zengin, “Tophane-i Amireden İmalat-ı Harbiye’ye Osmanlı Devleti’nde Harp Sanayii (1861–1923),” 217.

<sup>20</sup> Soyuer, “Osmanlı Silah Sanayii’nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876),” 295.

<sup>21</sup> Pamela Haag, *The Gunning of America: Business and the Making of American Gun Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 49.

<sup>22</sup> Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 10, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel R. Beaver, *Modernizing the American War Department: Change and Continuity in a Turbulent Era, 1885–1920* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Haag, *The Gunning of America*, 41.

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manufacturing. Once the war was over, however, the government did not need large quantities of arms anymore. Thus, the government orders declined sharply. Rifles and cartridges, including the government manufactured ones, were rendered redundant and faced the danger of rusting in the depots. Many small companies went bankrupt.<sup>25</sup> Americans now began to look for new markets abroad, perhaps more seriously than ever, for their surplus arms. Fortunately for them, they found eager buyers in the Ottomans.

In 1865, as part of their first large procurement the Ottomans purchased 40,000 Enfield rifles from the United States.<sup>26</sup> Next year, they bought large quantities of cartridges as well.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in 1868 the Ottoman government explored opportunities for importing guns from the United States, even though they had previously favored England and Prussia as potential suppliers. The Ottomans were particularly interested in an early model machine gun invented by Richard J. Gatling. They initially inquired with the British whether they could procure the Gatling guns from them. The British responded negatively as they did not use Gatling guns in their military. Therefore, the Ottomans decided to establish direct contacts with the Americans. Samples were brought to Istanbul to demonstrate the efficiency of the Gatling guns. The Ottoman military circles were satisfied with the performance of the Gatling gun, and subsequently in July 1870 the Ottoman government signed a contract with the Gatling armory. Accordingly, the Ottomans would purchase around 200 of these guns. The Ottomans were also interested in Thomas J. Rodman's coast defense artillery for the safeguarding of their coastline. However, they found it too risky and expensive to transport these heavy guns all the way from the United States, and instead concentrated their efforts on European countries as potential suppliers for coastal guns.<sup>28</sup> Europe was nearer, and the transportation would be less risky and less costly.

The Ottomans were interested in the manufacturing processes of American arms too. They toyed with the idea of importing the machines that made the rifles rather than the rifles themselves. In this regard, they dispatched Colonel Rustem Bey in 1869 to the United States to investigate the rifle production in

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<sup>25</sup> Beaver, *Modernizing the American War Department*, 15.

<sup>26</sup> E. Joy Morris to William H. Seward, 22 February 1865, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1865–1866*, pt. 3 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, n.d.), document 131.

<sup>27</sup> Ali İhsan Gencer, Ali Fuat Öreñç, and Metin Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi* (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2008), 53.

<sup>28</sup> Soylier, "Osmanlı Silah Sanayii'nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876)," 155–57.

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this country. Colonel Rustem was apparently very impressed with what he saw. American machines were superior to their English counterparts. In fact, the English were using American machinery in their own rifle factories.<sup>29</sup> Upon the recommendation of Colonel Rustem Bey, who was generously assisted by Edward Blacque, the Ottoman ambassador in Washington, some of these machines were bought at a very good price from a company that had recently gone bankrupt.<sup>30</sup> Even though Colonel Rustem Bey concentrated most of his efforts on finding the suitable production machines to be installed in the armories in Istanbul, he also checked out used Springfield rifles—now an American Civil War surplus. As a result of Colonel Rustem Bey's investigation, the Ottoman ambassador in Washington reported to their capital that these rifles were in pretty good shape and ready to fire.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently in the same year, the Ottoman government purchased a set of Lee-Enfield and Springfield rifles from the United States in the amount of around \$240,000. The Ottomans paid more than \$1.3 million USD for these rifles.<sup>32</sup> It appears that the U.S. administration played rather a facilitating role during this sale, which contributed to the already cordial relations between the United States and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>33</sup>

The Ottoman government was very content with this transaction. The next year, Istanbul sent instructions to Edward Blacque for the purchase of another set of rifles. Accordingly, Blacque was commissioned to purchase on behalf of his government brand-new Springfield rifles this time. The Ottoman ambassador had to secure President Ulysses S. Grant's approval for this purchase. The approval duly came. Blacque concluded a deal for about 100,000 rifles for around \$700,000. The rifles were shipped to the Ottoman Empire in February 1870. In the meantime, President Grant did another favor to the Ottomans. Through his personal initiative, 50,000 of the used Springfield rifles of the first transac-

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<sup>29</sup> Metin Ünver, "Teknolojik Gelişmeler Işığında Osmanlı-Amerikan Silah Ticaretinin İlk Dönemi," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 32, no. 54 (2013): 207, [https://doi.org/10.1501/Tarar\\_00000000560](https://doi.org/10.1501/Tarar_00000000560); and Örençer Gence and Metin Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi* (Istanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2008), 54–55.

<sup>30</sup> Ünver, "Teknolojik Gelişmeler Işığında Osmanlı-Amerikan Silah Ticaretinin İlk Dönemi," 208.

<sup>31</sup> Ünver, "Teknolojik Gelişmeler Işığında Osmanlı-Amerikan Silah Ticaretinin İlk Dönemi," 208.

<sup>32</sup> Gencer, Örençer, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 57–58; and Sander and Fişek, *ABD Dışişleri Belgeleriyle Türk-ABD Silah Ticaretinin İlk Yüzyılı (1829–1929)*, 25–26.

<sup>33</sup> Ünver, "Teknolojik Gelişmeler Işığında Osmanlı-Amerikan Silah Ticaretinin İlk Dönemi," 209–10.

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tion were replaced with unused ones.<sup>34</sup> President Grant continued to show interest in the Ottoman Empire even after he left office at the end of his tenure. In March 1878, he stopped by at the Ottoman capital as part of his world tour. He was warmly hosted by Sultan Abdulhamid II.<sup>35</sup>

In 1872, the Ottoman government dispatched another military delegation to the United States to investigate the recent advances in the American arms industry.<sup>36</sup> Ottoman officers would also inspect the rifles, which were paid for by the Ottoman Empire. Even though the Ottomans concluded the deal with a private company, American officers would accompany the Ottoman functionaries during their inspection in concurrence with the relevant clauses of the contract signed. These American officers would be paid by the Ottoman government for their services. The inspection of the rifles by the Ottoman military delegation continued well until 1881.<sup>37</sup>

In the 1870s, the Ottoman government continued to purchase rifles and ammunition from private American companies.<sup>38</sup> One of them was Winchester armory. In May 1869, the first contacts between the Ottoman government and the Winchester Repeating Arms Company began. Colonel Rustem Bey, who was already in the United States, got in touch with Winchester through the Ottoman consul in New York, Oscanyan Efendi.<sup>39</sup> In Istanbul, the company would be represented by Azarian Efendi. In early 1870, Winchester signed a contract with the Ottoman government.<sup>40</sup>

The volume of the sales from these companies to the Ottoman government increased so dramatically that the American rifle became one of the top trading items between the two countries. However, this period also saw the emergence of

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<sup>34</sup> Gencer, Örenç, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 59–60; and Ünver, “Teknolojik Gelişmeler Işığında Osmanlı-Amerikan Silah Ticaretinin İlk Dönemi,” 210.

<sup>35</sup> Ali Sönmez, “Ayastefanos Antlaşması’nın Gölgesinde ABD Eski Başkanı Grant’ın Türkiye Ziyareti,” *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi* 13, no. 1 (2013): 37–54.

<sup>36</sup> Sander and Fişek, *ABD Dışışleri Belgeleriyle Türk-ABD Silah Ticaretinin İlk Yüzyılı (1829–1929)*, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Gencer, Örenç, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 90–97.

<sup>38</sup> Gencer, Örenç, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 67–89; and Julian Bennett, “The ‘Aynalı Martini’: The Ottoman Army’s First Modern Rifle,” *Anatolica*, no. 44 (2018): 239–44, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ANA.44.0.3285056>.

<sup>39</sup> Oscanyan Efendi’s position was honorary. He lived off the fees he collected for his brokerage in American-Ottoman trade. See Haag, *The Gunning of America*, 131–32.

<sup>40</sup> Laura Trevelyan, *The Winchester: The Gun that Built an American Dynasty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 58–59.

disputes between American companies and the Ottoman government due to the latter's inability to make payments in a timely manner.<sup>41</sup> The parties were able to iron out their difficulties, nonetheless. The sale of American rifles to the Ottoman government continued, but only for a short period. The Ottoman's inability to pay for purchases and the American companies' lack of interest or ability to help the Ottomans line up credit—as German rifle manufacturers later would—proved to be one of the reasons why the Ottomans ceased to do business with the American rifle companies as of the early 1880s.<sup>42</sup>

In 1876, the Ottoman government ordered around 600,000 Peabody-Martini rifles from the Providence Tool Company, and most of these rifles reached their destination by July 1877.<sup>43</sup> The Ottomans made good use of the American rifles and cartridges during the disastrous war of 1877–78 against the Russians.<sup>44</sup> The Russians were impressed by the performance of the American rifles. Unlike the Ottomans, though, Russians preferred to import from Americans their rifle technology rather than the rifles themselves.<sup>45</sup>

At the height of the war, the Ottoman government had felt the need to import more rifles from the United States. Again, the Providence Tool Company was to manufacture and ship those rifles. However, the Ottoman government had defaulted on some part of the payments for these rifles in a timely manner for a while, as mentioned above.<sup>46</sup> Extraordinary circumstances caused by the ongoing war with the Russians also brought about further strains on the Ottoman finances, which were tremendously burdened by foreign debt accrued over the years.<sup>47</sup> Even though a large part of the sum owed was paid by the Ottoman government, the Providence Tool Company suspended the production of the rifles.

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<sup>41</sup> Soylier, "Osmanlı Silah Sanayii'nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876)," 300–5; and Bennett, "The 'Aynalı Martini'," 245.

<sup>42</sup> Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 10. Also see "The Turkish Army: Purchase of Arms and Ammunition—Bad Condition of the Troops," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 9 April 1877, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Grant, "The Sword of the Sultan," 15.

<sup>44</sup> Gencer, Öreng, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 115; Zengin, "Tophane-i Amireden İmalat-ı Harbiye'ye Osmanlı Devleti'nde Harp Sanayii (1861–1923)," 243; Bennett, "The 'Aynalı Martini'," 245–46; Trevelyan, *The Winchester*, 62–63; and Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 200.

<sup>45</sup> Bradley, *Guns for the Tsar*, 126–29.

<sup>46</sup> Ali Serdar Mete and Ercan Karakoç, "The Effects of the Firearm Purchasings on the Ottoman Financial Structure during the Military Modernization (1853–1908)," *Selçuk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 49 (2020): 301, <https://doi.org/10.21563/sutad.857494>.

<sup>47</sup> "The Overwhelming Debt of the Turkish Empire," *Daily Constitution*, 8 June 1877.

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As a result, the Ottomans found themselves in murky waters.<sup>48</sup> The American-Ottoman arms trade was now in serious danger.

In fact, the late 1870s and early 1880s witnessed a serious decline in the volume of arms trade between the United States and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>49</sup> The Ottoman Empire suddenly stopped purchasing American rifles and turned its attention to the German ones. The American rifle industry was adversely affected by the Ottoman failure in payments and later preference for German arms supplies. This was one of the primary reasons for the decline of American rifle manufacturing in the late 1870s and 1880s. Several armories went bankrupt. While there were more than 40 small arms companies in 1870, that number dwindled to merely 2 by the end of the 1880s.<sup>50</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s a unified Germany emerged as a formidable power in the middle of Europe during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This coincided with the deterioration of Ottoman relations with other European powers like Britain, France, and Russia. Russia in particular was following aggressive policies against the Ottoman Empire, which faced an imminent danger of dismemberment consequently. The Ottomans lost most of their Balkan possessions after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. Furthermore, France occupied Tunis in 1881, and the British took over Cyprus and Egypt in 1878 and 1882, respectively. To forestall further territorial losses including the capital city, the Ottoman Empire approached Germany, rather than, for instance, the United States, with which it had enjoyed cordial relations throughout.<sup>51</sup> As part of their overtures to the Germans, the Ottomans showed visible willingness to purchase arms from them. The Germans responded with utmost eagerness.

In an attempt to secure Germany's support to avert the demise of his empire, Abdulhamid II invited German military advisors to have the Ottoman military modernized after the catastrophic Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. Each of

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<sup>48</sup> Gencer, Örenç, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*, 133–35.

<sup>49</sup> Zengin, "Tophane-i Amireden İmalat-ı Harbiye'ye Osmanlı Devleti'nde Harp Sanayii (1861–1923)," 224–25; and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, "Tools of Revolution: Global Military Surplus, Arms Dealers and Smugglers in the Late Ottoman Balkans, 1878–1908," *Past & Present* 237, no. 1 (2017): 178, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtx034>.

<sup>50</sup> Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 10, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Sander and Fişek, *ABD Dışışleri Belgeleriyle Türk-ABD Silah Ticaretinin İlk Yüzyılı (1829–1929)*, 35; and Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, an imprint of Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.



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these German officers was granted the honorary title of sultan's aide-de-camp.<sup>52</sup> In accordance with the recommendations of these German advisors, the sultan expanded the army. Hence, the need for war materials for the army also increased. Unsurprisingly, the German military advisors urged the Ottoman government to purchase German weapons.<sup>53</sup>

In 1887, the German Mauser rifle company won a contract from the Ottoman Empire. The British ambassador in Istanbul believed that the sultan's personal intervention was instrumental in the entire business. That Otto von Bismarck, the German chancellor, had formerly won the trust of the sultan must have played a role. Bismarck was very keen on seeing the German arms manufacturers dominating the Ottoman market, whereas the British and the American ambassadors seemed to have failed intervening personally on behalf of the British and American companies, respectively.<sup>54</sup> Germans must have incisively noticed Sultan Abdulhamid II's autocratic inclinations. The sultan became involved in the process of arms procurement, pushing aside military professionals at this service.<sup>55</sup>

While the Ottomans' arms trade with the Americans declined, the corresponding trade with the Germans expanded quite rapidly. The Ottomans did not purchase only rifles but also coastal guns from the Germans in large quantities.<sup>56</sup> American arms ceased to enter the Ottoman territories almost completely until the end of the empire.<sup>57</sup>

There are several reasons why the Ottoman Empire might have preferred German arms over the American ones. Each of these reasons do not explain the Ottomans' choice individually. Only when considered as parts of a whole, these reasons offer a meaningful explanation. First, Germany proved its military might very recently at the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and emerged as a formidable power to reckon with in international politics. The Prussian military

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<sup>52</sup> F. A. K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878-1888* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 24-38.

<sup>53</sup> Naci Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire before World War I* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*, 35-37.

<sup>55</sup> Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 78.

<sup>56</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*.

<sup>57</sup> One notable exception to this rule was the Ottoman purchase of an American-made cruiser in 1900. See Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 90; and Naomi Wiener Cohen, *A Dual Heritage: The Public Career of Oscar S. Strauss* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 77.

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system began to be viewed as a viable and coveted model not only by the Ottomans but much of the world as well.<sup>58</sup> Second, compared to Germany, which showed a keen interest in near eastern affairs and had the necessary military might that could back up and justify that interest under the helm of its ambitious monarch, Kaiser Wilhelm II, the United States did not play a major role in international affairs until the late nineteenth century. The United States would be a more assertive international power in the twentieth century, particularly during the second half when Turks would prize the close friendship of Americans more than that of any other Western power in the face of Joseph Stalin's threats to Turkish sovereignty and territorial integrity. Third, Germany did not cherish any territorial ambitions over the Ottoman Empire that could jeopardize the very survival of the empire, at least initially.<sup>59</sup> Fourth, there is no evidence to suggest that the U.S. government viewed arms transfers as an instrument of foreign policy projection in the nineteenth century. It would be able to perceive that sort of an approach on the part of the U.S. administrations vis-à-vis arms transfers only in the twentieth century, particularly during its second half. Furthermore, the American administration did not have a relationship with national arms producers in the country similar to what the German government had with German armories. Thus, purchasing American arms did not guarantee American diplomatic and political support when necessary. Likewise, having cordial relations with the American government did not necessarily bring about advantages in the deals with the private American arms producers.<sup>60</sup> Fifth, the Ottomans had experienced certain difficulties recently with the American companies due to late payments for the purchases the Ottomans made. The American companies' rather understandable reluctance in delivering their merchandise without being paid in full first did not help, either. The Ottomans faced enormous difficulties in finding creditors for the purchases they were trying to make in the United States.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, the Ottoman government had ended up in court with American arms companies due to the delinquent payments for the rifles pur-

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<sup>58</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*, 180; and İlber Ortaylı, *İkinci Abdülhamit Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1981), 46.

<sup>59</sup> Ortaylı, *İkinci Abdülhamit Döneminde Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu*, 25; and Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy*, 51.

<sup>60</sup> Grant, *Ruler, Guns, and Money*, 35.

<sup>61</sup> Soyluer, "Osmanlı Silah Sanayii'nde Modernleşme Çabaları (1839–1876)," 310–11.

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chased in the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>62</sup> The Ottomans' financial state was in shambles, and they were in no condition to pay for the rifle purchases themselves. Therefore, when the Germans offered them creditors as well as rifles, the Ottomans went all in on German suppliers.<sup>63</sup> Sixth, geographically Germany was closer to the Ottoman Empire than the United States was. There was a direct railroad line linking the Ottoman Empire and Germany. Therefore, any sort of equipment that the Ottoman Empire needed and that Germany manufactured could be more easily and conveniently transferred to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>64</sup>

## CONCLUSION

American-Turkish relations have a very long history going back to the early days of the American republic. Since its emergence, the United States has been an active actor in the immediate vicinity of first the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish Republic. During the reign of the Ottomans, American merchants and missionaries had been the primary agents of the rather peaceful and at times considerably cordial relations between the two countries. This was particularly so during the nineteenth century. The two countries had never been in an armed conflict between them. In fact, even during the First World War, when the countries found themselves in opposing camps, they did not fire a bullet against each other.<sup>65</sup> That has always been the rule in the bilateral relations. Despite the ups and downs in their interactions, the two countries acted with utmost serenity to make sure that the bilateral relations were not troubled by an act of war.

One of the most important aspects of the bilateral relations was the arms trade between the United States and the Ottoman Empire from the 1860s until the first part of the 1880s. That trade, it should be noted, was one-sided. The United States was the supplier and the Ottoman Empire was the purchaser. This worked fairly well for both parties. The Ottoman Empire purchased large quantities of weaponry from the United States. The Ottomans initially bought arms directly from the U.S. government. Later, they made purchases from private companies, too.

This rather lucrative business for the American armories came to an abrupt end in the 1880s. The Ottoman government ceased to purchase weaponry from

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<sup>62</sup> Gencer, Örenç, and Ünver, *Türk-Amerikan Silah Ticareti Tarihi*.

<sup>63</sup> Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Sander and Fişek, *ABD Dışişleri Belgeleriyle Türk-ABD Silah Ticaretinin İlk Yüzyılı (1829–1929)*, 35–36.

<sup>65</sup> Köprülü, "Tarihte Türk-Amerikan Münasebetleri," 941.

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the United States. This decision did not have much to do with the quality of the American weapons. They were certainly of the highest quality. Even though there were financial issues regarding the arms trade, such as the Ottoman inability to make payments in a timely manner, there was a political dimension to the Ottoman change of heart as well. The American-Ottoman military diplomacy did not bring about political and/or financial support, which the Ottoman Empire was in dire need of in the face of the Russian menace. It was confined to commercial dealings. The Ottomans needed more than that. They needed friends and allies who could back them up financially and politically if and when necessary.

For its own reasons, perhaps, the American government did not show any willingness to become involved politically in near eastern affairs during the second half of the nineteenth century. Until the end of the century, the United States continued to stick to its isolationist foreign policy and stayed away from political conflicts in areas other than North America. Regarding the Ottoman Empire, the U.S. government did its utmost to look after the interests of American merchants and missionaries who were based in Ottoman territories without engaging in any sort of gunboat diplomacy.

Therefore, Sultan Abdulhamid II looked for other centers of political, military, and financial support and found that support in Germany. In a rather abrupt move, Abdulhamid II turned to Germany. To secure German political backing, Abdulhamid II started to purchase arms from German companies who had close links to the German government. Whether Abdulhamid II's policy played out in favor of the Ottomans remains debatable. However, what is clear is that two countries stood side by side politically during the First World War and the German military influence in the Ottoman Empire was undoubtedly a facilitator for such an association. A similar case in American-Turkish relations would be observed only during the post-World War II era when both countries perceived threats to their interests from the Soviet Union and decided to stand in unison to counter that threat.

## ◉ Chapter Two ◉

# The Kenner Mission: The Confederate States of America's Failed Military Diplomacy

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David Campmier, PhD

The Confederate States of America's last-ditch attempt at military diplomacy, the 1864–65 Kenner mission, offers crucial lessons in understanding why such efforts sometimes fail. During the 1861–65 American Civil War, the Confederate States of America's (CSA) diplomatic overtures centered on receiving international recognition, particularly from Great Britain—then the world's greatest superpower—along with economic aid and direct military assistance. Key to Confederate victory was the potential of the British government recognizing the CSA as an independent nation-state and providing direct military support in fighting the U.S. Navy blockade and threatening the northern states from Canada. Despite vigorous Confederate diplomacy, British military support never materialized due to the Confederacy's commitment to slavery, which was a red line for the British government. Britain declared and maintained its neutrality throughout the entire conflict. This stance meant Britain recognized the CSA as a lawful belligerent, permitting the Rebels to purchase arms and ships within some limitations, but did not provide economic or military assistance.<sup>1</sup> Without active British support, the CSA could not resist the steadily increasing Union military and economic pressure.

By the fall of 1864, the CSA's fortunes had fallen so low that Rebel leader-

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<sup>1</sup> Phillip E. Meyers, *Caution and Cooperation: The American Civil War in British-American Relations* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008), 36; and Howard Jones, *Blue and Gray Diplomacy: A History of Union and Confederate Foreign Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) 39–42.

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ship in Richmond, Virginia, took a desperate tact. President Jefferson Davis and Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin decided to use the possibility of enlisting Black troops in the Southern armies—offering such troops emancipation—to secure British assistance in the form of robust financial support and direct military intervention. Then, with the example of employing and freeing African American men for military service, the CSA could introduce general emancipation to solidify the relationship.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the year, President Davis sent Duncan F. Kenner, a Confederate congressman from Louisiana, to Britain as an envoy to present this new scheme. Davis, Benjamin, and Kenner assumed that the British would believe the CSA was at last prepared to initiate broad social change starting with its armies. However, the British rejected Kenner's overture. The mission's failure—examined at greater length later—demonstrated some pitfalls of unsuccessful military diplomacy.

The Kenner mission was the culmination of a yearslong struggle by Confederate and U.S. diplomats to gain the sympathy of the British government (and to some extent, the British public)—a struggle in which competing policies on slavery were prominent. Throughout the war, U.S. secretary of State William H. Seward and the U.S. minister (what we would today call an ambassador) to Great Britain, Charles Francis Adams, sought to highlight the CSA's staunch proslavery commitments.<sup>3</sup> As directed by the Confederate State Department in Richmond, Rebel envoys tried to deemphasize the importance of slavery. The Rebel secretaries of state understood that extolling slavery to a staunchly antislavery power would not produce results and reminded their subordinates to focus on other matters.

Notably, instead of debating slavery, representatives of the Confederacy pointed to Great Britain's economic reliance on slave-grown cotton and its support for independence movements in Europe, arguing that Britain should likewise support Confederate self-determination. The CSA's use of cotton as a weapon proved heavy-handed. Early on during the conflict, the Rebel states attempted to implement a cotton embargo in the hopes of holding hostage British textile manufacturing. The cotton embargo backfired; it angered the British.

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 111, 203n2; and Craig A. Bauer, "The Last Effort: The Secret Mission of the Confederate Diplomat, Duncan F. Kenner," *Louisiana History: Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 22, no. 1 (1981): 71, 73.

<sup>3</sup> James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, "Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 20 May 1861," in *The American Civil War through British Eyes: Dispatches from British Diplomats*, vol. 1 (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 83–86.

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Military matters repeatedly came to the fore of diplomatic disputes involving Washington, Richmond, and London. Early in the war, U.S. president Abraham Lincoln announced a blockade of Confederate ports to strangle CSA trade—a blockade that became increasingly effective throughout the war as the U.S. Navy tightened its grip and the Union Army seized some ports. Great Britain recognized Lincoln's blockade as the war began and conferred belligerent status to both sides while assuming neutrality. Neither the United States nor the CSA liked this decision. For the Union, the legal effect of declaring a “blockade” was to grant the CSA the status of a *de facto* independent nation rather than a region in rebellion. The United States would later argue the legal distinction that the Southern ports were “closed” rather than blockaded, to no effect. For the CSA's part, they believed the blockade to be illegal and sought to persuade Britain to reverse its recognition of it. According to Davis, the Union's attempt to cut off traffic to Confederate ports amounted to a “paper” blockade, meaning an unenforceable blockade.<sup>4</sup> If Britain had not recognized the blockade, it would have benefited the CSA by permitting British and other European merchant ships to defy the Union and—backed by the powerful Royal Navy—enter Confederate ports while Union ships stood by lest they risk war with Britain. For its part, Britain maintained recognition of the blockade in keeping with international law and strategic concerns to use it as a weapon for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Confederate diplomats also sought to paint a picture of the United States as a budding economic and strategic rival to Britain that the CSA could hold at bay.<sup>6</sup> As the war dragged on, the diplomats tried raising humanitarian concerns. They usually listed Union military atrocities and the physical destruction of the Confederate states. While the British listened, they did nothing

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<sup>4</sup> James McPherson, *War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies, 1861–1865*, Littlefield History of the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) 46–47. At the war's beginning, the Confederacy had a fair point. According to the 1856 Declaration of Paris, a joint British-French treaty that aimed to govern war on the seas, it stated that “blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy.” The U.S. Navy was small before the war and could not block access to every port at the onset of hostilities. It took time and a remarkable ship-building program for the Union Navy to be able to effectively execute a blockade. Before reaching full strength, however, scores of ships were able to reach Rebel shores.

<sup>5</sup> McPherson, *War on the Waters*, 47–49. Both the British and Confederates (unintentionally in their case) admitted that the blockade did effectively interrupt commerce and result in the seizure of ships.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 57–60.

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to act on Confederate requests—the few supporters the Rebel states had in Parliament tried but failed to push motions to recognize the CSA through the legislative body.

## THE PRIMACY OF THE SLAVERY ISSUE

The Confederate economic and security arguments were not without merit. Why did they fail to gain traction?

British reluctance to act on Confederate appeals seems to be rooted in their understanding of the cause and meaning of the war. In December 1860, even before the Rebels fired the first shots on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, Lord Richard Lyons—the British minister to Washington—summarized the British approach to treating the Confederacy. Lyons noted that even if the South succeeded in achieving its independence, the British government and people would be profoundly uncomfortable dealing with the Confederacy, even though they wanted to avoid disruptions in the cotton trade. He elaborated further, “Unless the Seceding States can be induced to act with moderation upon the question of slavery, they may rouse a feeling of indignation and horror in Great Britain which will overpower all consideration of material interest.” There was no indication that the Rebels were interested in moderating their proslavery ambitions. Lyons recommended that Britain support the North over the South: “To Englishmen sincerely interested in the welfare of this country, the present state of things is painful. Abhorrence of slavery, respect for law, more in complete community of race and language enlist his sympathies with the side of the North.”<sup>7</sup>

Lyons’s dispatches create the impression that Britain’s antislavery stance and its need for cotton carried equal weight but that the Confederacy’s overt support of slavery complicated any diplomatic efforts. When the Confederacy declared its independence, he noted that Southern politicians and leaders had not retreated from their proslavery advocacy.<sup>8</sup> When the Rebels fired on Fort Sumter, Lyons claimed, “The taint of slavery will render the cause of the South loathsome to the civilized world.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 12 May 1861,” in *The American Civil War through British Eyes*, vol. 1, 81–83.

<sup>8</sup> “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 12 May 1861,” 32–33; and “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 18 February 1861,” in *The American Civil War through British Eyes*, vol. 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 18 February 1861,” in *The American Civil War through British Eyes*, vol. 1., 50; and “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 15 April 1861,” in *The American Civil War through British Eyes*, vol. 1.



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The friendly reception of Confederate representatives in England, both among citizens and political leadership, led them to believe that recognition was imminent, but that was never the case. Rebel leaders were baffled for years and thought British leaders misled them about how vital antislavery commitments were to Great Britain's government and people. It was not, however, a matter of dishonesty. Instead, the Rebels refused to accept what was in front of them. Though sympathetic to the Confederacy, British diplomats and the cabinet never wavered on their antislavery commitments. It made them unenthusiastic when pursuing courses that might have led to the Confederacy's desired goals.

The closest the British came to intervening in the war was after the *Trent* affair, which was not about Confederate sovereignty or aligning British interests with those of a proslavery rebellion. In 1861, a Union warship stopped a British-flagged ship, the RMS *Trent* (1841), in international waters and detained two Confederate diplomats—minister to Great Britain James Murray Mason and minister to France John Slidell. Richmond had sent Mason and Slidell to replace its original group of envoys abroad and represent the CSA's interests to the two powerful nations. The British government nearly declared war on the United States based on this violation of British sovereignty. Lincoln and Seward, wanting to fight “one war at a time,” quickly acquiesced to British demands and smoothed over relations as best they could, releasing the prisoners. Even during the midst of the most extreme diplomatic incident between Great Britain and the Union, Lyons continued to report on Union antislavery efforts, undermining sympathy for the CSA.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond ensuring British sovereignty, His Majesty's Government took careful note of what happened during the war and listened to U.S. and CSA representatives. The American Civil War was an event of some import but hardly the

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<sup>10</sup> “Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, 15 April 1861,” 237, 238–39, 275–76, 310–11. “Dispatches from Lyons to Russell, 3 December 1861 (Dispatch 728),” “3 December 1861 (Dispatch 735),” “20 January 1862,” and “10 March 1862. “Dispatch 728” detailed U.S. congressional motions for confiscation of and emancipation for slaves whose masters were disloyal. “Dispatch 735” detailed congressional motions to recognize Haiti and Liberia, suppress the international slave trade, and acquire a colony for freedmen. The January 1862 dispatch assessed the antislavery positions of the new Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton (who, according to Lyons, wanted to attack the South where it was vulnerable—on the institution of slavery). The 10 March 1862 report to Russell carefully parsed the difference of opinions between Senator Charles Sumner and Francis Blair over the issue of emancipation, and where Lincoln stood on the debate. Lincoln and Blair seemed more cautious than Sumner, according to Lyons. The minister was quick to note that Lincoln suggested that if the war continued, compulsory emancipation would be an incident of the war.

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most crucial for the British Empire as it was for the Union or the Confederacy. In short, getting involved in the war on behalf of the CSA posed a risk with limited benefits, and slavery made taking that risk more unpalatable. Instead, the British focused their attention on the East; the “Great Game” of intrigue against Russia for influence in Central Asia and maintaining overseas colonies.<sup>11</sup>

In its efforts to gain British sympathy, the Confederacy did not help itself when its representatives abroad could not help but exalt the “virtues” of slave labor. With powers other than Great Britain, the Rebel diplomatic corps was more than willing to offer to build a network of proslavery allies, including Mexico, Spain’s Caribbean colonies, and Brazil in order to preserve the institution on an international scale.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the Rebels’ actions at home—even those they portrayed as weakening slavery, such as banning the transatlantic slave trade—propped up slavery. The Confederate Constitution banned global slave imports, seemingly in line with Great Britain’s interest in suppressing the trade.<sup>13</sup> On closer inspection, banning slave imports was not a reflection of some nascent abolitionist sentiment in the South; rather, it was an economic measure that protected the domestic interstate trade in enslaved people and kept prices high. Davis and others claimed that the Confederacy fought a simple defensive war with no territorial ambitions. The Rebels, however, embarked on several invasions of Northern territory and border states and territories throughout the war, setting up proslavery, Confederate-aligned governments and rounding up escaped slaves.

Conversely, Union diplomats actively emphasized the United States’ commitments to antislavery policies to keep the British Empire out of the war. British ministers continued to track how and when the federal Congress acted to dismantle the laws and practices that had upheld slavery.<sup>14</sup> In 1862, the Unit-

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<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Yapp, “The Legend of the Great Game,” in *Proceedings of the British Academy: 2000 Lectures and Memoirs*, vol. 111 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 179–98.

<sup>12</sup> Emory Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 80–86.

<sup>13</sup> “Constitution of the Confederate States, March 11, 1861,” in James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy Including the Diplomatic Correspondence 1861–1865* (Nashville, TN: United States Publishing Company, 1905).

<sup>14</sup> “Dispatches from Lyons to Russell, #500 and #501, July 18, 1864,” in *The American Civil War through British Eyes: Dispatches from British Diplomats*, vol. 3 (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003), 197. Lyons detailed the repeal of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act’s provision, which prevented Africans/African Americans from testifying in court cases, and abolition of the coastwise slave trade.

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ed States ratified the Lyons-Seward Treaty of 1862, which allowed Royal Navy warships to stop and inspect American-flagged ships in the Atlantic to suppress the slave trade. The preliminary and final Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 further cemented the United States' commitments to ending slavery and played a significant role in quieting those voices in the British government keen on intervening in the war.

Relations between the CSA and Great Britain stalled and eventually soured in 1863. Once again, the British acted only to secure or protect British sovereignty. When Rebel conscription officers forcibly enlisted British citizens into the army, British representatives complained, and the Confederacy did not comply with their requests for release. This quarrel led to an inflection point. To force the British to recognize and accept Confederate independence, Davis and his State Department recalled Mason from London. Great Britain followed suit by recalling its unofficial representatives in the South. The diplomatic spat signaled the Confederacy's displeasure over perceived interference into a vital war measure. Further, Confederate leaders in Richmond assumed that Britain absolutely needed the Confederacy's cheap, slave-produced cotton to keep the British manufacturing centers running. Their perception was flawed for three reasons. First, the British economy was not solely dependent on cotton goods manufacturing and was in fact diversified. It could withstand an economic shock to one part of its economy. Second, British manufactures sourced the fiber from elsewhere in the world, particularly from its own colonies as Confederate cotton grew more expensive. Third, the Rebels appeared to have believed that the British government would prioritize low-cost cotton imports above all other diplomatic concerns.<sup>15</sup>

Britain did not acquiesce to "cotton diplomacy," but their refusal to engage did not prevent Rebel leadership from believing in British dependence. From later 1863 and throughout most of 1864, the Rebels did not formerly conduct traditional diplomacy with the British. Davis and the Rebel leadership in the cabinet and Congress found itself in a paradox. They reasoned that only battlefield success could change the British's stubborn neutrality, but it would soon become apparent the CSA needed military support to consistently win on the battlefields.

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<sup>15</sup> Amanda Foreman, *A World on Fire: Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3–18, 219–30, 429–40; and Charles Hubbard, *The Burden of Confederate Diplomacy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 1–7, 177–82.

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The CSA turned to diplomatic efforts outside of official British government contacts. They bypassed antislavery commitments among British political leaders. In Liverpool, Confederate diplomatic and military personnel made contacts and worked closely with pro-Confederate sympathizers. They cultivated outspoken pro-Confederate public leaders and raised funds and awareness for the CSA's cause. Relying on British neutrality, Confederate agents purchased and shipped aboard blockade runners thousands of tons of war materiel across the Atlantic. Brazenly, Rebel agents purchased warships from British commercial shipyards using a loophole in the neutrality law. The British government restricted some purchases at the Union's behest, particularly ironclad warships.

Confederate leaders then searched for answers as to why the British had not come to their aid. Some envoys and members of the Department of State suggested slavery had prevented relations from developing further. These Rebel diplomats had warned leadership for years about how slavery complicated their efforts. As Confederate diplomatic commissioner William Lowndes Yancey complained in an 1862 speech, "The sentiment of Europe was anti-slavery, and that portion of the public opinion which formed and was represented by the Government of England was abolition."<sup>16</sup> Another commissioner, Edwin De Leon, reasoned,

The greatest stumbling block in the way of our foreign alliance is the perpetuation of the institution of slavery. That sentiment is stronger abroad than even considerations of interest—stronger probably in France than in England. Can we make no concessions in that direction? Can we not offer a gradual emancipation to at least a portion of our negroes—say at the expiration of twenty years—so as to give our friends abroad an answer to the cry that this is a war for the perpetuation of slavery?<sup>17</sup>

If Confederate leadership was slow to realize how corrosive slavery had been to their effort abroad, battlefield and political defeats changed their perspective. By November 1864, the CSA found itself on the precipice of collapse. Abraham Lincoln, who was set on unconditional military victory and destroying the institution of slavery, won his reelection as president after months of speculation that he might lose to an opponent open to a negotiated peace leaving the CSA intact.

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<sup>16</sup> Edwin De Leon, *The Secret History of Confederate Diplomacy Abroad*, ed. William C. Davis (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 99–101.

<sup>17</sup> De Leon, *The Secret History of Confederate Diplomacy Abroad*, 102–4.

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On the battlefronts, Confederate armies suffered losses and reversals. Rebel president Jefferson Davis knew the tide of the war had turned against the Confederacy.

### A DESPERATE PROPOSAL

In a radical departure from previous policy, on 11 November 1864, Davis announced before the Confederate Congress that he desired to enlist tens of thousands of enslaved men as soldiers into the ranks of the Rebel armies. In return for their service, the Confederacy would grant freedom to any enslaved man who served as a soldier. Previously, the Rebel government impressed enslaved people into Confederate service as servants, laborers, cooks, and teamsters. They were not supposed to handle weapons or ammunition, let alone fight.

Davis believed it was the last chance to forestall defeat and expended much political capital to get enlistment passed in Congress. For Davis and those who agreed with him, enlisting enslaved men served three purposes.

First, the Rebel military was desperate for manpower. Rebel armies were either pinned down or in full retreat. Confederate armies lost troops due to battlefield casualties, disease, and desertion. Rebel leaders struggled to replace those men, even after several expansions of the compulsory draft. Enslaved men could potentially fill draft quotas. How many Blacks would have voluntarily served—or, if drafted, would have remained in service without deserting at the first opportunity—is difficult to judge.

Second, some in the Confederacy envisioned enlisting African Americans as providing a morale boost to troops and civilians who had given up hope of the Confederacy's survival. With replenished ranks, even those filled with Black men, this might encourage Whites who deserted. Many deserted troops were disillusioned and had no reason to return to the Confederate armies. Shame might also bring them back, although it seems more likely that Southern White soldiers would reject serving with Black men as equals. Even in the North, there was strong early opposition to the enlistment of Black troops in the Union Army.<sup>18</sup>

Third, and potentially most important, Davis and others believed that freeing slaves on the condition of military service could change how the Confederacy's war was perceived internationally. Rebel war aims from the beginning

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<sup>18</sup> For Union attitudes about military emancipation and arming slaves, see Chandra Manning, "A Vexed Question: White Union Soldiers on Slavery and Race" in *The View from the Ground: Experience of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Davis (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 31–66; and Joseph T. Glatthar, *Why the Confederacy Lost*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 133–62.

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included independence and the preservation of slaveholders' right to own human beings. The meaning of the Confederate cause was no secret, and by the end of the war, Davis and others wanted international observers to believe differently. By emancipating slaves in return for military service, the Confederacy's leaders hoped the international community could more readily identify their cause with independence and freedom.

The ensuing months from November 1864 to February 1865 led to a protracted political struggle in which White generals, politicians, soldiers, and citizens debated whether to enlist slaves as soldiers and what such an act might mean for a country founded on the cornerstone of White supremacy. Many Confederates, rich or poor, civilian or military, bristled at the notion of arming Black men even when it appeared that it might be the only way to win. To do so would be to elevate African Americans to the same level as Whites, an unacceptable proposition. Moreover, slaveholders protested the impressment and potential emancipation of their slaves.

On its face, the proposal to enlist and arm enslaved men—leaving aside the political questions and existential contradictions for the CSA—was unrealistic in practical terms. Even by November 1864, it was probably far too late to gather, arm, drill, and deploy enough African American men to make a meaningful difference on the battlefield. Confederate leaders struggled to bring White troops to the front and supply them adequately during the war's later stages.

The scheme to employ enslaved men as soldiers was intended to fill the ranks, but the logistical and political hurdles became clear. The topic had been broached before. Confederate general Patrick R. Cleburne, an Irish immigrant and famous division commander in the Confederate Army of Tennessee, argued in a document to the Confederate Congress it was in the South's best interests to use slaves to fight for the rebellion. He stated the South should grant "freedom within a reasonable time to every slave in the South who shall remain true to the Confederacy in this war." He claimed it would also undercut the Union's ability to recruit slaves and demonstrate that the Confederacy was willing to accept emancipation as a condition for international recognition and intervention. However, though he was a highly regarded division commander, only about one-half of his subordinate officers supported him. Those who opposed the letter declared Cleburne an abolitionist and a traitor.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Jefferson Davis, *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 10 (Houston, TX: Rice University Press, 1971), 177–78.

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As soon as Davis announced his plan before Congress, opposition quickly materialized even as the country was failing, and the Union brought emancipation wherever its armies marched. Though the war had worn down resistance to arming slaves, it would still be a monthslong protracted struggle with those who represented slaveholding interests throughout the Rebel states.

Those who discussed an act to increase the military force of the Confederate States, for the most part, agreed that freeing slaves after their military service did not mean the Confederacy was going to enact a general abolition of slavery. It was a poorly kept secret that some in the Confederacy considered freeing some of the slaves. British minister Lyons dutifully conveyed these reports to Russell and included Seward's analysis. As Union secretary of State Seward noted, the proposal by Davis and his allies did not mean the CSA was committed to ending slavery. A limited number of enslaved African Americans could be freed without ending the institution. Seward argued that slaveholders could keep slave women in bondage, and the children those women had would remain enslaved, thus continuing the institution.<sup>20</sup>

On 10 March 1865, Davis signed into law the mundanely titled An Act to Increase the Military Force of the Confederate States. The new law, which opened the ranks of the Confederate Army to recruiting slaves as soldiers, was muddled by compromises. As a result, the act was neither capable of raising the hundreds of thousands of men needed to win the war, nor was it the harbinger of a social and political revolution some Southerners believed it could be. The act was only a hypothetical threat to slavery. Though Southerners feared the bill's passage, the law bent backward to protect slaveholders' rights. Davis could not compel owners to give up their slaves. The recruitment process had to be voluntary on the master's part. The Confederate government could not draw more than 25 percent of enslaved men between 18 and 45 for service in any state. Enslaved men who served as soldiers in the Rebel army had no guarantee of receiving freedom before or after military service.<sup>21</sup> Such half-hearted compromises appealed to no group, nor did they make the law effective.

## THE KENNER MISSION

The timing of attempting to get enslaved men into the armies and Kenner's

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<sup>20</sup> "Dispatch from Lyons to Russell, October 28, 1864," in *The American Civil War through British Eyes*, vol. 3, 218.

<sup>21</sup> H.R. 367, *An Act to Increase the Military Force of the Confederate States* (10 March 1865).

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mission abroad was possibly intentional. Davis and others who came to support arming enslaved men understood what emancipation might mean on the international stage.<sup>22</sup> The Kenner mission was a type of military diplomacy. At the time, the army was not realistically capable of conducting successful military operations to stop the Union armies, let alone push them back from Confederate soil. The military emancipation of the enslaved intended to prove to the British government that the Confederate states were willing to dismantle slavery in return for recognition. In short, Kenner was supposed to help the British government “get over” their reluctance to help a pro-slavery state.

Duncan Kenner, on the surface, was in an odd position to act as the leader of this ambitious plan. For one, Kenner was a Louisiana slaveholder of a large plantation. He had been a member of the Confederate Congress. But, from the early stages of the war, he argued with Davis and Benjamin that the Confederacy must introduce emancipation legislation for European powers to even consider intervention. His sentiments reflected what Confederate diplomats had long observed but refused to accept. By the summer of 1863, Benjamin ordered representatives abroad to end any negotiation if foreign diplomats broached the issue of slavery. As early as 1863, Duncan informed Davis that he intended to introduce legislation to send a commission to Britain and France to offer emancipation as a bargaining chip to win recognition and intervention. The president and secretary of State quashed the idea, but Kenner never entirely abandoned his views.<sup>23</sup>

Realities on the ground changed Richmond's mind, and Davis, with Benjamin's cajoling, hatched a plan to send Kenner abroad. In December 1864, Davis reluctantly charged Kenner with his mission after a meeting held in Richmond. Davis authorized Kenner to negotiate on the Confederacy's behalf and offer general emancipation in return for recognition. Kenner had the authority to sell all Southern cotton and purchase war materials. To ensure the Louisianan's success, the president and secretary gave him complete control over all Confederate ministers abroad and informed leading congressmen of Kenner's objectives. Though

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, a letter from Davis supporter and proslavery Kansas politician turned Confederate Surgeon John H. Stringfellow. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compendium of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 4, vol. 3, 1067–70. Letter from John H. Stringfellow, 8 February 1865.

<sup>23</sup> Craig A. Bauer, “The Last Effort: The Secret Mission of the Confederate Diplomat Duncan F. Kenner,” *Louisiana History: Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 70–73.



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the congressmen rejected the plan outright at first, Kenner convinced them of the necessity of abandoning slavery personally. Benjamin paved the way further by informing Rebel diplomats that Kenner was coming and that they should investigate if there were an issue that held European powers back from recognition.<sup>24</sup>

Problems remained. Even if the mission had been successful, as Davis noted to J. D. Shaw, the various Confederate states would have needed to approve the plan. In the same letter, Davis claimed that “the chief obstacle to recognition has been an unwillingness to be embroiled in a quarrel with the United States. If slavery or any other cause had been the impediment, our advances to European Governments would have led to the disclosure of their reasons for not acknowledging our independence.”<sup>25</sup>

Kenner set out for Europe in early January 1865; dangers abounded. The blockade and Union forces proved to be significant obstacles. After a weeks-long journey making his way to New York City in secret, involving many close calls, he arrived in Southampton, England, on 21 February. He was further delayed in his mission when he discovered that Mason and Slidell—Confederate diplomats based in Europe, whom he had counted on to assist him in London—were in Paris and Brussels. Mason and Slidell were doubtful Kenner’s plan would succeed. Both men rejected Kenner until Davis’s authorization papers were decoded and presented and reluctantly helped him.<sup>26</sup>

Even with their help, Kenner and Mason took another two weeks to contact the British cabinet. The Confederate diplomatic team focused on meeting the prime minister alone. They thought he was the key figure in successfully offering emancipation for recognition. Only Mason met with British prime minister Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston, on 14 March 1865, though he followed instructions from Kenner with one major exception. He never directly discussed abolishing slavery and only obliquely referred to some obstacle that prevented British action. Palmerston, for his part, read between the lines and rejected the notion that slavery impeded Great Britain’s recognition of the Confederacy. Instead, battlefield realities meant the rebellion lost, and interference would only lead to war with the United States. Mason never explicitly offered abolition in return for recognition after that discussion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bauer, “The Last Effort,” 75–78.

<sup>25</sup> “Davis to J. D. Shaw, March 22, 1865,” in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, vol. 11, 457.

<sup>26</sup> Bauer, “The Last Effort,” 88–90.

<sup>27</sup> Bauer, “The Last Effort,” 93–94.

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Despite that crushing failure, Kenner and Mason reached out to Richard Hely-Hutchinson, the Earl of Donoughmore, a Confederate sympathizer and Mason's contact in the British government and aristocratic circles, to assess what role partially or completely ending slavery could play in negotiation between the Confederacy and Great Britain. The earl agreed with Palmerston's assessment but claimed that slavery had prevented recognition. Mason finally made the proposition clear though Donoughmore replied it was too little too late. The mission failed, and the Confederacy's armies and the government soon fell after.<sup>28</sup>

Given the CSA's limitations, this might have been the extent of its foray into military diplomacy, but perhaps starting on this path sooner may have had better results. In short, the Rebels should have never given up on formal diplomatic overtures and offered emancipation in some form two years earlier, Donoughmore suggested. Of course, this is counterfactual and ultimately unprovable. The inability to pass a slave-soldier law quickly even when the CSA faced disaster suggests that trying it sooner might have been impossible.

## CONCLUSION

What does the story of the Kenner mission say about larger questions of military diplomacy?

First, the CSA was not able to offer much in the way of military assistance to Britain. The CSA's use of military diplomacy does not neatly conform to the present-day practice of armed forces training and exercising together; governments engaging in arms sales or authorizing private companies to do so; or providing humanitarian aid. The Confederacy could not offer any of this except to play the role of a purchaser of foreign arms.

Second, military diplomacy works best over time with governments that share common strategic goals or interests. It also seems to help when the partner states are similar politically, socially, and culturally. While the CSA and Britain, on the surface, may have shared an interest in wanting to degrade the Union's strength, they were at total odds about slavery. For its part, though some British leaders were tempted to help the CSA because they wanted to ensure the flow of cheap cotton and weaken a potential strategic rival, Great Britain never wavered on its antislavery commitments. The CSA's inability to overcome this obstacle doomed its efforts to move Britain from tepid neutrality to active support of the Confederate war effort. Moreover, Confederate leaders expected Kenner to

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<sup>28</sup> Bauer, "The Last Effort," 94.

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accomplish too much in too short a time when the CSA already faced imminent defeat, and the British knew it.

Finally, broad diplomatic efforts also seem to be required to make military diplomacy an effective tool. And that is the crucial distinction. It took a great deal of time for Confederate leadership to accept that slavery complicated their interest in the British Empire. Had they not ceased contact with the British during 1863, they could have offered limited emancipation sooner. It might not have been enough to convince the British cabinet or Parliament to intervene, but such a course could have given the CSA and Britain an avenue to more fruitful negotiations. In short, the Rebel leadership could have shown themselves “competing” with the United States on the issue of military emancipation. Moreover, the Confederacy could have been able to offer further economic incentives or credible promises of diplomatic support if it survived. So long as internal Confederate proslavery policies remained in effect, to make offers as the Kenner mission did without broader discussions and so late in the war fatally wounded the effort before it even began.

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## ◉ Chapter Three ◉

# U.S. Military Diplomacy and the Imperial State of Iran

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Kyle Balzer, PhD

### INTRODUCTION

Straddling strategic land routes and waterways, Iran has long garnered the attention of great powers. From the Macedonian and Roman empires to imperial rivals like the British Empire and Russia, states vying for global mastery have jockeyed for command of the Persian Gulf. The greater Middle East, with Iran occupying vast swaths of its strategic geography, has long been correlated with the security and prosperity of outside powers. For these reasons, the United States, too, has consistently seen itself drawn into the region. Iran, and the Persian Gulf in particular, first captured the imaginations of Presbyterian missionaries and commercial interests. Later, during the twilight struggle with the Soviet Union, Washington's official mind became increasingly concerned with the political orientation of regional powers positioned in vital strategic spaces.

Since World War II, the United States has employed various instruments to align the Imperial State of Iran with the West. Both economic and military aid were distributed in staggering sums to stabilize the fledgling monarchy and secure its vast oilfields and strategic passages. However, as a lever of influence, military diplomacy by the late 1960s became Washington's primary tool of inducement. Military assistance, supplemented by mounting sales of sophisticated weapons systems, were viewed by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi—Iran's ruler from 1941 until his overthrow and exile in 1979—as the means to bolster the monarchy and, in the long run, supplant Western dominance over the Persian Gulf. By the 1970s, for reasons external and internal to Iranian-American relations, the United States was sucked into the Pahlavi vortex, forced to cater to

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its client-turned-partner's self-indulgent and ruinous proclivities. The future of the Western security architecture now depended on the Shah, who was motivated by outsized ambitions that far outstripped his strategic capacities.

In the end, the Shah's fatalism, combined with his farcical geopolitical aspirations, doomed the Pahlavi dynasty and led to the rise of the anti-Western Islamic Republic. Therefore, Washington's reliance on military assistance constituted a long-shot strategic gamble gone awry as opposed to a predictable and easily avertible blunder. Nonetheless, the U.S. experience in prerevolutionary Iran illuminates practical lessons for the future of American military diplomacy. First, this chapter briefly explores Iran's strategic geography to explain the region's enduring importance to world order, great powers, and aspiring challengers to the status quo. During the Cold War, the historical gravity of Iran and its surroundings gradually pulled the United States into a direct role in the region, leading to sustained military missions to shore up Imperial Iran. Now, with the revival of intensive great power competition after a brief respite, the greater Middle East has unsurprisingly attracted the gaze of Chinese and Russian strategists. Next, the four phases of Iranian-American military diplomacy from World War II to the ultimate collapse of the Pahlavi dynasty is reviewed. Lastly, and in the present context of great power rivalry, some general conclusions are drawn from the U.S. experience in prerevolutionary Iran to illuminate lessons for the latest round of regional competition. American military diplomacy will undoubtedly serve as a tool to check the revisionist designs of China, Russia, and the Islamic Republic. Following the Global War on Terrorism and the ongoing pivot to Asia, the American regional footprint will undoubtedly be lighter. Nevertheless, history demonstrates that the greater Middle East, as well as the uses and abuses of military diplomacy, must receive careful attention from American policy makers.

## THE STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY OF IRAN AND THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST

The political and geographic boundaries of the Middle East are, to a great extent, arbitrary. However, when organized around the concept of strategic geography, the image of a "greater Middle East" comes into focus. Strategic geography relates to the command of, or access to, spatial areas that condition the security and economic vitality of nations. This encompasses physical geography, or topographic and climatic features, as well as human geography, or the political,

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economic, and military features as they relate to space, time, and distance. Physical geography does not determine politics, economics, or strategic affairs, but topography and climate certainly set the parameters in which states jockey for power. As such, both geographic components interact to drive the dynamics of interstate competition. Considering its cohesiveness as a unit of strategic competition, the greater Middle East in this chapter covers the Middle East “proper” (North Africa, Turkey, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa), Transcaucasia, western Central Asia, and South Asia.<sup>1</sup>

The greater Middle East is an expansive quadrilateral lying athwart historical land and sea routes that connect Europe, Russia, Asia, and North Africa. Many of the same lines of communication and access points have persisted from ancient civilizations to the present. The greater Middle East first served as the strategic and commercial crossroads for the great empires of antiquity. These routes were later refined for the modern era of interstate rivalry. During the Middle Ages, merchants blazed a lucrative network across the region to meet the European demand for Asian silks and spices.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in the Age of Discovery, and persisting through the advent of steam- and nuclear-powered warships, the command of regional maritime choke points played an outsized role in determining which blue-water navy established primacy.<sup>3</sup>

Aside from land and sea lines of communication, the greater Middle East holds abundant resources. Access to the region’s grain and timber strengthened the empires of antiquity. Later, in the modern era of nation-states, the great powers struggled for preponderant influence or outright dominance over the region’s access routes. These land and sea lines of communication hold the key to the vast oil and natural gas deposits littering the states of the Persian Gulf, Transcaucasia, and the Caspian basin. The region’s energy reserves powered Western industrialized societies, providing relatively cheap and accessible stocks of fos-

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of *strategic geography* and the delineation of the “greater Middle East” are taken from the work of Geoffrey Kemp and Robert E. Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 8–10, 13–15.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400–2000* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey R. Macris and Saul Kelly, eds., *Imperial Crossroads: The Great Powers and the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012).

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oil fuels at unprecedented levels following the Second World War. The political stability, economic vibrancy, and overall dynamism of Western states depended on the free flow of oil through maritime choke points and overland pipelines to the Mediterranean.<sup>4</sup> Later, beginning in the late 1980s, Asian “tiger” and “cub” economies increasingly used Persian Gulf crude oil to launch their societies into rapid industrial and consumer growth.<sup>5</sup> The region’s extensive fields of oil and natural gas, indispensable for the health of integrated global markets, remains the lifeblood of the world economy.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the destinies of great powers, alongside the aspirations of rising and developing states, have long rested on strategic access to the region. The enduring prominence of the greater Middle East hints that outside powers, whether enthusiastically or reluctantly, must grapple with its physical and human geography.

Beginning with the Portuguese in 1515, successive great powers engaged in sustained competition for strategic access to the Persian Gulf. Concerning the region’s peripheral land barriers, the Russian czars and their Soviet successors were impeded by the Caucasus Mountains running between the Black and Caspian Seas, while the towering Alborz and Hindu Kush mountain ranges restricted access farther east. These challenging heights have few exploitable strategic passes.<sup>7</sup> The peaks of Transcaucasia have long frustrated invaders, and this area served as a major battleground between the armies of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In 1942, Adolf Hitler launched an ill-fated campaign for the oilfields of the Caucasus, and if it had succeeded, it would have launched the Third Reich into Iran and Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Farther east, the low-lying Turanian Depression—spanning the eastern rim of the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan—has historically constituted the ideal space for Russian power projection into South Asia. However, the Alborz and the Hindu Kush provided a vital bulwark for sea powers

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Yergin, *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 84–85. The term *tiger* refers to the high-growth economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan; and *tiger cub* refers to the five developing economies of Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

<sup>6</sup> For the continued importance of the greater Middle East’s energy reserves, see Daniel Yergin, *The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 60–61, 156–57, 428–29.

<sup>7</sup> Kemp and Harkavy, *Strategic Geography and the Changing Middle East*, 18–23.

<sup>8</sup> Yergin, *The Prize*, 319–22; and Ashley Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command: A History of the Second World War in Iran and Iraq* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 134–35.

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like the British Empire and, later, an Anglo-American combination to contain Moscow's drive toward a warm-water port.<sup>9</sup>

A series of maritime choke points round out the peripheral barriers. The Turkish straits, which include the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, connect the Black Sea with the Eastern Mediterranean and Suez Canal. The Sinai Peninsula and its extensive waterways form a system of choke points at the nexus of the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, and Arabian Peninsula. The Suez Canal feeds into the Red Sea, which has historically facilitated trade between North Africa and the Levant. The Red Sea holds the Gulf of Aqaba and Gulf of Suez, which the states of North Africa and the Levant depend on for maritime commerce. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the narrow passage between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, constitutes another prominent choke point that has long attracted sea powers, as well as land powers looking to play spoiler. The port city of Aden, which Britain administered from 1839 to 1967, joined the island of Hormuz at the narrow entrance of the Persian Gulf in a vast Western imperial system. After the Portuguese consolidated control over Hormuz in 1515, these maritime choke points continued to secure the far-flung interests of the Dutch and British empires stretching from North Africa to Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> Later, an Anglo-American naval combination commanded the approaches to the Persian Gulf to secure the vital sea lanes stretching across the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific. Together, these maritime choke points and peripheral land barriers have conditioned the struggle for mastery over a vast arc stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to South Asia. The timeless competition for strategic access has transformed these land corridors and sea lanes into "routes," which encourage movement, or "anti-routes" that suppress the flow of people, commerce,

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<sup>9</sup> For the "great game" between Britain and Russia, see Evgeny Sergeev, *The Great Game, 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). For American entry into the Near East, see Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*; and Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). For the greater Middle East's enduring strategic significance, see Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron, OH: University of Akron Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Rudi Matthee, "The Portuguese Presence in the Persian Gulf: An Overview," in *Imperial Crossroads*, 1–12; Virginia Lunsford, "The Dutch in the Persian Gulf," in *Imperial Crossroads*, 13–30; Robert Johnson, "The Great Game and Power Projection," in *Imperial Crossroads*, 31–48; and Saul Kelly, "The Gamekeeper versus the Mercenary Spirit: The Pax Britannica in the Gulf," in *Imperial Crossroads*, 49–60.



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and ideas. Routes and antiroutes are interchangeable conditions depending on the proclivities of states exerting formal or informal control over strategic passes.<sup>11</sup> As such, the greater Middle East constitutes the fault line where land and sea powers frequently collide.<sup>12</sup>

Iran is bound by three imposing mountain ranges on its frontiers. The Alborz extends along the Caspian Sea in the north; the Zagros begins in Azerbaijan and straddles the Iran-Iraq border to span the length of the Persian Gulf; and the Makran lies to the southeast. Numerous peaks reach an elevation of 3,000 meters above sea level, with many along the Zagros exceeding 4,000 meters. As routes and antiroutes, the Zagros's treacherous passages facilitated or hindered movement from Persian Gulf ports to the Caspian. During World War II, the Persian corridor's rail cargo through Iran followed this route as Anglo-American largesse kept the Soviet Union fighting on the eastern front.<sup>13</sup> Later, during the Cold War, British and American military planners designated the Zagros as a barrier to halt a Soviet drive toward the oilfields and refineries of the Persian Gulf.<sup>14</sup> Moving past Iran's rugged peaks toward the interior, a great plateau rises at the center of the country, which is largely uninhabitable and averages an elevation of nearly 900 meters. The harsh topography is further magnified by the Dasht-e Lut and Dasht-e Kavir, two seemingly endless salt deserts in the east of the plateau. As such, few navigable waterways cut through Iran's arid and rugged terrain, and the space is brutal for agricultural projects on any scale. The majority of Iran's population therefore lives along the edges of the central plateau, as well as the oil-rich lowlands rimming the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

The strategic geography of the greater Middle East, combined with its abundant oil deposits, turned Iran into an arena of protracted competition between Britain, Russia, and the United States. In the nineteenth century, Iran joined Afghanistan as the lynchpin of the defense of British India and the Persian Gulf. Both Iran and Afghanistan were turned into buffer states at the turn of the cen-

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<sup>11</sup> Mahnaz Z. Ispahani, *Roads and Rivals: The Political Uses of Access in the Borderlands of Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), chap. 1, esp. 1–30.

<sup>12</sup> For the enduring struggle between Eurasian land powers and offshore sea powers, see H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1904): 421–44; Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia: Its Effect Upon International Politics*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2003); and Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of Peace*, ed. Helen R. Nicholl (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944).

<sup>13</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 294–315, 349–50.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Cohen, *Fighting World War Three from the Middle East: Allied Contingency Plans, 1945–1954* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 319–20.

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tury, as London and Moscow sought to deflate tensions as they faced the menace of Imperial Germany. Russia's imperial reach was further constrained by the upheaval of the Russian Revolution of 1917, as the Kremlin turned inward to consolidate ideological gains. However, with the rise of Nazi Germany and the onset of another global conflagration, Russia once again settled with Britain to carve out spheres of influence in Iran. It was the crucible of World War II, and the precipitous postwar breakdown of the Grand Alliance between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, that pulled Washington into the traditional preserve of London and Moscow. Washington, unfamiliar with regional dynamics, entered the playing fields of the "great game" for the greater Middle East.<sup>15</sup> In Iran, the United States gradually assumed Britain's role as the primary mover and shaker, employing military diplomacy to anchor Tehran in the Western security architecture.

## THE FOUR PHASES

### OF IRANIAN-AMERICAN MILITARY DIPLOMACY

This section delineates the four phases of U.S. military diplomacy with Imperial Iran. The establishment of American military and economic missions during World War II marked the first stage. Washington viewed assistance programs, whether in the form of military aid or financial counsel, as instruments to embed Iran in its envisioned postwar order. Even during the exigency of war, the United States aimed to anchor Iran in an international system free of brazen aggression and exclusive trade blocs. This goal was revised after the Soviet Union doused postwar aspirations, as Moscow had no intention of joining such a world order. Nonetheless, American military diplomacy persisted through the final three phases as a prominent tool to align Iran with the West. From the crucible of the early Cold War, the subsequent hinge years of the 1960s, to the denouement of the 1970s, the evolution of Iranian-American military diplomacy was characterized by the monarchy's power position relative to the United States. Iran, once dependent on American attitudes, eventually transcended its status as a client state. By the 1970s, ensconced as a full-fledged partner in the enterprise of containment, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi manipulated his ally's relative decline

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<sup>15</sup> For the historical context of American entry into the region, see Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). For the endurance of the great game, see Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*.

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to disastrous effect. He had asserted himself on the global stage and removed Washington's onerous restrictions on arms sales, which eroded Iran's sociopolitical and economic structures. The Shah, whose geopolitical ambitions and appetite for sophisticated weapons systems knew no bounds, ultimately dealt the fatal blow to his regime—and nearly that of the Western position in the Persian Gulf.

*The Grand Alliance and the Origins  
of Military Diplomacy, 1941–1945*

On 25 August 1941, the Soviet Union invaded Imperial Iran from the Transcaucasian borderlands. Britain's combined-arms assault followed closely on its heels, penetrating the southwestern oil fields of Khuzestan Province from the al-Basra bridgehead in Iraq.

London and Moscow had recently joined arms in an alliance of convenience following Hitler's betrayal of his onetime cobelligerent, Joseph Stalin. In the short term, Britain and the Soviet Union shared a joint interest in unfettered access to Iran's lines of communication. Stalin, after conspiring with Hitler to carve out their respective spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, was forced into Britain's arms as Germany invaded the Soviet Union and penetrated deeper into its territory. Soviet survival now depended on a robust British resupply program that would run through Iran's access routes. As for Britain's far-flung imperial interests, London feared that a Soviet collapse would threaten its position in the Eastern Mediterranean and the greater Middle East. Considering the gravity of the situation, Britain and the Soviet Union could hardly depend on Reza Shah Pahlavi to stabilize Iran for the mammoth resupply effort that lay ahead. Iran's autocratic ruler, clinging to the Persian stratagem of "positive equilibrium," had sought to play Nazi Germany against the traditional threat posed by Britain and Russia. Reza Shah, deemed unreliable by London and Moscow, was forced to abdicate following the invasion. With the country now under occupation and Reza Shah's more compliant son installed on the Peacock Throne, Britain was free to stabilize Iran and transport military aid to the Soviet zone in the north.<sup>16</sup>

Britain, however, was under tremendous material strain, as the defense of its far-flung empire exhausted its ability to replenish the Soviet warmaking capacity. Short on resources, but desperate to tie down Germany on the eastern front,

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<sup>16</sup> For the Anglo-Soviet invasion and occupation of Iran, see Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 150–207; and Ray Takeyh, *The Last Shah: America, Iran, and the Fall of the Pahlavi Dynasty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 8–30.

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British prime minister Winston Churchill turned to the United States to supercharge Britain's already formidable transportation infrastructure in Iran. In the summer and autumn of 1941, Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt identified Iran as the critical resupply corridor that could alleviate pressure on Britain and fulfill the Soviet Union's warfighting requirements. The Allies had three ocean-spanning routes at their disposal: the Persian corridor, accessible through the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf choke points; the hazardous Arctic sea lane; and the Pacific maritime bridge from the American West Coast to the Soviet port of Vladivostok. Since the Arctic was littered with U-boats, and Vladivostok was frozen for a significant portion of the year, Churchill and Roosevelt zeroed in on Persian Gulf waterways and overland corridors through Iran. The United States, serving as the Grand Alliance's arsenal and quartermaster, would boost the volume of supplies coursing along the treacherous passes of the Zagros Mountains and Iranian plateau. As the United States expanded ports, roads, and railways to deliver military aid, Britain could more readily defend the Persian Gulf and its vital lines of communication to India. Most importantly, at least until the tide of war favored the Allies, the Soviet Union would be empowered to staunch the Nazi onslaught and gradually take the offensive.<sup>17</sup>

Although shoring up the Soviet war effort was the immediate objective, American officials in short order envisioned military diplomacy as an instrument to pursue grandiose ambitions in Iran. The first sizeable detachment of U.S. military personnel arrived in December 1942, immediately turning its attention to the expansion of ports, overland lines of communication, and assembly plants for freight cars. Two months later, Wallace S. Murray—a career foreign service officer in the Division of Near East Affairs who later became ambassador to Iran—distributed a policy paper proposing Iran as the testing ground for a harmonious postwar world order. The U.S. president, in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and United Nations, aspired to construct an international system conditioned by self-government and free from territorial aggrandizement and exclusive trade barriers. Considering the enduring Anglo-Russian rivalry in the greater Middle East, if the United States could restore Iran's integrity and governmental machinery, Roosevelt's lofty ambitions would receive a considerable boost. The policy paper, moving beyond the narrow interest in winning the war, recommended basing "our response [in Iran] upon our interest in winning

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<sup>17</sup> For the Anglo-American view of Iran as a vital land corridor to Russia, see Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, esp. 131–37, 205–7, 294–95; and Takeyh, *The Lash Shah*, 10–11, 22–23.

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the peace.” It forwarded the United States as a disinterested actor, since it was not viewed in the region as a colonial oppressor. With its expertise and financial aid, the United States could “make Iran self-reliant and prosperous, open to the trade of all nations and a threat to none.”<sup>18</sup> American technocrats, acting as advisors and administrators, would shore up Iran’s governmental machinery, transportation infrastructure, and its military and security forces. In this way, British imperialism and Soviet Communism would recede from the region, as Iran shed its dependence on foreign tutelage.

The benevolent designs of U.S. officials were genuine, but underneath the selflessness lay a deeper strategic logic. The State Department policy paper added a supplemental, yet revealing, rationale underlying the proposed altruism: Iran’s “strategic location and its vast production of petroleum products.”<sup>19</sup> On 16 August 1943, Secretary of State Cordell Hull approved a refined draft, which he subsequently forwarded to Roosevelt. It became the State Department’s position that “from a more directly selfish point of view . . . no great power be established on the Persian Gulf opposite the important American petroleum development in Saudi Arabia.”<sup>20</sup> American largesse, then, served to create an independent and prosperous Iran free from its historical rivals—as well as the potential postwar rivals of the United States.

As early as August 1942, Murray had expressed to Under Secretary of State Benjamin Sumner Welles that “we shall soon be in the position of actually ‘running’ Iran through an impressive body of American advisers eagerly sought by the Iranian Government.” Indeed, considering American predominance in Tehran, Murray was puzzled by the “odd” struggle between the British and Soviet ambassadors over “whose man should be put in power without prior consultation with our legation.”<sup>21</sup> Welles believed that American advisory teams would “assist in the rehabilitation of the country . . . for the ultimate conversion of Iran into an active and willing partner on our side.” In particular, he exhibited confidence that “the United States Army mission to work with the Iranian Army could in fact play an extremely important role in this work.”<sup>22</sup> The Iranian prime minister, he

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<sup>18</sup> The policy paper, titled “American Policy in Iran,” is attached as the annex to Murray’s memorandum. See “Memorandum by Murray, 11 February 1943,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 4 (hereafter *FRUS, 1942: The Near East and Africa*), 334–35.

<sup>19</sup> “Memorandum by Murray, 11 February 1943,” 331.

<sup>20</sup> “The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt,” in *FRUS, 1943*, 378.

<sup>21</sup> “Memorandum by Murray,” in *FRUS, 1942: The Near East and Africa*, 242–43.

<sup>22</sup> “Memorandum from Welles to President Roosevelt,” in *FRUS, 1942*, 259.

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enthused, had already agreed to grant U.S. civilian and military advisors' broad powers to shape the future of the country. Even with German armored divisions threatening to knock out a wartime ally and penetrate the region, U.S. policy makers had already identified broader pursuits that lay beyond the immediate crisis.

Military diplomacy represented the means of rehabilitating Iran and furthering the interests of the United States in the region. It took the form of two advisory missions, as well as the herculean effort by the Persian Gulf Service Command to deliver U.S. Lend-Lease Act aid to the Soviet occupation zone. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, whose father's fate weighed heavily on his psyche, had turned to the United States for economic and military assistance following his installment on the throne. Then viewed by Iran's elite as a benevolent force, the United States was seen as a powerful counterweight to British imperialism and Soviet Communism.<sup>23</sup> Iran became eligible for Lend-Lease aid in March 1942, and Tehran subsequently launched a campaign to win substantial aid packages. The Shah, who identified the army as a potential source of political power to marginalize the Iranian aristocracy, sought to rebuild and expand the army to consolidate his postwar position.<sup>24</sup>

In July 1942, General John N. Greely arrived in Tehran to lead the U.S. Army advisory mission to the Iranian Ministry of War. The advisory team, at least initially, pursued a course that aligned with the Shah's vision. Greely proposed a robust military buildup, aspiring to bring Iran's Army into the fight against Germany. His ambitions, however, conflicted with the U.S. War Department's program, which sought to focus Iran's armed forces on internal security. As such, the U.S. Army replaced Greely with Major General Clarence S. Ridley in October, who immediately turned his attention on reorganizing the Iranian Army. Ridley centralized the administrative and auxiliary branches, seeking to streamline management and logistical functions. The advisory mission successfully motorized the army, which the Shah and his Iranian officers deemed of immense value and later proved vital for the suppression of postwar tribal rebellions.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, Ridley, on a tight leash from the War Department, con-

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<sup>23</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 10, 24, 186, 205, 320, 338–42; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 324; Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 52; and Steven R. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 171.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 322–23; and Ward, *Immortal*, 173–74.

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strained the Shah's unviable designs by setting a hard ceiling on troop levels. The Shah's pursuit of a robust army outstripped the economy's capacity to absorb such a force. The advisory team's prescribed force level of 88,000 men fell well short of the Shah's vision, who wanted his future political base expanded from 60,000 to 108,000 men. The conflict between the Shah's ambitions and U.S. priorities proved an enduring dynamic in prerevolutionary military relations.<sup>26</sup>

By far the most successful military advisory mission was the Gendarmerie Military Mission (GENMISH) led by Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf of the U.S. Army. Schwarzkopf's team arrived in August 1942, and its mission to train the indigenous police force faced considerable opposition from the British, Russians, and entrenched Iranian interests. The Shah, for one, disdained Schwarzkopf's broad powers and his plan to bring the force under the control of the Ministry of Interior. Weakened by foreign occupation, the monarch sought to transfer the gendarmerie back under the authority of the army. The British and Soviets, suspicious of their wartime ally's postwar plans for Iran, intrigued against GENMISH. Despite these hurdles, Schwarzkopf's advisory mission reorganized, trained, and armed a force that reached 20,000 gendarmes by war's end. Americans effectively led the police force, which was augmented by Lend-Lease aid in the form of military equipment and financial assistance. The gendarmes consolidated the authority of Tehran in the cities and even managed to suppress revolts in a few rural areas. Corruption, a problem prior to occupation, was brought under control during the war, and morale skyrocketed. Though graft and poor discipline soon returned, Schwarzkopf's advisory team was instrumental in subduing the Kurdish and Armenian rebellions following the Allies' withdrawal.<sup>27</sup>

The U.S. Persian Gulf Service Command was the mission most vital to Germany's defeat on the eastern front. In relation to American military diplomacy, it generated tremendous goodwill among Iranians. The expansion of the Persian corridor, necessary to deliver enormous volumes of supplies to the Soviets, marked a mammoth challenge to American soldiers, sailors, and civilian engineers. From the port of Khorramshahr at the head of the Persian Gulf, through the treacherous passes of the Zagros and Iranian plateau, to the final supply dump in the north, the Americans had to enlarge the load capacity of Iranian port fa-

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<sup>26</sup> For conflict of interests, see Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 324; Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 25, 52; and Ward, *Immortal*, 171, 174–75.

<sup>27</sup> Ward, *Immortal*, 171–72; and Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 292, 323.

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cilities and its road and rail network. In late 1941, with the British operating the Persian corridor, Iran's railways had the capacity to carry 6,000 tons per month. Persian Gulf Service Command, charged with supercharging the British effort, boosted the monthly total to 175,000 tons just two years later. This was the result of the herculean efforts of American military and civilian engineers to expand Iran's port facilities, as well as its rail and road infrastructure. Shoring up the deteriorating situation on the eastern front, American largesse resurrected the Soviet war effort, as voluminous stocks of weaponry and kit coursed northward through the Persian corridor. The eastern front was thus reinforced, and by mid-1943 the Soviets had thrown Nazi Germany on the defensive.<sup>28</sup> Though the United States had entered the theater to bolster Soviet army groups, upgrades to Iran's transportation infrastructure generated a groundswell of American goodwill among Iranian elites.

The Iranian government, even before the war had ended, actively campaigned to deepen relations with the United States. To cement ties with Washington, the Shah pledged to "create a close commercial relationship." One of Iran's political notables, desperate to deepen relations with a power with seemingly endless financial and material resources, "was anxious to have American businessmen enter all Iranian fields of enterprise."<sup>29</sup> Following the German collapse, and with the revival of foreign meddling, Tehran "dropped all pretense and appealed to America for direct military intervention to stop Soviet aggression."<sup>30</sup> In this sense, military diplomacy furthered the U.S. interest in, as Welles had stated, converting Iran into a voluntary partner in an ambitious postwar project.

In many aspects, World War II and its immediate aftermath constituted the height of American goodwill in Iran. Lend-Lease munificence, the military advisory missions, and the expansion of the transportation network engendered enthusiasm among royalists and aristocrats alike. These feelings, however, were transitory. As much a function of unique circumstances that would soon pass, the Shah's interest in American intervention signaled his adoption of the traditional policy of positive equilibrium. Iran had long suffered under British and Russian heavy-handedness, but the United States benefited from its unfamiliarity with the region. Not yet stained with the mark of imperialism, the Shah and Iran's fractious political class actively sought to embroil the United States

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<sup>28</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 348–50; and Ward, *Immortal*, 175–76.

<sup>29</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 353.



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in their self-interested schemes. The Shah, who acknowledged that occupation had weakened the monarchy, wanted to consolidate his position. With American backing, he could gradually expand his power at the expense of his aristocratic rivals. As for the monarch's intransigent rivals, the aristocrats wanted the expansion of parliamentary authority to continue apace. The war had opened up space for the Majlis, the parliamentary body of Iranian elites, to regain powers lost under the Shah's father. The notables, too, viewed the United States as a potential backer. Both the Shah and the aristocratic class, however, envisioned the United States as a counterweight to the malevolent designs of Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, as Iranians gained practical experience with the United States, feelings of American goodwill would rapidly fade. The Millspaugh mission, the wartime civilian advisory team sent to reform Iran's financial machinery, foreshadowed this dynamic. Arthur Millspaugh was the archetypal New Dealer, full of the reformist zeal characterizing American liberalism. A technocrat confident in his abilities, he viewed Iran as a social science laboratory to perfect theoretical postulations. In the process, he angered the royalist and aristocratic factions by applying American solutions to Iranian problems. First, by curbing defense expenditures, he infuriated the Shah. Then, turning his attention to the landed interests, Millspaugh attempted to enact a progressive income tax, which expropriated the profits of the aristocrats. He even managed to stoke the anger of the merchant class with the introduction of price controls, unsettling the artisans and guilds of the bazaar. The financial mission therefore marked the first instance of friction between Iran's elites and the United States. The Shah grudgingly accepted Millspaugh's arrival for a time.<sup>32</sup> But as he slowly regained the powers of the monarchy, the Shah became increasingly reluctant to accept American advice in the postwar period. American military diplomacy could only generate goodwill and near-total influence while Iran suffered from the overwhelming shocks of occupation. The United States, it seemed to royalists and aristocrats alike, gradually donned the image of Iran's foreign oppressors of the past.

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<sup>31</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 10, 24, 186, 205, 320, 338–42; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 324; Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 24–26, 30; and Ward, *Immortal*, 174–75.

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### *The Crucible of the Cold War, 1946–1961*

For the United States, the early postwar period marked the onset of the Cold War. Stalin's sinister opportunism dashed American hopes for a free and open international system. Iran, on the other hand, faced the revival of foreign machinations. Struggling to recover from the effects of occupation, the Shah and his parliamentary rivals sought American patronage to enlarge their respective domestic powers. Given Iran's weak position relative to the great powers, the United States continued to enjoy considerable influence in Iran during this period. The Iranian government was desperate to enlist Washington as a counterweight in its delicate balancing act. Therefore, the Shah's weak position in the domestic and foreign spheres allowed Washington to contain his outsized ambitions.<sup>33</sup> Three events highlight this dynamic, as well as the role of American military diplomacy in this period.

First, the outcome of the Azerbaijan crisis emboldened the Shah domestically. American intervention, however, suppressed the monarch's efforts to fully exploit this success and initiate his desired military buildup. In January 1942, London and Moscow concluded the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance with Tehran, affirming that the occupying powers would withdraw their respective armies six months after the war's conclusion.<sup>34</sup> The Kremlin, already moving to consolidate its position in Eastern Europe, failed to remove its forces by March 1946. American and British forces dutifully complied, yet Red Army units remained to fan the flames of separatism. In short order, the Tudeh Party—Iran's Communist party—were emboldened to proclaim the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan in the north. The Kurds followed suit by establishing the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. These developments threatened to hand Stalin control of Iran's northern oil fields, as the Tudeh generally abided by Moscow's line.<sup>35</sup>

Soviet encroachment in northern Iran, combined with its ongoing behavior in Eastern Europe, elicited fear in Washington that Stalin had expansionist designs. By the first months of 1946, U.S. policy had hardened. The untested President Harry S. Truman, whose confidence was bolstered by experienced advisors, decided the Soviet Union was animated by a desire for global dominance. Western leaders came to believe that Stalin coveted wide swaths of Eurasia, in-

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<sup>33</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 22, 51, 127–30.

<sup>34</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 180–81.

<sup>35</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 32–34; and Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 40–43.

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cluding unfettered access to the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, they acted on the assumption that the Soviet leader—who abided by the logic of power—would retreat in the face of determined resistance. Stalin would patiently wait to exploit signs of Western weakness, confident that the triumph of Communism was a scientific inevitability. By extension of this logic, the United States identified Iran as the battleground to demonstrate Western resolve and reveal Soviet intentions to the world.<sup>36</sup>

Considering it was the lone country of joint Allied occupation during the war, it is unsurprising Iran was the first Cold War battleground. Iran, after all, straddled the historic fault line between clashing Eurasian land powers and offshore sea powers. American entry into the traditional preserve of Anglo-Russian competition signified the changing character, yet enduring nature, of the great game for the greater Middle East.<sup>37</sup> The United States, propelled into the role of superpower following the wartime devastation of Europe and Northern Asia, reinforced Iran's formal complaint to the United Nations filed in January 1946. In April, the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB 63) visited Istanbul as an underhanded show of force in the region.<sup>38</sup> American diplomatic support, backstopped by the forward presence of its military might, undoubtedly emboldened the Iranian government. However, Ahmad Qavam's strategic dexterity played the leading role in removing Soviet forces, dissolving the nationalist republics, and preserving the integrity of the northern oil fields. By playing Britain against the Soviet Union and stoking discord between Moscow and Washington, the prime minister successfully drew the United States into Iran's orbit.<sup>39</sup> Next, he deftly maneuvered the Soviets out of Iranian Azerbaijan with the promise of a generous oil concession in March. The Azerbaijan and Kurdish republics were now easy targets for the Iranian Army and gendarmes, which had recently been trained and mechanized by U.S. military missions. The collapse of the separatist movements was now preordained. The Shah, desperate to turn public support away from Qa-

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<sup>36</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 40–46.

<sup>37</sup> For the greater Middle East's enduring strategic importance, see Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece*, rev. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). For the greater Middle East's enduring strategic significance, see Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 46–47; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 45.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen L. McFarland, "A Peripheral View of the Origins of the Cold War: The Crises in Iran, 1941–47," *Diplomatic History* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1980): 333–51.

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vam, personally commanded the military operations in the north that restored Iran's territorial integrity.<sup>40</sup>

Following the crisis, the Shah quickly removed Qavam and initiated his campaign to gradually regain the monarchy's absolute power. Prior to Reza Shah's reign and in the immediate postwar period, Iran had functioned as an imperfect democracy. The government machinery effectively diffused power between the monarchy and the Majlis. The aristocracy, which constituted Tehran's political notables and landowners, provided a channel of communication to the middle and lower classes. Highly skilled as politicians, they understood local grievances and managed to ameliorate the problems of daily life. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, weakened by occupation, was therefore forced to reign as opposed to rule. Despite his frustration with the present situation, the diffusion of power created a stable system of governance that worked for Iran's people and the Shah. When the Majlis fell short of the people's aspirations, the monarch could effectively deflect blame toward the aristocrats and selfish landowners.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the Shah, desperate to regain the absolute power his father had enjoyed, worked to gradually restore the monarchy's authority. The aristocrats, in his mind, were mere obstacles in the way of Iran's future. Determined to set Iran on the path of modernization and remove all foreign influence, the Shah believed Iranian prosperity and glory depended on the steady hand of an autocrat. He understood, however, that patience was required. First, domestic irritants in the form of the aristocracy had to be gradually swept aside. Next, he would have to secure American largesse to boost his modernizing efforts.<sup>42</sup>

To establish himself as a modernizing autocrat, the Shah maneuvered to enlarge the army. He immediately worked to translate Qavam's triumph into his own, portraying himself as the brilliant commander who liberated Iranian territory. Following Qavam's dismissal, he was free to expand the armed forces. This constituted a vital task, as the army stood as an essential political constituency. By channeling generous resources to the officer corps, the army became a loyal base of power in his struggle with the aristocracy. American military assistance, however, fell well short of the Shah's envisioned armed forces. In 1947, the U.S. Army Mission (ARMISH) was established on the heels of the promulgation of

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<sup>40</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 47–48; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 46–48.

<sup>41</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 15–20.

<sup>42</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 1–3, 15–20.

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the Truman Doctrine—Truman’s public declaration of American assistance to democratic states threatened by Communism. The Iranians and Americans worked at cross-purposes, as Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi focused on a large army for power projection while U.S. military advisors encouraged shaping the force for internal security. ARMISH insisted that the Iranian Army could not sustain even the present force of 113,000 men. With a relatively modest military grant of \$10 million USD, American military aid highlighted this discrepancy in intentions.<sup>43</sup> American military aid merely whetted the Shah’s appetite for military hardware throughout the early Cold War period. Nonetheless, he still managed to strip the Majlis of important powers in this period. The Shah, exploiting his “triumph” in the north and public sympathy following an assassination attempt, declared martial law and banned the Tudeh Party in 1949. He subsequently empowered himself to fill the upper chamber with loyalists from the royal court and reserved the right to dissolve parliament.<sup>44</sup>

Though successful at eroding the powers of parliamentary rivals, the Shah’s fortunes at this stage still depended on Iran’s notables, his traditional great power rivals, and American patronage. The oil nationalization crisis, his flight from the throne, and the subsequent coup that restored the Pahlavi dynasty demonstrated Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi’s weak position. The crisis kicked off when Iranian nationalists demanded outright nationalization of Iran’s oil fields in 1950. An increasingly powerful political force, the National Front Party—an umbrella organization of liberals, social democrats, and intellectuals—found Britain’s oil concession and the lopsided profit-sharing arrangement an affront to Iran’s sovereignty. Consumed by the nationalist fervor sweeping the country, Mohammad Mosaddegh led the Iranian government into the ill-fated decision to nationalize the British-owned and operated Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in March 1951. Britain, enraged by the Iranian prime minister’s intransigence, led a global embargo of Iran’s petroleum products. Iran’s economy came to an immediate standstill, paralyzed by the loss of its main source of revenue.<sup>45</sup> The Shah, an indecisive figure lacking backbone, fled the country following a failed Anglo-American-led coup to remove Mosaddegh. Despite the failure of foreigners, a cabal of military officers, leading members of the aristocracy, and influential

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<sup>43</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 49–50; and Ward, *Immortal*, 185–86.

<sup>44</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 49–52.

<sup>45</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 55–86; and Yergin, *The Prize*, 435–48.

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members of the clergy led a popular revolt in August 1953. The masses, disturbed by the prime minister's thirst for absolute power, restored the monarchy.<sup>46</sup>

As a result, the Shah's dependence on powerful domestic figures and foreign powers continued. General Fazlollah Zahedi, who resurrected the Shah's fortunes by playing a critical role in the coup, assumed the premiership and initially exerted considerable powers. Zahedi's steel-willed performance had impressed the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, and the prime minister subsequently began to meddle in the Shah's military affairs. Nevertheless, the nightmare experience of Mosaddegh emboldened the Shah to rule, as opposed to reign—ironic considering his demonstrated indecisiveness in the face of impending catastrophe. Zahedi eventually resigned in 1955 after sustained pressure from the royal court, allowing the Shah to initiate his campaign to install pliable politicians in key roles. This marked the early stages of the Shah's power play. By the 1960s, the monarch had established his authoritarian hold over the government machinery and society at large. The highly skilled politicians of the immediate post-war period were replaced by sycophantic technocrats positioned in key positions. Still, the Shah's autocracy was only just emerging in the late 1950s, and his fortunes remained tied to the opinions of the Eisenhower administration.<sup>47</sup>

The Eisenhower administration and American oil executives had effectively resolved the AIOC dispute, establishing a consortium of Western energy companies and a more generous profit-sharing agreement. Britain's political influence lessened as a result, and the United States gradually became the leading foreign power in the country. This, combined with the monarch's appetite for sophisticated weapons systems, allowed the United States to check the Shah's more outrageous requests. The debate about the role of Iran's armed forces continued, as the Eisenhower administration stressed internal security. Following the Suez Crisis, and amid continuing troubles with Nasserist Arab nationalism, the administration unveiled the Eisenhower Doctrine in January 1957. Its pledge to secure the region from Communist-led aggression bolstered the administration's position that the Shah should focus on economic development, domestic reforms, and expanding his civilian political base. Iran's external security, Washington insisted, can be left to the United States. The Pentagon and State Department had

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<sup>46</sup> Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: The Fall of Mosaddeq Revisited* (London: Pgrave Macillan), esp. 144–150, 162–64, 172–75; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 110–16.

<sup>47</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 118–27.

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determined that Iran could not absorb the Shah's desired military expenditures, which risked destabilizing the economy.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the Eisenhower administration's caution, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's determination paid off. Military aid remained well below the Shah's exorbitant requests, yet assistance increased during the 1950s. In 1955, the Eisenhower administration had facilitated the formation of the Baghdad Pact—a loose security arrangement between Western-oriented regional powers and Great Britain—to shore up antirevolutionary forces. With the rise of Arab nationalism, and the threat of Soviet opportunism, the Shah initiated a campaign to join the security pact. He exploited Iran's strategic position—the Zagros Mountains served as a barrier in the event of a Soviet drive toward the Persian Gulf—to increase the relatively modest flow of U.S. military assistance. By the end of his presidency, Eisenhower had authorized a total of approximately \$500 million in military assistance, including the provision of Iran's first jet fighters. The Shah duly used these funds to enlarge his armed forces to nearly 200,000 men. However, despite the presence of the largest U.S. military advisory and assistance mission in the world, the Shah grew frustrated as the administration barred the delivery of sophisticated weapons systems.<sup>49</sup> In a futile ploy to lift these restrictions, the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi attempted to play the Soviet Union against the United States, briefly courting Nikita Khrushchev to stoke fears in Washington. Eisenhower, who knew the Shah depended on American goodwill, held firm as Iran quickly returned to the fold.<sup>50</sup>

By the end of the 1950s, the United States had expanded its influence while simultaneously restraining the Shah from his self-destructive ambitions. Soviet influence remained marginal, if not nonexistent, and British influence was diminished after the United States pried open the Iranian oil market. Still, the Shah's autocracy was emerging as he curtailed the powers of the monarchy. His ambitions to build a modern Iran that could stand next to the world's great powers dissuaded him from enacting meaningful political reforms. Despite his weak personality and tendency to vacillate, he aspired to rule as an absolute monarch. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's aspirations, however, would continue to face formidable opposition from Eisenhower's successor.

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<sup>48</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 76–77; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 128–30.

<sup>49</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 76–77; and Ward, *Immortal*, 191–92.

<sup>50</sup> Roham Alvandi, "Flirting with Neutrality: The Shah, Khrushchev, and the Failed 1959 Soviet-Iranian Negotiations," *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 3 (May 2014): 419–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2014.880629>; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 136–39.

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### *The Hinge Years, 1961–1969*

In general, the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations generated only more frustration for the Shah. The new team supercharged Eisenhower's demand for economic development, political reform, and a focus on internal security. In U.S. academic circles, modernization theory was the intellectual trend of the day. With the aid of American expertise and selective employment of Western capital, developing countries could launch themselves into modernity. Modernity, in this sense, was defined as a market-oriented democracy focused on generating compound interest and sustained consumer growth. Like the Millspaugh mission before it, the John F. Kennedy administration turned Iran into a social science playground for ambitious American modernizers. The Shah, however, had no interest in building a democratic market economy. The Iranian Air Force may have replaced the army as his dearest pet project, but the armed services as a whole would remain his source of political power. Despite sustained protestations from Washington in the early 1960s, the Shah patiently waited out the Kennedy administration, focusing instead on the consolidation of his authoritarian hold over Iran. By the latter half of the decade, and with the United States embroiled in Southeast Asia, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi had begun to lift the onerous restrictions on U.S. military assistance. The 1960s may have been the age of Western reform, yet in Iran the balance began its ineluctable tilt in favor of the Shah's authoritarianism.<sup>51</sup>

By the 1960s, the Cold War had moved beyond Europe toward the postcolonial world. The Kennedy administration, ditching Eisenhower's focus on military pacts, desired to aggressively wage the fight against Communism by other means. The young president's team aspired to creatively reinforce the developing world against Sino-Soviet subversion or outright aggression. Viewed as the soft underbelly of the free world, the injection of democratic capitalism into postcolonial societies would harden states against internal and external pressures. Nation-building, therefore, became weaponized against Communism.<sup>52</sup> Though often couched in Cold War terms, many administration officials genuinely held

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<sup>51</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 141–69. See also Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The End of Ambition: The United States and the Third World in the Vietnam Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022), esp. 177–212.

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 30–32; Ben Offiler, *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 30–34; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 141–43.



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grandiose ambitions to modernize developing societies out of altruism.<sup>53</sup> Their goals, however, would not stand a chance in Iran unless the Shah committed to substantial reforms. On this point, the National Security Council and the Pentagon adopted a hard line with Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. The bureaucracy settled on a three-tiered reform program: first, the Shah should adopt the role of a constitutional monarch; second, Iran must undergo expansive political and economic reforms; and third, the administration should open lines of communication with the National Front Party—the umbrella organization of disparate opposition parties.<sup>54</sup>

Military assistance, the White House decided, must take a backseat to domestic reform. Moreover, aid in any form should be conditional and directly tied to the Shah's commitment to meaningful reform.<sup>55</sup> In January 1963, the Shah, under pressure from the White House, initiated his White Revolution and subsequently portrayed himself as the champion of the people. Differentiating itself from the subversive "red" Communists and the reactionary "black" clerics, the White Revolution commenced with land reform, which chipped away at the power of the landowners. Land reform was supplemented with female suffrage, breakneck industrialization powered by petrodollars, and a nationwide literary and health campaign.<sup>56</sup> The White Revolution transformed much of Iranian society, boosting the fortunes of wide swaths of the population. The initiative shored up the Shah's domestic position, and it had a positive effect on several key U.S. officials.<sup>57</sup> In late 1962, the Kennedy administration had unenthusiastically granted the Shah a five-year, \$298.6 million military assistance package after hearing the Shah's plans for the White Revolution. Once the Shah agreed to reduce the size of the armed forces, deliveries of military equipment continued. Still, the military cuts disappointed the administration, as the army still stood at 185,000 men. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara had already determined that Iran's economy would endure considerable strain if troop levels

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<sup>53</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 6–7; and Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in Iran in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1–19.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 58; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 145.

<sup>55</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 158–61.

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 61, 179; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 155–56.

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exceeded 160,000 personnel.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the monarch continued to complain that military aid remained far too modest.

Considering his regional ambition to gradually replace Britain as the custodian of Persian Gulf security, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's turn of fortunes under Lyndon B. Johnson was a momentous development. Johnson, who applied his famous legislative style to foreign affairs, employed a highly transactional approach with the Shah.<sup>59</sup> Boggled down in Vietnam, and suffering from domestic unrest and rising inflationary pressures, his administration was desperate for foreign diplomatic and financial support. The Shah, an adroit global statesman, provided public approval for America's misguided war. Most importantly, Washington came to see the Shah's insatiable appetite for weapons systems as a boon. Defense spending, combined with Johnson's ambitious domestic program, had leveled a serious blow to the U.S. balance of payments. By lifting pressure to reform, the Johnson administration lost much of its leverage to constrain the Shah's worst inclinations. When a group of private American banks offered a \$200 million credit, the Shah, free from Washington's constraints, went on a military spending spree. The ceiling on direct sales evaporated, as the Shah exploited Washington's weakness to blow past the \$50 million per year limit. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, aware of U.S. domestic turmoil and its increasingly debilitating economic position, pushed harder and ultimately secured an additional \$200 million a year in arms sales.<sup>60</sup>

Damaging geopolitical developments beyond Southeast Asia also played in the Shah's favor. In 1965, the Johnson administration suspended Pakistan's annual aid package after Islamabad instigated a full-scale war with India. The United States effectively abandoned Pakistan during the war, and relations soon collapsed. Pakistan, sheltering vital U.S. intelligence-collection installations, expelled the American technicians monitoring Soviet ballistic missile tests in Central Asia. Considering the administration's late interest in arms control negotiations, the United States would now rely on facilities in Iran to collect telem-

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<sup>58</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 179; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 155.

<sup>59</sup> For Johnson's application of his legislative practices to foreign policy, see Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence, *The End of Ambition*, 184–87; Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 93; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 172–73.

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etry data on the Soviet's rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal.<sup>61</sup> In 1968, Britain, unintentionally piling on to the administration's mounting problems, revealed its plan to withdraw from its imperial holdings "east of Suez." The Persian Gulf would therefore be without its longtime guardian, leaving a perilous security vacuum. The United States—exhausted by cross-cutting geopolitical, economic, and sociopolitical problems—accepted the Shah's ambition to police the Persian Gulf.<sup>62</sup> Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's readiness to assume guardianship of a vital strategic location underscored the shifting power balance between Washington and Tehran. As a result, in the late 1960s, the United States began to lose its grip on the scale and scope of arms sales. In the 1970s, these dynamics were amplified as soaring oil revenues emboldened the Shah's worst predilections.

### *The Denouement, 1969–1979*

The 1970s marked the climax of the Pahlavi-American relationship, a relationship ultimately undone by the Shah's grandiose ambitions. The lack of a coherent U.S. military diplomatic plan certainly played a critical role in the drama, but this was largely the result of the Shah's exploitation of his growing influence in Washington. Due to shifting geopolitical sands and soaring energy prices, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi successfully positioned himself as a full partner in America's containment enterprise. The Shah, no longer limited as Washington's client, leveraged his position in the Persian Gulf to further his pursuit of great-power status.

Emboldened by his newfound position, the Shah applied pressure to the Western oil companies of the 1954 consortium agreement. He successfully revised the profit-sharing arrangement, increasing Iran's annual share to nearly \$1 billion in the 1970s. By the 1970s, the glut that had typically characterized the oil market had evaporated. It was now a sellers' market, which left Western oil executives at the mercy of oil producers like Iran. In February 1971, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) triumphed over the oil companies in a heated price battle that established 55 percent profits as the minimum share for producers. The Shah led the revolt, and OPEC subsequently raised the price of a barrel of oil by 35 cents. To cap their watershed victory, the

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<sup>61</sup> Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 158–68; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 172.

<sup>62</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 176.

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exporting countries secured a commitment to annual price hikes.<sup>63</sup> The Shah's triumph, however, only encouraged him to dissolve the oil consortium and initiate a campaign for even bolder price hikes. In October 1973, when another round in the Arab-Israeli war broke out, Iran took full advantage of the Arab oil embargo imposed on Tel Aviv's backers. The Shah, recognizing an opportunity, capitalized on Arab anger to instigate a large price hike and production cuts. Free from the Arabs' embargo, the Shah capitalized on the new price of \$11.65/barrel by continuing to pump and deliver oil to the West. Pahlavi knew the soaring energy prices were punishing blows to the United States, but the monarch rationalized the move to President Richard M. Nixon as a long overdue sovereign right.<sup>64</sup>

Nixon, frustrated by the Shah's actions, knew he had no cards to play. Instead, his national security advisor, Henry A. Kissinger, thanked Iran's leader for abstaining from the Arab oil embargo. The American position had weakened precipitously in the early 1970s, as the balance-of-payments crisis destroyed the postwar economic order. Following the ignominious end to the American war in Vietnam, the onset of the energy crisis placed the United States in a precarious situation. Nixon and Kissinger's early visit to Tehran in May 1972 highlighted the Shah's elevation to a position of partner. Considering the punishing socioeconomic and geopolitical hits the country had suffered, the White House looked for regional allies to assume more of the defense burden. The Shah, naturally, was a likely partner in this endeavor, and Nixon begged the monarch to "protect me" during the summit in Tehran's capital. This marked the culmination of Iranian primacy, the moment in which the Shah assumed full responsibility for Persian Gulf security. The Shah, empowered by the world's premier superpower, subsequently invaded two disputed islands in the Gulf to secure his hold over the strategic waterway, hearing not a murmur from Washington.<sup>65</sup>

The Shah had gained a position of preeminence, as Nixon and Kissinger counted on the Shah to recycle his surplus petrodollars in the United States. The Johnson administration had relaxed the restrictions on arms sales, but its successor largely removed them. The Shah's oil revenues had reached \$885 million in 1971. Following his triumph over the oil companies, the embargo, and

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<sup>63</sup> Yergin, *The Prize*, 562–64.

<sup>64</sup> Yergin, *The Prize*, 607–8.

<sup>65</sup> Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62–64; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 183.

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subsequent price hikes, revenues shot to \$17.5 billion in 1975.<sup>66</sup> The United States had not only opened its armory to the Shah, but he could now afford sophisticated weapons systems on a breathtaking scale. From 1972 to 1977, the Iranian defense budget soared from \$1.4 billion to an astronomical \$9.4 billion. Iran began to take deliveries of a range of warfighting platforms—tanks, armored personnel carriers, fighters, surface ships—and sensors such as radars and overhead surveillance. The Nixon and Gerald R. Ford administrations green lit the sale of Grumman F-14 Tomcat fighters, at the time the most sophisticated fighter in the world. The James E. “Jimmy” Carter administration, not to be outdone, approved the sale of the airborne warning and control system (AWACS). As the world’s most advanced manned overhead surveillance platform, this aircraft would have granted Iran enormous advantages over its regional rivals. The Shah’s troop levels ballooned from 245,000 men at the start of the decade to nearly 400,000 by 1978.<sup>67</sup> The purchase of vast stocks of sophisticated military hardware underscores that the Shah had ignored American warnings to direct his attention toward internal security. These admonishments grew increasingly rare during the 1970s. Iran, awash in petrodollars, was now seen as the means to offset the U.S. balance-of-payments crisis.

Despite its outward appearance of stability, Iran’s prosperity ultimately wreaked chaos on its internal relations. At the height of his power, the Shah lost all sense of proportion as he pursued a phantasy world in which Iran stood on equal footing with the Western European industrial powers. His megalomania ultimately distorted the economy, as Iran could not absorb the enormous volume of military and commercial imports. The economy overheated, inflation soared, and graft surged to debilitating levels. The Shah’s autocracy, staffed with incompetent sycophants, mismanaged its campaign to reform agriculture and build a consumer sector in the Western image. The lower class suffered under punishing inflationary pressures. The working class, shocked by the staggering influx of American military trainers and technical advisors, lost their sense of identity and turned increasingly to Islam.<sup>68</sup> The floor fell out from the economy when Saudi Arabia, Iran’s rival, conspired with the United States to flood the oil

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<sup>66</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 179.

<sup>67</sup> Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 108–9; Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 182–84, 211; and Ward, *Immortal*.

<sup>68</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 196–200.

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market with its spare capacity to lower prices.<sup>69</sup> The Shah, deprived of his main source of revenue, faced rising unemployment rates and growing civil unrest that eventually sparked an irrepressible wave of mass protests.<sup>70</sup>

## THE LESSONS OF IRANIAN-AMERICAN MILITARY DIPLOMACY IN IMPERIAL IRAN

The collapse of the Pahlavi dynasty and the rise of the Islamic Republic was the result of several self-destructive traits deeply ingrained in the Shah's regime. American military diplomacy certainly played a role in his demise, but the Shah had essentially commandeered the driver's seat of the strategic relationship. Successive U.S. administrations insisted, to no avail, that the Shah focus on domestic reform. Until the Nixon administration, American presidents implored the monarch to posture the imperial armed forces for internal security. Washington believed the Shah's regime required liberalization, warning that the Iranian economy could not sustain sophisticated military capabilities for power projection. The United States certainly played a part in the Shah's destruction, but it was never the puppet master depicted by its critics. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi played the driving role, sowing his destruction by pursuing outrageous ambitions. The last Pahlavi monarch hollowed out Iran's imperfect parliamentary system and replaced it with a sclerotic autocracy that required a strong and determined leader. The Shah, however, was too soft and indecisive to assume such a role. When revolution came in 1979, there were no more Zahedis to save him. His characteristic vacillation in the middle stages of the revolution ultimately doomed the Pahlavi dynasty.

Though the United States played an indirect role in prerevolutionary Iran, the experience offers three general lessons for the future of American military diplomacy. First, leaders must continually reassess their assumptions. What is the underlying logic of present policy? What are the indicators that, if they were to arise, would signal that this reasoning is flawed? In Imperial Iran, American policy makers slavishly abided by what political scientist James A. Bill referred to as the "Pahlavi premise." This premise rested on "the powerful assumption in the highest echelons of the executive branch of the government that the

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<sup>69</sup> Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Oil Kings: How the US, Iran and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 353–87.

<sup>70</sup> Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 205–6.

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pro-American and anti-communist shah was in complete control of Iran.”<sup>71</sup> As other scholars have noted, however, officials and analysts at lower levels of the bureaucracy routinely reported the Shah’s glaring weaknesses, even going so far as to say he was not up to the task.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, national decision makers failed to reassess assumptions in light of mounting signals challenging policy premises.

That the Nixon and Ford administrations failed to adopt a new approach does not constitute gross negligence. Considering the weak American position in the late 1960s and 1970s, Washington’s reliance on the Shah represents a strategic gamble rather than an unforgivable blunder. Nonetheless, the American experience in Imperial Iran should give caution to the practitioners of military diplomacy. Policy makers and military officers must be aware of the pitfalls of excessive weapons sales to countries that cannot absorb sophisticated hardware. Today, with the intensification of great-power competition, American officials should encourage Taiwan and the Baltic partners to acquire weapons systems they can seamlessly integrate into an efficacious defense strategy.<sup>73</sup> Taiwan, in particular, should abandon its desire for legacy platforms like self-propelled artillery, manned strike aircraft, and main battle tanks. Taipei should instead focus on large numbers of inexpensive and survivable systems like swarming aerial drones, maneuverable undersea mines, man-portable air-defense missiles, and coastal antiship missiles. These systems would form an asymmetric, multilayered defense to offset a rapidly modernizing Chinese defense establishment.<sup>74</sup> As the experience in Imperial Iran demonstrates, there are times when a partner cannot be convinced to follow the desired course. Still, considering Taiwan has remarkably less leverage than the Shah enjoyed, the United States is in a strong position to cajole its partner into adopting a “porcupine defense posture” by arming itself to

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<sup>71</sup> James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 422.

<sup>72</sup> Michael Donovan and Ray Takeyh discount the notion that the Iranian Revolution was an intelligence failure, demonstrating that political officers and analysts reported with great skill the rising threats to the Shah. See Donovan, “National Intelligence and the Iranian Revolution,” *Intelligence and National Security* 12, no. 1 (1997):143–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684529708432403>; and Takeyh, *The Last Shah*, 6, 262.

<sup>73</sup> For Baltic defense, see Jan Van Tol et al., *Deterrence and Defense in the Baltic Region: New Realities* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, 2022).

<sup>74</sup> For People’s Liberation Army military modernization, see Joel Wuthnow et al., eds., *Crossing the Strait: China’s Military Prepares for War with China* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2022), esp. 161–306; and Jack Bianchi et al., *China’s Choices: A New Tool for Assessing the PLA’s Modernization* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, 2022).

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the teeth with cheap weapons systems.<sup>75</sup> The United States can then concentrate on long-range precision-strike fires to augment its partner's capacity to turn the Taiwan Strait into a "shooting gallery."<sup>76</sup>

Second, and on a related note, the American experience in prerevolutionary Iran demonstrates that partners will generally pursue their national interests at the expense of lesser, shared objectives. In the 1970s, the Shah secured oil price hikes that battered the U.S. economy. He continued to recklessly plow petrodollars into power-projection capabilities that would have been better spent on internal security, to say nothing of structural reforms. Instead, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi chose to punish Western industrial economies in pursuit of counterproductive regional interests. He desired to displace the United States in the Persian Gulf. He ultimately failed, yet his shortcomings ultimately threatened the future of the Western position in the region. In the Cold War and Global War on Terrorism, Pakistan displayed a similar tendency. Islamabad focused invariably on India, ignoring Washington's pleas to posture its military against the Soviet Union or the internal threat of Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>77</sup> Threat perceptions change gradually, if at all, absent a momentous shift in the geopolitical landscape. Rivalries are based on deep historical, geographical, and cultural roots. Nonetheless, policy makers and military officers must appreciate this when employing military diplomacy. Defense advisory teams, assistance missions, and arms sales cannot overturn a partner's fundamental attitudes. For that, higher-

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<sup>75</sup> For an asymmetric defense posture for Taiwan, see Ian Easton, *The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and America's Strategy in Asia* (Manchester, UK: Eastbridge Books, 2017); James Timbie and Adm James O. Ellis Jr., "A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan," *Texas National Security Review*, 5, no. 1 (Winter 2021/2022): 83–93, <https://doi.org/10.15781/gkaw-3709>; Joel Wuthnow, "Defending Taiwan in an Expanded Competitive Space," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 104 (2022): 89–94; and Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia," *International Security*, 42, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 117, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00294](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00294).

<sup>76</sup> For the American deterrence posture, see Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, "The Coming War over Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 August 2022; Michael Beckley, Zack Cooper, and Allison Schwartz, "Deterring Coercion and Conflict Across the Taiwan," in *Defending Taiwan*, ed. Kori Schake and Allison Schwartz (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute), 52–66; and Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, "Getting Ready for a Long War: Why a US-China Fight in the Western Pacific Won't End Quickly," in *Defending Taiwan*, 67–79.

<sup>77</sup> Carter Malkasian, *The American War in Afghanistan: A History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021); Steven Coll, *Directorate S: The CIA and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001–2016* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018); and Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan, 1947–2000* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).



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order political diplomacy is required. The role of military engagement is to demonstrate commitment, empower partners, and shore up the overall U.S. position in the world. Military diplomacy can build strong relationships with partners and strengthen deterrence, but it can hardly bend allies to America's worldview. This must be kept in mind as the United States moves to meet the array of challenges posed by China, Russia, and the Islamic Republic.

Finally, American military diplomacy in Iran demonstrates the enduring importance of the greater Middle East. In World War II, the United States found itself operating in the traditional preserves of Britain and Russia. The Anglo-Russian great game signified the historic clash between Eurasian land powers and offshore sea powers for strategic access to the greater Middle East. The U.S. entry into Iran thus marked the next stage of great-power struggle in the Persian Gulf, and it would gradually displace Britain as the central maritime counterweight to threats emanating from the "Heartland." From World War II through the Cold War, military diplomacy served as a vital tool to gain influence among regional powers. If history suggests the contours of future competition, the greater Middle East will remain of strategic importance for the great powers.

Washington will undoubtedly reduce its footprint to facilitate the pivot to Asia, but the region itself is not done with the United States. The Chinese economy depends on access to Persian Gulf energy, and Russia intends to play spoiler in the region.<sup>78</sup> The Islamic Republic, which sustains its revolution at home by fomenting Shi'ite chauvinism abroad, continues to project asymmetric power against American interests.<sup>79</sup> After 21 years of sustained combat operations, the United States and its partners have ravaged terrorist networks and decimated the old-guard jihadist leadership. Nevertheless, national intelligence warns that the region will remain a haven for terrorists—albeit greatly reduced.<sup>80</sup> The United States has become a net petroleum exporter and is moving unevenly toward a carbon-free energy program, yet partners in Europe and Asia will continue to rely on the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz. Regardless, major disruptions in the greater Middle East will place the global energy market, and by

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<sup>78</sup> For the vital importance of the Persian Gulf in China's grand strategy, see Yergin, *The New Map*, 156–57.

<sup>79</sup> Eric Edelman and Ray Takeyh, *Revolution and Aftermath: Forging a New Strategy Toward Iran* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2018), 13–15, 37–41.

<sup>80</sup> Gen Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., *Posture Statement of General Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., Commander, United States Central Command Before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 117th Cong. (15 March 2022).

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extension the American economy, under serious strain. Energy independence is an illusion, as deeply integrated markets extinguish any hope of absolute energy security. As such, the United States, in one form or another, will remain a major player in the greater Middle East. If employed effectively, military diplomacy will allow the United States to reduce its regional footprint while meeting the immense challenges that lie ahead. The enduring nature of regional competition will demand nothing less.

## ◉ Chapter Four ◉

### Replacing the Pillar

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#### *U.S. Policy on Military Aid to Egypt from Carter to Reagan*

James Bowden, MA

During the years 1979–85, Egypt became of critical importance to replacing the loss of Iran as a base for the American military, including the military intelligence branch, to intercept and prevent a Soviet infiltration into the Persian Gulf region and the greater Middle East. Egypt became the early favorite nation of Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's policy to develop a Rapid Deployment Force for the region as well as to develop an in-region presence that would habituate the area to the presence of American forces.

The development of a policy and a nation to replace Iran became a central tenant of Persian Gulf and general Middle Eastern defense strategy. The collapse of Iran as the main pillar of United States Persian Gulf foreign policy was a significant blow from which the James E. "Jimmy" Carter administration spent much of its last two years attempting to recover. It would be the succeeding Ronald W. Reagan administration that would become the chief beneficiary of this long process, but Egypt would never fully live up to the intended purpose of replacing the pillar of Iran. The military diplomatic steps that the United States took significantly helped Egypt and the United States, but the concept of two states anchoring, or pillaring, the United States' strategy in the Middle East was largely abandoned out of necessity and the difficulty of dealing with regional social and thus, political, forces.

#### HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Egypt occupies a very difficult place in the regional historiography for most eras,

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however, the difficulty grows for the era under consideration, that of 1979–85. The historiography carries with it many different levels of biases and levels of importance for various issues, many of which are along the lines of human rights and internal political and social considerations but not military factors. Military considerations are often wholly ignored on the secondary research level and rarely enters discussions on foreign policy. Most of the foreign policy considerations are toward such regional actors as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. The scholarly tendency to ignore Egypt on this level is somewhat counterbalanced by secondary source media and government reports which, although scholarly in some instances, mostly stem from media or reporting from sources closely associated with the government. These sources, while much more attuned to the nature of the discussion in this chapter, follow some of the lesser practices of journalism and tend to lump or uncritically cover numbers, types of military weapons, and use nomenclature in a manner that is misleading. This misleading nomenclature does not appear to be nefarious in intent; it appears to simply follow, as stated, the normal journalistic tendency toward generalization. It does, however, create as much confusion for the historian as other media sources. There are a large number of declassified government documents from a wide spectrum of agencies that cover this period and have served as a core component of this chapter.

Foreign policy chapters for the region of the Middle East and in this era have a heavy historiographical weight placed on Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. Other countries mentioned in discussions of foreign policy vis-à-vis the post-Shah era included Kenya, Somalia, and Oman. They entirely neglect the role of Egypt and omit it even when sources were available at the time of writing to support its inclusion in the consideration of the topic. Primary examples of this include two separate books reviewed for this project. Christopher T. Sanders's book, *America's Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire*, entirely neglects Egypt as well as substantial documentation on it and other Middle Eastern nations regarding military diplomacy. While Egypt did not formally host an American base, the process was notable and highly public and there were significant foreign policy debates on it in the United States as well as domestic debates on the matter inside Egypt, and media sources made it a part of routine discussion. Egypt's role during this period is also entirely neglected and never mentioned by Gary Sick in his chapter entitled, "The United States and the Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century" within Lawrence Potter's *The Persian Gulf in History*. While it may be suggested that Egypt was omitted because it is not located in the immediate Gulf region, he did discuss all the other later additional countries (Kenya, Somalia,

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and Oman) even though the majority of these lie outside of the Persian Gulf region. It was well documented that the United States was seeking a range of objectives involving Egypt. The United States sought to conduct military exercises, obtaining basing rights and congressional authorizations for Egypt, all of which were well publicized at the time and most of these reports made clear that Egypt was considered the primary Arab beneficiary of military diplomacy at this time.<sup>1</sup>

Much of scholarly attention has focused on Iraq and the Iran-Iraq War, and what role, if any, it played in the realm of arms diplomacy, or what is herein designated as military diplomacy. However, research has clarified that Iraq never played any role in post-Iran discussions and this persisted through the end of the Carter administration. This was largely a result of the reality that Iraq was considered to be too risky given that the administration was looking for a base and rapid deployment area to the *rear*. The chief threat that Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and even Kenya and Somalia were meant to blunt was the threat of a Soviet invasion through either northern Iraq or northern and eastern Iran. Iraq would have been a significantly poor area from which to establish a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) platform from which to launch offensive military operations. It also did not offer the buffer zone anticipated by planners for the weeks-long build up initially projected and confirmed through military exercises. To this point, a single secondary source authored in 1983 has lent significant insight into a portion of this issue.

Ronald V. Dellum's *Defense Sense: The Search for a Rational Military Policy* is the result of a mixture of both independent chapters authored by various peace scholars and special advocacy researchers as well as some chapters containing congressional testimony.<sup>2</sup> The book examines the matter of defense spending in the Reagan era. The book is essentially a polemic against the Reagan administration and its expenditures in the area of defense, which included heavy amounts of military diplomacy in the form of arms sales, grants and foreign military sales (FMS) credits, and many other items to be touched on below. The book notes some specifics that other sources do not, and it provides a historical context to the events that were taking place outside of the administration. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher T. Sandars, *America's Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:so/9780198296874.001.0001>; and Gary Sick, "The United States and the Persian Gulf in the Twentieth Century," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 295–310.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald V. Dellums et al., *Defense Sense: The Search for a Rational Military Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1989).

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the polemicizing and language tends to reach into hyperbolic and hyperpartisan territory, diminishing its value. The main problem with these types of sources are that financial or arms numbers, examples, and other elements are cherry-picked and sometimes taken out of context to advance a nonscholarly, nondispassionate agenda. There is also a misleading manner of speaking about them.

FMS credit is essentially a line of credit whereby a country may purchase weapons of a specific type and nonclassified status. The purchaser is not being given the weapons for free; the U.S. government structures the debt during a number of years and usually does not begin the loan repayment process until all or most of the order has been completed. Countries cannot purchase anything that they would like to. In some circumstances, components and features of the equipment are not sold due to their sensitive nature and desire to keep the technology from being leaked via secondary purchasers or to keep a slight strategic edge.<sup>3</sup>

Due to these constraints, this chapter relies on primary documents that have been declassified from both the Carter and Reagan administrations. These declassified documents come from a wide spectrum of government agencies and sources that complement each other and serve to provide a reliable baseline for many of the individual projects and aims as defined in the leading declassified source, that of the *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980* series for the Carter administration. This document, released by the Department of State, contains all of the declassified memorandums, meeting notes, and letters exchanged by various National Security Council meetings as well as memos and letters exchanged between Carter and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. The relevant section dealing with the Arabian Peninsula and general Middle East is extensive, covering 368 pages and delves into the minutiae of government policy formation and the various factors involved in developing or hindering it. Some portions have been withheld or are still classified due to various government agency wishes to protect means, methods, and sources. This is especially the case regarding intelligence related materials. However, this is somewhat compensated for by three declassified U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command's annual historical reviews, declassified between 1979 and 1983. These documents are enhanced by diplomatic cables that have been released in different databases and, as mentioned, a large number of various nonseries releases that help to create a composite picture. Finally, some government publications from sources such as

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<sup>3</sup> Dellums et al., *Defense Sense*.

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the Marine Corps, government research groups, and think tanks have contributed to this chapter. To articulate all of them at this point is not possible, however, a particular source is worth mentioning in this context.<sup>4</sup>

A primary declassified source used in this research is the Government Accountability Office (GAO) document *Forging a New Defense Relationship with Egypt*. This report, released in February 1982, reviews the actual numbers provided to Egypt that began in the Carter administration and up to that point in the Reagan administration. The report also specifies specific numbers and types of equipment that were provided to Egypt and offers critical reviews of the political or military ramifications of these weapons to Egypt and on the relationship between the United States and Egypt. This source is crucial for obtaining an accurate baseline of financial transactions between the two countries and not the lumping of information that is so frequent in media sources.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the key policy documents and discussions remain classified and are only now entering the 25-year threshold for declassification or remain classified simply because no one has sought those specific records. The United States government has not gone to any lengths to simply declassify great quantities of documents and it is still a fairly arcane and difficult process through which one must long endure. The annual historical reviews for the military intelligence material took 10 years to declassify. The organization Governmentattic.org issued the request in 2008 and fulfillment took place in 2018. In other instances, unforeseen events such as the pandemic in 2020–21 have delayed research due to the closure of presidential libraries and restricted access to the National Archives or slowed down processing times for requests. There is also a considerable gap when it comes to declassified military and Department of State documents. The reasons for the delay in declassification are that many of them still fall within declassification limits and are just now in process of review. This is substantially the case for the Reagan administration and its Department of State records dealing with their relations with the Middle East and Saudi Arabia, as the classification standard is. The Department of State has clarified that they are also subject to

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<sup>4</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Kelly McFarland and Adam M. Howard (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), hereafter *FRUS*; and *Annual Historical Review, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), FY 1980* (Arlington, VA: Department of the Army, 1980). The volumes in this series follow the same publication details for each year from 1979 through 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Bowsher, *Forging a New Defense Relationship with Egypt* (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 1982).

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the delays of the intelligence community when it comes to the release or approval of the release of documents.

## THE CONTEXT OF THE POLICY CRISIS

The fall of Iran was a catalyst for reexamining the approach of the United States to the Middle East region as a whole. It was at that point that the Carter administration took the region and its stability as a much more serious issue than it had previously done so. Most of American attention was, reasonably, on Europe and developments in that theater, and the Middle East was looked upon as being secured by the nations of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The fall of Iran was initially approached as the temporary removal of a national establishment and the revolution was anticipated to not only be a short-term phenomenon but to eventually soften and cool, as many had in prior years, and result in a return to the status quo. However, the longer the revolutionary government remained in power and with each new hardline development, the Carter administration's communications increasingly took on a sharper tone toward facing this new reality in the region.

Regional perceptions of the United States became increasingly important and the majority of this perception relied on American capabilities to not only deal with outside military threats that Saudi Arabia may face, but also whether the United States would deal effectively with internal crises that threatened to topple governments, again, the foremost being that of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia then, as now, has consistently had to develop what can be called an internal foreign policy. The 130,000 Palestinians in Saudi Arabia threatened the government and, just a few years prior, had nearly toppled the national government in Jordan. The same was feared in Saudi Arabia, but the response of the United States to the fall of the Shah left many of the top leadership reluctant to give full credit to promises that a revolt would actually be suppressed with U.S. assistance. Another concern for Saudi Arabia was the fear of an attack of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen through northern Yemen and into their backyard, not a Soviet thrust into the region. Other security concerns related to the Horn of Africa and other potential invasion points from Soviet armed and aligned nations that take on a southern, not northern, cast.

However, Saudi Arabia was not the only nation that had considerations to make. Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were also important regional allies and their support also became more critical in this period. Prior attempts by Bahrain and the UAE to obtain weapon systems such as the HAWK air



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defense system and tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided (TOW) anti-tank missiles had been denied, as they were considered to be too sophisticated to be released to these countries, and the United States often suggested alternative, lower-grade weapons to be disbursed to them instead. The Bahrainis were offered patrol boats in lieu of the two above mentioned systems and the UAE was told that they should rely on the Saudis or on Iran. In an interesting and prescient question posed by Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed, commander in chief of UAE forces, to the United States ambassador at the time, he asked, "What would happen if there were a sudden change in either of these two countries?" No satisfactory response was provided. While this discussion took place in 1977, it illustrates the situation that was taking place at the time of the revolution and the debate on how to move forward.<sup>6</sup>

This and other regional particularities that would interfere with permanent basing spurred acute debate within the National Security Council on how best to respond and reassure the regional partners that the United States was still committed to their security. It was in these discussions that the Rapid Deployment Force, a habituation to the presence of United States naval forces, and the shifting of military exercises from a solely European operation to include the Middle East began to take shape. It was also at this point that Saudi Arabia and Egypt were the primary nations discussed as being in the best position to meet these needs. Harold Brown, secretary of Defense, took an early lead on advocating that Egypt be in the primary role of replacing Iran as a pillar of U.S. response to the fall of Iran. The choice of Egypt was a unique choice and one in which the United States took a look outside of the box, given that the majority wanted to look toward other nations, such as Pakistan and also Sudan as alternatives.

### *The Position of Egypt in 1979*

Egypt, in 1979, was in a transitional phase regarding the United States, Israel, and the region. Egypt had fought Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and had made significant progress, if only to burst the myth of Israeli invincibility. Yet, by 1979, Egypt had pivoted toward Israel and had begun a robust peace process with them. The United States quickly adopted the process and became a media-

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<sup>6</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, memo 8, 22. The first 13 memorandums all deal with various background issues of policy setting for the Middle East. The Persian Gulf countries of the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia are the main countries of discussion in these memos. It is with memo 14 and the events in Iran, referenced obliquely, that we begin to see policy reorientation and the introduction of Egypt.

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tor in negotiations. Egypt had further pivoted away from the Soviet Union and again oriented itself more toward the West in general and toward the United States in particular. This created a situation where Egypt was thoroughly isolated politically and economically from the entire region, including Saudi Arabia and many key financial deals, such as an Arab joint defense arms production factory and company that fell through. Thus, Egypt was open to new sources of investment, arms supply, and national security support as it now had become regionally isolated. However, the United States viewed Egypt cautiously given the changing nature of the leadership of Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

Anwar Sadat was following an entirely new course and had broken with Egypt's previous leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and his close relations with the Soviets and the region. The new course that Sadat had embarked on was greeted with some skepticism as it was feared that he could just as easily feel burned by the West and then decide to repivot back to the Soviets at any time. Sadat essentially had to prove that he was being more than just an opportunist and that he had credibility. The peace deal as well as how long the peace deal would last became the litmus test for Sadat's reorientation.<sup>8</sup>

The main drive of late 1978 and early 1979 was to ensure that Egypt and Israel had signed a peace treaty, after which the United States would then begin sending in military aid. Direct donation of military weapons as well as direct sales were never considered; rather, the earliest proposal remained the sole choice, that of FMS credits. Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher suggested that the United States give the Egyptians a large number of armored personnel carriers and this was brought forward in the discussions. However, all of the military aid was contingent on Egypt signing the peace treaty with Israel, and Washington continued to use this as a means of leverage over Sadat. The Camp David Accords were signed on 17 September 1978 and the Camp David Treaty on 26 March 1979. It was not long after this that we see some of the more significant

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<sup>7</sup> Henry F. Jackson, "Egypt and the United States after Sadat: Continuity and Constraints," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 12, nos. 3/4. (Autumn–Winter 1982): 70–75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1166720>. See also Ira M. Lepidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 3d ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 570.

<sup>8</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Saudi Peninsula*, memo 15, 36, 50. Letter from Carter to Secretary of Defense Brown, 19, 50–56. The memos and meeting minutes have a large number of micro references (sentences and offhand responses) to the careful application of pressure on Sadat to tie arms and the treaty, coupled with the fear of pressuring him too much and forcing him out of the Camp David process altogether since this was how the Soviet government operated and why he left those agreements.

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moves. Indeed, it is known from other documentation that Sadat received a consignment of McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom IIs not long after this.<sup>9</sup>

Sadat's pivot toward the West created in Brown's mind the chief reason to pursue Egypt as the replacement. Egypt offered the safest strategic position to serve as a rear position from which to stage American weapons and basic supplies and was easier to access from the air and in naval terms to quickly insert a military force on a rapid deployment basis. Projections of a Soviet invasion had them entering the Middle East through Persian Iran and from both the northern Caucasus region and the Western Central Asian provinces, such as Turkmenistan and plausibly through Afghanistan. These moves would have eliminated Iraq as a key element of the White House plan as it would not have been able to mount a long-term defense and the United States was looking for a rear-area rapid force deployment staging area, not a forward operating theater where encountering the enemy would have taken place before men and materiel could be organized. Yet, despite Brown's assessment and optimism, Egypt required a substantial amount of coaxing and political dialogue to participate in not only Operation Bright Star but other areas of military cooperation. Egypt would eventually fall behind Somalia, Oman, and Pakistan in terms of agreement with the United States to allow foreign forces on their soil and to make this a matter of public knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

However, that lay in the future. Returning to 1979 and early 1980, Harold Brown took a trip throughout the Middle East region to gauge the feeling among the allies as well as possible allies in the region on their stance toward the United States in the wake of the collapse of Iran and also what some of their desires were in exchange for increased American promises and assurances. The responses were fairly consistent, but Egypt requested foreign military aid in the amount of \$15–20 billion USD, an amount that even Secretary of Defense Brown appeared to be uncomfortable with and labelled it the “Americanization” of Egyptian forces. However, both Brown and Carter agreed that the American FMS credits should amount to \$1.5 billion and that this should be augmented by routine military exercises. This number would be reduced during the Reagan administration to \$900 million. He also specified that the

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<sup>9</sup> Shai Feldman, “Peacemaking in the Middle East: The Next Step,” *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 4 (1981): 756–80; and Bowsher, *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, Meeting Minutes February 1, 1979, memo 17, 49.

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Egyptians did not wish to have a base on their soil, that they saw this as an admission of weakness, and that they felt that the chances of a Soviet invasion of the Middle East were not what the United States perceived them to be. The request for a base in the Sinai was also a nonstarter, however, they were willing to consider and even favored a U.S. base in “another” Arab country, a position seconded by the Saudis.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Reagan Administration and Egypt*

As best as can be determined from the documentation, the Reagan administration departed from the objectives of the Carter administration, or at least subordinated the RDJTF and was interested in making Egypt a much more fundamental part of regional security by using it as the most likely basing location in the Middle East for a number of objectives. Regional security considerations were chiefly anchored on that of Libya and preventing Muammar al-Qaddafi from spreading his influence throughout the region and potentially invading them or destabilizing them through revolutionary rhetoric and acts that would bring the Hosni Mubarak government down.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of the Mubarak government, the same fear of Egyptian fickleness in foreign policy and alignment would resurface with the assumption of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt after the assassination of Sadat. Many American commentators, in particular George Will, approached Mubarak negatively and felt that relations between the three parties, the United States, Egypt, and Israel, would end up souring and some felt that he would return to the Soviet fold. Mubarak pursued very different foreign policy objectives and, whereas Sadat had leaned heavily toward the West, almost as much as Nasser had leaned toward the Soviets, Mubarak seemed open to steering a foreign policy course that was in the middle. While he maintained the peace deal with Israel and continued to partner with the West, it was clear that he was attempting to balance the two superpowers and keep a lid on the resurgence of Islamism in his country. The too close association with any Western or non-Islamic state threatened to undo the internal peace of

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<sup>11</sup> *FRUS*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, memo 15, 36–37.

<sup>12</sup> A rash of classified memos were issued in the early period of the Reagan administration, one undated and untitled but discuss Egypt as a primary base for operations against Libya and Sadat’s position toward Libya. NSC Meeting Minutes January 21st, 1982, Meeting of Libya Task Force; and *Soviet Strategy in the Middle East: The Next Six Months* (Washington, DC: Directorate of Intelligence, 1982).

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Egypt, and in the 1980s and the 1990s this fear would be realized in a rash of terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

The administration's aims regarding Libya were clearly laid out in an article from the late 1980s entitled, "Egypt and the United States." Richard Murphy, the assistant secretary for Near East and Asian Affairs, said,

A strong and stable Egypt is crucial to virtually all of our interests in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to being a Camp David partner, Egypt is a counterweight to Libyan meddling in the Sudan, Chad and Tunisia. Our security assistance to Egypt promotes readiness and military self-sufficiency necessary for defense against Soviet-armed states in the region.<sup>14</sup>

That Libya was the most credible threat to the Reagan administration comes from an undated speech that was subsequently never delivered, however, it was declassified. In the speech, President Reagan lays out the justification for an invasion of Libya that was spearheaded by Egyptian forces but closely followed and supported by U.S. military personnel.<sup>15</sup>

The overthrow of al-Qaddafi was the aim. This would neutralize the terrorist leadership and training camps but also would remove the possible use of Libya as a staging platform for invading Soviet forces. Since the Libyan revolution that had brought al-Qaddafi to power, Libya was turned into a virtual terrorist training camp. Various Western and Eastern European terror groups trained alongside the for-hire Abu Nidal terrorist group in camps spread throughout the country. Al-Qaddafi had instituted a unique blend of Islamic socialism in the country and was invested in exporting his revolution to various countries in the region. Al-Qaddafi saw Sadat's termination of Soviet sponsorship as a threat and was largely responsible for the assassination of Sadat in October of 1981. Thus, the Reagan administration was legitimately concerned regarding the stability of not only Egypt's security but also with regional stability overall. While there were no further documents that clarified the place of this speech, they are likely in the

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<sup>13</sup> Lepidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 571; "U.S.-Egypt: Crumbling Alliance?," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1982): 2; and "Anwar Sadat Assassination," 6 October 1981, in *ABC News Nightline*, YouTube video, 1:00:02.

<sup>14</sup> "Egypt and the United States," *Great Decisions* (1987): 25–34.

<sup>15</sup> "Egypt and the United States." The speech by Reagan was released as a document on an unclassified document database server. The speech was not given an author attribute nor was it dated. The lack of critical citation material is disappointing.

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pending *Foreign Relations of the United States* series that is currently being put together along with other documents awaiting declassification. We now know what a post al-Qaddafi Libya would have looked like in the 1980s and that this plan was scrapped shows that there were strong policy debates in the administration. It is also clear that the leadership, on some level, did not believe that the military diplomacy of exercises and arms sales were likely sufficient to thoroughly intimidate and keep Egypt's and the United States' adversaries out of the region. However, others significantly differed in that position and, quoting from the same article as above, an unnamed aid official stated somewhat cavalierly, "If you can replace 50,000 American troops by a \$1 billion annual investment in a ramshackle development program in Egypt, or, in other words, if you can have peace in the Middle East for \$1 billion a year, that is a hell of a bargain."<sup>16</sup>

### ARMS AND MONEY:

#### LOOKING AT MATERIEL BENEFITS AND COSTS

The materiel support that Egypt received as a part of the military diplomatic path varied over the years, and what emerges in the documentation is a picture where the United States did not maintain consistent levels of aid across administrations. The materiel and financial support that was provided to Egypt was higher in the Carter administration and dipped in the Reagan administration. However, arriving at this is difficult given the nature of the secondary literature and how the press, and even government reports, routinely lumped and summarized information. Yet, to gain a clearer picture of the nature of the aid and the changing priorities, it is necessary to attempt to do so.

The *Foreign Relations* series memos are somewhat clear as far as specific steps that were and were not accomplished in the final year and months of the Carter administration. One of the most intractable issues that the Carter administration wrestled with was that of basing. The series of memos indicates that the basing issue was never fully resolved and that the suggested improvements to Ras Banas and to other suggested sites was never implemented. The issue of a forward operating base continued to play a large role in the negotiations, and the Egyptian and American governments denied in public that such an effort was under negotiation. However, in undated memos exchanged at this time, Sadat continued to be in favor of and offered different locations as possible forward operating bases in Egypt. It is likely that the official denials were meant to pre-

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<sup>16</sup> "Egypt and the United States," 32.

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vent unwanted public restlessness in Egypt should American soldiers be in the country. In addition, the proposed Marine Amphibious Unit maneuvers appear to have taken place at least once with a small cadre of Marines, around 1,400 troops. The closing memorandums also make it clear that this remained a pressing matter, but it was also for a range of other countries as Egypt slipped out of the priority position of discussions and increasingly drifted further back among favored nations.<sup>17</sup>

With the arrival of two full squadrons of F-4 Phantoms for Egypt and 15 Boeing CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters in 1979, two maneuvers were then able to be held in Egypt during 1980. The first one took place under the name of Proud Phantom and the other under the name Bright Star. The Proud Phantom operation was a joint F-4 Phantom training exercise that took place at West Cairo airport and air force base with U.S. personnel operating on the base alongside Egyptian F-4 pilots and repair crews. The second of these exercises, Bright Star 81, tested the RDJTF capabilities in both the United States and in Egypt. They helped to establish the reliability of intelligence and other systems put in place. The administration in its final year also pushed to 1981 a military exchange that would have seen a platoon exchange between the United States and Egypt (along with another platoon exchange with Saudi Arabia). Whether these were maintained by the Reagan administration is unknown. The Carter administration proposed and was able to advance through congressional authorization \$1.5 billion in FMS credits.<sup>18</sup>

In the Reagan administration, there were some modifications to the programs initiated by the Carter administration, and it appears that in some instances the level of aid decreased, rather than increased. An area that was expanded, after the assassination of Anwar Sadat, was Operation Bright Star. Via a memo issued on 8 October 1981 from the White House entitled "National Security Decision Directive Number 14," the president authorized the November 1982 Operation Bright Star to be expanded as required and that all actions were to be placed under the concept of training necessity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The memos and meeting minutes from memos 83–98 do mention Egypt sporadically but do not go into any detail and are largely, if not solely, concerned with exercises and making arrangements with Somalia, Kenya, and Oman.

<sup>18</sup> Jackson, "Egypt and the United States After Sadat," 73–74. *FRUS*, vol. 18, *Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula*, memorandum 96, 314.

<sup>19</sup> White House, National Security Decision Directive Number 14, *Security Considerations in Egypt and Sudan*, 8 October 1981.

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Sadat's tenure overlapped Carter and Reagan, but he continued to delay and hedge regarding basing. Documentation released by the Department of State demonstrates that negotiations were continuing up to the assassination. Subsequently under Mubarak, Egypt would experience significant social tension due to the Muslim Brotherhood and their efforts to influence society and social opinion. Mubarak did not want to bring American soldiers onto Egyptian soil in a permanent manner, at least publicly, in order to preserve calm, especially given that Sadat had been executed on the punitive reasons of having signed the peace treaty with Israel as well as working closely with the United States.<sup>20</sup>

There is a lack of consistency in the reporting for military aid to Egypt for the years 1981 through 1983. A wide range of sources consulted reported varying amounts and appeared to rely on different methods of arriving at those numbers. The General Accounting Office released a report, discussed below, that lays out the official government numbers for this period and appears to be the most reliable source, yet it also conflicts with publicly available information at that time.

According to a journal article from 1983 entitled "Egypt and the United States after Sadat: Continuity and Constraints," the Reagan administration dropped the level of FMS credits from \$1.5 billion to \$900 million. However, the reduction in FMS appears to have been offset by developments, which included the formalization of the military maneuvers in Egypt under the label of Operation Bright Star '82. This involved the largest number of American servicemembers to do so to that time; 4,000 troops were deployed to Egypt along with increased provision of materiel support.<sup>21</sup>

The year 1983 represented a realignment of priorities for the Reagan administration and the post-Carter dip was suddenly reversed, at least in terms of materiel support provided to Egypt. There is no clear reason, at present, for the inconsistency in the arms and funding of this period. In the information released in the research report entitled *Forging a New Defense Relationship with Egypt*, the Government Accountability Office report for 1981, and the testimony in *Defense Sense* make several things clear. The military aid being given to Egypt was not delivered in a single instance but rather over time in progressive shipments as funds and equipment became available and hardware could be integrated into the Egyptian armed forces. Also, the 1981 report confirms many of the

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<sup>20</sup> Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 571.

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, "Egypt and the United States After Sadat," 70–75.



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items in the 1983 report as well as information contained in the book *Defense Sense*, however, the numbers of the equipment were often higher than what was understood at the time.<sup>22</sup>

During this timeframe, from 1981 to 1983, the Egyptians were able to enhance their military capabilities and weapons systems. The Reagan administration approved sales of up to 80 General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcons, 35 F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers, 4 Northrop Grumman E-2C Hawkeye electronic spy planes, an unspecified number of Grumman F-14 Tomcats, 311 M-60A3 tanks, 12 HAWK air defense batteries, TOW antitank missile systems, 1,214 M-113 armored personnel carriers, and 15 Boeing CH-47c helicopters. The balance of these had been delivered by July 1981, with more to be delivered as they were produced.<sup>23</sup>

These arms purchase need to be placed within a proper context before conclusions can be reached about the program's overall benefit to Egypt and to the United States in terms of strategic advancement. The type and reasons behind these purchases fall into very familiar patterns of arms purchases for the entire Middle Eastern region and often do not follow the same logic patterns as in the West. These purchases are often made on the basis of image and political leverage that can be obtained, and they often lack real operability in the Middle East environment. It is important to understand the numbers are largely irrelevant as many of these were never used for much more than parts cannibalization and repair. In addition, these weapons are just as capable as defensive weapons as they are offensive, and the defensive position was the main concern of U.S. planners.

The weapons are airpower oriented and the E-2C Hawkeyes do fit with what is known, discussed below, about intelligence gathering operations and training carried out during this time as a part of U.S. aid to Egypt. The M-60A3 main

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<sup>22</sup> The various writers and contributors to *Defense Sense* were not able to get access to then current information on arms sales or at least precise government data as is now declassified. The Government Accountability Office report was completed in 1982 but not declassified until later, and likely not in time for the volume. There is the additional problem that numbers appear to be given on different rounding terms and reporting is not consistent and often lumped in together, creating difficulty in parsing individual years and allotments. However, some of the numbers of arms and credits were close to the government numbers. On page 3 of the Government Accountability Office report, *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, the grants and loans, in millions, from 1979–80 were as follows; grants 585 for two years and 780 for 1981. Loans were 250, 280, and 70 for the same time period. Military assistance in 1979 was 1.5, nothing in 1980, and in 1981 went down to 550.

<sup>23</sup> *Forging a New Defense Relationship with Egypt*, 9.

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battle tank, about to be phased out as the main battle tank for the U.S. military at the time in favor of the new M1 Abrams, was also well suited for desert warfare and was able to run without the dust and sand congestion issues that plagued later M1A1 tanks in the Gulf War.

The CH-47c helicopters were originally intended for Iran before the collapse of the Shah. The United States was charging less for their sale than other helicopter equipment and Egypt had already expressed an interest in the model. Thus, the marriage of the Egyptian desire for the helicopter and its cheaper price at the time resulted in its sale to Egypt. However, the GAO report notes that the helicopter was not only inferior but that “it also severely strained Egypt’s ability to operate and support yet another large procurement program. This is especially troublesome for an item of equipment that was not considered a top military priority by Egypt.” This fits within most Middle Eastern arms purchase patterns, which were (and still are), in a colloquial sense, based on the “bling factor.” According to the GAO on the same page, the Egyptians had noted the success of the Israeli operated F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers during the 1973 Yom Kippur War and had begun to set their sights on obtaining as many of them as possible. There was no direct consideration of handling, operability, or compatibility with other Egyptian owned aircraft.<sup>24</sup>

This is a frequently encountered problem with Middle Eastern countries where purchases are made often on the presumption that simply by possessing impressive weapons system neighbors will be intimidated or that they will be equally impressed. In *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, it is noted that only a fraction of the F-4s already delivered were still in service. This was a result of environmental incompatibility and a high rate of breakdowns and repairs. In many Middle Eastern contexts, when military equipment is purchased, potentially up to 50 percent of those weapons are cannibalized and stripped to service and repair the other half. Thus, the types of the weapons, rather than their numbers, are the more important aspect of this program.<sup>25</sup>

Toward the middle and latter years of the administration, the arms purchases as well as the funding appears to have once again been reduced. An article pub-

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<sup>24</sup> *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, 12–13.

<sup>25</sup> *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, 2. The precise number is redacted. For discussions of arms purchases and their political impact versus real operability, see Andrew J. Pierre, “Beyond the ‘Plan Package’: Arms and Politics in the Middle East,” *International Security* 3, no. 1 (1978): 148–61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2626647>; and James Bowden, “Readiness of Gulf Militaries,” *Modern War Magazine*, April 2016.

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lished in 1985 noted that, for the forthcoming fiscal years 1986 and 1987, Congress voted to give Egypt \$1.3 billion in FMS credits as well as \$815 million in foreign military financing. The \$1.3 billion annual allotments were to be given in the forms of block grants whereas the \$815 million was the only amount given in actual cash transfer. It was pointed out by the authors of the paper that this amount was lower than that granted to Israel at the time and during a point when relations had somewhat soured between Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Reagan. But the above may be a deceptive picture and the apparent reduction may have been not from a souring of relations, but a recognition that Egypt no longer required as much support.<sup>26</sup>

There are indications that the United States was also providing some arms as a means to help Egypt in its efforts to support Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. Diplomatic cables exchanged between Tel Aviv and the Department of State, early in the Reagan administration and while Menachem Begin was still prime minister, relate that the Israeli press had exposed, at the direction of Begin and the Israeli Ministry of Defense, a program in which the Egyptians were supplying Iraq with older Soviet arms and that the United States was resupplying Egypt with more modern, American equipment in lieu of this. This would have approached the threshold of what Harold Brown had contemplated as the "Americanization" of the Egyptian armed forces. The videos of Reagan and Begin at the end of two different visits to the United States are very different in character and nature. The first video shows an initial warm and friendly, even jovial, relationship, and the second video shows both leaders lacking smiles, rather muted, and both appearing to walk stiffly.<sup>27</sup> Both administrations did aid Egypt militarily in a manner that was kept out of the public eye and only with the declassification of records has become known but still remains relatively obscure.

## INTELLIGENCE AS FOREIGN MILITARY AID

Intelligence support is never mentioned in the secondary media sources discussing military assistance programs to Egypt or any other Middle East nations. The *Foreign Relations* series regularly makes oblique reference to intelligence efforts,

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<sup>26</sup> Dennis Wamsted, "Aid Bill Helps Israel, Egypt," *Washington Report on the Middle East Affairs* 4, no. 5 (1985): 4.

<sup>27</sup> State Department cable, untitled, March 1981, Cairo Embassy to Secretary of State Haig; State Department cable, untitled, April 1981, from Jeddah Embassy deputy chief of mission, James A. Placke to Secretary of State Haig; and State Department cable, untitled, May 1982, Department of Near East Affairs to Amb Samuel Lewis in Tel Aviv.

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but most of the material is redacted from the record. However, the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command did issue regular historical reviews narrating activities in the region. While most of the material is itself redacted, there are still pieces of information that indicate that the U.S. presence in Egypt on an intelligence level was significant and that the primary leaders of this intelligence work were not the Central Intelligence Agency but rather Army Intelligence. This is an important distinction as Army Intelligence could have implemented these steps in isolation from the Central Intelligence Agency and preserved a level of secrecy over the various programs launched.

The first report that conforms to the timeframe of this chapter was issued for the years 1979 through 1980 and noted the loss of Iran as a central area of intelligence for monitoring the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and that it was a priority to replace the loss with an in-region substitute nation. In the section that details foreign intelligence exchanges for this year there are no details, and foreign national visits are highly sanitized regarding the people allowed into the country and with whom the intelligence was shared. The material in the annual reviews clarifies that, despite not having formal basing rights in Egypt during the period of 1979–84, that did not prevent the implementation of U.S. intelligence personnel entering Egypt and cooperating with their military to advanced signals intelligence (SIGINT).<sup>28</sup>

The report for 1980 through 1981 elaborates more clearly on the activities that were taking place in Egypt, and it is disclosed that intelligence support did occur and material was emplaced. Specific locations were not disclosed in the annual reviews; however, their placement likely followed the normal patterns and would have given access to communications emanating from Israel, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and traffic through the Suez Canal and through the Red Sea. The SIGINT project likely fell within the parameters of the Trojan Project mentioned earlier in the same report. The Trojan Project was a SIGINT project designed to place stations strategically throughout parts of Europe and the Pacific and pick up transmissions from regional actors; again, specific locations were not defined. The technology that was used was American and operated solely by U.S. personnel.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Annual Historical Review, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), FY 1979*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> *Annual Historical Review, 1 October 1981–30 September 1982* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1982), 2–9.

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The next most significant area of cooperation came in the form of a program for cross-training of U.S. and Egyptian personnel, the Tactical Intelligence Defense Exchange Program (TIDEP), in which members of the Egyptian military intelligence units were trained on aspects of electronic warfare and intelligence electronic warfare systems. One of the first participants of this program on the Egyptian side was Major General Ismail Shawkey, along with five other unnamed members of Egypt's army intelligence corps. Shawkey's visit included meetings at key U.S. military installations, meetings with contractors, and select meetings with specialists on electronic warfare and tactical SIGNINT systems and equipment. The program continued on through 1983 despite lacking a formally signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), and it is unknown for how long the program continued and whether the Reagan administration continued to favor this program. The absence of an MOU did, however, provide an additional layer of secrecy and may have been key in preventing the leakage of the program to the press and other actors. The main period of this activity was 1981 through 1982 and was projected to be formalized sometime in 1983 but this was before the change of administrations.<sup>30</sup>

In the *Army Intelligence Historical Review* for 1983, the document redacted almost all information on Operation Bright Star 83. A couple brief paragraphs were left unclassified. In one brief section, there is a note that 60 personnel from military intelligence did participate, mostly to support operational security but also to provide some technical assistance. According to the source, the personnel evaluated Soviet made communications equipment and a counterintelligence team evaluated the Port of Alexandria to heighten operational security measures and to make personnel in the area, undefined, more aware of potential intelligence security oversights. This was driven by the presence of Soviet Union ship repair yards and the presence of Soviet ships was constant.<sup>31</sup>

While further declassification needs to take place, it is already clear that intelligence aid provided to Egypt by the United States, in the form of military intelligence support, was likely significant and to have made a difference. While not absolutely clear, the significance of this intelligence aid may be measured by the amount of redacted material for the Middle East in all of the years declassi-

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<sup>30</sup> *Annual Historical Review, 1 October 1981–30 September 1982*, 2-26–2-27.

<sup>31</sup> *Forging a New Defense Relationship*, 33; and *Annual Historical Review, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), FY 1983* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1983), 72.

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fied and demonstrates that intelligence support may have been of more benefit to both parties than many of the forward basing or arms purchases. In-region bases usually serve an intelligence gathering role and help to place sophisticated U.S. hardware closer to target centers, mostly to support SIGINT stations. However, these become widely known and public, and without the public knowledge the basing of intelligence resources can only be guessed and not proven. This portion of diplomacy and support for Egypt and U.S. interests describes a relationship that was more than mere guns and money and that the efforts resulted in tangible intelligence data. Unfortunately, the gains and achievements that may have been granted through this program will likely remain unknown and ignored in the discussions of what value U.S. diplomacy in this area actually achieved.

### SUMMARY

The military diplomacy initiated by the Carter administration and carried through by the Reagan administration was, in terms of impact, far less than what the numbers may appear to show. With the cost of an individual fighter at the time costing up to \$1 billion and a single M603A tank costing about one-half of that, the real net impact on Egypt and its long-term finances was a net negative. Due to domestic budget constraints and owing more than it could handle at the time, Egypt postponed payments on the interest until 2009.<sup>32</sup> The rates of absorption and the rate of use was far below that which the ordinary American might believe on a fundamental level. The hyperbolic language used by lawmakers on both sides of the political spectrum also belied the basic problems with the program and demonstrate the vast disconnect between the realms of perception and reality. There is no information that any of the planes, tanks, or fighters were used against Egyptian citizens, however, the lower-level, less public sales of ammunition, grenades, and other materials may likely have been used in riot control and against protesters. The Egyptians could not properly maintain all of the equipment provided, and by 1981 a classified number of the F-4 Phantoms provided in 1979 were no longer flying, as was discussed in the GAO report at length.

Had the researchers and analysts who wrote and testified before Congress in the early 1980s known many of these facts, it is likely that their testimony and

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<sup>32</sup> John T. Haldane, "Egypt: Sunnier Economic Days Ahead?," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 4, no. 1 (1987): 12.

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hyperbolic language of fear aimed against aiding Hosni Mubarak may have been seen as the political theater that in large part it was. Indeed, the lawmakers who sat in this testimony may have known that much of the program was stymied and essentially broken as well as grossly overestimated in its impact on both Egyptian military strength and capability.

Finally, it is worth noting that neither the Carter nor the Reagan administrations was able to achieve what the William J “Bill” Clinton administration did—the realization of a Rapid Deployment Force for the Middle East and a base from which real-time, solid intelligence could be gained. While this force was never formally designated RDJTF, the reality of the deployments to Kuwait were the actualization of this goal. The irony is that democratic lawmakers as well as liberal intellectuals had pilloried the idea as not only unachievable but also potentially destabilizing to the region and a “go-it-alone” mentality, which was heavily reflected in the source *Defense Sense*. The ironic part is that the Clinton administration was one of the most liberal administrations in the United States up until that time.<sup>33</sup>

It is further a bit of irony that Egypt would not play this vital role but would rather see it go to Kuwait. Kuwait was left out of all discussions on the RDJTF; Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kenya, and Pakistan were among the top tier nations, but it was to be Kuwait that became the center of this policy through the occasion of the Gulf War in 1991 and continual threats posed by Saddam Hussein afterward. According to *Between Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom*, the U.S. military achieved the ability to rapidly move forces in a matter of weeks in the initial conflict and then, amid several provocative steps by Saddam Hussein, the United States developed an ability to usher forces into the region in a matter of days, evolving into a near continuous cycle of rotational deployments.<sup>34</sup> This has now resulted in a continual basing presence in Kuwait, something that governments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia had both favored for the region so long as it was in another country. The primary thinking of the Carter administration and the Gulf countries was that the presence of American forces needed to be known but not felt by the regional opponents or by the ordinary people in those countries, which led to a reluctance to place forces in a highly visible role in the Per-

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<sup>33</sup> Jourden T. Moger, *Between Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom: U.S. Army Operations in the Middle East, 1991–2001* (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 2021); and Walter LaFeber, “Foreign Policy Assumptions of the Reagan Military Budget,” in *Defense Sense*, 82.

<sup>34</sup> Moger, *Between Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom*.

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sian Gulf or Saudi Arabia. However, by the end of the Gulf War those concerns were overridden by the fear of Saddam Hussein and invasion of their countries. They then accepted a very pronounced presence of American military forces in the region. This acceptance came despite threats to their internal security in the form of domestic threats, protests against Western forces by ordinary people, and terrorist bombings.







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# PART TWO

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CONTEMPORARY  
CHALLENGES



## ◉ Chapter Five ◉

# Understanding Hybrid Warfare as a Strategic Policy Tool

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### *Russia as a Case Study*

Ipshita Bhattacharya, PhD

#### INTRODUCTION

**H**ybrid warfare is a military theory of strategies, which was accurately defined by Frank Hoffmann in his book, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*.<sup>1</sup> According to him, states employ political warfare blended with various kinetic and nonkinetic war tools in order to subdue, subvert, or even coerce a particular vulnerable state. The important part of this type of warfare is synchronizing various verticals of hybrid tools either simultaneously or otherwise by the adversary state on the target state to manifest their covert goals. The reference to the concept of hybrid warfare is found dating back to 1995; there it first appeared in Thomas Mockaitis's book, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-imperial Era*.<sup>2</sup> In the following years, many other authors used this term in context to various military operations.<sup>3</sup> However, the conceptual similarity of

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-imperial Era* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Lt Robert G. Walker, "U.S. Navy, Spec Fi: The U.S. Marine Corps and the Naval Postgraduate School" (thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 1998); William J. Nemeth, "Future War and Chechnya: A Case for Hybrid Warfare" (thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2002); and Alan Dupont, "Transformation or Stagnation?: Rethinking Australia's Defence," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 1 (2003): <https://doi.org/10.1080/1035771032000073641>.

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these authors was missing, but all of them were actually referring to a kind of warfare that was neither fully conventional nor completely irregular.<sup>4</sup>

The first precise and widely distributed articulation of this concept was done in the speech given by General James N. Mattis in 2005 in a defense forum, and later in the year Mattis and Frank Hoffman published a paper on the hybrid warfare concept. However, later Hoffman in his book gave a clearer concept of hybrid warfare that included more detailed and accurate definition of this warfare model.<sup>5</sup>

The area of hybrid warfare study has acquired necessary anxiety in the current international polity and security. This is possibly because of its intuitiveness and involvement of a wide area of study, which includes various implicit and explicit operations to disturb a target state, adversely impacting its decision making. This warfare involves both state and nonstate actors in their actions, methods, and mechanisms in varied means and forms. The components of hybrid warfare are often nonconventional in nature, involving multiple tools of power implemented on a horizontal as well as vertical axis with varied intensity and degrees. It can be defined as the combination of various techniques that belligerents use to manifest their political goals to subvert vulnerable targets and as the synchronized use of various tools of power, customized to target specific vulnerabilities throughout their sociocultural, civil-military, economical, security, and political affairs to impose synergistic impacts.

Hybrid warfare in essence is an adversarial attack (unipronged or synchronized and multipronged) on a predetermined target state vulnerable to such attack. It is systematically and strategically inflicted to destabilize the sovereignty and integrity of the victim state by destroying its government and national infrastructure. Such integrated attack involves different methods like psychological warfare, subversion of the political system, latent military operations, and cyber warfare and information misuse. The essential clue here is to understand that the *varied forms* of power mechanisms are used in *multiple dimensions* at *various levels* concurrently in a synchronized manner. This allows them to use multiple tools in synchronized attacks that can be specifically customized for the target state. Principally, the synchronization and horizontal techniques provide the perpetrators more options than choosing unsynchronized and vertical options;

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<sup>4</sup> Tarik Solmaz, "‘Hybrid Warfare’: One Term Many Meanings," *Small Wars Journal*, 25 February 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*.

**Table 5.1.** Hybrid warfare tools

Hybrid warfare verticals kinetic and nonkinetic	Methods employed	Outcome
Economic: loans, trade, dependency	Loans and dollar diplo- macy	Economic dependency, weak economy
Political: ethnic cleavages, proxy population, religious and sectarianism	Exploitation based on ethnicity and religion	Instability and division in society
Cyber warfare: theft, hacking	Data stealing/sabotaging	Info-infrastructure crash/ espionage
Cognizant: Disinformation, incitement, social media/ provocateurs	social media, print media, literatures	Propaganda/public incite- ment/unrest
Nonstate actors, criminal organizations	Sabotage/suicide attack/ violence	Terror/civil war/unrest/ capturing territories
Private military corporations (PMC), mercenaries	Violence/killings	Killings/espionage
Military: conventional, guerrilla, nuclear	Force to force attack	Killing/annihilation/ capturing territories

Source: Rajendra Baikad et al., ed., *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2>.

this is because the horizontal synchronization will be more indirect, ambiguous, and vast in size. The ramifications to such attacks are direct and indirect; linear or nonlinear disturbances serve the ends of the attacking state. The flexibility of customization of the operations (depending on the threshold of deterrence of the defender) provides the attacker the option to use its force just below the defender’s detection capabilities. It further enables the attacker to use its force by just remaining below the defender’s response threshold and with the opportunity to leverage regulating the intensity by escalating and de-escalating the operations of the attacking state.

It can also be understood from this that hybrid warfare is essentially a strategic matter orchestrated by the governments that focuses mainly on nonmilitary hubs of gravity initially, functioning covertly in different interfaces against the specific targets and hence avoiding the conventional methods of war but eventu-

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ally shadowed by military capabilities. Thus, it successfully creates the strategic combination of varied civilian and military means to paralyze an operational political system to its own benefits. It is hypothetical that because of the known catastrophic results of nuclear weapons and the international legal conventions, the prospects of a full-fledged war among the adversary states is minimal. Perhaps this reason also raises the possibility of subconventional and hybrid models of warfare, but at the same time it cannot be denied that this potential hybrid model of warfare has the capacity to spill over and transform into major conventional war forms in later stages.

The world is entering an era of concentric circles of strategic competition within great power states, most notably China, the United States, and Russia escalating the challenges before the world. The interesting aspect here is that these great power countries believe these hybrid competitions to be operated below the threshold of full-fledged major wars to have a plausible deniability for the damages. Another important factor that remains pertinent here is that hybrid warfare is operated in a strategic and customized manner, in order to remain below obvious detection range and the response thresholds that require a highly calibrated and strategic effort. In the scale of competition, however, these challenges have been termed *gray zones*.

## HYBRID WARFARE: RUSSIA AS A CASE STUDY

The study of European gray zone cases indicates the presence of different hybrid campaigns to subvert the power of political institutions in the region. The significant elements in this type of warfare are that they are strategically undeclared and use kinetic and nonkinetic kinds of tools (such as using ethnic populations to create internal disturbances, cyber thefts, hacking, and disinformation campaigns) to fill the potential gaps from where it can be used for both military and civil purposes. A significant instrument that is being used to coerce the target countries is economic overdependence. A pertinent example is the case of Russia's energy tactics in Ukraine. Moscow imposed the energy crisis, along with the military, semimilitary, and disinformation campaigns over Ukraine to destabilize it.<sup>6</sup> This underscores the importance of energy security for national security because pivotal dependence on foreign states might result in a strategic liability. They said, interdependence between the provider state and the consumer

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Ruhle and Julijus Grubliauskas, *Energy as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare* (Rome, Italy: NATO Defense College, 2015), 113.

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state can pose a potentially detrimental consumer-side ramification, in which the provider can leverage a longer wait for the revenues against the consumer. The consumer's compelling dependability from such a single source would expose strategic vulnerability. Russia provided almost the total gas requirement of Ukraine, until the 2014 annexation of Crimea, but gradually it declined and eventually completely ceased providing it in 2016. Noticeably, it does use the gas pipelines across Ukraine to supply Central and Eastern European markets and pays the transit fees to Ukraine. In 2020 Moscow wanted to close the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline moving across Ukraine, but this could have resulted in severe revenue loss to Kyiv, pushing the country to starve, hence Moscow and Kyiv negotiated the continuation of the pipeline.<sup>7</sup> The use of economic measures as a weapon to coerce the target nation by making them over-reliant on the (re) source was an apparent tool leveraged by the Russians to create a power imbalance against the Eastern European countries to force compromised negotiation.<sup>8</sup>

In 2008 and again in 2014, the world witnessed the reappearance of the ages of coercion, disturbances, and annexations in Europe with the Russia-Georgia war and the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which have now become emblematic conflicts by strategic designs of today's contemporary political system of Eastern Europe. This archetypal spectrum of components that destabilizes and terminates the progressive growth of democracies, such as the presence of ethnic population pockets that can behave as carriers of the hidden agendas of their respective governments, coupled with the complex geopolitical locations, has severe implications for future possibilities of similar outcomes in the peripheral regions of Russia. These new emerging trends and patterns showcase the complex facets of the hybrid model of warfare in the region. However, with these new indications the vulnerable states of the region are silently examining the future course of action of Russia and the Western allies, other regional alliances, and the current existing conflict dynamics in the region.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps at the same time in the given circumstances between action and inaction of the frozen conflict, regions may experience a situation of suppression and subjugation leading to menacing outcomes that result in threatening violence.

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Masters, *Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Kent DeBenedictis, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare" and the Annexation of Crimea* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Lauren van Metre and Kathleen Kuehnast, *The Ukraine-Russia Conflict: Signals and Scenarios for the Broader Region* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2015).



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The vehement display of military might by conducting military exercises near the borders of vulnerable states and even in some cases infiltrating their territories results in intimidation. The unfavorable balance of power of Baltic countries and Russia is an indication of a latent military statecraft adopted by Russia in recent years against the Baltic countries by questioning the legitimacy of the independence of these countries.<sup>10</sup> Though the Baltic countries are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and enjoy deterrence against any possible adversary under Article V of the NATO alliance's treaty, the Baltic countries still feel vulnerable to the potential subversion strategies employed by Russia against them in the region.

Russia's 2014 military intervention in Donetsk and Luhansk and subjugation of Crimea narrates the hybrid character of war evolving in Europe. The status of some gray-zone states of Europe like Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh exist but are not recognized, although they are de jure status with the country of their origin but de facto in reality as they are controlled by another. Places like Donetsk and Luhansk are heavily guarded by the military of Russia and its proxies but have stalled development and are completely isolated from the world. With a feeble legal system and threats of instability and conflicts, these regions are more prone and accessible to smuggling and other unlawful activities. Hybrid warfare's operative strategies and the outcomes are quite evident from the strategic annexation of Crimea by overthrowing the regime of President Viktor Yanukovich and the implanting of Russian military and Spetsnaz in the form of "little green men" in strategic locations, forcing the region to implement a referendum and eventually join Russia.<sup>11</sup>

Nagorno-Karabakh is another unrecognized state between Armenia and Azerbaijan—two former Soviet republics currently in a state of frozen conflict that are recalculating their security dynamics as they are examining Russia's moves and the West's reactions on the regional situation, especially post Ukrainian crisis. In this region particularly, the repercussions after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Moscow's moves are surely creating disturbances and discomfort, which is perhaps resulting in gradual aggression by both of the states. It is also

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander Lanoszka, "Russian Hybrid Warfare and Extended Deterrence in Eastern Europe," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (January 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Hunter Stoll, "Kautilya in the Gray Zone: How Russia Has Successfully Adopted Two-Thousand Year Old Teachings," *Georgetown Security Studies Review* (2021).

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notable that since 2014, there has been an uptick in the level of violence in the region; the situation is also testing Russia's role in deterring these moves in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moscow is committed by treaty to protect Armenia in adversarial conditions that might create constant insecurities in the region, especially to Ukraine.<sup>12</sup> Moscow's intentions in deploying its military across the regional dynamics will be analyzed by these stakeholders, and in any fluid conflicting situation the stress levels of these states might result in miscalculation.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian invasion and occupation of Moldovan territory in Transnistria and the presence of its Operational Group of Russian Forces (ORGF) without the consent of the Moldovan government in the region self-narrates the manifestation of its strategic policies.<sup>14</sup> In 1990, Transnistria severed from Moldova, resulting in a civil war leading to the cease-fire in the state, which is still carried on by joint peacekeeping forces of 402 Russian, 492 Transnistrians, 355 Moldovan troops, and 10 Ukrainian military troops at 15 strategic checkpoints near the border close to the Dniester River.<sup>15</sup> The noteworthy point here is that Russian peacekeeping forces are present there with the consent of the Moldovan government but at the same time Russian troops of the 14th Army are also present in Transnistria, which is without the consent of the Moldovan government. Moreover, Russia stockpiles arms and its troops support the Transnistria separatist government.

In 2006, despite a referendum in which the population of Transnistria voted for independence, the European Court of Human Rights decided according to the public international law the region under the Transnistria separatist government will remain under the control of Moldova.<sup>16</sup> Transnistria remains in limbo, with no humanitarian reforms or economic development and an uncertain political future.

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<sup>12</sup> For more than 30 years, Moscow has been mediating between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two Caucasus countries, over disputes in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region under Armenian control but globally recognized as part of Azerbaijan. In 2020, both Azerbaijan and Armenia were engaged in a 44-day battle, which finally ended in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). However, both these countries remain archrivals with Russia's intervention. Just before the invasion of Kyiv, President Vladimir Putin met President Ilham Aliyev and both signed a 43-point allied cooperation, which is believed to embolden Russia when it has been ostracized currently in the world. In this situation, Armenia might retaliate considering this allied cooperation as a stab in the back. This might create disturbance in the region.

<sup>13</sup> Metre and Kuehnast, *The Ukraine-Russia Conflict*.

<sup>14</sup> Metre and Kuehnast, *The Ukraine-Russia Conflict*.

<sup>15</sup> Annyssa Bellal, ed., *The War Report: Armed Conflicts in 2018* (Geneva, Switzerland: Geneva Academy, 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Bellal, ed., *The War Report*.

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All these tools of interventions and negotiations share the key components of hybrid warfare models and the formation of gray zones fit into this model. They use a strategy of failure to settle the agenda based on conflicts of one superior state imposing its will on the vulnerable state. Adversarial states seek to avoid settling the issues, so they have an excuse to maintain forces on the disputed territories indefinitely. These gray zones have stakes in the adversarial state that purposefully make it difficult to settle the issue, so that a prolonged period of occupation of the territory can be maintained.

Some Western political scientists are of the opinion that Russia is entering into the new assertive posture on the international forum guided by the Gerasimov Doctrine (which has actually been inspired by the Primakov Doctrine by Russian military theoreticians and strategists like Alexander Andreyevich Svechin and Georgii Samoilovich Isserson).<sup>17</sup> This model is a fusion of hard and soft power concepts of various domains of a government that seeks the thin line between war and peace. In a Russian weekly trade publication, Valery Gerasimov published a paper titled "Military Industrial Kurier," where he explained methods formulated by Soviets and which then contextually blended with military strategies resulting in total war, a war which is not taken head-on or rated as conventional but in strategic fragments in order to weaken the target state.<sup>18</sup> Gerasimov defined these strategies as blurring lines between war and peace, creating a disturbed zone that eventually becomes the nonconventional means of achieving the political objectives of the aggressor state. He further defined this as a hybrid warfare, pitching the use of nonmilitary methods to weaken a state, then overpowering it in order to achieve strategic goals.<sup>19</sup>

However, there is no official evidence that Russia is intentionally following this model, paradoxically it was rather believed (or projected) that Gerasimov was actually depicting the world of the Russian preparation instead. Perhaps in Russian parlance, it is believed that hybrid warfare is a tool employed by the Western states. The exit of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union does not erode the ideas that drove their expansionist policies for ages. Russian history defines their ideological element that drives their foreign policy considerations even today. Factors like economic growth, protection of the Russian state from encroach-

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<sup>17</sup> Eugene Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action*.

<sup>19</sup> Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action*.

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ment by other powerful regimes, religion and ethnic issues, and above all the political ambitions of their rulers all play the key role in devising the current Russian foreign policies.<sup>20</sup>

A significant driver in the current regime of Russia is the potential stability within the state and the internal support for the existing government that provides it the complete freedom to take independent decisions related to any interventions made during a conflict. Another important driver is the Western response to the ongoing aggressive actions of Russia in the region; a lukewarm response will only encourage and embolden the Russian ambitions to the extent of jeopardizing the peace-building process.

## RUSSIA EVENTUALLY UNPACKED ITS WAR TOOLS IN UKRAINE: THE CURRENT SCENARIO

The Russian conflict in Ukraine is happening, which Western intelligence had knowledge of but for which it was perhaps not prepared. Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war on a sovereign European nation, Ukraine, has actually exposed Western Europe's vulnerabilities and its threshold to deter the dominance of Russia. The worrisome part of this war is the outrageous defiance of the international rules-based order by Moscow, its willful avoidance of the international appeals for peaceful negotiations, and Moscow's indifferent response to severe, crippling economic sanctions imposed by the West.

Russia's war clearly defines Russia's goal of long-term occupation in Ukraine, strategically planned to manifest its hybrid model of war methodology to weaken Ukraine and sever it from Western Europe completely. With the beginning of this war on 24 February 2022, the Kremlin initiated its direct and conventional methods of hybrid warfare to create a territory that becomes nonfunctional and disturbed, so that it becomes easier for Russia to control it either through a puppet regime or by continuous deployment of its army, making it another gray zone of Europe.

The unjust war on Ukraine since the beginning of 2022 unfolds the complete strategic model manifested by Russia ever since it annexed Crimea in 2014. It is quite evident now how within months Russia has changed the course and direction of the war methodology in this decade, but with no substantial gain yet.

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<sup>20</sup> Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, *Grand Illusions: The Impact of Misperception about Russia on U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021).

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However, with this war Russia has not only rekindled the practice of territorial conquests and annexations but has also revitalized the threat of nuclear warfare across the world. Moreover, this act of Russia is also highly encouraging for other nations of the world that have been defying the international law and order, for instance, China's efforts to intimidate Taiwan and its South China Sea neighbors like the Philippines and Vietnam.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 occurred when Russian soldiers grabbed the Crimean region based on a narrative that the invasion was justified in order to protect the Russian-speaking people in Crimea and the southeast of Ukraine. This strategic tool of narrative building was further implemented in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, purportedly to support the independence of Russian-speaking peoples. Exploiting and augmenting the ethnicity for crafting conflicts has been one of the key tools that Russia has used in Ukraine since 2014. Moscow has strategically used the fears of ethnic Russians and fanned their discontents in Ukraine to bring them in their fold to manifest Moscow's objectives. The nature of this conflict was never completely organic, but manipulations by Russia at various levels have resulted in political tensions allowing Russia to justify its aggression toward Ukraine. Just weeks before this war, Russia waged a cyberattack on major Ukrainian websites; this has been a practice in the past also wherein they have shut down Kyiv's electrical networks. However, Ukraine was able to defend its facilities at a later stage.<sup>21</sup>

Moscow initiated its strategic war in February 2022, proffering a bizarre list of grievances justifying it as a "special military operation." The cause of grievances mainly targeted long-smoldering issues over NATO's expansion and its underlying trust deficit in the current European security model. Over the years, Russia has followed a policy vis-à-vis Ukraine and Belarus regarding their respective national identities; Russia believes they are unrecognized states and therefore vulnerable to manipulation by the West.<sup>22</sup> Another strategy used by Russia during the war was constantly threatening the Western nations against participating in the conflict under implied threat of nuclear attack; apparently Russia was designing its deterrence in disguise. These threats, however, reduced the gravity of nuclear power to a simple deterrence toy. Despite this, Moscow

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<sup>21</sup> Capt Michael C. Mastalski, USAF, "Russia's Implementation of Hybrid Warfare: Estonia ('07), Georgia ('08), Crimea ('14)," *Wild Blue Yonder*, 27 April 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russia's War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2022).

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still remained unimpressive in comparison to the Ukrainian fighting spirit and leadership.

What has this war brought Russia? It lost (as of this writing) more than 28,000 soldiers, vast quantities of vehicle and gear, and suffered major naval losses including the cruiser *Moskva*, which was quite unexpected for Russia. Russia destroyed and decimated a sovereign nation, killing thousands and displacing millions of Ukrainian civilians. Russia is facing severe sanctions today, leading to approximately 17.7 percent annual inflation. European nations are shutting down energy imports from Russia. This aggression also provoked Sweden and Finland to seek NATO membership. Thousands of experts are leaving Russia; there is civil unrest within Russia; Russia was suspended from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and most importantly Russia lost its grandiosity, respect, and trust as a nation in the international forum.<sup>23</sup> It has awoken and unified Europe. This war is also testing the limits of the United States and its diplomatic and strategic powers to avert and limit such wars, possibly challenging Washington to develop new strategies to overcome nuclear threats.

## A STRATEGIC POLICY TOOL

One of the important strategic patterns of gray-zone warfare is adopting a thin veneer of deniability by the revisionist state that primarily creates ambiguity and eventually blocks the international community from taking any action. Russia's covert deployment in Crimea and the Donbas of special forces troops in the guise of local separatists—the “little green men”—in 2014, and China's island building in the South China Sea, ostensibly for rescue operations and environmental research but in fact to provide a literal foundation for expanded sovereignty claims, are examples of veiled intentions behind strategic agendas of these states.<sup>24</sup> China is creating artificial islands in the South China Sea with an objective to finally claim the region as a whole. This works on a two-pronged theory, as China makes its presence under the guise of humanitarian work, in the form of some research project or disaster management and rescue operations, but in reality, these manmade islands act as China's military establishments in the international waters, in defiance of international law itself.

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<sup>23</sup> Alexy Kovalev, “As War Hits the Homefront, Russia's Defeat Inches Closer,” *Foreign Policy*, 19 October 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Davis Knoll, *Story Telling and Strategy: How Narrative Is Central to Gray Zone Warfare* (West Point, NY: Modern War Institute, 2021).

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However, an overt deniability over the tactical intentions gives a clear-cut understanding about the strategic intentions of the state, which gives the international community an opportunity to react. This kind of pattern also establishes a complete narrative underpinning the strategic objectives, but if the narrative fails to get momentum, the intended strategic objectives will have difficulty succeeding. Gray zone warfare patterns mainly focus on deniability and succeeding in a collaborative way by implementing minor actions.

With successful iterations of the narratives, the aggressor state implants the doubt to the target state and gradually enforces the narratives and its activities as a routine affair of the gray zone; over time, it eventually becomes the accepted norm for the target state and an explanation for the actions of the aggressor state.<sup>25</sup> Russia, with its recent unprovoked invasion in Ukraine, is using a rather escalated form of narrative building to justify its invasion. This renewed invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 paved the path for Europe's deadliest war since World War II. After years of strategic maneuverings and gradual military buildups along Ukraine's border, eventually Russia invaded its neighbor from multiple directions. The major strategic goal was to recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk republics in Ukraine's Donbas region. The region is a target of Russian narratives against Ukraine's activity in this region in order to have justifiable war narratives for its own actions.

Another significant aspect of this warfare system is it does not involve the hardcore methods of conventional war, but at the same time it does focus more on the competitions relative to the prevalent norms of the international system. The adversary in hybrid war adopts strategic operations as purely standard and regular behavior, eventually leading to a change in status quo. This kind of repeated activity consolidates the established narrative and actions and hence sets a trend. A similar strategy can be witnessed in South China Sea by China in establishing its claims against other claimants by calibrating its maritime militia/fishermen and army by switching their roles accordingly.<sup>26</sup> Establishing and consolidating the strategic narratives before the international community makes the conventional military operations in response unreasonable, giving the adversary the comfort to proceed with their methods.

The plausible pattern that is rising out of peripheral states of Russia is inter-

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<sup>25</sup> Knoll, *Story Telling and Strategy*.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, "China's Maritime Militia: What It Is and How to Deal with It," *Foreign Affairs*, 23 June 2016.

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nal instability leading to political vacuum and external provocations; revanchist Russia's intrinsic regime-based strategic objectives and the phlegmatic approach of the Western countries prove to be the key drivers for the future course of this region. These emerging patterns and their responses by the respective variable state will shape future geopolitics and determine the intensity of the crisis in Europe. The definite patterns of coercion were implemented in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and other Eastern European states and may result in severe implications for the rest of the states in the future. These coercion patterns rest on strategic designs that operate in the form of sharp power, political manipulations, malign influence, and irregular warfare.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps this reflects the war techniques from the past, but these patterns are wider in scope and outreach, lying somewhere between routine statecraft and overt warfare. Knowing that Russia is uncomfortable with the U.S.-dominated international order and hence apprehensive to the Western intrusions on its strategic objectives, it will continue to use the patterns of war that are short of any full-scale war with restricted and moderate use of force testing and examining Western moves.

These tools generally focus on creating political mayhem that purposefully keeps the operations below the level of direct warfare. That being said, a prior observation of the target state is pertinent to understand its vulnerable gaps for application of a customized hybrid model for that state. The customization ranges from proxy support to state-designed forces that work on the fulcrum of provocation. Russia's tactical trend for Estonia, Georgia, and Crimea/Eastern Ukraine has remained the same: application of low-intensity force, initially without conventional military, but eventually setting a pretext for conventional military action.

A Russian subversion strategy revolves around more than one particular pattern; it rests upon various forms of vertical strategies operating simultaneously on different interfaces. Moscow implements its subversive techniques focusing and searching for the vulnerabilities and the plausible gaps in the target state. However, the Russian subversion strategy does not revolve round a very strong central command and sometimes the subversive controls are denied activities, ambiguous and unfigured too. To have access into the government agencies or institutions of a target country, the adversary studies their domestic matters that influence the politics and decision making, which in turn provides Russia its

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<sup>27</sup> Sharp political powers are used by the adversary state to either influence or subdue the vulnerable target state.



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subversion objectives achieved without much international attention, and with less expenditure and investment. The subversion techniques that include various realistic operations (vivid operations) rests on Moscow's interest and intentions in the destined country, however, the congenial circumstances, resources, and other dynamics also play an important role.

The social divides existing in the Western societies are exploited and sometimes even the democratic values of these societies are also leveraged, like freedom of speech and assembly, which are used for the strategic implementation of situations that lead to destabilization of the state.<sup>28</sup> Russia extended its covert support to the separatists of Eastern Ukraine with the conscious effort of creating an imbroglio to achieve its objectives. In these scenarios Moscow does not try hard to hide its role but also at the same time it did not readily admit to its role either. Another method is economic predation and punishing the target country as seen in the case of eastern flank countries of Europe where Russia's monopolistic power abuse on the production sector can be seen. In the recent past, Russia seized the flow of gas through Ukraine as a rebuttal for the Orange Revolution from 2006 to 2009, which resulted in measurable economic harm to Ukraine and other Eastern European countries.<sup>29</sup> In recent years, a study conducted by 15 intelligence and security agencies produced a thorough analysis resulting in 40 annual reports by the following 11 nations: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. It reveals that Russia has been involved in Western politics and other covert operations in propaganda, cyber operations, political affairs, and influence activities in order to move strategically on the hybrid warfare model.<sup>30</sup>

A major factor playing an important role in this region are the vulnerable countries sharing deep economic, political, and historic ties with Moscow that gives power and influence to Russia to manipulate and meddle in the affairs of its neighboring states. The hybrid methodology implemented by Russia in its periphery states is complex in nature but all connected to the same interface. Moscow is considered to be one of the most advanced in cyber technology; it

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Radin, Alyssa Demus, and Krystyna Marcinek, *Understanding Russian Subversion: Patterns, Threats and Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7249/PE331>.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Smeenk, "Russian Gas for Europe: Creating Access and Choice" (PhD thesis, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Geir Hågen Karlsen, "Divide and Rule: Ten Lessons about Russian Political Influence Activities in Europe," *Palgrave Communications*, no. 5 (2019).

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appears to have used its technological capabilities most prolifically as a tool for hybrid warfare to disrupt the internet infrastructure of targeted countries. In 2007, Estonia's internet infrastructure was severely impacted in retaliation for the removal of a World War II Soviet war memorial in Tallinn, the capital. The Russian hacker group "Cyber-Berkut" (pro-Russian hacktivists) tampered and subdued the cyber infrastructure of the Ukrainian National Election Commission to cripple the credibility of the elections.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the military campaigns supported by Russian cyber capabilities in Georgia caused a complete setback to the government and business organizations.

The Kremlin's involvement of proxies, disinformation, and hack and leak operations exploiting ethnic cleavages and economic subversions as tools to intervene into the political affairs of the Baltic states is forming an impression that hybrid warfare does bear the potential of replacing hard power, but this understanding is not completely correct as Russian military and hybrid warfare strategies conducted by the Kremlin are inseparable and they go hand in hand.<sup>32</sup> To understand it more clearly, it can be said that military power is an imperative enabler of hybrid warfare, however, the various tools used for hybrid warfare are used when the actual military action is less feasible, but it always remains in the backdrop as an active facilitator.

The use of ethnic cleavages to achieve policy goals is yet another tool. Exploiting the ethnic divides and historical ties in the targeted states to understand the trajectory of hybrid warfare may be examined. A consideration of the recent substantive example, wherein the deployment of Russian secret services for the strategic use of the propaganda apparatus to mobilize and incite ethnic Russian populations in Ukraine may serve the objective of ethnic cleavages. Another tactical move that has been practiced in this regard is the use of a proxy population. The use of this method could be seen in the Balkans, wherein Russia incited historical grievances and sought out the ethnic Serbs for their respective ethnic demands.<sup>33</sup> Similarly in Georgia, Abkhaz and South Ossetian minorities were skillfully used to achieve the Kremlin's goal. The episode of the Catalan secession is also evidence of the sparks of incitement planted by Moscow through

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<sup>31</sup> Patrick Cullen and Njord Wegge, *MCDC Countering Hybrid Warfare Project: Understanding Hybrid Warfare* (n.p.: Multinational Capability Development Campaign, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Rumer, *The Primakov (Not Gerasimov) Doctrine in Action*.

<sup>33</sup> Russia enjoys a shared cultural (Slavic) and religious (Eastern Orthodox) connection and historical ties with the Serbs, hence to make its presence more prominent in the region it has always buttressed its relations in the Balkans to have political leverage.

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Spanish-speaking people and bots. In the 2017–18 Spanish constitutional crisis, wherein the Catalan separatists were incited through Russian propaganda like RT and Sputnik using the Spanish language to influence people for which bots were used through social media in Spain in order to create disturbance and a movement against the Spanish government and to create a negative image of Spain. Then as a two-pronged theory it also warned Madrid that Catalan secession would also drastically impact the Spanish economy.<sup>34</sup> The use of ethnic cleavages as a tool can be seen prominently in the Baltic states too, although these countries are members of NATO and European Union (EU), wherein Russia is found to be instrumental in disrupting communication infrastructures and in creating civil unrest through its pockets of the Russian diaspora.<sup>35</sup>

Noting the fact that Russian speakers make up approximately 30 percent of the Latvian population, it becomes considerably easier to stimulate various cognizant tools effective there, especially looking into the coercive and fragmented minority rights, the civil population becomes more prone to be disquiet and unstable.<sup>36</sup> Media platforms like Baltic Media Alliance, which is instrumental in connecting and channelling the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries, promotes instability in the region.<sup>37</sup>

In Latvia during the parliamentary election process in 2018, pernicious Russian cyberattacks on Latvian government agencies, which was reported by the Latvian Constitution Protection Bureau, discovered the presence of Russia's *Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie* or GRU (Russian: Chief Intelligence Office) military agency in this malicious event. The attacks were mostly intended for the Central Election Commission, responsible for the electoral process, however the attack did not result in success, but it elevated distrust and discordance between both the states for future discourse.<sup>38</sup> Moreover this issue failed to gather much international attention and did not receive any support from international law as there was no ongoing military conflict between Latvia and Russia.

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<sup>34</sup> David Alandete, "Russian Meddling Machine Sets Sights on Catalonia," *El Pais*, 28 September 2017.

<sup>35</sup> David Carment, *War's Future: The Risks and Rewards of Gray-Zone Conflict and Hybrid Warfare* (Calgary, Alberta: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2018).

<sup>36</sup> Carment, *War's Future*.

<sup>37</sup> Carment, *War's Future*.

<sup>38</sup> Krista Viksnins, *Cyber Warfare in Latvia: A Call for New Cyber Warfare Terminology* (Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2020).

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Russia baffled the transatlantic community with its hybrid warfare techniques used in the invasion of Ukraine in 2014, and now in 2022, particularly its strategic merger of speed, cohesion, and proper coordination of civil and military components. It skillfully combined the conventional and modern methods of warfare, which was supported by the covert operations of special forces as provocateurs, disinformation engagement campaigns expedited the destabilization process, and finally Russia augmented the whole process by strategically putting economic pressure through its oil and gas resources on Ukraine.<sup>39</sup> The response and resistance of Ukraine in the 2022 war has not given Moscow the expected result. It seems Russia is lost in its own creation of its “special military operation,” or it may be that too many strategies and its obsession to recreate the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence has led it to oblivion.

Kremlin Watch report (an endeavor of 16 governmental and nongovernmental organizations of 12 European countries), published in 2018, states that Russia uses belligerent hostile methods like disinformation, collaboration, and assistance to European extremists and radical leaders to create instability in the target states. This action has already estranged 14 European countries (UK, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Romania, Germany, Finland, Czech Republic, Denmark, and Poland) from Russia as they clearly acknowledge the existence of the threat and are prepared to take countermeasures. However there are certain other countries like Cyprus and Greece that have shown no substantial retaliation toward Russia, and the countries like Hungary, Luxembourg, Austria, Malta, Slovenia, and Portugal completely either ignore or deny such possibilities.<sup>40</sup> Most active resilience and the highest level of countermeasures and preparedness can be observed from Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the UK.<sup>41</sup>

A conscious rousing surfaced post-Crimean annexation by certain other nations of the region, including Spain, France, the Netherlands, Romania, Germany, Finland, Denmark, Poland, and the Czech Republic, which clearly indicates the presence of destabilizing factors in the region. Apparently on several cases

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<sup>39</sup> “Hybrid War, Russia and the Role of ‘Law Fare’ as a Pre-emptive Countermeasure” (presentation, Nordic Ways of War and Peace, Royal Danish Defence College, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.5004.6327>.

<sup>40</sup> *2018 Ranking of Countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin’s Subversion Operations* (Prague, Czech Republic: European Values, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Mark Galeotti, “Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages its Political War in Europe,” European Council on Foreign Relations, 15 September 2017.

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it is observed that Russia relies on strong alliances with the hostile foreign influences, and the governing politicians play a supportive role with these external influences and strategically abort any countermeasures taken by their state.<sup>42</sup>

Russia indulges in encouraging active strategic techniques to create chaos and ambiguities in Europe. The primary objective is to have more perplexed governments in its periphery; it has a two-pronged theory, primarily to have confused and destabilized governments in order to avoid any threats emerging from its immediate neighborhood. Secondly, it will be an opportunity to intervene easily into a destabilized and chaotic state to serve Russia's strategic objectives as this will build a more conducive environment for it. These hybrid mode activities involve an array of operatives from governmental officials to media to military to espionage systems to businesses. Depending on the priorities of different states, this also includes determining and strategizing on the correlation between response deterrence of these state government agencies and their susceptibility to the Russian influence.

Media outlets are not only the singular tools that are being employed by Russia; other sources or messages for political propaganda by paid lobbyists are also being employed by Moscow as strategic tools. There is another subtle trend to Russian propaganda machinery, like creating a cloud of rumors and conspiracy theories. The major task before Moscow is also to make their own people believe in the half-truths and complete lies in order to envelope their activities for both foreign and domestic audiences. The other, better method is to disbelieve all the other possibilities that are argumentatively correct. Perhaps the hybrid model of new warfare may lead to destabilizing societies and states in the international system, but with a resilient democratic order of the states and the international law and order under a robust United Nations with proper reforms, this may prohibit such instances in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Russia's new strategic mode began in 2008 with the invasion of Georgia, however, during the eviction of Georgia from South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia did suffer from lack of military competencies in comparison to the Western-supported military of Georgia. For instance, Russia was responsible for the crashes of three Russian aircraft due to inadequate equipment and effective coor-

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<sup>42</sup> *2018 Ranking of Countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin's Subversion Operations.*

**Table 5.2.** Political behavior response of the European countries vis-à-vis Russia

Collaboration	Active opposition	Partial opposition	No opposition
Cyprus and Greece	Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, and UK	Croatia, Ireland, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Belgium	Austria, Hungary, Luxembourg, Italy, Malta, and Portugal

Source: *2018 Ranking of Countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin’s Subversion Operations*.

dination.<sup>43</sup> Since the Georgian war underlined some of the shortfalls of the Russian military in the form of lack of training, coordination, and technology, this gave Moscow enough reasons to recognize the challenges and perhaps provided the impetus to find alternatives to rebuild its Soviet image through employing various types of hybrid methods to accomplish its strategic goals across Europe.

Various methods and techniques are being employed by the adversary state against its objective state, customized according to the gaps and flaws present in the target states in order to influence the state to negotiate. The above study reveals the various tools and the methodology of hybrid warfare in destabilizing states for strategic purposes. These are nonconventional forms of warfare, which cover all types of military retaliations existing on or above the level of peace and below the level of war to apply plausible deniability. Economic coercion in the form of loans, debts, and embargoes are also some of the methods of destabilizing states in an indirect manner. Another important tool is social media and its disinformation campaigns. This method is rapidly becoming a very effective method of inciting the strategic pockets of population. Cyber theft or sabotaging the entire info-infrastructure for the purpose of information theft or espionage will be a serious concern for contemporary and future wars. The nonabidance of international laws and gradual drift from the international norms to build independent narratives to suit specific goals is the more politically skewed method that is being adopted by certain states.

The case study of Russia reveals that between 2008 and Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, much has happened in Eastern Europe. Perhaps

<sup>43</sup> Maria Snegovaya, *Putin’s Information Warfare in Ukraine: Soviet Origins of Russia’s Hybrid War* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, 2015).

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the world did not take Russia's initial moves seriously, except for imposing some economic sanctions. These sanctions were assumed to be enough by the Western states until the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 comprised a blend of Russia's old Soviet-era military posture with a new cynically designed strategic model, which perhaps could be understood as hybrid warfare, but the unexpected part was Western underestimation of Moscow's audacity.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> DeBenedictis, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare" and the Annexation of Crimea*.

## ◉ Chapter Six ◉

# The Evolution of U.S. and European Security Assistance to Ukraine

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### *Diplomacy and Defense on the Edge of Deterrence*

Frank T. Goertner; Edward Hunter Christie;  
Yaropolk Taras Kulchyckyj, PhD; and Eugene M. Fishel, PhD

*We condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms . . . [and] stand in full solidarity with the government and the people of Ukraine in the heroic defence of their country.*

~ Heads of State and Government  
of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance<sup>1</sup>

*We will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.*

~ Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7)<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

In June 2022, the global West met in Europe for a historic round of militarized diplomacy in defense of Ukraine and condemnation of Russia. It was a moment that would have shocked many of their citizens just a few years prior. Yet, three months into Russia's overt war of aggression to destroy Ukraine's independent identity, it was both incremental and logical for every leader involved.

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, "Madrid Summit Declaration," press release, 29 June 2022.

<sup>2</sup> European Council, "G7 Leaders Communiqué—Executive Summary," statement, 28 June 2022.



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The United States and Europe have provided security assistance to Ukraine in various modalities since the early 1990s. Across three decades of support spanning six U.S. presidential administrations and 10 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) secretaries general, Ukraine has become a model of how Western assistance can foster democratic security institutions, establish trust among Western defense professionals, and modernize niche military capabilities. However, Ukraine also offers a case study on the limits of U.S. and NATO security assistance as a military deterrent against aggression from Russia.

In four parts, this chapter traces the arc of U.S. security assistance to Ukraine from 1991 to 2022 to explore the facets of its achievements, the predicaments of its challenges, and the implications of each for the future. Starting with the rebirth of the modern Ukrainian state following the collapse of the Soviet Union, section one summarizes the origins of U.S. and European defense relations with Ukraine from 1991 to 2014. It was an era defined by meandering Western ambitions for multilateral regimes and security assistance accords aiming for post-Cold War peace *and* security in Europe. Section two explores the policy decisions confronted by U.S. leaders from 2014 to 2021 through a series of Russian aggressive actions to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Section three shifts the lens toward the European perspective during the same period. This period was one of reluctant but progressive Western adaptations and responses to a new dilemma forced on the international community by the Russian Federation: U.S. and European security assistance to Ukraine could advance peace *or* security in Europe, but *not* both. Finally, section four of the chapter considers the implications of the history of U.S. and European security assistance to Ukraine for both nations since February 2022 and into the future. This is an era that is being shaped by the carnage of war, policy, and increasingly defined by answers to the dilemma: *security before peace* has emerged as the West's united response.

Ukraine is only one nation of many, in peace and at war, that the U.S. and Western allies engage with security assistance. It is unique in history, geography, and politics. Yet, Ukraine is also emblematic of a growing class of U.S. defense partners straddling the erupting fault lines of great power competition. Where Ukraine goes, others will likely follow; and what the United States provides for Ukraine's defense, other partners will likely request. It may be too early to assess everything the United States can learn from this relationship, but it is increasingly clear that the lessons will resonate around the world.

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## SECTION ONE

### *Peace and Security: Origins of U.S. and European Defense Relations with Ukraine*

In August 1989, as Mikhail Gorbachev maneuvered a waning Soviet Union into glasnost and détente with the United States, two warships of the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet—USS *Thomas S. Gates* (CG 51) and USS *Kaufman* (FFG 59)—pulled into the port of Sevastopol, in the then-Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, for an inaugural visit, greeted by crowds of cheering locals and Soviet military personnel.<sup>3</sup> It is unlikely anyone present that day could envision what was to unfold around them in the coming years. Focused more on ceremony and culture than military cooperation, the visit foreshadowed the genesis of more than three decades of evolving defense ties among the United States, NATO, Russia, and an independent Ukraine.

The birth of a new relationship came two summers later in August 1991, when the citizens of Sevastopol joined representatives in their capital of Kyiv to declare an independent state of Ukraine. It was bold but not unprecedented. The Soviet Union had not yet formally dissolved, nor had Russia established independence in the preceding months. With no coherent response from the Kremlin, Ukraine led the remaining 10 republics that followed.<sup>4</sup>

The United States and many NATO allies looked at Ukrainian independence with a mix of caution, uncertainty, ambition, and concern. Foreign policy toward the reborn independent state reflected each, with U.S. and NATO security assistance providing a key tool to modulate priorities for relations to develop and mature. During the first decade of relations, caution was at the fore as nuclear stability and military familiarization activities dominated the foreign policy agenda. By the late 1990s, Ukrainian government and defense reforms offered more mature bilateral goals. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil refocused ambitions on military support for global counterterrorism and expeditionary coalition operations. That focus would progressively widen in the early 2000s to include regional integration and inclusion in transregional defense regimes until a final foundational span, from 2010 to 2014, when cau-

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<sup>3</sup> Dan Fisher, "Sevastopol Rolls Out Red Carpet for U.S. Sailors," *Los Angeles (CA) Times*, 5 August 1989.

<sup>4</sup> Kristyna Foltynova, "The Undoing of the U.S.S.R.: How It Happened," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1 October 2021.

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tion reset to primacy on account of political, economic, and diplomatic ambiguity. These formative years set the stage for the pivotal security assistance policies and decisions that define contemporary times. They were defined by change but also one key consistency. From 1991 to 2014, the West's goal in Ukraine was to promote, in the words of U.S. diplomacy, peace and security not just for Ukraine, but for its regional neighbors as well.<sup>5</sup>

### *1991–1995: Caution, Ambition, and Concern*

As Ukraine reemerged as a newly independent state following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the predominance of Western national security interests was focused on a singular feature of the newborn state: its nuclear infrastructure. Fresh in the minds of Europeans was the cloud of radioactive contamination that less than five years prior belled from the meltdown of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. Chernobyl was just one of five Soviet nuclear plants on Ukraine's territory.<sup>6</sup> Across the Atlantic in the United States, there was another radioactive concern; the more than 1,800 nuclear warheads on former Soviet bases that were on Ukraine's territory made Ukraine the third largest nuclear power in the world behind Russia and the United States in December 1991.<sup>7</sup>

The result was a debate in Washington within the administration of President George H. W. Bush. Principals, such as Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, wanted to place bilateral Ukrainian nation-building at the top of the U.S. policy agenda as a means to gradually secure a stable, independent nuclear ally in the region. Others, including Secretary of State James A. Baker III, argued for a more multilateral approach to broadly promote nuclear strategic stability and nonproliferation through assistance that was much more focused on Russia than Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> President Bush, along with senior Senators Samuel A. Nunn (D-GA) and Richard G. Lugar (R-IN), ultimately sided with Baker. The White House and Congress aligned diplomatic pressure on both Moscow and, even more so, on Kyiv to abide by Soviet-signed arms control and reduction agreements in exchange for U.S. security and economic assistance to each country.

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<sup>5</sup> "Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Fact Sheets," U.S. Department of State, accessed 21 October 2022.

<sup>6</sup> "Nuclear Power in Ukraine," World Nuclear Association, March 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Nadia Schadlow, "The Denuclearization of Ukraine: Consolidating Ukrainian Security," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, no. 20 (1996).

<sup>8</sup> Schadlow, "The Denuclearization of Ukraine."

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The result was the Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act of 1991, passed in December 1991 just four days after Moscow initiated formal dissolution of the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> The first of a series of Nunn-Lugar legislative packages, the act initiated U.S. defense cooperation with Ukraine predicated on prioritizing protection and destruction of its nuclear and chemical weapons arsenals in concert with Russia and other post-Soviet nations.<sup>10</sup> With it came a bipartisan precedent in Washington that U.S. security assistance for Ukraine would be coupled, in deliberation and often legislation, with security concerns originating in Moscow.

In Brussels, a different precedent emerged. Europe and NATO forged their first post-Cold War consensus around familiarization with defense officials from neighbors previously considered adversaries. The alliance inaugurated a North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to facilitate defense dialogue programs and military-to-military exchanges between NATO and individual post-Soviet states.<sup>11</sup> Ukraine joined the NACC in December 1991, launching a relationship with NATO that, unlike the one with the United States, was wholly independent of Russia from the start.<sup>12</sup>

Gradually, the two approaches converged. In 1992, Nunn-Lugar legislation added authorizations and funds for defense industry conversion and military-to-military contacts. In 1993, the California National Guard established bilateral ties with the Ukrainian military and held their first combined exercise through a new State Partnership Program.<sup>13</sup> Washington, under newly elected President William J. “Bill” Clinton, adopted a national security doctrine shift from “containment to enlargement” of Western-led security regimes and even started postulating that Ukraine and Russia could potentially join NATO to-

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<sup>9</sup> Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act of 1991, Pub. L. No. 102-228 (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Paul I. Bernstein, and Jason D. Wood, “The Origins of Nunn-Lugar and Cooperative Threat Reduction,” Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, National Defense University Press, 1 April 2010.

<sup>11</sup> “North Atlantic Cooperation Council (1991–1997),” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, updated 9 September 2022.

<sup>12</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO-Ukraine Relations,” factsheet, 22 February 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Justin Geiger, “California NG, Ukrainian Forces Maintain Partnership Program,” U.S. Army, 22 September 2017.

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gether within a couple of decades.<sup>14</sup> During this time, U.S. foreign and security assistance to Ukraine both increased and expanded, albeit at a steady proportionality to larger assistance packages for Russia.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, in 1994 the U.S. regional stability and NATO bilateral familiarization tracks met and two landmark agreements were signed. In February 1994, Ukraine joined the first cohort of nations in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, and in December 1994, Ukraine, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom signed the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, whereby Ukraine committed to transfer or eliminate Kyiv's full nuclear force to Moscow in exchange for security assurance of "sovereign rights and non-aggression" and confirmation of Ukraine's 1991 borders, including Crimea.<sup>16</sup>

### *1995–2000: Maturity and Development*

In 1995, the United States, the European Union (EU), NATO, Ukraine, and Russia began the year with optimism for a collaborative national security for the remainder of the twentieth century. Russian president Boris Yeltsin enjoyed a publicly jovial relationship with U.S. president Clinton while Ukraine's president Leonid Kuchma was settling in as Ukraine's second democratically elected president following a peaceful transfer of power from his rival, President Leonid Kravchuk.<sup>17</sup> NATO, having successfully facilitated German reunification in 1990, was increasingly proactive in welcoming the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland through its Open Door Policy. The EU, too, initiated an enlargement policy for the former Warsaw Pact countries. Meanwhile, U.S. bipartisan congressional commitment to Nunn-Lugar style security assistance had solidified into annual policy.

Regionally as well as bilaterally, "enlargement" policy drove a progressive convergence of defense dialogue, military familiarization, and foreign policy.

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<sup>14</sup> "From Containment to Enlargement" (remarks of Anthony Lake, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, 21 September 1993); and U.S. Department of State, memo, "Strategy for NATO's Expansion and Transformation," Undersecretary of State for International Security Affairs Lynn Davis to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, 7 September 1993.

<sup>15</sup> "U.S. Security Assistance to the Former Soviet Union," *Arms Control Today* 24, no. 1 (January/February 1994): 32–33.

<sup>16</sup> "Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," UN Treaty No. 52241, 5 December 1994.

<sup>17</sup> William Jefferson Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 676.

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In September 1996, the Ukrainian Navy made a historic first port visit to the U.S. Navy's Fleet Headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>18</sup> The next year, Ukraine established a standing NATO-Ukraine Council in Brussels, five years ahead of a similar body established with Russia. Kyiv and Moscow also established their own bilateral Strategic Consultative Group and signed an accord on friendly basing and operations of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, Ukraine.<sup>19</sup>

Discord was relatively rare and generally rapidly settled. While Ukraine had agreed to give up nuclear weapons, it retained capacity to export ballistic missile and civilian nuclear technologies. Consideration of sales to China, Iran, and Libya all drew concern and ire from the United States. However, quick negotiations by U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright to exchange the scrapping of those prospects for expanded U.S. small business loans, import-export credits, and military space cooperation assured relations with Ukraine and the Nunn-Lugar paradigm endured.

### *2001–2005: Refocus and Deployment*

All this changed on 11 September 2001. In the wake of al-Qaeda's attacks on New York and Washington, the United States and NATO—under the first-ever invocation of Article 5 for collective defense—reoriented national security and military focus from peaceful enlargement in Europe to combat engagement in the Middle East. Ukraine, now a decade into bilateral defense ties with the United States and institutionally partnered with NATO, was swept along in this new orientation of foreign policy.

In late 2001, as the U.S. military prepared for operations in and around Afghanistan under the rubric of Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–14), Kyiv granted overflight rights to NATO aircraft en route to and returning from the area. That contribution later grew to include Ukrainian troop contributions in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). In 2003, as the United States expanded military operations into Iraq, Ukraine also joined Coalition operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003–11), deploying a mechanized bri-

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<sup>18</sup> "Turning the Pages Back to Sept 11, 1996," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 21 September 2021.

<sup>19</sup> "Relations with Ukraine," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, updated 11 March 2022; Stephen F. Larrabee, *Ukraine in the World, Studies in the International Relations and Security Structure of a Newly Independent State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1996), 249–70; and Michael Gordon, "Russia and Ukraine Finally Reach Accord on Black Sea Fleet," *New York Times*, 29 May 1997.

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gade of 1,650 servicemembers to Iraq for combat operations that would result in casualties of 18 killed and 44 wounded in action.<sup>20</sup> For the first time in history, Ukrainian military personnel were not just cheering or training with U.S. servicemembers; they were fighting and sacrificing together in integrated deployed chains of command.

These operational shifts in the nature of security assistance were facilitated by a range of structural shifts to both broaden and deepen bilateral defense ties in line with the original aims of then U.S. vice president Dick Cheney. The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) agreed to a bilateral defense analysis of the Ukrainian armed forces by the U.S. European Command. The U.S. State and Defense Departments consolidated their disparate military liaison, training, education and financing as well as humanitarian and civic assistance functions under a single Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) within the U.S. embassy in Kyiv, in line with other European allies and partners. Both efforts aligned and professionalized defense activities at a more operational level than prior familiarization and reform initiatives. They also enabled establishment of Ukraine's first Western-style Joint Rapid Reaction Force (JRRF).<sup>21</sup>

By 2004, defense ties between the United States and Ukraine were fundamentally changed from where they had been at the start of the decade. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and NATO policy and military planning circles, Ukrainian defense officials were now embedded, represented, and accounted for independent of Russia and their tactical inclusion exceeded anything practiced with Russian military forces. U.S. foreign assistance now had new justifications beyond strategic and regional stability, and Ukrainian military interoperability had shared equities. Kyiv could count on a consistent \$60–\$70 million in bilateral U.S. foreign aid for security and law enforcement activities across programs that not only sustained denuclearization and nonproliferation goals, but also advanced new programs—most administered by DOD, some by the State Department—for international military education and training (IMET), foreign military financing (FMF) for foreign military sales (FMS), anticrime training and technical assistance (ACTTA), export control and related border security (EXBS), and transfer of U.S. excess defense articles (EDA).<sup>22</sup> In NATO, a

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<sup>20</sup> Gary Espinas, "Ukraine's Defense Engagements with the United States," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 53–63.

<sup>21</sup> Leonid I. Polyakov, *U.S.-Ukraine Military Relations and the Value of Interoperability* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2004), 29–34.

<sup>22</sup> "U.S. Assistance to Ukraine—Fiscal Years 2003–2005," U.S. Department of State.

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Joint Working Group on Defence Technical Cooperation was established to promote increased cooperation in capability development, defense equipment procurement processes, and the development of technical standards.<sup>23</sup> In sum, the Nunn-Lugar paradigm appeared abandoned, allowing for Washington, Kyiv, and Brussels to embrace new ambitions.

### *2005–2010: Revolution and Reaction*

November 2004 marked the next pivot in defense relations with Ukraine, as the fraudulent “election” of President Kuchma’s would-be successor, Viktor Yanukovich, descended into mass protests known as the Orange Revolution. Resolved by an internationally observed rerun, Ukraine started 2005 with a new and optimistic President Viktor Yushchenko promising more transparent democratic processes as well as prioritization of closer ties to the EU, NATO, and the United States, above regional relations and interests with Russia.<sup>24</sup> Applauded by the West even as he fulfilled a campaign promise to withdraw Ukrainian military forces from Iraq, Yushchenko attracted a wave of more robust U.S. and European security assistance predicated on accelerated NATO and regional integration. Within weeks of inauguration, Yushchenko’s triumph prompted activity in Washington to increase bilateral aid by more than \$30 million; legislatively endorsed Ukraine’s membership into the World Trade Organization (WTO), four years ahead of Russia; provided a Normal Trade Relations treatment; and scheduled a coveted joint address to the U.S. Congress.<sup>25</sup> By summer 2005, a steady flow of Western dignitaries were visiting Kyiv to build on the goodwill, which included the familiar U.S. senator Lugar accompanied by freshman senator Barack H. Obama (D-IL), who together signed a pact for U.S. aid to Ukraine for bioweapon security.<sup>26</sup>

Enthusiasm in Brussels was equally robust. Just a month into his new term, Yushchenko addressed the NATO-Ukraine Commission, professing “a course [of] integration in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures . . . ready to make

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<sup>23</sup> “Relations with Ukraine.”

<sup>24</sup> Steven Woehrel, *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Woehrel, *Ukraine’s Orange Revolution and U.S. Policy*.

<sup>26</sup> Jo Warrick, “Counter Bioweapons,” *Washington Post*, 30 August 2005.



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all necessary efforts to achieve this noble goal.”<sup>27</sup> A year later, NATO ratified a Strategic Airlift Agreement with Kyiv and established a NATO Trust Fund to assist in the destruction of excess small arms, light weapons, conventional munitions, and antipersonnel mines.<sup>28</sup> By 2007, in addition to sustained commitments to ISAF in Afghanistan, the Ukrainian Navy deployed its first ship beyond the Black Sea for NATO’s maritime counterterrorism surveillance and interdiction operations in the Mediterranean for Operation Active Endeavor.<sup>29</sup> Finally, in April 2008 at NATO’s Bucharest Summit, the last for U.S. president Bush and his administration, Ukraine received diplomatic endorsement for transatlantic integration in a joint declaration by participating heads of state that Ukraine, with Georgia, “will become members of NATO,” with invitations for each to pursue a Membership Action Plan (MAP).<sup>30</sup>

As exhilarating as these developments were for those who sought closer U.S. and NATO relations with Ukraine, each did not go unnoticed by what had been the third party to the now obsolete Nunn-Lugar balance, Russia—now led by Vladimir Putin (who had succeeded Yeltsin as president of the Russian Federation in 2000).

Moscow’s neo-imperialist mindset surfaced further in 2003 with tension over the ownership of Ukraine’s Tuzla Island in the Kerch Strait. The Kerch Strait connects the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Administratively, Tuzla is part of Kerch district in eastern Crimea. Russia also signaled its opposition to Yushchenko’s election as president of Ukraine in late December 2004. Ukraine’s decisions to pursue NATO membership and to reject membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) led to diplomatic pressure from Moscow and elevated tensions in the Russia-NATO Council.<sup>31</sup> Ukraine’s independent cooperation with the West was increasingly unwelcome in Moscow, as was the West’s respect for Ukraine as a sovereign actor entitled to its own decisions, not subject to conditions set

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<sup>27</sup> “NATO HQ Summit: Opening Statement by Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine at the Meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council at the level of Heads of State and Government,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 22 February 2005.

<sup>28</sup> “NATO—Ukraine Cooperation within Partnership for Peace,” Ukraine Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 December 2019.

<sup>29</sup> “Ukrainian Support for Operation Active Endeavour,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 26 March 2007.

<sup>30</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” press release, 3 April 2008.

<sup>31</sup> “NATO-Russia Council,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, updated 1 September 2022.

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by Russia. This was on full display in February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, when Putin delivered a public speech against U.S. unilateralism and NATO expansion.<sup>32</sup> In August 2008, just three months after NATO's Bucharest declaration that both Georgia and Ukraine would in time become members of NATO, Putin invaded Ukraine's coaspirant to NATO, Georgia.

With the war in Georgia, and Russia's subsequent illegal occupation of Georgian territory in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, any remaining vestiges of the Nunn-Lugar paradigm passed further into history. The United States and NATO responded with limited and nonlethal aid to Georgia as well as a series of bilateral military reassurance measures to Ukraine. Among these was an unprecedented visit to Sevastopol by the flagship of the U.S. Sixth Fleet (equipped also for NATO seaborne command and control) for U.S.-led multilateral exercises in November 2008.<sup>33</sup> A clear military and geographic rebuke to Russian words and actions in Munich and Georgia, the symbolic visit was followed two years later by the Ukrainian Army joining rotations of the NATO Response Force (NRF).<sup>34</sup>

### *2010–2014: Ambiguity and Caution*

In early 2010, another round of presidential elections resulted in a victory for Moscow-friendly leader Viktor Yanukovich. Elected by a slim majority centered on votes from Ukraine's southern and eastern regions of Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv, there could be little doubt relations with the United States and Europe were about to change direction. Yanukovich entered office as Ukraine's fourth president with reassurance that integration with the EU remained a "strategic aim."<sup>35</sup> However, he concurrently pledged that Ukraine should seek a neutral position between NATO and Russia rather than the 2008 invitation for NATO alliance membership.<sup>36</sup> Then, in an effort to draw Washington's attention from his increasingly corrupt and authoritarian governance at home, he announced that Ukraine would give up Soviet-inherited stocks of highly enriched uranium. In 2010, he also agreed to and forced through parlia-

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<sup>32</sup> Thom Shanker and Mark Landler, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability," *New York Times*, 11 February 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Scott Miller, "U.S. 6th Fleet, USS *Mount Whitney* Visit Sevastopol," DVIDS, 7 November 2008.

<sup>34</sup> "Ukrainian Army Units Will Participate in NATO Response Force in 2010 and 2011," *Kyiv Post*, 27 January 2010.

<sup>35</sup> "Ukraine's Political Cat-Fight Leaves Voters Cold," BBC, 2 December 2009.

<sup>36</sup> "Ukraine Drops NATO Membership Aim," Reuters, 27 May 2010.

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ment an extension of Russia's basing agreement in Crimea for 25 years beyond its 2017 expiration.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile in Washington, an equally momentous shift was underway within the administration of U.S. president Barack Obama, elected in 2008. Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton launched a campaign to "reset" relations with Russia to resurrect bilateral discourse on topics such as missile defense, Iran, and nuclear arms control and assisted Russia with membership into the WTO.<sup>38</sup> This new posture allowed the United States to endorse, in effect, Yanukovych's Moscow-friendly stance, backtracked on NATO ambitions, and maintained largely nominal bilateral pressure for democratic reforms, reinforced with modest but important foreign assistance. In the words of Secretary Clinton, "NATO's door remains open but . . . what Ukraine is doing in trying to balance its relationships between the United States, the European Union and Russia makes a lot of sense."<sup>39</sup> The result was a period in which both NATO and U.S. defense relations and security assistance programs with Ukraine progressed broadly unchanged from years past but with increasingly ambiguous intent. This remained the case until late 2013 and early 2014, when Moscow's efforts to increasingly constrain Yanukovych's maneuver room created friction that led to Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity.

## SECTION TWO

### *Peace or Security?: A U.S. Dilemma, 2014–2021*

In November 2013, Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych's precarious balance between NATO's Open Door and Russia's increasingly assertive pull toppled when, under pressure from Moscow, he scuttled an EU association agreement just days before its signing. The unpopular reversal, along with Yanukovych's record of corruption and authoritarian practices, triggered a series of mass protests and clashes known as the Revolution of Dignity or the Euromaidan Revolution. The immediate result for Kyiv was Yanukovych's decision to flee to Russia in February 2014 after signing an EU-brokered political agreement for new elec-

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<sup>37</sup> UNIAN, "Rehionaly zablokuvaly trybunu i prezydiyu VR" [Members of the ruling Party of the Regions blocked the tribune and chair of the parliament], 27 April 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory Feifer, "Clinton Upbeat on Russia 'Reset' after Moscow Talks," Radio Free Europe, 13 October 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Arshad Mohammed, "Hillary Clinton Tells Ukraine Door to NATO Open," Reuters, 1 July 2010.

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tions.<sup>40</sup> However, the more consequential result for the United States and the EU was how Putin responded. In the weeks that followed, obscurely uniformed Russian military and paramilitary forces used their bases in Crimea, including Sevastopol, to orchestrate the illegal seizure of the Crimean Peninsula. This was followed by similar “gray-zone” tactics in Ukraine’s eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk where Moscow’s operatives organized Russian volunteers and local criminal elements loyal to Yanukovych to mount a diplomatically deniable but militarily unmistakable invasion.

This invasion unbalanced not just Kyiv but also its U.S. and European partners. It challenged long-standing Western assumptions that Moscow would not engage in aggression against fellow majority Orthodox Slav Ukraine, confronted Obama’s presidential promises to minimize foreign exposure, and upended efforts to reset relations with Russia following its 2008 invasion of Georgia. For policy makers in Washington, peace and security was no longer an option in Ukraine. Russia had forced a new dilemma: the West could promote peace *or* security, but no longer both.

During the next three years, spanning the remaining two years of the Obama administration and into the first year of Obama’s successor, President Donald J. Trump, foreign and security assistance decisions related to Ukraine were defined by three core questions exposed by Russia’s aggression. First, would the security assistance response to *peace or security* be: (1) regional or bilateral; (2) influence or defense; and (3) nonlethal or lethal? Policy debates and results over each question defined the years ahead for all nations involved.

### *2014–2016: Regional Influence, Nonlethal Assistance*

With Russia invading and illegally claiming territory in Ukraine, all pretext for compartmentalization or reset of bilateral ambitions for Ukraine or Russia collapsed. In the words of Secretary of State John F. Kerry in April 2014, “events in Ukraine are a wake-up call . . . we’ve pursued serious bilateral engagement. . . . But what Russia’s actions in Ukraine tell us is that today Putin’s Russia is playing by a different set of rules.”<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as the Ukrainian military fought back against Russian and Russian-led forces in the country’s east, the ambitions

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<sup>40</sup> Shaun Walker, “Ukraine’s Former PM Rallies Protesters after Yanukovych Flees Kiev,” *Guardian*, 22 February 2014.

<sup>41</sup> John Kerry, “Toward a Europe Whole and Free” (remarks, Atlantic Council’s “Toward a Europe Whole and Free” Conference, 29 April 2014).

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and results of 24 years of U.S. and NATO security assistance came into stark relief. All eyes were on the United States to respond, and that response would set a new policy foundation for security assistance to Ukraine moving forward. The question was where to start.

The Obama administration opted for a regional approach. In coordination with the EU, the U.S. and EU member states imposed sanctions against Russia, and in June 2014, three months after Russia's invasion, the White House announced a new European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). The initiative rested on a request to Congress for \$1 billion in supplemental Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds for increased U.S. exercises, training, and presence in NATO territory; facility upgrades for NATO prepositioned equipment; additional U.S. participation in NATO naval force deployments; and "partner capacity" activities with Georgia, Moldova, and—listed last—Ukraine.<sup>42</sup> Intended as a single-year surge of U.S. military money and activity distributed across the European region starting in 2015, it was a tepid first step. For comparison, the accompanying 2015 OCO request for U.S. peace and security efforts in Afghanistan topped \$58 billion.<sup>43</sup>

There were advocates in Congress for a more direct bilateral approach. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) in particular pressed for more bilateral defensive aid to Kyiv.<sup>44</sup> Yet from this point forward, the new foundation was set. U.S. strategy under Obama on security assistance to a Ukraine at war was to buttress the European region at large in the hope of preserving European peace as well as transatlantic and European unity. Bilateral assistance to Ukraine was of secondary interest—to be pursued but not to the extent of allowing it to strongly divide allied consensus. The foundation was reinforced with the decision to re-new ERI in fiscal year 2016 at a reduced level of \$789 million with, again, the bulk allocated to U.S. force presence, exercises, equipment prepositioning, and infrastructure.<sup>45</sup>

As the Obama administration had opted to retain a regional approach, the

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<sup>42</sup> "FACT SHEET: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners," White House, 3 June 2014.

<sup>43</sup> Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Steve Sedgwick and Antonia Matthews, "West Must Arm Ukraine to Fight 'Invasion': McCain," CNBC, 6 September 2014.

<sup>45</sup> *European Reassurance Initiative: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year 2017* (Washington, DC: Office of Under Secretary of Defense [Comptroller], 2016).

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forced dilemma distilled to two options: influence the region toward a negotiated peace and away from a confrontational course toward Moscow or boost the defense capacity of the region toward a new balance of security based on clearer opposition to Russia's actions. The Obama administration chose the former. While the administration did not articulate what peace should entail for the occupied parts of Ukraine, they were consistent from the start that U.S. security assistance would aim to curtail further military confrontation, escalation, or entanglements. If support to both Ukraine and Russia was no longer viable, the goal was to preserve influence on each without aggravating either.

The strategy invoked a delicate balance between forceful statements in defense of the international rules-based order, broad power legislation, and soft power action.<sup>46</sup> The Obama administration neither shirked nor curtailed stern rhetoric about the invasion of Ukraine. In a June 2014 speech in Warsaw announcing ERI, Obama asserted, "Ukraine must be free to choose its own future for itself and by itself. . . . Bigger nations must not be allowed to bully the small, or impose their will at the barrel of a gun. . . . So, we will not accept Russia's occupation of Crimea or its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty." This language of hard power was accompanied by a call for soft power action: "a free and independent Ukraine needs strong ties and growing trade with Europe and Russia and the United States . . . further Russian provocations will only mean more isolation and costs for Russia."<sup>47</sup>

Despite the rules-based rhetoric, Washington's freedom of action on Ukraine was constrained by the U.S. desire to cooperate with Moscow in other areas. For example, just three months after his "wake-up call" and three days after a Russian surface-to-air missile shot down Malaysian Airline Flight 17 (MH17) over Russian-occupied parts of eastern Ukraine, Secretary Kerry struck a much more muted tone. "We live in an extremely complicated world right now where everybody is working on ten different things simultaneously," he cautioned, adding that "Russia is working with us in a cooperative way on [Iran]," negotiations the administration hoped to isolate from tensions in Europe.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> An approach to international relations involving economic or cultural influence. The ability to co-opt rather than coerce. Developed by Joseph Nye Jr. and further developed in his 2004 book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs Books, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> White House, "Remarks by President Obama at 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day" (speech, Warsaw, Poland, 4 June 2014).

<sup>48</sup> John Kerry, Secretary of State, interview with David Gregory of NBC's *Meet the Press*, U.S. Department of State, 20 July 2014.

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Accompanying this bold but balanced rhetoric was an incremental broadening of U.S. legislative authority for measures of both influence and defense in Ukraine, delivered by Congress for use at the White House's discretion. In April 2014, the Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014 was signed into law. It not only required the president to impose visa bans and asset seizures against those responsible for undermining Ukraine's territorial integrity but also "encouraged" the president "to draw down defense articles from the stocks of the Department of Defense in order to provide non-lethal assistance, which could include communication equipment, clothing, fuel and other forms of appropriate assistance to the Government of Ukraine."<sup>49</sup> As fighting continued in Ukraine through several rounds of attempted cease-fire negotiations known as the Minsk Agreements, Congress doubled down with passage in September 2014 of the Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014 (UFSA). The act expanded the depth and breadth of sanctions and authorized Obama to expand from soft power tools of influence to include more hard power tools of defense in security assistance for Ukraine. These included:

defense articles, defense services, and training to the Government of Ukraine for the purpose of countering offensive weapons and reestablishing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including anti-tank and anti-armor weapons, crew weapons and ammunition, counter-artillery radars to identify and target artillery batteries, fire control, range finder, and optical and guidance and control equipment, tactical troop-operated surveillance drones, and secure command and communications equipment.<sup>50</sup>

Astride the rules-based rhetoric and defense-related authorities, U.S. action remained principally focused on soft power influence. This was most evident in how and why the Obama administration answered the final question in the forced dilemma on the type of security assistance to be provided to Ukraine, lethal or only nonlethal aid.

By the start of 2015, the Russian war against Ukraine was a full year into what increasingly resembled a potential frozen conflict. Moscow appeared uninfluenced by U.S. and European sanctions to reverse course in Ukraine. For

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<sup>49</sup> Support for the Sovereignty, Integrity, Democracy, and Economic Stability of Ukraine Act of 2014, Pub. L. No. 113-95 (3 April 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, Pub. L. No. 113-272 (2014).

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its part, Kyiv was attempting to return to Western-leaning stability under newly elected President Petro Poroshenko. Meanwhile Washington, broadly empowered to bolster Ukraine's military defense, adhered to a strategy of distributed influence and ambitions for regional peace.

With no resolution in sight, pressure mounted on the United States to define what type of security assistance Ukrainian forces deserved and what kind they could handle. The initial tranches of bilateral security assistance had been modest: \$8 million USD of nonlethal military aide had been released in spring 2014 "to allow the Ukrainian armed forces and State Border Guard Service to fulfill their core security missions." The materiel included explosive ordinance disposal equipment, handheld radios, engineering equipment, and nonlethal individual tactical gear.<sup>51</sup> The intent, as expressed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Evelyn N. Farkas to Congress was to "to provide reassurance, deterrence, and support without taking actions that would escalate the crisis militarily."<sup>52</sup> By summer 2014, the United States had delivered 2,000 sets of body armor, first aid kits, tactical radios, and 5,000 uniforms.<sup>53</sup> The tranche foreshadowed the regional approach and influence strategy ERI codified later that year. It also prompted a sensitive question in Washington and beyond. Would the United States assist Ukrainian forces with lethal military capabilities as well? In the words of Poroshenko to a joint session of Congress in September 2014, "[b]lankets and night vision goggles are important . . . one cannot win a war with a blanket."<sup>54</sup>

The UFSA authorized empowering Ukrainian forces with far more than blankets entering their second year of conflict. With it came a crescendo of pressure on Obama, not least from both Republicans and Democrats in the Senate, to provide lethal capabilities to level the broad disparity in military materiel between Ukrainian troops and the Russian forces arrayed against them.<sup>55</sup> At the top of the list were antiarmor missile systems, such as Javelin Weapons Systems, to

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<sup>51</sup> "Fact Sheet: U.S. Crisis Support Package for Ukraine," American Presidency Project, 22 April 2014.

<sup>52</sup> *Ukraine: Countering Russian Intervention and Supporting a Democratic State*, 113th Cong. (6 May 2014) (Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations).

<sup>53</sup> *Russian and Developments in Ukraine*, 113th Cong. (9 July 2014) (Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations).

<sup>54</sup> Julie Pace, "Ukraine's Pleas for Lethal Aid from U.S. Go Unmet," Associated Press, 18 September 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "On the Frontlines in Ukraine, a Technological Gap," *Washington Post*, 31 August 2015.



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defend against Russia's increasingly mechanized aggression in Ukraine's east.<sup>56</sup>

Senator McCain pressed hardest, asserting with Senator Lindsey O. Graham (R-SC) in February 2015, "it is long past time to provide defensive weapons to Ukraine" and calling on the White House to "do so immediately, rather than hide behind a failed attempt to negotiate with an aggressor."<sup>57</sup> That same month, the bipartisan United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki Commission, called on Obama to "vigorously implement the Ukraine Freedom Support Act, including the provision of military arms to assist Ukrainians in protecting their sovereignty."<sup>58</sup> Commission members Senators Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) and Robert J. Portman (R-OH) went further, chiding that "aid alone doesn't defend borders, and expressions of our commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine will not make it so."<sup>59</sup> Commission cochair Representative Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ) added a month later his impression that the administration's approach and strategy represented "a de facto defensive weapons arms embargo on Ukraine . . . [in which] delay is denial."<sup>60</sup> Their opinions were joined by public communications from Congress to the White House referencing "overwhelming bipartisan support . . . to provide assistance, including lethal, to the government and people of Ukraine."<sup>61</sup>

Even within the Obama administration, a coalition of support grew through 2015 for lethal security assistance to Ukraine. In private, Secretary Kerry reportedly started to favor lethal military assistance to Ukraine, along with another member of Obama's presidential cabinet and his vice president, Joseph R. Biden Jr.<sup>62</sup> U.S. General Philip M. Breedlove, dual-hatted as commander of U.S. European Command and as the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe

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<sup>56</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Considers Supplying Arms to Ukraine Forces, Officials Say," *New York Times*, 1 February 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Guy Taylor, "Top GOP Senators Blast Obama Admin's Waffling on Arming Ukraine Military," *Washington Times*, 17 February 2015.

<sup>58</sup> "Helsinki Commission Urges End to Ongoing Bloodshed in Ukraine," United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 12 February 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Ben Cardin and Rob Portman, "Ukraine Violence Continues," *USA Today*, 24 October 2014.

<sup>60</sup> "Chairman Smith Rebukes U.S. Administration: 'Delay Is Denial' Regarding Military Aid to Ukraine," United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 4 March 2015.

<sup>61</sup> John Boehner et al., "Letter to President Obama," House of Representatives, 4 March 2015.

<sup>62</sup> For another reference to Kerry's alleged private views on this issue, please see Josh Rogin, "Kerry Tells Lawmakers He's for Arming Ukraine," *Bloomberg*, 9 February 2015; and David J. Kramer, "U.S. Policy Toward Ukraine in Need of Urgent Fix," *American Interest*, 4 December 2015.

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(SACEUR), likewise advocated for defensive weapons to Ukraine.<sup>63</sup> General Joseph F. Dunford, Obama's nominee for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, professed support for lethal military assistance in his July 2015 confirmation hearing with Congress, as did his nominee for secretary of Defense later that year, Ashton B. Carter.<sup>64</sup>

This was the terrain within which the UFSA authorized the United States to offer up to \$350 million in either lethal or nonlethal security assistance to Ukraine.<sup>65</sup> The Obama administration, after much deliberation, chose to stay the course: hard power words, broad power legislation, and soft power action. Through the end of Obama's presidency, rhetoric from the White House continued to escalate.<sup>66</sup> "Russian aggression . . . threatens our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace," he asserted in 2016 as the election for his successor was underway.<sup>67</sup>

Legislative authorities also continued to broaden. The third iteration of ERI for fiscal year 2017 more than tripled in size to \$3.4 billion.<sup>68</sup> Yet, the actions taken remained focused on regional reassurance with military aid to Ukraine limited to nonlethal capabilities. Nearly all of the increase in ERI was to further distribute presence and prepositioning of U.S. forces across the European region. As for Ukraine, funds authorized by Congress were used exclusively for nonlethal military assistance: training and equipping of the Ukrainian National Guard; training of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine forces; and the provision of Humvees, thermal goggles, night-vision devices, secure radios, explosive ordnance disposal robots, countermortar radars, a military field hospital, and recon-

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<sup>63</sup> Gordon and Schmitt, "U.S. Considers Supplying Arms to Ukraine Forces, Officials Say."

<sup>64</sup> Gordon Lubold, "Joint Chiefs Chairman Nominee Says Russia is Top Military Threat," *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 2015; and Josh Rogin, "The Pentagon's Lonely War Against Russia and China," Bloomberg, 11 November 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Passed by a vote of 411-10; and "Congress Gives President Obama the Tools He Needs Against Russia if He Wants to Use Them," *Wall Street Journal*, 16 December 2014.

<sup>66</sup> "Obama Calls for an 'Increase in Urgency' in Addressing Ukraine Conflict," Reuters, 6 September 2016.

<sup>67</sup> "Ahresiya RF v Ukrayini zahrozhuye vilniy Yevropi—Obama" [Russian Federation's aggression in Ukraine threatens free Europe] (in Ukrainian), *Ukrayinska Pravda*, 25 April 2016.

<sup>68</sup> *European Reassurance Initiative: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year 2017* (Washington, DC: Office of Under Secretary of Defense [Comptroller], 2016).

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naissance drones to Kyiv.<sup>69</sup> Through its conclusion in January 2017, the Obama administration hoped to influence the region toward peace without engagement in the lethality of security in Ukraine.

### *2017–2020: Bilateral Defense, Lethal Assistance*

In January 2017, U.S. president Donald J. Trump assumed office as Russia's invasion, occupation, and the dilemma about peace or security in Ukraine entered its third unresolved year. Trump's foreign policy views represented a radical departure from Obama's. His skepticism of multilateralism and foreign entanglements, conviction that America's allies did not pull their weight within the international organizations, professed desire to improve relations with Moscow, and penchant for norm-breaking policy decisions ushered in the potential for U.S. answers to all three questions in the dilemma in Ukraine to be wholly revised. In practice, each was amended but the dilemma remained.

In terms of regional versus bilateral approaches, the Trump administration sustained both but flipped their priority. Consistent with Obama, Trump sustained ERI but under a new name. Starting with legislation for fiscal year 2018, the European *Reassurance* Initiative was rebranded the European *Deterrence* Initiative and progressively expanded to \$4.8 billion for 2018 and \$6.5 billion for 2019.<sup>70</sup> With the bulk of funds still allocated to increased distributed presence and prepositioning of U.S. forces across Ukraine's European periphery, the structure of the initiative changed little. Yet, the new title signaled that it was now less about buttressing regional resolve and more about preparing for bilateral confrontation with Russia. This was periodically reinforced in rhetoric from the White House, as Trump regularly expressed dismissive views on the role of

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<sup>69</sup> The National Guard of Ukraine is subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Victoria Nuland, assistant secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, Department of State, "Statement Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: Testimony on Ukraine," 114th Cong. (8 October 2015); Embassy of the United States, Kyiv, Ukraine, "United States Provides \$7.6 Million Dollar Military Field Hospital to Ukraine," press release, 18 August 2015; and "Ukrayina otrymala partiynu bezpilotnykiv vid SSHA vartistyu ponad \$12 milioniv," *Yevropeyska Pravda*, 27 July 2016.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Belkin and Hibbah Kaileh, *The European Deterrence Initiative: A Budgetary Overview* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021).

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NATO, U.S. relations with Europe, and regional security alliances in general.<sup>71</sup> It was also accompanied by an aggressive agenda of direct bilateral dialogue with the presidents of both Ukraine and Russia.

For Ukraine, the bilateral dialogue started five months, to the day, into Trump's presidency with an Oval Office visit by Poroshenko on 20 June 2017. Both were businessmen before they were statesmen, and Poroshenko sold Trump on the business case of granting Ukraine more lethal weapons, specifically Javelin missiles, as a prelude to Ukraine purchasing the weapons from the United States in the future.<sup>72</sup> The follow-up was a visit to Kyiv two months later by Trump's new secretary of Defense, James N. Mattis, to launch a bilateral reassessment of Ukraine's needs to start "actively reviewing" sending new weapons to Ukraine.<sup>73</sup>

For Russia, the bilateral dialogue started earlier but gained momentum with the first of several meetings between Putin and Trump on 7 July 2017. The details of most remain murky, but scattered reporting of their interactions suggest each aimed to personally resume ties on many of the same issues addressed in Obama's post-Georgia and pre-Ukraine invasion reset.<sup>74</sup> Warming ties did not dissuade Putin from rebuffing Mattis's trip with a September 2017 warning that U.S. lethal aid to Ukraine would only serve to increase casualties.<sup>75</sup> Ukraine, like Georgia before, was being bilaterally compartmentalized.

With U.S. policy favoring compartmentalized bilateralism over regional approaches, security assistance strategy also pivoted under Trump to prioritize Ukraine's defense over less direct measures of influence. Soft power was not fully dismissed. In August 2017, Trump signed the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) to codify Ukraine-related executive orders

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<sup>71</sup> Julian Barnes and Helene Cooper, "Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. from NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia," *New York Times*, 14 January 2019; Steven Erlanger and Katrin Bennhold, "Rift Between Trump and Europe Is Now Open and Angry," *New York Times*, 17 February 2019; and Bruce Klingner, Jung H. Pak, and Sue Mi Terry, "Trump Shakedowns Are Threatening Two Key US Alliances in Asia," Brookings Institution, 18 December 2019.

<sup>72</sup> Marie Yovanovitch, *Lessons from the Edge: A Memoir* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 2022), 238.

<sup>73</sup> Rebecca Kheel, "Mattis: US 'Actively Reviewing' Sending Weapons to Ukraine," *Hill*, 24 August 2017.

<sup>74</sup> Adam Taylor, "Trump Has Spoken Privately with Putin at Least 16 times. Here's What We Know about the Conversations," *Washington Post*, 4 October 2019.

<sup>75</sup> "Putin Warns U.S. Against Supplying Ukraine with Lethal Weapons," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 5 September 2017.

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and strengthen sanctions against Russia. Beyond that, however, a shift to hard power action became a new Washington norm.<sup>76</sup> The result was a decision to reexamine the de facto “embargo” on lethal assistance to Kyiv.

The pivotal shift started on Mattis’s return to the United States from his Kyiv visit in August 2017.<sup>77</sup> By December, Mattis, along with National Security Advisor H. R. McMaster, persuaded Trump to authorize defensive lethal aid to Ukraine.<sup>78</sup> The first tranche was scheduled to include the long-awaited Javelins for defense against Russian tanks. Mindful of the same escalatory risks that concerned their predecessors, conditional restrictions were set on their use only for defensive purposes.<sup>79</sup> Further, to ensure the technology would not be stolen or replicated by the Russians, arrangements were made to store the Javelins at the Yavoriv Combat Training Center in western Ukraine, and it was agreed they would be used to train Ukrainian military forces rather than on the front lines of combat in eastern Ukraine.<sup>80</sup> On 30 April 2018, four years into the conflict with Russia, Ukraine received its first U.S. weapon system capable of defending against Russian aggression with comparable lethality. This shipment was estimated to cost \$47 million, paid through U.S. foreign military financing (FMF).<sup>81</sup>

By May 2018, Ukrainian forces were testing the Javelins in western Ukraine, and Poroshenko was issuing public thanks aimed as much toward Moscow as Washington.<sup>82</sup> While the provision of assistance assured the Russian occupiers would not see a Javelin aimed at them along the then-line of contact across east-

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<sup>76</sup> *Hard power* refers to how nations express influence through force. Force can be in the form of threats, economic sanctions, or military force. According to Joseph Nye, hard power involves “the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will.” Joseph Nye, “Propaganda Isn’t the Way: Soft Power,” *International Herald Tribune*, 10 January 2003.

<sup>77</sup> Josh Rogin, “Trump Administration Approves Lethal Arms Sales to Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, 20 December 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Natacha Bertrand, “Ukraine’s Successful Courtship of Trump,” *Atlantic*, 3 May 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Carol Morello and David Filipov, “Russia Issues Stern Warning U.S. Is Fueling New Bloodshed in Ukraine,” *Washington Post*, 23 December 2017.

<sup>80</sup> Illia Ponomarenko, “Ukraine’s Armed Forces Test Javelins,” *Kyiv Post*, 23 May 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Cory Welt, *Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia, and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2020), 38. Foreign military financing (FMF) is a critical foreign assistance account used for promoting U.S. interests around the world to equip and train toward common security goals and shared missions. An objective of the FMF is to improve the military capabilities of key friendly countries to contribute to international crisis response operations, including peacekeeping and humanitarian crisis.

<sup>82</sup> “Poroshenko Attends First Javelin Launches,” *Kyiv Post*, 22 May 2018.

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ern Ukraine, their presence anywhere in Ukraine changed the resistance they would encounter in any expanded invasion.

The Javelins also established a new precedent for Poroshenko to pass to his successor in May 2019 as the sixth president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, assumed office. Within weeks, Zelenskyy attempted to pick up Poroshenko's bilateral discourse with Trump that the two businessmen had started two years prior. The result was an infamous phone call in which Zelenskyy's request for a second round of lethal security assistance was met with a suggestion from Trump for a political quid pro quo.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, in October 2019, a second round of 150 Javelins, at a total estimated cost of \$38.2 million, was released to Ukraine. This time, as had been originally suggested by Poroshenko, the government of Ukraine paid a portion through foreign military sales.<sup>84</sup>

By the second half of the Trump administration, the United States had definitively embraced bilateral lethal defense in its strategy for Ukraine. Yet, it is important to note that it was more of an amendment than a complete change in direction in Washington's reply to Russia's aggression. Nearly every responsive measure Obama initiated in the wake of the original invasion was sustained and expanded under Trump. Names and priorities changed, but the programs and their authorities did not, nor did the overall contours of the Russian war against Ukraine. By 2020, as Trump concluded his single term as president, the United States was allocating a roughly steady annualized average of \$360 million to Ukraine through FMF, the EDI, and a collection of other programs bundled into the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), with a relatively predictable elevation of \$30–40 million per year. The United States, under both Obama and Trump, had neither reversed the results of Russian aggression nor fully answered Russia's forced dilemma of peace *or* security for Ukraine, but it had programmed and priced into U.S. security assistance what it assumed was sufficient deterrence to keep the six-year-old simmering conflict from boiling over.

## SECTION THREE

### *Peace or Security: A Shared Dilemma*

While Russia and the United States receive majority focus as external protagonists in Ukraine's story of independence and security, they are not the only ones.

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<sup>83</sup> Devlin Barrett et al., "Trump Offered Ukrainian President Justice Dept. Help in an Investigation of Biden, Memo Shows," *Washington Post*, 26 September 2019.

<sup>84</sup> Welt, *Ukraine*, 37.

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Of equal importance are European nations, both within and apart from NATO and the EU. Yet, unlike policy makers in Washington, Moscow, or Kyiv, EU capitals rarely make major decisions on national security or foreign assistance on unilateral, bilateral, or even trilateral terms. Their strategies and actions tend to be assessed as they relate to collective as well as national outcomes and constructed as reactions rather than initiatives. Accordingly, Europe's reply to the dilemma forced on them by Russia in 2014 followed a less linear path of strategic planning than the questions navigated in Washington. Rather, European responses emerged through three overlapping phases: *crisis*, *consolidation*, and *divergence*.

The *crisis phase* started when Russia used force in Crimea in February 2014 and lasted until March 2015, shortly after the Battle of Debaltsevo of February 2015, the last high-casualty battle in the 2014–20 period. During this crisis phase, European foreign policies, aligned with U.S. policy under Obama, moved in search of Russian de-escalation and conflict stabilization. The *consolidation phase* ran from April 2015 until the end of 2017. Across the final years of the Obama administration through the first year of Trump, major foreign policy choices in Europe were fixed but security assistance activities were enhanced in the areas of training, capacity building, and technical assistance. Finally, the *divergence phase* ran from 2018 all the way to January 2022. As the United States introduced lethal assistance to Ukraine, European assistance activities were largely stable and operating. Yet, levels of attention and commitment began to diverge, with some allies beginning to provide or export more significant military equipment to Ukraine, while others, notably Germany and France, sought to reengage with Moscow over the objections of their Central European allies.

### *2014–2015: Europe's Crisis*

In the crisis phase, the U.S. and European policy response aligned on two common pillars—diplomatic negotiations and sanctions—with the aim of inducing Russia to cease hostilities and agree to the search for a political settlement. Military assistance was viewed as a channel that should not be used to affect facts on the ground. Instead, economic channels were viewed as the only desirable ones to have an impact on the conflict—sanctions to damage the Russian economy, and economic assistance to keep Ukraine afloat.

In response to the war in eastern Ukraine, packages of sanctions aimed at disrupting Russia at a strategic level, targeting the financial sector, long-term oil production, and Russia's military-industrial complex, were designed in close

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coordination with the Obama administration in Washington and adopted in July and September 2014 as events progressed.<sup>85</sup> In parallel, France and Germany took the lead in seeking negotiations between the Russian state, its proxies in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and the Ukrainian state—the grouping was named the Normandy Format—with the aim of stabilizing the conflict along the emerging line of contact within Ukraine and promoting a political settlement. These negotiations led to the Minsk Protocol of September 2014, and to an additional agreement, Minsk II, in February 2015, jointly referred to as the Minsk Agreements.<sup>86</sup> France and Germany appeared to hope to convince Russia to settle for a “frozen conflict” for the territory it had seized together with its proxies. By implication, given Chancellor Angela Merkel’s known stance on the inadmissibility into NATO of nations with “internal conflicts,” a compatible incentive for both Russia and Germany was to pretend that the war in the east was not an interstate war but an internal conflict.<sup>87</sup>

UN Security Council Resolution 2202 of 17 February 2015, which endorsed the Minsk Agreements and was adopted unanimously (and thus also by the United States), cemented the presentation of the conflict as a war opposing Ukrainian forces and “armed formations from certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine” with the involvement of “foreign armed formations, military equipment, as well as mercenaries” of unspecified nationality.<sup>88</sup> The European approach was sealed with a March 2015 statement of position by the European Council—the governments of all European Union member

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<sup>85</sup> Sanctions prohibited the export of advanced technologies for deep-sea and shale oil extraction, with the aim of curtailing Russian oil production only in the long term, with little to no effect on current production. See Edward Hunter Christie, “The Design and Impact of Western Economic Sanctions against Russia,” *RUSI Journal* 161, no. 3 (June 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2016.1193359>.

<sup>86</sup> Hilde Haug, “The Minsk Agreements and the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission: Providing Effective Monitoring for the Ceasefire Regime,” *Security and Human Rights* 27, nos. 3–4 (2016): 342–57, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02703004>.

<sup>87</sup> Merkel’s exact statement prior to the NATO Bucharest Summit of 2008 was: “Länder, die selbst in regionale oder innere Konflikte verstrickt sind, können aus meiner Sicht nicht Mitglieder der NATO sein” [Countries that are themselves involved in regional or internal conflicts cannot, in my view, be members of NATO]. See Nina Werkhäuser, “Bush akzeptiert deutsche Afghanistan-Strategie” [Bush accepts German Afghanistan strategy], *Deutsche Welle*, 2 April 2008.

<sup>88</sup> “Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2202 (2015), Security Council Calls on Parties to Implement Accords Aimed at Peaceful Settlement in Eastern Ukraine,” United Nations, Meetings Coverage, SC/11785, 17 February 2015.



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states—linking the lifting of the economic sanctions with the “complete implementation of the Minsk Agreements.”<sup>89</sup> From that moment on—and until the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022—European sanctions and diplomacy on Ukraine froze in place.<sup>90</sup>

Regarding military assistance, the general stance was to limit it to the continued provision of training and capacity building and the delivery of nonlethal military and humanitarian supplies. The reasoning for refraining from lethal aid was expressed, for example, by Germany’s then-defense minister, Ursula von der Leyen, who stated on the margins of the February 2015 meeting of NATO defense ministers that “statements by colleagues” showed that “the danger of escalation is a very high risk and one doesn’t want to increase it further with weapons supplies.”<sup>91</sup> In March 2015, UK policy was also clarified as limited to providing “non-lethal assistance to Ukrainian armed forces, in line with [the government’s] assessment that there must be a political solution to this crisis.”<sup>92</sup>

What European nations provided Ukraine, therefore, was largely similar to U.S. efforts: humanitarian supplies (e.g., food rations, clothing, bedding, heating and water equipment, and first aid and medical supplies), as well as nonlethal minor military equipment (e.g., helmets, bullet-proof vests, night-vision goggles, and GPS equipment). Selected examples include Poland, Lithuania, Germany, and the UK, among others.<sup>93</sup> The degree of military utility of (publicly known) European supplies tracked U.S. policy. However, two incidents suggest that some nations in Central Europe sought to go beyond nonlethal equipment during the crisis phase.

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<sup>89</sup> “European Council Conclusions (19–20 March 2015)—Conclusions,” European Council, 20 March 2015, para. 10.

<sup>90</sup> Contrary to the United States, which adopted additional sanctions against Russia in the course of the Trump presidency in relation to election interference and other hostile behavior.

<sup>91</sup> “Europa gegen Waffenlieferungen an Ukraine” [Europe against weapons deliveries to Ukraine] (in German), *Deutsche Welle*, 5 February 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Fallon, “Defence Secretary Announces Further UK Support to Ukrainian Armed Forces,” United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, 6 March 2015.

<sup>93</sup> “Pol’shcha vidpravyla humanitarnu dopomohu v Ukrainu, - RNBO” [Poland has sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, - NSDC] (in Ukrainian), *Espresso.tv*, 27 August 2014; “Lytva nadala shist’ tonn humanitarky dlya ukraïns’kykh viys’kovykh v ATO” [Lithuania provided six tons of humanitarian aid for Ukrainian troops in the antiterrorist operation] (in Ukrainian), *TSN*, 2 September 2014; “Nimechchyna vidpravyla do Ukrayiny humanitarnoyi dopomohy na 12 mln dol. - RNBO” [Germany sent \$12 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine - NSDC] (in Ukrainian), *UNIAN*, 5 October 2014; and Fallon, “Defence Secretary Announces Further UK Support to Ukrainian Armed Forces.”

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In one case, private intermediaries appear to have sought to transfer ammunition from the Czech Republic to Ukraine. This came to light due to two covert Russian sabotage operations against ammunition depots in the Czech Republic in October 2014 and December 2014.<sup>94</sup> The other case concerns deliveries by Lithuania of “elements of armaments” in January 2015. This description, which the authors presume referred to spare parts for Soviet-era weapon systems held by both countries, was used by Ukraine’s then-president, Petro Poroshenko.<sup>95</sup> Russia implicitly threatened Lithuania at the UN Security Council meeting of 17 February 2015 by stating it had admitted to providing “arms” to Ukraine, which Lithuania denied.<sup>96</sup> In sum, the crisis phase featured a strict observation of a criterion of nonlethality, which was effectively co-determined by Russia. Known deviations from nonlethality were limited to ammunition and (the authors believe) spare parts for armaments, but no armaments as such. Both deviations led to hostile reactions by Russia. Also, both deviations were attempted by allies from Central Europe who displayed a greater willingness to take risks to further assist Ukraine than their Western European allies or even the United States.

### *2015–2017: Europe’s Consolidation*

From March 2015 to the end of 2017, as Russian hostilities stabilized and U.S. security assistance to Ukraine held generally steady in Washington’s turn-over from Obama to Trump, greater room for longer-term policies in Europe emerged. The pace of shipments of nonlethal military aid decreased markedly as compared to the crisis period. Conversely, training, capacity building, and technical assistance activities continued and new ones were set in motion.<sup>97</sup> Overall, the period represented a consolidation of European policies, even if not a convergence. National choices in the provision of security assistance to Ukraine stabilized over time, with most of the assistance provided by a small subset of European allies while others contributed far less.

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<sup>94</sup> Tony Wesolowsky, “Czech PM’s Remarks on 2014 Blasts Trigger Outrage, Underscore Split over Russia Ties,” *RFE/RL*, 20 April 2021.

<sup>95</sup> “Lytva peredala Ukraini elementy ozbroynnya” [Lithuania handed over weapons to Ukraine] (in Ukrainian), *Yevropeys’ka Pravda*, 5 January 2015.

<sup>96</sup> “Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2202 (2015), Security Council Calls on Parties to Implement Accords Aimed at Peaceful Settlement in Eastern Ukraine.”

<sup>97</sup> A Ukrainian-language Wikipedia page devoted to humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine since 2014 records 20 distinct shipments from European nations between July 2014 and March 2015, but just two shipments between April 2015 and December 2017.

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One notable type of assistance that European nations were involved in was NATO Trust Funds. These are targeted assistance programs supported by a NATO body or agency and carried out by a subset of allies, led by one or more “lead nations,” which provide funding and in-kind contributions. As referenced earlier, Trust Funds for Ukraine that predated 2014 addressed: destruction of Soviet-era stocks of antipersonnel landmines, small arms and light weapons, and ammunition; disposal of radioactive waste; retraining and resettlement of former service personnel; and education programs for civilian officials in the defense and security sectors.<sup>98</sup>

These activities continued beyond 2014 through new Trust Funds or new phases of existing ones. As of August 2018, there were 18 active Trust Funds devoted to specific partner nations, of which 9 were devoted to Ukraine.<sup>99</sup> The remaining nine Trust Funds were devoted to another eight partner nations—there was therefore a clear prioritization in favor of Ukraine.<sup>100</sup> Of notable interest are those Trust Funds for Ukraine that were created from 2014 onward; see table 6.1. With the exception of the Norway-led activity on retraining and resettlement, the new Trust Funds focused either on needs related to the Donbas War and its aftermath, or on foundational capabilities to support the modernization of the armed forces.

The other major area of assistance was the training of the Ukrainian armed forces. Two related U.S.-led multinational efforts were decisive. The first was the Multinational Joint Commission on military cooperation and defense reform, formed in July 2014 by the United States, Canada, and the UK and subsequently expanded to include Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden, which had a broad remit to support and advise on reforms in both the defense and security sectors.<sup>101</sup> The other was the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U), with the same contributing nations, which focused on training the Ukrainian armed forces. This was based on regular rotations of personnel and trainers at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in Yavoriv, in western Ukraine. Among the first activities was Operation Fearless Guardian, which began in April 2015, with personnel from the U.S. Army’s 173d Air-

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<sup>98</sup> “Summary of Ongoing NATO Trust Funds—August 2018,” NATO, August 2018.

<sup>99</sup> “Summary of Ongoing NATO Trust Funds—August 2018.”

<sup>100</sup> “Summary of Ongoing NATO Trust Funds—August 2018.”

<sup>101</sup> Claire Mills, “Military Assistance to Ukraine 2014–2021,” House of Commons Library, 4 March 2022.

**Table 6.1.** NATO Trust Funds for Ukraine created since 2014

Trust Fund name	Lead nation(s)	Purpose	Start date
UKR Cyber Defence	Romania	Develop computer security incident response team (CSIRT) capabilities	December 2014
UKR Military Career Transition	Norway	Retraining and resettlement of departing servicemembers	June 2015
UKR C4	Canada, Germany, United Kingdom	Modernize command, control, communications, and computers (C4)	July 2015
UKR Logistics and Standardization	Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland	Improve national codification, supply chain management, and standardization management capabilities	October 2015
UKR Medical Rehabilitation	Bulgaria	Support rehabilitation of injured service personnel	March 2016
UKR EOD and C-IED	Slovakia	Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and counterimprovised explosive devices (CIED)	October 2017

Source: authors' compilation based on "Summary of Ongoing NATO Trust Funds—August 2018."

borne Brigade training three battalions of Ukrainian National Guard troops during a six-month period at Yaroviv.<sup>102</sup> The UK, Canada, and Lithuania joined

<sup>102</sup> Maj Michael J. Weisman, "Fearless Guardian Ground Convoy Arrives in Ukraine," U.S. Army, 11 April 2015.

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the JMTG-U in 2015, followed by Poland in 2016.<sup>103</sup> The JMTG-U had a notable focus on weapons training, combat skills, and exercising.<sup>104</sup>

Thanks to its rotational and iterative format, the JMTG-U ensured the training of large numbers of Ukrainian land forces personnel. By early 2019, Ukraine described cooperation with “the USA, Canada, the UK, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland [as] the most intensive and productive.”<sup>105</sup> The UK contribution was substantial and broad-based. Named Operation Orbital, it was delivered partly through the U.S.-led multinational arrangements described earlier, partly through NATO, and partly bilaterally. Operation Orbital focused mainly on essential skills for infantry forces, including leadership, planning, logistics, counterimprovised explosive devices (IEDs), and medical training, as well as on maritime capacity building in the areas of diving, firefighting, damage control, and sea surveillance.<sup>106</sup> The two other major European contributions, those of Lithuania and Poland, were likewise delivered partly through U.S.-led arrangements, partly through NATO, as well as bilaterally—but also trilaterally with the formation of a joint Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade, with headquarters in Lublin, Poland, which reached full operating capability in 2016.<sup>107</sup> Lithuania and Poland—as well as Romania—were also regular host countries of multinational exercises in which Ukraine was a participant.<sup>108</sup>

There is no consolidated estimate of the total number of Ukrainian personnel who were trained through JMTG-U or the bilateral parts of the UK’s Operational Orbital, Canada’s Operation Unifier, and other allied contributions. However, as the reported totals for the Canadian and UK efforts are both in the tens of thousands, the overall total of personnel that benefited from at least one allied training activity was, with certainty, also in the tens of thousands by Janu-

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<sup>103</sup> *White Book 2015: The Armed Forces of Ukraine* (Kyiv, Ukraine: Ukraine Ministry of Defence, 2015).

<sup>104</sup> *White Book 2016* (Kyiv, Ukraine: Ukraine Ministry of Defence, 2016).

<sup>105</sup> *White Book 2018* (Kyiv, Ukraine: Ukraine Ministry of Defence, 2018), 129.

<sup>106</sup> “Operation ORBITAL Explained: Training Ukrainian Armed Forces,” *Voices of the Armed Forces*, 21 December 2020.

<sup>107</sup> The brigade was based on a preexisting trilateral agreement from 2009. Its formation was delayed throughout the period of the Yanukovych presidency, only to be revived starting from 2014.

<sup>108</sup> *White Book 2016*, 90.

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ary 2022.<sup>109</sup> In addition, smaller numbers of Ukrainian personnel also benefited from participations in a range of multinational exercises with NATO allies and partners outside Ukraine.<sup>110</sup>

### *2018–2020: Europe’s Divergence*

During the course of 2018, as U.S. policy under Trump shifted to include lethal assistance to Kyiv, cracks appeared in how European allies viewed Russia and the Ukraine situation. In line with previous behavior, unilateral efforts to improve relations with Russia were initiated by Germany and France, to the dismay of Central European allies. In January 2018, Germany granted the construction permit for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, thereby aiming at increasing rather than decreasing its dependence on Russian natural gas, despite objections from many of its allies.<sup>111</sup> Starting in May 2018, France initiated a new diplomatic outreach to Russia, with successive meetings between Presidents Emmanuel Macron and Putin, which by September 2019 was generating considerable criticism in both Warsaw and London, as well as by the U.S. secretary of Defense.<sup>112</sup>

By contrast, from 2018 onward, certain European allies joined the United States in providing armaments to Ukraine. Table 6.2 shows major armaments transfers from European allies to Ukraine that were either completed or had begun in the 2018–20 period, as recorded in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) arms transfer database, excluding military transport equipment and multipurpose equipment for nonmilitary security services (e.g., coast guard vessels). Allies from Central and Eastern Europe were in the lead in transferring armaments to Ukraine in the 2018–20 period. The main sup-

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<sup>109</sup> Without distinction between its bilateral and multilateral parts, the government of Canada reported in 2022 that “as of January 31, 2022, 33,346 Security Forces of Ukraine (SFU) candidates have participated.” “Operation UNIFIER,” Canada.ca, 8 April 2022. The UK reported in 2022 that, from 2015 to 2022, the UK had “trained over 22,000 personnel as part of Operation Orbital and the UK-led Maritime Training Initiative.” UK Ministry of Defence, “UK Defence Ministers Host Ukrainian Government to Plan Future Military Aid,” press release, 7 April 2022.

<sup>110</sup> *White Book 2016*; *White Book 2017* (Kyiv, Ukraine: Ukraine Ministry of Defence, 2017); and *White Book 2018*.

<sup>111</sup> “Germany Grants Permit for Nord Stream 2 Russian Gas Pipeline,” Reuters, 31 January 2018. See “Polish PM Calls Nord Stream 2 ‘Weapon’ of Hybrid Warfare,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 28 May 2018.

<sup>112</sup> Jamie Dettmer, “Macron’s Courtship of Putin Alarming Russia’s Near Neighbors,” *Voice of America*, 11 September 2019.

**Table 6.2.** Transfers of major armaments by European allies to Ukraine, 2018–20

Country	Item	Description	Number	Delivered
Czech Republic	BMP-1AK	Modernized Soviet-era infantry fighting vehicle	50	2018–20
Czech Republic	BMP-1 BVP1	Secondhand modernized Soviet infantry fighting vehicle	37	2020
Czech Republic	2S1 Gvozdika	Soviet-era self-propelled artillery (howitzer)	40	2018
Czech Republic	2S1 Gvozdika	Soviet-era self-propelled artillery (howitzer)	16	2020
Poland	WARMATE loitering munition	Micro kamikaze unmanned aerial combat vehicle	100	2018
Poland	MT-LB	Secondhand Soviet-era multipurpose armored tracked vehicle (with Polish engine)	54	2018–19
Turkey	Bayraktar-TB2	Unmanned combat aerial vehicle	12	2019–21

Source: Arms Transfers Database (Trade Registers) [data file], SIPRI, 28 October 2022.

pliers were the Czech Republic and Poland. Contrary to its important role in training—and in arms transfers in early 2022—the UK did not transfer major armaments to Ukraine in the 2018–20 period. The newly emerging actor in the period was Turkey, with deliveries of the renowned Baykar Bayraktar TB2 unmanned combat aerial vehicle during the period (followed by additional orders and deliveries into 2021 and 2022).

Turkey and Ukraine also started to collaborate on significant defense industry projects. One was the joint development and planned manufacturing of

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a remote-controlled antitank missile launching system—the Serdar.<sup>113</sup> In the maritime domain, Ukraine secured an agreement for procurement and domestic production of Turkish-designed *Ada*-class corvettes.<sup>114</sup> The end of 2020 also saw the signing of a memorandum of intent with the UK for the development of Ukraine’s naval capabilities, followed by a joint agreement with UK industry for the procurement of naval missile systems, joint production of fast missile warships, and naval base development.<sup>115</sup>

By the end of the *divergence phase* in December 2020, Ukraine had benefited from substantial cumulative training, capacity building, and technical assistance, delivered primarily by the United States, Canada, the UK, Poland, and Lithuania. In terms of arms transfers, the taboo against providing lethal equipment had been broken in the course of 2018, with supplies from the United States, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Turkey. Overall, however, Ukraine’s armed forces had received or procured only a very limited range and number of higher-end systems, not least due to implicit or explicit Russian threats. Even so, the U.S. Javelins and Turkish drones it had acquired would soon prove remarkably useful.

## SECTION FOUR

### *Security before Peace: A New Era*

In January 2021, former vice president Joseph R. Biden Jr. became U.S. president, inheriting from Trump what most Western defense planners assumed to be a relatively predictable dilemma with Russia and the security assistance relationship with Ukraine. Also inherited was an increasingly divergent group of European allies, anticipated to better align with the known soft-power regionalist Biden than hard power bilateralist Trump. Yet, the dilemma Russia had forced on the West seven years prior had never been overtly answered. Forced to decide, would the West opt for peace or security?

In short order, the question was answered. In February 2022, Russia rein-

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<sup>113</sup> “SERDAR Anti-tank Missile Launching System Completes Qualifying Trials,” *Army Technology*, 7 June 2019.

<sup>114</sup> “Turkey-made Ukrainian Navy Corvettes to Be Built in Okean Shipyards,” *Daily Sabah*, 22 December 2020.

<sup>115</sup> UK Ministry of Defence, “From Portsmouth to Odesa, UK and Ukraine Naval Cooperation on Show as Ukrainian President Visits HMS *Prince of Wales*,” press release, 8 October 2020; and UK Ministry of Defence, “UK Signs Agreement to Support Enhancement of Ukrainian Naval Capabilities,” press release, 23 June 2021.



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vaded Ukraine, this time in full-scale, overt combined arms war. The combined response from the United States and Europe settled the dilemma. The West has opted for security. Assistance for the territorial defense of Ukraine, lethal and direct, has risen and remained the highest priority for Washington, the EU, and NATO, matched only by intent to curtail great power war with Russia. U.S. ambitions for regional peace, past or present, will wait for the Russian war against Ukraine to be resolved. Moreover, the United States, NATO, and the broader global West is united in resolve to support Ukraine “to the end” whatever that may be.

An exponential increase in security assistance has ensued. The United States allocated \$390 million in security assistance to Ukraine for 2021. By the close of U.S. fiscal year 2022, the Biden administration committed \$17.6 billion, a 45-fold increase. The hundreds of Javelins cautiously transferred in 2018 proliferated to 8,500+ Javelins, 32,000+ other U.S. antiarmor systems, 1,400+ Stinger anti-aircraft systems, 1,400+ tactical counterunmanned aerial systems (UAS), and 10,000+ small arms with munitions. Moreover, potentially offensive weapons such as High Mobility Artillery Rockets Systems (HIMARS), advanced surface-to-air missile systems, Howitzer artillery, Mil Mi-17 helicopters, and laser-guided rocket systems joined the list of U.S. weapons in Ukraine.<sup>116</sup>

The juxtaposition to all prior years of Western security assistance to Ukraine is staggering. How it escalates and what it will ultimately cost remain unknown. What is clear, however, is that new questions for security assistance professionals in the United States and Europe are emerging with every military and diplomatic development in Ukraine. They are questions historians will study in the future, but they are questions policy makers should contemplate today.

First, there is the question of whether the dilemma forced by Russia on the United States and Europe in 2014 could have been avoided with a different approach toward Ukraine’s security in the years that preceded it. U.S. and European defense relations with Ukraine since 1991 represented both a continuum of progress and disarray of ambitions. Could a different approach, pace, or agenda have averted the dilemma from ever being formulated?

Second, was the European practice of benchmarking security assistance on U.S. responses to the dilemma a feature or a bug of post-Cold War Western se-

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<sup>116</sup> Christina L. Arabia, Andrew S. Bowen, and Cory Welt, *U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2022).

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curity? In some regards, the sequential phases of policy crisis, consolidation, and divergence that emerged in Europe stemmed from U.S. policy. In other regards, they were rooted in the nature of European politics and design of NATO decision making. Could diplomacy, designs, or decisions on either side of the Atlantic have changed this dynamic for more favorable security outcomes in Ukraine?

Third, what does the case in Ukraine suggest about the role of security assistance in contemporary diplomacy, deterrence, and defense? From the start, U.S. diplomats valued security assistance to Ukraine as a tool of diplomacy. In time, U.S. defense planners came to see it as a tool of regional deterrence and, more recently, territorial military defense. Yet, both the prioritization and complementarity of these uses and roles has varied in both Washington and Kyiv. Should one have always been at the fore, and if so, which?

Fourth, does the case of security assistance to Ukraine represent a norm or an anomaly for other Western security assistance partners on the fault lines of great power ambitions? While Ukraine may be unique, the nation is not alone on the edges of diplomatic alliances and equations of military deterrence. Moreover, Washington and Kyiv are plying new lessons and setting new norms as the lethality, range, and sophistication of U.S. weaponry being used in active defense surpasses all precedent. Will today's contingencies and responses become tomorrow's global policies to preclude similar outcomes in the Indo-Pacific or other world regions? Should they? If so, what does that imply for the future of Western defense planning and industry?

Fifth and finally, there is the question of what peace and deterrence will demand following the conclusion of war in Europe. European government leaders, along with much of the world, have converged in solidarity with leaders in Washington and Kyiv to condemn Russia's invasion and aggression against Ukraine.<sup>117</sup> A growing number are clearly and directly involved in Ukraine's military defense. However, it remains less clear where their convergence and assistance leads. What are the contours of peace in Ukraine for the United States, NATO, and their security partners and how can they deter further conflict once it is secured?

Ukraine is one case study of many in U.S. security assistance since the end of the Cold War. Others will follow as the terms of both security and peace continue to evolve. The questions, lessons, and answers here, however, are likely to resonate well beyond the EU, Kyiv, Moscow, and Washington.

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<sup>117</sup> "General Assembly Resolution Demands End to Russian Offensive in Ukraine," UN News, 2 March 2022.

## ◉ Chapter Seven ◉

# Turkish-U.S. Defense Diplomacy in the Twenty-first Century

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Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, PhD; and Stallion Yang

### INTRODUCTION

The Turkish-American alliance, forged in the wake of the Second World War, has been generally viewed as robust and steadfast. After all, the relationship was a “true friendship” based on “confidence and faith,” as described by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Turkey was a faithful ally, as praised by President George H. W. Bush.<sup>1</sup> In reality, however, the relationship has been rife with ups and downs. Nevertheless, the alliance survived those downs, mostly owing to the perceived threat from the Soviets during the Cold War. As such, since the relationship was built upon common security perceptions and interests, the strategic and military dimension has been the backbone of relations.

Over time, Turkey became one of the largest recipients of military assistance, arms, and training from the United States and granted the United States access to bases, such as the critical Incirlik Air Base. Traditionally, the United States provided most of Turkey’s defense needs. In the mid-1990s until the early 2000s, Turkey imported 76 percent of its military hardware.<sup>2</sup> Roughly 80 percent of that came from the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Until the war in Iraq in 2003, Turkey was the third largest recipient of U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Toasts of the President and President Bayar at the Turkish Embassy,” American Presidency Project, 29 January 1954; and George H. W. Bush, “Remarks Following Discussions with President Turgut Ozal of Turkey,” American Presidency Project, 25 September 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Fikri Işık, “Hedef 10 Milyar Dolar İhracat,” [msb.gov.tr](http://msb.gov.tr), 18 January 2017.

<sup>3</sup> *European Diversification and Defense Market Assessment: A Comprehensive Guide for Entry into Overseas Markets* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1995), 286.

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assistance, following Israel and Egypt.<sup>4</sup> U.S. total foreign assistance (economic and military) to Turkey between 1946 and 2019 was \$19.5 billion while assistance to all of Western Europe amounted to \$77.4 billion.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, American and Turkish militaries enhanced their collaboration through various institutional channels. Turkey has been the largest International Military Education and Training (IMET) program recipient in the world.<sup>6</sup> There were 28,587 Turkish students trained under IMET between 1950 and 2016.<sup>7</sup> Through this program, quite a large group of Turkish military personnel became familiar with U.S. military training and doctrine as well as the American way of life and values. Former deputy chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Çevik Bir, once praised the military-to-military relationship by stating that “for Turkish soldiers, members of the U.S. Armed Forces are ‘comrades-in-arms.’”<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, the two militaries had developed a robust collaboration over the years.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the Pentagon has become one of the biggest supporters of Turkish interests within the American administration.<sup>10</sup>

However, the military domain was not immune to political tensions. The military cooperation was first hit hard by the Johnson Letter of 1964. The rather harshly worded letter addressed by President Lyndon B. Johnson to then-Turkish prime minister İsmet İnönü became the symbol of Turkish doubts regarding American reliability in the succeeding decades. In this letter, President Johnson warned Turkey not to use U.S. military equipment if it intervened in Cyprus on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots and asserted that the North Atlantic Treaty Operation (NATO) had no obligation to protect Turkey if such an inter-

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<sup>4</sup> Rhonda L. Callaway and Elizabeth G. Matthews, *Strategic U.S. Foreign Assistance: The Battle between Human Rights and National Security* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 145.

<sup>5</sup> *U.S. Overseas Loans: Obligations and Authorizations, July 1, 1945–September 30, 2019* (Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Capt Richard Robey and Col Jeffrey Vordermark, “Security Assistance Mission in the Republic of Turkey,” *Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management Journal* 26, no. 2 (2003): 9.

<sup>7</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency, *Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Other Security Cooperation Historical Facts* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2016), 121.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish Question* (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 228.

<sup>9</sup> F. Stephen Larrabee and Ian O. Lesser, *Turkish Foreign Policy in an Age of Uncertainty* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2003), 172, <https://doi.org/10.7249/MR1612>.

<sup>10</sup> Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish Question*, 228.

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vention were to lead to a Soviet military response.<sup>11</sup> When Turkey went ahead and carried out a military operation in Cyprus in 1974, Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in spite of the Gerald R. Ford administration's opposition. The embargo lasted until 1978. Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, Congress enforced various restrictions on military aid and arms sales to Turkey by linking them to Turkey's poor human rights record and actions concerning Cyprus.

While Turkey chafed at such restrictions, the American side grew increasingly irritated by Ankara's inhibitions on the use of İncirlik. Turkey was quite adamant not to allow non-NATO U.S. use of İncirlik as dictated by the bilateral agreements, such as the Defense Cooperation Agreement of 1969, and closed the base to American use during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israel wars, for instance.

Despite these political tensions, the military domain remained as the bedrock of bilateral relations for a very long time. However, it is now turning into an area of friction between the two countries as U.S.-Turkish relations have been going through one of the worst periods in history. The military relations have recently strained to a degree that certain U.S. congresspersons are suggesting that Turkey be "kicked out" of NATO.<sup>12</sup> Others proposed schemes like setting up an alternative base in the Eastern Mediterranean that would replace the İncirlik Air Base "as [Turkey] becomes less stable and less friendly to the United States."<sup>13</sup> In this context, Qatar, Romania, Greece, Cyprus, and Jordan were offered as alternatives.<sup>14</sup>

Against this backdrop, this chapter will analyze the transformation of bilateral relations in the last 20 years and its impact on military cooperation and demonstrate that recently the military domain of relations, which once used to be hinged on security cooperation, received the most severe blow.

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<sup>11</sup> For the text of the letter, see Lyndon B. Johnson and İsmet İnönü, "President Johnson and Prime Minister İnönü: Correspondence between President Johnson and Prime Minister İnönü, June 1964, as Released by the White House, January 15, 1966," *Middle East Journal* 20, no. 3 (1966): 386–93.

<sup>12</sup> Jason Lemon, "Congressman Suggests Turkey Could Be 'Kicked Out' of NATO: 'I Don't Think They're an Ally Today'," *Newsweek*, 15 October 2019.

<sup>13</sup> "The Alternatives to İncirlik," Bipartisan Policy Center, 3 August 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, *Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2021), 12; and Alex Ward, "How America's Relationship with Turkey Fell Apart," *VOX*, 11 April 2019.

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## THE 2003 CRISIS

One of the biggest crises in the history of U.S.-Turkish relations erupted in 2003 while Washington was preparing to launch a war in Iraq.

After 11 September 2001, relations seemed to be on the right track. Turkey immediately offered support to the Bush administration's Global War on Terrorism and deployed 90 special forces troops to Afghanistan to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>15</sup> Turkish support lasted for years, including key roles such as undertaking the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan twice together with the operation of the Kabul International Airport.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as a Muslim country—the only one in NATO—and relying on its historical ties to Afghanistan, Turkey provided legitimacy to the Western operations there.

However, things did not unfold as smoothly with the Iraqi campaign. The American side wished to open up a northern front in the war against Iraq along the Turkish-Iraqi border, through which the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division would enter Iraq.<sup>17</sup> In mid-2002, American civilian and military officials approached their Turkish counterparts in order to finalize the war plans.

The coalition government under then-prime minister Bülent Ecevit was wary of the American scheme as Turks had their own concerns lingering since the First Gulf War. Many Turks, including members of the civil and military elite, had been dismayed over the American military protection extended to Iraqi Kurds through Operation Provide Comfort (OPC, 1991–96) in the aftermath of the Gulf War. They thought that OPC facilitated the establishment of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq right across the Turkish border. It was anathema for Ankara as it could fuel Kurdish separatism in Turkey, a decades-long acute political problem. Furthermore, they argued that local conditions generated by OPC served the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* or PKK), which both Ankara and Washington had long designated a terrorist organization. Thanks to the enforced no-fly zone and the ensuing lack of central authority in the region, the PKK was able to infiltrate into northern Iraq and launch attacks to the Turkish territory from there. Therefore, Turks

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<sup>15</sup> "Türk Askeri Afganistan'a Gidiyor," *NTV*, 2 November 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Milli Savunma Bakanlığı Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, "Türkiye'nin Barış Desteleme Harekâtına Katkıları," [www.tsk.tr](http://www.tsk.tr), accessed 9 December 2022.

<sup>17</sup> For the American administration's preparations prior to the war, see Robert Draper, *To Start a War: How the Bush Administration Took America into Iraq* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020).

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were particularly worried about the possibility of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq that could emerge as a result of the American intervention.

In response, American officials expended great energy to dispel the Turkish concerns about the consequences of the war. For instance, then Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz unequivocally declared that an independent Kurdish state was out of question and the United States supported the territorial integrity of Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, the Turkish political scene went through a dramatic change. A new party, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or AKP), won the elections in November 2002 and set up a single-party government. The AKP was founded by a splinter group from the pro-Islamist Virtue Party, which was the political standard-bearer of the National Outlook movement. All the previous political parties sprung up from the movement by that time were closed down on the grounds that their Islamist agendas violated the constitutional principle of secularism. The AKP, nevertheless, denounced its pro-Islamist roots. It presented itself as a pro-Western, pro-market, conservative- (or Muslim-) democrat party. However, the staunch secularist civil and military elite did not seem convinced. Therefore, from the beginning there was a latent war of nerves between the AKP and the military, which historically regarded itself as the guardian of the secular, unitary republic.

Under these circumstances, the new Turkish government and the American side launched a new round of negotiations. The Americans proposed (or demanded, as the Turks saw it) deploying 80,000 troops and 250 warplanes to Turkey and using 14 airports and 5 seaports.<sup>19</sup> It would not have been easy for any Turkish government, let alone the AKP, a new party, to authorize the deployment of such a high number of foreign soldiers on Turkish territory. Therefore, long and arduous negotiations followed. Ankara also insisted that it should be able to send troops to northern Iraq together with Americans and demanded that the United States not give heavy weapons to the Kurdish groups there (Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party—KDP, and Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—PUK).<sup>20</sup> The intense bargaining included financial matters as well. Arguing that Turkey suffered huge economic losses due to the First Gulf War,

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<sup>18</sup> Fikret Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları: Sivil Darbe Girişimi ve Gizli Belgelerde 1 Mart Tezkeresi* (İstanbul: Güncel Yayıncılık, 2007), 143–44.

<sup>19</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*, 226.

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Ankara demanded \$32 billion in economic aid and eventually settled for \$6 billion.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Ankara authorized a U.S. military team to inspect the Turkish military airports and seaports that would be used by American forces during the war. This decision seemed to have further reassured American officials who had already been quite confident about Turkish compliance.<sup>22</sup> Several American warships and dozens of cargo vessels, which carried supplies and equipment for the 4th Infantry Division, were already anchored off Turkey's southern coast to unload.

Eventually, the Turkish government drafted a bill to authorize the United States to deploy 62,000 troops, 255 warplanes, and 65 helicopters for a period of six months.<sup>23</sup> However, on 1 March 2003, the Turkish parliament rejected the bill by a small margin. The decision, which killed the possibility of opening up a northern front, came as a shock to the American side. It was a severe blow to American strategic and political interests. Americans read the Turkish parliament's vote as a betrayal by a NATO ally. On top of it, refusal of a Muslim country through democratic means to participate in a war against Iraq projected an image that ran counter to what Washington had aimed for.

The Turkish parliament's rejection of the bill can be attributed to several factors. First was the Turkish fear of the formation of an independent Kurdish state, as explained above. Secondly, some very influential pro-Islamist AKP deputies were against any Western military intervention to a Muslim country and they had already been quite vocal in their objection, apparently mobilizing others. Thirdly, the inexperienced AKP leadership failed to whip its party group and balance the competing influences.<sup>24</sup> Finally, around 80 percent of the Turkish public was against their country's involvement in a war in Iraq.<sup>25</sup> This definitely had an impact on deputies' political calculations.

In the face of the decision, the Bush administration's exasperation was directed at the Turkish military rather than the government. The Pentagon, in par-

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<sup>21</sup> Dexter Filkins, "Turkey Seeks \$32 Billion for Helping U.S. in an Iraqi War," *New York Times*, 18 February 2003; Carol Migdalovitz, *Iraq: Turkey, the Deployment of U.S. Forces, and Related Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2003), 15; and Haber Merkezi, "150 ABD'li Uzman Üsleri İnceleyecek," *Yeni Şafak*, 11 January 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*, 206.

<sup>23</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*, 310. For detailed information about the political processes concerning the 1 March 2003 bill, see Murat Yetkin, *Tezkere: Irak Krizinin Gerçek Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Migdalovitz, *Iraq*.

<sup>25</sup> "Türk Halkı Savaşa Karşı," *Hürriyet*, 15 January 2003.



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ticular, accused the Turkish top brass of not publicly backing the bill before the parliamentary vote. Wolfowitz appeared on Turkish TV and criticized the military for not having influenced the Turkish lawmakers.<sup>26</sup> American policy makers and security officials had gotten used to seeing the military as politically more powerful than the ruling elite. In fact, any observer of Turkish politics might have easily concurred with this conviction, not least because the Turkish constitution and military's Internal Service Law provided the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) with a considerable domestic political role.

Nevertheless, Fikret Bila, a prominent journalist with substantial expertise on the TAF, noted that the TAF suspected that the newly elected pro-Islamist AKP government would put the blame squarely on the military if things went wrong as a result of either an affirmative or a negative vote.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the TAF was extremely cautious to remain politically neutral during the decision-making and the parliamentary voting processes.

Realizing the extent of the damage done to bilateral relations, the AKP government promptly tried to revive the negotiations. This time, however, the American side moderated its requests to focus on overflight rights, while making clear that it would not approve Ankara's demand to deploy Turkish troops in northern Iraq.<sup>28</sup> On 20 March, the parliament opened Turkish airspace for American overflights. Rather than send a heavily mechanized infantry division crashing into Saddam Hussein's northern flank, the Americans had to content themselves with a less potent—albeit photogenic and politically significant—parachute insertion of an airborne brigade, which linked up with and advanced alongside Iraqi Kurdish rebels. Ankara would later provide blanket overflight rights for American aircraft and allow Incirlik Air Base to become a logistics hub for American troops.

The Incirlik connection remained vital years into America's unanticipated counterinsurgency campaign in Iraq. In 2007, then-secretary of defense Robert M. Gates announced that 70 percent of the military cargo was transported to Iraq through Turkey.<sup>29</sup> Yet, it was not a sufficient measure to mend the fences.

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<sup>26</sup> For transcription of the interview, see Güncelleme Tarihi, "Wolfowitz: Accept Your Mistake, Our Partnership Shall Continue," *Hürriyet*, 7 May 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*.

<sup>28</sup> "On Overflights and Understandings," *Washington Post*, 23 March 2003.

<sup>29</sup> David S. Cloud, "Military Seeks Alternatives in Case Turkey Limits Access," *New York Times*, 12 October 2007.

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## THE 2003 CRISIS'S IMPACT ON MILITARY-TO-MILITARY RELATIONS

In the wake of the 2003 crisis, bilateral relations remained tenuous at best. While Turkey's 2003 decision strained bilateral relations tremendously, the military-to-military relations were particularly damaged. The comrades-in-arms feeling and mutual trust seemed to have vanished. The 2003 Sulaymaniyah "hooding" incident both reflected and accelerated this downturn in trust between NATO's two largest militaries.

In July 2003, reportedly acting on an intelligence tip that Turkish soldiers would assassinate a Kurdish aide, American troops stormed the covert headquarters of Turkish special forces in Sulaymaniyah in northern Iraq—whose mission was to gather intelligence and to operate against PKK cadres using northern Iraq as a safe haven—and arrested them.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps more than the raid itself, the way American soldiers treated their Turkish counterparts infuriated the Turkish military as the Turkish soldiers were forcibly handcuffed and hooded and marched before TV cameras. Then-chief of staff Hilmi Özkök defined the incident as the biggest crisis of confidence between two countries.<sup>31</sup> The military saw the incident as "American revenge for the 2003 bill" blocking U.S. plans for a northern front.<sup>32</sup>

The hooding incident—and together with it the American opposition to any Turkish military operation in northern Iraq—added to the TAF's frustration. Despite strong institutional connections, alliance ties, and close cooperation with its American counterpart, the Turkish military had its own reasons for discontent even before 2003. As noted above, the TAF shared the Turkish government's concerns about OPC and the situation in northern Iraq throughout the 1990s. For the Turkish military, which had been fighting the PKK since 1984, OPC was one of the factors facilitating PKK's attacks.<sup>33</sup> Thus the Turkish military's priority diverged from that of its American counterpart. While Americans' number one concern was containment of Hussein, for Turks, it was elimination

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<sup>30</sup> Bila, *Ankara'da Irak Savaşları*, 234–51.

<sup>31</sup> Güncelleme Tarihi, "Özkök: En Büyük Güven Bunalımı," *Hürriyet*, 7 July 2003.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, see statements of retired LtGen Köksal Karabay, "Ben Olsam Ateş Emri Verirdim," *Vatan*, 18 December 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Hakan Cora, Elnur Hasan Mikail, and Ali Nazmi Cora, "A Study on the Effects of Operation Provide Comfort (Poised Hammer Force) on the Establishment of a Kurdish State that Threatens Atatürk's Turkey," *China-USA Business Review* 20, no. 1 (2021): 8, <https://doi.org/10.17265/1537-1514/2021.01.001>.

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of the PKK and the protection of Iraq's territorial integrity.<sup>34</sup> As Iraqi Kurds gradually established an autonomous entity thanks to American protection, quite a number of Turks suspected that the United States had a hidden agenda of establishing a Kurdish state in the region to the detriment of Turkish interests.<sup>35</sup> Press reports and later memoirs confirmed that the TAF shared this perception.<sup>36</sup> For instance, then-chief of staff Doğan Güreş stated that the U.S. forces of OPC helped PKK in northern Iraq.<sup>37</sup> They apparently took it as incompatible with the behavior of an ally and a sign that the Americans took Turkey for granted, expecting Ankara to fall in line and to subordinate its own strategic interests to America's. U.S. efforts to curb the Turkish military's actions in northern Iraq also exacerbated this image.

Americans, on the other hand, viewed the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq as the most and indeed only stable part of the country, which quickly descended into anarchy and sectarian violence after the 2003 invasion.<sup>38</sup> The Peshmerga's competence and willingness to fight stood in great contrast with the reconstituted Iraqi security forces, who seemed to be perennially in need of training and assistance to conduct basic operations.<sup>39</sup> These traits not only endeared the Kurdish regional government to the decision makers in Washington, but also created respect and an affinity for the Kurdish people in successive generations of American military leaders. The 2003 crisis caused the top brass level contacts to remain limited. Relations between the U.S. Army and the Turkish Land Forces were practically frozen.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Kemal Kirisci, "Turkey and the United States: Ambivalent Allies," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 2, no. 4 (1998): 18–27.

<sup>35</sup> Baskın Oran, *Kalkık Horoz Çekiş Güç ve Kürt Devleti* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1998), 166.

<sup>36</sup> See Nilüfer Yalçın, "Genelkurmay Kaygılı," *Milliyet*, 6 November 1992; and Fikret Bila, *Komutanlar Cephesi* (Istanbul: Detay Yayınları, 2007), 59.

<sup>37</sup> Bila, *Komutanlar Cephesi*, 72. For a first-hand account, see Ali Nazmi Çora, *Çekiş Güç: Tarihimizdeki Kara Leke* (Ankara: Sonçağ Yayınları, 2021). Also see the statements of retired Gen Necati Özgen, in Aytunç Erkin, "Kürt Devleti Irak'ta Olmadı Simdi Suriye'de Deniyorlar," *Sözcü*, 9 September 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Philip Giraldi, "Turkey and the Threat of Kurdish Nationalism," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2008): 33–41, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2007-036>.

<sup>39</sup> Sgt Sean Harding, "3rd SFAB and Kurdish Peshmerga Work Side by Side to Defeat Threats," U.S. Central Command, 24 February 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen J. Flanagan et al., ed., *Turkey's Nationalist Course: Implications for the U.S.-Turkish Strategic Partnership and the U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2020), xxv, <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2589>.

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Things only started to change in late 2007. Right after the Turkish parliament authorized the government to send troops to Iraq, President George W. Bush and then-prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan agreed on “the November 5 deal.” In accordance with the deal, Washington provided Turks with real-time intelligence on PKK activities in Iraq. Furthermore, reversing its policy, the Bush administration allowed Turkish cross-border operations between December 2007 and February 2008 while facilitating Turkey-Iraq-KRG coordination in the meantime.<sup>41</sup> Thus, years later, mostly thanks to the intelligence-sharing scheme on the PKK, military-to-military relations improved, resulting in the “the first-ever talks” between the U.S. Army Staff and the Turkish General Staff in 2009.<sup>42</sup>

### CHANGE IN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN TURKEY

Meanwhile, the political structure of Turkey went through a dramatic change. The TAF was exceptionally powerful within the Turkish political system. Its political power stemmed from both legal and popular basis. The TAF, which carried out two coups d'état and two interventions by the early 2000s, managed to carve itself legal and political autonomy. It relied on this autonomy to fulfill the guardianship role, protecting the republic against both external and internal threats. Its popular source of power, on the other hand, essentially emanated from unwavering public confidence in the TAF as the most reliable institution in the country.

After the European Council granted Turkey candidate status in 1999, the country's EU accession process started. The process required harmonization of the Turkish laws with the EU acquis. As the successive governments introduced changes to the country's legislative and institutional structures, it was expected that the military's political activism would be curbed and civilian control over the military would be achieved.<sup>43</sup> To this end, several legislative amendments were enacted between 2001 and 2006, when Turkey's accession process stalled.

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<sup>41</sup> Jim Zanotti, *Turkey–U.S. Defense Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Flanagan, *Turkey's Nationalist Course*, xxv.

<sup>43</sup> For more detailed information about this period and the reform process, see Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, “The Military and Europeanization Reforms in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 5 (2009): 803–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200903135588>.

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However, the TAF retained some crucial prerogatives in addition to its popular support base, which enabled it to resist full civilian control.

The real blow to the TAF's political power came with the Sledgehammer (Balyoz) and Ergenekon court cases (2007–15).<sup>44</sup> The cases were named after alleged coup plans in 2003 by then commissioned officers against the AKP government. Hundreds of military personnel were arrested and convicted. During the process, the TAF lost its informal powers. The TAF was discredited in the eyes of the public as “as evil-minded ‘terrorists’ as opposed to honorable saviors of the nation.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the TAF appeared as a powerless paper tiger as opposed to its all-powerful image. Consequently, the trials helped the government transform the political structure, shifting the balance of power in favor of civilians.

The military's loss of power as a significant actor in the Turkish political system has definitely had an impact on foreign policy as well as on domestic politics. AKP's foreign policy of seeking “zero problems with neighbors” or desecuritization of regional strategy (mostly in connection with the Kurdish issue) in addition to its policy of reducing the military expenditure might be tied to AKP's urge to curb the TAF's prerogatives indirectly.<sup>46</sup> As the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon trials proceeded and AKP's existential fear of the military faded, it paved the way for a foreign policy shaped less by the military's influence and more by AKP's preferences. For American policy makers, the decline in influence of Turkey's secular and pro-Western military and the rise of an AKP that harbors a visceral suspicion of the West made it difficult to accommodate Turkish foreign policy interests.

The relationship between Ankara and Washington was further frayed by two incidents in 2009–10. First, Turkish-Israeli relations broke down over the Da-

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<sup>44</sup> For more information about the trials, see Dani Rodrik, “Ergenekon and Sledgehammer: Building or Undermining the Rule of Law?,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (2011): 99–109.

<sup>45</sup> Out of 400 officers who were suspects, 275 were commissioned. The number included 68 generals, which was roughly one-fifth of all generals in the Turkish military. See “İşte Ergenekon ve Balyoz'un Bilançosu,” ODATV, 15 May 2012; and Ayşegül Kars Kaynar, “Post-2016 Military Restructuring in Turkey from the Perspective of Coup-Proofing,” *Turkish Studies* 23, no. 3 (2021): <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2021.1977631>.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey's Zero-Problems Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, 20 May 2010; and Bülent Aras and Rabia Karakaya Polat, “From Conflict to Cooperation: Desecuritization of Turkey's Relations with Syria and Iran,” *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 5 (2008): 495–515, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608096150>.

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vos “moment” and the Gaza flotilla incident.<sup>47</sup> Second, in June 2010, while serving a term as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council, Turkey voted against additional sanctions on Iran. These incidents, together with Ankara’s cozying up with Hamas, caused some in Washington to question whether Turkey had shifted its direction from the West. Yet, where interests coincided, Turkey and the United States could still work together—for example, when Turkey agreed at NATO’s Lisbon summit in November 2010 to host an early-warning radar system as part of the missile shield project aimed at Iran. Soon, however, with the advent of the Arab Spring, American and Turkish priorities were to diverge significantly, especially in Syria.

## SYRIA

When the Arab Spring spread to Syria in 2011, a new chapter in U.S.-Turkish relations opened up. Ankara had especially close relations with Damascus in recent years, sometimes to the dismay of Washington. Syria became the success story of AKP’s new and activist foreign policy.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Turkey’s first reaction to the uprisings in Syria was to use its perceived leverage over President Bashar al-Assad to persuade him to launch a reform program. As its efforts failed, Ankara set regime change in Syria as its top priority. Thus, the AKP made a drastic change in traditional Turkish foreign policy by renouncing the principle of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of regional states.<sup>49</sup> In coordination with Washington and other regional countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar,

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<sup>47</sup> In January 2009, then-prime minister Erdoğan stormed out of a World Economic Forum debate after an angry exchange with Israeli president Shimon Peres over Israel’s offensive against Gaza. The Gaza flotilla, organized in part by the Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH), sailed toward Israel in May 2010 in an attempt to breach the blockade of Gaza strip. Israeli forces raided the Turkish-owned flagship, MV *Mavi Marmara*, killing 10 Turkish citizens.

<sup>48</sup> AKP’s vision of foreign policy in this period was mainly shaped by Ahmet Davutoglu, who served as foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, foreign minister, and prime minister between 2003 and 2016. Leaving behind the Kemalist foreign policy, which they described as passive, Western dependent, and aloof to Middle East, AKP launched an active policy that, assertedly, aimed for less conflictual and more harmonious (or desecuritized) relations with the countries in the Middle East in particular, and in the wider region in general. In this perspective, setting up “zero problems with neighbors policy” was a step toward making Turkey an “order-instituting central country” (a regional/global power) by utilizing its historical and cultural (religious) ties with regional countries.

<sup>49</sup> Sinan Ülgen, *Redefining the U.S.-Turkey Relationship* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021), 9.

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Turkey supported Syrian opposition.<sup>50</sup> Ankara helped establish the Free Syrian Army (FSA) with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) support between 2013 and 2017 on its own territory.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, Turkey constantly pushed Washington to intervene militarily in Syria to oust the Syrian regime, despite the Turkish military being the second largest military in NATO and, on paper, capable of defeating al-Assad's forces. Moreover, Ankara tried to convince the Barack H. Obama administration to establish safe zones along the Turkish-Syrian border together with a no-fly zone protecting them, both to relocate a massive number of Syrian refugees in the country and to provide military protection to Syrian opposition forces.<sup>52</sup> Both demands fell on deaf ears in Washington as President Obama remained wary of involving the United States in additional military engagements on top of Iraq and Afghanistan.

With the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria, the Obama administration's political calculations shifted. This time the United States was more willing to use military force, albeit indirectly. There were rumors that the United States and Turkey were planning some sort of a joint ground operation. As late as summer 2015, Ankara suggested the use of the FSA as ground forces since the Turkish military dragged its feet concerning an incursion into Syria. Yet, the Pentagon rejected the idea on the grounds that the FSA was not qualitatively and quantitatively fit for fighting. Most importantly, the FSA had a fundamental problem in that moderate FSA groups tended to be ineffective in combat while the groups that were capable in combat reeked of Islamic radicalism.<sup>53</sup> The Turkish reluctance to fight in Syria led Obama to complain that Erdoğan "refuse[d] to use his enormous army to bring stability to Syria."<sup>54</sup> In fact, it seems like it was the

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<sup>50</sup> Soli Ozel, "Indispensable Even When Unreliable: An Anatomy of Turkish-American Relations," *International Journal* 67, no. 1 (Winter 2011/2012): 53–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070201206700105>.

<sup>51</sup> Jen Kirby, "9 Questions about Turkey, Syria, and the Kurds You Were Too Embarrassed to Ask," *VOX*, 16 October 2019; and Josie Ensor and Luna Safwan, "Donald Trump Ends Covert CIA Aid to Syrian Rebels in 'Win' for Russia," *The Telegraph*, 7 July 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Brian W. Everstine, "Obama Opposes Syria No-Fly, Safe Zone," *Air and Space Forces Magazine*, 17 November 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Adam Entous, Gordon Lubold, and Dion Nissenbaum, "Turkish Offensive on Islamic State in Syria Caught U.S. Off Guard," *Wall Street Journal*, 30 August 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *Atlantic*, April 2016.

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Turkish military, not the AKP government, that was averse to any operation.<sup>55</sup>

There were several reasons why the TAF, more correctly the Turkish Army and the Air Force, resisted the government's pressure to launch a ground operation into Syria. First, it was the conviction that conventional troops would definitely need the aid of the local opposition forces to succeed. Not only would a ground campaign involve the use of Turkish conscripts fighting beyond national borders—always a politically fraught idea—the TAF would have to cooperate with either radical Islamists or the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (*Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat* or PYD) and the armed wing, the People's Protection Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* or YPG). The TAF was unwilling to act together with either.<sup>56</sup> One other reason could be resistance that the TAF was putting up in response to the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon cases.<sup>57</sup> Convinced that trials, which were wholeheartedly supported by the AKP government, were based on phony evidence and false claims aiming to discredit the TAF, the top brass could have resisted the government's demands. Third, the U.S. diplomat Edward G. Stafford argued that the military's reluctance also stemmed from the TAF's disappointment with having been excluded from the decision-making process on the "Kurdish Opening" or "Democratic Opening" (2009–15), which aimed to solve Turkey's Kurdish problem through political means as they had been fighting the PKK for the last 40 years.<sup>58</sup> Perhaps more importantly, the TAF asked for legal protection from the government similar to that provided for the National Intelligence Agency (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı* or MIT).<sup>59</sup> The aforementioned cases included accusations concerning job-related acts of the military personnel. Apparently, the military was concerned that they might face the same fate after an operation in Syria. Instead of a ground operation, in August 2015, Ankara allowed the coalition aircraft to use İncirlik Air Base and joined the air operations against ISIS, a step that it had been unwilling to take for some time.<sup>60</sup> To grant the United States access to İncirlik, the Erdoğan gov-

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<sup>55</sup> For the reasons why the AKP government wanted to conduct a military operation in Syria in 2014, see Saygı Öztürk, "Asker Ne Yapıyor, Ne Yapacak?," *Sözcü*, 3 October 2014. Also see Saygı Öztürk, "Askerler Cumhurbaşkanı'na Neler Anlattı?," *Sözcü*, 30 June 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Metin Gurcan, "Turkish Military Puts Brakes on Syrian Intervention," *Al-Monitor*, 4 May 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Ed Stafford, "Explaining the Turkish Military's Opposition to Combating ISIS," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 January 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Stafford, "Explaining the Turkish Military's Opposition to Combating ISIS."

<sup>59</sup> Saygı Öztürk, "Genelkurmay, Sınır Ötesi İçin Güvence İstedi," *Sözcü*, 4 October 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Spencer C. Tucker, ed., *Middle East Conflicts from Ancient Egypt to the 21st Century* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2019), 1285.



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ernment insisted on establishment of the no-fly zone.<sup>61</sup> Later, however, Ankara dropped the condition.

After failing to secure the involvement of Turkey's large conventional forces and watching U.S.-supported FSA groups fail in combat, Washington eventually found a more willing partner to do the fighting against ISIS on the ground in the Syrian Kurds (i.e., the YPG, the major fighting force of the Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF]). The United States started to arm them with light weapons. Ankara's reaction was harsh because the YPG was PKK's Syrian offshoot, and it was unacceptable for an ally to aid a terrorist organization that Turkey had been fighting.<sup>62</sup> In response, the U.S. side took a legalistic position emphasizing that Washington designated the PKK as a terrorist organization, not the YPG—an explanation that was largely ineffective in Turkey.<sup>63</sup> Turks found American promises that arms provided to the YPG for use in Syria would not find their way into the hands of PKK insurgents in Turkey naïve at best and dishonest at worst. The same held true for American assurances that their partnership with the YPG was both temporary and transactional, based on common enmity toward ISIS, and would end once ISIS was defeated.<sup>64</sup>

Turks found U.S. support to the YPG particularly hard to understand. For them, it has become the number one problem eroding the relationship. For many Turks, what they suspected since OPC had been established was finally being proven true. The United States long aspired for a free Kurdistan and therefore supported both Iraqi and Syrian Kurds.<sup>65</sup> For the Turkish government and public in general, Washington backed Turkey's number one enemy, disregarding Turkish concerns and undermining Turkish confidence in its historical ally.

Americans perceived the whole episode differently. They believed that they

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<sup>61</sup> "Obama'nın Adanı Yazdı: ABD'nin YPG'ye Silah Vermesinin Nedeni Erdoğan'ın O Şartı," *ODATV*, 13 May 2017.

<sup>62</sup> "Erdoğan: PYD'ye Silah Göndermeye 'Evet' Diyemeyiz," *BBC News Türkçe*, 19 October 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "Syria's Dark Shadow Over US-Turkey Relations," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2016): 29.

<sup>64</sup> Philip H. Gordon and Amanda Sloat, "The Dangerous Unraveling of the U.S.-Turkish Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, 10 January 2020.

<sup>65</sup> See, for instance, Mehmet Pişkin, "Emekli Generallerden Uyarı: Barzani, Irak ve Suriye'de 'Büyük Kürdistan' Kurmaya Çalışıyor," *Sözcü*, 10 July 2020; Uğur Dündar, "ABD'nin Asıl Hedefi Büyük Kürdistan'ı Kurmak," *Sözcü*, 14 May 2017; and Hasan B. Yalçın, "ABD Suriye'de PKK Devleti Kuruyor," *SETA*, 27 June 2016.

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had no other viable option for ground forces with which to fight ISIS.<sup>66</sup> While it seemed inconceivable to Turks that the world's lone superpower would have difficulty generating ground combat forces to fight an irregular army, President Obama's reluctance to become heavily involved in Syria, and Turkish unwillingness to fight the ISIS campaign on the United States' behalf, meant that the YPG was the partner of last resort.

While Turkey was drifting away from the United States, it simultaneously drew closer to Russia, although not without the same sort of roller coaster rides that characterized ties with Washington. Russia had deployed combat aircraft and limited ground forces to Syria in 2015 in support of al-Assad's shaky forces, rapidly shoring up the government forces in their fight against rebel forces. In November 2015, a Turkish General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon shot down a Russian bomber that had briefly crossed into Turkish airspace after attacking rebels in Syria, leading to Russian economic retaliation and threats of more concrete action.

After Turkish president Erdoğan managed a grudging apology for the shoot-down, Russian president Putin dropped the sanctions, which were also hurting Russian exporters and tourists. Following the rapprochement, Russia both allowed and enabled Turkish operations against the YPG.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, the AKP government gave up its insistence on regime change in Syria.<sup>68</sup> Instead, Ankara shifted its focus to containing the YPG and preventing the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish entity in northern Syria. Against this background, opinion polls conducted in the last couple of years reveal that nearly 80 percent of Turkish people prefer Russia to the United States as Turkey's main partner.<sup>69</sup>

In short, the Syrian conflict further exacerbated already strained relations and worsened the lingering trust issues. Eventually both parties found a new partner that the other side saw as its primary antagonist. Americans perceived Turks as unreliable because they failed to fully support—and even actively un-

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<sup>66</sup> Max Hoffman, Alan Makovsky, and Michael Werz, "What Turkey's Political Changes Mean for U.S.-Turkish Relations," Center for American Progress, 31 July 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Aaron Stein, "Why Turkey Turned Its Back on the United States and Embraced Russia: A Rift that Began in Iraq and Syria Now Threatens to Divide NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, 9 July 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Ülgen, "Redefining the U.S.-Turkey Relationship," 10.

<sup>69</sup> "Turkish Citizens Prefer Russia to U.S. as Strategic Partner: Survey," *Daily Sabah*, 7 June 2021.

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dermined—the international fight against the ISIS’s terrorist threat.<sup>70</sup> Turks perceived Americans as unreliable because the United States gave arms to YPG, which Turkey argued was essentially the Syrian wing of the terrorist group targeting Turkey. Both sides tried to pressure the other into accomplishing their own foreign policy goals while trying to conserve their own military resources in furtherance of their divergent interests.

## 2016 COUP D’ÉTAT

On 15 July 2016, a faction within the Turkish military attempted a coup d’état. Nevertheless, it remained as a botched attempt. In the aftermath, the AKP government swiftly took control. They declared that the coup attempt was conducted by Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ), the followers of Fethullah Gülen, a religious leader, who was once a close political ally of the AKP and had been in self-exile in Pennsylvania since 1999.<sup>71</sup>

The government’s response to the coup attempt had a profound impact on the Turkish political scene. Its effect on the military domain has arguably been even more staggering. Measures taken by the government have restructured the civil-military relations, and it has shaped security policy and the strategic outlook. Therefore, the following section will analyze how post-coup attempt developments in various aspects of the military domain have affected U.S.-Turkish relations. In doing so, the rest of the discussion will focus on:

- I. Post-coup attempt at civil-military relations
- II. Military operations abroad
- III. Military activism
- IV. Defense industry
- V. Arms procurement and S-400s issue

### *I. Post-Coup Attempt Civil-Military Relations*

Since the coup attempt, the TAF has undergone a substantial reorganization. First, ending decades-long debate, the commands of the army, navy, and air force were subordinated to the Ministry of National Defence (MOD) instead of the chief of General Staff (CGS). The CGS, alternatively, became accountable to

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<sup>70</sup> See the statement of Amb James F. Jeffrey, “Assessing the Impact of Turkey’s Offensive in Northeast Syria,” 116th Cong. (22 October 2019) (Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate).

<sup>71</sup> Washington’s rejection of Turkey’s extradition demands of Gülen on the grounds of lack of evidence has been another source of discord in bilateral relations.

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the president. The most sweeping institutional change was to move the paramilitary and rural Jandarma (a vital counterinsurgency force) from under the control of the MOD to the Ministry of the Interior, considered more reliably pro-AKP. Second, the TAF lost its influence in military promotions, paving the way for civilian control of the process. The structure of the Supreme Military Council (*Yüksek Askeri Şura*), which handles promotion and dismissal of officers, was changed, empowering civilian members. Third, the war academies and military high schools were closed down and replaced by the National Defence University. A civilian was appointed as the president.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the government totally tamed the TAF that had already been crippled by the Sledgehammer and Ergenekon trials. At present, there seems to be total civilian control over the military.

Meanwhile, to boost its political power domestically, the AKP government forged a de facto coalition with different nationalist groups from right and center-left sides of the spectrum, such as the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* or MHP) and several Eurasianist or *Ulusalcı* political groupings.<sup>73</sup> The AKP relied on MHP to secure an electoral victory in the future elections.

## *II. Military Operations Abroad*

In the wake of the coup attempt and against the background of AKP's new domestic political alliances with nationalist groups, the government developed a novel security doctrine. According to the doctrine, Turkey is being faced with existential threats originating not only in its own territory but also from abroad. Therefore, the security concept requires threats to be eradicated where they originate from with a preventive approach.<sup>74</sup> Relying on this revised understanding of security, immediately after the botched coup attempt, the AKP government

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<sup>72</sup> For detailed information about post-2016 civil-military relations reforms, see Kaynar, "Post-2016 Military Restructuring in Turkey from the Perspective of Coup-Proofing."

<sup>73</sup> Akçali and Perinçek define (Kemalist) Eurasianism "as an alternative to Turkey's pro-Western orientation" as embraced by certain factions within the TAF. For them, it provides a critique of the pro-American policies of Turkish governments, in particular, since they have eroded the secular, social, and unitary characteristics of the state. They also regard it as an "alternative globalization" discourse because of its resentment toward pro-Western policies and its anti-imperialist character drawing from the Kemalism's anti-imperialist agenda. See Emel Akçali and Mehmet Perinçek, "Kemalist Eurasianism: An Emerging Geopolitical Discourse in Turkey," *Geopolitics* 14, no. 3 (2009): 550–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040802693564>.

<sup>74</sup> Burhanettin Duran, "Milli Savunma Bakanı Hulusi Akar 'Milli Güvenlik Ülke Sınırlarının Dışında Başlar,'" *Kriter* 6, no. 66 (2022).

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started to carry out a series of cross-border operations against the number one threat (i.e., PKK) in Syria and Iraq.

### *Operations in Syria*

After the failed coup attempt, Turkey carried out its first military operation in Syria: Operation Euphrates Shield (August 2016–March 2017).<sup>75</sup> Apparently, the TAF had to accept what they had been objecting to for several years. The major reason was that almost no officer was in a position to stand up against the government in the midst of the post-coup purges and arrests. Second, while previous plans of operations aimed at ousting of Bashar al-Assad or defeating ISIS, this time the operation mainly targeted the YPG, the natural enemy for the Turkish military. The new ruling coalition, which had a full grip now over the military, agreed on not allowing a “Kurdish corridor” alongside the Turkish-Syrian border, which would constitute an independent Kurdish statelet. As explained above, such a contingency was anathema to Turkey. Even many Turkish citizens who did not support the AKP favored Erdoğan’s moves into Syria, which the Erdoğan government promoted as aimed at preventing cross-border attacks on Turkish civilians and reversing the flow of Syrian refugees into Turkey.

Despite the risk Operation Euphrates Shield posed to the campaign to defeat ISIS, Washington was unable to react strongly to the operation since military or economic action against Turkey was out of the question. Instead, during a visit to Turkey in August 2016, then-vice president Joseph R. Biden Jr. sounded conciliatory notes to placate Turkish anger:

No [Kurdish] corridor [along the Turkish border], period. No separate entity on the Turkish border. A united Syria. And the Prime Minister explained precisely the arrangement that we have relative to both Jarabulus and the commitment we made with regard to Manbij. We have made it absolutely clear to the elements that were part of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the YPG that participated, that they must move back across the river. They cannot, will not, and under no circumstances get American support if they do not keep that commitment, period.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ankara has conducted three more ground operations in northern Syria. These were Operation Olive Branch (January–March 2018), Operation Peace Spring (October 2019), and Operation Spring Shield (February–March 2020).

<sup>76</sup> White House Office of the Vice President, “Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım at a Press Availability Cankaya Palace Ankara, Turkey,” news release, 24 August 2016.

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Despite promises to the Obama administration, the YPG did not vacate Manbij, Syria. Nevertheless, the new Donald J. Trump administration did not alter its predecessor's policy of designating the YPG as the main U.S. partner in the fight against ISIS. In May 2017, the United States directly armed the YPG during the Raqqa operation.<sup>77</sup> Ankara's reaction became harsher. The AKP government officially declared one of the goals of Turkish military operations as "to counter U.S. support for a terrorist organization."<sup>78</sup>

Following the second Turkish incursion in early 2018, then-secretary of state Rex W. Tillerson voiced support to Ankara in a similar manner as Biden had: "We continue to be supportive of addressing the legitimate security concerns of Turkey as a NATO Ally and critical partner in the effort to defeat ISIS."<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the United States and Turkey took joint measures not to endanger the remaining U.S. forces on the ground. In June 2018, for instance, they crafted an agreement called the Manbij roadmap, which also included provisions aimed at force protection.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the two sides forged a deconfliction arrangement that entailed Turkey to operate freely in the region between Tel Abyad and Tel Afar and provided Turkish aircraft with information about the positions of the U.S. forces.<sup>81</sup> Washington also designed a series of confidence-building measures with Turkey, such as joint patrols and reconnaissance flights.<sup>82</sup> However, Ankara complained about the poor implementation of the agreement and Washington's reluctance to clear out a 30 kilometer deep strip alongside the border as a safe zone, increased its pressure on the Trump administration to reverse its policy or allow it to carry out an operation to push the YPG away from its border.

In October 2019, President Trump ordered the withdrawal or relocation of the U.S. troops from the border areas in northern Syria apparently to clear the way for an impending Turkish military incursion. Trump faced immense crit-

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<sup>77</sup> Michael R. Gordan and Eric Schmitt, "Trump to Arm Syrian Kurds, Even as Turkey Strongly Objects," *New York Times*, 9 May 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Sevil Erkuş, "12 Maddede Türkiye'nin Afrin Hedefi," *Hürriyet*, 22 January 2018.

<sup>79</sup> "Statement by Department of State Spokesperson Heather Nauert," Department of State, 21 January 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Flanagan, *Turkey's Nationalist Course*, xxv.

<sup>81</sup> Ari Cicurel, Sam Millner, and Blaise Misztal, "Turkey Prepares for Possible Offensive Against U.S. Partners in Syria," JINSA's Gemunder Center for Defense and Strategy, November 2021; and Aaron Stein, "The American Deconfliction Disadvantage: Ankara's Drone Campaign in Syria and Iraq," *War on the Rocks*, 6 October 2021.

<sup>82</sup> Will Todman, "The Implications of a Turkish Intervention in Northeastern Syria," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 7 October 2019.

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icism, even from close political allies, partially because his decision reportedly came after a phone call from Erdoğan.<sup>83</sup> The bipartisan condemnation focused on Erdoğan's disproportionate influence over Trump.<sup>84</sup>

Turkey's third ground operation, carried out two days after Trump's decision, incurred a U.S. House of Representatives resolution condemning Turkey and the Protect Against Conflict by Turkey Act, which required the president to impose sanctions as well as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's sanctions package.<sup>85</sup> Neither President Trump's threats to "destroy and obliterate the economy of Turkey" nor sanctions stopped Turkey from carrying out its fourth operation in early 2020.<sup>86</sup>

As a result of the military operations, Ankara has realized some of its goals. It prevented formation of a contiguous Kurdish area along its border with an outlet to the Mediterranean. It also created a possible, albeit limited, relocation zone for Syrian refugees. For research analyst Francesco Siccadi, Turkey scored significant political gains. It managed "to deter the United States from pursuing further cooperation with Kurdish forces and positioned [Turkey] to play a role in any political process that will end the conflict."<sup>87</sup> For Max Hoffman, it almost destroyed the prospects of Syrian Kurdish autonomy.<sup>88</sup>

Turkey's operations did not help with military-to-military relations, though. NATO's comrades-in-arms have come eyeball-to-eyeball in the Syrian theater. The Pentagon has been particularly disturbed by the Turkish operations. Concerned about the safety of the U.S. forces inside Syria, Pentagon officials con-

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<sup>83</sup> Dorian Jones, "Trump's Decision to Withdraw from Syria Is Triumph for Erdogan," *Voice of America*, 7 October 2019.

<sup>84</sup> On the Trump-Erdoğan relationship, see, for instance, David Ignatius, "Why Is the Trump Administration Enabling Erdogan's Turkey?," *Washington Post*, 3 September 2020; and Humeyra Pamuk and Orhan Coskun, "Behind Trump-Erdogan 'Bromance,' a White House Meeting to Repair U.S.-Turkey Ties," *Reuters*, 12 November 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Protect Against Conflict by Turkey Act or the PACT Act, H.R. Rep. No. 4695 (2019); and Promoting American National Security and Preventing the Resurgence of ISIS Act of 2019, S. 2641, 116th Cong. (2019).

<sup>86</sup> President Trump, tweet on 7 October 2019, [thetrumparchive.com](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1178111111): "As I have stated strongly before, and just to reiterate, if Turkey does anything that I, in my great and unmatched wisdom, consider to be off limits, I will totally destroy and obliterate the Economy of Turkey (I've done before!). They must, with Europe and others, watch over..." @realDonaldTrump.

<sup>87</sup> Francesco Siccadi, *How Syria Changed Turkey's Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2021).

<sup>88</sup> Max Hoffman, *Flashpoints in U.S.-Turkey Relations in 2021* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2021), 33.

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tacted their Turkish counterparts before operations to stop the incursions, but to no avail. In several instances, the U.S. forces claimed that they came under Turkish artillery fire.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, U.S. top brass coordinated with Turkish officers during the operations. Still, top Pentagon officials, like the secretary of Defense or Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, condemned the operations by arguing that they had a destabilizing impact on the region, which harmed bilateral relations.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, Central Command (CENTCOM) commanders seemed particularly content with YPG's fighting capabilities against ISIS, although frustrated when YPG commanders redeployed forces from reducing ISIS's remaining strongholds in order to defend against Turkish attacks. Besides, certain developments such as lengthy and difficult Incirlik negotiations and Turkey's delay in designating Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist organization caused a perception to prevail among the U.S. military officers that Turkey was not a helpful partner in the fight against ISIS.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, U.S. European Command (EUCOM) accused Turkey of being a "major facilitation hub" for ISIS.<sup>92</sup> This, too, exacerbated the trust problem. Under these circumstances, the Pentagon's take on this seems to be that Turkey undermines American counterterrorism efforts by crippling the United States' main partner on the ground.

### *Operations in Northern Iraq*

As explained above, Turkey is against the establishment of an independent Kurdish state not only in Syria but also in Iraq. Ankara fears that such an independent entity would eventually carve out territory from Turkey, causing its dismemberment. The Turkish state, especially the TAF, long resisted engaging with Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).<sup>93</sup> However, as the military's political power waned in the late 2000s, the AKP government launched a new policy of close cooperation with KRG.

AKP's policy toward the KRG was in part related to its new policy initia-

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<sup>89</sup> Tom O'Connor, James LaPorta, and Naveed Jamali, "Exclusive: Turkey Attacks U.S. Special Forces in Syria, Apparently by Mistake," *Newsweek*, 11 October 2019.

<sup>90</sup> See, for instance, Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, "U.S. Military Says Not Abandoning Kurds, Condemns Turkish Offensive," Reuters, 11 October 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Tulin Daloglu, "Turkey Finally Designates Jabhat Al-Nusra a Terrorist Group," *Al-Monitor*, 6 June 2014.

<sup>92</sup> John Vandiver, "Turkey Still a Major Hub for ISIS Militants, IG Report Says," *Stars and Stripes*, 5 August 2020.

<sup>93</sup> Bilgiç, "The Military and Europeanization Reforms in Turkey."



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tive at home, namely the Kurdish Opening. The AKP government expected that having better relations with Iraqi Kurds would contribute to a peace process at home.<sup>94</sup> However, following the collapse of the Kurdish Opening, Ankara reembraced its former line of policy and adopted a more securitized outlook toward the region.<sup>95</sup>

In this context, when KRG leaders announced that they would hold an independence referendum on 25 September 2017, Ankara reacted sternly. Following the referendum issue, the Turkish military carried out several operations in northern Iraq against the PKK. For instance, in June 2020, during an incursion dubbed Operation Claw Tiger, Turkish troops entered up to 40 kilometers inside Iraq and set up around 30 military points.<sup>96</sup>

The new security concept reiterates the presence of the PKK alongside Turkish borders carrying out hit and run attacks in the Turkish territory as a major security threat. With this aim, Ankara partners with KDP, the ruling party in KRG. Thus, Turkey has been able to establish military bases and cooperate with KDP concerning anti-PKK intelligence.<sup>97</sup> KDP, whose own relations with the PKK or the YPG are not free from tensions, prefers to enable Turkish operations, albeit not fully all the time. The Baghdad government, on the other hand, condemns but does not prevent the operations mostly because it lacks the necessary capabilities. Furthermore, Baghdad's and Ankara's interests converge within the framework of the Sinjar Agreement.<sup>98</sup> The security agreement, signed in October 2020 between the federal government in Baghdad and KRG and backed by the United States and Turkey, requires withdrawal of all armed groups, such as the PKK, from the Sinjar district.

The U.S. reaction toward the Turkish military operations in Iraq was milder compared to its response to the incursions into Syria. In fact, the United States officially countenances Ankara's strikes against the PKK in northern Iraq.

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<sup>94</sup> Henri J. Barkey, "The Evolution of Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *TESEV*, July 2012, 3. For AKP's "Kurdish Opening," see Michael M. Gunter, "The Turkish-Kurdish Peace Process," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 14, no. 1 (2013): 101–11.

<sup>95</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The New Turn in Turkey's Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Regional and Domestic Insecurities," *IAI Papers* 20, no. 17 (2020): 15.

<sup>96</sup> Orhan Coskun, Daren Butler, and John Davison, "Turkey Shifts Fight Against Kurdish Militants Deeper into Iraq," Reuters, 22 July 2020.

<sup>97</sup> Berkay Mandıracı, "Turkey's PKK Conflict: A Regional Battleground in Flux," International Crisis Group, 18 February 2022.

<sup>98</sup> *Iraq: Stabilising the Contested District of Sinjar*, report no. 235 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2022).

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It even sought to cool off Ankara concerning its partnership with the YPG by helping with Turkish operations in Iraq.<sup>99</sup> Against this backdrop, there is a *modus vivendi* between two sides as far the situation in northern Iraq is concerned. Washington and Ankara crafted a deconfliction agreement similar to the one in Syria. Accordingly, Turkey had a free hand to the north of the deconfliction line in northern Iraq, while the southern regions were under complete U.S. control.<sup>100</sup> In other words, the United States tolerates Turkish strikes against the PKK within the said area on the condition that Ankara informs them about the strikes.<sup>101</sup>

In short, American reactions toward Turkish operations in Syria and Iraq are not similar. This is basically because Washington sticks to its distinction between the YPG as an ally in the fight against terrorism and the PKK as a terrorist organization. However, occasionally problems in one theater can affect the other one. For instance, in 2019, in protest of the Turkish operations in Syria, the United States stopped intelligence sharing program that had been going on since 2007 and greatly contributed to the military-to-military relations.

### *III. Military Activism*

Turkey's military activism was not limited to operations abroad. Ankara also openly wished to be a major regional player with teeth. Thus, the AKP government sought to forge a new identity as a more independent actor. The AKP had continuously criticized previous governments for turning Turkey into a satellite/client state of the United States. With this aim, Turkey increased its military expenditure, boosted its military industry, built security cooperation with a number of regional countries through military agreements, and set up military bases abroad.

Since it came to power in 2002, the AKP government gradually decreased the military expenditure until 2015. The main goal was to limit the resource base of the Turkish military and hence curb its political influence. Following the coup attempt, defense spending increased promptly. In the newly structured domestic political environment, the government reversed its previous policy. For the reasons explained above, the government preferred a strong military under its

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<sup>99</sup> Stein, "The American Deconfliction Disadvantage."

<sup>100</sup> Stein, "The American Deconfliction Disadvantage."

<sup>101</sup> Cicurel, Millner, and Misztal, "Turkey Prepares for Possible Offensive Against U.S. Partners in Syria."

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tight control rather than a weak one. As a result, the military expenditure as percentage of GDP increased from 1.8 percent in 2015 to 2.8 percent in 2020.<sup>102</sup>

Through a series of military agreements with regional states, Ankara has built an expanded web of military cooperation, what former State Department official Rich Outzen calls a regional security subsystem.<sup>103</sup> Turkey opened new bases in Syria, Libya, Qatar, Somalia, and Sub-Saharan Africa; devised a new strategic defense doctrine; built new defense-industrial partnerships with Pakistan, Malaysia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, enabling it to project power regionally and providing it with political and diplomatic leverage.<sup>104</sup> The increase in military activism serves the vision of being an influential regional power. It also can be seen as a military power projection against the Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and United Arab Emirates alliance.

#### *IV. Defense Industry*

Turkey's expanding military presence is currently being buttressed by a growing military industry. In this regard, one of the immediate responses of the government to the abortive coup attempt was the bolstering of the defense industry. İsmail Demir, president of Defense Industries, pinpoints civil and military bureaucratic transformation in Turkey after the botched coup attempt, together with distrust toward NATO and Turkey's traditional allies as the major drivers behind the rise of the Turkish defense industry.<sup>105</sup> The AKP government framed development of the defense industry as part of the national struggle with direct reference to the Turkish War of Independence (1919–23). Expansion of the defense industry also resonates well with the revised domestic and foreign policy of the AKP government. The new policies are partially shaped by the new requirements imposed by the conditions of the post-coup attempt political alignments. It is an essential component of being an independent, nationalist, strong, and assertive regional (or preferably global) actor (i.e., the so-called New Turkey).

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<sup>102</sup> "Military Expenditure (% of GDP)—Türkiye," World Bank, accessed 1 November 2022; and "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," sipri.org, accessed 1 November 2022.

<sup>103</sup> Rich Outzen, *Deals, Drones, and National Will: The New Era in Turkish Power Projection* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2021), 16.

<sup>104</sup> Outzen, *Deals, Drones, and National Will*, 9–10.

<sup>105</sup> İsmail Demir, "Transformation of the Turkish Defense Industry," *Insight Turkey* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 35, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2020223.02>.

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### *Restructuring the Defense Industry*

After the Turkish Republic was established in 1923, Turkey immediately attempted to develop a national defense industry. Following the Truman Doctrine, and especially Turkey's membership in NATO in 1952, as the country started to receive great amounts of military aid and equipment from the United States and other Western countries, Ankara gradually abandoned almost all of its local defense development projects.<sup>106</sup> As a result, Turkish armament inventory became overwhelmingly of U.S. origin. Turkish dependence on U.S. supply of defense materials proved to be a problem with the advent of the Cyprus crisis. Following the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974, Washington imposed an arms embargo against Turkey in February 1975. H. Res. 1167 dictated suspension of all military aid, sales, and deliveries to Turkey, mainly because Turkey used defense materials supplied by the United States for purposes other than self-defense, internal security, and action in conformity with UN decisions.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, for Demir, the embargo was a trauma for the Turks, which eventually led to the establishment of a self-sufficient defense industry.<sup>108</sup>

Similarly, President Erdoğan voiced a conviction shared by the majority of Turks: "We saw it during the 1974 Cyprus Operation; those who should have stood by us, ended their support abruptly. Luckily, they did so! . . . [Thanks to them] we established [the defense corporation] Aselsan. As the proverb says, a bad landlord causes the tenant to own their home."<sup>109</sup>

Indeed, a mere nine months after the embargo decision, Aselsan, a major defense corporation, was established by the Turkish Army Foundation. A number of other defense manufacturers, such as Aspilsan (1981), Havelsan (1982), and Roketsan (1988), followed suit. All aimed to meet the equipment needs of the TAF. Meanwhile, in 1985, the Defense Industry Development and Support Administration Office (SAGEB) was set up under the Ministry of National Defence in order to encourage defense research and development. In 1989, it was

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<sup>106</sup> Ömer Karasapan, "Turkey's Armaments Industries," *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)*, no. 144 (January/February 1987).

<sup>107</sup> Joint Resolution Making Further Continuing Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 1975, and for Other Purposes, H. Res. 1167, 93d Cong. (1974); A. A. Fatouros, "The Turkish Aid Ban: Review and Assessment," *Articles by Maurer Faculty*, 1905 (1976): 6; and "Congress Wins Restrictions on AID to Turkey," in *CQ Almanac 1974* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1975), 547–53.

<sup>108</sup> Demir, "Transformation of the Turkish Defense Industry," 30.

<sup>109</sup> T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "Üretmekte Ürkek Davrananlar, İthal Etmekte Oldukça Cesur Çıktılar," *tecb.gov.tr*, 16 March 2015.

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restructured as the Undersecretariat of the Defense Industry (SSM) again under the MOD. Finally, after the coup attempt, in 2018, SSM was renamed as the Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB) and placed directly under the presidency to ensure a rapid decision-making process and to signal the political support.

### *Political Will*

Turkish desire to develop its own defense industry is by no means new. (See chapter 1 in this volume on U.S.-Ottoman defense relations.) Nevertheless, especially in recent years, the AKP government has attached utmost importance to it. The *2023 Siyasi Vizyon* document, symbolizing formation of a New Turkey at the centenary of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, set the goal of zero dependence on foreign-produced defense articles and materials.<sup>110</sup> There are several reasons for the special significance attributed to it by the AKP.

First of all, the AKP linked the urgency to eliminate Turkey's dependence on foreign-supplied defense systems and equipment to its Western allies' "betrayal" during its fight against the country's biggest enemy, the PKK. President Erdoğan and other AKP leaders have repeatedly expressed their disappointment at NATO allies' lack of support to Turkey's counterterrorism efforts and declared that NATO allies were not to be trusted. According to them, the West has consistently disregarded Turkish interests and downgraded the threats that the country has been dealing with. For instance, İsmail Demir argues that Turkey's "defense industry was considerably handicapped due to [its] membership to NATO" and furthermore, "NATO . . . has declined to provide active support to Turkey" when it faced security threats despite the fact that NATO responded to Ankara's demands in 1991, 2003, and 2012 by sending air defense systems to Turkey.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, "not to allow a fait accompli and any steps to be taken 'despite Turkey' in [its] region," it has become a strategic necessity for Turkey to develop an indigenous industry in order to limit its dependence on its allies.<sup>112</sup>

This particular point of view would most probably be shared by a majority of the Turkish public. With a number of official or unofficial arms embargoes imposed by its NATO allies over the years and a painful history of arms procure-

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<sup>110</sup> "2023 Siyasi Vizyon," AK PARTİ, 1 November 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Demir, "Transformation of the Turkish Defense Industry," 34.

<sup>112</sup> Hulusi Akar, "Turkey's Military and Defense Policies," *Insight Turkey* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 14, <https://doi.org/10.25253/99.2020223.01>.

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ment from the United States even during the Cold War era have left its mark on the Turkish psyche.

After the arms embargo was lifted in 1978, on a number of occasions during the 1980s and afterward, the U.S. Congress prevented arms sales to Turkey, linking them to the Kurdish issue and the Cyprus problem. During a period when Turkey was getting most of its defense materials from the United States, such restrictions seriously crippled the Turkish military. To date, Turkey's other Western allies have also imposed similar restrictions in order to prevent Ankara from using weapons manufactured in these countries during its fight against terrorism. For instance, in 2018 Germany withdrew from the Altay tank project according to which it would provide the engine. In 2019, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom stopped the procurement of drone components necessary for local production.<sup>113</sup>

Second, it is a political tool to get back at the previous governments and the Kemalist regime. The AKP propaganda reads that the pro-Western Kemalist regime failed (or intentionally declined) to produce even a simple infantry rifle and thus made the country dependent on the West for its own defense and security needs. Whereas now thanks to the AKP, Turkey, for the first time, can ensure its security on its own and protect its interests.

Third, it is also related to the party's claim to become the leader of the Muslim world. According to the AKP leaders, from Libya to Syria or from Iraq to Yemen, in order to help the Muslim people around the world, Turkey has to be secure and independent first and then rise up to the challenge of rectifying the wrong done to Muslims.

Fourth, according to some observers, expansion of the defense industry has been a pet project of President Erdoğan. His personal goal of "projecting an image of power" or his political ambitions have been one of the motivations of the government's support to the industry.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, given Turkey's history of persistent current account deficits, turning expensive military equipment purchases made in hard currencies into military equipment exports that bring in hard currency creates a measurable impact on

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<sup>113</sup> Émile Bouvier, "Turkey: The Arms Industry on the Fast Track to Autonomy," *ORIENTXXI*, 27 October 2021.

<sup>114</sup> Ferhat Gurini, "Turkey's Unpromising Defense Industry," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 9 October 2020.

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Turkey's cash flow, not to mention other positive effects of having military research and development improve Turkey's high-tech manufacturing workforce and industrial base.

### *Developments*

Against this background, the industry has made significant progress in recent years. In 2020, 7 Turkish companies appeared in the top 100 global defense companies list, reflecting the huge leap forward that Turkey took in the field.<sup>115</sup> Turkey's dependence on foreign supplies in the defense industry decreased from around 80 percent to around 20 percent, as President Erdoğan proudly announced.<sup>116</sup> From 2017 to 2021, Turkey's share of global arms imports diminished by 56 percent compared to the preceding five-year period.<sup>117</sup>

Within this context, Turkey's dependence on the United States decreased significantly. During the AKP reign (2002–21), according to SIPRI, total trend-indicator values (TIVs) of arms imports of Turkey were \$13.068 million, \$4.908 million of which came from the United States. During this period, imports from the United States constituted 37.5 percent of all imports to Turkey. The United States' share in imports to Turkey has been in decline since 2014, dropping from 72.4 percent in that year to 8.8 percent in 2021.<sup>118</sup> From another perspective, U.S. arms exports to Turkey between 2011–15 and 2016–20 decreased by 81 percent. Consequently, Turkey became the 19th largest recipient of U.S. arms exports in 2016–20. Formerly, in 2011–15, it was the third largest.<sup>119</sup>

Turkey has not only made significant strides in achieving autonomy by diminishing reliance on foreign suppliers, but it also has become an exporter. Turkey was the 12th largest exporter of major arms in 2021. Its arms exports grew

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<sup>115</sup> "Top 100 for 2022," Defense News, accessed 1 November 2022. The list is compiled by the Defense News and the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

<sup>116</sup> Rümeyza Kaya, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Savunma Sanayinde Dışa Bağımlılık Yüze 20'lere İndi," *TGRT Haber*, 17 August 2021. According to SSB, external dependency was roughly 80 percent in 2002, whereas it was less than 35 percent in 2021. T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Savunma Sanayii Başkanlığı, "Türk Savunma Sanayisinin 2021 Yılı Performansı," *ssb.gov*, accessed 1 November 2022.

<sup>117</sup> Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, and Siemon T. Wezeman, *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2021* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2022).

<sup>118</sup> "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed 1 November 2022.

<sup>119</sup> Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova, and Siemon T. Wezeman, *Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020* (Stockholm: SIPRI, 2021).

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by 31 percent between 2012–16 and 2017–21, increasing its global share from 0.7 percent to 0.9 percent.<sup>120</sup> The total turnover of the industry grew from \$1 billion in 2002 to \$11 billion in 2020.<sup>121</sup>

The crown jewel of the expanding industry has been the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones. President Erdoğan takes a special pride in them. Drones are especially strong symbols because they represent more than improvement in technological capability but also political will to become a regional power.

Ankara's interest in drone manufacturing is also partially generated by the U.S. Congress's prevention of the Turkish procurement of General Atomics MQ-1 Predator and General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper drones since 2008.<sup>122</sup> Later in 2010 and 2012, Congress vetoed exporting drones to Turkey because of the strained relations between Turkey and Israel.<sup>123</sup> In addition, IAI Heron reconnaissance drones, which Turkey bought from Israel in 2007, were claimed to be either defective or could easily be controlled by the Israeli military.<sup>124</sup> Because of these reasons, Ankara decided to support indigenous design and production. When Baykar Bayraktar Tactical Block 2 (TB2) drones, produced by the aviation company Baykar Makina, which belongs to President Erdoğan's co-in-laws, first deployed in 2016, it had considerable success on the field.<sup>125</sup>

As of August 2020, the TAF possessed 144 UAVs and armed UAVs. One hundred and ten of them were TB2 drones. Twenty-four of them were ANKA or TAI Aksungur drones that were manufactured by the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAŞ-Türk Havacılık ve Uzay Sanayii A.Ş.). The remaining 10 were Israeli-made Heron UAVs.<sup>126</sup> In August 2021, the TAF procured six Baykar Bayraktar Akıncı A, unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAV), again produced by Baykar Makina.<sup>127</sup> Turkey exported drones to 16 countries, including Libya,

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<sup>120</sup> Wezeman, Kuimova, and Wezeman, *Trends in International Arms Transfers*, 2021.

<sup>121</sup> Bouvier, "Turkey."

<sup>122</sup> Outzen, *Deals, Drones, and National Will*, 11; and Tolga Tanış, "ABD Hâlâ Bu Silah Sistemlerini Türkiye'ye Vermiyor," *Hürriyet*, 8 October 2015.

<sup>123</sup> Samuel Brownsword, "Turkey's Unprecedented Ascent to Drone Superpower Status," *Drone Wars*, 15 June 2020.

<sup>124</sup> Taha Hüseyin Karagöz, "İsrail'in Bozuk Heronlarından Dünyanın Gıpta Ettiği SİHA'lara: Türkiye'nin İnsansız Hava Aracı Başarısının Şifreleri," *Yeni Şafak*, 3 March 2020.

<sup>125</sup> "Domestic UAV Bayraktar TB2 Ensures Success of TSK in Afrin," *Daily Sabah*, 23 March 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Ayşe Betül Bal, "Another New Radar-Equipped ANKA Drone Joins Turkish Naval Inventory," *Daily Sabah*, 24 August 2020.

<sup>127</sup> Göksel Yıldırım, "Bayraktar AKINCI TİHA Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Envanterine Giriyor," *Anadolu Ajansı*, 28 August 2021.



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Azerbaijan, Qatar, and Ukraine and deployed them in Iraq, Syria, and Libya. In 2022 the Bayraktar became a star performer of Ukraine's defense against the Russian invasion, inspiring a wave of Ukrainian folk songs and baby naming.

In addition to the drones, Turkey has other ambitious projects such as the *Milgem*-class corvette warship and the "national tank," Altay. As President Erdoğan boasts, Turkey is "among 10 countries that can design, build and maintain their own warships" and have discussed an aircraft carrier construction program.<sup>128</sup>

Whether Turkey will long be able to maintain its defense industrial initiatives at the current pace in the face of broader challenges to the economy is difficult to predict. Despite its impressive achievements, some observers note that Turkey's defense industry is still struggling with certain shortcomings, such as the ability to produce a cost-effective engine. In that respect, Turkey is still dependent on foreign suppliers of engines. For instance, when Germany imposed a de facto arms embargo for political reasons, as mentioned above, the Altay tank project has been delayed significantly. Or when the United States invoked export licenses of CTS800 engines for the T129 ATAK combat helicopters, Ankara's plans to sell 30 attack helicopters to Pakistan for \$1.5 billion failed.<sup>129</sup>

### *V. Arms Procurement and the S-400 Issue*

Ankara's decision to procure the S-400 Triumf mobile surface-to-air antiballistic missile system from Russia has become a major point of contention with the United States. The decision cannot be isolated from the context of the post-coup attempt political dynamics.

Turkey has repeatedly declared its intent to strengthen its air defense capabilities in the last 30 years. The main reason was, as explained in the previous section, Turkish distrust toward its Western/NATO allies, which "refused" to protect Turkey in the face of imminent threats. Turkey requested air defense systems from NATO during the Gulf War in 1991; the Iraq War in 2003, following the shooting down of a Turkish jet by Syrian forces and the killing of Turkish civilians by Syrian shelling in 2012; and after Turkey shot down a Russian jet in 2015.<sup>130</sup> Despite Turkish claims that these requests received a cold shoul-

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<sup>128</sup> T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "We Have Reduced Our External Dependency in Defense Industry from Around 70% to Around 30%," [tcch.gov](http://tcch.gov), 30 August 2020.

<sup>129</sup> Bouvier, "Turkey."

<sup>130</sup> Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, "U.S.—Turkish Relations between 2002 and 2022: 'New Turkey,' New Alliance," in *Turkish-American Relations Since 1783*, ed. Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç and Bestami S. Bilgiç (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022).

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der and were only met after strenuous negotiations, the fact is that NATO has maintained advanced air defense systems in Iraq since 2012 under the aegis of Operation Active Fence.<sup>131</sup> From the American perspective, Turkish complaints that allied air defense assistance was either burdened with some political conditionality or offered for a limited time were not justified because it did not fit well with the nature of international relations in general. Any military aid from one state to another almost always is burdened with some conditionality. However, Ankara was convinced that its allies were unreliable and Turkey thus urgently needed its own air defense system.

To improve its air defense capabilities, in 2011–12, Ankara initiated a procurement process. Turkey embarked on negotiations with Washington to purchase the Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept on Target (Patriot) Advanced Capability (PAC)-3 air and missile defense system, produced by a Raytheon and Lockheed Martin partnership. Ankara was insistent on technology transfer together with the sale of Patriots. Technology transfer would lower the future costs and possibility of technical difficulties for Turkey.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, it would be a jump-start for its developing defense industry. However, talks stalled due to the cost and American rejection of technology transfer.<sup>133</sup> Instead, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin offered a long-range air and antimissile system, which was produced to prevent the replication of critical technologies.<sup>134</sup> According to Raytheon and Lockheed Martin, Turkey kept pressing for higher levels of technology transfer than it could successfully absorb with its available infrastructure. In later stages, Raytheon and Lockheed Martin agreed to be more flexible on coproduction and technology transfer, albeit at a significantly increased cost.<sup>135</sup> By this time, however, negotiations had already broken down.

While continuing its search, in 2012–13 Ankara opened a tender out of which Chinese HQ-9 missile defense system (FD-2000) came out as the win-

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<sup>131</sup> Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç, “U.S.-Turkish Relations in the 1990s: In Search of a New Alliance,” in *Turkish-American Relations Since 1783*.

<sup>132</sup> Gonul Tol and Nilsu Goren, “Turkey’s Quest for Air Defense: Is the S-400 Deal a Pivot to Russia?,” Middle East Institute, December 2017, 4.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen J. Flanagan and Peter A. Wilson, “Implications for the U.S.-Turkish Partnership and the U.S. Army,” in *Turkey’s Nationalist Course*, 201.

<sup>134</sup> Mike Stone and Andrea Shalal, “U.S. State Department in Talks with Turkey to Sell Patriot System,” Reuters, 16 July 2018.

<sup>135</sup> “Anti-Missile Bidders Offer Co-Production and Technology Transfer,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 28 March 2014.

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ner.<sup>136</sup> However, most probably due to the U.S. objections concerning interoperability of the Chinese system with NATO assets, the AKP government decided not to proceed.<sup>137</sup> However, things were to change after the failed coup attempt.

Turkey's next step was a real bombshell. In September 2017, Erdoğan announced that his government had signed an agreement worth \$2.5 billion to purchase two batteries of the S-400 missile system from Russia and had already made a down payment.<sup>138</sup> The deal also supposedly included an offer for Turkey to coproduce the next generation S-500 air defense systems with Russia. Immediately after the deal became public, top U.S. officials warned about interoperability issues and possible sanctions by the United States.<sup>139</sup> The U.S. side was concerned about integration of S-400s and Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning IIs to the same defense system as S-400s could gather intelligence on these aircraft, or any other NATO aircraft for that matter, resulting in security breaches.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, Washington was adamant not to allow Turkey to incorporate S-400s into the NATO system.

As Turkey did not reverse its decision, in spring 2019, the Pentagon suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 program.<sup>141</sup> The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jet program was critical for Turkey. It joined the program in 1999, be-

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<sup>136</sup> For more information regarding U.S. reactions, see Ethan Meick, *China's Potential Air Defense System Sale to Turkey and Implications for the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2013).

<sup>137</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, *On Turkey's Missile Defense Strategy: The Four Faces of the S-400 Deal Between Turkey and Russia*, SAM Papers 16 (Ankara, Turkey: SAM, 2019), 6–7.

<sup>138</sup> "Turkey Signs Deal to Get Russian S-400 Air Defence Missiles," BBC, 12 September 2017. For more information about Turkey's procurement process of the S-400 system, see Sitki Ege-  
li, "Making Sense of Turkey's Air and Missile Defense Merry-go-round," *All Azimuth* 8, no. 1 (2019): 69–92, <https://doi.org/10.20991/allazimuth.470640>.

<sup>139</sup> See, for instance, Christopher Woody, "Turkey Has Agreed to Buy Russia's Advanced Missile-Defense System, Leaving NATO Wondering What's Next," *Business Insider*, 17 July 2017; "U.S. Chief of Staff: Ankara, Moscow Missile Deal a Concern," *Daily Sabah*, 25 July 2017; and Andrew Hanna, "Cardin: Turkey's Purchase of Russian Missile System May Trigger Sanctions," *Politico*, 14 September 2017.

<sup>140</sup> Department of Defense transcript, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Ellen M. Lord and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy David J. Trachtenberg, Press Briefing on DOD's Response to Turkey Accepting Delivery of the Russian S-400 Air and Missile Defense System, 17 July 2019. Quoted in Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas, *Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations in Brief* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 11.

<sup>141</sup> Ryan Browne, "U.S. Suspends Delivery of F-35 Jet Equipment to Turkey," CNN, 2 April 2019.

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coming a partner country together with eight consortium members.<sup>142</sup> Turkey invested \$1.40 billion in the program and was supposed to procure 100 F-35A aircraft. Furthermore, 10 Turkish defense companies participated in the production process to manufacture F-35 parts locally, with the total amount of contracts reaching \$12 billion.<sup>143</sup> In short, the F-35 program was to provide Turkey with not only stealth fighters but also much-wanted technological know-how and income.<sup>144</sup> In July 2019, the Pentagon threatened Turkey that it would lose its right to buy F-35s in case it did not cancel the S-400 deal.<sup>145</sup> The same month, the Turkish Ministry of National Defence declared that the first batch of the S-400 air defense systems was delivered and thus Turkey was officially removed from the F-35 program.

Furthermore, the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 forced President Trump to impose “five or more of the sanctions described in section 235 of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (22 U.S.C. 9529)” until “the Government of Turkey and any person acting on its behalf no longer possesses the S-400 air defense system or a successor system.”<sup>146</sup> Trump signed the act in December 2020, imposing punitive actions mainly on SSB.

Meanwhile, in 2018 the U.S. Congress imposed a *de facto* arms embargo on Turkey.<sup>147</sup> As a result, Turkey was unable to receive upgrades for its F-16 fleet

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<sup>142</sup> Cem Akalin, “Lockheed Martin Opens F-35 JSF Production Base to Turkish Journalists,” *Defence Turkey*, no. 84 (August 2018).

<sup>143</sup> Akalin, “Lockheed Martin Opens F-35 JSF Production Base to Turkish Journalists.” Zanotti gives the same figure as \$5 billion–\$6 billion over 20 years. Zanotti, *Turkey-U.S. Defense Cooperation*.

<sup>144</sup> Hoffman, *Flashpoints in U.S.–Turkey Relations in 2021*.

<sup>145</sup> Marcus Weisgerber, “Pentagon Gives Turkey a Deadline to Cancel S-400 Deal or Lose F-35,” *Defense One*, 7 June 2019.

<sup>146</sup> Section 231 of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), Pub. L. No. 115-44 (2017), which was enacted on 2 August 2017, requires sanctioning of “a person . . . who engages in a significant transaction with a person that is part of, or operates for or on behalf of, the defense or intelligence sectors of the Government of the Russian Federation.” See Section 231 of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act of 2017, S. 231, 115th Cong. (2017); and Subtitle E—Matters Relating to Europe and NATO, S. 1241. Determination and Imposition of Sanctions with Respect to Turkey’s Acquisition of the S-400 Air Defense System. William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-283 (2021).

<sup>147</sup> Valerie Insinna et al., “Congress Has Secretly Blocked U.S. Arms Sales to Turkey for Nearly Two Years,” *Defense News*, 12 August 2020. Also see Ryan Browne and Jennifer Hansler, “Congress Is Quietly Blocking Arms Sales to Turkey,” *CNN*, 12 August 2020.

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and export licenses for U.S.-made engines that Turkey uses in attack helicopters, as mentioned above. In September 2021, Ankara repeated its request to purchase 40 new F-16s and kits to upgrade its existing F-16 fighters.<sup>148</sup> Only after the Ukrainian crisis erupted in February 2022, the Biden administration publicly announced its support for the sale. However, Congress still seems persistent in blocking the sale. In July 2022, the House passed a bipartisan amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act prohibiting the president from selling F-16s to Turkey “unless the President provides a certification to Congress that such a transfer is in the national interest of the United States and includes a detailed description of concrete steps taken to ensure that such F-16s are not used by Turkey for repeated unauthorized territorial overflights of Greece.”<sup>149</sup> Yet, the Turkish side remains hopeful.<sup>150</sup>

To date, despite occasional statements by President Erdoğan that Turkey might purchase another batch of the S-400 system, Ankara has not made the S-400 system operational.<sup>151</sup> Even if it becomes operational, it is likely that Ankara will have to use it on a stand-alone basis because of U.S. and NATO objections as well as the technical difficulty of integrating different system architectures together. If this is the case, it begs the question of why Turkey purchased a stand-alone missile defense system that incurred enormous political and economic costs.

The AKP government has offered two main explanations. One was the Obama administration’s “refusal” to sell Patriot missiles to Turkey. The second reason was American rejection of Turkey’s technology transfer demand.<sup>152</sup> However, despite occasional public statements by Turkish officials, the Russian S-400 deal did not seem to include any technology sharing either. Therefore, the decision requires further analysis.

The AKP government’s S-400 decision has several dimensions. First, it reflects widespread Turkish desire to be less dependent on the United States,

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<sup>148</sup> Selcan Hacaoglu, “Erdoğan Seeks Biden Meeting to Talk \$6 Billion Arms Deal Request,” *Bloomberg*, 11 October 2021.

<sup>149</sup> National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 Amendments, H.R. 7900, 117th Cong. (2022).

<sup>150</sup> “U.S. May Approve F-16 Sale to Turkey in Two Months, Erdoğan’s Spokesman Says,” Reuters, 4 November 2022.

<sup>151</sup> Humeyra Pamuk, “Erdoğan Says Turkey Plans to Buy More Russian Defense Systems,” Reuters, 27 September 2021.

<sup>152</sup> “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Net Konuştu: O İş Bizim İçin Bitmiştir,” *DHA*, 18 June 2019.

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Turkey's traditional main supplier of military equipment and weapons systems.

Second, it resonates with the Euroasianist/nationalist undercurrent in the country. In this context, the decision might have aimed to signal the United States about its disillusionment with American support to the YPG.<sup>153</sup>

Third, it evinces the multipolar balancing that Ankara has sought to strike due to its regional repercussions, particularly the Russian support in its fight against the YPG in Syria.

Fourth, the decision indicates a miscalculation. Firstly, the AKP government might have underestimated the U.S. reaction and overestimated Turkey's indispensability to the F-35 program and to NATO. Second, relying on his personal relationship with Trump, Erdoğan might have calculated that once presented as the Obama administration's failure, the decision would trigger no retaliation.<sup>154</sup> However, this reflects that the Turkish side did not fully understand how the U.S. government works. While many economic sanctions include a waiver provision that allowed the president great flexibility in the imposition of sanctions, the U.S. Congress specifically wrote CAATSA without such a discretionary waiver provision, due to concern that President Trump would not impose the sanctions. Third, Ankara might have calculated that it could follow the example of Greece, which has S-300s in its inventory. As the S-400s are not incorporated to the NATO system and NATO has no rules against non-NATO procurements, the decision is thought to generate no problems.<sup>155</sup>

The decision by Turkey demonstrates an unwillingness or inability for political decision makers to consult technical experts. Without the connection to an integrated air defense network, a stand-alone S-400 system would be deprived of targeting data normally provided by numerous radars placed far from the S-400 launcher system. That data is necessary for the S-400 launcher system to track, target, and engage aircraft at the theoretical maximum distance of its missile systems of several hundred kilometers, depending on the type of missile used. As a stand-alone system, Turkey's S-400 system would have to rely on its own radar to acquire targets. In Turkey's mountainous terrain, the range of a stand-alone S-400 system would be measured in the tens of kilometers, a massive handi-

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<sup>153</sup> Can Kasapoglu, "Turkey's S-400 Dilemma," *EDAM Foreign Policy and Security Paper Series* 2017/5 (July 2017): 6.

<sup>154</sup> Ülgen, "Redefining the U.S.-Turkey Relationship"; and Jim Townsend and Rachel Ellehuus, "The Tale of Turkey and the Patriots," *War on the Rocks*, 22 July 2019.

<sup>155</sup> Kasapoglu, "Turkey's S-400 Dilemma," 6.

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cap.<sup>156</sup> While Turkish Armed Forces air defense experts most certainly knew the comparative uselessness of a stand-alone S-400 system, President Erdoğan's decision to go ahead and acquire the system at great political and economic cost implies that the technical experts were either not consulted or that their warnings were overruled.

Finally, the acquisition of S-400s addresses AKP's own insecurity. According to some domestic critics of Erdoğan, he chose S-400 for personal reasons, as a guarantee against another coup attempt.<sup>157</sup> Observers claim that the decision was part of AKP's efforts to build its own army beyond the reach and effect of FETÖ, and by implication the United States, on the assumption that AKP cadres sincerely believe that Washington directly or indirectly got involved in the coup through FETÖ members.<sup>158</sup> Thus, for some, the answer lies at the individual level.

The decision might be an interplay of these various factors at different levels. Yet, it seems to testify to the AKP government's enthusiasm on removing perceived obstacles to a more autonomous foreign policy by decreasing its dependence on the United States. The problem has been most likely exacerbated by the AKP government's miscalculation of the costs and benefits.

## CONCLUSION

The military domain has been particularly hard hit by the fraying U.S.-Turkish relations. As the bilateral relations were strained, Ankara has used military diplomacy increasingly elsewhere in an effort to strengthen its economic and political ties with the third countries in lieu of its traditional ally.<sup>159</sup>

Bilateral relations, which deteriorated due to the 2003 crisis, were mended over cooperation against the PKK in northern Iraq in 2007. However, following the advent of the Syrian conflict, as Turkish and American interests diverged and the United States started to provide support to the YPG, relations have frayed again. The steadily eroding relations should be analyzed against a certain background. Despite the existence of problems since the early 1990s and

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<sup>156</sup> Egeci, "Making Sense of Turkey's Air and Missile Defense Merry-go-round," 85–86.

<sup>157</sup> See İYİ Party leader Meral Akşener's statements, "Meral Akşener'den S-400 İddiası," *TRT Haber*, 6 June 2018.

<sup>158</sup> Leela Jacinto, "Turkey's Post-Coup Purge and Erdogan's Private Army," *Foreign Policy*, 13 July 2017; and Tom Karako, "Coup-proofing?: Making Sense of Turkey's S-400 Decision," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 15 July 2019.

<sup>159</sup> Outzen, *Deals, Drones, and National Will*, 11.

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especially after 2003, the military-to-military relations came under particular duress after the botched coup attempt. AKP's threat perceptions and its new domestic political alliances entailed by those perceptions shaped the political environment. All aspects of the military domain, including the Turkish military, have been deeply affected by the new political circumstances. Turkey has become more assertive in conducting military operations or engaging in military activism and more determined to be self-sufficient in defense industry as well in arms procurement.

The Turkish officers, who once considered themselves as comrades-in-arms with their American counterparts, had already been frustrated over the repercussions of Operation Provide Comfort regarding Turkey's PKK problem and congressional reluctance toward arms sales to Turkey over the Kurdish issue. The frustration grew when American policy makers accused the TAF of causing the failure of the March 2003 bill and the ensuing hooding incident. Under these circumstances, a majority of the accused top brass, together with their civilian supporters, saw the Ergenekon trials not only as a Gülenist plot against themselves but also as an American conspiracy to punish the Turkish military. For instance, former chief of staff İlker Başbuğ stated this argument publicly.<sup>160</sup>

On the civilian side, the AKP's skeptical and distrustful attitude toward the West in general and the United States in particular, a typical symptom of Turkish Islamism of the Cold War years, became more pronounced following the coup attempt. It seems that the distrust might have been exacerbated by the belief that the United States was behind the failed coup.<sup>161</sup> It resonated well with the political agendas of Erdoğan's new political partners, particularly the MHP. Thus, the new ruling coalition, forged by these political powers, has been pursuing a more nationalist and less pro-American agenda. As President Erdoğan's anti-American rhetoric became sharper, there have been increased attempts to be more independent from the United States militarily and politically. The motivation to

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<sup>160</sup> See statements, "Başbuğ: ABD, Türkiye'ye Oyun Oynadı" *Sputnik Türkiye*, 7 October 2015. Also see Tolga Tanış, "Balyoz'un Arkasında Amerika mı Var?," *Hürriyet*, 5 December 2015.

<sup>161</sup> For instance, for then-minister of labor and social security Süleyman Soylu's statements, see Ayla Ganioglu, "Coup Row Haunts Turkish-US Ties," *Al-Monitor*, 16 February 2021. President Erdoğan did not openly blame the United States but during his CBS interview, he said the Turkish people believe that the United States was behind the coup attempt. "Erdoğan: ABD'nin Politikaları Nedeniyle Hayal Kırıklığına Uğradım," *BBC News Türkçe*, 1 November 2016. Indeed, as of September 2016, 81 percent of the Turkish people believed so. See Ayla Ganioglu, "Türkiye'de Halk Darbeler için ABD'yi Suçluyor," *Al-Monitor*, 16 February 2021.



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be more independent also stems from the fact that the AKP sees an increasingly multipolar international political structure within which the U.S. power has been in decline. Furthermore, it helps President Erdoğan in various ways to present himself as the leader of the New Turkey, which is no longer dependent on the United States. First, it projects an image of power to his domestic constituency among which anti-Americanism is already common. Second, it helps him score against the Kemalists who, he claims, kept the country for decades as a U.S. puppet. Third, it corroborates his claim as being the leader of the Muslim world, which has been suffering various injustices incurred by the United States. Due to these reasons, the party propaganda emphasized that “Turkey is an independent country, not the 51st state of the U.S.” President Erdoğan repeatedly asserted that “the U.S. was not honest with [Turkey],” it had “[secret and vicious plans] against Turkey,” and that Turkey was not dependent or “desperately in need of American support.”<sup>162</sup>

Things have changed for the American side as well. The Pentagon’s reactions were quite different to the 1975 arms embargo versus sanctions imposed on Turkey in relation to the S-400 procurement. The Pentagon did not support Congress’s arms embargo due to Turkey’s importance to U.S. national security. Former U.S. secretary of the Air Force Dr. John L. McLucas wrote in his memoirs that “all of us in the Pentagon leadership were dismayed by” Congress’s decision and that the Pentagon acted in a way in order to “signal to the Turkish General Staff and Turkish Air Force that we wanted to remain close allies despite the circumstances.”<sup>163</sup> In the aftermath of the S-400 procurement, the Pentagon backed the administration’s measures, such as removal of Turkey from the F-35 program, despite all the financial costs it would incur. The Pentagon’s response has been partially shaped by its distrust toward Turks due to their perceived backing of various jihadist groups in Syria.

Under these circumstances, several issues came to plague the Turkish-American alliance. For the American side, the major problems are the S-400

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<sup>162</sup> Bülent Turan (AKP Parliamentary Group Deputy Chairman), “Amerika’nın 51. Eyaleti Değiliz,” 8 February 2021; “ABD İle Gidişat Pek Hayra Alamet Değil: Dürüst Davranmıyorlar,” *Yeni Şafak*, 24 September 2021; “Erdoğan: Amerika’nın Bize Karşı Bir Planı Olduğu Artık İyice Anlaşıyor,” *Hürriyet*, 5 December 2017; and “Amerika’nın Türkiye Gibi Bir Stratejik Ortağını Bir Kendini Bilmez Büyükelçiye Feda Etmesi Kabul Edilemez. Biz Size Muhtaç Değiliz,” *T24*, 12 October 2017.

<sup>163</sup> John L. McLucas, *Reflections of a Technocrat Managing Defense, Air, and Space Programs during the Cold War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2006), 232–33.

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deal, Turkish military operations—particularly in northern Syria, a more independent and militarily assertive Turkey as a regional player, and a less friendly top brass in the TAF. For the Turkish side, one source of contention is the ongoing problem with arms procurement since the 1990s, especially because the issue has been tied to Ankara's fight against the PKK. The other one is the U.S. assistance to the YPG in Syria on top of its continuing support to Iraqi Kurds since the First Gulf War, which many Turks regarded as part of an American plan to establish an independent Kurdistan in the region.<sup>164</sup>

As a result, just as the American side feels betrayed by a NATO ally on a critical defense matter due to Turkey's procurement of the S-400, the Turkish side feels betrayed by its most important ally on the Kurdish issue.

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that the Turkish-American alliance is about to crumble. On the one hand, Turkey still relies on NATO whenever it perceives a substantial threat. On the other hand, Turkey's indispensability to NATO has been highlighted by the current crisis in Ukraine, even as its dependability as an ally has been questioned. As the crisis in Ukraine worsened, calls for ousting Turkey from NATO stopped abruptly—and then seemed to have resumed when Turkey took advantage of NATO's consensus decision-making requirement to block Swedish and Finnish accession until Sweden in particular agreed to modify its policies on Kurdish issues and limits on arms exports to Turkey.

Therefore, as long as these mutual forces of pull are in action, it is unlikely that the Turkish-American alliance will break up. However, there are still quite a number of problems fraying the cooperation between the two countries. The solution to them will definitely require reassessment and realignment of interests and improvement of mutual understanding of respective positions through better channels of communication. In this respect, military-to-military relations may once again play a facilitating role as has historically been the case.

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<sup>164</sup> For instance, see the statements of former deputy chief of general staff Ergin Saygun, "Emekli Orgeneral Ergin Saygun'dan Şok Uyarı Bu Sıranın Sonunda Türkiye Var," *Internethaber*, 23 July 2019; and for statements of retired Gen Necati Özgen, see Erkin, "Kürt Devleti Irak'ta."

## ◉ Chapter Eight ◉

# The U.S. and Chinese Struggle for Influence in the Pacific

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### *How Military Diplomacy Can Tip the Balance*

Ambassador John T. Hennessey-Niland (Ret)

#### PREFACE

*The future of each of our nations—and indeed the world—depends on a free and open Indo-Pacific enduring and flourishing in the decades ahead.*<sup>1</sup>

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s foreign policy statements routinely note “the United States has long been, is, and always will be an Indo-Pacific nation. This is a geographical fact . . . and a historical reality, demonstrated by our two centuries of trade and other ties to the region.”<sup>2</sup> The recently released *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* notes that “for 75 years the U.S. has maintained a strong and consistent presence necessary to support regional peace, security and prosperity.”<sup>3</sup>

Access to the markets of Asia has been essential for American (and global) prosperity.<sup>4</sup> More than \$3 trillion in commerce transits the South China Sea annually. As Secretary Antony J. Blinken has said, “the livelihoods and well-being of millions of people around the world are dependent on a free and

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<sup>1</sup> Antony J. Blinken, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (speech, Jakarta, Indonesia, 14 December 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Blinken, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific.”

<sup>3</sup> *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: White House, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Albert J. Beveridge (R-IN), *Congressional Record* 34, no. 1 (Senate, 56th Cong., 1st Sess., 9 January 1900), 704.

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open Indo-Pacific.”<sup>5</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has focused attention on supply chain issues and associated risks of overreliance on a single market. This realization is overdue. The need to protect sea lanes and ensure freedom of navigation globally remains a primary mission for the United States and allied nations. This will continue. As Lord Henry J. Palmerston, prime minister of the United Kingdom (UK), noted more than a century ago, “we have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. But our interests are eternal and perpetual.”<sup>6</sup>

The challenge in the Pacific is ensuring a rules-based order is maintained. As highlighted in numerous U.S. policy statements, “it’s about upholding the rights and agreements that are responsible for the most peaceful and prosperous period this region and the world has ever experienced.”<sup>7</sup> Key to success is a crucial U.S. advantage: America’s treaty allies and like-minded partners. This network of relationships and access, dating to America’s island-hopping campaign in World War II, has been neglected but is the basis of a renewed whole-of-government effort dedicated to “weaving together all our instruments of power—diplomacy, military, intelligence—with those of our allies and partners.”<sup>8</sup> U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III describes this as “integrated deterrence.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, effective and sustained American military diplomacy in the Pacific is vital and must be “credible, flexible and so formidable that it will give any adversary pause.”<sup>10</sup>

But the focus cannot be exclusively on the challenge posed by the People’s Republic of China. For Pacific island countries, climate and environmental threats must also be addressed. The Pacific Islands Forum, the leading regional policy shop in the Pacific, has repeatedly stressed that “climate change is an immediate and serious threat to sustainable development in many Pacific Island Countries, and for some their very survival. By their geography and mid-ocean location they are at the ‘frontline.’”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Blinken, “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific.”

<sup>6</sup> Lord Palmerston 1784–1865 British statesman; prime minister, 1855–58, 1859–65, speech, House of Commons, 1 March 1848.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy statements, see, in particular, footnote 1.

<sup>8</sup> Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, “Indo-Pacific Change of Command” (remarks, Honolulu, HI, 30 April 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Austin, “Indo-Pacific Change of Command.”

<sup>10</sup> Austin, “Indo-Pacific Change of Command.”

<sup>11</sup> “The Role of PIFS in Climate Change,” Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, September 2014.

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This chapter offers a first-person perspective from a recently retired U.S. ambassador in the Pacific with more than 35 years of experience, most recently in the small island nation of Palau. The People's Republic of China's (PRC) malign activities are a real and growing challenge to the rules-based order. For the Pacific region, the concern regarding the impact of climate change must also be addressed. A critical U.S. advantage vis-à-vis the PRC is America's allies and partners. This needs to be backed by a persistent U.S. presence in the region. While the outcome of this contest is not certain, there are lessons to be studied about what works and what does not work in the region. Effective American military diplomacy can tip the balance in favor of the United States and like-minded partners. But it will take a sustained whole-of-government effort to be successful. This partnership with the region will be key to deterring and responding to any threats while ensuring continued peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and globally.

## CHALLENGE(S) TO THE RULES-BASED ORDER

*What happens in the Indo Pacific will, more than in any other region, shape the trajectory of the world in the 21st Century.*<sup>12</sup>

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has repeatedly stressed the importance of the Indo-Pacific region, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the world's economy and is home to more than one-half the world's population. The rise of the PRC to a position of strength sufficient to challenge the existing international rules-based order has global implications.<sup>13</sup> Seen from the Pacific, the PRC is increasingly active in asserting its power. This influence is manifested in several ways across the full spectrum of international relations. What is a particular concern and threat is the increase in gray-zone activities beyond what has normally been regarded as acceptable behavior by state actors. Cooperation and competition have been the parameters, the norm of relations between states, "phase zero" to use a military shorthand. But interference, in-

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<sup>12</sup> Blinken, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

<sup>13</sup> An international rules-based order are the rules that protect sovereignty, preserve peace, curb excessive use of power, and enable international trade and investment. There are international standards related to health and pandemics, to transport, telecommunications, and other issues that underpin the global economy, and which will be vital to a post-COVID-19 economic recovery; and finally, the norms that underpin universal human rights, gender equality, and the rule of law.

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timidation, and coercion—a weaponization of power in peace time—short of actual conflict is nonetheless a real and grave threat to peace and stability. The long game practiced by the PRC, a set of actions below the threshold of conflict, forceful enough to advance its objectives but not so overt as to trigger a robust response by the United States or its allies, is difficult to respond to but has belatedly set off alarm bells ringing in capitols across the Indo-Pacific.

The intensification of PRC pressure on small (and not so small) nations across the Pacific is causing significant harm and endangers decades of close ties between the United States and the region. One like-minded foreign minister in the region described PRC actions as the furtherance of their interests to the detriment of everyone else. The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy released by the White House in February 2022 states that the United States “will focus on every corner of the region, from northeast Asia and southeast Asia, to South Asia and Oceania, including the Pacific Islands.”<sup>14</sup> The strategy also notes the need “to bolster Indo-Pacific security, drawing on all instruments of power to deter aggression and to counter coercion.”<sup>15</sup> This refers to the “integrated deterrence” called for by U.S. Secretary of Defense Austin. In his July 2021 speech to the Fullerton Forum in Singapore, Austin described integrated deterrence as “using every military and non-military tool in our toolbox in lock-step with our allies and partners. Integrated deterrence is about using existing capabilities, building new ones, and deploying them all in new and networked ways, all tailored to a region’s security landscape and growing in partnership with our friends.”<sup>16</sup>

## THE CASE OF PALAU

It will take a sustained whole-of-government response to counter and push back against PRC interference and malign activities in the Pacific. To focus on Palau as an example, this small Pacific island nation has experienced the full gamut of PRC pressure. Palau’s economy is tourism based. It is known as a pristine paradise. It is one of the smallest and most remote nations in the Pacific and is also one of the few nations in the world that continue to recog-

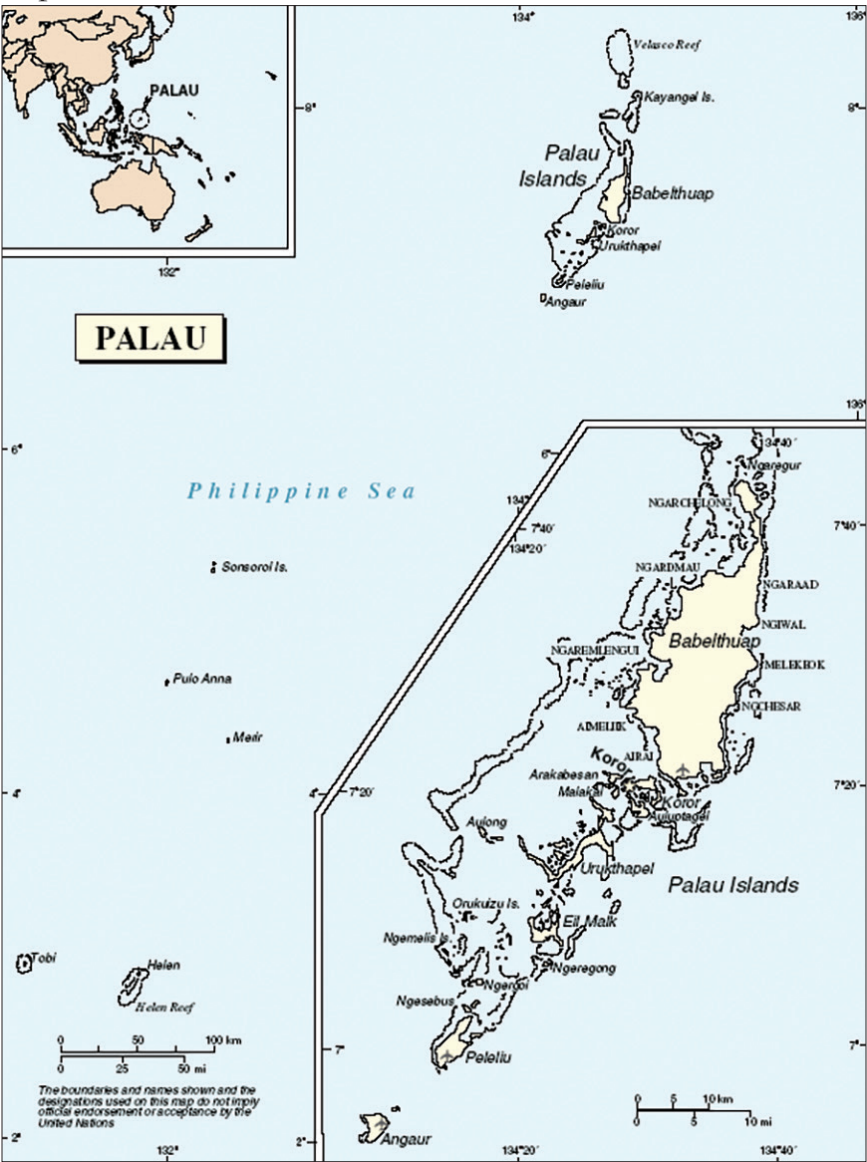
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<sup>14</sup> *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*.

<sup>15</sup> *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*.

<sup>16</sup> Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, “Secretary of Defense Remarks at the 40th International Institute for Strategic Studies Fullerton Lecture (as Prepared)” (speech, Singapore, 27 July 2021).

Map 8.1. Map of Palau



Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

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nize Taiwan. This has ensured it is a focus for the PRC, which is determined to completely isolate Taiwan diplomatically.

For a small nation, Palau has experienced a fascinating history. This island country, consisting of more than 300 islands, has been inhabited for more than 3,000 years. It was not until the eighteenth century that European nations laid claim to the islands, first Spain, which later transferred the islands to Germany as part of its payment for defeat in the Spanish-American War. Japan occupied Palau following the 1914 declaration of war on the German Empire. Koror, Palau's principal city, became known as "little Tokyo" due to its economic growth under Japanese rule. Following Japan's defeat in World War II, the United States took over the administration of Palau as a United Nations (UN) Trust Territory. Palau became an independent republic in 1994. Palau's current population is approximately 17,000 people, making it one of the smallest nations in the world.<sup>17</sup>

For tiny Palau, where tourism accounts for 42.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), the most dramatic pressure came in the form of what local residents call the "China ban." Tourism from the PRC "skyrocketed from 634 travelers in 2008—making up less than 1 percent of all visitors—to more than 91,000 in 2015—54 percent of all visitors."<sup>18</sup> Then in November 2017, after Palau refused demands to switch diplomatic allegiance from Taiwan to China, the Chinese government ordered tour operators to stop selling package tours to Palau, with reports that doing so could lead to fines. Literally overnight the number of tourists from China stopped so dramatically that some Chinese visitors were stuck in Palau when charter flights between China and Palau ended.

Palau being blacklisted as a destination immediately impacted its economy and Palau continues to feel the effect of the drop-off in tourism from China. Evan Rees, Asia-Pacific analyst at Stratfor, says China uses such bans—as well as the granting and withholding of Approved Destination Status (ADS) to countries—as "part of a larger toolkit for compelling behavior."<sup>19</sup> The PRC may have believed its year after year increase in tourism numbers to Palau would have created an economic dependency on the PRC and leverage over

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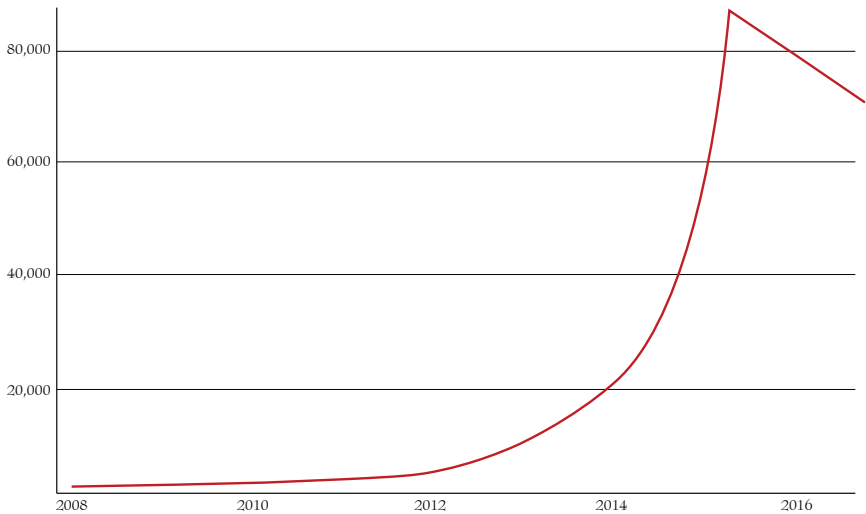
<sup>17</sup> "Palau," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 7 May 2021.

<sup>18</sup> "Palau," Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>19</sup> "Palau against China!: The Tiny Island Standing up to a Giant," *Guardian*, 7 September 2018.



Figure 8.1. Chinese tourists to Palau



Source: “Palau against China: The Tiny Island Standing Up to a Giant,” *Guardian*, 7 September 2018.

Palau, a variant of its debt trap diplomacy seen elsewhere in the region and globally. Indeed, the staggering boom and abrupt bust of the tourism market from the PRC may have been a deliberate effort to gain leverage over Palau.

This carrot-and-stick approach and the attempt to use its economic power, in this case tourism dollars, to bully a small Pacific island nation and force a change in its foreign and security policy was not successful. Palau’s relationship with Taiwan endures. But the commercial impact of these actions was severe and the PRC’s pressure on Palau continues.

While tourist numbers from the PRC have dramatically declined, there remains in Palau a significant number of PRC nationals, “overstays” who entered Palau on tourist visas and never left. Many now run small business and commercial establishments. Some, however, are part of a network of Chinese criminal organizations active in Palau focused on cybercrimes. In January 2020, Palau’s Bureau of Public Service (BPS) (the national police force)

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arrested more than 150 PRC nationals belonging to three different online gambling operations. Later the same year, in June, BPS arrested an additional 60 Chinese associated with a separate PRC backed criminal organization. Many of these online gambling centers operated by PRC nationals are in hotels that are now vacant due to the lack of PRC tourists.<sup>20</sup> In December 2020, on International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December), the U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced sanctions against Wan Kuok Koi (a.k.a. Broken Tooth), leader of the Macau 14K triad, one of the largest Chinese crime syndicates active in Palau and across Asia. This was the first time the U.S. Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act was used to target organized crime in the Pacific islands. In a press statement in June 2021, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken announced that the PRC would be held accountable “for its pattern of irresponsible, disruptive and destabilizing behavior in cyberspace, which poses a major threat to economic and national security.” Research by the Advanced Programs Group of McAfee that investigates cybersecurity issues found that Chinese cyber actors “have transformed from small local networks targeting mostly Chinese businesses and citizens to large well-organized criminal groups hacking international corporations.” These same criminal entities also target government operations as “the lines between criminal activity and more traditional espionage blur.”<sup>21</sup>

Palau has experienced how the actions of PRC organized crime gangs, such as illegal online gambling centers on the island, also result in a range of other negative impacts on a small society. One such issue is trafficking in persons. Reportedly, several Chinese nationals brought to Palau apparently are not there of their own free will but are working in these cybercrime centers to pay off debts. Some are also engaged in prostitution, again apparently at the behest of their Triad “bosses.” The profits generated by these criminal enterprises are used to pay off immigration and other administrative clerks, police officials, landlords, and business partners as well as reportedly more senior representatives of government. This pattern of corruption is familiar across the Pacific. It is highly destabilizing but has been considered by some as “victimless crime,”

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<sup>20</sup> Rieko Hayakawa, “Targeting Palau and Other Island Countries, China Puts Human Rights and Pacific Security at Risk,” *Japan Forward*, 9 January 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Anne An, as quoted by Allen Bernard, “Chinese Cyber Criminals Are Getting More Organized and Dangerous,” *Tech Republic*, 13 February 2020.

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as local residents have not been impacted negatively, on the contrary. With the leadership of these criminal organizations largely offshore and their activities increasingly complex, governments in the Pacific have limited resources available to investigate and prosecute such crimes. Even when they have tried and successfully prosecuted cases, the result often means more headaches for island jurisdictions as the PRC has routinely refused to take back their nationals convicted of criminal offenses. The result is that they stay in the islands and oftentimes resume their activities after paying a token fine—just another (very modest) cost of doing business for well-funded criminal enterprises.

No doubt the “success” of these criminal organizations and the exponential growth in their illicit profits has created opportunities to influence and interfere. Corruption is unfortunately a global phenomenon. What is happening in the Pacific, however, is a blurring of the lines between old-fashioned corruption for personal gain financed by criminal proceeds and a more deliberate effort to “capture elites” and advance the objectives of a foreign power. As Secretary of State Blinken has noted, “The PRC’s Ministry of State Security has fostered an ecosystem of criminal contract hackers who carry out both state-sponsored activities and cybercrime for their own financial gain.”<sup>22</sup> In Palau’s case, identified cyber intrusions include the hacking of the Ministry of Justice website—one of the more sensitive government sites—and concern that PRC originated cyber intrusions have penetrated most government internal and external information networks. Palau’s domestic telecommunications cell network is also susceptible as its system hardware is Huawei and ZTE and the remote monitoring provisions of its contract with these companies provides for full access to the network from the PRC.<sup>23</sup>

The PRC has also exerted more overt pressure on Pacific islands countries targeting their one great resource, their extensive exclusive economic zones (EEZs). PRC research vessels have significantly increased their presence in the waters around Palau. In the one-year period from 2020 to 2021, five different PRC research vessels were present 14 separate times in or just outside Palau’s EEZ. The most recent unauthorized incursion took place in November 2021. For five days, the PRC’s newest and most capable research vessel, the *Da Yang*

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<sup>22</sup> Antony Blinken, State Department, “Responding to the PRC’s Destabilizing and Irresponsible Behavior in Cyberspace,” press statement, 19 July 2021.

<sup>23</sup> “Palau to Remove Huawei Technology from PNCC,” *Island Times*, 24 August 2021.

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Figure 8.2. *Da Yang Hao* PRC research vessel



Source: Chinese state-owned media.

*Hao*, loitered in Palau's EEZ, with its track paralleling that of the SEA-U.S. transpacific cable, which passes through the area. The PRC research vessel crisscrossed over the location of the junction of that fiber optic cable with the spur that lands in Palau. U.S. maritime analysts assess that these remotely controlled underwater vehicles can operate from the *Da Yang Hao*, which raises concerns about the ship's possible covert activities while in Palau's EEZ. While weather avoidance was the purported reason for its urgent need to enter the EEZ, its back-and-forth track indicates this may not have been the case. Another indication that this ship was seeking to hide its possible activities is that its automatic identification system (AIS) was falsely reporting it was a commercial vessel, not a PRC state-owned research ship.<sup>24</sup>

The PRC has fused business, criminal, and state means and seeks to alter the status quo in Palau and regionally. But this is not the only challenge facing Pacific island countries. Context is always important but particularly so when

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<sup>24</sup> "U.S. Coast Guard Helps Palau Track Chinese Research Vessel in Its EEZ," *Marine Executive*, 10 December 2021.

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discussing developments in the Pacific islands. The challenge to the region and to the existing international order from the PRC is real. But it must be understood that for the islands, this needs to be addressed as part of a larger effort by the United States across the region, which includes U.S. resources targeting an additional threat, possibly more concerning to Pacific island populations than the PRC.

U.S. efforts must also be focused on restoring confidence and convincing a sometimes-skeptical audience that the United States is truly listening to and committed to the region and to redressing what is another clear and present danger to the Pacific: the existential threat posed by climate change. The Western powers, in particular the United States, need to overcome regional and domestic skepticism that it has the will and the resources to assist with both challenges over the long term. There are doubters who question the assertion that the United States has had a sustained engagement across the Pacific for the last three quarters of a century. While Pacific island leaders welcomed the visit by Secretary of State Blinken to Fiji in February 2022, this was the first visit by a secretary of State in 37 years. The acting president of Fiji, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, commented on Blinken's "lightning" visit to Fiji, noting, "Fiji and our small-state neighbors have felt at times, to borrow an American term, like a flyover country. Small dots spotted from plane windows of leaders en route to meetings where they spoke about us, rather than with us, if they spoke of us at all."<sup>25</sup> Sayed-Khaiyum further observed that "the last significant American presence we felt in Fiji were soldiers we welcomed here during the Second World War."<sup>26</sup>

This sentiment is not only a Fijian lament. This perspective of (benign) neglect by the United States is widespread among Pacific island leaders. Palau's president, Surangel S. Whipps Jr., shares this view. He has stressed both publicly as well as privately the importance of continued American interest in and presence across the Pacific islands.<sup>27</sup> Of all the examples that could be cited about the United States not caring about the priorities of the region, the most dramatic is the issue of climate. If the PRC is the acute threat, the chronic long-standing concern and existential threat for the Pacific is climate change.

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<sup>25</sup> Transcript, Joint Press Availability, Sofitel Fiji Resort, Denarau Island, Fiji, 12 February 2022, hereafter Transcript February 2022.

<sup>26</sup> Transcript February 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Bernadette Carreon, "President-elect Whipps U.S. Military Presence Will Boost Palau's Economy," *Island Times*, 29 December 2020.

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The lack of sustained U.S. action on environmental concerns in the Pacific has hampered progress on all other issues in the region.

What greatly alarmed the Pacific and damaged America's standing in the region (and globally) was the decision by the Donald J. Trump administration to exit the Paris Agreement (a.k.a. the Paris climate agreement). The acting president of Fiji, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, commented on Blinken's remarks "when the U.S. signaled its intent to leave the Paris Agreement, we felt forgotten by a superpower. We very much welcome President Biden's promise to the world that America was back. We face a new war today, a climate war."<sup>28</sup> In his own remarks to the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021, President Whipps grabbed media attention with his statement that "you might as well bomb us" as Pacific islands face a "death sentence" unless action is taken to address climate change.<sup>29</sup> In his remarks, employing legends and metaphors to stress the impact of climate change on a sinking region, Whipps described how "we are seeing the scorching sun is giving us intolerable heat, the warming sea is invading us, the strong winds are blowing us every which way, our resources are disappearing before our eyes and our future is being robbed from us."<sup>30</sup>

The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy acknowledges that "climate change is growing ever more severe" and the Pacific islands are "battling an existential rise in sea levels" and "grappling with natural disasters and resource scarcity."<sup>31</sup> The U.S. presidential special envoy for climate, former Secretary of State John F. Kerry, in Glasgow at COP 26, emphasized "this is personal," noting that the consequences of climate change would be even more dire for representatives of low-lying Pacific islands and other nations vulnerable to flooding "because you're standing with your feet in the water."<sup>32</sup> As a significant demonstration of U.S. support to the region regarding the impact of climate on island states, the United States agreed to cohost with Palau the 2022 Our Ocean Conference, a global conference to address the specific challenges caused by warming oceans

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<sup>28</sup> Transcript February 2022.

<sup>29</sup> "‘You Might as Well Bomb Us’ Palau President Tells World leaders at COP26," *Island Times*, 5 November 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Remarks by President Surangel Whipps Jr., 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26), Glasgow, 3 November 2021.

<sup>31</sup> *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*.

<sup>32</sup> Statement by U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, Secretary Kerry, 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 26), Glasgow, November 2021.

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and rising sea levels. This is the first time the Our Ocean Conference is being held in an island nation and cohosted with the United States. This is an important and positive signal of U.S. support and responsiveness to a long-term threat to the Pacific.

U.S. action and assistance to Pacific islands on climate and environmental issues will help restore confidence in the U.S. commitment to the region. Doing this will help ensure that climate does not become—as some feared—an issue that divides the Pacific islands from the United States. On the contrary, real progress on climate will bolster support for the United States across the region and help build a coalition of like-minded nations that can call out and shine a spotlight on the PRC's lack of progress on this and other issues of concern to the Pacific.

Undoubtedly, building such a coalition like this takes time and determined action. A challenge for the United States is that American presence in the Pacific has declined significantly since its peak in WWII. Boots on the ground and effective military diplomacy cannot be put in place overnight. As former Special Operations Command (SOCOM) Commander Admiral William H. McRaven was fond of saying, “you cannot surge trust.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Lesson #1**

There is a real and growing challenge to the rules-based order. Pacific island countries, however, face a challenge from the PRC as well as from climate. The United States should not be coy about the first but must help Pacific island countries also respond to the second. Both are threats to peace and security in the Pacific. Both will require increased U.S. attention.

## **AMERICAN PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC— FROM WWII TO TODAY**

*We are determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on the one hand and of overwhelming force on the other.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> SOCOM Commander Adm William H. McRaven, remarks, Aspen Security Forum, 26 July 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Gen George C. Marshall, “The Marshal Plan” (speech to the graduating class of the United States Military Academy, 29 May 1942).

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In the lead-up to World War II, America and its allies faced a different adversary in the Indo-Pacific. But like then, the United States was on the defensive, having to respond to an aggressive regional power with global ambitions. And like then, initial U.S. policy sought to engage with the rising power rather than confront it over its malign and coercive actions. There are important lessons to be heeded from that era and the war that followed. The parallels to the challenges the United States faces today in the region are worth remembering if the United States is to successfully manage competition and avoid conflict.

For the United States, according to the official U.S. Department of State history of U.S. foreign relations, during the prewar period, “at the outset, U.S. officials viewed developments with ambivalence. Tensions with Japan rose when the Japanese Army bombed the U.S.S. *Panay* [PR 5] as it evacuated American citizens from Nanjing, killing three. The U.S. Government, however, continued to avoid conflict and accepted an apology and indemnity from the Japanese. An uneasy truce held between the two nations into 1940.”<sup>35</sup> However, “the Japanese Government made several decisions that year that exacerbated the situation. Unable or unwilling to control the military, Japan’s political leaders sought greater security by establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in August 1940. In so doing, they announced Japan’s intention to drive the ‘Western imperialist nations’ from Asia.”<sup>36</sup>

The attack on Pearl Harbor nevertheless came as a shock to the American body politic. In response to this and the Japanese military campaign that followed, the United States, island by island, gradually reasserted its presence in the Pacific.

It is this legacy of the U.S. military liberating the islands that laid the foundation of the American presence in the Pacific today. It is a presence that was welcomed and remains popular. The number of boots on the ground in the region has had a series of highs and lows since. At its peak, at the conclusion of WWII, there were more than 400,000 U.S. military forces forward deployed in the Pacific.<sup>37</sup> The current strength of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (uni-

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<sup>35</sup> “Japan, China, the United States and the Road to Pearl Harbor, 1937–41,” in *Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations* (Washington, DC: Department of State, n.d.).

<sup>36</sup> “Japan, China, the United States and the Road to Pearl Harbor, 1937–41.”

<sup>37</sup> *U.S. Presence in the Pacific: U.S. Military in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 1991).



Map 8.2. The Second World War: The Pacific theater



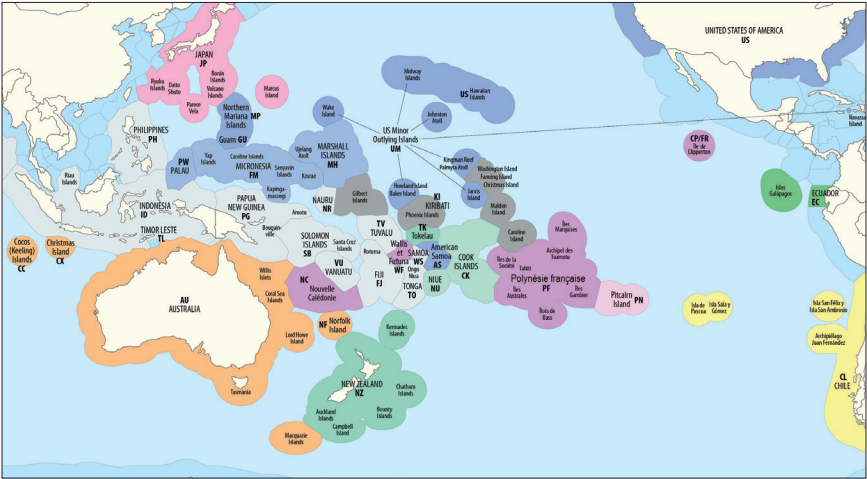
Source: Clayton R. Newell, *Central Pacific: The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2003).

formed and civilian) total approximately 375,000 personnel. However, only around 97,000 are stationed west of the international date line.<sup>38</sup>

To put this in perspective, Palau, for example, was a key steppingstone in the island-hopping campaign in WWII. On 10 May 1944, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, issued the planning order for the assault on the Palau islands of Peleliu and Angaur as part of the larger Operation Forager. The operation, targeting two airstrips used by the Japanese military, was code named Stalemate II and was considered essential by General Douglas MacArthur for his return to the Philippines. D-day for the attack on Peleliu was set for 15 September. The attack was launched by the 1st Marine

<sup>38</sup> *The Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy: Achieving U.S. National Security Objectives in a Changing Environment* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2015).

Map 8.3. Pacific islands



Source: Maximilian Dörrbecker, adapted by MCUP.

Division, which later in the battle was relieved by the 81st Army Infantry Division, which had been tasked with securing Angaur. The human cost of this operation was high. On Peleliu, Marine casualties included 1,336 deaths while the Army suffered 208 killed in action. On Angaur, 196 American soldiers died. The Japanese lost an estimated 10,500 men.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately, Palauan loss of life was minimal as the small native Palauan population in Peleliu had been evacuated prior to the arrival of U.S. forces and subsequent conflict with the Japanese Army.

Following the war and the departure of the U.S. combat forces in 1947, Palau was administered by the U.S. government as a UN Trust Territory. Initially it was the U.S. Navy that administered Palau with the Department of Interior taking on this responsibility in 1951. Palau became an independent nation in 1994 in “free association” with the United States. The United States managed relations with Palau from the neighboring Philippines and in 2004 opened the U.S. Embassy in Palau, led by a chargé d’affaires. The United States appointed its first resident ambassador to Palau in 2010. The embassy in Koror

<sup>39</sup> “The Battle of Peleliu,” Marine Corps University, History Division, accessed 7 November 2022.

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is one of the smallest U.S. embassies in the world but is growing—a recognition of the increasingly strategic importance of this island nation known as the anchor of the second island chain—and is currently staffed with 3 foreign service officers, 1 U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) country coordinator, a small Department of Defense liaison team, and approximately 20 local staff.

The size of the U.S. footprint in Palau is consistent with the experience in the two other Compacts of Free Association states (COFA), the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia, and generally across the Pacific islands. The United States is not present in much of the Pacific islands although the United States has reopened an embassy in the Solomon Islands. It is also reportedly considering opening or colocating missions with Australia or New Zealand. This is overdue and is a consequence of America's focus elsewhere than on the Pacific. Resourcing new diplomatic missions is frustratingly difficult to accomplish due to limited funding and high security requirements of the Department of State. Australia recently has committed to having a diplomatic presence in every member state of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Australia is also in the process of supplying a new series of offshore patrol boats to each PIF nation.<sup>40</sup>

U.S. interest in the Pacific islands has often been overshadowed by a historic and institutional bias in the halls of government in Washington that has focused attention (and resources) on the Northern Pacific, including China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula. The well-publicized “pivot” and rebalance under President Barack H. Obama and the current refocus and new Indo-Pacific strategy of the Biden administration, heralding that America is back, has not led (yet) to a substantial increase in American presence in these islands.

As pointed out by a recent Center for Strategic and International Studies report, the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy is the third iteration of U.S. strategy for the region. This reflects increased attention to the region by recent U.S. administrations, but the results have been “uneven.”<sup>41</sup> There has been consistency, as the report notes, on certain key features of policies toward the Indo-Pacific, including “an understanding of the region's relative importance, an emphasis on allies and partners, and the overall goal of keeping the

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<sup>40</sup> “Australia Opens New Pacific Embassies as Chinese Influence Grows,” Reuters, 4 May 2021.

<sup>41</sup> Charles Edsel, “What to Expect from the Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy,” United States Study Centre, 10 February 2022.

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region free from coercion and open to trade, investment and ideas.” However, to be successful, “three separate elements need to come together for a coherent strategy: a security plan, an economic blueprint and a diplomatic road map.”<sup>42</sup>

## Lesson #2

American attention to the Pacific has risen and fallen like the ocean tide. This has impaired U.S. understanding of and its standing in the region. However, a little goes a long way in the islands. Focused and sustained efforts scaled appropriately is an effective use of limited U.S. government resources. The compound return on investment over time will pay important dividends for the United States across the Indo-Pacific. Presence is the first step to partnership—it takes time.

### “MILITARY DIPLOMACY” IN THE ISLANDS— WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOES NOT

*President Biden has pledged to lead with diplomacy because it’s the best way to deal with today’s challenges. At the same time, we’ll make sure that we continue to have the world’s most powerful armed forces. Our ability to be effective diplomats depends in no small measure on the strength of our military.*<sup>43</sup>

The U.S. National Defense University’s assessment of the complexity and importance of the Indo-Pacific is accurate:

there are few regions as culturally, socially, economically, and geopolitically diverse as the Asia-Pacific. The 36 nations comprising the Asia-Pacific region are home to more than 50% of the world’s population, 3,000 different languages, several of the world’s largest militaries, and five nations allied with the U.S. through mutual defense treaties. Two of the three largest economies are located in the Asia-Pacific, along with ten of the fourteen smallest. The Area of Responsibility (AOR) includes the most populous nation in the world, the largest democracy, and the largest Muslim-majority nation. More than one third of Asia-Pacific nations are smaller, island nations, in-

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<sup>42</sup> Edsel, “What to Expect from the Biden Administration’s Indo-Pacific Strategy.”

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People” (speech, Treaty Room, Department of State, Washington, DC, 3 March 2021).

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cluding the smallest republic in the world and the smallest nation in Asia. The region is a vital driver of the global economy and includes the world's busiest international sea lanes and nine of the ten largest ports. The Asia-Pacific is also a heavily militarized region, with seven of the world's ten largest standing militaries and five of the world's declared nuclear nations. Given these conditions, the strategic complexity facing the region is unique.<sup>44</sup>

U.S. armed forces are a vital contributor to American diplomacy. They are a key element of national power, which includes diplomatic, informational, military, and economic means (DIME). As explained in a 2019 Brookings report on *The Use of Military Diplomacy in Great Power Competition: Lessons Learned from the Marshall Plan*, the benefits are several-fold. For example, when the U.S. military is engaged with other nations, "the interaction increases interoperability, increases mutual understanding and improves capabilities as well as builds dialogue that facilitates communication and helps avoid confusion or conflict."<sup>45</sup> This is essential for building relationships that are based on trust and shared perspectives and principles. As the Brookings report concludes,

in places where the U.S. military has maintained a long-term presence (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Germany), this enhances regions economically—directly through commercial contracting and the resulting employment, servicemember contributions through commerce, and in some cases, contributions of military gear and equipment through foreign military sales or otherwise. Although not diplomacy in the traditional sense of a State Department mission, military relationships between countries build a foundation [for positive relations].<sup>46</sup>

In the Pacific, and to use Palau again as the example, this small island nation, the so-called anchor of the second island chain, has received significant attention from both the United States and the PRC. It is illuminating

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<sup>44</sup> CAPSTONE 19-4 *Indo-Pacific Field Study* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup> Amy Ebitz, *The Use of Military Diplomacy in Great Power Competition: Lessons Learned from the Marshall Plan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2019).

<sup>46</sup> Ebitz, *The Use of Military Diplomacy in Great Power Competition*.

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to contrast what type of actions, including military diplomacy, have proven successful and others less so. There is a distinct difference in approach between the suitors of Palau's support and allegiance. A fundamental difference to start with is the long history of service by Palauans in the U.S. military. Almost every family in Palau has had or currently has someone serving in a branch of the U.S. armed forces. There are a number of Gold Star Families in Palau whose sons died defending freedom dating back to the Vietnam War. The president's father is a former U.S. Army medic. Palau's High Chief Reklai Bao Ngirmang served for more than 25 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. On a per capita basis, more Palauans have served in the U.S. military than residents of any U.S. state or territory. On a monthly basis, the U.S. Civic Action Team (CAT) in Palau maintains the WWII memorials in Peleliu and Anguar. This legacy and these ties remain strong.

Possibly the best example of successful military diplomacy in Palau and a model for the region is the U.S. Civic Action Team. Established in 1969, this tri-Service (Navy, Army, and Air Force) six-month deployment rotates among the three Services and is by far the most popular and visible U.S. presence in Palau. The CAT officer in charge is a member of the embassy's country team. These small teams (approximately a dozen personnel) have for more than 50 years provided engineering, medical, and humanitarian aid and disaster response (HA/DR). Each CAT also provides an apprenticeship program in trade-related skills, whose graduates are eagerly sought after by local businesses. Operating from a small camp, this facility is open to the public, who regularly use its health clinic, gym, and basketball courts and is a center of activity every day in Koror. The camp routinely hosts movie nights, a weekly radio show, and other social activities and participates in annual cultural events in Palau. This legacy, a positive and practical demonstration of the U.S. commitment to Palau, provides real benefit to the people of the island nation. This tactical scale effort—which has been sustained over time despite cutbacks elsewhere in the region—has had a strategic-level impact. This grassroots approach has helped to build relationships and foster trust, resulting in a very strong connection between Palau and the United States. This small investment each year has ensured larger military activities such as annual exercises and other engagements can proceed, because the CAT has literally and figuratively “paved the way.” As *Military Times* reported following Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper's 2020 visit to Palau:

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For decades, small groups of military engineer teams have been spending six-month stints in paradise in the name of strengthening the U.S.'s relationship with one Pacific island nation. Defense Secretary Mark Esper made a Pentagon chief's first ever visit to Palau on Aug. 28, stating, "I think, the Civic Action Teams—how can we replicate that in other countries? It's a high payoff, low-cost way to get the teams out there. They're just a great asset."<sup>47</sup>

Another example of military diplomacy in Palau and the region is the work of the Army Corps of Engineers. In Palau, the paved road that circles the main island of Babeldaob was constructed by the Corps of Engineers. This 85-kilometer-long road was completed in 2007 at a cost of \$149 million. The road, which was repaired in 2020 at a cost of an additional \$2 million, is one of the most significant infrastructure projects approved under the Compact of Free Association with the United States.<sup>48</sup> It is a great example of partnership within the U.S. government, which supports the Compact Agreement with Palau, with the Department of the Interior funding the work of the Army Corps of Engineers as well as other Compact-related assistance. The "Compact" road links the city of Koror, Palau's commercial hub, to the international airport. It also connects rural areas around the island to Palau's urban center, facilitating opportunities for economic development through improved transportation. It is also a visible sign of the Army Corps of Engineers "Essayons" ("let us try" in French) providing practical assistance that has greatly benefited Palau's development. The mission of the Corps, to "deliver vital public and military engineering services; partnering in peace and war to strengthen our nation's security, energize the economy and reduce risks from disasters," defines well what successful military diplomacy looks like in the Pacific.<sup>49</sup>

Military exercises and exercise-related construction projects are another example of the positive contribution military diplomacy makes to the nations of the Pacific. Ensuring U.S. strategic objectives are met, which also results in improvements to the infrastructures of small-island nations, is a near perfect

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<sup>47</sup> Meghan Myers, "Esper, First SECDEF to Travel to Palau, Visits with Seabees and Marines," *Military Times*, 2 September 2020.

<sup>48</sup> "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Overseeing Repairs to Palau Compact Road," Office of Insular Affairs, accessed 13 December 2022.

<sup>49</sup> "Mission and Vision," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, accessed 7 November 2022.

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model of successful military diplomacy. To cite just one annual regional exercise that is focused on building partner capacity: the most recent U.S. Marine Corps exercise “Koa Moana” (Ocean Warrior) in 2021 in Palau contributed an estimated \$5 million to the national economy. This included contracts for exercise-related construction, lodging, local transportation, and related expenses. In terms of other tangible benefits to Palau, the Koa Moana Task Force together with the resident Civic Action Team successfully renovated the Anguar Airstrip (now Lockheed C-130 Hercules capable) and repaired the (one) main road on the island of Peleliu. Additionally, a series of training sessions and subject matter expert (SME) exchanges were conducted that focused on improving Palau’s law enforcement capabilities. As with each annual Koa Moana exercise in Palau, the Marines continued their work to locate and defuse unexploded ordinance dating to WWII. As one Marine put it, “Task Force Koa Moana makes Palau safer one bomb at a time.”

In addition to exercises, under chapter II of the Compact Agreement and other authorities, the United States is responsible for and provides substantial assistance to Palau for its defense and security.<sup>50</sup> This military diplomacy, to use that term, has resulted in significant improvements to the country’s infrastructure and national resiliency. Examples of such assistance include the provision of new equipment to the international airport in Koror as well as the establishment of a police dog (K-9) program and the construction of a new kennel facility. Other examples include improvements to the armory at the Bureau of Public Safety, renovation of the wharf at the main Malakai port in Koror, as well as small scale construction and related civil affairs projects. A U.S. staff sergeant who participated in a recent project to repair a local school described it as “investing in the future.”

Another example of how the United States assists Palau through military diplomacy is the Global Defense Reform Program. This State Department-managed program has provided a series of advisors to Palau. These advisors have helped set up Palau’s new national security coordinator’s office—a first in Palau’s history. Currently there is one U.S. advisor embedded in Palau’s Joint Operations Center (the JOC being another new addition to Palau’s defense and security coordination). This advisor works alongside counterparts from Australia and Japan and is focused on supporting Palau’s maritime enforcement

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<sup>50</sup> “Compacts of Free Association,” Office of Insular Affairs, accessed 13 December 2022.



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efforts, which is a vital requirement due to the size and location of Palau's EEZ. These recent developments and improvements to Palau's command and control processes are positive examples of how Palau's international partners are working together to support peace and security in the Pacific.

Regular visits by U.S. ships and aircraft are another important and visible sign of American support to Palau and of the U.S. persistent presence in the region. Palau's President Whipps has repeatedly commented how these visits (as well as other U.S. military activities) help to "reassure" Palau of America's commitment to its defense and security. Indeed, President Whipps has asked that the United States consider establishing a military "base" in Palau.<sup>51</sup> Undoubtedly, as the United States increases its military posture and preparedness west of the international date line, Palau will figure prominently in U.S. planning. Lastly, other examples of military diplomacy that work well in the region are the chaplains and also the U.S. military bands visiting the region, which cannot be underestimated. Their engagements, whenever they take place in Palau, are among the most popular events every year and demonstrate that even a small four-piece musical ensemble can be an incredible strategic asset.

In recognition of and to help manage and coordinate the increased tempo and complexity of the U.S. military engagement in Palau, the small embassy team in Koror has now been supplemented by a military liaison group. Initially, this additional support, now known as the U.S. Oceania Engagement Team (OET), was sourced from the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) and focused on civil-military affairs. In 2022, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) indicated that it will buttress this initial deployment by staffing a liaison officer position at Embassy Koror. It is understood that this staffing will likely lead to a full Security Cooperation (SCO)/Defense Attaché (DAT) Office at some point in the future as an integral part of Embassy Koror.

Perhaps the most recent and most impactful example of what has worked well that included military diplomacy is the U.S. whole-of-government support to Palau (and the region) regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. From the onset of the pandemic, the U.S. Congress funded a series of measures to respond to the health crisis. These programs included specific provisions to extend this assistance to the Freely Associated States (FAS). Treating these three nations,

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<sup>51</sup> Charlotte Morton, Antonia Gough, and the PACOM Team, "Executive Summary: Palau Offers Bases to the US," Counterterrorism Group, 12 May 2021.

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Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia as part of “the homeland” for purposes of this legislation is not only the right and correct approach to a public health emergency that had no borders, but also a clear statement of the U.S. commitment to the FAS. The U.S. response included assistance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Public Health Service, and several other U.S. departments and agencies as well as the Department of Defense. U.S. support included the provisions of vaccines, personal protective equipment, and supplies as well as medical teams that deployed to the island nation. This assistance resulted in Palau leading the world in the percentage of its population vaccinated with more than 98 percent of its population being fully vaccinated. This support demonstrates the U.S. capability and willingness to assist its partners—however small or remote—in a time of need. In terms of winning hearts and minds, providing such help when the pandemic was at its worst globally, including in the United States, has done more than possibly anything else in recent history to ensure the closest possible relationship between the United States and the Pacific islands. Admiral John C. Aquilino, commander of IN-DOPACOM, personally delivered masks and other assistance when he visited Palau, and it is this type of military diplomacy that works.<sup>52</sup>

### THE CHINESE APPROACH— THE CASE OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

In contrast, some of the PRC’s carrots-and-sticks efforts previously described in this chapter to upend the status quo and usurp the U.S. role in the Pacific have been less successful. However, the PRC’s malign activities continue to be a challenge and threaten the rules-based order, endangering stability in the region. The PRC’s wolf-warrior style of diplomacy globally is increasingly counterproductive, with governments growing tired of the PRC’s behavior. As described by the National Bureau of Asian Research:

wolf warrior diplomacy has become the shorthand expression for a new, assertive brand of Chinese diplomacy. In the past, Chinese diplomats tended to keep a lower profile and to be quite cautious and moderate in the way that they interacted with the outside world. Recently,

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<sup>52</sup> “The United States Is Assisting Pacific Island Countries to Respond to COVID-19,” Department of State, 21 April 2020.

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however, they have become far more strident and assertive—exhibiting behavior that ranges from storming out of an international meeting to shouting at foreign counterparts and even insulting foreign leaders. This turn in Chinese foreign policy has been slowly building since 2008–9 and accelerated after Xi Jinping came to office in 2012–13.<sup>53</sup>

This style of aggressive diplomacy is increasingly evident in the Pacific. Even when assistance or other support from the PRC is accepted, this is generally only highlighted by the PRC and often not commented on publicly by recipient governments. This is another indication that in many Pacific island states such ties are not widely popular even if elites may have been “captured” by the PRC. There is little doubt that Chinese investments in the Pacific can be a conduit for influence, in particular within business and political circles.

Recent events in the Solomon Islands provide a timely example that illustrates, on the one hand, the PRC’s increasing role there, including sending police advisors for the first time and possibly establishing a future military presence or base, but on the other hand the reality that China is not welcomed by many on the island. The unrest in the streets, the burning of many Chinese-owned properties, and continued outcry over the lack of transparency regarding what the government of the Solomon Islands has reportedly agreed to with the PRC clearly demonstrates that not everyone in the Solomon Islands supports this new “enhanced” relationship. The series of visits to Honora by senior United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Japanese officials following the revelation of a secret agreement between the PRC and the Solomon Islands is both a recognition of these counties being caught flat-footed and a demonstration of the seriousness of their concern regarding developments. No doubt messages were conveyed that may constrain future PRC plans.<sup>54</sup>

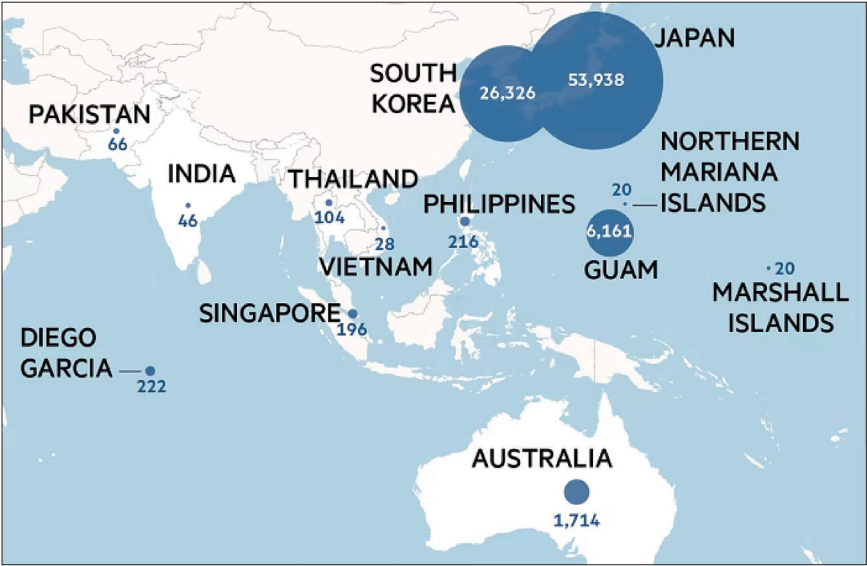
In Palau, which recognizes Taiwan and not the PRC, the pestering by China’s ambassador in neighboring FSM became so bad during the last election that President Whipps had to change his mobile phone number multiple times.

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<sup>53</sup> “Understanding Chinese ‘World Warrior Diplomacy,’” interview with Peter Martin, National Bureau of Asian Research, 22 October 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Cairns and April Herlevi, “China and the Solomon Islands: Drivers of Security Cooperation,” CNA, 13 April 2022.

Map 8.4. U.S. security ties in the Asia-Pacific



Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, U.S. Department of Defense, Active Duty Personnel by location as of June 2021. Map courtesy of *Financial Times* (FT).

While the PRC is seeking to increase its influence in the Pacific, this has been hampered by a lack of effective diplomacy, at least thus far. It is also hamstrung by the fact that its military reach is limited beyond the first island chain. While it has probed Palau’s EEZ, Palau’s close and historic ties to the United States and the robust presence of U.S. forces rotating in and out of the country together with the resident U.S. Civic Action Team have helped to establish facts on the ground in the strategically important second island chain that are difficult for the PRC to change:

As a recent report from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments concluded, it is too soon to tell how effective these counterstrategies will be. Although Pacific leaders will be open to working with traditional partners, it is unlikely they will do so in lieu of their relations with China. China has offered them what the United States and its allies cannot: large sums of money (albeit mostly loans) for

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development projects with few accounting or transparency conditions. As a result, any response to the impact of CCP interference activities in Oceania must involve an economic component, as well as a military one.<sup>55</sup>

To this it should be added that an increased focus and spotlight by media and like-minded governments on the PRC's use of business and criminal enterprises to support its long-term objectives to influence and secure elite if not popular support for its strategic priorities will be important.

### Lesson #3

Money talks anywhere. But nothing beats having a U.S. Navy ship visit or a U.S. Air Force fighter roaring overhead to deter any potential aggressor and reassure Pacific island nations. Add to that the persistent presence of U.S. diplomatic and military "country teams" on the ground and you have what works across the Pacific. Being present is what matters most.

THE U.S. ADVANTAGE:  
TREATY ALLIES AND LIKE-MINDED PARTNERS  
*Together, the United States and its democratic allies possess an overwhelming economic and military advantage over any possible competitors.*<sup>56</sup>

The PRC pressure is incessant across the Indo-Pacific, but it may be increasingly counterproductive. As noted in a recent Aspen Strategy Group study, "wolf warrior diplomacy and their (PRC) bullying of other countries has kind of concentrated minds in part of Asia to say, 'wow, we have to meet this challenge together.'"<sup>57</sup> The great advantage that the United States has vis-à-vis the

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<sup>55</sup> Ross Babbage, *Winning Without Fighting: Chinese and Russian Political Warfare Campaigns and How the West Can Prevail* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019).

<sup>56</sup> Lindsey W. Ford and James Goldgeier, *Retooling America's Alliances to Manage the China Challenge* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Anja Manuel, "This Brave New World: India, China, and the United States," 17 May 2016, YouTube video, 1:08:25.

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PRC is America's network of treaty allies, COFA partners, and like-minded friends across the Pacific. As the Center for New American Security (CNAS) (cofounded by Kurt Campbell, the current Indo-Pacific coordinator at the National Security Council) and others have noted, a central factor contributing to the extraordinary rise of Asia in the post-World War II era has been the stability afforded by the U.S.-organized and managed alliance system.<sup>58</sup>

This network of security ties is extensive and overlapping, affording the United States a variety of different multilateral and mini-lateral approaches to countering PRC interference in the region. There have been a number of recent developments that strengthen this coordination and add new policy architecture in the Indo-Pacific that supports the international rules-based order. Such "cooperation between allies and partners is required to ensure free and open access to the global commons," as Admiral Aquilino noted at the Halifax International Security Forum.<sup>59</sup> The task facing the United States is to "articulate a new and integrated approach to alliance management that addresses the fear of allies and partners, respects their unique security priorities, and combines individual actions into a coherent collective effort that can effectively meet the challenge that China poses."<sup>60</sup>

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue group (the Quad) of the United States, Australia, Japan, and India, while not a security organization, is increasingly coordinating respective national responses to "the serious challenges for this region," including competition with the PRC.<sup>61</sup> The growing collaboration among the four like-minded powers, with Quad meetings now held at the leaders level, has evolved significantly since its first "informal" meeting in 2007. Indeed, some observers are now calling for consideration of the concept of a "Quad-Plus" framework that would include other like-minded nations, such as New Zealand or possibly Asian partners such as South Korea and Vietnam.<sup>62</sup>

Another recent development is the September 2021 announcement of the

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Fontaine, "Networking Asian Security: An Integrated Approach to Order in the Pacific," Center for a New American Security, 19 June 2017.

<sup>59</sup> Adm Chris Aquilino, "Importance of Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific" (speech, Halifax International Security Forum, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 20 November 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Charles Edel and Siddharth Mohandas, "Enhancing Forward Defense: The Role of Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific," Center for a New American Security, 15 October 2020.

<sup>61</sup> "Quad Joint Leaders' Statement" (speech, Briefing Room, White House, 24 May 2022).

<sup>62</sup> Jagannath Panda, "Making 'Quad Plus' a Reality," *Diplomat*, 13 January 2022.

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Australia-UK-U.S. (AUKUS) defense pact. The roll out of this new initiative was marred by the inexpert managing of its impact on relations with France and the loss of its multibillion-dollar sale of next-generation *Attack*-class submarines to Australia. French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian described the decision to switch to U.S.-UK backed submarine program as “a stab in the back.”<sup>63</sup> French sensitivities notwithstanding, AUKUS is a further demonstration of the deepening of defense ties between traditional allies. The PRC public response accused the three powers of having a “cold-war mentality.”<sup>64</sup> This pact will include cooperation on “cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and additional undersea capabilities” separate from the Five-Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance, which also includes Canada and New Zealand.<sup>65</sup> At its core, “the AUKUS commitment to share sensitive defense technology is a powerful show of allied unity and resolve to preserve the regional balance of power.”<sup>66</sup>

Palau provides a number of examples of the United States partnering with nations to support defense and security objectives in the region. In 2021, Pacific Partnership, the U.S. Pacific Fleet’s annual humanitarian exercise, took place in Palau and for the first time included participation by Taiwan. This engagement was supported by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. This effort “leveraged U.S., Palau and Taiwan’s HADR expertise to develop mutual understanding and build capacity in Palau’s resiliency and disaster preparedness.” The goal of the Pacific Partnership—which nests perfectly with U.S. strategic objectives in the region—is to “work collectively with host and partner nations to enhance interoperability and response capabilities, increase stability and security, and foster new and enduring friendships across the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>67</sup>

Another example of how America’s allies and alliances support shared objectives in the region and demonstrate responsiveness to needs identified by

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<sup>63</sup> Jack Hawke, “Defence Minister Will Not Apologise to France for ‘Backstab’ over Dumped \$90b Submarine Deal,” ABC, 16 September 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Giles Gibson, “AUKUS Partnership Shows ‘Cold War Mentality,’ Says China’s Wang Yi,” CGTN, 29 September 2021.

<sup>65</sup> “AUKUS: China Denounces ‘Irresponsible’ US-UK-Australia Pact,” BBC News, 17 September 2021.

<sup>66</sup> Jane Hardy, “Integrated Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific: Advancing the Australia-United States Alliance,” United States Study Centre, 15 October 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Lt Janice Leister, “Pacific Partnership 2021 Mission Concludes in Palau,” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 13 August 2021.

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the Pacific islands is the cooperation between Australia and the United States and other partners regarding maritime security concerns. In March 2022, for the first time Australia deployed an air asset operating out of Koror. The mission, part of Operation Solania, to assist with patrolling Palau's large exclusive economic zone, also included the Royal Australian Navy. The operation supported the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency maritime surveillance program.<sup>68</sup> Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and transnational crime are serious threats to the region. Australia's tailored support, including the provision of maritime patrol boats to every Pacific Island Forum nation, meets locally identified needs and also helps to support regional and strategic objectives regarding the international rules-based order.

There are a number of "mini-lateral" mechanisms in the Pacific, such as the Pacific Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group (the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand); the FRANZ arrangement between France, Australia, and New Zealand; and other cooperative arrangements that are mutually reinforcing and help strengthen coordination between Pacific island nations and other security partners. This interlocking network helps to build capacity to respond to all threats in the region. This formal and informal group of friends and allies is a unique and significant advantage for the United States regarding the PRC. A recent Rand study dryly notes "that in the long-term strategic competition with China, how effectively the U.S. works with allies and partners will be critical to determining U.S. success."<sup>69</sup> The study concludes that

coordinating with allies and partners to engage third countries provides four main benefits: pools resources; facilitates division of labor that leverages unique allied and partner strengths and relationships; counters PRC influence in countries with which the U.S. cannot fully engage; and achieves U.S. objectives without forcing countries to explicitly align themselves with the U.S.<sup>70</sup>

These advantages are what differentiates the United States and its allies

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<sup>68</sup> "ADF Aids Palau and FSM with Operation Solania," Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter, 29 March 2022.

<sup>69</sup> Bonny Lin et al., *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR4412>.

<sup>70</sup> Lin et al., *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific*.



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from the PRC. This critical strength—of like-minded nations working together on shared priorities—cannot be taken for granted. Thus far at least, the PRC has not managed to overcome what some have called a “trust gap,” even if some leaders in the region have been “captured.” Popular support for America and its principles remains high. America’s historic ties matter. However, like any relationship, unless it is tended to, ties to the region will wither if they are neglected.

#### **Lesson #4**

To paraphrase the UK’s wartime prime minister, Winston Churchill, there is only one thing worse than fighting with allies and that is fighting without them. While coordination can be difficult and a drag, our allies and partners are an important force multiplier. And the PRC does not have many friends. The United States should not be shy about using this advantage—it matters.

### INTEGRATED DETERRENCE REQUIRES PERSISTENT PRESENCE

*Integrated deterrence means all of us giving our all.*<sup>71</sup>

Admiral John C. Aquilino has emphasized that cooperation between allies and partners is essential to preserve the rules-based international order and ensure free and open access to the global commons. This is what Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to achieve when they met in Newfoundland 80 years ago to announce the Atlantic Charter, which was followed a few years later by the agreement to establish a United Nations.<sup>72</sup> The Pacific region has remained largely that, pacific, as a result of the peace and stability provided by this international commitment to shared values.

However, the global commons is under attack by nations such as the PRC and Russia that claim that they have both the right and the power to force a new

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<sup>71</sup> Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, “Secretary of Defense Remarks for the U.S. INDOPACOM Change of Command” (speech, Department of Defense, 30 April 2021).

<sup>72</sup> “FDR and Churchill Meet on Ship, Map Out Atlantic Charter,” History.com, accessed 13 December 2021.

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world order. While Russia's ambitions have been significantly impaired by its inept invasion of Ukraine, China's "long game" continues unabated with the goal to reduce and render U.S. influence in the Pacific to an inconsequential level. Recognizing the urgency of the threat, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin introduced in May 2021 the concept of integrated deterrence to maintain peace and stability in the global security environment. According to Secretary Austin, integrated deterrence is synchronizing all forms of national power, with the Joint Force and U.S. allies and partners to preserve peace, stability, and the international rules-based order.<sup>73</sup>

Admiral Aquilino, whose shorthand for the rules-based international order is "RBIO," has stressed the importance of a credible integrated deterrence in order to "deter our adversaries, making them pause before they take any action that threatens a free, safe, prosperous, and open Indo-Pacific."<sup>74</sup> The United States is making great strides in developing and implementing this new force posture, introducing new technologies and expanding U.S. presence in the region together with international partners.

Some examples of integrated deterrence in execution include: seven nations including Canada, the Netherlands, UK, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States with more than 15,000 sailors and Marines conducting exercises from a four-carrier strike group in October 2021. Other examples include:

- U.S. and Canadian navies conducting a coordinated Taiwan Strait transit.
- The French-led La Perouse exercise, with naval assets from Australia, France, India, Japan, and the United States.
- The largest maritime exercise in the world, Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), which routinely incorporates more than 20 different nations, including most Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.
- The deployment of the German flagship *Bayern* (F 217) to the region and its participation in the coalition of nations enforcing the UN Security Council Resolutions off the Korean Peninsula.

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<sup>73</sup> Kris Osborn, "Secretary Austin's New 'Integrated Deterrence' Strategy Is Turning Heads," *National Interest*, 30 September 2021.

<sup>74</sup> Adm John C. Aquilino, "USFK Change of Command," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 6 July 2021.

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**Figure 8.3.** Japanese helicopter destroyer squadron with U.S. littoral combat ships in Palau



Source: U.S. Embassy of Palau-Koror, 2021.

- Integrating Joint air and maritime operations by embarking U.S. Marines onboard the UK's HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (R08) in the South China Sea.<sup>75</sup>

As clearly articulated by Secretary Austin and the U.S. Department of Defense, integrated deterrence will increase capability, improve interoperability, and strengthen the trust between partnered nations to ensure the air, maritime, cyber, and space domains remain open to all nations. As Admiral John Aquilino has noted, “when viewed by those who seek to change the rules-based international order, these activities provide clear, visible evidence of our allies’ and partners’ commitment to preserving peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Aquilino, “Importance of Allies and Partners in the Pacific.”

<sup>76</sup> Aquilino, “Importance of Allies and Partners in the Pacific.”

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The People's Republic of China is actively seeking to counter the historic relationships enjoyed by like-minded nations and partners in the Pacific and at the same time is pushing back against U.S. military capabilities and the U.S. commitment to the defense and security of Pacific island nations, such as Palau. The PRC does not hide its intentions in the region, publicly noting (in the most recent "Joint Statement of China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers Meeting") that it seeks to create in the Pacific "a new type of international relations" with countries affirming they will respect each other's "core interests and major concerns" and "the principle of non-interference in internal affairs" of each nation.<sup>77</sup> This is Chinese diplomatic language, code for using all tools at its disposal to ensure Taiwan is no longer recognized by any Pacific island nation and that no Pacific island nation will raise objections to any PRC policies regarding "sensitive" issues such as Hong Kong or Xinjiang. The PRC pressures small island states using gray zone measures to influence and interfere; utilizing economic coercion; and testing the resolve and response of small island states to respond to unauthorized research vessels entering their EEZs and unreported, unregulated, and illegal fishing in their waters. Other types of PRC activities include cyber intrusions and hacking of government systems and the role of PRC triads and criminal enterprises in these small nations and attempts to "capture" political and traditional elites, which is a pattern of activity all too common across the Pacific region. Despite a renewed interest in the region—and the stepping up by the United States and other democratic nations in terms of addressing resource and regional concerns—this threat to Pacific island countries is only increasing.

From my perspective as seen from my old office window overlooking Palau's Rock Islands, successful statecraft in the Pacific requires a whole-of-government effort, truly, a whole of United States enterprise, combing hard and soft power and a public and private sector partnership together with allies and friends, to respond to the threat to peace and prosperity in the Pacific from the PRC, which is real and increasing. This truly is the challenge of our era.

### **Lesson #5**

In addition to allies, the other great advantage the United States must

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<sup>77</sup> "Joint Statement of China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers Meeting," Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 21 October 2021.

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retain is its technological edge over any potential adversary. This means breaking down barriers between bureaucracies and partnering more with the private sector in not only a whole of government, but a whole of United States enterprise to ensure America remains the world's best guarantee of peace and security.

## ◉ Chapter Nine ◉

# Military Diplomacy Conceptualized from a Small State's Perspective

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### *The Case of the Netherlands*

Lieutenant Colonel Mirjam Grandia Mantas (RNLA), PhD;  
Hester Postma, Msc; and Colonel Han Bouwmeester (RNLA), PhD

#### INTRODUCTION

Small states like the Netherlands have habitually strongly depended on international military cooperation for their defense and defense strategies. Consequently, the armed forces of the Netherlands have deployed a large network of military personnel at various international headquarters, missions, and diplomatic posts. The quantity of this network, however, does not necessarily translate into a robust information position for the Netherlands Ministry of Defence regarding the interpretation and possible influence of security developments. For example, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in the beginning of 2022 came as a surprise to many, as did the prompt withdrawal of the United States and its allies from Afghanistan in 2021.

The authors argue that by deploying the international and diplomatic military network *strategically*—i.e., with a preconceived plan—and utilizing its sensor function to its full potential, states might be able to better anticipate and possibly even influence security developments.<sup>1</sup>

However, a strategic employment of the international and/or military diplomatic network requires the military actors within this network to be managed and

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<sup>1</sup> The term *sensor function* is used to illustrate the capacity of military personnel deployed in the international and/or diplomatic network of the Ministry of Defence to detect security developments and activities measured against its own national interests, and respond to these developments and activities as deemed necessary (based on Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022).

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guided by their respective ministries of defense. In addition, the authors maintain that the actors in the network must comprehend their role in the process of understanding and possibly influencing security developments, which are of importance to the state and/or alliance. The authors will illustrate this claim through the context of the Netherlands case and its recent activities on the professionalization of military diplomacy as a capacity.

First, the authors will introduce the definition of military diplomacy as developed by the Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands and also explain the conceptual demarcations the authors have made between military diplomacy and defense diplomacy. Subsequently, the authors will put forward military diplomacy as a capacity for the Netherlands followed by an explanation of the current activities to further professionalize military diplomacy within the armed forces. The Dutch perspective will be illustrated by the participation of the Netherlands air defense and command frigate, HNLMS *Evertsen* (F805), in the UK-led Carrier Strike Group 2021 (CSG21). The analysis is based on in-depth interviews with two Dutch naval officers and a civilian official, together with primary and secondary sources. The authors will conclude with our main findings and propose avenues for future research.

## DEFINITION OF MILITARY DIPLOMACY IN THE NETHERLANDS<sup>2</sup>

Various defense doctrines and policy documents, including the *Netherlands Defence Doctrine* and the policy memorandum entitled *Understanding Conflicts, Preventing Escalation*, refer to the use of military diplomacy as a course of action.<sup>3</sup> In addition, both the *Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy, 2018–2022* and the *Defense Vision 2035* describe security objectives to which military diplomacy could contribute.<sup>4</sup> However, until 2021 no definition of military diplomacy was in place to which the Ministry of Defence referred when it used the term,

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter heavily builds on an article published in the *Militaire Spectator* by Mirjam Grandia Mantas and Ted Mutsaers, "Militaire diplomatie als enabler en handelingsoptie voor Defensie," 21 June 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *Understanding Conflicts, Preventing Escalation* (in Dutch) (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2019); and *Netherlands Defence Doctrine* (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> *Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy, 2018–2022* (in Dutch) (The Hague: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, 2018); and *Starting Note on the Project on Military Diplomacy* (in Dutch) (The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2021).

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nor was there any consensus on which actors in fact conduct military diplomacy.

Consequently, a project team comprised of members of the Ministry of Defence's Directorate of International Military Cooperation, the Directorate of General Policy, and the Faculty of Military Sciences of the Netherlands Defence Academy was founded in January 2021. Its tasks were to, first, develop a commonly agreed definition of military diplomacy based on a combination of literature reviews and empirical data, particularly a questionnaire among and interviews with personnel deployed within the international and diplomatic military network of the Netherlands armed forces. Second, the team was to develop (online) education and training on military diplomacy, and, last, to conduct academic research on the topic.<sup>5</sup>

### CONCEPTUAL AMBIGUITY

In the pursuit to develop a definition on military diplomacy for the Ministry of Defence in the Netherlands, the authors came across the fact that there is conceptual ambiguity on what it is and is not. In other words, there is no consensus and various interpretations can be found in contemporary literature on the topic. Hence, military diplomacy as a concept is not sufficiently delineated in the present literature and no clear conceptual delineations are made between military diplomacy and defense diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> The concepts are frequently used interchangeably, and even though various academics acknowledge the importance of resolving the much-discussed conceptual ambiguity surrounding military diplomacy and defense diplomacy, no common perspective has been reached so far.<sup>7</sup>

Military power usually is associated with the hard power of a state, by which a state can pursue its interests via deterrence or the use of force. Diplomacy, on the

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<sup>5</sup> *Starting Note on the Project on Military Diplomacy*.

<sup>6</sup> Hadith Asemani and Sayed Mohammed Tabatabaei, "Military Diplomacy: An Iranian Perspective," *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2021): 621–51; and Erik Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," *Security Dimensions* 20, no. 1 (2016): 179–94.

<sup>7</sup> Faith Mabera, "South Africa's Defense Diplomacy: A Viable Instrument of Foreign and Security Policy," *South African Foreign Policy Review* (2022); Gregory Winger, "The Velvet Gauntlet: A Theory of Defense Diplomacy," in *IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings* (Vienna: WM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, 2014), 1–14; Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94; Heather Exner-Pirot, "Defense Diplomacy in the Arctic: The Search and Rescue Agreement as a Confidence Builder," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18, no. 2 (2012): 195–207; and Lech Drab, "Defense Diplomacy—An Important Tool for the Implementation of the Foreign Policy and Security of the State," *Security and Defense Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2018): 57–71, <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0012.5152>.



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contrary, is understood as a means of soft power, where the interests of the state can be pursued by negotiation and dialogue.<sup>8</sup> Military diplomacy has therefore often been described as an oxymoron.<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, in order to draw some conceptual clarity, the authors asked themselves three questions:

1. Which actors engage in military diplomacy?
2. What can be regarded as military diplomatic activities?
3. What are the objectives of military diplomacy?

It is important to note that the answers to these questions will, by definition, vary per state, region, and are often culturally dependent. However, the authors heavily built on the work of Dr. Erik Pajtinka while developing a definition of military diplomacy for the Ministry of Defence in the Netherlands. He proposes analyzing military diplomacy through three analytical categories, namely:

- Actors;
- Activities;
- Foreign policy objectives<sup>10</sup>

Erik Pajtinka understands military diplomacy as:

a set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the defense department, as well as other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the field of security and defense policy, and whose actions are based on the negotiations and other diplomatic instruments.<sup>11</sup>

Let us first start by distinguishing who we consider to be the actors within the domain of military diplomacy. The field is often associated with the work of military attachés or military advisors.<sup>12</sup> Their function is to represent the interests of their armed forces in line with the interests of their ministries of defense

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<sup>8</sup> See Seng Tan, "Military Diplomacy," in *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, ed. Costas M. Constantinou, Pauline Kerr, and Paul Sharp (London: SAGE Publications, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Roby Thomas, *Indian Defense Diplomacy: A Handbook* (New Delhi: Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2021); Tan, "Military Diplomacy," 591–600; and K. A. Muthanna, "Military Diplomacy," *Journal of Defense Studies* 5, no. 1 (2011): 1–15.

<sup>10</sup> Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94.

<sup>11</sup> Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94.

<sup>12</sup> Anton Du Plessis, *Defence Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Dimensions with Specific Reference to South Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: University of Pretoria, 2008).

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and foreign affairs, as well as their state as a whole. The authors, however, propose a more inclusive conceptualization of the actors in the field of military diplomacy and argue that all military personnel who are deployed within the international and/or diplomatic network of the Netherlands armed forces can potentially engage in military diplomacy. Although not all deployed military personnel hold a diplomatic status, they are able to engage in diplomatic activities (following the above-mentioned definition of diplomacy by Tan).<sup>13</sup> However, not all diplomatic relations have an international component, and not all international relations have a diplomatic dimension. Diplomatic relations can also exist within a national context, for instance between ministries or departments within a ministry. The same applies to military diplomatic relations, which can take place in both a national and an international context. Hence, military diplomacy is not exclusively reserved for high-placed military officials but can even be practiced by the lowest ranking infantry soldier.<sup>14</sup>

While the authors acknowledge that diplomacy should be regarded as a constructive process in which two or more parties actively engage (an active party “imposing” diplomacy on a passive recipient is not necessarily effective, according to Paul Sharp), the authors do not include the actors in the definition that are, seen from the Dutch perspective, at the recipient end, as the possibilities are limitless.<sup>15</sup> Military diplomatic activities can be targeted at several “recipient” audiences at the same time, which can be both military personnel and civilians. Moreover, during the research of military diplomacy literature, the authors discovered that several scholars emphasized the peaceful character of military diplomatic activities, in the sense that no use of (brutal) force is employed, while these activities can still influence other actors.<sup>16</sup> This entails a wide range of ac-

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<sup>13</sup> Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, Treaty Series 500, United Nations; and See Seng and Bhubindar Singh, “Introduction,” *Asian Security* 8, no. 3 (2012): 221–31, <https://doi-org.lomc.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/14799855.2012.723916>.

<sup>14</sup> Bakare Najimdeen, “UN Peacekeeping Operations and Successful Military Diplomacy: A Case Study of Pakistan,” *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability* 3, no. 1 (2020): 13–25, <https://doi.org/10.3126/jofa.v1i1.36253>.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Sharp, “For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations,” *International Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 33–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.00140>.

<sup>16</sup> B. S. Sachar, “Cooperation in Military Training as a Tool of Peacetime Military Diplomacy,” *Strategic Analysis* 27, no. 3 (July–September 2003): 404–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160308450097>; and C. Raja Mohan, *From Isolation to Partnership: The Evolution of India’s Military Diplomacy* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2012), 1–13.

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tivities, among others, enhancing training, exchanging technology, sharing best practices from military experiences, informing allies on the content of defense white papers, clarifying intentions, or negotiating between warring parties and even carrying a country's emblems.<sup>17</sup>

To encapsulate the activities within the field of military diplomacy, the authors sent out questionnaires to 70 respondents and conducted interviews with more than 25 respondents who all work within the international and diplomatic network of the Netherlands armed forces. As the authors studied their answers on the various activities they conduct, the authors came across an interesting proposition of one respondent who claimed that all military diplomatic activities can be captured in the following four verbs:

- *to monitor;*
- *to identify;*
- *to appreciate; and*
- *to influence*

Regardless of their various interpretations, all the four mentioned categories of activities contribute to the implementation of national foreign and security policy.

This brings us to our third point, the identification of the objectives of military diplomacy. Numerous scholars debated what military diplomacy should achieve. The proposed answers included achieving a climate of confidence, improving the relations between nations, disarmament and arms control, building trust, increasing transparency and changing the mindset of partners, and pursuing the national foreign and security policy objectives.<sup>18</sup>

Even though the focus seems to be on confidence-building measures and establishing and improving relations, the authors advance the argument that the objectives of military diplomacy will solely be focused on these objectives when

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Leahy, "Military Diplomacy," in *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?*, ed. Brendan Taylor et al. (Canberra: Australian National University, 2014), 15–17; and Najimdeen, "UN Peacekeeping Operations and Successful Military Diplomacy," 13–25.

<sup>18</sup> Sachar, "Cooperation in Military Training as a Tool of Peacetime Military Diplomacy," 404–21; Jaswinder Singh, "Military Diplomacy: An Appraisal in the Indian Context," *CLAWS Journal* 14, no. 2 (2021): 108–24; Drab, "Defense Diplomacy," 57–71; Muthanna, "Military Diplomacy," 1–15; Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94; Amit Sarin, "Military Diplomacy—A Tool for Foreign Policy," in *India's Defense Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Sanjay Kumar, Dharendra Dwivedi, and Samir Hussain (New Delhi: G. B. Books, 2016), 9–22; Mohan, *From Isolation to Partnership*, 1–13; and Muthanna, "Military Diplomacy," 1–15.

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these are in line with the broader national interests. The authors argue that military diplomacy is not restricted to serve peaceful objectives and, as such, is not only practiced during peacetime. This is because it depends on the interests of the state such as, for example, provoking escalation on the side of the enemy or establishing coalitions to prevent a state from entering a partnership. Military diplomacy can still be practiced to pursue national foreign and security policy objectives both during peacetime (when the use of military force is absent) or during a conflict (when deterrence or the use of military force can be present).

The authors therefore do not position military diplomacy on one side of the spectrum and coercive diplomacy on the other side, but rather believe that military diplomacy in itself can be employed for coercive (potentially escalating) and noncoercive (potentially de-escalating) purposes. As such, the authors claim the effectiveness of military diplomacy (coercive and noncoercive) can depend on the objectives as laid out in the national foreign and security policy of states. In other words, the ultimate objective of military diplomacy should be the implementation of national foreign and security policy. And this subconclusion is in line with the insights of Pajtinka, Sarin, Mohan, and Muthanna.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the above-mentioned research, the authors have defined military diplomacy for the Netherlands Ministry of Defence and its armed forces in the following way:

The strategic deployment of military personnel working within the international and/or diplomatic network of the Ministry of Defence, with the aim of monitoring, identifying, appreciating and influencing security developments and activities in order to contribute to the implementation of national foreign and security policy.

The purpose of the definition was to, first, attain consensus within our Ministry of Defence, in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on what military diplomacy *is*. The definition also serves as a starting point for determining required competences, skills, and tasks for military officials working within the international diplomatic network of defense, in order to better prepare them for their (sensor) function.

The distinction the authors make between military diplomacy and defense

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<sup>19</sup> Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94; Sarin, "Military Diplomacy," 9–22; Mohan, *From Isolation to Partnership*, 1–13; and Muthanna, "Military Diplomacy," 1–15.

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diplomacy primarily lies with the types of actors involved. The authors assert that military diplomacy is practiced by military actors solely and defense diplomacy is practiced by both military and civilian actors. In addition, according to our research and demarcation, defense diplomacy focuses on a larger set of subjects and activities related to security matters such as the defense industry, security organizations, and negotiations by civil servants of relevant ministries of defense.

## DIPLOMACY IN THE NEW CENTURY: SECURITY/DEFENSE/MILITARY DIPLOMACY

The use of the military in the field of diplomacy is a key component within the twenty-first century diplomatic tool kit. As a manifestation of network diplomacy, it links the implementation of foreign policy objectives to the defense sector and, if managed properly, it can be an invaluable instrument of statecraft. It, in fact, uses the multiple dimensions of both soft and hard power on any given issue.<sup>20</sup>

The authors propose applying this definition to military diplomacy and defense diplomacy as it might help resolve the current conceptual ambiguity within the domain of defense (and/or military) diplomacy. As already laid out by Gregory Winger, existing definitions describe what it looks like (peaceful use of military force) or what it hopes to achieve (cooperation and conflict prevention) without explaining what defense (and/or military) diplomacy actually is.<sup>21</sup>

The absence of theoretical depth is evident as descriptive studies detail the ways states practice defense and/or military diplomacy but fail to link these practices to the broader study of international relations and security studies. Hence, each study of defense (and/or military) diplomacy seems to exist within a vacuum, detailing a specific case while failing to deepen our understanding of the concept.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCEPTUAL DEMARCATION

By employing the analytical categories of actors, activities, and foreign policy objectives, as proposed by Patjinka and further developed by this chapter, one can differentiate differences between military, defense, and security diplomacy

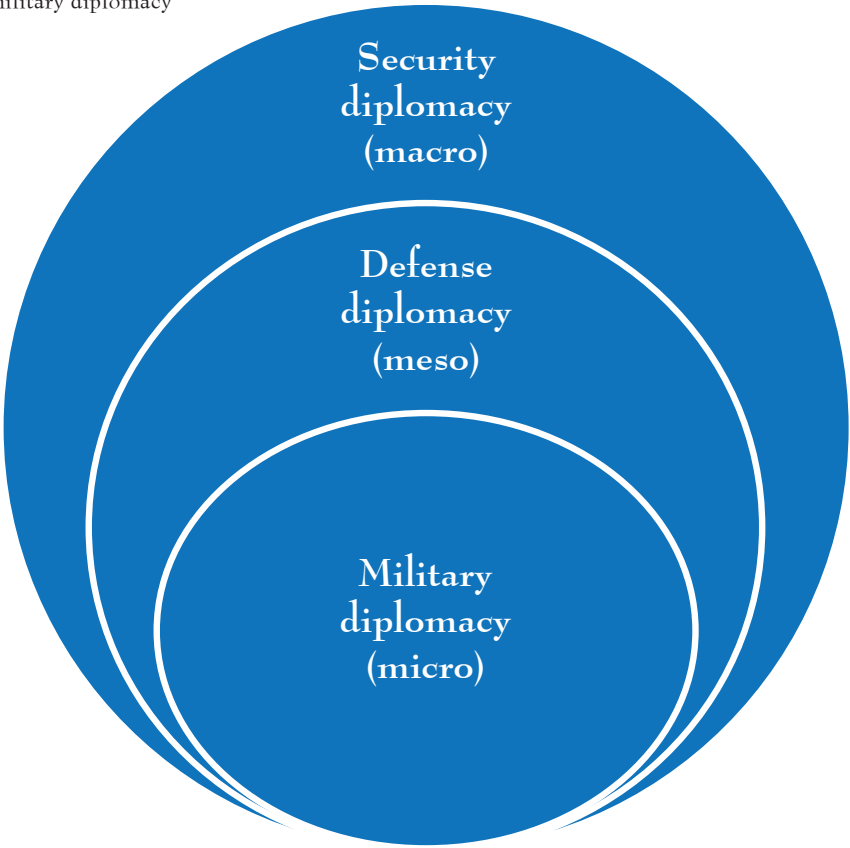
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<sup>20</sup> Juan Emilio Cheyre, "Defense Diplomacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Diplomacy*, ed. Andrew Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Takur (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Winger, "The Velvet Gauntlet," 1–14.

<sup>22</sup> Winger, "The Velvet Gauntlet," 1–14; and Cooper, Heine, and Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*.

**Figure 9.1.** The conceptual framework of security diplomacy, defense diplomacy, and military diplomacy



Source: M. Grandia and T. Mutsaers, presentation, Ministry of Defence, October 2020.

(figure 9.1).<sup>23</sup> The authors draw a distinction between military, defense, and security diplomacy by differentiating between the range of actors, activities, and objectives.

The authors draw a distinction between military, defense, and security diplomacy by differentiating between the range of actors, activities, and objectives. In the authors' view, the actors operating in the field of security diplomacy are

<sup>23</sup> Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94.

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military and civilian personnel working in a multilateral setting and/or for a multilateral alliance—for instance, an intergovernmental organization like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the United Nations (UN). Military diplomacy is exclusively practiced, as we argued in this chapter, by military personnel (on all levels) and defense diplomacy is practiced by both civilian and military personnel employed in the international defense sector of a state.

The activities practiced in security diplomacy entail security-enhancing actions in the broadest sense and are not limited to monitoring, identifying, appreciating, and, where possible, influencing security developments for the national security interest of a state.

The objectives of security diplomacy are to enhance (human) security in the international arena, whereas the objectives of defense diplomacy and military diplomacy are to help pursue the foreign policy objectives of the state. The authors suggest more research on the matter to further distinguish between the strongly related but different concepts of military, defense, and security diplomacy.

This chapter proposes that categorizing and subsequently analyzing the activities of defense and/or military diplomacy along the four verbs (*monitoring, identifying, appreciating, and influencing*) will advance research on the matter. The categorization will also enable a better differentiation between an *objective-centered approach* versus a *task-oriented approach* to these various, but related, forms of diplomacy. This notion also builds on the contention that we need analytical categories to offer a certain form of distance and clarity, which the concept of diplomacy itself cannot offer.<sup>24</sup> They argue that diplomacy in all shapes and forms (including its military form) to be a social phenomenon, and therefore call for analytical tools that apprehend how the various actors in the field understand and practice their work. These analytical tools can, as the authors argue as well, better situate and explain the broader sociocultural and political-institutional frameworks in which the actors operate.

## SECURITY DIPLOMACY AND ITS FEATURES

Multinational organizations such as NATO and the UN conduct various partnering and security programs. Different forms of what we define as *security diplo-*

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<sup>24</sup> Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann, "Introduction," in *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics*, ed. Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316162903.001>.

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macy adapted by multilateral organizations meet different objectives: pragmatic versus transformative forms or a combination of pragmatic and transformative forms, like for example the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programs of NATO.<sup>25</sup> A comparison between these forms of security diplomacy would be of great interest and contribute to the growing body of literature.

The authors also propose further investigating the impending flaws and shortcomings of multilateral security programs as discussed by for example Tarak Barkawi.<sup>26</sup> He argues that the political utility of the term *security* is that anything can be conceptualized or framed as a security issue to provide it greater prominence. As such, he argues, defense and security have become bywords for policies and strategies concerned with the threat, use, and organization of armed force in international relations and world politics.<sup>27</sup> Following this line of thought, the authors suggest empirically testing these claims by, for example, conducting case studies of various NATO and UN security programs.

## CONFLICT PREVENTION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Military and defense diplomacy are often believed to play an important role regarding conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The most known and researched activities in this regard are UN peacekeeping missions and their potential to help restore stability and/or prevent further wrongdoings of warring parties. The authors, however, view these multilateral responses as security diplomacy and would suggest further examining the use of military and/or defense diplomacy of individual states in their strategies to prevent or resolve conflicts as little empirical research is yet available.

## MILITARY DIPLOMACY AS A STRATEGIC CAPACITY FOR THE NETHERLANDS

The international and diplomatic military network of the Ministry of Defence complements the existing broader diplomatic efforts of other departments within the Netherlands government. The higher, less tangible goals of military diplomacy, as the authors see it, are to establish new international military relationships

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<sup>25</sup> Tan and Singh, "Introduction," 221–31.

<sup>26</sup> Tarak Barkawi, "Defence Diplomacy in North-South Relations," *International Journal* 66, no. 3 (2011): 597–612, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070201106600305>.

<sup>27</sup> Barkawi, "Defense Diplomacy in North-South Relations," 597–612.



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or to further deepen existing ones in order to pursue the foreign policy objectives of the state. The added value of the strategic use of military diplomacy is, among other things, that the military often attains exclusive access to players in the security sector: *The uniform can open doors that remain closed to others*.<sup>28</sup>

According to the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, diplomacy in all its forms is considered the most important type of communication in the world of international relations.<sup>29</sup> However, the way in which diplomacy is conducted has changed enormously over the last 30 years. A shift has occurred from so-called club diplomacy to network diplomacy. Whereas diplomacy was traditionally conducted primarily in a bilateral manner between states by a “club of diplomats,” diplomacy nowadays has transformed to a “network” of various actors at different levels by which multilateral relations play a major role: “network” diplomacy.<sup>30</sup>

Although practiced for centuries, military diplomacy and the role of military diplomats were officially recognized during the Vienna Convention in 1961.<sup>31</sup> Since the 1990s, military diplomats have been increasingly deployed in the West, and also in Asia, for so-called assistance and trust-building activities, with the aim of contributing to conflict prevention and resolution. Today, many scholars associate military diplomacy with negotiation, conflict prevention, or mediation.<sup>32</sup> However, the use of military diplomacy can also be used to arrange coalitions for military interventions or military partnerships to undermine dissenting states.<sup>33</sup>

There are also various forms of coercive diplomacy in which the international military network of defense plays a role. In coercion, diplomatic success is achieved via an extrinsic threat. This option employs the potential destruction by military capabilities to influence other countries to change their behavior. A somewhat dated but familiar term for this is “gunboat diplomacy.” Today, gun-

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<sup>28</sup> *Understanding Conflicts, Preventing Escalation*.

<sup>29</sup> Cooper, Heine, and Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*.

<sup>30</sup> Jorge Heine, “From Club to Network Diplomacy,” in Cooper, Heine, and Thakur, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, 54–69.

<sup>31</sup> Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

<sup>32</sup> Rajeswari Rajagopalan, “Military Diplomacy: The Need for India to Effectively Use in Its Conduct of Diplomacy” (unpublished article, 2008); M. L. Muhindi and S. P. K. Learpanai, “Evaluation of Military Diplomacy Influence on Physical Security in Dhobley, Jubaland, Somalia,” *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 5 (2020): 7–89; and Mohan, *From Isolation to Partnership*, 1–13.

<sup>33</sup> Sarin, “Military Diplomacy,” 9–22; and Sachar, “Cooperation in Military Training as a Tool of Peacetime Military Diplomacy,” 404–21.

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boat diplomacy transformed into naval international engagement, for example, using a naval force to support foreign policy of a nation.<sup>34</sup> Deterrence is also a well-known strategy whereby threats to support the use of military means are used to realize political interests.

The authors also consider the establishment of enhanced international military cooperation as a form of military diplomacy. This practice of cooperation is particularly important for a small state like the Netherlands as it is foundational to the *Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy*. International military cooperation with traditional partners such as NATO, the European Union (EU), and the UN prominently features in the Netherlands defense strategy and its respective defense doctrine. International military contacts are of great importance to acquire additional information on security developments. Additionally, international military cooperation is critical when a conflict of interest, confrontation, or crisis occurs as trusted relations and/or coalitions can identify a collective response.

In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on the role of information-driven military action within the information domain in order to attain information superiority. Being able to operate successfully as a sensor requires a cognitive effort from military personnel. In addition to the traditional battlefield, nowadays “the battle of the narrative” more than ever transpires in the cognitive domain. The multifaceted context in which militaries operate influences the way in which information is gathered, interpreted, and analyzed, and it also influences the way militaries understand their operational environment.<sup>35</sup> The authors argue that the international and diplomatic military network of the Netherlands armed forces can best be regarded as a sensor capacity which, *if strategically deployed*, and with other departments such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice and Security, can strengthen the information position of the Netherlands government. It nevertheless requires the Netherlands armed forces to equip their actors within the international and diplomatic military network in such a way that they are able to effectively fulfill their role as sensors.

The employment of the sensor capacity in the international and diplomatic military network needs to be applied and incorporated in various policy and de-

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<sup>34</sup> Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century*, 4th ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> Roel Samson and Gwenda Nielen, “Identity Crisis: I think, Therefore I Am,” *Military Spectator*, 2020.

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cision-making processes. The strategic foresight and direction (SFD) process is one of the ways in which the Ministry of Defence wants to further strengthen its anticipatory capacity to identify conflicts in time, understand them better, and prevent them from escalating.<sup>36</sup> SFD furthermore facilitates cooperation with other departments, civil society organizations, think tanks, and international partners and organizations.<sup>37</sup>

Policy-making processes and activities, such as the SFD process, the development of regional defense policy frameworks, and military strategic analyses (MSA) often draw on the knowledge and information of defense attachés. However, the entire international and diplomatic military network is much broader as it consists of military personnel stationed all over the world such as military personnel at international organisations (e.g., the EU, NATO, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], and the UN and at ministries or headquarters of strategic partners).<sup>38</sup> The international and diplomatic military network also includes military personnel deployed to international missions such as United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), and various missions in Africa such as United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS).

The professionalization of military diplomacy requires training and educating military personnel to develop specific skills and competencies. Training and education enables them to better identify, assess, monitor, and, where necessary, influence security developments. In this way, military diplomacy is further developed as a strategic capacity, thus contributing to the implementation of the national foreign and security policy.

To better prepare the military personnel for their functioning in the international and/or diplomatic network of the Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Defence Academy developed an integrated learning trajectory on military diplomacy. This entails that, in their initial studies, the military officers in training will start to develop competencies and skills that are necessary to successfully operate in the international and/or diplomatic domain. The integrated learning trajectory on military diplomacy commences in the first year

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<sup>36</sup> *Understanding Conflicts, Preventing Escalation.*

<sup>37</sup> *Understanding Conflicts, Preventing Escalation.*

<sup>38</sup> The most important strategic partners for the Netherlands Ministry of Defence are the United States, Germany, Great Britain, France, Norway, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

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of the bachelor's degree and is continued at the intermediate and senior level advanced staff courses of the Netherlands Defence College. The competencies and skills that are developed throughout the integrated learning trajectory are based on the results of empirical research.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the Netherlands Defence Academy developed two online modules, which are mandatory for military officers deployed in international and/or diplomatic domain: an introductory course on military diplomacy and a course on how to operate as a sensor within the domain of military diplomacy.

CASE STUDY:  
PARTICIPATION OF THE NETHERLANDS NAVY  
FRIGATE HNLMS *EVERTSEN*  
IN CARRIER STRIKE GROUP 21

In 2021, HNLMS *Evertsen* (F805), an air defense and command frigate of the Royal Netherlands Navy, joined the UK-led CSG21, which was sailing from the North Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific.<sup>40</sup> The mission of the CSG21 was to exchange information with and provide support to EU and NATO missions and to strengthen relations with countries in the Indo-Pacific in areas such as diplomacy, security, and economy. The main reasons for the Royal Netherlands Navy to reinforce CSG21 were threefold: 1) underline that the Netherlands is a trustworthy ally by integrating into the UK-led CSG21; 2) increase the operational readiness of the navy frigate and enhance interoperability with other nations during exercises; and 3) conduct military diplomacy, and more specifically, naval international engagement.<sup>41</sup>

The CSG21 was based on an alliance between the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Netherlands. The alliance was an illustration of the NATO Readiness Initiative, to which the UK contributed the Joint Expeditionary Force

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<sup>39</sup> Including a survey among approximately 350 military officers working in the international and/or diplomatic network of the Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands, as well as semistructured interviews with high-level military diplomats.

<sup>40</sup> The CSG21 consisted of nine ships, five squadrons of aircraft, and approximately 3,700 personnel.

<sup>41</sup> Henk Warnar, "Warships as Tools for International Diplomacy: HNMLS *Evertsen* as Part of the British Carrier Strike Group," accessed 8 June 2022.

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with a UK-led CSG21 and a UK land brigade.<sup>42</sup> The task of HNLMS *Evertsen* was to provide air defense protection to the entire carrier group and to control air missions.<sup>43</sup> The frigate operated closely with a squadron of the U.S. Marine Corps Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II jets and a U.S. Navy destroyer.<sup>44</sup>

The case of the HNLMS *Evertsen* demonstrates the Dutch practice of military diplomacy by illuminating the value of the strategic deployment of the Netherlands military personnel in the international and/or diplomatic network of the Ministry of Defence. This enables the actors to successfully carry out the introduced activities of *monitoring, identifying, appreciating, and (potentially) influencing* security developments to help pursue the foreign policy objectives of the Netherlands. It is the first time in more than two decades that the Netherlands so consciously and publicly expressed military diplomatic signals at sea.<sup>45</sup>

#### SERIES OF EVENTS:

##### RUSSIAN MOCK ATTACKS ON THE HNLMS *EVERTSEN*

The HNLMS *Evertsen* and the HMS *Defender* (D36) navigated through the Black Sea in June 2021. In this region, the staff of the HNLMS *Evertsen* noted that their automatic identification system was being manipulated.<sup>46</sup> To other ships in the area, the location of HNLMS *Evertsen* was displayed near the Crimean harbor of Sevastopol, while in reality it was moored in the Ukrainian harbor of Odessa. The crew of HNLMS *Evertsen* soon figured out that they were challenged by a spoofing operation trying to manipulate GPS data, but it was hard for them to officially attribute this operation to another party.<sup>47</sup>

Part of the UK-led CSG21 continued their journey via a direct route from

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<sup>42</sup> The initiative aims to increase the readiness of the existing national forces of the NATO allies. The initiative ensures that NATO allies are committed to be able to set up 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval combat vessels, which are ready to use within a maximum of 30 days. *NATO Readiness Initiative* (Brussels: NATO, 2018). The Joint Expeditionary Force is a partnership between Northern European countries and aims to contribute to supporting global and regional peace. George Allison, "UK Commits Carrier Strike Group to NATO Readiness Initiative," *UK Defence Journal*, 18 February 2020.

<sup>43</sup> Interview, Cdr George Pastoor, March 2022, hereafter Pastoor interview.

<sup>44</sup> "UK Carrier Strike Group to Sail with Netherlands Frigate on 2021 Deployment," UK Ministry of Defence, 31 March 2021.

<sup>45</sup> "Russian War Planes Carry Out Mock attacks on Netherlands Warship," NOS, 29 June 2021.

<sup>46</sup> For the first three months of the journey, the HNLMS *Eversten* was under the command of Cdr Pastoor. Pastoor interview.

<sup>47</sup> Pastoor interview.

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Odessa to Batumi, located on the Georgian coast, where they scheduled a port visit, and entered into the territorial waters of Crimea.<sup>48</sup> The *Evertsen* was not part of this operation, as the UK and the Netherlands adhered to very similar but slightly different rules of engagement. Whereas the Netherlands adhered to a strict de-escalation policy at all times, the UK maintained the status quo. The Dutch frigate was therefore not able to participate in all aspects of the journey.<sup>49</sup>

On 23 June 2021, HMS *Defender*, a British type-45 air destroyer, went on to carry out a freedom of navigation operation and sailed through the territorial waters of Crimea in Ukraine.<sup>50</sup> Unlike most states, the Russian authorities consider the territorial sea of Crimea as their own territorial waters since the annexation in 2014, which extends 12 nautical miles from the coast.<sup>51</sup> A Russian reaction could therefore be expected. However, the level of aggression of this reaction was not anticipated. During the passage of the *Defender*, the destroyer was followed by two Russian coast guard ships and an estimated 20 aircraft flew over as close as 150 meters away from the destroyer.<sup>52</sup>

This aggressive response was combined with a disinformation campaign. First, a Russian coast guard ship warned that it would start a fire-gun exercise close to the *Defender*.<sup>53</sup> Shortly after this announcement, explosions were noticed a few miles away. The UK Ministry of Defence interpreted these activities as a military exercise instead of warning shots because the British destroyer was out of reach of the Russian artillery.<sup>54</sup> Noteworthy was that the Russian Ministry of Defence, on the other hand, told several news agencies that warning shots were fired at HMS *Defender* and that four bombs had been released near the warship. BBC and *Daily Mail* journalists on board the *Defender*, as well as the British Ministry of Defence, debunked the Russian statements.<sup>55</sup> The crew of the *Evertsen* did not detect any released bombs near the HMS *Defender* nor anywhere else in the area.<sup>56</sup>

HNLMs *Evertsen* continued the journey to a planned operation in the east

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<sup>48</sup> Dan Sabbagh and Andrew Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship," *Guardian*, 24 June 2021.

<sup>49</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>50</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, United Nations, 10 December 1982.

<sup>52</sup> Sabbagh and Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship."

<sup>53</sup> Sabbagh and Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship."

<sup>54</sup> Sabbagh and Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship."

<sup>55</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>56</sup> Pastoor interview.

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of Crimea, while not using the territorial waters around the peninsula.<sup>57</sup> On 23 and 24 June 2021, during this passage to an operating area southeast of the Crimean Peninsula, the Dutch frigate was shadowed by a Russian warship.<sup>58</sup> The closer the frigate approached the opening of the Kerch Strait, the more the Russians reacted with a form of intimidation. First, a Russian ship targeted the Dutch frigate with its missile radar system and locked it.<sup>59</sup> Second, during the passage, several Russian warplanes started flying over and close by the Dutch frigate with so-called dirty wings, meaning the planes were armed with bombs, leading to an assumption that they were ready to attack the warship. The presence of these warplanes was not announced beforehand.<sup>60</sup> The Dutch commander could have interpreted these Russian activities as offensive acts, and the Dutch frigate hence attempted to establish contact with the Russian warplanes to ask for clarification on their intentions. These attempts, however, failed.

### THE NETHERLANDS MILITARY DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE TO THE RUSSIAN MOCK ATTACKS

The crew of the Dutch frigate were able to thoroughly log all of the incidents and reported this to the headquarters (HQ) of the Royal Netherlands Navy. They therefore changed the direction of the ship as the Dutch instruction was to operate in a de-escalating manner. Due to the seriousness of these activities, the Maritime HQ made the incidents a case for the military officer responsible for the incidents at sea file.<sup>61</sup> Since 1991 the Russian Federation and the Netherlands have adhered to a bilateral Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) agreement, which, among others, prescribes what lines of communication to follow in case of incidents between the armed forces of the Netherlands and Russia at sea.<sup>62</sup>

The Netherlands Ministry of Defence was quite displeased with the series of events and submitted the incidents to the Russian defense attaché, stationed in The Hague, in accordance with the INCSEA agreement.<sup>63</sup> The Russian attaché

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<sup>57</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>58</sup> This operating area is close to the Kerch Strait, which connects the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, Cdr Roel Samson, March 2022.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, Netherlands Ministry of Defence official Frank de Boer, March 2022, hereafter de Boer interview.

<sup>61</sup> de Boer interview.

<sup>62</sup> de Boer interview.

<sup>63</sup> de Boer interview.

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was consequently summoned to the Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands.<sup>64</sup> The director of the department International Military Cooperation, a brigadier general, discussed the incidents with the Russian defense attaché. Although the military-to-military relations between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation were based on mutual respect, incidents like these cannot be tolerated.<sup>65</sup> The Russian defense attaché was urged to voice the Dutch objections against unauthorized activities and requested the defense attaché to pass it on to the responsible authorities in Russia to conform with the INCSEA agreement. The minister of defence of the Netherlands condemned the activities of the armed Russian warplanes in a press release and thought it was very irresponsible.<sup>66</sup>

To avoid further political escalation, the involved nations decided to review the incidents on the military-to-military level.<sup>67</sup> The deputy commander of the Royal Netherlands Navy departed with a delegation to Moscow to discuss the incidents.

During the meeting, the Dutch delegation asked for clarification from the Russian side. As a reaction the Russian representatives claimed that their armed warplanes wanted to show the Dutch frigate the way to the south.<sup>68</sup> The Dutch delegation replied that when the general procedure would have been followed by the Russian authorities, the Dutch frigate could have explained that it was not its intention to navigate through the Kerch Strait, but the Russians ignored this request for communication.<sup>69</sup>

Although these incidents were quite sensitive, the military-to-military talks between the two states ended in a positive light. Both sides understood each other's perspective and engaged in an active, professional, and open dialogue. The discussion of the incidents was satisfactory, even though no formal apologies were made.<sup>70</sup> While the participation of the Dutch frigate in the UK-led CSG21 caused some tensions between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation, the objectives of the journey, as stated earlier in this work, were all achieved.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>65</sup> de Boer interview.

<sup>66</sup> "Defensie: urenlange Russische 'schijnaanvallen' op Nederlands schip," RLT Nieuws, 29 June 2021.

<sup>67</sup> de Boer interview.

<sup>68</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>69</sup> Interview, Cdr Roel Samson, March 2022, hereafter Samson interview.

<sup>70</sup> de Boer interview.

<sup>71</sup> Pastoor interview.



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## ANALYSIS OF THE ACTORS, ACTIVITIES, AND FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES

To make an analysis of the case, we made a distinction between the actors, activities, and foreign policy objectives.<sup>72</sup> First, in terms of *actors*, the authors can identify the armed forces of the Netherlands on the one side, and on the other the armed forces of the Russian Federation, as the protagonists in the case. Other actors that played an ancillary but important role are the British and U.S. armed forces, which together with the Netherlands formed the UK-led CSG21, the political leaders of the relevant states, as well as the worldwide public. These are actors to whom military diplomatic events still can be targeted. An example is, for instance, that the Russian authorities broadcast the incidents with the entire UK-led CSG21 on their national state television. During this broadcast the Russians highlighted the incidents that were considered a provocation by NATO and that the Russian Federation was forced to defend itself against NATO.<sup>73</sup> The framing of such events to influence public opinion can sometimes be as important as the occurrence of the military diplomatic events itself.

Second, the authors analyzed the military diplomatic *activities* in accordance with the four verbs as laid out in our definition of military diplomacy, to *monitor*, *identify*, *appreciate* and, where possible, *influence* security developments.

By closely *monitoring* the security developments on 24 June 2021, the Netherlands military personnel of HNLMS *Evertsen* enabled a thorough interpretation of the incidents. The staff continuously oversaw the reaction of the Russian Federation to the actions of the Dutch frigate and vice versa. This enabled the frigate to appropriately respond to the Russian Federation's operations. For instance, when the staff noticed that a Russian warship had targeted the frigate with their missile radar system and locked it, this could have been interpreted as an act of aggression. As the frigate was still sailing through international waters, in line with international agreements and the de-escalation assignment of the Netherlands political and military leadership, it decided not to respond in a reciprocal manner.

By *identifying* the misalignment of the mock attacks with the INCSEA agreement and international law, the naval headquarters and the Defense Staff in the Netherlands were able to draw a better operational picture. The reports of the frigate were scrutinized and compared to the existing agreements. The

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<sup>72</sup> Pajtinka, "Military Diplomacy and Its Present Functions," 179–94.

<sup>73</sup> Sabbagh and Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship."

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staff identified, for instance, that the Russian warplanes were legally allowed to maintain the distance as close as two nautical miles from the navy frigate during the day and three nautical miles at night. It is clear that the short distance the Russian warplanes maintained when approaching the HNLMS *Evertsen* was not in line with the agreement.

By *appreciating* the events, the developments were assessed from the different perspectives of the involved parties by the Netherlands Defence Staff. The analysis concluded that it was not the intention of the Russian Federation to effectively attack the Dutch frigate, as this might have serious consequences. At this point, the Russian invasion in Ukraine had not yet occurred, which meant that the Russian mock attacks were still in the line of prediction of a Russian deterrence strategy to illuminate their claim on Ukrainian territorial sea, although the proportion in which these incidents took place was not.<sup>74</sup> In short, by monitoring, identifying, and appreciating the security developments, the delegation of the Netherlands was able to present a strong and deliberate case to their Russian counterparts in Moscow.

The participation in the UK-led CSG21 finally enhanced *influencing* security developments at sea, as its presence in the international waters near Crimea instigated several reactions from the Russian Federation. These reactions in turn built up to a potential climax, and it depended on the mandates of the actors involved whether the point of escalating was reached. It is a classic example of the game of chicken in international relations. In this theory, two parties drive a car at full speed in the direction of a brick wall. It is in neither's interest to crash into the wall, but if one of the parties slows down first, the other party will regard the first party as a chicken.<sup>75</sup> This is all related to image, ego, and a lack of communication (in this case the failed attempts to establish contact with the Russian warplanes), as it is not logical that even one of the parties would voluntarily crash into the wall just to make a point (although there is always a chance that this can occur). Eventually, one of the parties decides to de-escalate, which in this case was the Netherlands, and hence disaster was averted. Ultimately, the sum of the monitoring, identifying, appreciating, and influencing security developments contribute to achieving the foreign policy objectives of the involved actors, which the authors analyze next.

Third, this chapter will highlight the *foreign policy objectives* from the per-

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<sup>74</sup> Samson interview.

<sup>75</sup> Steven J. Brams, *Game Theory and Politics* (North Chelmsford, MA: Courier, 2011).

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spectives of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation and connect the military diplomatic activities to these objectives. The participation of HNLMS *Evertsen* in the UK-led CSG21 served multiple foreign policy objectives of the Netherlands. It emphasized the Netherlands values its relationship with the UK, the United States, and NATO allies and partners and contributed to the image of the Netherlands as a trustworthy ally and partner. It also increased the operational readiness of the Dutch frigate by contributing to joint exercises and operations.

The journey illuminated that the Netherlands, as a state, respects international law (i.e., innocent passage, freedom of navigation, and territorial integrity), as well as bilateral agreements with other states. For instance, despite the increased tensions between the Netherlands and the Russian Federation at sea, the Netherlands still adhered to the protocol as described in the original INCSEA agreement. Moreover, one of the most important foreign policy objectives was to show that the Netherlands considers the annexation of Crimea as illegal and recognizes the area as the territory of Ukraine.

During the mock attacks on the Dutch frigate, the capabilities of the actors involved (i.e., resorting to force or navigating through a particular area) were mistaken for the intentions of the actors because of the lack of communication. The Russian delegates communicated during the meeting in Moscow that it was their intention to show the Dutch frigate the way to the east with the “help of the armed warplanes.”<sup>76</sup> Together with the lack of communication from the Russian side during the incidents at sea on 24 June 2021, the credibility of these communicated intentions can be left open to interpretation.

The events of 24 June 2021 can be situated in the broader foreign policy objectives of the Russian Federation to reclaim its position as a world power. To better comprehend this perspective, we need to return to the 1990s. After the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the implosion of the Soviet Union, the United States and the Russian Federation informally agreed that if Germany, including former East Germany, would become part of NATO, the alliance would not expand. Unified Germany shortly after joined NATO.<sup>77</sup> However, since the 1990s, many former Warsaw Pact member states and the Baltics, which were former Soviet Union states, applied for NATO membership.<sup>78</sup> At the time, Russia strongly op-

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<sup>76</sup> Pastoor interview.

<sup>77</sup> Mary Elise Sarotte, “A Broken Promise?: What the West Really Told Moscow about NATO Expansion,” *Foreign Affairs* 23, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 90–97.

<sup>78</sup> Patrick Wintour, “Russia’s Belief in NATO ‘Betrayal’—and Why It Matters Today,” *Guardian*, 12 January 2022.

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posed the enlargement and stated that if NATO's enlargement would continue, it would fuel negative domestic consequences in the form of an anti-Western sentiment, a strong emphasis on nationalism and military power, and pro-Chinese policies.<sup>79</sup>

The Russian authorities are engaging the West with a strong deterrence strategy and are aiming to increase support for its view that NATO is a major threat to the Russian Federation's existence. For instance, the incidents on 23 and 24 June 2021 have been framed as a provocation by NATO, as parts of CSG21 partly sailed through territorial waters of Crimea and partly in international waters. The narrative communicated the requirement of the Russian Federation to defend itself against NATO powers.<sup>80</sup> As stated before, framing is essential to get overall support of the public or at least national support.

The lack of communication by the Russian Navy during the events on 24 June 2021 illustrates their strategy to come across as unpredictable as possible. Unpredictability can be regarded as a successful deterrence strategy, as this enables a larger spectrum of options for one actor, options to which the other involved parties are unlikely to resort to. The fact the Russian Federation has a different normative framework from the West regarding global security is illustrated, for example, by the indiscriminate way of warfare and the bombing of civilian targets during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.<sup>81</sup>

The disinformation spread by the Russian authorities that four bombs were released near the HMS *Defender* can be regarded as part of this strategy of unpredictability. It also fits in the long Russian tradition of *maskirovka*, the Russian way of deception.<sup>82</sup> It is of great importance for the Russian authorities to portray themselves as brutal, strong, and unpredictable to put the opponent under pressure and thus ensure that others adhere to a de-escalating policy to prevent them from escalating to a state of conflict. The same applies to the mock attacks by the Russian warplanes on the Dutch frigate HNLMS *Evertsen*. Although it would not necessarily be in the interest of the Russian Federation to eliminate

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<sup>79</sup> Tuomas Forsberg and Graeme Herd, "Russia and NATO: From Windows of Opportunities to Closed Doors," *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, no. 23 (2015): 41–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2014.1001824>.

<sup>80</sup> Roth, "Britain Acknowledges Surprise at Speed of Russian Reaction to Warship."

<sup>81</sup> Dave Clark, Dimitry Zaks, and Liz Cookman, "Civilian Targets Hit as Russian Forces Near Kyiv," *Moscow Times*, 11 March 2022.

<sup>82</sup> Albert Johan Hendrik Bouwmeester, *Krym Nash: An Analysis of Modern Russian Deception Warfare* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Utrecht University, 2020).

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a Dutch warship in international waters, the risk simply was too high for the HNLMS *Evertsen* to not eventually change direction.

Finally, it can be debated whether the Russian strategy of unpredictability toward the West can be regarded as an effective strategy in the long term. Refusing to abide by international conventions and sacrificing the lives of both civilians and military personnel to evoke a certain perception may result in opposition from the Russian population itself. How military diplomatic efforts might help to restore the balance between the Russian Federation and the West is yet to be seen.

## CONCLUSION

Military diplomacy is an important course of action for states before, during, and after a conflict. When military diplomacy is employed *strategically* (with a preconceived plan), it becomes a capacity. A strategic employment of military diplomacy requires ministries of defense to manage and guide the military actors within the international and/or military diplomatic *as sensors*.

In addition, the actors in the network must comprehend their role in the process of understanding and possibly influencing security developments, which are of importance to the Netherlands. This enables them to effectively *monitor, identify, appreciate*, and potentially *influence* security developments and, as such, help achieve the foreign policy objectives of their state.

Objectives of military diplomacy depend on the interests of a state as expressed in its foreign and security strategy and the context in which the security developments unfold. These interests can fluctuate in the short term depending on political developments and can serve both coercive and noncoercive objectives.

By deploying the international and diplomatic network of defense strategically and making optimal use of the sensor function of this network, there could be better responses to security developments as the authors illustrated in the case of the participation of the Dutch frigate HNLMS *Evertsen* in the UK-led CSG21. Military diplomacy can be employed to expand and strengthen the existing network of the local representation of the government, but it can also be utilized to communicate the points of view of a state in the security domain.

In times like these, in which the security domain is rapidly shifting and nations are facing many unknown scenarios, military diplomacy offers a valuable tool to better comprehend and possibly influence security developments. The authors therefore call for military diplomacy to be both employed and studied more often in order to further professionalize this capacity for state action.



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# PART THREE

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LESSONS FROM  
PRACTITIONERS



## ◉ Chapter Ten ◉

# Improving Civil-Military Operations in Humanitarian Emergencies

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Sara Belligoni, PhD

### INTRODUCTION

Civil-military operations in humanitarian emergencies are worth more attention from the scholarship given the progressive involvement of military actors. This chapter investigates how contextual factors, namely the level of state capacity of the emergency-affected country, shape the extent of civil-military coordination when responding to disasters. The importance of investigating this topic lies in the increasing number and worsening magnitude of natural hazards due to the effects of climate change, political instability, and uncontrolled urbanization.<sup>1</sup> Besides, several humanitarian operations were catastrophic because of a lack of coordination among involved actors, which increases the need to further explore civil-military coordination in humanitarian operations.

The international community, including the United Nations (UN), interna-

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the author refers to natural hazards, rather than natural disasters, recognizing the vulnerability aspect of the issue. Natural hazards—such as earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes—result in a disaster because of the territory and community's vulnerability. Conversely, the vulnerability has been often discussed as being both internal and external: the former is the exposure of communities to natural hazards or, more in general, to shocks. Internal vulnerability refers to the capabilities of communities to mitigate or adapt to natural hazards whose territory in which they live may be prone. Sven Fuchs, Christian Kuhlicke, and Volker Meyer, "Editorial for the Special Issue: Vulnerability to Natural Hazards—The Challenge of Integration," *Natural Hazards* 58, no. 22 (2011): 609–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-011-9825-5>; Jason W. Anderson, "Climate Change and Natural Disasters: Scientific Evidence of a Possible Relation between Recent Natural Disasters and Climate Change," Policy Brief for the EP Environment Committee, 25 January 2006; and Juergen Weichselgartner and Patrick Pigeon, "The Role of Knowledge in Disaster Risk Reduction," *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science* 6, no. 2 (2015): 107–16, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13753-015-0052-7>.



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tional organizations (IOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and military forces have been progressively more likely to coordinate their efforts to avoid gaps or overlaps in emergency responses.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, the term *civilian* actors refers to UN entities working within the UN system, IOs, and NGOs, while *military* actors refers to third countries' armed forces intervening under a humanitarian mandate in a country affected by an emergency.<sup>3</sup> The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is the entity to which international law demands coordinating humanitarian response efforts. UN OCHA is also in charge of determining the strategy of coordination between the international civilian community and military forces. The coordination strategy serves the goal of delivering humanitarian aid, ideally efficiently, or at least effectively. When the mission is achieved *efficiently* it means that it is performed in the least time and with the least effort. Conversely, when the mission is achieved *effectively*, it means that it is adequate to accomplish the goal, but it may experience higher costs and take more time. Note that both efficiency and effectiveness allow for the goal to be accomplished, which make them different than failure, when the goal is not accomplished at all. The coordination strategy can range from tight cooperation, where the two actors share information and carry out relief activities together, to a mere coexistence in the field, where the information sharing and joint activities are minimal.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Luc Wybo and Melanie Latiers, "Exploring Complex Emergency Situations' Dynamic: Theoretical, Epistemological and Methodological Proposals," *International Journal for Emergency Management* 3, no. 1 (2006; unpublished): 40–51, <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEM.2006.010279>; and I. Kelman et al., "Learning from the history of Disaster Vulnerability and Resilience Research and Practice for Climate Change," *Natural Hazards* 82, no. 1 (2016): 129–43, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-016-2294-0>. It is important to distinguish emergencies from crises, and their causes from consequences. Emergencies are situations resulting from a shock, characterized by chaos, populations suffering, and a rapid-changing environment. Those deteriorate into crises when local institutions and/or actors involved in emergency response operations are not able to provide either an efficient or effective response. This study refers to crises since it recognizes the role of institutions in disaster responses. Barry Munslow and Christopher Brown, "Complex Emergencies: The Institutional Impasse," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999): 207–22.

<sup>3</sup> Civil-military humanitarian coordination is the set of operations carried out by civilian and military actors operating under a humanitarian mandate in an emergency or crisis-affected country. This general and theoretical definition is elaborated based on the information available on the UN OCHA website.

<sup>4</sup> These are terms widely used not only within the UN system, including UN OCHA, but also by the overall civilian community involved in emergency response operations, especially within the IASC's cluster approach; *UN CM-Coord Field Handbook* (Geneva, Switzerland: OCHA, 2018).

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Civil-military humanitarian coordination in response to humanitarian emergencies can be defined as a mechanism aimed at conducting relief operations, establishing a structure for in-the-field ones, facilitating access to hard-to-reach areas, and providing security and protection to local populations and humanitarian operators.<sup>5</sup> To facilitate civil-military humanitarian coordination, the UN OCHA has established the UN Humanitarian Civil-military Coordination (UN-CMCoord), defined as “the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate, pursue common goals.”<sup>6</sup>

If UN-CMCoord is used by the UN OCHA, militaries follow a different, yet similar in some respects, set of guidelines called Civil-military Cooperation (CIMIC). The latter has been used for the first time during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is defined as “how the military command establishes formal relations with national and local authorities, the civilian population, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations within its area of responsibility.”<sup>7</sup>

The presence of two sets of coordination practices—UN-CMCoord and CIMIC—is also indicative of the fact that civilians and militaries operate under humanitarian mandates whose scopes may be different. Civilian mandates for humanitarian operations are often structured for missions lasting months if not years, while military ones are usually shorter and last several weeks. Besides, militaries are deployed for specific purposes, such as search and rescue operations and delivery of medical items. Conversely, civilians are deployed to assist the emergency-affected country with a variety of activities, many of which are identified once in the field. Different guidelines can, therefore, alter how the humanitarian operations and priorities are set and how issues are treated, including the state capacity of the emergency-affected country. That can potentially affect the civil-military coordination strategy.

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<sup>5</sup> *Emergency Handbook* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> “Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, accessed 16 December 2022.

<sup>7</sup> “Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” Informer #31, NATO, 11 March 1998.

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## COOPERATION OR COEXISTENCE?: DRIVING FACTORS IN CIVIL-MILITARY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

There appears to be agreement among scholars, including Andrew S. Natsios and Michael Pugh, that a cooperation strategy is more likely to be adopted among the same set of actors, civilians with civilians or militaries with militaries, but not between different sets of them (e.g., civilians with militaries).<sup>8</sup> To be sure, there are limits to cooperation even among civilian actors, especially between the UN and NGOs.<sup>9</sup> These scholars argue that civilians and militaries have different mandates, organizational structures, and strategies that can be responsible for preventing them from cooperating.<sup>10</sup> This explains limitations to civil-military humanitarian cooperation due to differences in internal characteristics but concerning operations in response to humanitarian crises due to human-caused emergencies—i.e., those whose triggering factor is not a natural hazard but an intra- and interstate conflict.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the Balkan region in the 1990s is commonly used as a case study to evaluate civil-military humanitarian coordination.<sup>12</sup> The argument has also been tested based on a single case study of Lebanon where the intervention occurred in a conflict-prone area; in this case, most of the military forces operate under a military rather than humanitarian mandate and humanitarian operations were not central in their deployment.<sup>13</sup>

Aimed at investigating the increasing number of cases where both civilians and militaries are involved in crisis responses, another strand of the literature

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, "NGOs and the UN System in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Conflict or Coordination?," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3: (1995) 405–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599550035979>; and Michael Pugh, "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations," *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 345–57, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7717.00183>.

<sup>9</sup> NGOs are often used by the UN when NGOs are already working on development projects and programs in an emergency-affected country and therefore are more likely to quickly respond in the immediate aftermath of an emergency before the UN can arrive.

<sup>10</sup> Natsios, "NGOs and the UN System in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies," 405–20; and Pugh, "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations," 345–57.

<sup>11</sup> Pugh, "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations," 345–57.

<sup>12</sup> Pugh, "The Challenge of Civil-military Relations in International Peace Operations," 345–57; and Thomas R. Mockaitis, "Reluctant Partners: Civil-Military Cooperation in Kosovo," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 15, no. 2 (2004): 38–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0959231042000282625>.

<sup>13</sup> Chiara Ruffa and Pascal Vennesson, "Fighting and Helping?: A Historical-Institutionalist Explanation of NGO-Military Relations," *Security Studies* 23, no. 3 (2014): 582–621, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2014.935236>.

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argues that the two actors cooperate only under certain circumstances that are favorable to both actors.<sup>14</sup> There is a tendency, according to Kurt Mills, of politicizing military actors where humanitarian missions led by civilians are used as a justification for military involvement that otherwise would not be legitimate.<sup>15</sup> For instance, according to this argument, President George W. Bush's administration used the humanitarian goal as a justification for the U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> Further, scholars argue that in human-caused emergencies, civilians use militaries when in need, that is, as a last resort when they do not have enough capabilities for rapid response operations.<sup>17</sup> Other authors note that, especially in human-caused emergencies, militaries are seen by civilians as providers of security and escort of civilian humanitarian convoys.<sup>18</sup>

The literature also examines how the humanitarian affairs world has institutionalized its structure and procedures due to the increasing number of crises—in recent years—resulting from political instability in countries with low state capacity.<sup>19</sup> Political instability can result in human-caused emergencies but also exacerbate the consequences of natural hazards when they occur. In other words, a shock caused by a natural hazard can deteriorate into a disaster because the local government is unable to prepare, respond, and recover from the shock or it fails to do so in the medium and long run. If state capacity is low, detecting early warnings, deciding who needs to do what, and leading the crisis response are unlikely to happen.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, humanitarian actors, civilians, and/or militaries

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<sup>14</sup> Catriona Gourlay, "Partners Apart: Managing Civil-military Cooperation in Humanitarian Interventions" (unpublished manuscript, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Kurt Mills, "Neo-Humanitarianism: The Role of International Humanitarian Norms and Organizations in Contemporary Conflict," *Global Governance* 11, no. 2 (2005): 161–83.

<sup>16</sup> Mills, "Neo-Humanitarianism," 161–83.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Salmon et al., "Coordination During Multi-Agency Emergency Response: Issues and Solutions," *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 20, no. 2 (2011): 140–58, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09653561111126085>.

<sup>18</sup> Gary Lloyd and Gielie Van Dyk, "The Challenges, Roles, and Functions of Civil-military Coordination Officers in Peace Support Operations: A Theoretical Discussion," *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 35, no. 2 (2007): 68–94, <https://doi.org/10.5787/35-2-38>.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCR in the Global Undertow," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 244–77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2001.tb00013.x>; and David G. Chandler, "The Road to Military Humanitarianism: How the Human Rights NGOs Shaped a New Humanitarian Agenda," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2001): 678–700, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2001.0031>.

<sup>20</sup> Uriel Rosenthal and Alexander Kouzmin, "Crises and Crisis Management: Toward Comprehensive Government Decision Making," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 7, no. 2 (April 1997): 277–304, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024349>.

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cannot rely on some sort of support or structure of the emergency-affected state.

Before moving forward, it is important to establish and define “state capacity.” Jonathan K. Hanson and Rachel Sigman define *state capacity* as the “the state’s ability to perform the core functions most commonly deemed necessary for modern states: protection from external threats, the maintenance of internal order, the administration and provision of basic infrastructure necessary to sustain economic activity, and the extraction of revenue.”<sup>21</sup> Although state capacity may not account for the initial shock resulting from a natural hazard, it is very likely to account for its deterioration into a disaster whose recovery depends on the ability of the government to intervene.<sup>22</sup> This chapter argues that when international civilian and military actors are deployed in support of response operations, the emergency-affected country’s capabilities are an important factor in determining the kind of coordination strategy: cooperation or coexistence.

## A DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

As noted earlier, the institution that decides on the type of civil-military coordination is UN OCHA. Since its mission and goals state that “OCHA coordinates humanitarian response to expand the reach of humanitarian action, improve prioritization and reduce duplication, ensuring that assistance and protection reach the people who need it most,” it is assumed that UN OCHA’s mission is to be able to deliver humanitarian aid to all—or at least most—of the emergency-affected population.<sup>23</sup> Doing so efficiently means that activities are carried out in such a way that the goal is reached “optimally,” i.e., by achieving the most with the least, meaning maximizing benefits and minimizing costs, such as time, effort, and resources. Efficient outcomes are likely to be associated with civil-military cooperation.

On the other hand, doing so effectively means that activities are adequate to the context and/or purpose, that is outcomes may not be “optimal.” In the context of UN OCHA’s mission and goals, effectiveness is acceptable, however, relief operations may not reach all or most people who need assistance. Effective outcomes are likely to be associated with civil-military coexistence, which even if

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan K. Hanson and Rachel Sigman, “Leviathan’s Latent Dimensions: Measuring State Capacity for Comparative Political Research,” *Journal of Politics* 83, no. 4 (May 2021): 1495–1510, <https://doi.org/10.1086/715066>.

<sup>22</sup> David Sobek, “Masters of Their Domains: The Role of State Capacity in Civil Wars,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 3 (May 2010): <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310362295>.

<sup>23</sup> The mission, goals, and work of the UN OCHA are presented on the organization’s website.

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not efficient, still allows civilians to provide the emergency-affected population with relief aid.

The author adopts an elaborated version of the Organizational Decision-Making (ODM) and Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) frameworks to explain the mechanisms and processes of the UN OCHA decision making.<sup>24</sup> By adopting the ODM framework, the analysis of the decision-making process is based on the factors involved in it. More specifically, this framework provides a design that includes environmental and contextual factors and analyzes how they affect decision making. Additionally, it considers both internal (organizational and interorganizational) and external factors that may explain variation in the organizational decision-making process and potential outcomes resulting from this process.<sup>25</sup> The IAD framework includes the interactions that the main decision maker has with stakeholders.<sup>26</sup> ODM is based on a bounded rational decision-making framework (where bounded indicates situations where actors may have a limited decision-making span), and divides the decision-making process into three stages: intelligence gathering, design, and choice (IDC).<sup>27</sup> Intelligence gathering serves as a basic step in the decision-making process that involves gaining information to analyze the environment and reach a satisfactory decision. The term *satisficing* was coined by Herbert A. Simon in 1956 and refers to the adoption of a decision that is suboptimal but acceptable for the action.<sup>28</sup>

First, in disaster settings, information is not always available and changes very rapidly. Second, a cost-benefit logic in the view of reaching the best possible outcome would not explain why UN OCHA may be prone to adopting a strategy of coexistence that is effective rather than efficient. UN OCHA may encourage meeting the needs of the emergency-affected population; therefore, it is impera-

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<sup>24</sup> Herbert A. Simon, "Rational Decision-Making in Business Organizations," *American Economic Review* 69, no. 4 (September 1979): 493–513; and Elinor Ostrom, "Background on the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework," *Policy Studies Journal* 39, no. 1 (February 2011): 7–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00394.x>.

<sup>25</sup> Aashish Srivastava S. Bruce Thomson, "Framework Analysis: A Qualitative Methodology for Applied Policy Research," *Journal of Administration and Governance* 72, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>26</sup> Ostrom, "Background on the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework," 7–27.

<sup>27</sup> Simon, "Rational Decision-Making in Business Organizations," 493–513.

<sup>28</sup> H. A. Simon, "Rational Choice and the Structure of the Environment," *Psychological Review* 63, no. 2 (March 1956): 129, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0042769>.

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tive to make a decision, even if not optimal, to avoid needs going unmet.<sup>29</sup> Table 10.1 presents the activities belonging to each of the strategies. Tables 10.2a and 10.2b present the ODM-ICD framework when decision making leads to co-existence and cooperation, respectively. The IAD framework, in table 10.3, is useful in evaluating how the organization's decision making is conducted given institutional arrangements and desired outcomes.

### CIVIL-MILITARY HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION'S DECISION MAKING AND STATE CAPACITY

The UN OCHA's decision making about which civil-military coordination strategy to adopt is driven also by external factors.<sup>30</sup> In particular, the state capacity of the emergency-affected country is an important factor affecting the decision-making process. When state capacity is relatively high, the state is more likely to be able to maintain security and provide humanitarian actors with a safe environment to work within. Conversely, when state capacity is low, the state may not be able to maintain security and provide a safe environment for international interveners. This often results in military humanitarian actors replacing the local police and military's roles in ensuring that response operations are safely carried out. However, engaging in such policing and military activities often pulls military actors away from their humanitarian mandate, which should not encompass policing or military activities.

Civilian actors operating under humanitarian principles may see their neutrality and impartiality at risk if associated with militaries performing policing/military duties. This may lead the UN OCHA to adopt a strategy of coexistence when working with militaries. The alternative to that would be to cooperate with militaries, which may put at risk humanitarian principles. In addition, civilian humanitarians may potentially be targeted in the conflict and thus unable to deliver the aid. Hence, it is assumed that the strategy choice is to be considered

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<sup>29</sup> James Samuel Coleman and Thomas J. Fararo, *Rational Choice Theory: Advocacy and Critique* (New York: Sage, 1992).

<sup>30</sup> Peter Macalister-Smith, *International Humanitarian Assistance: Disaster Relief Actions in International Law and Organizations* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985); and Victoria Metcalfe, Alison Giffen, and Samir Elhawary, *UN Integration and Humanitarian Space. An Independent Study Commissioned by the UN Integration Steering Group* (London: ODI and Stimson Center, 2011).

**Table 10.1.** Activities for each of the coordination strategies

Cooperation	Coexistence
Sharing of information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Excludes information classified as such for national security purposes</li><li>· Includes unclassified documents and reports</li></ul>	Sharing of information is limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Significant changes in the environment</li><li>· Significant events that threaten relief operations and/or population</li></ul>
In-the-field activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Set up and regular use of joint operations centers in the presence of civilians and militaries</li></ul>	In-the-field activities are limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Military escort of humanitarian convoys as a last resort where the level of insecurity increases or there is no civilian capacity in such regard</li><li>· Military guards in sensitive areas where relief operators are present and operating</li></ul>

Source: courtesy of author, based on UN OCHA guidelines, adapted by MCUP.

**Table 10.2a.** ODM-ICD framework applied to the decision-making process of UN OCHA: coexistence

Intelligence	Analysis	Decision
ENVIRONMENT Disaster(s) resulting from the natural hazard(s)	CONSIDERATION #1 The local government is not able to provide a safe context	DECISION Effectiveness vs. efficiency + Delivery of relief aid
CONDITION Multi-actor emergency response operations	CONSIDERATION #2 Military actors engage in policing activities	+ Principle of impartiality + Principle of neutrality
DECISION Civil-military humanitarian coordination strategy to adopt	CONSIDERATION #3 Humanitarian principles need to be preserved	= Coexistence strategy

Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.



**Table 10.2b.** ODM-ICD framework applied to the decision-making process of UN OCHA: cooperation

Intelligence	Analysis	Decision
ENVIRONMENT Disaster(s) resulting from natural hazard(s)	CONSIDERATION #1 The local government can provide a safe context	DECISION Effectiveness vs. efficiency + Delivery of relief aid
CONDITION Multi-actor emergency response operations	CONSIDERATION #2 Military actors engage in relief operations	+ Principle of impartiality + Principle of neutrality
DECISION Civil-military humanitarian coordination strategy to adopt	CONSIDERATION #3 Humanitarian principles need to be preserved	= Cooperation strategy

Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

**Table 10.3.** IAD framework applied to the decision-making process of UN OCHA

Contextual factors	Action situations	Interactions
BIOPHYSICAL CONDITIONS Type of natural hazard(s)	ACTION #1 Immediate aftermath	INTERNAL ACTORS Local militaries and police Local criminal groups
EFFECTS Disaster-affected country	ACTION #2 Local government re- sponse	Local government Local population
INSTITUTIONS Civilians (IOs, NGOs, UN) Militaries (local, third states) Law enforcement (local)	ACTION #3 Arrival of international actors	EXTERNAL ACTORS Civilians (IOs, NGOs) Militaries third states
	ACTION #4 International departure	LEADERSHIP UN OCHA
OUTCOME Effective delivery of relief aid to the disaster-affected population		

Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

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in the view of mission success. Further, the decision on the coordination strategy would be in line with the UN OCHA's goal of delivering relief aid to the in-need population based on standards of efficiency or effectiveness, as noted above.

In insecure yet complex situations, civilians prefer to adopt a coexistence strategy to effectively carry out humanitarian operations, even if this means sacrificing efficiency. This is based on the fact that civil-military humanitarian coordination has a cost that, for civilians, is related to the preservation of the humanitarian sphere and principles. As emerged in several interviews, the cost of preserving the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality is considered the driving force in the decision making of the UN OCHA. If cooperation keeps the two actors closer, in the presence of security issues, the cost of cooperation would be higher relative to the cost of coexistence; coexistence would be the strategy for deconflicting while minimizing inconsistency of in-the-field operations. Coexistence allows civilians to minimize contact with militaries while also carrying out, effectively, humanitarian operations and transitioning to civilian support only, which is decided after a certain time has passed from the event to avoid the perception of militaries as an occupation force.

The low state capacity of disaster-affected countries has often motivated their governments in requesting assistance from third-countries' militaries to support local armed forces in relief operations. At the same time, low state capacity has often meant having major safety issues on the ground, as in the case of the U.S. military-humanitarian deployment to Pakistan. When Pakistan was severely affected by floods in 2010, the U.S. military deployed to the country in support of Pakistani military forces, upon request of the local government. As reported in an article by *New York Times*, the local population was welcoming of the U.S. forces, but the same cannot be said for the Taliban.<sup>31</sup> The *New York Times* mentions Pakistan Army Captain Asad Mehmood—who was coordinating operations with the U.S. military—who recalled the time in which relief aid was supposed to be delivered in the northern region of Kohistan, not far from the border with Afghanistan, and just a few moments before the aircraft were supposed to be on the ground, local tribes leaders warned of the presence of armed people, likely associated with the Taliban, who were hiding behind a hill close to the landing area. This episode suggests that local state capacity, and the overall security context in which humanitarian operations are carried out, may interfere

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<sup>31</sup> Nathaniel Gronewold, "In Flood-Isolated Regions of Pakistan, U.S. Military Presents a Humanitarian Face," *New York Times*, 14 October 2010.

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with military operations and with the humanitarian mission's success in delivering aid to people in need.<sup>32</sup>

A different situation can be experienced when the level of state capacity is high and military operations in support of local armed forces serve to multiply the emergency response capabilities while operating in secure environments. An example is the 2011 Operation Tomodachi in Japan, when the United States sent the aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan* (CVN 76) along with Navy, Marine, and other military assets to help Japanese personnel respond to the catastrophe caused by the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.<sup>33</sup> The Japanese government immediately requested assistance from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). In a multiagency operation, the United States provided emergency response support by deploying assets and personnel from the DOD, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), other U.S. government agencies, NGOs, and U.S. military forces. Japan experienced the worst earthquake in its history—leading to a massive tsunami and threatening disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power plant—since recordings began in the early 1900s. The U.S. Navy was initially deployed to the Sendai Airport to support the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force by freeing runaways from debris and reopening the airport as soon as possible so the international community could provide further humanitarian aid.<sup>34</sup>

The Pakistan and Japan comparison highlights how in the first case, U.S. military actors only worked with other armed forces (i.e., the local ones) while in response to the earthquake, they engaged in both military-military and civilian-military operations, given the safer humanitarian space they were called to work within and the less fraught political environment. To provide more knowledge coming from in-the-field operations, this chapter will comment further on the case of the earthquake in Haiti, which struck the country in 2010.

## CASE STUDY:

### THE 2010 EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI

On Tuesday 12 January 2010, Haiti was stricken by an earthquake of 7.0 mag-

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<sup>32</sup> Gronewold, "In Flood-Isolated Regions of Pakistan, U.S. Military Presents a Humanitarian Face."

<sup>33</sup> Ray Ortensie, *Operation Tomodachi: 12 March–4 May 2011, and AFMC S Air Force Radiation Assessment Team's Response* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 2021).

<sup>34</sup> Ortensie, *Operation Tomodachi*.

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nitude at 1653 local time. The epicenter was registered close to the capital, Port-au-Prince, in the southeast of the country, not very far from the border with the Dominican Republic. According to the Red Cross, more than 200,000 people lost their lives and about 1.5 million people lost their homes. The impact of the earthquake was exacerbated by widespread poverty that made the majority of the Haitian population unable to live in antiseismic homes. The economic crisis affecting the country since the beginning of the 1990s has been also considered responsible for the fragile infrastructures often left without proper maintenance interventions for years.<sup>35</sup> In this context, the disaster was a catastrophic event happening in an already un-resilient and fragile community, in other words, in a fragile state.

Since the mid-2000s, many steps forward had been taken by the government of Haiti under the presidency of René Préal, thanks to the presence of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which was established in 2004. The president promoted several initiatives to improve security all over the country, including working with the private sector to promote development projects and with local authorities to reduce local rivalries and criminality.<sup>36</sup> However, following the earthquake in 2010 many, if not all, of the efforts that were done in the previous years seemed to vanish, bringing the country back to a condition of economic, political, and social instability.

As many news articles have pointed out, a major security problem after the earthquake had been protecting unarmed civilians and vulnerable groups from the violence perpetrated by “former” inmates that, facilitated by the collapse of infrastructures, easily escaped from jails.<sup>37</sup> As also Louis-Alexandre Berg pointed out in his policy brief, according to the Haitian National Police, more than 5,000 inmates escaped the jails following the earthquake and 15 percent were members of gangs that led to the spread of violence and crimes, including episodes of sexual violence and looting. The presence and actions of these opportunistic groups further deteriorated the climate of insecurity in Haiti, showing the inability of the government to fulfill law enforcement and safety duties. Indeed, the mandate of MINUSTAH gave special attention to police operations to be

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<sup>35</sup> “2010 Haiti Earthquake,” Britannica, accessed 20 December 2022.

<sup>36</sup> For more information about the situation of crime and violence in Haiti, Louis-Alexandre Berg published a policy brief for the United States Institute of Peace in 2010, “Crime, Politics and Violence in Post-Earthquake,” U.S. Institute of Peace Brief 58, 28 September 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Berg, “Crime, Politics and Violence in Post-Earthquake.”

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conducted together with the Haitian police with the aim of facing gang crime in the most vulnerable areas of the country.<sup>38</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the priorities for the UN were extracting people from the collapsed infrastructures and freeing streets from debris to allow the rescuers to reach the affected areas. The UN OCHA required immediate international assistance, which included civilians and military involvement. In the days following the earthquake, organizations coming from civil society, including international organizations such as the Red Cross and nongovernmental organizations such as *Terre des Hommes*, arrived in Haiti in support of the UN. Also, several countries responded to the UN OCHA's humanitarian appeal by starting to establish military missions with the main purpose of delivering food and non-food items, bringing medical personnel and appliances, and making available additional transportation means such as helicopters and trucks.<sup>39</sup>

Despite not being perfect, the case of Haiti serves two additional purposes. With a multiactor intervention and evolving inability of the emergency-affected state to provide a safe humanitarian space for international interveners, the within-case analysis of the earthquake in Haiti controls for certain factors such as type of natural hazard, population, and form of government while observing variation in the coordination strategy, from cooperation to coexistence, and in-state capacity (i.e., a decline in state capacity). Besides, it provides insights on relief operations and what factors worked well and those that need improvement. That serves military readers in better understanding the civilians' decision-

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<sup>38</sup> The MINUSTAH mandate was that of "support[ing] the immediate recovery, reconstruction and stability efforts in the country" according to the fact sheet: "MINUSTAH Fact Sheet: United Nations Stabilization Mission In Haiti," United Nations Peacekeeping, 19 December 2022. For more information, see the special report of the United States Institute of Peace written by Michael Dziedzic and Robert M. Perito, "Haiti: Confronting the Gangs of Port-au-Prince," U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2008. To learn more about the situation in Haiti in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, please see the dedicated ReliefWeb webpage to Haiti.

<sup>39</sup> Among the countries that deployed a military mission in Haiti in response to the UN appeal, there were: Canada—the *Hestia* mission arrived on 18 January 2010 and departed in April 2010; France—the *Séisme Haiti* mission arrived on 15 January 2010 and departed in February 2010; Italy—the *White Crane* mission arrived on 1 February 2010 and departed in April 2010; the Republic of Korea—the *Danbi* mission arrived on 15 January 2010 (no information is available concerning the departing date); Spain—the *Hispaniola* mission arrived on 29 January 2010 (no information is available concerning the departing date); and the United States—the *Unified Response* mission arrived on 13 January 2010 and departed in March 2010. The names and dates of the military missions have been collected by looking at news articles and press releases available online.

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making process while also reflecting on ways to overcome challenges and improve practices when conducting in-the-field operations.

To further investigate the humanitarian intervention in Haiti, the author conducted archival research online via the UN, UN OCHA, UN Peacekeeping, and World Bank websites, in addition to other online sources available on websites of military forces that have been involved in humanitarian responses, including Brazil, Canada, Italy, Republic of Korea, and the United States. Second, the author conducted research at the UN Archives and Records Management Section locations in Manhattan and Queens, New York, accessing and analyzing reports from UN missions in response to humanitarian crises, to examine civil-military relations assessment, joint-operation office meeting briefs, and liaison officers' contextual evaluations. This data collection included 31 folders of UN missions' documentation selected among the whole list of archival resources available. The author analyzed documentation of UN missions in the field to collect information about intervening actors, relief operations, and context-based evaluations related to the emergency-affected country and gathered information on the UN's coordination strategy in the field with actors different than UN entities and/or military ones. The limitation of the archival research was for clearance reasons; documentation of the last 20 years was not accessible. Therefore, to complement that, the author analyzed more than 60 documents found online on the ReliefWeb and Humanitarian Response platforms, the UNOCHA, NGOs, and military forces' websites that intervened in disaster response in Haiti.

To triangulate the results of the analysis, the author conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews with relevant actors involved in humanitarian affairs in different roles to provide evidence of the connection between the coordination strategy and the state capacity, based on the *analysis* and *decision* steps of the ODM framework and *action situations* and *outcome* of the IAD one.<sup>40</sup> The interviewees are asked about their direct experience in the field in participating in the assessment of the crisis context and decision-making process about the strategy of coordination to adopt. The author conducted interviews with academic and policy experts in the field of emergency management, humanitarian affairs, and international interventionism. Additionally, the author conducted interviews with civilians working with IOs, not for profits (NFPs), and NGOs. Specifically, people working with UN agencies involved in emergency response

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<sup>40</sup> The study was approved by the University of Central Florida's (UCF) Internal Review Board (IRB).

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operations to collect insights from the field and a better understanding of how coordination is shaped by the context in which a crisis occurs. Most of the interviewees have worked in Haiti during the earthquake response or immediately after, in the recovery phase. Also, some of the interviewees currently working with the UN served in the military in 2010.

## LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM HISTORY AND PRACTITIONERS

### *The Institutionalization of Civil-Military Coordination and the Humanitarian Space*

The analysis suggests that before the UN Humanitarian Agenda Reform in 2006, regardless of the context or situations where a humanitarian emergency occurred, or even the nature of the emergency itself, civil-military coordination was minimal, often even absent. In the last two decades, instances have increased where military actors intervened in humanitarian emergencies under a humanitarian mandate, rather than a military one, especially in disasters caused by natural hazards, rather than in complex emergencies resulting from a conflict where they used to intervene under a military mandate.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the role of UN OCHA has been that of institutionalizing civil-military humanitarian coordination by setting strategies and guidelines while retaining the civilian leadership of humanitarian activities. For example, there are formal and “existing UN humanitarian civil-military coordination policies and guidelines [that] assume a humanitarian-military relationship and are concerned with maintaining an appropriate relationship between the two which preserves humanitarian space.”<sup>42</sup>

The Humanitarian Policy Group defines the *humanitarian space*—based on the UN OCHA definition—as “a conducive humanitarian operating environment in which agencies can adhere to the principles of neutrality and impartiality and maintain a clear distinction between their roles and functions (saving lives and alleviating suffering) and those of military and political actors.”<sup>43</sup> Oxfam International puts emphasis on the right of people to receive relief aid when affected by disasters and defines the humanitarian space as “an operating envi-

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<sup>41</sup> Nikolay Nichev, “Historical Analysis of the Involvement of Joint Armed Forces in Humanitarian Operations” (15th International Conference on Knowledge-Based Organization, Singapore, August 2022), 104–8.

<sup>42</sup> *Civil-Military Coordination for Protection Outcomes: Report of a Global Protection Cluster Round-Table* (Geneva, Switzerland: Global Protection Cluster, 2018).

<sup>43</sup> Sarah Collinson, *Humanitarian Space: A Review of Trends and Issues* (London: ODI, 2012).

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ronment in which the right of populations to receive protection and assistance is upheld, and aid agencies can carry out effective humanitarian action by responding to their needs impartially and independently.”<sup>44</sup>

Civil-military coordination’s top principle, from the perspective of civilians, was indeed that of always preserving the humanitarian space and the use of military assets in support of humanitarian operations as a last resort. Besides, militaries may have different experiences, may not be aware of humanitarian principles, and may be hostile toward humanitarian actors. Thus, as Nayson Adlparvar explains in a report of the Watson Institute that,

civil-military coordination is more likely to take the form of cooperation given the limited negative impacts of humanitarians being perceived as aligned with military actors. In contrast, in complex emergencies, civil-military coordination is more prone to take the form of coexistence, as humanitarians endeavor to maintain independence and neutrality from military actors.<sup>45</sup>

### *Civil-Military Humanitarian Coordination as Context-Specific*

The UN OCHA’s message on civil-military coordination stresses how the extent of civil-military coordination is highly context specific and depends on the evolution of the security situation in the field and “internationally agreed on guidelines.”<sup>46</sup> Activities undertaken by civilians and militaries should comply with the peculiarity of the situation and, especially for militaries, with the local situation. Hence, as Peter Tatham and Sebastian Rietjens additionally discuss, “Control of the civil-military network is further influenced by the extent to which authorities of the affected country are capable of managing the disaster relief operation.”<sup>47</sup>

Several interviewees discussed how civil-military coordination is widely affected by contextual and situational factors, including political stability, geopolitical relevance of the country where a disaster occurs, local perspectives, and needs for humanitarian aid. As one of the interviewees mentioned, “Intervening

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<sup>44</sup> *Policy Compendium Note on United Nations Integrated Missions and Humanitarian Assistance* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam International, 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Nayson Adlparvar *Humanitarian Civil-military Information-sharing in Complex Emergencies: Realities, Strategies, and Risks* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> *OCHA on Message: UN-CMCoord* (New York: OCHA, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Peter Tatham and Sebastian Rietjens, “Integrated Disaster Relief Logistics: A Stepping Stone Towards Viable Civil-military Networks?,” *Disasters* 40, no. 1 (January 2016): 7–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12131>.



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actors usually have a framework to analyze in which environment they're working . . . and will be potentially working."<sup>48</sup> State capacity can help or prevent the emergency-affected population from receiving support and assistance in the aftermath of an event. Thus, the government of Haiti's progress toward a higher level of state capacity in the previous 10 years from the 2010 earthquake vanished in a few weeks following that. As two interviewees mentioned, the earthquake "blew out" several aspects of the progress the institutions in Haiti achieved in previous years. Therefore, it became challenging to provide relief aid to the population, as it was difficult to engage in conversations directly with opportunistic groups, as they and weak institutions were impeding this process. This led the country toward increasing political instability and insecurity and more difficult recovery.

An interviewee pointed out that although the immediate aftermath of the earthquake was a catastrophe with entire buildings collapsing, including hospitals and the iconic Haiti National Palace, civilians and military were cooperating to save lives, deliver food and nonfood items to the affected population that in most cases lost their homes and belongings, while also providing medical care to the huge numbers of injured people as the local government was able to provide a *safe humanitarian space* to work within.<sup>49</sup> For instance, the Italian Navy's Operation White Crane task force arrived in Haiti three weeks after the earthquake and worked closely with local NGOs as well as Italian ones whose personnel arrived in Haiti by embarking on the aircraft carrier ITS *Cavour* (C 550) from the Italian city of La Spezia.<sup>50</sup> Despite not being able to dock in Port-au-Prince because of the damage caused by the earthquake, the *Cavour* disembarked 200 soldiers, 135,000 tons of supplies sent by the UN World Food Programme (WFP), and 77 tons of supplies from the Italian Red Cross in the Dominican Republic from where trucks helped the transportation of the aid to Haiti. The six naval helicopters available on the *Cavour* helped the transportation of patients in need of treatment in the hyperbaric chamber available on the aircraft carrier. In an interview released for Reuters, Captain Gianluigi Reversi said, "We have saved several legs and arms from amputation with this treatment" when discussing how around 30 people have used the hyperbaric chamber that was the only one available in

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<sup>48</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

<sup>49</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

<sup>50</sup> For more information about the Italian Navy White Crane Mission, see "White Crane 2010: Haiti Mission for Italian Navy's Aircraft Carrier *Cavour*," Marina Militare, 19 January 2021.

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the area within the first weeks from the earthquake.<sup>51</sup> Not only were the Italian militaries able to directly support the Haitian population while also transporting relief aid sent by UN agencies and the Red Cross, but the Operation White Crane also worked closely with the NGO Operation Smile to perform surgeries on children with facial deformities on board the aircraft carrier *Cavour*.<sup>52</sup>

In the weeks following the earthquake, as described by some interviewees, the security situation in Haiti deteriorated. The affected population was still lacking basic food and nonfood items, the health care system collapsed while taking care of the injured people, and many people were left without a job in a country whose poverty level was among the highest in the world. As a result, many people were looting. Furthermore, the jail building collapsed, and inmates were on the loose. Many of them ended up in gangs and started controlling areas where the relief aid was more likely to be distributed (i.e., the periphery of the capital).

As emerged during several interviews, opportunistic groups took advantage of the needs of communities and interfered in the humanitarian aid delivery “serving” as mediators between the population and relief agencies while keeping large amounts of food and non-food items for themselves. As an interviewee stressed, “Ongoing tensions [in Haiti pose] security issues that evolve continuously. UN-CMCoord Officers need to continuously analyze and adapt. But they are not security officers. They need to be familiar [with the situation] since it is part of the assessment.”<sup>53</sup> The approach of relief agencies has been often that of negotiating with such groups, with the intent of providing aid to the population, while armed forces have often kept those groups in check.

As several interviewees highlighted, in Haiti, several of those groups controlled entire areas, preventing humanitarian actors from reaching and assisting emergency-affected communities. Civilian humanitarians had to negotiate access to certain areas with those groups while international humanitarian armed forces were policing the areas controlled by them. In those situations, the local population feared conflict between military actors and opportunistic groups that may prevent access to civilian humanitarians delivering aid. This can cause mistrust toward civil-military coordination because the local population can fear

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<sup>51</sup> For the full interview with Capt Gianluigi Reversi, see Jo Winterbottom, “Italian Aircraft Carrier Plays Host to Haitian Babies,” Reuters, 22 February 2010.

<sup>52</sup> For more information about the cooperation between the Italian Navy and Operation Smile in Haiti, see “White Crane 2010: Haiti Mission for Italian Navy’s Aircraft Carrier *Cavour*,” Marina Militare, 19 January 2021.

<sup>53</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

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that if opportunistic groups see civilians cooperating with militaries who approach them differently (civilians by negotiating access, militaries by fighting the opportunistic groups), it may stop the negotiations with civilians. This ultimately causes an interruption in the delivery of humanitarian aid. To avoid this from happening, UN OCHA in Haiti stepped out from tight cooperation with military actors. Indeed, such deterioration of security led to the adoption of a strategy of coexistence for civil-military humanitarian coordination. Civilians did not want to increase mistrust toward civil-military humanitarian coordination, and therefore, they did not want to be associated with military actors that were working with the local police in law enforcement activities.<sup>54</sup>

Civil-military cooperation has an ethical cost for civilians because humanitarian operations are demanded to be carried out by civilians and militaries are to be used as a last resort. The ethical cost, indeed, refers to the preservation of the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, in contexts of insecurity. Thus, when civilians *use* militaries, that cost is high because of the negative perception around civil-military cooperation that the affected population or government may have. Negative perceptions, responsible for ethical costs, include mistrust over civil-military coordination if militaries engage in policing/military activities, if they adopt a different approach toward opportunistic groups, and if they are deployed under a humanitarian mandate whose goals and priorities differ from those of the civilians' mandate. In other words, the ethical costs can be related to contextual factors that, by shaping the level of insecurity, may threaten the humanitarian principles and so motivate civilians to adopt a strategy of civil-military humanitarian coexistence.

As interviewees pointed out, when conducting humanitarian operations in Haiti by themselves as civilians—both UN and non-UN affiliated—they have fewer assets and capabilities than what was previously available to them thanks to the militaries' cooperation. This has prevented carrying out relief operations efficiently and promptly, however, given the circumstances and safety concerns, it has been an effective way of delivering humanitarian aid because it is important.<sup>55</sup> As one of the interviewees said, "to change the strategy based on how the situation changes." Another interviewee also stressed that "coexistence [was] not efficient, it [was] appropriate [for the situation] because it [was] effective."<sup>56</sup> As

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<sup>54</sup> This information come from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

<sup>55</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

<sup>56</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

**Table 10.4.** ODM-ICD framework applied to the decision-making process of UN OCHA in Haiti

Intelligence	Analysis	Decision
ENVIRONMENT Disaster resulting from an earthquake	CONSIDERATION #1 The local government is unable to provide a safe context for external actors to work within	Military actors fight opportunistic groups who control access to areas where relief aid is needed +
CONDITION Civilians and militaries are deployed	CONSIDERATION #2 Opportunistic groups try to control certain areas and the humanitarian access to them to control the relief aid delivery	Civilians negotiate with opportunistic groups trying to deliver relief aid to the people in need +
DECISION Extent of civil-military humanitarian coordination strategy	CONSIDERATION #3 Military actors engage in military and law enforcement activities	Humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality preserved by civilians by stepping back from tight cooperation with military actors +
	CONSIDERATION #4 Civilians intend to preserve their humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality	Effectiveness vs. efficiency = Coexistence strategy

Source: courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

a result, table 10.4 describes the ODM-ICD framework applied to the decision making of UN OCHA for coexistence.

*The Challenges of Applying Manuals’ Guidelines in the Field*

Several interviewees stressed how guidelines and frameworks developed to institutionalize and discipline civil-military humanitarian coordination are often

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far from being applicable once in the field. During an interview, it emerged that “[the strategy adopted] is an indication given by the Liaison Officer. Even the strategy is facilitated by the Liaison Officer who [is in charge to] provide training if needed.”<sup>57</sup> Further, other interviews indicated that some actors working within the same cluster of operations started to adopt a coordination strategy, often of cooperation, to carry out relief operations within that specific cluster. The clusters that have been named for doing so more frequently were health and education. The last point confirms another pattern identified in the analysis, which refers to the coordination strategy as a gray area. Indeed, it ranges between the two extremes—coexistence and cooperation—which means that civilians and militaries can adopt a specific strategy at a given moment—a strategy conducive to the area of the emergency-affected country.

Despite both UN OCHA and UN-CMCoord’s use in their framework and guidelines of the words “coexistence” and “cooperation” to indicate the extent of civil-military coordination, there are some gray areas in between. *Gray areas* refer to the chance of smoothing some of the characteristics of the two extremes—coexistence and cooperation—but also adopting the two extremes within the same disaster response over time, over space, and across activities. As emerged in the analysis, in Haiti, contextual and situational factors, including state capacity, have shaped how civilians and militaries coordinated over time, showing how in cases of low state capacity when the state is not able to ensure a safe space and provide support to the population, civilians and militaries coexist. Indeed, in Haiti, civilians and militaries cooperated only in the immediate aftermath of the emergency, when security issues were overcome by a situation of extreme need and where there was a massive presence of local policing and militaries deployed by the state. With time, looting and criminal activities increased, disabling local authorities in exercising effective security control. Civilians merely coexisted with militaries.

The example of the U.S. mission to Haiti, Operation Unified Response, reveals that shortly after the government of Haiti requested assistance from the United States, on 14 January 2010, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) was already moving toward the establishment of the Joint Task Force-Haiti (JTF-Haiti) to provide military support to the international community. Post-operation evaluations revealed how the mission was overall effective and JTF-Haiti contributed to coordinating relief operations with civilian entities

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<sup>57</sup> This quote comes from one of the interviewees who were interviewed as part of this study.

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operating on the ground. However, throughout the entire mission, the majority of relationships were established at the diplomatic and military level, including with the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH, and local forces rather than civilian officials. The level of insecurity in the field motivated the U.S. military to work with other military forces, including peacekeepers, to pursue the ultimate goal—also shared by civilians—of providing relief aid to the population in need.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Civil-military coordination evolved, and such evolution was motivated by the increasing occasions where military forces were involved in humanitarian response operations in the last two decades. There is still mistrust toward militaries working in humanitarian settings because they are often perceived as politically engaged, especially where there are no strong local institutions and, as a result, there may be an opportunity for power projection to serve political ends. Local institutions are not able to prevent them from doing so and while requiring humanitarian support, local institutions may accept a certain extent of power projection from militaries. This contrasts with the necessity of civilians to preserve the humanitarian space and principles of neutrality, impartiality, and non-politicization, so they often find it difficult to cooperate with militaries in such situations.

### *How to Move Forward?: Policy Recommendations*

The analysis findings of this study inform and provide insights on directions that humanitarian emergency policy making should take:

**Item #1:** Civil-military humanitarian coordination communications

**Recommendation:** Civilians and militaries should both be involved in the discussion around civil-military humanitarian coordination.

**Rationale:** Civilian actors are responsible for the adoption and management of civil-military coordination in the aftermath of a disaster according to international law. The rationale behind such assignment fails in the need of preserving the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality, often not associated with how military forces of a certain country operate in a third one.

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<sup>58</sup> Gary Cecchine, *The U.S. Military Response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Considerations for Army Leaders* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2013).

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However, with the progressive involvement of militaries in humanitarian operations, where they operate under a humanitarian mandate based on their governments' guidelines, it may be time to rethink the way humanitarian assistance coordination is associated with civilians and civilians only, acknowledging the role of additional actors, including armed forces. That does not mean undermining the humanitarian principles or pulling the humanitarian leadership away from civilians and/or international civilian actors such as the UN and, in particular, the UN OCHA. Instead, it means acknowledging that current approaches may not fit with the practices in the field, where a large number of militaries may be deployed in support of humanitarian operations.

Contrary to what happened in Haiti in 2010 and beyond, it is very important to develop mechanisms where militaries are involved when deliberating and setting up the civil-military humanitarian coordination strategy and deciding on the adoption of cooperation or coexistence less unilaterally and more collegially. The benefits of this approach will be to project a coordinated image of civil-military relations, which can help disaster-affected countries and populations to build trust in civil-military relations. In addition, promoting civil-military communication in this field would help to reduce the extent to which militaries may operate outside their humanitarian mandate.

This presents several limitations. Military actors are often in the field because of the mandate their government gives them, and this mandate may change or be adjusted over time to match political or geopolitical goals. In other words, militaries respond to a line of command that is outside the humanitarian space in the field, the same line of command that may not have a comprehensive overview of the in-the-field environment.

*Item #2:* In-the-field application of guidelines and best practices

*Recommendation:* Currently available guidelines and best practices have proven to be less flexible than they intended to be; therefore, it is necessary to either update or complement them with more pragmatism and real-world examples to make them more applicable in the field.

*Rationale:* Several actors find it difficult to operate in the field when trying to follow the "manual," which cannot predict a series of challenges likely to occur in the field. Indeed, if guidelines are intended to represent a road map for in-the-field operations, guidelines should be flexible because civilians and militaries, when responding to humani-

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tarian emergencies, are required to work in a rapidly changing environment.

In Haiti, humanitarian operations were conducted under a spirit of flexibility, therefore it may be useful to update the guideline documents to make them more reflective of real-world scenarios. Alternatively, creating documents in the form of “case studies” or “lessons learned” would contribute to having case study analyses and sets of suggested practices that derive from situations occurring in the field.

Limitations of this approach may be related to disclosure and confidentiality of policies where certain facts or actions are undertaken in the field during a mission or operations, especially from a military perspective, are not to be publicly shared, and therefore cannot be included in such documents as proposed above.



## ◉ Chapter Eleven ◉

### The Military Attaché

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#### *Adapting to Foreign Cultures*

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Skaggs, USMC (Ret)

#### INTRODUCTION

Assignment as a defense attaché is one of the most rewarding postings in the Department of Defense (DOD). It is by nature both Joint and independent, since you serve beside the other Services in the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) within an embassy, yet you are very likely one of the only representatives of your Service in the embassy. You are serving with the Department of State, directly under the ambassador/chief of mission (COM), yet you are also accountable to your Service, the combatant commander, and the senior defense official/defense attaché (SDO/DATT). This chapter is intended to serve as a guide for an aspiring or selected attaché and as a reference for those interested in the role and activities of a U.S. military attaché.

#### TRAINING

The U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard all contribute members to the Defense Attaché Service (DAS), yet each has its own separate selection process. Once selected as an attaché by your Service, the first stop will be assignment to the Joint Military Attaché School (JMAS) at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling (JBAB) in Washington, DC. The first part of the course is language training, conducted through the Defense Language Institute-East (DLI). This school has no formal campus and uses a series of contracted instructors to perform language training. The length of training depends on the difficulty of the language and can last a year or more. The servicemember's spouse is also eligible to attend classes with you, which I recommend; JMAS reimburses childcare costs.

Learning a new language as an adult can be challenging, but this phase of

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training will set the foundation of your credibility on your new assignment. Language proficiency is by far the best way to establish your *bona fides*, both with the host nation and with the country team. The Department of State takes language training very seriously, and foreign service officers (FSOs) assigned to language-designated positions are not sent to their new assignment until they have reached the required level of proficiency. Therefore, arriving at post with limited language abilities hurts your credibility from the start. Language skills establish instant rapport and credibility with your host nation interlocutors.

Moreover, arriving with an interpreter at an initial meeting with a host nation counterpart sets the relationship on a formal path that will be difficult to reverse. At the end of the day, you are the U.S. representative, and your host will be polite regardless, but arriving with inadequate language skills presents an image of a diplomat who is talking down to the host or lacks interest in the country. In addition to language skills, I highly recommend immersing yourself in local culture, history, literature, and movies. DLI instructors can be helpful in this regard. Having a general knowledge of these things is a great conversation starter and allows you to have discussions outside stilted work-related topics. Like language, this is a sure way to gain instant credibility with your counterparts.

The second phase of training is the attaché training course conducted at JMAS. Like language training, your spouse is eligible to attend and will graduate with a certificate of completion from the Spouse Training Program. I cannot exaggerate how important spousal participation is for the success of your assignment. While optional, attendance at the course allows the spouse to be truly integrated in your work as an attaché. Otherwise, your spouse will arrive at post without a true understanding of the depth and breadth of your duties and will be unable to support your efforts in the same way as a JMAS graduate. JMAS is a course that embeds feedback from the field on a regular basis and thus remains extremely relevant.

While attending JMAS, it is highly recommended to get in touch with your predecessor. Most likely, they will reach out to you, but in any case, get in contact once you begin JMAS. The person holding your new job is your duty expert on your new assignment and can answer questions you and your spouse may have. They will also put you in contact with the operations chief, the warrant officer, or noncommissioned officer who runs the day-to-day activities of the Defense Attaché Office. While I do not recommend bombarding them with emails on a daily basis, occasional emails with a list of questions is the best way to have them answered without crushing their inboxes. As a rule, I would keep general

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questions about daily activities and work environment until the end of JMAS. The course will likely answer some of these questions, allowing you to scope your questions to be specific to your new DAO.<sup>1</sup>

## PREPARING TO LEAVE FOR POST

As the time for arriving at the embassy draws near, there are several key factors to consider; housing, what to bring, vehicle, uniforms, and schools. Housing is a topic that can be emotional and controversial. The housing situation will be like no other you faced in the DOD, in a good way. The Department of State is responsible for moving you, and they choose very good moving companies. You are given a certain weight allowance to send to your post, and the rest of your household goods are moved to nontemporary storage for the duration of your stay overseas. There is no “house hunting leave” as you will be assigned quarters from an embassy housing pool. These quarters *usually* are completely furnished with embassy furniture, including a welcome kit with dishes, small and large appliances, bedding, etc. You could conceivably arrive with just your clothes and have enough to live comfortably. I recommend focusing on bringing things that make you feel at home, and things that tell your story to your guests. Do keep in mind that there is always potential for your family to get evacuated with minimum luggage, so I would leave family heirlooms or expensive antiques at home.

As for the type of house, the embassy will work with you based on your family needs. You will receive a housing survey in advance, which gives you an opportunity to communicate your needs and desires to the housing board. Since you have representational requirements, you will receive quarters that are generally in the upper end of the housing pool. Depending on what part of the world you are in, you could be living in a house on its own grounds, complete with a staff, or an apartment in town. By and large, the accommodations are quite good and satisfaction with quarters is usually quite high. Work with your predecessor to manage expectations. Complaining about housing or presenting unreasonable demands is a sure way to tarnish your professional reputation before you even arrive in country.

The education of dependent children is usually met by the local international school, funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA). In my experience, the quality of these schools is very high. (This may not be the

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<sup>1</sup> Based on author's personal experience attending JMAS.

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case in some less developed countries, especially at the high school level—do your research on schools before you accept an assignment.) These schools are usually attended by children of diplomats, foreign businessmen, and affluent local families. The tuition at these schools usually mirrors the cost of Ivy League collegiate education in the United States, so this is an opportunity to send your children to a particularly high level of education with an international student body. Many of these schools have a formal application process with associated timelines, so do your research well in advance.

## WHAT TO BRING

Aside from the very important topics of where to live and where your children go to school, consider which items to bring that are necessary for work and for entertaining guests in your home. For work, you will need business attire and the associated professional clothing requirements for the work environment in the embassy. JMAS has a class on professional attire, and I recommend following the advice closely. In my experience, you should buy at least two suits that are of relatively high quality. These are expensive, but if properly maintained they last a long time. As a rule, our foreign colleagues dress smartly, and a cheap suit can be spotted a mile away. You will need all of your uniforms, from evening dress to field uniforms. Where you are posted will drive how often you wear them, but you will wear them all. Consider bringing extra pieces of all adornments such as ribbons and rank insignia, since you will have to replace these items by mail.

For home entertaining, JMAS offers advice on this as well. Your predecessor can give you an idea of how often and at what level you will entertain.<sup>2</sup> Most attachés buy a complete dinner set for six to eight, including assorted glasses and flatware. Some DAOs have DAO service that can be borrowed, if needed, but most bring their own. I strongly advise against bringing things with emotional value, such as your grandmother's china. It will be moved at least twice, and things also get broken when in high use. It is not necessary to buy the most expensive dinnerware available. A complete set of white dishes that look nice, with good flatware and glasses, is all you need. You will be allowed one vehicle, which the Department of State will ship in advance. I recommend a newer model SUV, since roads in even the best parts of the world can be tricky once you leave the highway. Once this vehicle ships, you will probably not see it for a month or two after you arrive. Buying a vehicle at post, such as from a departing United

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<sup>2</sup> This was part of the curriculum at JMAS when the author attended.

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States or third-country diplomat, is also an option and offers the convenience of having a car from day one. Your office, sponsor, or the embassy Community Liaison Office (similar to a military morale, welfare, and recreation team) can point you to available vehicles for sale.

Finally, you will be ready to leave for your post. Think about packing in your luggage as many of your work clothes and uniforms as space will allow. You will need the suit on day one, and uniforms depend on what events are happening right away. You will have an air shipment, so some of these things can be shipped then. Most places allow pets, but airline restrictions on flying pets in the summertime can be very strict, so do the research ahead of time. Different countries also have various rules about quarantines, veterinary certifications, and other regulations, so research is needed in this regard as well. The embassy management section is your best source of information on importing pets. Your whole family will receive diplomatic passports with the required visas. Starting this process early will avoid delays in your departure. These visas are usually only good for a short time and are extended once you arrive in country and are officially accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## ARRIVAL

When you arrive in country, you will usually be met by a representative from your DAO and an embassy van for the baggage. You will meet your social sponsor early on—embassies will assign new arrivals a social sponsor prior to your arrival and most try to match newcomers with someone from a different agency to help introduce you to the broader embassy community. You will likely be taken to temporary quarters unless your permanent quarters are ready. Usually there is a turnover period in the summertime as families clear houses, the houses are cleaned, repaired, and reassigned. Usually, you get a few days to rest and acclimate to the time zone before you report to the embassy.

When you report to the embassy, you will likely do so in business attire. You will not have an embassy badge, so you will be met by the DAO to walk you through. You will probably meet the DATT first and be put on the calendar to meet the chief of mission as soon as possible. The relationship you have with the ambassador/COM depends on the size of the embassy. In Ukraine I routinely had one on one meetings with the ambassador, whereas in London I rarely met him officially. Some ambassadors will have deep familiarity with military culture and language and pay close attention to the details of your office's work; others (particularly noncareer "political appointees"—unless they happen to have served

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in uniform) may not know a lieutenant from a lieutenant colonel, at least at the start of their tour.

Be sure to check in early with the deputy chief of mission (DCM)—the ambassador's alter ego and chief operating officer, responsible for coordinating the activities of all embassy elements and ensuring everyone is moving in sync and fulfilling the ambassador's intent. In the ambassador's absence (either due to an assignment gap, or if the current ambassador is temporarily out of the country), the DCM becomes *chargé d'affaires*—acting ambassador. Having a good relationship with the DCM will save you many missteps. The DCM can help you get a sense of how involved the front office wants to be in defense issues and how much they wish to delegate to DAO.

Get to know the personal assistants of the ambassador and DCM—known in State Department parlance as office management specialists (OMSs). Introduce yourself to the protocol assistants, local employees who know everyone in town and can be a tremendous help in understanding how things work. But do not task protocol directly without a green light—they usually report to one of the OMSs, who do not appreciate everyone in the embassy giving the protocol staff instructions.

You will be walked around the embassy, meeting members of the country team including various FSOs, other representatives of government agencies, and local staff. I strongly encourage you to cultivate strong relationships with the Department of State employees, especially pol/mil, public affairs, and the ambassador's front office. All these people are in positions that will help guide you in your duties. In most cases they have been on several assignments in the region, and their advice and experience are invaluable. Local staff are also good people to know. Chances are they have worked at the embassy for years or even decades and know as much about embassy life as they do the capital city.

If you are a Marine attaché as I was, go meet the Marine Security Guard (MSG) detachment commander—a senior noncommissioned officer—as soon as possible. The relationship with the detachment commander is usually a good one. However, I urge caution here. The Marines do not work for you in any way. They have a battalion commander who covers the region, and they are strictly in their chain of command, and they work operationally for the embassy's State Department regional security officer (RSO). I encourage having a professional relationship with the Marines, and most detachment commanders will welcome having a Marine officer at post to serve as a resource and informal mentor for the MSGs—but they are not yours.

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Your predecessor will be trying to check out, move the family, etc., so do not expect 100 percent of their time while you turn over. However, spend as much time with them as possible. The meetings where you are introduced by your predecessor to your host nation counterparts are vital, as this is step one in building trust and rapport.

## DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES

As with most noncombat assignments you have had as an officer, your days are filled with meetings, emails, and report writing. Attaché duty has a few key differences. Unless you are the DATT, you will have very few, if any, subordinates, or staff. As a field grade officer, you will find yourself doing things that may have been done for you in the past such as travel claims, booking travel on the Defense Travel System, and any other minutia you might have not previously considered. This is part of being on a staff on independent duty, and you will find yourself getting used to it. Another major difference is the number of events and occasions you will attend in the evenings and on weekends. These include organizing official visits of distinguished visitors (DVs), receptions at foreign embassies, and host nation events. Many of these events also include your spouse. I should note that DAO is something of an outlier within an embassy environment in its *expectation* that unpaid spouses will actively participate in representational work. While many spouses of State Department and other civilian agency employees at post do so more or less willingly, it is easier for them to opt out of diplomatic functions should they wish to focus on employment opportunities—when they exist—or other interests. You will learn that the different civilian agencies at post have their own cultures and traditions, just like the military Services.

The attaché calendar can get very full. The overall average is probably two or three events a week. During the holidays this will escalate to two or three per day before things shut down for the holiday break.<sup>3</sup> My rule of thumb was to attend every event to which I was officially invited (invitations are always formal and by name). The exception was if I had subsequently been invited to something of higher priority for the DAO or the embassy. My advice: if you are invited, go. Representation at these events is a part of your official duties. Skipping an event because you do not feel like going is like missing a meeting at work, in my opinion.

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<sup>3</sup> Depending on where in the world you are. In both of my posts, they celebrated Christmas. Obviously, holidays vary across the world.

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As a military attaché, you are expected to be the subject matter expert on your own Service and on the like Service of the host nation. This is the minimum expected by the chief of mission. Additionally, getting to know the host nation Service is crucial. Know its leaders, visit its bases, and understand its capabilities. All these things must be known prior to getting a phone call from headquarters with an urgent question. Cold calling a counterpart you have never met and asking them urgent questions will bring you mixed results, at best.

At large embassies, there may be additional military elements aside from the DAO. At smaller embassies DAO handles these functions. The senior defense attaché is designated the ambassador's senior defense official (SDO/DATT) and tasked with ensuring military elements coordinate. The most common of these is an Office of Defense Cooperation, which focuses on arms transfers—including assisting the host nation with commercial procurement from U.S. companies as well as government-to-government transfers—training and exercises.

As a member of the country team—the embassy's section chiefs and agency heads—you will interact with various members on a regular basis and likely attend the ambassador's country team meetings. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these relationships. Foreign service officers undergo a grueling and competitive hiring process, and the training at the Foreign Service Institute is equally demanding. There is not an "us vs. them" relationship between the State Department and DOD unless you personally make it so. It is vital to integrate and become a functioning member of the team. You will find the pol-mil officers are an amazing resource on regional affairs, and they value you for your military expertise and experience. The public affairs officers are well connected across the capital and are also valuable allies. It would be impossible to be an effective attaché without being firmly embedded in the country team.

## OBSERVING AND REPORTING

According to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, diplomats are allowed to observe local atmospherics and report them to their home country.<sup>4</sup> As a military diplomat, you are allowed to observe and report on the host nation military if such information is collected via legal means. This provision makes the military attaché a declared and overt collector of information, which is reported

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<sup>4</sup> Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Vienna, 18 April 1961, ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State.



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back to headquarters through official channels. Overt collection allows for direct observation, photography (in unrestricted areas), and discussions with individuals who willingly provide information of interest. While direct observation is the most reliable, this will be limited to things in which you have direct access. By far the most useful and widely used method is conversation.

Obtaining information of interest through conversation requires knowing with whom to talk and having access to that person through professional or personal connections. Building a network of reliable information sources is the most challenging part of this assignment yet is the only way to provide timely and accurate reporting. Some of these people will be professional contacts handed to you by your predecessor or through the course of your duties. Others you will develop on your own. Knowing who to call when the phone rings from headquarters is the key to being an effective attaché.

## HOST NATION COUNTERPARTS

The relationship between the attaché and host nation (HN) counterparts is vital. Of course, the nature of that relationship depends on which country you are serving. If the environment is hostile, your outreach and access will be limited to what their Ministry of Defense allows. It is often a formal and routine meeting with a representative of their international cooperation branch of their general staff, or something of the like. For countries with a more permissive environment, the relationship will largely be defined by you. There is a balance to be struck between rapport and maintaining a professional relationship, but the closer you know your counterparts, and the more often the meetings, the better. My method was to establish a series of formal, scheduled meetings to discuss official business, and schedule nonformal events such as dinner, drinks, or some other social event to build rapport. As an American attaché, you will always get someone to meet you, but the value of rapport cannot be overstated. One day, you are going to need something. It could be a favor, it could be an urgent question from headquarters with a short suspense time, or any number of things. In my experience, it is good to be professionally respected but it is even better that they also genuinely like you. Being likeable is an art that does not come easily to all of those in the military. Work at it, and success will follow.

## THE FOREIGN MILITARY ATTACHÉ COMMUNITY

Much like your host nation counterparts, the relationships you have with other foreign military attachés will largely be defined by you. They can be a good

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source of comradery as well as information. Socially and professionally, you will undoubtedly form relationships since in most cases they are invited to the same events that you are. There will be attachés that are from your same Service or have a similar interest. There will be attachés with whom you simply enjoy speaking. In all cases, these can be good relationships. Some attachés are a one-person shop, meaning they are the only defense official from their country. This is especially true of smaller countries. Do not underestimate their value. These attachés can have lots of access and know virtually everyone. The value of this community is that they are in the same boat as you. They have been sent to represent their countries and report back to their capitals. They deal with the same issues such as access to host nation officials, housing, education for children, bored spouses, and any other issues you might have. For this reason, they understand you in a way most of your host nation counterparts do not and building rapport can be quite easy.

Third country attachés should be a vital part of your network. If you are working in a hostile environment, your access to the host nation is probably limited. However, this will not necessarily be the case with the entire diplomatic corps. Establishing a relationship with an attaché whose government is on better terms with the host can be a valuable resource to news and perspective that is otherwise limited. Every capital city has a foreign attaché association. These formal clubs are formed to allow attachés to interact in venues outside of host nation events. I served as treasurer in both Ukraine and the UK, and it was a fantastic way to get to know every single member. These associations and events can be ideal environments to meet people and cultivate valuable relationships. These groups are also open to spouses, and the events provide your partner meaningful social interaction.

### **Your relationship with foreign attachés can change overnight based on politics: Kyiv, November 2013**

*I was having a formal dinner in my home in honor of the U.S. Marine Corps birthday. I invited every naval attaché whose navy had a naval infantry force. One of those in attendance was the Russian naval attaché. At that time relations were tense but still somewhat cordial. He was a polite and friendly guest and brought me a nice gift (which I later had X-rayed for microphones), flowers for my wife, and chocolate for the children. Dinner and drinks passed as normal in usual diplomatic fashion. A few months later, he was having dinner in a local restaurant when he was approached by officers of the Ukrainian Security Service (SBU). One of*

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*ficer said, "Captain, you are under arrest for conducting espionage against the Government of Ukraine." The Captain said, "I am a diplomat of the Russian Federation." The SBU officer said, "And you are under arrest." The entire restaurant stood up and applauded, and he was led away. He was declared persona non grata the next day and returned to Moscow.<sup>5</sup>*

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Distinguished visitors (DVs) can be a source of great anxiety and a tremendous amount of work, which will be in addition to your normal duties. Your role in such a visit can be a minor, supporting role, such as setting up a meeting with a host nation official. When the DV is military or DOD affiliated, an attaché will be assigned as the action officer (AO). As the AO, you are the lead and will likely directly report to the ambassador and DCM all details of the visit, which you will plan in coordination with the country team and the host nation. The embassy's management and security sections are deeply involved in the logistics of DV visits, regardless of a visitor's agency affiliation. (Conversely, staff from all agencies are expected to pitch in should a senior official with a large party come to town.) Based on the high level of attention these events receive, they are a perfect opportunity to destroy your professional reputation and look and feel like a complete amateur, which brings the aforementioned anxiety. While this threat is real, it rarely happens. The entire country team and DAO will coalesce around you to make it a success, and no one wants you, or the embassy, to fail. Listen to the experts, coordinate with the DV staff to manage expectations on both sides, and the visit will be a success. You will find that the planning phase is much more stressful and lasts significantly longer than the execution phase. Most DVs are on the ground for 24–48 hours, while planning beforehand can last weeks. The sense of relief you will feel when you announce "wheels up" is easy to imagine.<sup>6</sup>

### **Expectation Management Prior to DV Arrival Is Key: London, UK 2018**

*A large group of diverse distinguished visitors (DVs) always come to London for the Queen's birthday in June. London is crowded that time of year anyway with tourists and hundreds of royal and other-*

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<sup>5</sup> Based on author's personal interaction.

<sup>6</sup> *Wheels up* means the DV plane has taken off and left the local area, meaning you and the embassy are no longer responsible for what happens. Most seasoned diplomats wait until the plane is out of sight before making this call, meaning the chance of a return emergency landing is unlikely.

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*wise wealthy Gulf state families who spend the hot Arab summers in London. This time I was action officer for a certain four star general, one of three such U.S. generals in town. He had visited before, and I felt I knew his routine and needs. It turned out the aide was different, and the new expectations had not been communicated to me, nor had I asked. They had been on a five-country trip, and their hectic schedule had made communication sparse. They were less than impressed that yours truly was the one meeting them at the airport. "The last place we visited, the minister of defense met us with a band and a red carpet," one staff member commented. I mentioned that this was London, and this was not the only DV event today. We arrived at the hotel. I was asked by the aide, "Of course, you have all of our rooms together on the same floor, right?" This had not been requested, and besides there were entire floors of the hotel rented out by various royal families for the summer. One American general was, frankly, not a subject of serious accommodation for this hotel. I tried to explain that to the entourage, but it fell flat as a weak excuse. As you can guess, I had an uphill battle earning back a professional reputation with that group. The visit went well after that, and everyone left happy, but I could have avoided all of that by vigorously interrogating the aide in advance, specifically laying out what was possible, and making their expectations realistic prior to arrival.<sup>7</sup>*

Based on the above reality, it would be logical to view an upcoming DV event with a sense of dread. However, there are two major positive attributes of being an action office that deserve attention as you plan for the occasion. These events offer you an opportunity to inform U.S. policy, and these events provide you access to host nation officials to whom you likely do not meet regularly.

As a military attaché, you likely have a host nation area of interest that you were assigned, and on which you have a passionate desire for U.S. policy makers to address or consider issues. As a diplomat, you do not make policy. Your reporting informs policy makers and decision makers, who in turn make policy. A DV event that has your passion projects on its agenda is an ideal opportunity for you to present said issues to a policy maker in a way that is understandable and memorable. As a field grade officer, you will find there are not many opportunities to influence policy, but this is one of them.

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<sup>7</sup> Based on author's personal reflections.

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Another advantage to DV events is that many times they provide you with access to areas and individuals that are normally difficult. You probably do not meet with the president, the minister of defense, head of parliament, or chief of defense (CHOD) on a regular basis, depending on your role in the DAO. As action officer you will escort the DV to meetings with these high-ranking individuals. This grants you access, insight, and increased credibility and visibility with these local officials. Seating is often limited in these meetings. Do not let the DVs entourage push you out into the hallway during the meeting. They will absolutely try to do this if numbers are limited. This is the point where you make it clear that you are not the driver or the escort, you are the one introducing them to the official, and you are representing the ambassador. I soon learned that making this arrangement clear in advance prevents awkward situations.

### **Standing Your Ground: Ministry of Defense, London, 2018**

*I was action officer for a high-ranking U.S. defense official who was scheduled to meet a few members of parliament and several senior UK defense officials. When we arrived at the meeting, it was announced that seating was limited. The U.S. official's military aide, who outranked me, said, "You'll have to sit in the hall." I said, "The ambassador's policy for all meetings is the U.S. embassy must be represented at all visits we sponsor. I'm that representative. If I go back and tell him you threw me out, he will not look very favorably on visits by your office in the future." I was allowed in the meeting. Truthfully, that was a pretty broad interpretation of the ambassador's policy, but in principle it applies everywhere. These events are sponsored by the embassy, and the ambassador has a right to know what was discussed. To be thrown out to the hallway by someone who probably is not even taking notes should never be considered.<sup>8</sup>*

Sometimes the agenda for DV meetings are ambiguous and lack detail. This is an excellent opportunity for you to shape the agenda to fill in your information gaps. If you had an audience with this official, what would you ask them? Use these gaps to fill the agenda for the conversation, and you have properly used the event to further U.S. government understanding of a particular issue. DV events require a great deal of planning. Rather than complain about the extra work, I recommend you use the event to your benefit.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on author's personal reflections.

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## ASSIGNMENT TO UKRAINE, 2013–2016

I will describe my time in Ukraine as being in three distinct phases. The first, arrival and serving in an officially neutral, yet openly pro-Russian Ukraine, with limited interest by the U.S. government. The second was Ukraine during the Euromaidan Revolution, when the Ukrainian government was still overtly pro-Russian, but events brought a lot of U.S. government interest. The third phase was post-Euromaidan/Crimea/war in Eastern Ukraine, bringing a pro-Western government and high U.S. government interest.<sup>9</sup>

I always tell aspiring attachés, “Even after you receive your assignment, you do not know where you are going.” This phrase always draws a quizzical look, compelling me to explain. The Ukraine I prepared for, and arrived in, was a former Soviet state with not much interest by the U.S. government. Ukraine had swung westward after the Orange Revolution in 2004.<sup>10</sup> By 2010, a pro-Russian government had returned with President Viktor Yanukovich, and the West was profoundly disappointed in this political reversal. Consequently, Ukraine was pretty low on the priority list for U.S. interest. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cooperated with the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and there were two international exercises a year in Ukraine. Besides that, interaction with the Ukrainian military was cordial, and even friendly, but it was assumed they told the Russians everything. Therefore, I prepared for and arrived in a Ukraine that was a “mostly permissive and semi-hostile environment” as I remember describing it at the time. Our hosts were formal but very friendly, and our militaries got along well on a personal level.

The security services were another story. While not openly hostile, it was clear that my family and I were under constant surveillance. I am certain my apartment was under audio and video monitoring and catching a glimpse of a surveillance team was not uncommon. What I experienced was nothing like my colleagues in China or Russia experienced, but we were definitely on the radar of the host nation government. Attaché training had prepared me for this possibility, and there were no real surprises. One of the multinational exercises, Sea Breeze, commenced within a month of my arrival, and I soon found myself in Odessa watching the exercise and meeting Ukrainian Navy contacts. Subsequently, I found

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<sup>9</sup> Author witnessed these events firsthand.

<sup>10</sup> Orange Revolution in Ukraine, 2004–5, one of the “color revolutions” of the 2000s. Ukrainians protested what they believed was a rigged election and a recount overturned the results, bringing in a pro-Western government. Lili Bivings, “Ukraine’s Orange Revolution,” *Kyiv Independent*, 24 August 2022.

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myself in Crimea twice that fall, visiting the Ukrainian Navy and Naval Infantry (Marines). The Ukrainian Marines were particularly pro-Western in thinking and fancied themselves as modelled after U.S. Marines. Of course, structurally they were not much like the U.S. Marine Corps, but many of their officers had trained in Quantico through International Military Exchange Training (IMET) programs.<sup>11</sup> These emotional ties between the Ukrainian and U.S. Marines would pay off later during the crisis in Crimea.

Life in Kyiv in the fall of 2013 was business as usual, attending receptions and national day celebrations in various embassies, formal dinners, and daily life surrounding work at the embassy. As the fall progressed, there was more and more local discussion of Ukraine's decision to sign a European Union Association Agreement (EUAA). While a long way from EU membership, it was a surprising step westward for a pro-Russian government. At the time, President Vladimir Putin was fully committed to creating a Eurasian Customs Union, which would rival the EU. Such a union would be nothing without Ukraine's 44 million consumers, and membership in the Eurasian Union would be impossible under EU Association rules. In the end, it was not surprising that Putin gave Yanukovych a huge cash stipend to rebuff the EU, and Yanukovych announced weeks before the signature ceremony that Ukraine would not sign the EUAA. This sudden and publicly unexplained reversal brought outrage and street protests, mostly in Kyiv. The protests, centered in Kyiv's Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) were orchestrated and run by students and opposition politicians. They lasted about two weeks, with the intent of changing the government's mind and signing the EUAA in a ceremony scheduled for 29 November 2013. These nightly protests were my introduction to real time event reporting. I stood around these protests, listened to people, gauged atmospherics and attitudes, assessed the security situation, and reported it to the embassy.<sup>12</sup>

These were long, cold hours, but the reporting was crucial to tempering the U.S. reaction. On Friday, 29 November Yanukovych flew to Vilnius, Lithuania, and did not sign the EUAA.<sup>13</sup> That evening, the crowd mood was somber. Opposition politicians vowed to keep the struggle for European integration alive,

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<sup>11</sup> IMET—International Military Exchange Training, a program funded by the State Department to bring foreign military students to U.S. military training courses.

<sup>12</sup> Narrative based on author's experience in Kyiv in 2013.

<sup>13</sup> President Yanukovych flew to attend the Eastern Partnership meeting on 29 November 2013, but he did not sign the EUAA. "Yanukovych Confirms Intention to Attend Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius," *Interfax*, 26 November 2013.

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and most everyone went home at about midnight. I was awoken first thing in the morning with alarming news. At about 0400, 2,000 riot police descended on the 200 students sleeping in vigil on Maidan. As these students sprang awake and ran in terror, many were savagely beaten by the police. Some had run to St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery for refuge, which is where I was headed. None of my Ukrainian government contacts were going to be of any use, so I ran to the scene to see and hear for myself.

There was no way any government official would offer any meaningful comments on something like this, so the only solution was to go find witnesses. The footage of the cruel treatment by the police was all over the TV and internet. People were much angrier about the beatings than the spoiled EUAA. Mass protests were scheduled for Sunday. I took up a vantage position overlooking Maidan. Busloads of people arrived from all over Ukraine, and more than 100,000 marched through the square and into adjoining European Plaza. Ukrainians I spoke with said that this reaction was much bigger than the Orange Revolution. More striking was the fact that thousands remained in the square for days, which turned to weeks. Peacefully, the protesters occupied the gigantic square, turning it into a protest camp.<sup>14</sup>

As attachés, our job became spending our time there talking, listening, and understanding both the protest and the government reaction. While the protest was nonviolent, the police presence was very large. A large force of Interior Ministry troops manned barricades that protected the government area that housed most of the ministries, including the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) and the presidential office. In effect, there were two areas of interest, one government, one protest, and I spent my nights circulating between them. As a military officer, I was keen to focus on police equipment, structure, and posture. Most importantly, endless hours on those streets connected me to what was going on. I literally developed a sense of what was happening and could feel things change, like feeling a pulse. I was physically present at seven different extremely violent events, largely because I had a strong sense beforehand when and where these things would happen and positioned myself accordingly.

### **Being the Gray Man:**

#### **European Plaza, Kyiv, Ukraine, January 2014**

*Late one evening I was standing behind an improvised barricade, watch-*

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<sup>14</sup> Events witnessed by author, 29 November 2013.



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*ing a particularly violent clash between protesters and police. Protesters threw Molotov cocktails and rocks, and the police responded with stun grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets. As a diplomat, we were assigned to observe and report these events, but not to draw attention or get involved, and give no appearance whatsoever that we were participating in anti-government activities. The protests involved thousands of people from all walks of life, so it was easy to blend in. Suddenly someone touched my arm. When I turned around a protester was showing me his unlit Molotov cocktail, asking me to light it for him. It seemed to me it was too awkward to explain, "I'm sorry, sir. I'm a diplomat, you see, and I'm not allowed to participate, so I will not light your improvised bomb." Therefore, I said in Ukrainian, "I don't smoke" (implying that I do not normally carry a lighter). He shrugged and moved on to someone else.*

There is a saying in the news media, something about reporting the story and not being part of the story. The same is true as an attaché in a place prone to violence. The endless hours spent on the street allowed us to know where to be in order to observe and report and instilled the instinct to know when to "get off the x."<sup>15</sup> I probably played this closer than I needed to a few times, but the most important thing was being close enough to see what you need to see without getting hurt in the process. At this point, I was intentionally going to places that were discouraged or prohibited by the embassy Regional Security Officer (RSO). Of course, I was there in full coordination with the RSO, who was a real professional. To ensure timely and accurate reporting, we were locating ourselves at events with extremely violent potential. In some cases, extreme violence did occur. A protester right in front of me was shot in the chest nearly point blank with a large caliber rubber bullet. I was sure he was dead by the way he instantly and lifelessly collapsed (he was).<sup>16</sup>

As the protesters grew impatient with the government in late January 2014, the mood became more restive, and I knew something was coming. Big things always happened on Sunday, when usually a weekly "viche" was held.<sup>17</sup> Sure enough, after the viche I saw a group of Praviy Sector men marching with assorted weaponry

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<sup>15</sup> *Get off the x* was a term we used in the military to describe getting out of a violent situation quickly.

<sup>16</sup> Author witnessed this event in Kyiv, January 2014.

<sup>17</sup> *Viche*—traditional Cossack meeting of the masses to discuss business, politics, overall way ahead, like a tribal meeting.

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(bats, sticks, clubs) toward European Plaza where there was a huge government barricade.<sup>18</sup> Weapons were not allowed on Maidan, and neither was Praviy Sektor for that matter. This was new and ominous. I decided to follow these fellows.

When we arrived at European Square, I was genuinely shocked. The police barricades, made up largely of police buses and other vehicles, were all on fire. The police were raining tear gas, stun grenades, and rubber bullets down on the crowd. As night fell, Molotov cocktails arrived on the protest side. While the police moved their lines back out of throwing range, four officers were sent forward and immediately set ablaze, dancing around in the flames until they fell. The crowd roared with delight. I remember being struck that these were Ukrainians cheering the death or severe injury of other Ukrainians, but it gave me a sense of how severe the hatred for the government was. This day was a turning point and marked the evolution from peaceful to violent. There were almost daily clashes after that, culminating when the government tried to clear Maidan on 18 February 2014. The government failed to clear the camp, but reduced its perimeter significantly and moved the police lines a lot closer to the perimeter. On 20 February, I was standing in the middle of Maidan, looking at the new truncated perimeter and the line of police less than 50 meters away. I had been watching the police for months now, and there was something different today.

**Absence of the Normal or Presence of the Abnormal,  
Maidan Nezalezhnosti, 20 February 2014**

*There was indeed something different that day about the police and interior troops. Yes, they were a lot closer, but something else. They all had a band of red reflective tape on the back of their helmets. In Iraq and Afghanistan, we used "glow tape" and other such identifiers on the back of our helmets so our colleagues would not accidentally shoot us by mistake. My suspicions became clear later when the police presence suddenly withdrew, and the shooting started. I could tell by the sound that it was live rounds, and the bodies piling up confirmed that. I sent several urgent messages straight to the ambassador. "Live fire on protesters on Maidan, gunshot wounds, many wounded and dead." The red reflective tape was indeed an identifier to prevent friendly fire. It also proves the shooting had been previously planned.<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> *Praviy Sektor* (Right Sector) is a far-right group in Ukraine, not allowed on Maidan due to extremist nationalist ideology.

<sup>19</sup> Based on author's personal experience.

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The shooting that day inevitably brought down the government. The security forces rightly assumed Yanukovych would sacrifice them to stay in power and they quit. Exposed, Yanukovych and his loyalists fled to Russia. With the entire pro-Russian majority of the parliament and government gone, only pro-Western politicians remained. As Rada members met to rebuild the government and plan a way forward, we in the embassy faced an entirely different political reality. Literally overnight Ukraine pivoted from pro-Russian to Pro-Western. This was head-snapping in its suddenness and severity. Politically it was a completely different country. For me as a military diplomat, my counterparts remained the same, but the context was entirely different. That changed even more when Russia decided to secure their interests in Crimea for posterity.

I knew something was wrong in Crimea on 27 February when it was announced on the radio that Russians were doing exercises and movements around Crimea and had surrounded some Ukrainian bases. I knew that according to the lease agreement, Russian Black Sea Fleet forces had to announce all such movements to Ukraine in advance. These had not been announced. In fact, Russia declared that all their forces were in garrison. As the situation progressed, everyone wanted to know what was really going on.

### **Knowing Who to Know; Crimea, Ukraine, March 2014**

*When Russian soldiers and Naval Infantry in unmarked uniforms (so-called little green men) surrounded Ukrainian bases in Crimea, effectively barricading the occupants within, official information from the Ukrainian government was limited. President Yanukovych had just fled to Russia with all the ministers and half the legislature, and the government was paralyzed. Headquarters in Washington was clamoring for details. Fortunately, the naval attaché (ALUSNA) and the Marine attaché (MARA) had well-developed contacts within their respective Services. In a short series of phone calls, we had a well-developed picture of exactly what was happening and that the Russian military was doing it. These Ukrainian military contacts were the only information source the embassy had when the crisis erupted.<sup>20</sup>*

After Crimea was annexed, things in the east began heating up. Russian security services were going into eastern Ukraine and urging groups of locals to

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<sup>20</sup> Author's personal reflections on this incident.

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form resistance movements and calling for separation from Ukraine. Over the summer, many of these attempts fizzled, but some grew, thanks to an influx of Russian mercenaries posing as locals.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes regular Russian forces mixed in with these irregular bands, such as the Russian antiaircraft unit that shot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17).<sup>22</sup> The Ukrainian government struggled to deal with these so-called separatist groups. By law, the armed forces could not deal with “internal matters,” so the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior Troops, recently renamed the National Guard, was left to deal with them while the army prepared for a potential invasion. As attachés, we were sent out to assess what was going on with the “separatists” and to see how the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) looked as it braced for an invasion. The front lines were only scattered positions, and the army was just getting into place, so we were not escorted by members of the AFU. Things looked grim for the AFU in the field. The Yanukovich administration had hollowed the army, eliminating most of its logistics and maintenance ability. Vehicles were sent to the front as they became serviceable, with former military mechanics showing up at military bases to offer their services. But the army dug in and prepared to defend key areas against a Russian invasion they believed was sure to come.<sup>23</sup>

### **And Sometimes It Is Better to Play It Straight:**

#### **Sumy Oblast, Ukraine, June 2014**

*I was rolling around Eastern Ukraine, observing Ukrainian military preparations for an expected Russian invasion, and getting a sense for what the Russian-led “separatists” were doing. We were in a rented car to not attract unwanted attention or scrutiny. We turned left on a remote road, and straight ahead was a previously unseen Ukrainian checkpoint. Turning around would have very been suspicious. Ukrainian soldiers were rightly leery of everyone and could be quite jumpy. Approaching the checkpoint risked detention or delay but driving away risked much worse. There was nothing to do but play it out. We pulled up and an armed soldier cautiously approached*

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<sup>21</sup> Mark Corcoran, “How Did the Conflict in Ukraine Start?,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 28 July 2014.

<sup>22</sup> MH17 was a Dutch KLM airliner downed by a Buk antiaircraft system. The Buk system existed in both Ukrainian and Russian inventories. Despite Russian denials, a large body of evidence indicated this was the work of a Russian military unit dispatched to Ukraine.

<sup>23</sup> Author witnessed these events as part of his official duties.

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*as the rest surrounded the car. I showed him my diplomatic passport and said in Ukrainian "I am an American diplomat." His face broke into a broad grin, and he said in English, "I love America! I was stationed at Ukrainian Embassy in Washington, DC. Georgetown is awesome!" We had no problems passing through that checkpoint.*<sup>24</sup>

As the conflict escalated, the Ukrainian government decided the situation in the east required the full involvement of the armed forces. The separatist groups were starting to form into military formations, armed with Russian weapons, equipment, and Russian soldiers and mercenaries posing as locals. Ukraine used a law that allows the military to support the Interior Ministry during antiterrorist operations. Therefore, they labeled the campaign an antiterror operation (ATO) and placed the AFU operating in the east under the command of the Security Services of Ukraine, who were overall in charge of the operation. The structure was a little clumsy, but it worked, and the armed forces started pushing the separatists out. This reversal prompted the injection of Russian regular forces.<sup>25</sup> I will not spend much time on the history of the war in the east as there are plenty of references for that, and I will limit my remarks to how the conflict affected operations as an attaché. I will pause to say that I cannot say enough about the proficiency and bravery of the AFU. The previous regime left the armed forces in such a state that anyone would have predicted their complete collapse in the face of a formidable opponent. In fact, the AFU not only stood their ground, but they also inflicted significant casualties on Russian regular forces. The Russians, in turn, backed away and relied on tube and rocket artillery to inflict massive casualties that the Russian mechanized infantry could not accomplish. In the end, these casualties were crushing, especially at Ilovaisk.<sup>26</sup>

The Russians inflicted enough losses to get Ukraine to the negotiating table in Minsk. My view at the embassy gave me real insight into this process, and it seems clear to me that France and Germany (and of course Russia) were forcing Ukraine into a cease-fire that would freeze the conflict along its current lines. That is more or less what happened. It happened again the next year in 2015 when Russian forces wanted to straighten their lines by taking the key city of De-

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<sup>24</sup> Author's personal reflections.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Miller, "Kyiv Rebrands Its War in the East," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 19 January 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Viacheslav Shramovych, "Ukraine's Deadliest Day: The Battle of Ilovaisk," BBC Ukraine, 29 August 2019.

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baltseve. This fierce battle brought about a cease-fire codified in the agreement known as Minsk II. It was clear the Russians had no intention of fulfilling the terms of these agreements, as the cease-fire alone met their goals by freezing the conflict. This frozen conflict was Russia's way of slowing or halting Ukraine's westward accession, the same way Russia halted Georgia and Moldova's ambitions.<sup>27</sup>

What does an attaché do in a country at war? The front was isolated in the east, leaving the rest of the country in a more or less normal state of affairs. But there are many reasons you cannot spend all your time at the front. For one, the host nation will want to escort you around the battlefield. This is to keep you safe and control your access. This is understandable, as no country would be comfortable with foreigners snooping around their military during a conflict. This also means your time at the front is a burden on your hosts. I found the Ukrainians always willing to do it any time I requested a trip, but this had to be limited, and with specified objectives. This was more of a courtesy on my part than a demand by the Ukrainian General Staff. At the end of the day as a diplomat, I could have driven anywhere I wanted, but at the expense of a severe loss of rapport with my hosts.

When not at the front, normal duties ensued in the embassy. The war brought a virtual deluge of DVs, some with genuine policy interests, some with a burning desire for disaster tourism. Either way, they needed to be accommodated, and the embassy was keen to keep the Ukraine story alive with policy makers. One issue to underscore is that even though the war in Ukraine was one of the biggest stories in the world at the time, not all DVs were well briefed on the situation. We had to be ready to tell the story in a concise and compelling fashion. The amount of knowledge a DV has on the situation is logically related to how connected they are to the event. Military leadership was always well briefed, and Senator John McCain seemed to know as much about the situation as I did. Some DVs were clearly along for the ride. Consider these individuals as opportunities for you to advance the story.

Aside from DVs, the rest of attaché life continued. Diplomatic events resumed, the rest of the Ukrainian military conducted training and exercise in preparation for rotations to the line of contact. Security cooperation with the Ministry of Defence increased from a \$10 million program to \$350 million virtually overnight. The extra staffing to run this program increase was not quick

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<sup>27</sup> Duncan Allen, "The Minsk Conundrum: Western Policy and Russia's War in Eastern Ukraine," Chatham House, 22 May 2022.

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in coming and attachés helped the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) when needed.<sup>28</sup>

### **A Convenient Conversation: U.S. Embassy, Kyiv, 2014**

*I was leaving the embassy one afternoon and happened to step into the elevator with my boss, the SDO/DATT, an Air Force colonel.<sup>29</sup> He was in uniform and obviously heading to a major event. He said, "I'm headed to the airport to meet the arrival of our first shipment of HMMWVs to be given to the Ukrainians. I'm going to ceremoniously hand the keys of the first one to President Petro Poroshenko." I said, "One issue with that plan, Sir. HMMWVs do not have keys. They have a push button ignition." Apparently, Air Force pilots do not spend a lot of time driving HMMWVs. The DATT was a clever officer, and on the way to the airport he changed the plan to inviting the president up into the airplane to drive the first HMMWV out of the plane on to the tarmac. Everyone was happy, and it made a great photo opportunity for the president, MOD, and the U.S. Embassy.<sup>30</sup>*

All assignments end, and my time in Ukraine came to a close. I was off to a new assignment, doing the same job in London. We packed up the SUV and drove from Ukraine to Amsterdam and took the ferry over to the UK. I made the decision to drive because I knew that sending the car by ship meant I would not see it for months. That said, this option was not without complications. The car had Ukrainian diplomatic plates. Once I left Ukraine, I was no longer an accredited diplomat, invalidating my right to the plates. I could not register the car in the UK in advance, of course. In the end, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) let me drive to London with the plates, with the promise of sending them back once I arrived and had the car newly registered. Once in the UK, I experienced the madness of registering my car. The car had come from Ukraine, not the EU, which was a big customs issue. I explained the car had originally come from America, which was not helpful since the United States is also not in

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<sup>28</sup> ODC serves under chief of mission authority but is not part of the DAO. The ODC executes the security cooperation plan of the combatant commander, in conjunction with the country team's country plan.

<sup>29</sup> Senior defense official/defense attaché. These two roles are held by a single person. As DATT, they are in charge of the Defense Attaché Office, and as SDO they are the senior official for all defense issues in the country, including security cooperation.

<sup>30</sup> Author's personal reflections.

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the EU. If you think being an American diplomat in the UK wins points with the customs service, you can think again. It took months to unsnarl this bureaucratic Gordian knot, with the Ukrainian MFA screaming the whole time that I had obviously conspired to steal their diplomatic plates. It was all sorted out eventually, as these things always are, and I was officially legal to drive in the UK.

## ARRIVAL IN THE UK

After three years in Ukraine, I was looking forward to a completely different experience in the UK. I expected the UK to be a stable post with mature relations with the HN, although the high-profile nature would mean my operational tempo would remain about the same. I was right about the last part; it was indeed a busy place. However, as mentioned earlier, you never know where you are going. The day before I drove off the ferry from Amsterdam, citizens in the UK voted by referendum to leave the EU. From that day, the United Kingdom was not to be the same place. While a casual observer might think an economic and commercial union would have little effect on UK defense, quite the opposite was true. The vote polarized UK society, caused political upheaval that cost the prime minister her job, changed diplomatic relations across the transatlantic and continent, and cast defense budgets, programs, exercises, and other defense commitments into obscurity and uncertainty.<sup>31</sup>

While all this political chaos drove the expected demand for information from headquarters, I adjusted to a different embassy environment and diplomatic community. The embassy in Ukraine had a few hundred employees. The embassy in London had more than 1,000 employees, representing more than 33 U.S. government entities. This was akin to working in a remote branch office and transferring to corporate headquarters. In Ukraine, the embassy staff assisted you except for matters of a personal nature. In the UK, since it was an English-speaking environment, diplomats were expected to sort out many things on their own. Housing and furniture were provided of course, but all other daily minutia was up to you. Bank accounts, cell phone companies, cable TV, and kids' schooling were left to the diplomat to work out on their own.<sup>32</sup> It sounds easy enough, at first, until you are faced with the reality that, despite the similar language, you are a foreigner in a country with very different social, cultural, and business norms.

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<sup>31</sup> "EU Referendum," UK government website, 23 June 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Schooling was funded by DODEA. However, all coordination and admittance procedures for the school had to be done by the diplomat.



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Getting a cell phone account without an established UK banking history was impossible without a note from the embassy. Bank accounts were hard to get for non-UK citizens, so you were limited to the one UK bank located in the embassy, which had special exceptions allowing Americans to bank with them. Getting a credit card from a UK bank was complicated but using a U.S. card meant taking a crushing currency conversion fee. I make a point of these issues to underscore that common language does not equate to common culture or practices.<sup>33</sup> In many ways, Ukraine was easier because I went there assuming I would have to learn everything new. In the UK I called this the “familiarity trap.” There it was easy to be surprised by little things because the common language distorts how different the countries really are. For example, most people on the professional level are quite formal. Most British people I knew professionally referred to themselves by their full names (Michael, Thomas, Edward) and expected to be addressed as such unless mentioned otherwise, which was different from the largely informal American way of addressing professional colleagues.

As mentioned before, the U.S. embassy was very different. The country team was bigger, with more agencies represented. The DAO was twice the size, and the ambassador was a non-career “political appointee” rather than a career FSO. This is not to convey that London was a bad or impersonal place to work, because that is far from the case. My point is that every embassy has its own characteristics and culture to relearn.

## RELATIONS WITH CLOSE ALLIES

There is probably not a closer diplomatic relationship than that between the United States and the UK. The countries are culturally and politically compatible and militarily interoperable on almost every level. We have military personnel embedded in UK military schools, units, and headquarters. As an attaché, I had an access badge to the Ministry of Defence. While relations with the Ukrainian government and military had been quite friendly after 2014, the level of partnership between the United States and the UK is complete on most levels. This was a very different environment, and one I would say is probably unique between the United States, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>34</sup> Again, one must

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<sup>33</sup> I was told by my Royal Marine counterpart who was serving as Royal Marine attaché in the United States that he encountered many of these same difficulties. Imagine getting a cell phone account in the United States without a Social Security Number.

<sup>34</sup> The so-called Five Eyes partners, which is the Anglo-North American intelligence partnership shared by the five countries.

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remind oneself that although close partners, these are separate countries with occasionally diverging interests and issues. Even close relationships must be managed, and I contend that no matter how the diplomatic relationship is defined, it is exceedingly valuable to be liked on a personal level.

As a U.S. Marine, my relationship with the Royal Marines was about as friendly as one could imagine. Some of that can be attributed to our long history of direct cooperation and coordination and the fact we have officers and Marines embedded in each other's schools and operational units. I would also argue that U.S. Marines and Royal Marines fighting side by side in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, for years cemented the relationship. This familiarity increased further when we codified it with an "interoperability pathway" signed by the U.S. Secretary of the Navy and Royal Navy First Sea Lord in 2017. Here, I caution that no relationship should be taken for granted, and even the closest ones require regular maintenance. I recommend getting out of the capital at every opportunity. Go and observe exercises, conduct unit visits, and accept invitations at unit mess nights and formal dinners. Every one of these occasions enhances your credibility and builds the relationship. Wreath laying ceremonies and other such solemn events are particularly valuable, as they draw military personnel past and present, local dignitaries, academics, journalists, politicians, and all walks of civil society. I was once invited to ceremoniously plant a tree on the Isle of Wight to commemorate a WWII event there. This place took a day to reach, by train and by ferry, and the ceremony lasted an hour. However, the show of affection and appreciation from veterans, families, and the local member of Parliament ensured the event was worthwhile. In my mind, no event is too small. Say yes to everything.

**Culture and History Matter, Even among Friends:  
45 Commando Officers' Mess, Scotland, UK 2018**

*I was in the dining room of the officers' mess with a group of Royal Marine officers who I'd known for a while. They were talking me through historical pieces of military art in the mess. We were looking at a painting of the punitive expedition against the Mahdi rebellion in Egypt in 1885. My colleague was noting that the expedition was not an easy one, but the British government was determined to finish off the Mahdi's rebels. I said, "There was never any doubt of that, after what they did to Gordon." (General Charles George Gordon's garrison at Khartoum had been wiped out, the general executed, beheaded, and*

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*his head put on a pike and delivered to the Mahdi. This was a national humiliation that demanded the punitive expedition.) My colleague looked at me astonished and said, "You really know your British history!" My British military history was good, but in this case, I had fortunately read that story just a week before. In my mind, it is impossible to have too much credibility and rapport, even with your closest allies.*<sup>35</sup>

## NETWORKING IN THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

The military diplomatic community in London is the second largest in the world, behind Washington, DC. The attaché corps is so large that there are attaché associations representing each Service instead of one large organization. Of course, it is impossible to get to know everyone in a group that size. In this case, I recommend focusing on the members of the group to which you belong and develop relationships outside that organization as needed. One advantage to being a native speaker of the local language is that the whole diplomatic corps also spoke English. In Ukraine, all diplomats learned Ukrainian or Russian, which for me were second languages. I could communicate in those languages, of course, but there is nothing like having an ability to easily communicate with every international diplomat in London. Even in a large community it is possible to build a network of associates who become reliable sources of information and interest.

In London, there is a military club system, including the Army-Navy Club, the Cavalry and Guards Club, the Royal Air Force Club, and others. These exclusive organizations offered honorary membership to military attachés. The clubs are beautiful establishments, well-furnished, and steeped in British military tradition. These were perfect venues for every occasion for meeting contacts. Morning coffee, lunch, dinner, or even formal receptions were on offer in these clubs. The exclusivity of these venues ensured your meetings were always discreet and relatively secure.

While London is the center of the financial world, it is considered the home of a great deal of intellectual capital as well. There are many think tanks and security-oriented societies that house dozens, if not hundreds, of well-researched and well-connected academics, authors, and intellectuals. These people have an infinite number of reliable sources and know just about everyone and everything defense and security related. Developing relationships with these individuals and regularly attending their events is a sure way to develop a deep understanding of the defense and security sector. Local- and national-level politicians can also be interesting

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<sup>35</sup> Author's personal reflections.

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people to get to know. They are well connected and have a solid understanding of their community and their government. Regardless of political party affiliation, I found many members of the House of Commons were friendly and approachable.

Politics back in the United States will undoubtedly color your interactions with your host. I was in London during an administration change, which meant a new ambassador and very different policy priorities. Fortunately, many of those things were transparent to the Department of Defense, and it was possible to deflect or avoid a lot of the ensuing fireworks. As a military attaché you represent the Department of Defense. It is best to avoid sticky or controversial political rhetoric and center yourself only on defense policy and leave politics to the politicians. Musing or opining about the latest tweets is risky behavior for a military diplomat, and I recommend avoiding this.

### **Sharing Your Proud Service Traditions with the Diplomatic Corps, November 2017, London, UK**

*At most U.S. Embassies, a Marine Corps Birthday Ball is held to mark the occasion, like the type of event held at most Marine Corps units. This is a formal event, full of strict tradition and ceremony. Typically, this is the biggest social event of the year for the embassy. The event is both social, for embassy staff, and representational in that many local dignitaries are invited, and tickets usually sell out in a matter of hours. I used this event for years, taking advantage of the fact it was a ready-made event that celebrated my Service. However, it occurred to me that the event's popularity necessitated excluding most of the foreign attaché community. It dawned on me that I was missing a real opportunity. I created a separate event that focused on only the ceremonial part, including the cake cutting, reading of speeches, the Commandant's message, and all the pomp that goes with marking the Marine Corps birthday. With the help of the MSG detachment, we hosted an event to which we invited most of the military diplomatic corps and their spouses. This event was a huge hit and introduced a broad audience to the pride and professionalism of my Service. The community spoke of this event for months, and I was invited to several events as diplomats attempted to reciprocate something they felt honored to attend.<sup>36</sup>*

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<sup>36</sup> Author's personal reflections.

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One piece of advice about serving in a place like London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, and so on. The level of resentment you will get from your colleagues from your same Service back home will be thinly veiled. Usually, these things are disguised as humor, with comments such as, "I'll bet the language preparation for London was tough" or "if my wife knew your job in London existed, she would hate me for not having it." Personally, I never let these things bother me. Appointment as a military attaché is an extremely competitive process. The screening and application package is exhausting, and the selection boards are quite discerning. Also unnoticed by your peers is that unless they are in the field or at sea, they are probably not regularly working evenings and weekends like you are. My experience is that there are no "easy" jobs in the military, and that challenge is why we serve.

## CONCLUSION

For the aspiring or selected attaché, preparation is where you will gain the most benefit. It is impossible to know too much about local language, culture, history, and local norms. Once you hit the ground for your assignment, there will not be time to make up your homework. For certain, this assignment will be like no other for you and your family. While at times frustrating, I do not know any veterans of the attaché service who regretted their time out on post. Prepare, work, enjoy, and your family will probably talk about the experience for the rest of their lives. For the reader of casual interest about the role of the military attaché, I assure you that the role of the military diplomat is one of the most challenging, sensitive, and rewarding positions in the U.S. Department of Defense. For more reading, there are a few books and reminiscences available.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> One such book of note is by Frank Marcio De Oliveira, *Attaché Extraordinaire: Vernon Walters in Brazil* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010).

## ◉ Chapter Twelve ◉

### Foreign Policy Advisor 101

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#### *Civ-Mil Partnership in the Global War on Terrorism*

Joanne Cummings and Heather Steil

#### INTRODUCTION

Political minefields abound in military theaters. Military leaders must have a firm grasp of the effect political views and activities have on U.S. military operations. In the same way, leaders must appreciate the impact U.S. military operations have on diplomatic relations with the governments of the countries where those operations take place, as well as on our relations with affected allies.<sup>1</sup> Under ideal circumstances, the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State are aligned in their respective approaches to carrying out U.S. foreign policy; however, the differences in cultures, resources, and tactics can present challenges. Similarly, a shift in U.S. foreign policy can have a significant impact on military operations.<sup>2</sup> Equally important is a commander's ability to navigate the political landscapes in their areas of operations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*Strategy*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-18 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018). *Strategy* highlights the relationship of power, politics, and change (I-2, 3). "The military professional who believes politics has no place in strategy does not understand the fundamentals of strategy."

<sup>2</sup>Wanda Nesbitt, three-time ambassador and former senior vice president of the National Defense University, wrote: "War is the continuation of politics by other means." This famous quote from the nineteenth-century Prussian Gen Carl von Clausewitz in *On War* (1832) is well known to officers throughout the U.S. military. My guess is that a smaller percentage of foreign service officers are familiar with it, although it is as relevant for servicemembers as it is for those in uniform. Why is it relevant? Because military force is one of several elements of national power that a nation can use to achieve its foreign policy goals. Others include economics and trade; information and public diplomacy; and negotiation and foreign aid. Wanda Nesbitt, "Working with the U.S. Military: Let's Take Full Advantage of Opportunities," *Foreign Service Journal* 94, no. 5 (June 2017).

<sup>3</sup>Dan Green, "Counterinsurgency Diplomacy: Political Advisors at the Operational and Tactical Levels," *Military Review* 87, no. 3 (May-June 2007): 24-30.

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Samuel Huntington, in his classic 1957 work on civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State*, noted that the amount of military assistance and related military advisory groups created a challenge to the balance of DOD and State Department roles and authorities in executing U.S. foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> While some have criticized the “proconsular” roles of military commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan during periods of occupation, several factors decrease the risk of U.S. commanders casting off civil authority—communications, bureaucratic institutions, and most importantly the coordination of civil and military authority on the ground.<sup>5</sup> That coordination, however, often relies as much on the willingness of individuals to engage in good faith as on a clearly delineated chain of command.<sup>6</sup>

At every stage of a campaign, from operations to occupation and stabilization, “No senior military figure operates solely in a military arena, and the international consequences of uninformed action can be tragic—and counter-productive.”<sup>7</sup> In each of these phases, U.S. military leaders have a unique resource at their disposal as they unpack these diplomatic and policy nuances—foreign policy advisors (POLADs).

Dating back to World War II, when Supreme Allied Commander in Europe General Dwight D. Eisenhower tapped U.S. diplomat Robert D. Murphy as his advisor, the POLAD program expanded after 2001 from just more than a dozen to about 90 POLADs by 2012—more than a five-fold increase.<sup>8</sup> POLADs are now assigned to most Service chiefs, all combatant commanders, most component commanders, relevant Pentagon and other DOD offices in Washington, as

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<sup>4</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (1957, repr.; New York: Vintage Books, 1964).

<sup>5</sup>Carnes Lord, *Proconsuls: Delegated Political-Military Leadership from Rome to America Today* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Michael P. Noonan, “The Cartography of Command and U.S. Civil-Military Relations Narratives,” *Orbis* 58, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 147–57.

<sup>6</sup>Cynthia A. Watson, *Combatant Commands: Origins, Structure, and Engagements* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 2011), in Noonan, “The Cartography of Command and U.S. Civil-Military Relations Narratives,” 147–57.

<sup>7</sup>David T. Jones, “From the Field: Mr. Jones Goes to the Pentagon,” *Foreign Service Journal* 69, no. 2 (March 1992): 18–19.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964); and “A Window on State-Defense Relations: The POLAD System: The POLAD Program: History and Current Circumstances from the Political Advisor (POLAD)” (conference sponsored by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Simons Center of the Command and General Staff College Foundation, 10 May 2013).

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well as theater special operations commands and special operations component commands.<sup>9</sup> From 1943 to 2000, POLADs were typically U.S. foreign service officers (FSOs)—diplomats who had previously been ambassadors—serving on the staff of military service chiefs, service secretaries, or regional combatant commanders. National need and command demand grew rapidly at the height of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and POLADs of varied ranks were deployed where their skills and expertise were most needed.

POLADs are managed by the State Department's Office of State-Defense Integration, which facilitates coordination between the Department of State and Department of Defense. The office falls under the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, which provides policy direction in the areas of international security, security assistance, military operations, defense strategy and plans, and defense trade.

As State Department foreign service officers, POLADs report directly to either a commander or directorate chief, providing a critical civilian and diplomatic perspective. They inform military strategizing and decision making in order to align with U.S. foreign policy priorities. POLADs help commanders support U.S. foreign policy with a united political-military approach, understand the political landscapes of the countries in which they operate, and engage effectively with foreign military and political leaders. POLADs are essential advisors for military leaders in the messy mix of conflict and diplomacy, providing sound counsel and a broad political, humanitarian, and economic point of view.

POLAD positions are not identical. A command deployed to execute (or advise) kinetic operations is a different context from a combatant command (COMCOM) headquarters, and each type of command has its own specific requirements for a POLAD. For example, a conflict zone demands deep local knowledge and extraordinary flexibility, while a headquarters requires expertise in a broad range of countries and security agreements. Special operations commands of various stripes function quite differently, and the POLAD's role is often focused on building and maintaining relationships.

Deployed division commanders might use their POLADs to inform and facilitate engagements with local leaders, whether administrative, religious, civic, or social personages. These relationships are often less formal and the POLAD's

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<sup>9</sup> "Special Report: A Summary of the Political Advisor (POLAD) Conference conducted May 10, 2013, in Washington, D.C." (brief, American Foreign Service Association, Washington, DC, 10 May 2013).



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civilian identity can ease connections when there has been tension over military actions. In southern Iraq, in one case, the commander had the POLAD wander freely around meeting compounds with minimal security, knowing that she would bring back more candid reports than formal leaders were likely to convey. At the two-star level, meetings with the U.S. embassy are infrequent, but the connection to the ambassador's country team remains strong through the POLAD's active engagement.

Commanders in Joint (multiple military branches) and combined (multinational coalitions) commands are more hierarchical, more complex in composition, and more formal in most engagements. The commander will have regular communication with the ambassador, often in a direct relationship, but the POLAD—with discretion—is often the sounding board for each meeting. During a violent attack on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad in January 2020, partly in reaction to the U.S. strike that killed the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—Quds Force (IRGC-QF) commander Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) assigned his POLAD to represent him in the embassy operations center, to communicate security challenges and needs directly with him. Although the commanding general of CJTF-OIR was American, the Coalition included troops and leaders from 30 countries, and their forces faced repercussions from the varied reactions against U.S. operations and policy. Every U.S. commanding general deliberated carefully about the implications of U.S. statements and policies on the cohesion of the Coalition as a whole—what the UK two-star deputy called “good coalition karma.”<sup>10</sup>

Commanders of special operations task forces, such as the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), are also in close communication with ambassadors, the country teams, and CIA station chiefs in all countries of concern. A special operations POLAD will be deeply engaged in command discussion of planning, analysis, and goals; more than this, they engage directly with intelligence community (IC) elements and may be deployed by the commander to manage relations with an embassy on the command's behalf.

Although not the topic of this book, the multinational coalition brings another flavor of POLAD—some UK general officers are assigned POLADs who are civilians within the UK Ministry of Defence, not diplomats from the Foreign

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<sup>10</sup> Direct communication with author Cummings from UK MajGen Gerald Strickland, August 2020.

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Office. In addition, where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is present, a senior civilian usually accompanies the military commander.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter will depict real-world examples from command headquarters and in the field that illustrate the roles POLADs play in helping commanders incorporate political, economic, and other policy realities in their planning and operations. It will also offer recommendations for commanders and prospective POLADs on how to maximize the success of their assignments.

## THE MILITARY CONTEXT FOR INTERAGENCY AND POLAD ENGAGEMENT

The American experience of WWII generated new perspectives on the role of the military, both in terms of uniformed and civilian leadership and also regarding coalitions with other nations. Organizational structures that had met their requirements through WWI were overstretched by the growing demands on an internationally engaged United States. After unification of the military Services by the National Security Act of 1947 and designation of the Department of Defense in 1949, the national security system—including the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council—improved presidential oversight and leadership and took on the general configuration maintained for four decades.<sup>12</sup>

Growing inter-Service rivalries, however, remained a challenge, as failures in the 1970s and 1980s attributed to poor communication, coordination, and cooperation highlighted the need to address poorly defined command responsi-

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<sup>11</sup> Steve Kashkett, a senior foreign service officer and senior POLAD to U.S. Special Operations Command 2012–13, describes the growth of POLADs in special operations commands. “Embedded State foreign policy advisers (POLADs) are now assigned throughout the special operations community within the U.S. military. This diplomatic presence extends not just to the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) based at MacDill AFB in Tampa, Florida, which oversees all special operations forces (SOF) worldwide, but also to the headquarters of each of the functional component special operations commands for the four branches of the military and to the theater special operations commands in each region of the world. At the same time, SOCOM has assigned its own dedicated SOF liaison officers to the State Department and more than two dozen U.S. embassies. . . . Like the ethos of career diplomats, the SOF philosophy recognizes the value of nurturing ties to foreign cultures, and acknowledges the stability value of addressing the critical needs of civilians.” Steven Kashkett, “Special Operations and Diplomacy: A Unique Nexus,” *Foreign Service Journal* 94, no. 5 (June 2017).

<sup>12</sup> National Security Act of 1947, Pub. L. No. 80-253, 61 Stat. 495 (1947).

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bilities in complex operations.<sup>13</sup> The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act established a congressional mandate for the joint command and control structures we have today.<sup>14</sup> Burgeoning opportunities for Joint Service within the uniformed Services and an increase in cross-over tours between counterterrorism and intelligence officers in DOD and the CIA generated a markedly different mindset and sense of “jointness” or interagency proficiency. From the perspective of a true whole-of-government approach, however, this reinforced a sense that the circle of DOD, the intelligence community, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) comprised all relevant interagency arms, while leaving out the State Department and other civilian agencies.

As Ambassador Ronald Neumann (Ret) points out, the interagency process (adjective, not noun) is not a single formal flow, but many—“formal, informal, and personal. . . . Everyone wants a hand on the steering wheel, and most want a foot on the brake . . . [but] only a few drivers will be trying to use the gas pedal to get things done.”<sup>15</sup> Even within the State Department and among DOD organizations, internal disagreements and rivalries get in the way of moving forward. Among military organizations, the very size of the endeavor requires comprehensive coordination among offices and agencies. At COCOMs, the number of boards, cells, and working groups is beyond the capacity of most embassies; embassy priorities of staffing and mission needs may not accommodate embassy participation in military meetings at the level requested.<sup>16</sup> There are more than 30 U.S. government departments and agencies operating overseas, with larger embassies having full offices for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service, Department of Commerce’s Foreign Commercial Service, legal attachés

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<sup>13</sup> Ufot B. Inamete, “The Unified Combatant Command System: Centerpiece of the 1986 U.S. Armed Forces Reforms,” *Expeditions with MCUP* (7 January 2022): <https://doi.org/10.36304/ExpwMCUP.2022.02>

<sup>14</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-433, 100 Stat. 992. (1986); and Kathleen J. McInnis, “Defense Primer: Commanding U.S. Military Operations,” Congressional Research Service, 8 November 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Amb Ronald Neumann (Ret) is the president of the American Academy of Diplomacy and was ambassador to Algeria, Bahrain, and Afghanistan as well as a deputy assistant secretary of State for the Middle East and a senior officer in Iraq. Ronald Neumann, “Demystifying the Interagency Process: The Ambassador’s Role,” Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, accessed 15 November 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Ted Strickler, “Working with the U.S. Military—10 Things the Foreign Service Needs to Know,” *Foreign Service Journal* 92, no. 8 (October 2015).

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from both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Library of Congress, Department of Homeland Security, and other teams relevant to U.S. interests in the country. On the ground, an ambassador is the president's representative and leads the country team, a mechanism for active interagency coordination, to carry out the embassy's mission across the range of policy priorities.<sup>17</sup> Military personnel within the embassy are under ambassadorial authority; those in a combatant commander's direct chain of command are not. The relationship between ambassador and commander is clearest in two conditions: full combat conditions and an absence of combat operations.<sup>18</sup> Everything in the middle requires active, sincere, and consistent effort to maintain a unified presentation of U.S. foreign policy.

These two separate chains of command can create confusion, both in Washington and abroad. A POLAD can mitigate grumbles of "lane crossing" by supporting a full flow of information and ensuring that each leader gets potential hot wires flagged before sparks fly. Exchanging information on the ground, though, is easier to manage than the separate reporting lines to Washington. The DOD and State Department have different reporting priorities, varieties, and tempos. Raw reports may reach some DOD offices and inform DC discussions before embassy analysis gives context to the anecdotes. More detrimental, however, are complaints to home offices about country team or COCOM partners that have not been raised at the local level. Again, the POLAD has an ear to these several pieces of ground.

David C. Litt recently wrote that as POLAD to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) two decades ago, he realized that "we did not speak the same organizational language ('diplospeak' vs. 'milspeak') and did not share the same organizational values (tolerance for ambiguity, need for 'end states' and 'planning'). Even our 'home base' concept was different (e.g., 'forward deployed' in embassies vs. garrisoned in mostly stateside military bases)."<sup>19</sup> David Jones, commenting in 1992 on his POLAD experience (as one of only 10 POLADs worldwide at that time), said, "The Pentagon has never met an audio-visual aid it didn't like. State has never met an audio-

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<sup>17</sup> Chief of mission, 22 U.S.C. § 3927.

<sup>18</sup> F. John Bray, *The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership: Strategy and Institutional Friction* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> David C. Litt, "Notes for American Diplomacy on Civil-Military Relations," *American Diplomacy*, October 2016.

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visual aid.”<sup>20</sup> Technology has moved far beyond the audiovisual resources available in the 1980s, but how it is used to brief remains a point of difference—and often disparagement—between the State Department and DOD. There are tangible distinctions. In the DOD, the crucial military PowerPoint slides, requiring labor and rehearsals that the State Department would not prioritize, culminates in a formal oral briefing of bullet points; in the State Department, slide preparation and rehearsal would be seen as busywork, and FSOs are expected to be able to discuss relevant issues on the fly. The contrast is both budgetary (staff and equipment) and also philosophical (analysis and planning). As Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley wrote about her experience as POLAD to U.S. Cyber Command, “The vocabulary differences between agencies are real; the thought pattern differences are real; and the measurements of success are different, too.”<sup>21</sup>

Describing his learning curve as POLAD to the Commandant of the Marine Corps between 2006 and 2008, Donald M. Bishop claimed that Marines “have their own language made up of acronyms!”<sup>22</sup> However popular it is to identify the differences—for example, between “Mars and Venus”—the POLAD’s role is to understand and overcome any potential linguistic or philosophical barriers. The POLAD learns to speak PowerPoint and its bullets as fluently as acronyms, to mesh battle rhythm and embassy protocol, and provide judgment-free responses to questions about State and embassy workings. POLADs and commanders (and the command group) have an opportunity to develop a relationship that supports more candid exchange of views, especially in two- and three-star commands.

POLAD advisory roles promote an effective interaction of interagency partners in a unity of effort in the three “Ds”: diplomacy, defense, and development. True to form, DOD has coined several acronyms to describe the contributions of U.S. actors in achieving security strategy. Concepts like DIME (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic), whole-of-government, MIDFIELD (military, informational, diplomatic, financial, intelligence, economic, law, and development), and—for analysis of an operating environment—PMESII-PT (political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time) underscore the range of nonmilitary sources of power and influence. In interagency meetings, whether in Washington or in the field, these

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<sup>20</sup> Jones, “From the Field,” 18–19.

<sup>21</sup> Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, “A Diplomat in a Cyber World,” *Foreign Service Journal* 95, no. 5 (June 2018): 89.

<sup>22</sup> Donald M. Bishop, “Take It from a Marine: Lead with Lingo, Manage with Metaphors,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 98, no. 8 (August 2014): 30–32.

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may convey DOD-defined expectations to State Department and USAID that they were not involved in planning. DOD, in return, may read this as an unwillingness to carry their proper load, in effect abdicating the process to DOD.

Once again, the POLAD has expertise in the nonmilitary aspects of DIME and its variants, and as part of the commander's team can assist all players in reading the same sheet of music. As the FSOs directly responsible to their military commanders, POLADs "provide USG [U.S. government] foreign policy perspectives and diplomatic considerations and establish linkages with US embassies in the AOR [area of responsibility] or joint operational area."<sup>23</sup> There is undeniably distrust between State and DOD on important issues—diplomats may resent the sheer numbers, the equipment, and the disdain for diplomacy of U.S. armed forces around an embassy, and military personnel may resent the living conditions, the condescension, and the apparent lack of interest in taking on DOD projects.<sup>24</sup> A few unfortunate interactions can flavor an individual's willingness to collaborate for years to come—a parallel to the impact of hostile behavior from U.S. personnel toward citizens of the country itself.

Experienced POLADs provide a civilian and diplomatic perspective to security challenges that is not inherent in DOD thinking. They can also establish lines of communication that prove helpful to a commander. As the case studies below demonstrate, POLADs are a valuable asset to ensure DOD-State Department alignment in executing U.S. foreign policy and achieving national security objectives.

## CASE STUDY: MEDIATING A CIVILIAN-MILITARY COMPROMISE IN SYRIA

Syria came late to the Arab Spring movement that was sparked in Tunisia in 2010 and spread rapidly through the Arab Middle East. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad reverted to brutality when initial small efforts to protest for democracy challenged his authority.<sup>25</sup> The Syrian government's violent overreaction to

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<sup>23</sup> *Marine Air Ground Task Force: Civil-Military Operations*, MCCMOS Circular 3.0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2017), 88–89.

<sup>24</sup> Larry Butler, "Creeping Foreign Policy Militarization or Creeping State Department Irrelevance?," *Foreign Service Journal* 94, no. 5 (June 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Raymond Hinnebusch and Omar Imady, eds., *The Syrian Uprising: Domestic Origins and Early Trajectory* (Abingdon, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2018); and Raymond Hinnebusch and Omar Imady, "Introduction: Origins of the Syrian Uprising: From Structure to Agency," in *The Syrian Uprising*, 14.

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pro-Arab Spring graffiti in a southern school, and then Assad's wholesale arrest and torture of protesters as demonstrations spread in the country, increasingly fractured the country, and governing councils opposed to Assad were established across most of Syria.<sup>26</sup> Assad's refusal to accept political reform set the stage for Iranian ground support and Russian and Syrian Air Force bombardment of civilian centers. Syria devolved into a decade-plus civil war.

Enter the Islamic State in Iraq and *Sham*—an Arabic word for the Levant (ISIS)—which exploited popular anger toward the Syrian government and fractures among Syria's diverse religious and ethnic groups. ISIS expanded rapidly in both Syria and Iraq, spreading unrelenting violence, destruction, and fear. The U.S.-led Coalition joined the fight against ISIS in Syria in 2014, eventually supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a militia composed of Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, and Turkmen groups. The Syrian conflict and ISIS brutality exacted a tragic toll on the Syrian people; tens of thousands of people internally (internally displaced persons or IDPs) and externally were displaced from their homes, creating a massive refugee crisis.<sup>27</sup>

In 1991, the UN High Commission for Refugees had established the Al Hol camp as a humanitarian refuge. It expanded again in the early 2000s.<sup>28</sup> In 2018, it housed about 10,000 Syrians fleeing ISIS violence and grew rapidly when ISIS lost its final stronghold near the city of Deir al-Zor in March 2019. Thousands of Iraqis, Syrians, and other foreign nationals—including family members of ISIS fighters—arrived at the camp during and after the final weeks of ISIS's fight against the Coalition in the Middle Euphrates River Valley. The camp, housing mostly women and children (more than 60 percent under age 12), is administered by the Kurdish-led Self-Administration of Northeast Syria and supported by civilian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) funded by the U.S. government and other international donors.<sup>29</sup> Some camp residents continued to support ISIS and carried out violent activities within the camp—those who were caught were removed from the camp by local authorities.

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<sup>26</sup> Hinnebusch and Imady, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>27</sup> Marc Lynch, "The Political and Institutional Impact of Syria's Displacement Crisis: Introduction," *Middle East Law and Governance* 9, no. 3 (2017): 223–31, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763375-00903003>.

<sup>28</sup> Neil J. Saad, "The Al Hol Camp in Northeast Syria: Health and Humanitarian Challenges," *BMJ Global Health* 5, no. 7 (2020): <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002491>.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Luquerna, "The Children of ISIS: Statelessness and Eligibility for Asylum under International Law," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 21, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 148–93.

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U.S. Central Command, while acknowledging the humanitarian character of Al Hol, recognized the violence within the camp and the potential threat to military objectives if ISIS were allowed to groom and recruit the next generation of fighters from the camp's vulnerable population of children.<sup>30</sup> In 2021, the CENTCOM commander, General Kenneth F. McKenzie, directed Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve to develop a plan to improve security at Al Hol.<sup>31</sup> A reduction of ISIS-related violence in the camp would make it safer for the camp operators and NGOs to provide humanitarian services.

The State Department and USAID had a large stake in the Al Hol camp. They were aware of and concerned about the security threats within the camp, but they worried that military efforts to upgrade the security posture would disrupt the humanitarian nature of the camp. While State Department/USAID and the DOD elements viewed the camp through different lenses, all sides wanted the same thing—a safer camp. One of the challenges to reaching consensus on a security plan was the reticence of the humanitarian organizations that operated in the camp; they feared the security upgrades would “militarize” the camp and impede their ability to provide humanitarian services.

A second challenge was that each stakeholder had different funding resources and different legal authorities that came with strict restrictions on how they could be applied. CENTCOM wanted to use a unique funding mechanism (Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund—CTEF) to improve camp security by providing equipment, increasing the number of guards (to include women), and improving their proficiency. Because CTEF was strictly limited to counter-ISIS activities, the project justification reflected that. For humanitarian and development professionals, however, such strong counter-ISIS language used in connection with a civilian camp was unsettling.<sup>32</sup>

The POLAD at CENTCOM coordinated closely with CENTCOM's

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<sup>30</sup> For additional context, see Mona Yacoubian, “Al-Hol: Displacement Crisis Is a Tinderbox that Could Ignite ISIS 2.0,” U.S. Institute of Peace, 11 May 2022. “Al-Hol embodies the many complexities associated with ISIS-related displacement. Beyond the clear concerns regarding the children whose protection is required under international humanitarian law, the women in the camp include victims, bystanders and perpetrators of extremist violence under ISIS. Some of the camp's women have played the role of enforcers, perpetuating ISIS's extremist ideology and norms by meting out harsh punishment, including death, to those women who do not obey. Other women have suffered significant trauma both inside the camp and under ISIS rule while living in the so-called ‘caliphate.’”

<sup>31</sup> Author's personal notes, CENTCOM documents.

<sup>32</sup> Author's personal notes, CENTCOM documents.



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USAID advisor to bridge the gap between military and civilian stakeholders. The first step was to get the right people talking to each other. Within the State Department, multiple offices had equities in Al Hol, and the POLAD was able to reach back to Washington from CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa to make the right connections. During the course of several months, the POLAD mediated open-minded and frank discussions at various levels among CENTCOM, State, and USAID to reach an understanding. As a result of the POLAD's advocacy, the State Department recognized the value of CENTCOM's plan to reduce the ISIS threat in Al Hol because it contributed to the camp's overall security; and CENTCOM understood the need for NGO buy-in to prevent any perception that it sought to militarize a humanitarian facility.

The Al Hol project could easily have become a point of contention among CENTCOM, State Department, and USAID—and the NGOs. While points of friction remained, the patient and persistent engagement among the stakeholders paid off. Having a POLAD and USAID advisor involved early in the planning process was critical to helping each side understand the other's priorities, concerns, and limitations, and it ultimately contributed to a plan that addressed the security threat while respecting the humanitarian nature of the camp.

### CASE STUDY: PATHFINDING THROUGH IRAQI POLITICS

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003—variously, to overthrow Saddam Hussein, to block terrorists, or to bring democracy—initiated a sequence of events still heatedly discussed in both military and civilian circles. The U.S. military continues to be engaged almost 20 years later, although both domestic Iraq and American contexts have changed, and the world stage has a very different set of props and actors. Despite the heated rhetoric of pro-Iranian parties in Baghdad, the post-2014 U.S. military presence in Iraq is significantly different from the 2003–11 period.

Iraq experienced the Arab Spring uprising in the context of seven years of American military presence, Iranian influence, and ethno-sectarian and class divisions. The sectarian policies of the Iraqi government allowed openings for earlier groups to rebrand as ISIS—the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham—and, against far larger numbers in the Iraqi Security Forces, to rapidly gain control of a third of Iraq. When the most respected Shia leader in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called on all Iraqis to take up arms to defend the country, tens

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of thousands responded.<sup>33</sup> Iran, equally hostile to the anti-Shia ISIS, engaged quickly in support of Iraqi Shia and was instrumental in blocking the ISIS advance toward Baghdad. The United States, with a strong multinational coalition and at the fervent request of the Iraqi government, responded through the Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve in March 2014, pushing back ISIS and rebuilding ISF strength. The fight against ISIS territorial control inside Iraq was complete in 2017.<sup>34</sup>

The fight against ISIS, which had consumed both political and military resources, was largely over, but governance had not improved. The freedom, democracy, human rights, and social welfare demanded by citizens across the country did not materialize.<sup>35</sup> Protesters took to the streets in October 2019. Marking a distinct shift in Iraq, the largely Shia protestors in southern Iraq and Baghdad directed their anger toward Shia party offices and Iranian targets that together represented a “closed system of elite rule.”<sup>36</sup> Adel Abdul Mahdi, then prime minister, was blamed for his sectarian policies.<sup>37</sup> Unlike other Arab Spring movements, Iraqi protestors sought reform in the system and not necessarily a complete overthrow. As long as their demands for reform remained unmet, the protestors continued to challenge both the political and the security institutions of the country.<sup>38</sup>

Prime Minister Abdul Madhi resigned under pressure in November 2019. Despite COVID-19, a budget reeling from low oil prices, and continuing security concerns, the political elites blocked the first two candidates proposed by Iraqi president Barham Salih out of fear that their own interests would be jeopardized.<sup>39</sup> Mustafa al-Kadhimi, with a background in both journalism and intel-

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<sup>33</sup> Sarhang Hamasaeed and Garrett Nada, “Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 War,” U.S. Institute of Peace, 29 May 2020.

<sup>34</sup> As noted in comments on Syria, the lack of a trusted government during civil war left many social cracks open for ISIS exploitation.

<sup>35</sup> Biner Aziz, “Is There a Magic Antidote for Iraq’s Political Deadlock?,” Wilson Center, 19 March 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Hamzeh al-Shadeedi and Erwin van Veen, *Iraq’s Adolescent Democracy: Where to Go from Here* (The Hague, Netherlands: Clingendael Institute, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Nathalie Bussemaker, “Iraq’s New Government: What to Know,” Council on Foreign Relations, 11 August 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Munqith Dagher, “The Tishreeni Movement Continues: Change Is Inevitably Coming to Iraq,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 June 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Shadeedi and van Veen, *Iraq’s Adolescent Democracy*.

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ligence, became prime minister of Iraq in May 2020 as a compromise candidate among the various political parties. Al-Kadhimi had to walk a fine line between calls to remove all U.S. troops from Iraq and the continued need for U.S. military support to the government of Iraq (GOI) in its fight against ISIS.

Kadhimi's fragile political position prevented him from publicly supporting a U.S. military presence in Iraq for fear of antagonizing the Iran-backed groups pushing to expel U.S. forces. While senior Iraqi political and military leaders privately acknowledged the Iraqi military's dependence on U.S.-led Coalition forces to keep pressure on ISIS, their public rhetoric was carefully constructed to avoid feeding the narrative that the GOI was America's puppet. A political misstep could have endangered the counter-ISIS mission and resulted in a full U.S. military withdrawal, quickly followed by other Coalition members. CENTCOM and OIR commanders had to acknowledge the tricky politics in their engagements with their Iraqi counterparts, and their language in these engagements had to align with State Department and U.S. embassy communications on the diplomatic side.

Despite his political weakness, Kadhimi remained the best chance of keeping a U.S. military presence in Iraq to enable Iraqi forces to fight ISIS. But he needed cover from his political opponents using the presence of foreign forces as a rallying cry to remove him from his position. Close coordination between DOD and State Department, facilitated in large part by the POLADs at CENTCOM and CJTF-OIR, shaped both private talking points and public narratives. For example, the State Department wanted to broaden the U.S.-Iraq relationship from a strong focus on the security partnership to one that included political, economic, and cultural aspects. The statements issued following U.S.-Iraq strategic dialogues directed attention to a more normalized bilateral relationship. Additionally, the U.S. interagency agreed to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Iraq and to transition Operation Inherent Resolve from a "combat" mission to an "advise, assist, and enable" role.<sup>40</sup> These steps allowed the United States to continue supporting the GOI's fight against ISIS while countering the anti-Kadhimi rhetoric.

To preserve the military mission in Iraq, it was important for U.S. mili-

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<sup>40</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement on the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue," press release, 7 April 2021; and U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement on the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Dialogue," press release, 26 July 2021.

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tary leaders to understand the broader dynamics at play.<sup>41</sup> POLADs were able to provide that insight and helped synchronize the military talking points with the diplomatic language used with Iraqi military and political leaders.

### CASE STUDY:

#### BREAKING THE ICE WITH SHEIKHS IN ANBAR

In 2003, U.S. authorities judged the western Iraqi city of Fallujah, in al Anbar province, as not hostile. During succeeding months, a series of events turned the quiet city to violence and then the largest post-invasion battle in the country. The First Battle of Fallujah (Operation Vigilant Resolve) began in March 2004 and resulted in hundreds of Iraqi deaths, noncombatants accounting for more than half, and 27 Americans. Unable to achieve a definitive victory, U.S. troops transferred authority to an Iraqi security force that eventually joined with nationalist and extremist groups vying for control in Fallujah. By November, a joint U.S.-Iraqi-UK offensive (Operation al-Fajr and Operation Phantom Fury) devolved into a bloody advance into urban neighborhoods that multiple extremist groups had turned into interconnected bunkers—often against the wishes of the civilian owners and residents. Both militant and Coalition actions drove most of the city’s 300,000 inhabitants to flee, seeking refuge in schools, mosques, relatives’ homes, and (more rarely) in tents. Tens of thousands, however, were unable to leave. The brutal fighting—the Second Battle of Fallujah—damaged most of the homes, shops, and infrastructure in the city. By late January 2005, residents were slowly being allowed to enter the city and assess what was left.

In immediate post-conflict situations like Fallujah, civilian POLADs have the advantage of being accepted as an intermediary with local populations and are at times better able to have open conversations with ordinary folks, nota-

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<sup>41</sup> In this way, POLADs can, to an extent, alleviate DOD’s frustration with State: “State’s biggest shortfall is a failure to provide military planners and commanders with achievable political objectives. Without those clearly defined political objectives, the military will focus on strictly military objectives and establish a military definition of victory.” Strickler, “Working with the U.S. Military.”

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bles, and foreign officials.<sup>42</sup> Speaking the language helps, and the State Department's extensive language training program at the Foreign Service Institute was ramping up the numbers of diplomats prepared for engaging directly, without interpreters.

During the Second Battle of Fallujah, the future CJTF-OIR POLAD was the State Department refugee coordinator advising U.S. military leaders on humanitarian response. The FSO traveled weekly to Fallujah to coordinate with Marines and Iraqis how the thousands of displaced Fallujah civilians would return and how they could be compensated for destroyed homes. As in most meetings between U.S. military and Iraqis, a long table divided the participants, usually seated on each side in series rows based on rank and status. All conversation was filtered through interpreters of varied abilities, and neither U.S. nor Iraqi monolingual participants were able to assess what meaning was actually conveyed. To the loss of all involved, no personal engagement was attempted before or after the formal meeting—no conversation, networking, or pull-aside clarifications. Senior Anbar sheikhs (tribal leaders) and military leaders arrived for a significant negotiation on compensation for property damage during the fighting, a measure the Iraqis viewed as critical to their honor. The table was in place, chairs were arranged, and each group was seated facing each other. Neither side made eye contact, smiled, or interacted with the other as everyone waited an hour for the meeting to begin.

The State Department officer recognized a problem—the Americans were showing disrespect to the Iraqi sheikhs by ignoring their presence. Needlessly antagonizing the other side in a negotiation was not a good strategy. An opportunity—getting an informal sense of play from important community leaders, gathered in one place, available for dialogue—also presented itself. The State

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<sup>42</sup> LtGen William Troy, director of the Army staff 2013: "Essentially, the POLAD is at the center of everything, not that POLADs can make everything work perfectly, but they can from their experience reach out and touch all of these bits and pieces. Specifically, the POLAD can see intelligence and operational information and assure both are taken into consideration. Moreover, they can touch other places, including attachés, embassies, and combatant commanders. Bureaucratic practice tends to limit uniformed personnel from contacting other agencies or services. A POLAD can contact both easily and naturally without undue bureaucracy. . . . In one sense, the function of the POLAD is to be a kind of osmotic barrier and figure out what information to let pass across the filter between the two authorities to keep coordination without violating an officer's responsibility and loyalty to the commander." "A Window on State-Defense Relations: The POLAD System," in "A Conference on Interagency Cooperation" (Summary of the Political Advisor [POLAD] Conference, Washington, DC, 10 May 2013).

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Department officer, a civilian woman who spoke Arabic, crossed over to the Iraqi side of the room and began offering greetings to the front row, the most senior sheikhs. Colleagues in the room reported that each sheikh, after being greeted with respect and a brief conversation, metamorphosed from a stern and impassive demeanor to great animation and pleasure. The Iraqis were delighted to be recognized as individuals, not merely a group of petitioners. That American recognition by the civilian officer generated a more positive attitude among the sheikhs, increasing the relational power of the U.S. military, and improving the outcome of the negotiation on a proposed compensation schedule. The sheikhs' responses were eased by acknowledgment of their status and honor, and the commander was able to achieve agreement on what he had feared would be a serious point of dispute. With increased confidence that they would be able to restore homes and shops, IDPs and returnees engaged more easily with U.S. troops at checkpoints and on patrol. Equally important, the sheikhs did not go home angry, resentful, and targets for militia recruitment. Half an hour of personal conversation paid off in spades.

#### CASE STUDY: TEAMING WITH AN EMBASSY

The POLAD's support is valuable to any commander carrying out a mission in complex conditions—as conditions usually are. Conversely, glitches in relations between a commander and an ambassador can scuttle the most elaborate plans. U.S. security objectives cannot be achieved in the short term and assured for the long term without a constructive relationship between the two. Commanders who demonstrate tangible trust and confidence in their POLAD can lay the groundwork with the embassy for an ongoing productive relationship between commander and the chief of mission (COM). A trusted POLAD is often able to help a command and embassy to better understand each other's perspectives on the value—and consequences—of a proposed military action.

The chief of mission is the most senior American official in any country and also has ultimate authority over all official American personnel aside from those under a military combatant commander. Many U.S. missions include personnel from other federal agencies, typically including Defense, USAID, Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, and Justice. The largest embassies may have staff from even more agencies. Military personnel assigned to an embassy—typically the Defense Attaché Office, and at larger posts a separate Office of Defense Cooperation and the embassy's Marine Security Guards—report to the chief of mission, not the combatant commander. Embassy logistics, budgeting, and regulation are

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complex, and establishing or expanding a military presence in a mission facility requires military acceptance of the ambassador's authority.

Countless high-level discussions in Washington, DC, about the relevant titles, authorities, and chain of command involved in placing military personnel in an embassy have stumbled over on one key question: Who decides what military personnel inside the mission may do and, more importantly for many ambassadors, what could they be prevented from doing? For example, in the case of Special Operations Forces operating under chief of mission authority, the ambassador wants assurances that operators will not carry out operations prior to briefing and obtaining formal concurrence from the ambassador. In the same vein, military leadership needs confidence in the ambassador's support for the broad effort and assurance that the embassy front office would not arbitrarily (in their view) interfere with planned operations. Theoretically and legally, they are under chief of mission authority and follow the COM's orders. In reality—and this is an issue with both civilian and military agencies within an embassy who have bosses back home they need to keep happy—they do not always stay aligned with the chief of mission's intent. The embassy's deputy chief of mission, who plays the role of deputy ambassador on policy issues and chief of staff on management, is generally tasked with keeping the embassy's disparate agencies moving in the same direction and following the ambassador's guidance.

An example: as POLAD to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), an FSO traveled frequently with JSOC's three-star commander to engage on counterterrorism with officials of other countries where al-Qaeda was a focus. These visits sometimes included engagements with high-level host country officials; they always included meetings at the embassy. Tajikistan, bordered by China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan, was receiving increased pressure from al-Qaeda and associated groups, and the commander and team visited U.S. Embassy Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to obtain the ambassador's agreement for a military analyst to be placed in the embassy, to gain insight into growing al-Qaeda (AQ) activities in the region. JSOC's intelligence officers laid out the threat, their assessment that AQ's expansion was aggressive and ongoing, and a well-reasoned proposal to incorporate a qualified individual in the appropriate office at Embassy Dushanbe. The ambassador and country team resisted the proposal, expressing several concerns. How would this fit into COM authority and chain of command? Is there a risk that the placement would lead to kinetic op-

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erations, seen as provocative? Would this negatively affect the embassy's overall priorities in Tajikistan?<sup>43</sup>

The JSOC team was frustrated that their presentation had not been successful. Following the meeting, the POLAD debriefed the JSOC team and walked them through the embassy's concerns that had not been addressed—because JSOC had not understood the subtext. The JSOC commander decided to send the POLAD back to Dushanbe, alone, for talks with the embassy leadership to demonstrate the commander's willingness to address the ambassador's concerns and—most importantly—to enable a candid conversation. In this command, the POLAD was fully incorporated into the command group and had insight into the commander's priorities and reasoning. From that foundation, the POLAD identified the points of overlapping concern—for JSOC, bringing specialized eyes and training to the forward line, allowing live coordination among inter-agency representatives; for the embassy, gaining direct access to analysis that helps shape U.S. security cooperation. This solution eased embassy apprehensions that unapproved operations might antagonize the already delicate bilateral relationship and gave the commander the means to gain agreement.

Several elements contributed to the POLAD's successful advocacy on JSOC's behalf. First, the commander respected and trusted the POLAD. Second, the commander respected the role played by embassies and ambassadors in implementing the U.S. foreign policies within which military operations take place. And third, the commander recognized that the command's goals could be best achieved by empowering the POLAD to link diplomatic and military roles.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Theoretically, the State Department and the Defense Department work in concert to implement the same U.S. foreign policy. But their different approaches, resources, and cultures can sometimes make it seem like they are on different teams playing in different games or, even worse, on opposing teams. It is important to think of those differences not as obstacles, but as a diverse toolbox for executing U.S. foreign policy. POLADs can facilitate this process by helping military commands coordinate effectively with State Department colleagues, interpret each other's procedures and constraints, and mediate when there are

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<sup>43</sup> Edward Lemon, "Talking Up Terrorism in Central Asia," Wilson Center Kennan Cable No. 38 (December 2018).



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misunderstandings or mistrust. The examples from Syria and Tajikistan demonstrate the value of POLADs in guiding State Department and DOD colleagues through complicated, or even contentious, situations to mutually beneficial outcomes.

POLADs are vital in helping military leaders understand the political and cultural landscape in which they operate. As we saw with the Iraq example, a failure to understand the political pressure Iraqi leaders faced to expel U.S. troops could have resulted in DOD's misinterpretation of the government of Iraq's true position and, ultimately, the premature withdrawal of U.S. forces. And a POLAD's cultural gesture with the sheikhs in Anbar opened the door for productive conversation and relationship building.

Finally, here are some practical suggestions to military commanders for utilizing POLADs:

1. Select a POLAD with whom you think you will have personal rapport and who has some familiarity with the military mission and culture.
2. Treat the POLAD as a respected member of the command staff and a trusted advisor.
3. Seek the POLAD's input early on when developing talking points for command leadership, planning documents, and strategies.
4. The POLAD may sometimes seem like an outlier from your uniformed staff. That is a feature, not a bug. Do not discount the POLAD's views out of hand—you brought a POLAD onboard to offer a different perspective.
5. Use the POLAD to find the most appropriate entry point into the State Department or embassy when interagency coordination is needed; include the POLAD in any communication with State.
6. Rely on the POLAD to mediate between the command and State Department stakeholders when there is a misunderstanding or misalignment of goals.
7. Demonstrate trust in the POLAD; the POLAD's ability to influence State Department and embassy interlocutors depends on their colleagues' perception of the commander's regard for the POLAD.
8. See the POLAD's civilian nature as an asset to gain access to contacts who might be intimidated by uniformed military personnel.
9. Recognize that U.S. military operations and activities have politi-

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cal consequences in the countries where they take place. And vice versa—political realities in those countries impact U.S. military objectives. Draw on the POLAD's insights to understand the political landscape.

10. Use the POLAD's cultural and linguistic knowledge to better understand the people affected by military operations.

## ◉ Chapter Thirteen ◉

# The Provincial Reconstruction Team Programs in Afghanistan and Iraq

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### *A Guide for Practitioners*

Alison Storsve

Civilian-military partnerships have the potential to transform operations, joining the essential elements of U.S. foreign policy: force, development, and diplomacy. They offer the opportunity to match diverse institutional cultures, planning approaches, and complementary skill sets to elevate critical thinking and avoid “group think” as illustrated in examples throughout this book.

But how to make such partnerships effective in practice? While many practitioners state it all comes down to relationships and personalities, there are clear best practices that can set up a partnership for a higher probability of success, starting with clear, shared objectives, as well as healthy doses of good humor, strong communication, and joint strategic leadership.

As the unfolding crisis in Ukraine since February 2022 and the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in 2021 illustrate, as do the myriad contemporary examples covered in this chapter, the types of confrontations and challenges the United States and its allies will face in the future will be complex emergencies—often likely to be long-term ones—that encompass far more than a force component. They will require effective marshaling of all the national and multilateral tools civilian-military partnerships feature, namely diplomacy, defense, humanitarian response, resilience building, and development.

Examples abound of operations and commands with “joined up” civilian and military leadership: combatant commands boast cadres of diplomats and sometimes think tank experts matched up with military officer counterparts at multiple ranks. As detailed elsewhere in this volume, in addition to Marine Security

**Table 13.1.** Useful distinctions for practitioners

Military	Foreign Service Officers of Departments of State, Agriculture, Commerce, and USAID
Specialists. U.S. military Services all have some version of military occupational specialty or enlisted classification.	Generalists. Meant to be “worldwide available” for assignment to all manner of embassies and country conditions, from highly developed and secure to dangerous or austere.
Rank worn publicly.	Rank in person, not shown outwardly (you have to ask).
Resource level: HIGH. In PRTs, the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) often ran into the millions of dollars per PRT, enabling even large infrastructure construction, with decision making at the unit level.	Resource level: LOW to HIGH. Diplomats often had a few thousand dollars to marshal for representational or public outreach events. Development workers might oversee any range of budgets for projects, running to the millions of dollars, but funds are often managed at capital or regional level.
Chain of command supreme.	Chain of command important, but can be shortcut via relationships, as long as there are no surprises.

Source: Courtesy of author, adapted by MCUP.

Guards, most embassies boast defense attaché and defense cooperation offices, often with additional Department of Defense representation specific to a country and playing an integral part of the ambassador’s country team. But for this “practitioner’s guide,” this chapter will turn to exploring experiences and lessons learned from about 11 years of civilian-military field codeployments in Iraq and Afghanistan: Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

WHAT ARE PRTS, AND WHY STUDY THEM FOR CIVILIAN-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP LESSONS? PRTs in Iraq (2005–11) and Afghanistan (2003–13) were small civilian-military teams typically comprising 15–25 military command, civil affairs, support, contracting, and engineering elements, alongside some blend of civil-

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ians typically from the U.S. Departments of State and Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>1</sup> On larger PRTs, beyond the foreign service officers, the civilian team sometimes included so-called “3161” hires, named after the section of U.S. law serving as the basis for their employment. In addition, the PRT was supported by a force protection unit, often soldiers from a National Guard unit. The PRTs sometimes employed additional civilian contract experts, such as police training specialists. Led by U.S. or allied Coalition partner militaries, the PRTs uniquely blended service branches, National Guard, and civilian elements.<sup>2</sup> These teams were intended to work in complex environments where local government services were nascent or rebuilding, and where the U.S. government and its coalition of allies and partners sought to advance political, development, and counterinsurgency aims.<sup>3</sup>

PRTs differed from more usual civilian-concentrated efforts occurring in post-conflict environments because many of the PRTs were placed in areas that continued to experience active violence, military operations, or periodic insurgent activity. As a result, some locations were more “permissive” than others for movement, for example, in Bamiyan and Herat (provinces that later became far less permissive), and civilians in the PRTs relied to varying degrees on their military counterparts for transport, security, and basic logistics.

The idea was that PRTs could assist mentoring and improving institutional effectiveness at the district or provincial level, build population confidence in civic services, and thus connect communities to a government that delivered on their needs (in contrast to insurgent groups’ models of justice, underwhelming education and health services, and insufficient infrastructure investment). PRTs aimed to stitch together national social fabric from local to regional to national levels, with the goal of providing skeptical populations positive, regularized interactions with all levels of their government and rule of law institutions, thus dissuading reliance on traditional patronage networks and informal judicial constructs. In hindsight, the level of ambition remains astonishing.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) personnel on PRTs were “on loan” from state-level Departments of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> Note: some ally-led PRTs in Afghanistan, such as the one in Kunduz headed by Germany, had a much larger civilian component than the U.S.-led PRTs, with higher-ranked German diplomats in the leadership structure.

<sup>3</sup> *Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Handbook*, 11-16 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army, 2011); and Jemila Abdulai, “State Department Accelerates Hiring for Afghanistan, Pakistan,” *Devex*, 17 May 2010.

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Much has been studied and written about whether this level of ambition was appropriate or achievable, and many authors have evaluated the concept of PRTs as an institution for propagating security, governance, and connectedness to civic services on unconventional battlefields. There is similarly extensive literature surrounding U.S. counterinsurgency theory and its evolution, going back to the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program of the Vietnam era.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the 2007 publication of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies*, Field Manual 3-24, largely underpinned the PRT approach and has since been updated to apply across services, reflective of the PRT experience in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will not make judgments or dive into those robust discussions. It instead will look to the PRTs as examples of long-term codeployment of civilian and military counterparts in stability operations that included austere, frequently volatile, and unstable environments, and distill lessons learned from those experiences that could improve the effectiveness of future civilian-military partnerships.

## SIMULTANEOUSLY DEVELOPED BUT DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT: MODELS REFLECT VARIED CONTEXT

There were several fundamental differences between PRT organization and doctrine in Afghanistan and Iraq. While the timing of their evolution overlapped, more than a year of PRT experience in Afghanistan and the U.S. Army's 2003–4 experience in Mosul, Iraq, under then-Major General David H. Petraeus, commander of the Army's 101st Airborne Division, informed Iraq PRTs' initial development.<sup>6</sup> Petraeus contributed to the fast evolution of Iraq PRTs into platforms with a "true" civil lead or colead with military counterparts, ultimately

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<sup>4</sup> "Military Records: The Office of Civil Operations and Rural Support (CORDS)," U.S. National Archives, 15 15, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Nagl, David Howell Petraeus, and James F. Amos, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> From the 2003 invasion of Iraq into 2004, MajGen Petraeus coordinated closely with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), including his civilian counterpart at the CPA-North headquarters in Erbil, Dr. Liane Saunders, a British diplomat, according to a retired U.S. diplomat. The precursor to PRTs at the provincial or governorate level was CPA's so-called governance teams, which were first established throughout the country in 2003. The head of the governance team was a U.S. diplomat based in Mosul, capital of the Nineveh governorate. See also Michael Gordon, "The Struggle for Iraq: Reconstruction; 101st Airborne Scores Success in Northern Iraq," *New York Times*, 4 September 2003.

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## Hey State, what do you bring to the fight?

The directness of the question came as a surprise in the tent at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where I had just met the leadership team of the PRT, headed by a U.S. Navy O-4 lieutenant commander, that would deploy to eastern Afghanistan a few months ahead of my arrival there. It was 2007 and we were embedded in training together, experiencing five days of civilian-military immersion at the tail end of my military counterparts' six weeks of redeployment training. USAID and U.S. Department of Agriculture counterparts and I first met the uniformed members of our PRT at a moment when they were already tired of the tent city, relentless rain, and unreliable Wi-Fi. Even before we linked up with them, our military PRT colleagues had mostly gelled as a mixed-unit, mixed Service team of Navy leadership, Army Civil Affairs, and National Guard force protection. The group was welcoming, but we three civilians in drab-toned clothes, ill-fitting flak vests, and off-kilter helmets might as well have been Martians.

That first question—who are you and what do you bring?—was an honest one, and formulates the repeated ritual introduction to most diplomatic-military partnerships. Without the nameplate and rank everyone else wears on their chests, military colleagues search for a moniker for their civilian counterparts. Our U.S. government identification cards (CACs) have our General Schedule (GS) equivalent, so that at least gives a soldier or officer a hint of our military rank equivalent, at least in terms of pay grade if not real-world responsibilities.

Diplomats and development workers bring political understanding, familiarity with foreign government structure and governance, communication skills—especially briefing and writing, expertise in community-led development, and relationship building and cultural assimilation skills built from years of experience in foreign capitals articulating U.S. foreign policy goals and implementing programs, projects, and oversight of U.S. taxpayer funding. U.S. Department of Agriculture representatives meanwhile came from the state level with different areas of agricultural expertise and worked closely with the PRT's Agricultural Development Teams (ADTs), first proposed in 2007.

Beyond concrete skills, diplomats and development professionals have reach-back to an entire second chain of command—to the U.S. embassy in the host country's capital city, Kabul, and back to civilian headquarters in Washington, DC—that leads the formulation of U.S. foreign policy and is an integral part of national security decision making. Seasoned practitioners have spent decades working with host governments and laying out compelling cases for how countries might align with U.S. interests to achieve their goals, while also carefully parsing host government policies for alignment with U.S. interests in trade, economic prosperity, democratic governance, and shared security objectives.

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mirroring his own collaboration with U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, from 2007. The tone set from the top in Iraq after a rough start in 2003–4—was one of equal strategic partnership, according to Department of State and USAID civilians who served there, with encouragement to implement this model throughout the operation and down to the lowest level.

Civilians in Iraq PRTs noted Iraq's institutional capacity, even in early post-conflict scenarios, benefited from its former longevity and greater diffusion from national to local levels than Afghanistan's, which had always been more decentralized. They observed Iraq also had been a more stable country with a higher baseline level of citizen education and more capable institutions. As the Iraq War progressed, most practitioners perceived the local environments for PRTs as more "permissive" for civilian activities. They also cited a generally more receptive environment for governance outreach and development activities, despite intense pockets and periods of violence, compared to their counterparts in Afghanistan. As a result, PRT civilians reported greater autonomy in the logistics of their own transport, meeting rhythm with local officials, and strategic planning of activities.

The substantial overhaul, overseen by Petraeus, of the U.S. Army/Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency* field manual underpinned PRT operations in both countries and seemed to see quicker implementation in Iraq where the teams were linked to a unified campaign, with expectations of partnership communicated through the ranks as guidance and orders.<sup>7</sup> The military disseminated State Department reporting cables through its own channels as military orders. Lending a clear level of credibility to civilian coleads throughout the command chain, practitioners said, removed the need to argue who you were. Paired with the fact "there was much more government to practice governance with" at all levels of society, according to a former PRT representative, Iraq PRT members reported a sense of greater effectiveness at regional and national levels where they were partnered.

Practitioners described Afghanistan PRTs differently, especially at their outset: more remote, and with a sense of civilians as enablers, enhancing elements, or advisors to the commander rather than co-equals. One observer noted the greater instability, especially in Afghanistan's east and south, meant PRTs there necessarily required a closer tie-in to "maneuver" elements conducting active military operations for coordination and for the provision of additional overwatch security to PRT activities or excursions to farther-flung districts.

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<sup>7</sup> Nagl, Petraeus, and Amos, *Counterinsurgency*.



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Afghanistan PRTs also had significantly fewer civilian personnel until at least 2008: its early PRTs were military-dominant, with Army civil affairs teams complementing the roles of often only one or two embedded civilians from the Department of State and USAID. Lucky PRTs received a third civilian from USDA with soil or water or other agricultural expertise to assist rebuilding efforts, with particular emphasis on rural livelihoods. As a result, civilians in the PRTs—at least in the more volatile provinces—became almost fully dependent on their military counterparts for movement off base, meetings with local officials, and personal security, making them less autonomous actors.

Civilians reported a perception they were often seen by military counterparts as long-term embeds akin to the international journalists who occasionally cycled through for reporting stints far afield. This was less a matter of intent on the part of military commanders or the Departments of State, Agriculture, and USAID as reflective of the reality: civilians were on the ground to advise and support the military during an active period of fighting in many rural areas of Afghanistan. Many PRT commanders demonstrated great attention to elevating civilians' roles as coequals, but provincial governors—especially in locations that saw intense fighting—looked to military commanders as their natural counterparts, usually for practical reasons: the PRTs had stronger ties to communities through their engagement, commanders controlled significant resources through Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds, and maneuver elements often relied on PRT leadership teams to award projects and "solatia" (condolence) payments when battle damage or worse—civilian casualties—occurred.<sup>8</sup> Civilian team members frequently had excellent relationships with provincial governors, yet lined up much of their work with subordinate local government officials who derived their authority from the national ministries of education, health, women's affairs, and rural reconstruction and development. Visible in meeting seating arrangements, the military "battlespace owner" normally sat at the head of the delegation opposite the governor, with respective advisors and aides arrayed to either side. One USAID civilian described the lack of formal leadership roles for development experts on Afghanistan PRTs as reflecting they were "part of the team" rather than strategic partners in decision making.

The composition of Afghanistan PRTs changed over time as a mix of diplomatic reporting, congressional interest expressed through field visits, and feed-

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<sup>8</sup> "Military Operations: The Department of Defense's Use of Solatia and Condolence Payments in Iraq and Afghanistan," GAO, 23 May 2007.

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back from operational commanders and civilians, including the ambassador and combatant commands, as well as shifting needs on the ground resulted in a major civilian staffing increase starting in 2008. This change more than doubled the presence of State, USAID, and other agency practitioners at the provincial and even district levels. The civilian surge in Afghanistan, paired with President Barack H. Obama's announcement of a surge deployment of military troops in late 2009, also added political advisors (POLADs) outside the PRTs at the Brigade Combat Team and Afghanistan Regional Command levels, mirroring civilian-military partnership throughout all agencies' chains of command. The term "senior civilian lead" emerged at the brigade and regional command levels, referring to the head of the civilian team on the ground, usually but not always a foreign service officer (FSO) from the Department of State. Likewise, as the size of the civilian presence at the provincial and district level in Afghanistan increased, the U.S. embassy in Kabul also designated a senior civilian representative (SCR) within each PRT as the civilian counterpart to the commander. That imposed a more formal reporting structure on civilian activities both at the PRTs and on the interagency district support teams (DSTs). Multiple practitioners said the greater civilian density helped clarify roles, enable more effective task delegation, and forced people into a more disciplined and coordinated reporting stream. However, clear lines of leadership among and across agencies were never formally established. As a result, a Department of State or USAID senior civilian at the large regional military base nominally led the mixed-agency team of civilians operating at provincial or district levels, but without clear authority to direct their activities.

Despite differences in civilian density across the country and within the command structure, PRTs in both countries shared many common elements of their approach. Established to woo deeply skeptical populations weary of recent battles and sea changes in government at the local level, Afghanistan and Iraq PRTs established "islands in a sea of chaos" in the words of one practitioner, for anchoring development and governance gains in the hands of provincial authorities. In both countries, PRTs emphasized enabling the local government to successfully and reliably deliver services, in order to offer the population a palpably different experience than what insurgent groups espoused as an alternative. Nearly all practitioners reflected the catchphrase of "winning the hearts and minds" of the population encompassed anticorruption themes, but in retrospect should have made those the central cause rather than an element of the community grievances the PRTs were attempting to address.

#### THE PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM PROGRAMS

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### Observations of a Long-term PRTer

In Afghanistan, military receptivity of civilians' roles was extremely high among commanders, up to and including the commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). All of our engagement from predeployment training was cordial, respectful, and even marked by self-deprecating awareness of civilian and military strengths, weaknesses, and stereotypes. We had great partnerships, and I was the continuity between three rotations. Still, it was clear civilians had no real power beyond the relationships they could forge. We were good partnership builders who could rally the other interagency members.

At my PRT, the commanders made a concerted effort to elevate our roles, and I made deliberate decisions to get to know each of those teams, down to the security force protection elements who enabled our movements. By the end of my extended tours in Afghanistan, I was invited on so many missions there was no way I could go on them all. But I regularly talked with civilians in other PRTs who said they could not get out. Experiences varied widely, with some PRT civilians being able to write their own operational plans, and others traveling only "space available" on important project oversight trips and district meetings entirely arranged by the military command. At the end of the day, soldiers are practical and look to organizational structures they understand from internalizing the chain of command. The length of my assignment and my investment in relationships with our force protection teams—bringing them into the conversation about our goals connecting the population to the local government—helped, but my authority at the PRT came as much from the size of my room and its proximity to the commander's as from my title.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with the author, April 2022.

SO WHAT DO CIVILIANS "BRING TO THE FIGHT"? One of the first questions that arises in nearly every civilian-military partnered operation is one of establishing roles—who is everyone and what do they bring to the fight. Within the military itself this same dance occurs, but with rank worn on the chest. With military occupational specialties well understood and the staff organization system classifying personnel (e.g., S1–S4, J1–J9), roles are visible and almost immediately clear. Among civilian agencies there is no such obvious personnel organizing principle. Add to this that the foreign affairs agencies describe their overseas-deployed diplomats as "generalists" and roles appear murky

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to a military chain of command. Meanwhile, so-called 3161 hires might have specialties, such as lawyers working on promoting rule of law, but they might be much less familiar with U.S. embassy and U.S. State Department hierarchies, policies, and reach-back capabilities.

Hence the first question that inevitably arises: Who are you and what do you bring? Contrary to outward appearances (undoubtedly enhanced downrange by ill-fitting “battle rattle” and an off-kilter helmet), civilian agency personnel come in a variety of flavors. The State Department has political and economic officers who specialize in understanding the host country government structure, political party networks, governance, power relationships among leaders, economy, and business, investment, and prosperity generation opportunities. Their jobs are to build relationships to observe, analyze, and report on these topics and explain to policy makers how host country conditions align with or could be influenced to support U.S. interests. State Department public diplomacy officers communicate and explain U.S. policy objectives to foreign audiences, namely the host country’s citizenry. They expand linkages between students and professionals through promoting exchanges, speaker programs, and cultural and informational programming. State Department consular officers specialize in immigration policy—visas, reciprocity with the host government, and fraud prevention—and service to American citizens overseas (passports, registrations of birth, health and wellness checks on imprisoned Americans abroad, and emergency assistance). Management officers are expert overseers of budgets, human resources, logistics, facilities maintenance, general services (vehicles, housing, and VIP visits to name a few specialties).<sup>9</sup> Within USAID, humanitarian affairs officers bring expertise about complex emergencies and immediate assistance (food, shelter, legal aid, social protection)—often with the ability to mobilize significant funds and resources. Development officers from USAID focus on medium- and longer-term resilience building and capacity development to grow communities’ prosperity sustainably.<sup>10</sup> Foreign Agricultural Service officers from U.S. Department of Agriculture are similarly generalists, often with expertise in trade, agricultural livelihoods, soil, water, forestry, fisheries, or commodities.<sup>11</sup>

Civilian rank is also tricky—simultaneously hierarchical and flat, the

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<sup>9</sup> “Five Foreign Service Officer Career Tracks,” U.S. Department of State, accessed 10 January 2023.

<sup>10</sup> “Foreign Service,” USAID, accessed 10 January 2023.

<sup>11</sup> “FAS Careers,” USDA, accessed 10 January 2023.

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State Department Foreign Service counts backward through its ranks from entry to mid-level (FS-O6 corresponding to military O1 or GS-7, through FS-O1, which is roughly equivalent to O6 or GS-14/15). The system then counts forward once an officer “makes the leap” across the threshold into the Senior Foreign Service (counselor, minister-counselor, career minister, career ambassador—O7–O10, or Senior Executive Service, respectively). Civilians are typically aware of each other’s ranks, but the only civilian regularly referred to by title is the ambassador—the president’s personal representative overseas and chief of mission leading the embassy. Baffling to military counterparts, everyone else tends to go by first names. Since civilians lack uniforms, effective partnerships rely on frank conversations and communication from the outset of these functions, with military colleagues having to try to remember who belongs to which civilian agency and how they fit into the interagency picture.

Beyond the specific categories, civilian officers from the various foreign service agencies of the U.S. government are accustomed to living and adapting to cultures and contexts abroad, with a small number having prior military service under their belt. They often come with significant language skills built over a career. They are often strategic thinkers with awareness of host country dynamics that can be a boon to operational planning and success. Civilians are also leaders in their own right—while civilian “command structures” admittedly have nowhere near the personnel numbers of companies, battalions, and brigades, or the responsibility for millions of dollars of weapons, vehicles, and equipment, civilians have often orchestrated emergency responses in a foreign location, marshaled host country resources or mentored local government planning to run elections, managed multimillion dollar contracts with accountability of U.S. taxpayer resources, and delivered assistance or capacity building projects in remote, austere locales, with effectiveness indicators to measure success. In stability operations like Iraq and Afghanistan, these skill sets were critical to helping local governments and governance become more effective service deliverers, connect to their immediate populations, and (in retrospect, less effectively) address corruption, graft, and other grievances. More generally, civilian officers bring consensus making, vote whipping, and coalition building skills from years of relationship nurturing with foreign counterparts, as well as within their own home agencies. Effective PRTs leveraged this, sometimes cutting through U.S. government bureaucracy by going up multiple chains of command simultaneously, effectively reverse engineering the guidance they wanted to see in the field by coordinating a unified message through Defense, State, and USAID channels.

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In the best cases across PRTs, commanders avoided promoting among the rank and file the perception of civilians as subordinate to the Department of Defense and instead highlighted their coleadership. The joined-up model took work on the part of commanders, who proactively communicated civilians' roles in a team leadership model. Naturally more achievable where active military operations against an active and violent insurgency had subsided, there were nonetheless examples of teams in both Afghanistan and Iraq that achieved almost an embassy-style country team level of interagency coleadership, with civilians assessing and advising on CERP-funded projects, co-planning outside the wire missions, and strategizing together for a unified approach to project, program, and governance mentoring throughout a province. Where these partnerships were effective, maneuver elements sometimes "borrowed" a civilian to advise a forward operating base about its local partners—for example, bringing tribal mapping or awareness of long-standing former local militia loyalties to the conversation about whom to hire as the outer base security element, or riding along to assist an aid delivery, or helping tamp down passions or hostility after civilian casualty incidents by engaging with elders, religious leaders, and/or the families of victims.

### STRONG PARTNERSHIP YIELDS EFFECTIVE PROVINCIAL STRATEGY; SUSTAINABILITY STILL LACKING

The PRT in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, based in the capital Asadabad, sat at the confluence of two river valleys with a mountainous geography arrayed like a "T" on its side. Wild Nuristan to the north, the restive border with Pakistan to the east, bustling metropolis Jalalabad to the south, and seemingly impassable mountains to the west and southwest, Kunar was a remote, Pashtun-dominant province capable of being a significant irritant to Kabul's central authority since at least the 1980s; the province claims to be the birthplace of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion. PRT alumni describe a complex array of tribes spanning the border and frequently cut off from one another by high mountains, and a provincial political scene dominated by successor parties to various wings of longtime Afghan politician and former mujahideen fighter-commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) faction.

It was a province that saw intense fighting during the early purge of al-Qaeda from Afghanistan eastward and was also an area that became an easy haven for satellite cells of various insurgent groups challenging the post-Taliban Afghan

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## Terminology that Baffles Civilians about the Military and Vice Versa

### *“Kinetic” as applied to an operation or context characterized by use of force*

Most civilians last encountered the word *kinetic* in a natural science or physics class describing energy transfer and find this description of battles with bullets flying a euphemism, or at minimum, an understatement.

### *“Predeployment Visit,” “Right Seat, Left Seat,” and “Change of Command Ceremony” vs. “Handover Notes”*

The U.S. military has three terms and robust processes for what roughly corresponds to the civilian experience of handover notes. The military initiates change in leadership in the field by sponsoring a predeployment field visit of a few days to a week for an incoming commander and key leaders to visit incumbent leaders and learn from them directly. Military colleagues will need to explain to civilians that the “right seat, left seat” period, lasting several days after the arrival of the incoming main body, refers literally and figuratively to ride-alongs where the incoming leaders shadow their incumbents (sitting in the right hand passenger’s seat) before switching places to experience gaining control in the operational environment (sitting in the left hand driver’s seat). Ideally after significant communication during and after the predeployment visit and the “right seat, left seat” period, with opportunities for questions and answers, these activities culminate in a formal change of command ceremony marking the end of one unit’s tour and the uptake of another’s responsibility. Conversely, diplomats are traditionally accustomed to gaps, with most personnel transferring within the same three-month window and only rare cases of in-person overlap between officers. (Practitioners note that later during the Afghanistan mission, the U.S. embassy aimed for two to three days of overlap between PRT civilians in the field.) Civilians assigned to embassies in development and diplomatic roles leave behind notes (meant to be copious, but of varied length and complexity) and the details for meeting key contacts, in a thin folder or file for their successors. Representatives from State, USAID, and Agriculture typically followed that same ritual. One civilian who served twice in the same PRT, in 2006 and then in 2012–13, was shocked to see what information he inherited during his second tour, and what he did not, from both the State Department and military sides: some historical records were easy to find; others were lost forever.

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## Terminology that Baffles Civilians about the Military and Vice Versa (continued)

### *“Battlespace Owner” vs. “Chief of Mission Authority”*

A term often new to civilians partnering with military colleagues, the concept that the leader of the highest-ranking maneuver force “owns” the terrain of operations can be foreign and, for some, perhaps off-putting. While it makes sense from a force planning, safety, and military line of authority perspective, civilians sometimes express concern that designating a battlespace owner sounds a bit colonial, ignoring the fact that the host country population and the government’s official representatives deserve a say in what is happening in the country. In complex stability operations, giving primacy to the U.S. combat commander and to military operations can indeed diminish the role of the local government, the very entity civilian-military partnerships are often assigned to strengthen.

To deal with this problem, in 2006, in Kunar Province, the U.S. battlespace owner (then-lieutenant colonel Christopher G. Cavoli, commander of the Chosin Battalion from the 10th Mountain Division) established a coordinating center on the provincial governor’s compound, staffed by U.S. and Afghan soldiers, with the provincial governor kept in the loop on military operations. The next challenge was ensuring that PRT projects and battlespace owner’s CERP funds were spent in a logical fashion that meshed with the provincial government’s and Afghan government’s priorities and strategies. In the past, the PRT in Kunar unilaterally decided what projects to initiate after meeting with local elders. Starting in 2006–7, the PRT began coordinating more closely with local government institutions, eventually joining the governor-led Provincial Development Council and opening local and PRT civilian-staffed offices at the governor’s compound to jointly determine strategies and coordinate initiatives.

From a civilian’s perspective, the battlespace “owner” designation, while necessary from a military perspective, risks making the civilian population and local government institutions an afterthought. Despite trouble understanding this military terminology, ask any civilian about “chief of mission (COM) authority” and they will immediately understand. An ambassador plenipotentiary is the president’s personal representative to a country or mission overseas, and they are the authoritative voice of the U.S. government in that location, with the ability to grant permission for other agencies of the U.S. government to visit, be assigned, and follow embassy security and safety directives. Higher level military officials in country understood the ambassador’s role, but civilians on PRTs often needed to explain the COM’s and the U.S. embassy’s role in the big picture to more junior team members. Thus, apart from nuances, these terms battlespace owner and chief of mission are roughly commensurate to describe “The Boss” in military and civilian parlance.



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## Terminology that Baffles Civilians about the Military and Vice Versa (continued)

### *“J-5” (strategies, plans, and policies) vs. Integrated Country Strategy*

Contrary to popular belief within military circles that civilian agencies’ planning processes range from nonexistent to nonrigorous compared to military planning, the Department of State and USAID engage in long-term planning exercises linked to the *National Security Strategy* through the regional bureau level and down to embassy- and mission-level Integrated Country Strategies, complete with objectives, indicators, and resource requests. Interagency practitioners from Afghanistan and Iraq found it important to exchange experiences with institutional planning processes: while military and civilian counterparts sometimes use different jargon, they frequently find each other more well-versed than expected in identifying assumptions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, then drafting operational level goals and breaking them down to identify tasks, tactics, indicators, and measures of success.

government, Hekmatyar included.<sup>12</sup> Standing before the wall-size map in the PRT’s Tactical Operation Center (TOC), Kunar’s attractiveness to fighters made sense. Once clear of the border area and over the north-south Kunar River, it was possible to scale one mountain partway up and essentially ridge-walk through the Abbas Ghar range without losing time or elevation. The most notorious valleys for insurgent activity—the Korengal, Shuryak, Chapadara, and Chowkey valleys all met up toward the back of the Abbas Ghar—a fact U.S. maneuver elements knew all too well from repeated operations to flush fighters and weapons out of one valley, only to have them pop up one over. U.S. forces fought major battles and faced significant losses in Kunar throughout the war.

The U.S. Navy-led Asadabad PRT benefitted from a series of dynamic leadership rotations that prioritized the roles of State Department and later USAID and USDA partners and built on each other’s work mapping tribes, generating reams of documentation about minor warlords and valley commanders from the mujahideen era to understand local power relationships, and puzzling out the highly unregulated timber industry that generated a windfall for smugglers. With an imperative to move troops around the remote province more efficient-

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<sup>12</sup> “Counter-terrorism Guide, Terrorist Groups: Hezb-e-Islami Gullbuddin (HIG), Director of National Intelligence”; and Wesley Morgan, “Special Report: Ten Years in Afghanistan’s Pech Valley,” U.S. Institute of Peace, September 2015.

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ly and safely, by 2006 the PRT was focused on mobility as the most essential development. It could transform the battlefield (facilitating troop movement) and materially increase citizens' access to their provincial government (cutting travel times over unimproved roads or far out of the way to rickety, unreliable bridges over churning rivers by hours). Kunar PRT alumni said the PRT put funding and engineering know-how—a mix of Navy civil and electrical engineers and Army Corps of Engineers warrant officers who formed the brain trust for the design-build of two thoroughfares—up the Kunar Valley from Jalalabad to Nuristan and lengthening the Pech Valley road east-west across the province, with heavy-grade bridges at intervals to enable disconnected villages access. (It is important to note quality varied on PRT-constructed bridges.) Some CERP projects executed without such input were less durable. After the pylons of the Ziribaba Bridge, built near the Kunar/Nangarhar border by local contractors, sank during a flood, creating a sagging and unsafe structure over the Kunar River, locals noted with derision that bridges built decades before by the Soviets were far sturdier.<sup>13</sup>

These massive infrastructure improvements were costly but also provided “anchors,” easing citizens' movement and commercial transport around the province. According to State Department PRT practitioners, the roads and bridges strategy hit its stride with the completion of the two major river valley roads, and 2007–8 saw its extension to offshoot roads into populous valleys. Economic activity exploded along the river valley routes—a gas station had popped up at the mouth of the Korengal Valley, and by 2008 Asadabad's dusty main bazaar boasted more than 600 shops. Improvised explosive devices became rare along the main thoroughfares; their emplacement was far more common in the last kilometer of road-building projects that were beginning to reach restive villages deeper into the Watapur, Shuryak, and Chowkey Valleys. Insurgents and citizens alike seemed genuinely invested in the maintenance of free, unfettered movement and commerce, rarely threatening the major river valley roads themselves.

This “roads and bridges” strategy was a strong example of a truly joint concept, endorsed by civilian and military counterparts and repeatedly revisited in executive team leadership meetings. Instead of haphazard project assignment catering to the desires of village elders, PRT civilians brought in provincial education and health experts to determine strategic locations for placing schools, clinic facilities, and other government service outposts aligned to central gov-

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<sup>13</sup> “Kunar PRT Bridges Collapse,” Killid Group, 10 March 2012.

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ernment planning and staffing resources. The joint PRT leadership team incorporated security discussions into helping the local government plan its service delivery, including which projects it could fund or co-fund on its own using Kabul-allocated resources. USAID looked at projects that could be placed along major roadways, promoting visibility and accessibility. The consensus at the top of the PRT for this “hub and spoke” model imposed discipline on project design, selection, and placement and encouraged similarly rational planning on the part of provincial government officials.

About the same time, the PRT leadership group saw a troubling increase in local demand for meetings at its headquarters base just outside the capital Asadabad. One local politician joked, “Since the most powerful political party in Kunar is the one that delivers the most services, money, and goods to provincial residents, the PRT is the front-runner for popular support.” Afghanistan’s then-President Hamid Karzai openly chafed over the years at what he saw as a parallel government structure in the PRT system. Realizing the problem of making the PRT appear the most significant provincial governance authority, the PRT leadership team worked with the governor to shift its operations accessible to the public to the main government building in the capital. Located in a side office beneath the governor’s central and ornate one, the newly established downtown PRT offices symbolically reoriented foot traffic and the locus of decision making to the government headquarters; anyone visiting the PRT would first stop into relevant government offices or see the governor himself. PRT activities were placed under the umbrella of the provincial administration, and State Department, USAID, and USDA officers established regular office hours several times per week. The PRT also had a seat on the Provincial Development Council chaired by the governor to better understand Afghan government priorities.

On the positive side, major infrastructure improvements by the PRT had some capacity-building effects of growing the population of skilled labor in Kunar—project managers who could handle complicated punch-lists and structural checks, machine operators, drainage experts, and electricians. At times, a virtuous cycle emerged: projects demanded skilled workers, the PRT insisted a certain percentage of the labor force must be drawn from a close radius to the project, and newly skilled workers formed small businesses, ready to bid on the next PRT infrastructure project. This demand for skilled labor begot another well-intended project that enjoyed strong civilian-military consensus—the Kunar Construction Center (KCC).

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The KCC, built to perch above the Kunar River Valley Road in Shigal District just north of the capital city, aimed to unify skilled vocational training: plumbing, electricity, engineering support, and carpentry and produce a labor force with employable skills, able to earn higher wages and contribute to investment and development of the province. Funded through a blend of USAID and CERP resources, the KCC was an enormous undertaking, employing master vocational trainers (including some of its own graduates) and incurring high costs for security, yet was extremely popular—competitive even—among Afghan citizens and with the government. The project supported the PRT's roads and bridges development model, which in turn kept demand high for the types of graduates the KCC could churn out. For some time, PRT Asadabad became a regular destination stop for visiting congressional delegations and international journalists—the strong civilian-military partnership underpinning project choice and the mutually reinforcing nature of undertakings like the KCC linked to key roads made for easy communication of what appeared a successful strategy.

Kunar's experience offers lessons too. While the roads and bridges anchor strategy had clear, measurable benefits to the local population (seen in economic activity and security measures along major roadways for several years), it never connected to similar approaches or development plans outside the province. As a result, its transformative effects were limited to the area covered by one PRT, while supported by a significant fighting force in the province, rather than joined in a networked regional or national approach. The roads strategy also struggled once offshoot valley initiatives reached into communities that had seen long-term presence of varied insurgent groups (al-Qaeda, HIG militants, Taliban, and later even Islamic State) and consequent coalition operations, where known and persistent conflicts and grievances festered. Once building reached these locales, long work stoppages while security could be brokered drove up costs for each meter of asphalt.

Funding was also never sustainable. Road and bridge infrastructure had enormous costs and maintenance requirements, as did the formation of classes at the KCC, teaching salaries, materials, and security. The PRT succeeded in an initial transition plan, turning the KCC into a registered Afghan nongovernmental organization (NGO), but the institution never attracted the necessary investment or financing to become a long-standing Afghan-operated facility. Like many experiences across Afghanistan, what went wrong included at the local level a blend of too-high ambition, absence of linkage to regional or national

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strategy, and the lack of a sustainability plan. While a primary goal was for the PRT to deconflict its programming with on-budget development work planned and funded by the Afghan government, achievement was spotty at best. Many practitioners in retrospect suggest CERP and direct PRT development funding should have ceased much earlier, driving the Afghan government to improve its own Kabul-to-province communication and implementation, professionalizing government procurement at all levels, and removing external “slush” funding that drew the public away from relying on their government or holding it accountable. At the national level, the overarching U.S. and NATO approach to Afghanistan also shifted significantly several times, including the de-prioritization and draw-down of more remote bases in Afghanistan and an uptick in transition planning. Strong PRT-level civilian-military partnership and involvement in designing and implementing a workable provincial approach was insufficient to withstand these dynamics.

## THINKING BEYOND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT: FAMILIARITY WITH THE ARRAY OF GLOBAL ACTORS

Reflecting on the Iraq and Afghanistan PRT experiences, with many alumni continuing to be involved in civilian-military predeployment training for both locations and others in the years that followed, a number of practitioners have noted the tendency toward insular U.S. government-only thinking that undermines success in stability operations. Much of this chapter has been dedicated to U.S. government agencies getting to know each other and establishing roles and leveraging respective institutional strengths and skills for cohesive field approaches. At least as important, many practitioners argue, is enhancing awareness by civilian-military teams of the vast array of nongovernment global actors frequently active in complex emergency situations.

“There is an astonishing gap in knowledge of the Bretton Woods organizations,” one trainer said.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the international financial institutions established at the end of World War II (International Monetary Fund, World Bank) are active in project and program financing all over the world. In Afghanistan, the World Bank’s National Solidarity Program (NSP) conducted community-driven development, typically with very small grants that effectively generated strong community buy-in. Often awarded for \$25,000 or less, NSP projects were dwarfed by CERP and even USAID-funded programs, but the small grants, in retrospect,

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with the author, 3 April 2022.

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### **“USAID Is Not an NGO”**

“No matter how many civilian-military pre-deployment trainings I conduct, it always comes as a surprise to the military element when I remind them that USAID is not an NGO,” said a seasoned PRT and forward-deployed civilian officer in a 7 April 2022 interview with the author.

Like the Department of State, USAID is a foreign policy agency of the U.S. government—an instrument of humanitarian and development dollars provided by U.S. taxpayers to meet emergency needs and build the capacity and prosperity of foreign populations. Why is this work in the U.S. interest? It reduces dependency on foreign donors, builds resilience to future economic, climate, and conflict shocks, and ultimately promotes stability, which costs the United States less, reduces migration, and creates stronger partners aligned with our goals and democratic values.

In speaking with multiple civilian-military practitioners, they underlined a repeated theme: that pre-deployment training is an essential opportunity to increase military officers’ and enlisted ranks’ exposure to and awareness of U.S. civilian institutions—knowledge that can be game-changing in the field and help avoid the perception of subordination of foreign policy experts to the military command. USAID officers can also arm their military colleagues with an understanding of work undertaken according to humanitarian principles—apolitical, purely needs-based assistance—versus assistance designed to advance a U.S. foreign policy goal, message, or interest. This training is critical whether the deploying element is a mixed civilian-military team, a brigade combat team, or a special forces unit.

often had more sustainable results. Whereas U.S. teams were concerned about “burn rates” to get vast sums spent—a phenomenon that also favored large infrastructure development, given those projects’ high costs—NSP projects rarely overran the absorption capacity of local NGOs or village councils’ ability to track and monitor accountable spending. Community-run implementation tended to organically build the involvement of diverse citizens including vulnerable groups like women and youth, as councils self-realized their involvement increased the likelihood of successful projects. A community needed someone who could sign for the grant at a bank? That meant prioritizing literacy. Did a council hope youth would be involved? That meant outreach to mothers and women would occur. NSP’s approach empowered local decision making and created minimal opportunities for corruption, as communities were willing participants in locally led projects. With the World Bank-mentored Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) providing oversight, the NSP model—according

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to military and civilian PRT members—built in sustainability and community ownership. However, most PRTs were only nominally aware of NSP’s work, approach, and planning. Greater coordination could have avoided duplication or potentially augmented a working program, rather than overrunning communities with larger dollar-value projects implemented by outside contractors.

PRT alumni similarly noted that while the intent to coordinate with other actors was present, “more kinetic” environments made regular meetings difficult, and ongoing military operations sometimes steered conversations away from development planning toward security matters. NGOs frequently complained the PRTs muddled humanitarian principles, since they made project decisions based on counterinsurgency objectives rather than pure needs-based assessments. While many PRTs had strong relationships with local United Nations (UN) Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) offices, and even collaborated closely on community outreach following operations and for civilian casualty documentation and investigation, there was little work toward a common development approach. Essential for deploying practitioners, greater emphasis in training on the roles of nongovernment international organizations such as the European Union (EU) and UN, development banks, the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, NGOs, and other actors could help teams understand how to work in tandem, partner together, or at least do no harm to each other’s programming.

CONCENTRATING ON OURSELVES:  
TENDENCY TO UNDERVALUE LOCAL CAPABILITIES

Practitioners also lamented an overemphasis on coordinating ourselves (international partners and within the U.S. government), which also came at the cost of undervaluing the sophistication of existing local capabilities in both Afghanistan and Iraq. One officer noted,

Well into my third deployment, I began making a point of dragging my military counterparts off base and into town to meet with external private project implementers, including Afghan NGOs with great track records. Time and again, when we visited an indigenous NGO, we would enter the office and find computers, excellent filing systems, and even women working who spoke English. It astonished my military counterparts. This happened repeatedly. There was an assumption of a biblical level of development in Afghanistan, and all our civilian-military teams—even after multiple deployments and whether based at the dis-

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trict, provincial, or regional levels—simply did not realize the baseline level of existing capacity we could have built on.<sup>15</sup>

Another officer observed a similar underestimation of sophisticated local institutions in Iraq, noting PRTs tended to become so focused on their own plans, projects, and budget execution that they ignored or unintentionally undermined the roles of local institutions, failing to recognize expertise and experience. Beyond educating civilian-military teams ahead of deployment about all the U.S. agencies and international partners active in the “battle space,” it is essential to truly study local institutions, their authority, and their capabilities, she said.

A PRT practitioner who worked in eastern Afghanistan similarly observed, “Have you ever taken a night flight and seen the tiny dots lighting up the hillsides throughout the province? Micro-hydropower plants. Afghans were building, resourcing, and maintaining effective mini-plants. They didn’t need us to come in; I spent hours convincing multiple PRT rotations to leave them alone. All we could do was mess up what they were already doing . . . or make it more costly.”<sup>16</sup>

Many attributed this tendency to overlook local capacity to the “battle rhythm” and press of business, not ill intent. It plagued civilian officers as much as military counterparts as well, who often felt time pressure to implement fast because of their short deployments. Until quite late in the PRT era, civilians were assigned to one-year tours compared to their military counterparts’ 15 months (later shortened to 12 months). There was some utility in the lack of precise overlap, as some continuity always remained on the ground from the off-cycle rotations. However, short tours meant little time to adequately explore or understand the full array of effective local and international actors.

A State Department officer undertaking a survey of Kunar’s political parties heard several contacts bemoan the lack of sophistication of local politics, just before launching into full analyses of an elaborate political spectrum with wings and branches for each party and divisions between political and insurgent leadership in several cases. They described recruiting teams, training election officials, establishing youth councils, identifying social mobilizers, collecting dues, creating women’s councils even in the most traditional areas, and monitoring party membership. These same local politicians advised the PRTs the focus on major infrastructure was important and should be expanded to electricity and water

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with the author, 3 April 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with the author, 3 April 2022.



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provision, but warned local officials tended to buy votes with peripheral projects disconnected from a central plan. In short, political parties at the local level were anything but unsophisticated and were attuned early on to the potential for corruption, yet mostly remained an untapped resource for the PRTs.

Despite these failings, PRT alumni nearly all noted the overwhelming willingness of local partners in Iraq and Afghanistan to dedicate their careers to working with the foreign presence as long as it lasted, even at great personal risk for targeting themselves. Many civilian and military counterparts in the PRTs regularly grappled with this reality while deployed and long after, hearing tale after tale of a diligent and reliable partner's killing by some new wave of insurgent activity. Stability operations of the future must reckon with these questions of how to tap, enable, and empower local capacity without underestimating its sophistication or inadvertently risking their survival after an inevitable force drawdown.

## STABILITY OPERATIONS OF THE FUTURE

With the benefit of hindsight, it is admittedly difficult to look back on the PRTs as exemplars of success, knowing the deep challenges to sustainability and the ultimate governance outcomes, especially in Afghanistan. However, the rough decade of their existence offers five lessons for effective civilian-military partnerships in future complex operations.

1. **Establishing roles from the outset** is essential, ideally from the start of a robust predeployment training. Civilians bring hard skills in coalition building, negotiation, analysis, political acumen, organizational wizardry, development and humanitarian expertise, and strategic thinking to the table. Identifying these assets and matching them with military counterparts' significant management, complex operational acumen, planning expertise, and resources can produce blended leadership teams ready to design transformational initiatives in stability operations and complex emergencies.
2. **Achieving joined-up leadership starts at the top and must be modeled throughout the organization.** The Iraq model of PRTs created an expectation throughout the battle space that civilian and military leads were coequals and partners in decision making. Simple initiatives like reproducing each other's reporting and orders within the counterpart's chain of command communicated

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to the rank and file this “one team, one strategy” approach. Some Afghanistan PRTs achieved similar levels of joined-up leadership at the provincial level, but the lack of linkage to a national plan or strategy caused sustainability problems later.

3. **Training must include cross-familiarization with all the institutions of U.S. government.** Awareness of each other’s institutions and their unique roles as foreign policy implementers is essential. Agencies of the U.S. government are not subordinate to one another, and the extent to which teams internalize and appreciate the nuances of each other’s roles, the easier it is to achieve joined-up leadership. Preparation is essential, up to and including battalion- and brigade-level cross-training.
4. **Strong understanding of the U.S. government is insufficient in complex emergencies. Teams must know the other international actors and wider civilian landscape.** Predeployment training should include familiarization with the roles in economic development and prosperity promotion of the international financial institutions, regional development banks, UN agencies, the EU, International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, and NGOs (international and local) who are likely to be active in the operational environment downrange. Many of these organizations are effective; some will be on the ground long-term even well after an inevitable drawdown of U.S. assets.
5. **Local capacity is usually stronger than perceived: avoid underestimating the sophistication of host country counterparts and institutions. Coordinate activities with the appropriate local officials.** Underappreciation of host country capabilities comes at a cost—civilian-military partnerships aiming to extend governance and stability should first do no harm to existing, functioning structures. Ample willingness to partner with civilian-military structures on the part of local officials should also be balanced by keen awareness of the personal risks that may accrue from their association. In addition, unilaterally implementing projects undercuts the authority of the local government and stifles any capacity-building opportunities offered by U.S.-supported activities.

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Beyond PRT lessons drawn from battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq, successful practitioners in civilian-military operations repeatedly offered the same advice: curiosity about each other's institutional strengths, weaknesses, procedures, and oddities, matched with healthy self-deprecation and a willingness to invest in the relationships produced the most effective partnerships. Creating an interagency microcosm in the field capable of reaching consensus and sending mutually reinforcing messages up multiple command chains helped unstick Washington bureaucracy too, resulting in better guidance and delegated authority to field operators knowledgeable about local context. Sustainability conversations upfront and linkages of initiatives to bigger-picture planning usually produced the longest standing projects with measurable effects, including community or host government buy-in and support. Civilian and military counterparts might come to an operation presuming to speak different languages, but their ability to exchange jargon, explore creative partnerships with other effective actors, apply diverse planning rubrics, and leverage local capacity can improve effectiveness in complex operations.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Multiple PRT alumni deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2002–13 contributed to this chapter through phone interviews in April–May 2022, editing August–September 2022, and the submission of anecdotes and written recollections of their experiences, including: Alison Kosnett (formerly with the Department of State and USAID), Tim Standaert (Department of State, Ret), Shawn Waddoups (Department of State, Ret), Ted Wittenberger (USAID, Ret), and the author.

## ◉ Chapter Fourteen ◉

### Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan and Iraq

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Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann (Ret)

Civil-military relations in U.S. government operations exist across a wide spectrum. They are involved in numerous policy discussions in Washington. Many U.S. embassies have a defense attaché, a military group responsible for training, or both. Short-term military missions come from innumerable elements of the defense establishment; special forces teams dealing with counterterrorism or training host government forces and study and survey teams and representatives of various military intelligence agencies all arrive in countries where they deal with an embassy and an ambassador. None of these are the subject of this chapter.

Nor does it deal with operations like those in El Salvador, the Philippines, or Colombia, which were very limited in size and conducted under political constraints very different from the large deployments of Afghanistan and Iraq. This reflection focuses on civil-military affairs in those two large military operations. I have done so in part because such large operations have characteristics particular to the size of the U.S. military deployment. Also, having served as a senior diplomat in Iraq and ambassador in Afghanistan, a country to which I returned repeatedly after retirement, this chapter can speak to those experiences with personal knowledge.

Although this chapter focuses on two recent wars, some of the problems it reflects on are perennial. The U.S. Army first asked for State Department help in 1848 in managing the occupation of Mexico. The State Department could not respond. It has found it difficult in the recent wars to respond adequately to new requests for help. I have looked at different aspects of these problems in Vietnam (from a much different perspective as a soldier but also in study) as well

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as in my later service in recent wars. I believe a larger study would show that the tensions and the issues described here have a considerable similarity over time. It should also be noted that I am reflecting only on the U.S. experience. While similarities may be found in the experience of other powers with international deployments, particularly the British and French, they have their own characteristics. Thus, all mention of civil-military relations here should be understood as referring only to the U.S. case.

## STRUCTURE OF THE APPROACH

This chapter begins with a consideration of some of the differences in scale between the military and civilian components in the United States' recent wars and how this affects operations. It concentrates considerable attention on the problems that derive from the fact that the United States has chosen to fight with no one in charge; that is, with no single individual below the president of the United States having full authority for operations. As a nation, we have accepted this rather strange state of affairs without questioning whether it serves us well or ought to be changed. But the default from coordination to cooperation is full of problems and the reliance on personalities is equivalent to betting success on the luck of the draw. These ideas need to be seriously reexamined.

Details matter. That is why the chapter looks rather far down the operational spectrum to note problems and the need for further study. It looks at some specific changes in training and education on both sides of the divide, but particularly on the civilian side, to recommend changes. Lastly, it considered a much larger kind of change that, while it is unlikely to occur, does illustrate the need for and the possibility of thinking in nontraditional ways.

## FRAMING THE PROBLEM— WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THESE WARS?

One difference derives from the scale of the military operation and what the military brings with it. Military staffs enormously outnumber their civilian partners. This gives them an ability to handle planning in much more detail, but not necessarily to understand all the issues that need to be dealt with in planning for non-military areas. Because the military exercises such a large role in the country and in combat, the commanding general is bound to have a great deal of interaction with the head of state and senior civilian officials of the host government. This allows host government officials to play the "seams" between U.S. military and civilian leaders.

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Afghanistan's president Hamid Karzai was a master of the art of working the seams. The United States or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commander might go to see him with a purely military agenda. But Karzai would get into requests for development or issues of broader policy. If the response showed any difference between the military and the civilians, Karzai would work on that to get the policy response he preferred.

Sheer size, both in personnel and budgets, magnifies the potential for tension resulting from the traditional U.S. habit of separation between military and civilian operations despite the interrelated nature of the problems encountered in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The inherent tension of the situation—between civil and military separation in tradition and doctrine versus the actual intertwining of the issue in practice—is brought into particular focus by the most basic element of civil-military relations in war, the lack of a single point of control.

Simply put, no one, or at least no single person, is in charge. While unity of command is a basic tenant of military doctrine and is highly desirable in civilian practice, the fact is that it is not possible under our constitutional system. The only point where the civilian and military chains of command meet is in the president.

Various special envoys, "czars," or representatives may be appointed by a president. But budgets are separate and no such "czar" in the 50 years I have watched such operations has achieved interagency budget control. And in a bureaucracy, budgets are power.

Other systems can be envisioned, and the conclusion of this chapter will consider some. But under current law and practice, the issues must be seen as how to have effective cooperation between different institutions. This means that civil-military operations in the field are always a sort of internal alliance operation. And as the noted historian Robert Dallek has written, "The history of any alliance is the history of mutual recrimination."<sup>1</sup> Such recrimination has been a recurrent theme in Iraq and Afghanistan but waxes and wanes dependent on the personalities of leaders. Successful operations therefore depend on cooperation and hence on personalities.

American military doctrine differentiates between a supported and supporting commander. The supported commander, for example the commander of the U.S. Central Command, has the primary responsibility for conducting the cam-

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (Oxford, UK: Council on Foreign Relations, Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

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paign. The supporting commands, the organizations responsible for everything from organizing the personnel, to supply, to transport (each of which has separate four-star commands) is responsible for providing the required support but does not command the operation. Some have argued that in large operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan, the diplomats are really in the position of supporting commands and frictions would diminish if the civilians recognized that. In some respects, this makes sense. With such vast disparities in resources, some ambassadors might have been far less frustrated if they had accepted that they were not simply going to be able to give orders about how military resources were going to be used. But ultimately the “supported and supporting” approach does not work. Explaining why this is so requires some discussion.

In Afghanistan, the military’s budget for quick-impact projects under the so-called Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), which often exceeded development funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and could be deployed faster as I saw repeatedly in Afghanistan. Instead of arguing between the two organizations, might it not have been better to treat USAID as a supporting command, drawing on its expertise, but under a single command (i.e., treating USAID as the supporting command)?

But while this is superficially attractive, it breaks down on closer examination. CERP could build a road much faster than USAID. But CERP funds were limited to “tactical” roads (i.e., gravel), and could neither fund paving them nor maintaining them, so CERP roads quickly washed out.

CERP funds could build a school or a clinic far faster than USAID funding could. But the military had no way to coordinate construction with the relevant Afghan ministry responsible for providing teachers, clinicians, and supplies. Such coordination, whether for medical or educational supplies or for road maintenance, was essential because the Afghan authorities had no ability to add support into their budgets for items not foreseen in Afghan planning. But such coordination is but a part of far larger involvement in economic development strategy and its coordination with the host government. This is an endeavor central to USAID’s mission for which the military lacks training or personnel.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, since the military lacks the expertise to direct the larger economic and developmental effort, subordination would not work, at least not as the military is currently trained. So, one is returned to coordination, and the

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Sterling, VA: Potomac Books, 2009).

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requirement for cooperation. Yet, this coordination, while it has improved over the 20 years of our experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, must still overcome significant obstacles in doctrine and personnel formation.

## HOW DOCTRINE FELL BEHIND NEED AND PRACTICE

For many years, American doctrine, whether explicitly or implicitly, separated the spheres in which military and civilian authorities were exercised. During wartime, the military was in charge. The civilians might offer views, but the military made the decisions.<sup>3</sup> This was formalized in planning for occupation policy during World War I (WWI) and carried over explicitly in WWII. It was recognized that as the front advanced there would be growing areas of civilian population requiring civil governance. Doctrine required that the military maintain control in all occupied areas to ensure that nothing would be allowed to impede military operations.<sup>4</sup> Only at a proper point after the termination of hostilities was control turned over to civilian authorities. This approach governed operations in Japan and Germany after the close of hostilities where the occupation military forces (with some civilian advisors) remained in control until they passed authority to the newly democratized civilian host governments in 1951 and 1955 respectively.

This approach to phases of war, one for the military and another for the civilians, was still the basis for planning for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the experience of Vietnam where civilian and military authorities were in place at the same time. Since doctrine was not able to preserve unity of command, it defaulted to unity of effort. As Nadia Schadlow has observed, “This replacement was arguably one of the most important operational failures in the post-9/11 wars.”<sup>5</sup>

The difference in thinking was clear, as I saw in Iraq in February 2004 working with Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, whom President George W. Bush had

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<sup>3</sup> Louis A. Dimarco, “Restoring Order: The US Army Experience with Occupation Operations, 1865–1952” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2010). This lays particular stress on the continuity of experience in senior officers in the occupation of Veracruz through the Indian Wars and into occupation duty in the Philippines in forming policies for the occupation of the Rhineland in 1918.

<sup>4</sup> Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 79.



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recalled from retirement to lead the transitional occupation government known as the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Military briefing charts repeatedly referred to a “phase IV” when the security situation would become calm and operations would pass to civilian control. Unlike the detailed planning that went into the first three phases of operations, there was usually no planning for the fourth phase; it was just assumed that things would work that way. Both CPA and the U.S. military command reported to President Bush via the secretary of Defense.

There was much discussion of military and civilian lanes of authority as though matters could be kept separate. At one point in a staff meeting of Ambassador Bremer in Baghdad, when a civilian from one of the provincial posts protested the political effect of a military action, the three-star commanding general simply ruled the comment out of order as pertaining to military affairs in which the civilian had no right to comment. In fact, as military actions were pushing Iraqi civilians into political opposition, it mattered enormously.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The reality is that operations in wars like those of Afghanistan and Iraq cannot be conducted in separate lanes. What the military does in operations affects the political reactions of the civilians. Equally, actions by civilians in areas like justice and economic development will affect popular attitudes toward the war and toward the country’s government; the basic attributes of loyalty. Operational success or failure is heavily dependent on how well civilian and military leaders are able to cooperate across their areas of legal authority. Although the authority of each is still confined by law and regulations to its own domain, they must be able to cooperate in each other’s areas. A particular demonstration of this occurred in the First and Second battles of Fallujah in Iraq.

The First Battle of Fallujah was touched off by the murder of American civilian security contractors passing through the city in March 2004 with their burned bodies being hung from an overpass. Although the U.S. Marines on the ground were resistant to beginning the battle, they were ordered to do so by Washington.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Timothy S. McWilliams with Nicholas J. Schlosser, *U.S. Marines in Battle: Fallujah, November–December 2004* (Quantico, VA: History Division, 2014). On page 2 it states, “Both General Conway and General Mattis protested the order, arguing that a large-scale operation would send the wrong message, unnecessarily endanger civilians, and ultimately fail to achieve the primary objective of locating the individuals responsible for the murders. Their protests were overridden and I MEF launched an assault on the city.”

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The operation generated increasingly vehement opposition from Iraqi civilians, the interim Iraqi government, and other countries due to reports of civilian casualties.

I was in Baghdad at the time. Along with two other senior foreign service officers with extensive Arab world experience, we were there to provide political advice. However, relations between Ambassador Bremer and the Coalition military commander, Army lieutenant general Ricardo S. Sanchez, made our work impossible. Disagreements between the two were sufficiently strong for their raised voices to carry outside Bremer's office. The military stopped cooperation with our small group of advisors (we assumed under orders since later the same officers worked very closely with us after General Sanchez departed). We could get no information on the campaign plan, likely duration, or what was happening on the battlefield. In short, we had no context from which to give detailed or useful advice. Political pressure eventually forced the halt of operations, leaving Fallujah in insurgent control.

The Second Battle of Fallujah that kicked off in November 2004 was, by contrast, a model of civil-military cooperation. The difference was entirely the relations of the senior commanders. Ambassador John D. Negroponte had taken over the embassy and Army general George W. Casey Jr. the command, and the two worked closely together, including having offices across from each other in the Republican Palace (Casey had a separate office at Camp Victory near the airport but his headquarters element in the palace numbered around 100 staff in the north ballroom).<sup>7</sup>

By the summer of 2004, Fallujah had become a center of insurgent operations, including torture of kidnapped victims and truck hijacking. The hijacking was so routine and so well organized that middlemen could go to Fallujah and negotiate a ransom to get trucks back for their owners. With Iraq's first parliamentary election coming up, there was strong agreement among Coalition and Iraqi government leaders that Fallujah had to be retaken before the elections. Civil-military planning could not have been more cooperative both at the Coalition headquarters in Baghdad, where I had the primary responsibility for the

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<sup>7</sup> The information on the First and Second Battles of Fallujah are from my observations. I was in Iraq from February 2004 to July 2005, first assisting Amb L. Paul Bremmer in a variety of functions and then as the principal liaison between the U.S. embassy and Amb John Negroponte and the Coalition military under the command of Gen George Casey. For the Second Battle of Fallujah, I was involved in all aspects of campaign planning that had political or civilian components and remained involved throughout the battle and its aftermath.

Figure 14.1. With I MEF commander LtGen John Sattler (left) and Coalition commander Gen George Casey discussing battle planning outside the forward headquarters at Fallujah (the author making notes)



Source: author's collection.

civilian side of the effort, and outside Fallujah where I received very full operational briefings.<sup>8</sup>

Cooperation was essential to even beginning the battle because it was politically necessary to have the authorization of the Iraqi government in order to avoid the political backlash that had aborted the first battle. And although Iraqi prime minister Ayad Allawi had agreed that the battle was necessary, he was very aware that it would be controversial and hesitated to actually approve the start of the operation. By November, both Coalition civilian and military leaders were becoming concerned that further delay would cause problems, including the

<sup>8</sup> The author's counterpart in Baghdad was Army MajGen Henry W. Stratman, chief of staff for political, military, and economic integration, Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I).

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psychological impact of having the fighting continuing into the religious celebrations of the Eid al-Fitr at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Prime Minister Allawi was returning from a visit abroad and the United States wanted his assent to begin operations.

The final prebattle political activity included flying to Amman, Jordan, with the Army's III Corps commander, Lieutenant General Thomas F. Metz, then boarding the Lockheed C-130 Hercules that was to take Allawi back to Baghdad. On the flight back, Metz and I briefed on all the civilian and military planning for the battle, for the conduct of humanitarian operations in support of civilians, and for the return of authority to Iraqi control after the battle. When the plane landed in Baghdad in the small hours of the morning, Allawi gave the order to begin the fight. Civilian and military cooperation could not have been closer.

There are other examples of collegial and effective civilian and military cooperation from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The good stories would include the relations between Army generals David H. Petraeus and Raymond T. Odierno with Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, and Marine Corps general Joseph F. Dunford with Ambassador James B. Cunningham.<sup>9</sup> My own relations as ambassador to Afghanistan with then Army lieutenant general Karl W. Eikenberry in Afghanistan were excellent. We were in constant contact and generally had a one-on-one dinner once a week to go over plans. We did not always agree on everything, but I recognized that General Eikenberry was entitled to views on the conduct of programs in rule of law, governance, and economic development because success in those areas would influence the outcome of his operations. By the same token, he recognized that I was entitled to a view of military operations because of their impact on political developments. (A few years later Eikenberry, now retired, became an ambassador in Kabul.) Many other good news stories from these wars and others can be found in the podcast series, *The General and the Ambassador*.<sup>10</sup>

But while there are good stories, this is not universal. The difference always came down to relations between the leaders. When I visited Afghanistan in

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<sup>9</sup> See Gen Dunford's remarks delivered on 28 May 2017 at an Evening Parade at Marine Barracks in Washington, DC, in honor of Amb James B. Cunningham. Quoted in Ted Strickler, "Working with the U.S. Military: 10 Things the Foreign Service Needs to Know," *Foreign Service Journal* 92, no. 8 (June 2017).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Gen Jasper Jeffers and Amb William Roebuck, "Serving on the Front Lines in Syria," accessed 22 December 2022, in *The General and the Ambassador*, podcast, 40:51.

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2010, I observed extreme friction between the civilian and military leadership teams. Relations between Army general Stanley A. McChrystal and now Ambassador Eikenberry had soured after the leak of a highly classified cable in which Eikenberry laid out his reasons for opposing McChrystal's campaign plans.

Subsequently, the friction then bubbled up constantly in different views of district operations. The difference, simplified for clarity, was that the military was determined to move with enormous speed in pacification and the development of governance in a large number of districts. This was driven by a timeline for operations decided by the White House. The civilians regarded the plan as unworkable because the Afghan government would not be able to sustain the progress. The backbiting was depressing, with the military, essentially, accusing the civilians of being unable to take timely decisions and actions and the civilians accusing the military of "rushing to failure."<sup>11</sup>

In later years, as I made yearly visits to Afghanistan, I observed how frictions rose and fell with relations between the commanding general and the ambassador. Some of the differences were about policy. But personal relations often made the difference between the ability to handle disagreements with or without temper. Reflecting on these differences, and based on what I had seen at subordinate levels in cooperation in numerous provincial reconstruction teams, I concluded that some of the frictions that played out in personalities were heavily influenced by the difference between military and civilian culture.

## WHY CULTURE INFLUENCES COOPERATION

Ultimately, cooperation comes down to individuals. But it is easier to achieve when one understands the ways in which military and civilian cultures differ and, equally, that these are the legitimate result of training and experience. Either culture may provide the best guide to a given situation. Neither has a monopoly on truth. With some exaggeration for simplicity, the military teaches leaders to identify a problem, identify a solution, solve the problem, and move on. Solving the problem, in turn, relies heavily on careful planning. This, again slightly simplified, requires defining an end state and then planning backwards to achieve it.

The civilian experience differs in several ways. Civilians often deal with

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<sup>11</sup> The frictions described in this paragraph were particularly evident when I visited Afghanistan in 2010. I visited in a personal capacity as part of my continuing involvement in writing and speaking about Afghanistan.

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issues where ultimate solutions either are not possible or where U.S. national interests do not warrant the resources for total solutions. Some issues have no definable “end state”; think economic development or U.S.-French relations. This is not to say that no problem diplomats deal with has a solution but, rather, that the overall profession teaches one to manage problems, to keep them from exploding, and to handle discrete issues within a larger problem. The time horizon has no end. At times, this approach may be much too slow for a given situation. At other times the military approach may not be realistic. There is no one truth, but if the limits and virtues of each culture are not understood, friction is likely to be magnified.

I watched the frictions compound in a particularly dramatic way in Afghanistan in 2010 when I returned on one of my periodic, post-retirement trips. President Barack H. Obama’s decision to surge forces in 2009 came with a timeline; military forces were to begin drawing down by 2011. This timeline put the military under great pressure to achieve rapid results. General McChrystal approved a plan that identified some 80 “key terrain” districts and decreed that about half would be stabilized in 2010 and the second half the following year. Mixed civil-military teams were fielded not only at the province level, where Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs that had operated since before my time as ambassador, but were now supplemented by district support teams (DSTs)), which operated in many districts. The basic problem was that while the teams could make progress in many aspects of governance, they were not destined to remain in place. The Afghan government, which was still rebuilding from the total destruction of years of war, had no capacity to follow up with bringing effective administration into anything close to the number of districts being “pacified.” Therefore, the teams’ long-term impact was close to nil.

There were many individual issues and arguments. But fundamentally, the problem was that the civilians considered the pace of the program unrealistic and doomed to failure because the Afghan government would not be able to make use of territory gained in this way. And the U.S. military demanded that the civilians produce a plan to take care of their end of things and produce the required Afghan support. The basic problem was that President Obama’s timeline gave the military no choice about the speed they had to maintain, and the civilians badmouthed the military’s plan without offering any alternative.

Each side criticized the other. I sat in on meetings where senior embassy officials criticized the U.S. military, despite the presence of military in the room, and meetings where senior military were scathing in their comments about their



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civilian partners. While the situation was better in some parts of the country, it was sufficiently bad that in our trip report to General McChrystal, Anthony H. Cordesman, Michael E. O'Hanlon, and I noted:

The level of civil-military coordination remains an obvious problem in Kabul and in the south. Tension between IJC [the corps command] and the Embassy/USAID is high. The reciprocal disagreement expressed by personnel on each side with the views, realism, and contribution of the other poses a significant problem to effectiveness.<sup>12</sup>

## CIVIL-MILITARY COORDINATION

In the same report, we noted that civ-mil relations in eastern Afghanistan were better because the senior civilian and military leaders shared a common view of the situation and the pacing that this required. When personalities and views meshed, cooperation followed. When they did not, operations as well as relations suffered. Because there was no single point of control of the two chains of command, there was no organizational way of bringing order to the situation.

## OPERATIONAL ISSUES THAT IMPACT COOPERATION

In Afghanistan and Iraq, civilian and military cooperation took place at many levels, from the ambassador and the commanding general down to majors and lieutenant colonels working with military-level foreign service and USAID officers in PRTs and DSTs. I interacted with all of the PRTs during my time as ambassador, and with many of the smaller teams on my later trips. While I did not do a systematic survey, I observed a number of institutional and formational differences that complicated cooperation.

One was the decision cycle. Simplifying for purposes of generalization, the military has a formalized planning cycle that works through consideration of alternative "courses of action" and guidance from the command level and eventually makes proposals for final decisions. Civilians have no comparable process nor real training in planning in this highly structured way. This sometimes led to problems when civilian reservations or opposition were voiced at the decision phase, rather than at what their military colleagues would have considered the appropriate phase in the plan's development. When this happened, it was jarring.

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<sup>12</sup> Author's private email to Gen McChrystal and others, 19 May 2010.

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One contributing factor lay in the relative size of military and civilian staffs. Frequently, there would be as few as one FSO and one USAID officer in a PRT. Even in a larger headquarters there would be only a few civilians. Often the military was extremely open and cooperative in inviting civilian participation in every phase of planning. But the civilians were, in a delightful military expression, a “high demand, low density asset.” There were not enough of them. This put a requirement on both sides to understand how the other worked in order to make sure that the civilians were involved appropriately at the right time in the planning process. Otherwise, civilian objections often came late and were seen as disruptive because the problems had not been raised earlier.

It also put a requirement on the civilians to think broadly about possible political issues. In one case in Afghanistan that I learned about during a visit in 2012, a military anticorruption group placed an Afghan airline off limits for American use due to reports of criminal activity. However, the airline was owned by someone close to President Hamid Karzai and the palace, taken by surprise, went ballistic. The political fallout rebounded on the embassy and there was resulting friction between the embassy and the command. The problem arose because the embassy liaison officer in the anticorruption group had not done his job. The command was entitled to look to the liaison officer to raise a red flag if a proposed action had political implications. But the embassy officer had not checked the political implication with his embassy colleagues nor notified anyone of the impending action, so there had been no consideration of whether the decision ought to be made or how to manage the political fallout if it was.

Frustration has arisen also from not understanding the limitations that each group has. The difference in chains of command and of numbers are both cause for complaint when understanding lags. Afghanistan and Iraq each had periods of large surges, not only of the military but of their civilian counterparts. In each case, the civilians failed to respond with the numbers needed. This caused a good deal of resentment. The military complaints made it into the press. In 2010 and 2011, I heard the complaints both in Washington and in travels in Afghanistan. As one disgruntled division commander remarked to me, “I feel the civilian surge lapping at my ankles.”<sup>13</sup>

The problem was not lack of volition but lack of numbers. The active-duty officers of the Foreign Service at that time numbered only about 8,000, slightly more than the strength of a brigade. They were fully deployed in some 270 posts

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<sup>13</sup> Personal quote from one division commander to the author, 2013.



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abroad and had no “garrison force” available for deployment. At one point, some 10 percent of positions worldwide were empty due to the staffing requirements of Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>14</sup> Had this been better explained at all levels of operations, and not just in Washington, it might have reduced the ill feeling, although that would not have solved the problem. As I saw during my regular trips to Afghanistan, various approaches were used to field more staff, including temporary hires referred to as “3161s” for the section of law that provided the authority for the employment. The operation was only partially successful, has not been well studied to understand how to improve it, and the problem would probably reemerge if another large civilian deployment were ever required.

Another area for misunderstanding came from the differences in the length of the respective chains of command and the separate reporting responsibilities of those working together in the field. State Department and USAID officers in the field had responsibilities for reporting that would go, via the embassy, to Washington. Their information would often be the result of working with their military colleagues. This posed challenges in who could clear reports and in the timing of reporting; mishandling either of these areas would cause frictions and impede cooperation.

A report from, for example, a political officer in a PRT would go to the embassy office managing PRTs in Kabul and be seen by one or two interested offices. If it was sensitive, it would be signed out by the author or the deputy chief of mission (DCM), my deputy, which was a very short civilian chain of command. The PRT military commander, by contrast, reported through a chain of command involving the relevant brigade, division, and corps commands before even getting to the commanding general, my opposite number. If all involved were not careful, an outgoing message with something negative about military operations could be on its way to Washington before a copy landed on the commanding general’s desk. This kind of surprise would be likely to radiate downward to the PRT commander who, in turn, would be more than irritated at his civilian counterpart and the result would affect cooperation. The flip side of this could be the military tendency, at various levels, to refuse to clear a report that they found in some way critical.

All of this may seem trivial, except that it could undermine the cooperation

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<sup>14</sup> *A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness* (Washington, DC: American Academy of Diplomacy, 2008); and *Diplomacy in a Time of Scarcity* (Washington, DC: American Academy of Diplomacy, 2012).

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so essential to mission success. In time, I dealt with the problem by instructing my officers always to make sure that they showed their reporting to their counterparts, that their counterparts were given an opportunity to put in the report a dissenting view, but that their counterparts were not allowed to refuse to allow the report to go forward. If the report was sufficiently critical, I would make sure that it was discussed with the commanding general. Other ambassadors may have dealt differently with the issue. The point is that when mission effectiveness relies on cooperation rather than a point of command, special care is necessary to avoid problems. Successful operation requires attention to a great deal of detail that falls well below the usual understanding of policy or even broad operational considerations.

Because successful civilian operations in these circumstances depend on personal relations, they are particularly subject to problems resulting from the short tours of officers on both side of the civilian military divide. The usual tour on each side was one year. Rotation dates did not line up, so even within the one-year span, old working relations would be ending and new ones taken up; and with each change the quality of cooperation might change in either direction. For example, the trip report cited earlier noted that we had seen a good pattern of cooperation in eastern Afghanistan. But recently a USAID officer who had served in the east looked at the old report and noted; "I believe this was the trip in which TF [task force] Yukon (Khost, Patyka [*sic*], and Paktika) was one of your stops and you were briefed on the 'board of directors' approach that we implemented at the time. While there was hope that this was not personality dependent, the departure of some key actors demonstrated that sadly it was."<sup>15</sup>

In short, personalities matter and their impact is magnified by short tours, differences in the chain of command, and the degree to which they do or do not make the effort to understand the institutional and cultural factors that shape their counterpart's response. The recent press coverage of a military report blaming embassy Kabul's leadership for many of the problems of the disastrous August 2021 retreat and evacuation from Kabul suggest that the problem remains unaltered from what I experienced and observed.<sup>16</sup>

Given the number of places where cooperation can break down, perhaps what ought to be surprising is that things do sometimes work well. But beyond

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<sup>15</sup> Anonymous email to author, 20 February 2022.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, Dan Lamothe and Alex Horton, "Documents Reveal U.S. Military's Frustration with White House, Diplomats over Afghanistan Evacuation," *Washington Post*, 8 February 2022.

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describing the problem, the obvious question is, what can be done to improve matters?

## IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Professional education on both sides of the civil-military divide is clearly part of the answer. While much remains necessary, it is important to say that much more has been done on the military side than on the civilian. The study of Joint operations and of the matters in this chapter receives far more attention on the military side than it used to. A focus on Jointness, once first broached at the lieutenant colonel level in the war colleges, is now regularly addressed in the Command and General Staff College at Leavenworth (attended generally at the level of major or lieutenant commander) and the comparable institutions of the other military Services.

Regrettably, there are no comparable training programs on the civilian side. The State Department and USAID send a small number of officers to the war colleges but lack comparable training in interagency operations beyond a brief seminar here or there. Professional publications reflect the same imbalance. Military and military foundation periodicals and publications such as this volume regularly address different aspects of the problem.<sup>17</sup> The *Foreign Service Journal* has published occasional articles on civil-military relations, but there is no real civilian equivalent to the numerous publications of the military.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, a considerably expanded effort to educate civilians, particularly Foreign Service and USAID officers about working with the military, is long overdue.

Some of the deficiency may be remedied by the large number of civilians who have served with their military colleagues over the years in Afghanistan and Iraq. They have learned much from their service. But there have been few efforts to learn from or capture the lessons of their service. Already some of the mid-level officers who served in PRTs under me have reached retirement.

Improvements at the strategic or policy level are very difficult and are considered further on. At the operational level, improvements are readily identifiable in theory, although difficult to bring about in practice. One would be systematic training of civilians in Joint operations, preferably with military counterparts.

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<sup>17</sup> Two examples among many are *Prism*, the publication of the National Defense University, and the *Interagency Journal*, published by the Simons Center at Fort Leavenworth.

<sup>18</sup> The *Foreign Service Journal* had features on civ-mil relations. See *Foreign Service Journal*, October 2015.

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At the most basic level, this could be as small as assigning active-duty State Department and USAID officers to work in role-playing or control groups at the numerous military exercises that take place every year. Senior civilians are rarely available for these exercises. To fill the gap, the military contracts with former ambassadors to participate but the result is that while the military receives the benefit of the training there is no benefit or learning for the civilian institution since the retirees are already out of the active ranks.

Up to now, the result has been that even in wartime, Joint training came about slowly and unevenly. Joint military and civilian teams began work in PRTs in Afghanistan in 2004. However, these were pick-up teams formed initially on the ground. The first PRT to deploy with training as a group before arriving in country came only in 2006. PRTs were still a “pick-up” game as late as 2007 with many identifiable lacks in doctrine, training, and organization.<sup>19</sup> While the advantage of having civilians from the State Department and USAID join the training was obvious, this was difficult to achieve due to the problem of releasing officers from ongoing assignments to join the training. Since that problem would presumably reemerge in the future, it simply emphasizes the need for more professional education and training in the normal course of events.

One place where some civilians gain experience in working with their military colleagues is in the assignment of officers as advisors, called foreign policy advisors (POLADs), to major military commands. Generally, this program has been well regarded by all participants. The mutual learning that flows from this program is evident, but it is difficult for the State Department to staff the program at its current size and it is unlikely to be able to send POLADs to the brigade level, although some have recommended it. Great care in selecting officers is required. One study of the program concluded that it was better to leave POLAD positions empty than to fill them if the personality of the POLAD did not fit well with the commander, another reminder of how personal relationships are central to civ-mil work.<sup>20</sup> Other than the officers who end up in these

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<sup>19</sup> *The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan*, 110th Cong. (18 October 2007) (testimony of Robert Perito, U.S. Institute of Peace, senior program officer in the Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations, before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations).

<sup>20</sup> *The Foreign Policy Advisor Program: Diplomats Among Warriors* (special report of a conference on interagency cooperation, Washington, DC, American Foreign Service Association under the auspices of CGSC Foundation Arthur D. Simons Center and the American Academy of Diplomacy, 10 May 2013).

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positions, those few who attend the service colleges, or who happen to end up serving with the military, there is no systematic education of civilians in how to work with the military. Some change may also result from the number of former military personnel who have joined the Foreign Service. How many have done so is unclear from available information,

One exception to this is USAID's work in disaster relief. USAID disaster relief teams do work and train with the military. This cooperation has been effective in many cases of national disaster. But this is a specialized area within USAID. It has comparatively limited influence on the training of the rest of the institution.<sup>21</sup>

Various lessons learned studies from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq may reveal other opportunities for training. At one point, a study of 200 civilians who had served in PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan was done to derive lessons learned and best practices from the experience. However, bureaucratic sensitivities about some of the implied criticisms kept the report from being cleared for general use so it did not have any real value for training.<sup>22</sup> A small portion of the study was published by the U.S. Institute of Peace but was not used for training.<sup>23</sup>

The special inspector general for Afghanistan (SIGAR) has published a retrospective on the American experience in Afghanistan. This could provide useful lessons if it is used for that purpose.

A recurring problem during the 20 years of warfare was that when the call came to rapidly increase the civilian presence, the response was slow and often deemed inadequate. Various ideas for the formation of a crisis response force or Foreign Service Reserve were studied and some progress was made in constituting such an organization in State Department's Office of the Coordinator of Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS, which has now become the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, CSO).<sup>24</sup> However, Congress cut the funding to maintain equipment for a large deployment and ideas of constitut-

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<sup>21</sup> USAID, "U.S. Department of Defense Providing Critical Logistics Support for USAID's Pakistan Floods Response," press release, 9 September 2022.

<sup>22</sup> The study was jointly conducted by the National Defense University, the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and the U.S. Institute for Peace. When permission was denied to post it on the ADST website, the reason given was security. Private exchange with one of the authors, 28 February 2022.

<sup>23</sup> John Naland, *Lessons from Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *In Brief: State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012).

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ing a Foreign Service Reserve, equivalent to the military reserve, were never authorized or funded. The mission of CSO has continually changed. While many possibilities for using CSO to improve training in civilian-military cooperation have not worked out, it is possible that with further study the bureau might still play a useful role in bridging institutional cultures.<sup>25</sup>

Because of the failure to build a standing organization adequate for crisis response, it is useful to look for lessons from the ad hoc measures that have been employed in the past. Many of the personnel hired to meet the staffing gaps of Afghanistan and Iraq were so-called 3161s, a reference to the section of law that allowed their employment.<sup>26</sup> My anecdotal observations and discussions suggest that some people hired under this program were brilliant, some failed so badly that they had to be terminated, some qualified people took months to reach their assignments, and training was very limited.<sup>27</sup> In short, while some worked extremely well with their military counterparts, this appears to have been more a matter of luck and compatible personalities than of any particular focus of the program or training for those brought into it. To my knowledge, no detailed study of the successes, failures, and areas for improvement of the 3161 program has been undertaken. Lessons learned from such a study could be very useful if there is a future crisis needing personnel augmentation. As it is, we will no doubt reinvent the wheel from scratch without any review of what shapes and configurations worked for previous wheels.

Training, professional education, and study of past practices all focus on the operation level of civilian military operations; how personnel might work together more effectively. But are there more fundamental measures that might address the basic problem of separate chains of command, the problem that no one person is in charge at any level? This issue has not received much attention and it may well be that systematic study would surface ideas beyond those offered here. However, a few thoughts may be worth looking at.

One issue is whether it is or might be possible to have real Joint command at lower levels of operations, in something akin to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The legal view that I have generally been briefed on is that the relevant laws prevent civilians from directly controlling military personnel and vice versa.

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<sup>25</sup> CSO was looked at in some detail in a study of the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center, *Diplomacy in a Time of Scarcity*, 38–42.

<sup>26</sup> Employment and Compensation of Employees, 5 U.S.C. § 3161 (2016).

<sup>27</sup> Naland, *Lessons from Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq*.

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Thus, for example, when the Africa Command (AFRICOM) was established, the so-called civilian deputy was not permitted any actual command functions. Yet, half a century ago in the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program in Vietnam, there were joint teams that apparently functioned with a single chain of command involving both civilians and military. The organization was created by an executive order of President Lyndon B. Johnson. There was a great deal of bureaucratic struggle in defining how it would work in Vietnam but, in the end, Robert W. Komer was designated a deputy commander of U.S. forces for pacification and established real command over the unified operations of the program. Studies of the program focus on the bureaucratic battles necessary to achieve unity of command and the presidential decision necessary to overcome the resistance but do not mention legal issues.<sup>28</sup> That which is now said to be prohibited did happen.

The late Rufus C. Phillips, who was heavily involved in the program, was clear that there was unity of command in the field. Civilians did give orders to military and vice versa depending on the organization of local teams. But Phillips could not remember any discussion of legal authority. He did note that

Even before CORDS, when I went out to run the Office of Rural Affairs in USOM/Saigon in 1962, I got the agreement of the head of [US]MACV, General [Paul D.] Harkins, to appoint provincial (sector) military advisors as Rural Affairs provincial advisors because it took time to recruit and assign civilians. Thus, they answered to me in their civilian responsibilities and to the military command for their military responsibilities. There were no rules that prevented that and it worked well.<sup>29</sup>

Whether the law has changed since Vietnam, or whether it is a matter of interpretation, needs attention. Even in Vietnam there was no comparable unity or cooperation between the embassy and USMACV, the military command. But

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas W. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1999). See also Dale Andrade and LtCol James H. Willbanks, "Cords/Phoenix, Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," *Military Review*, no. 86 (March–April 2006).

<sup>29</sup> USOM refers to United States Operations Mission; USMACV refers to the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Private email exchange between the author and the late Rufus Phillips, 17 October 2021.

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lower down it was achieved. It does seem worth trying to answer the question of how what is now deemed impossible was done and might be done again.

What about at the top of the chains of command in the field: Is there a way of going beyond the current reliance on goodwill and compatible personalities? In a 2014 article, Admiral Dennis C. Blair, the former director of National Intelligence; Admiral Eric T. Olson, the former commander of U.S. Special Operations Command; and I suggested some major changes in how to organize the civil military relationships in the field and between Washington and the field.<sup>30</sup> We focused on what could be done by executive order and direction without the need for legislation.

Our starting point was to note that only when Washington decision makers pass from military operations to those involving interagency issues do they try to do the planning in Washington and pass implementation to the field, whereas in military planning the initial work is done by those who will have to carry out the plan. This approach has often proved problematic. We suggested reversing it. We noted that:

Washington's plans are subject to pressures that often make them unrealistic and unsuitable for conditions in the field. An in-country planning team is much more likely to deliver a plan that is balanced between the short and the long term, that includes the most effective applications of the capabilities of the different departments and that realistically matches the needs on the ground. During interagency review in Washington, there will be plenty of opportunity for adding other considerations and good ideas.<sup>31</sup>

We envisaged a much larger role for the ambassador, not only in preparing such a plan but in carrying it out. Clearly, this would not be simple. Embassies are neither organized nor staffed to undertake such complex planning. Accordingly, we suggested military and interagency augmentation to organize a joint plan. We recognized as well that few ambassadors have the requisite background or training to direct such an effort. Serious changes in professional education and in ambassadorial selection would be required to produce the required leaders.

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<sup>30</sup> Dennis Blair, Ronald Neumann, and Eric Olson, "Fixing Failed States," *National Interest*, 27 August 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Quote from observations from 1970 to 2007 as a diplomat, where I served as an ambassador, a deputy assistant secretary of State, and a senior officer in Iraq.



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Once a plan has been approved, we recommended that the ambassador have the overall responsibility to conduct operations. Our argument, which at the time of writing focused mainly on the threat from al-Qaeda, noted that:

Within the overall integrated plan in a fragile state, the ambassador should recommend the military and intelligence actions to be taken directly against Al Qaeda personnel and units. The country plan must establish the priority and scope of these activities within the overall mission of strengthening security. It needs to define the areas in which the raids and drone strikes will be conducted and the intensity of the campaign. The overall objective is to capture or kill more enemies than are created. The ambassador should recommend whether these actions be taken as military activities under Title 10 or intelligence activities under Title 50. With special-operations forces and CIA planners as part of his team, the ambassador is in the best position to recommend both the actions themselves and the most appropriate authorities under which to conduct them. During the course of the campaign, the ambassador needs the authority to approve direct actions—drone strikes as well as raids and conventional military strikes—to ensure that they are integrated into the overall plan.<sup>32</sup>

And recognizing that circumstances change, the needs change, and that the current Washington process for allocating funds through a slow and clumsy bureaucratic process is anything but nimble, we suggested that

The solution is to give the ambassador both the responsibility for overall progress on the plan and directive authority over the programs in country within the limits of the plan that was approved. Once budgets have been allocated to U.S. programs to strengthen a fragile state, an ambassador should be able to shift them, within realistic thresholds, as needs and opportunities develop.<sup>33</sup>

The ideas we recommended are very unlikely ever to be implemented. They break too many institutional and mental barriers to be accepted. They may not even be the best ideas. Perhaps their most amazing point is that they were agreed on by two four-star admirals and a former ambassador. The point in describing

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<sup>32</sup> Blair, Neumann, and Olson, "Fixing Failed States."

<sup>33</sup> Blair, Neumann, and Olson, "Fixing Failed States."

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them in such detail is only to illustrate that it is possible to think outside the box. Such thinking is needed and should be encouraged.

The current organization of civil-military operations with its absence of adequate preparation, neglect of civilian education, ignorance of lessons learned, and excessive dependence on how civilian and military leaders will work together has not been adequate for the challenges of the past. It is unlikely to do better in the future. Current practices in conducting civil-military operations need to be examined at every level and the time, energy, and resources necessary devoted to change. Failing this, the best that can be done is probably to study and teach the reality of the problems encountered to better prepare future leaders, civilian and military, for the challenges they may face.



## ◉ Conclusion ◉

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Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett (Ret)

The authors of the preceding chapters hope that this book will prove a useful addition to the study of military diplomacy in all its aspects, and it will help to spark further study and discussion of the topic. Please note the list of recommended additional readings that follow.

I will address my final comments to those readers who may find themselves invited to participate in the sort of nation-building diplomacy and interagency coordination described in the “Lessons from Practitioners” section. Here, I wish to build on the insightful advice in those chapters. While my thoughts reflect my personal experience in U.S.-led campaigns, this advice—for what it is worth—is not meant exclusively for Americans.

### WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE

You have been reading an instruction manual, not just a history book. The U.S. military has been tasked with counterinsurgency throughout its history: the Indian Wars, in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, and Haiti in the 1920s. In the 1960s, the Army and Marine Corps were joined in Vietnam by the State Department and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which became deeply engaged in governing Vietnamese at the provincial and district level—hardly their core competencies. Afterward, these organizations breathed a collective bitter sigh of relief and returned to preparing for their preferred missions, whether mechanized or amphibious warfare, or traditional diplomacy and development work, doing little to memorialize hard lessons. Then they did it all over again in Iraq and Afghanistan, relearning lessons on the fly. Of course, it would be wonderful to imagine that the future will hold no more long, painful wars in store, and there is no higher aim of diplomacy than

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to forestall conflict. But chances are, unless the United States turns resolutely isolationist, or the human race matures to the point of abandoning warfare, future American leaders will again be tempted to deploy the tools of hard and soft power for counterinsurgency and nation-building.

### MODERATE YOUR AMBITIONS

I served as a provincial administrator in an-Najaf, Iraq, during the 2003–4 Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) transitional occupation, after the United States led a multinational force to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein. In some respects, the CPA provincial teams foreshadowed the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) program, but with greater authority since the United States represented a foreign occupation in a decidedly “wild west” atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> The CPA provincial chiefs were seasoned American or British diplomats seconded from the State Department and Foreign Office. While some were Middle East hands, few of us had experience with managing large organizations, let alone governing millions of Iraqi citizens, nor with dealing with counterinsurgency. Some, myself included, did not speak Arabic.

The hubris of the American-led effort to reshape Iraq has been well documented, and CPA experienced sometimes spectacular disconnects between ambition and capabilities.<sup>2</sup> Our military counterparts also struggled with governance and counterinsurgency missions, and we were slow to learn how the scale of our presence and heavy-handedness of our governance were wearing out our initial welcome even from those who welcomed Saddam Hussein’s departure.<sup>3</sup> All this

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<sup>1</sup> I recount one vignette from these days in Philip S. Kosnett, “Foreign Service Firefight,” *Foreign Service Journal*, June 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For the seminal works on this period, see Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone: Imperial Life in the Emerald City* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010); and Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003 to 2005* (London: Penguin Books, 2007). Instructive books by former CPA officers operating at the provincial level include Mark Etherington, *Revolt on the Tigris: The Al-Sadr Uprising and the Governing of Iraq* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Mark A. Schapiro, *Authorized Departure: Letters from Iraq, 2004–2010* (Morristown, NC: LuLu, 2016); and Rory Stewart, *Prince of the Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2006). CPA chief L. Paul Bremer’s memoir is a bit of an apologia but offers a useful perspective. See L. Paul Bremer, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Only in 2006, five years after the start of military operations in Afghanistan and three years into the occupation of Iraq, did the U.S. military issue an updated manual on counterinsurgency: *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, Field Manual 3-24 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, 2014). The State Department had no comparable playbook for diplomats sent to the field.

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contributed to the popular resentment that fueled both Sunni and Shi'ite resistance.

Over time, both the military and the civilian agencies stepped up predeployment training and language instruction (including in the Afghan languages Dari and Pashto) but training in governance and “tactical diplomacy” remained very much a matter of learning on the job. While thousands of State Department and USAID personnel (and some plucky U.S. Department of Agriculture agronomists) volunteered for Afghanistan and Iraq duty, the civilian agencies remained hesitant to exercise their authority to order officers with specific skills (such as fluent Arabic, or war college experience that may have smoothed civ-mil cooperation) to deploy to war zones against their will.

EMBRACE HUMILITY, LISTEN  
TO THE LOCALS, AND TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT

Listen to your local partners, especially when they seem unenthusiastic about your bright new ideas. It was common for CPA officials to decorate their workspaces with a quotation purportedly from T. E. Lawrence—a.k.a. Lawrence of Arabia—meant originally for British officers working with Arab allies during World War I: “Better to let them do it imperfectly than to do it perfectly yourself, for it is their country, their way, and your time is short.” Few of us took that message properly on board, but if a tad condescending (who defines *perfectly*?) it was useful advice.

BRIDGE THE CIV-MIL DIVIDE,  
ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

My own experience in Iraq in 2004 and again from 2007 to 2009, and in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010, tracks with Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann’s views in his chapter on the challenges of getting military and civilian leadership in sync. That we had parallel military and civilian structures violated the principle of unity of command and threatened the principle of unity of effort. Determining the division of labor between military and civilian elements was a constant struggle, and it was overly dependent on the chemistry between the U.S. ambassador on the ground and the four-star military commander, whether of the Multinational Force-Iraq or the International Security Assistance Force-Afghanistan. When the general and the ambassador had a visibly positive, trusting relationship, as in the case of General David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker in Iraq, a spirit of cooperation and purpose permeated the American civ-mil enterprise.

#### CONCLUSION

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With some of the other pairings the disconnect was obvious, and it was on display in vigorous disagreements in Joint civ-mil staff meetings. This set a tone that undermined trust between civilians and military throughout the enterprise.

Even during years when leadership was strong and perceived progress on the ground bolstered morale, misunderstandings between American civilians and military abounded. Many military officers resented that the Army and Marines were engaged in nation-building tasks and wondered why the State Department and USAID could not do more, not realizing how small the civilian agencies were, and that the skills of diplomacy and governance were not identical. Conversely, as a pol-mil officer, I was disappointed that some foreign service officers (FSOs) working in civ-mil environments in war zones—the sort of diplomats who prided themselves on developing nuanced knowledge of every country in which they served—could not be bothered to learn the basics of military culture and rank. Some civilians saw the military as pushily taking on development tasks better left to USAID or the State Department; some military would have happily left such tasks to the civilian agencies but saw themselves as filling gaps the civilians lacked the resources or drive to tackle.

On top of this American-to-American disconnect, the cultural and policy differences among Americans and the numerous partner military contingents and embassies, not to mention the perspectives of the Iraqis and Afghans we were in country to support, made team building a constant struggle.

In “Foreign Policy Advisor 101,” Joanne Cummings and Heather Steil note the importance of personal rapport between POLAD and commander and encourage generals not to be put off if their POLADs present views different from the prevailing wisdom of the military staff. After all, that is supposedly why you brought an outsider on board. My own experience as a POLAD in Iraq tracks with this. My boss (the late General Raymond T. Odierno) was the sort of leader who was smart enough to listen to a range of views and even pushback from his staff. In contrast, I have occasionally encountered senior leaders—both civilian and military—who seemed to think being “the smartest person in the room” meant they did not have to listen to opposing views among their advisors, who would wearily give up on pointing out problems and just try to execute the boss’s personal vision.

Living 24/7 on a military compound in a war zone, even “inside the wire” at a division or corps headquarters, usually means living a more austere life than down the road at the embassy (although during my time in Baghdad and Kabul, there were enough bombings and rocket attacks on both embassies and military

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headquarters to keep anyone from confusing the posting with Brussels). At the height of the Global War on Terrorism, the State Department had sufficient volunteers for war zone service (contrary to legend), but they sometimes struggled to fill the surging demand for POLADs with candidates whose temperament and background would make them good fits to embed with the military. My view was that you did not need to have served in or alongside the military previously to succeed as a war zone POLAD—but you needed to be adaptable. (It also helped to have gone camping at some point in your life.) I know of a few military commanders who, disappointed in their POLADs, suggested to colleagues that they consider hiring from the ranks of retired military officers or Department of Defense (DOD) civilians to fill their POLAD billets. This was a loss for the effort to build a culture of interagency partnership.

For those who might serve in a *peacetime* civ-mil environment such as an embassy, I would note that one legacy of the civ-mil effort in Iraq and Afghanistan was to skew some military officers' understanding of interagency relationships. This is a euphemistic way of saying some military attachés who had previously served in war zones, where they saw civilians acting in supporting roles, did not initially catch on that they now worked for the ambassador and deputy chief of mission. A related issue was that after a decade of ordering around Iraqi and Afghan counterparts, some war zone veterans were slow to realize they needed to persuade, not just instruct, host country officials. Most figured out how to switch gears, perhaps after an instructive failure or two.

## DO NOT WAIT FOR TROUBLE TO BUILD TRUST WITH ALLIES

The deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan took on a multinational character, as Washington sought to broaden the alliance—to “put out more flags”—to overcome the image of unilateral American action. Perhaps because I was a civilian and thus an outsider, some third-country staff officers during my 2007–10 tours felt comfortable venting to me that their ideas received scant attention from Americans. Conversely, some American officers would privately complain that the war would be easier to fight without allies and their different national doctrines, cultures, and rules of engagement. (To be fair, this impatience with allies was not unknown in diplomatic and political circles; it was more than a military problem.) There is nothing new about discord among allies, but recognize it, build personal relationships, and try to address differences before the war heats up.

## CONCLUSION



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I will offer an example from my service as Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) administrator in an-Najaf during the 2004 rebellion of the Shi'ite militia of the cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. At the outbreak of fighting in April, most of the Coalition military forces in an-Najaf were Spanish, Salvadoran, and Honduran troops under the command of a Polish general based in a neighboring province, with a few American units in the city. As fighting continued and American troops flowed in, disagreements ensued over the rules of engagement to be employed in combatting the rebellion. Were claymore devices (mines) prohibited by United Nations (UN) convention? What level of "hostile intent" did a group of armed fighters moving toward your perimeter have to demonstrate before it was okay to shoot at them? Contingents responded to direction from their governments as well as the U.S.-led military chain of command, and Spain pulled its forces out of Iraq in the middle of the campaign. These disagreements were exacerbated by the ad hoc nature of the military deployment, which was not a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or UN enterprise. I made my share of mistakes in relations with partner leaders. My point is not that one group or another was right or wrong on every issue, but that these issues would better have been addressed before the shooting started.

### SPEAK UP

Once you have been on the ground long enough that your opinions are well-formed, try to insert your analysis into the policy making process. You probably do not understand local conditions and culture as well as you hope to, but you understand them better than your bosses wielding the "thousand-mile screwdriver." Put yourself in a position of influence, which can happen even if you are of modest rank, if you have leaders who will listen. If you think the strategy and tactics being employed are not working, say so—but do not just complain; offer alternatives.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, some military and civilian leaders would tell visiting executive and congressional VIPs, honestly, that stabilizing the country would take decades. The visitors would reply, honestly, that the American people would not maintain support for such "forever wars." But getting out proved harder than getting in, in part, due to unrealistic goals.<sup>4</sup> So we kept grinding away.

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<sup>4</sup> Retired U.S. Army Col Christopher D. Kolenda discusses this at length in *Zero-Sum Victory: What We're Getting Wrong about War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021).

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## RESIST ARTIFICIAL DEADLINES AND METRICS

Do not mistake *efficiency* for *effectiveness* or *movement* for *progress*. When I was seconded to Multinational Corps-Iraq as POLAD in 2007–8, I learned the power of the PowerPoint slide, including the infamous spotlight charts, which were a feature of the daily briefings for the commanding generals. These listed goals, with progress delineated by colored circles: green meant all was well, yellow meant slow progress, red meant stuck. Like any weapon, PowerPoint can be wielded for good or evil. But the unrelenting pace of briefings could artificially drive decision making.

I recall one infrastructure project the staff briefed daily for weeks. Almost all the criteria (funding, design, logistics, security) showed green on the slide. Only one criterion remained resolutely red—host nation approval—so the project remained stuck at the starting gate. Every morning a senior officer asked why his slide had not turned fully green, and the exasperated briefer would look at his boots and mutter, “It’s . . . *the embassy*! They’re . . . *still talking to the Iraqis*.” Nobody asked if, possibly, there was a legitimate reason why the Iraqis lacked enthusiasm for this particular project. While I usually found senior military officers open to counsel from the POLAD and respectful of the embassy’s role, in this case people just wanted to see green on the slide. My takeaway is that any progress briefing worth having is worth having half as often, in order to moderate the pressure for artificially rapid movement.

If engaged in diplomacy with local stakeholders, whatever your rank, whether in a presidential palace or a village square:

- Talk less. Listen more. Speak respectfully.
- Make realistic promises about what you have to offer—whether money, security, expertise—then keep them. If conditions change and you cannot deliver, admit it. Be clear on what you are looking for in return.
- It is a cliché but it is true: planning is everything. The plan is nothing. Do not fall in love with the plan, whether your own or your leaders’.
- Realize your local interlocutors may have seen foreign soldiers and diplomats come and go, leaving unfulfilled promises in their wake. Give them a reason to trust you.
- Remember that today’s adversaries can become tomorrow’s partners, if not necessarily friends, if you can find common ground and common interests. That is the essence of diplomacy.

## CONCLUSION



## ◉ Further Study ◉

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## VIEWING

*Restrepo* (2010) directed by Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington and its sequel *Korengal* (2014), detail journalist Junger's time embedded with an American infantry platoon engaged in a frustrating counterinsurgency campaign in the mountains of Afghanistan's Kunar Province (the same topic Junger covers in his book *War*, listed above).

Among numerous documentaries detailing the American war in Iraq, two standouts are *No End in Sight* (2007) directed by Charles Ferguson, which addresses the chaotic early days of the occupation through American eyes; and *Once Upon a Time in Iraq* (2020), directed by James Bluemel, which showcases voices of ordinary Iraqis little heard in the West.

Finally, *ISIS in Afghanistan: Frontline* (2020) reveals the degree to which ISIS is gaining a foothold in the country in 2015 Afghanistan.

The list of Hollywood-style movies dealing seriously with military diplomacy is predictably not long. Here are a few worth watching:

*Arrival* (2016), directed by Denis Villeneuve from a story by Ted Chiang. When mysterious alien spacecraft arrive over Earth and initial efforts at communication fail, the U.S. Army calls on civilian scientists led by a linguist and physicist (Amy Adams and Jeremy Renner). Not just a creative, award-winning film, but also a study in civ-mil operations where the soldiers and civilians sometimes have as much trouble understanding each other's culture as do the humans and aliens.

*Rules of Engagement* (2000), directed by William Friedkin, from a story by James Webb (a Marine Vietnam veteran, former secretary of the Navy, and future U.S. senator). A violent demonstration by AK-wielding civilians outside the U.S. Embassy in Yemen ends in the death of dozens of Yemenis and three U.S. Marines after the ambassador calls in reinforcements. A court-martial ensues—is the Marine commander a hero for preventing the slaughter of embassy staff, or is he responsible for escalating a demonstration into a bloodbath? Typical for Hollywood, the military comes across better than the civilians. This film is not universally admired but it is worth watching for its reminder that diplomacy is conducted by flawed individuals with personal goals and preconceptions, not by rational-actor governments wielding abstract theories of political science. Samuel L. Jackson serves as the tough-talking Marine colonel, Tommy Lee Jones as his honorable JAG defender; Bruce Greenwood as the slimy national security advisor, the ambassador's archetypal jerk of an

## FURTHER STUDY

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aide; Ben Kingsley as a risk-averse, career-obsessed U.S. ambassador. Kudos to Chris Umland for his brief but spot-on performance as the ambassador's archetypical jerk of an aide. The Yemenis have little voice in the story.

*The Sand Pebbles* (1966) directed by Robert Wise from a novel by Richard McKenna. An old-school, big-screen adventure set in 1926 China, detailing the cultural clash between two awakening powers. The American gunboat USS *San Pablo*, all alone and far from home, is tasked with showing the flag and protecting American civilians in a region of China riven by civil conflict and incipient revolution. The story is told primarily through the eyes of a troubled petty officer (Steve McQueen) who initially ignores the political and social currents swirling around him, until an idealistic missionary (Candice Bergen) opens his eyes. Richard Crenna is the gunboat captain dead set on doing his duty despite doubts about his mission and despair at his dead-end command. Refreshingly, Chinese characters including a *San Pablo* crewmember (Mako), a student revolutionary (Paul Chun), and an army major (Richard Loo) are key to the story, not just part of the scenery.

*The Wind and the Lion* (1975), directed and written by John Milius. Included on this list for cautionary purposes. Inspired by a true 1904 incident in which Moroccan tribal leader Mulai Ahmed el Raisuni abducted for ransom an American expat businessman, Ion Perdicaris, leading President Theodore Roosevelt to dispatch warships to Morocco and declare his intention to retrieve "Perdicaris alive or Raisuni dead!" Ignoring the Spanish government, which claimed Morocco as part of its sphere of influence, Roosevelt leaned on the sultan of Morocco to ransom Perdicaris, who was released. This muscle flexing—which highlighted rising American power—contributed to Roosevelt's reelection. In the movie, Perdicaris is morphed into a feisty widow (Candice Bergen, again), who develops some Stockholm syndrome-style chemistry with her charismatic captor (Sean Connery). As Roosevelt (Brian Keith) speaks loudly and wields a big stick, the U.S. consul (Geoffrey Lewis) conspires with the U.S. Navy and Marines to forcibly replace the local pasha with a more malleable, pro-U.S. leader. The Marines handily defeat Moroccan and German troops (German?: presumably Hollywood saw German villains as more saleable than Spanish). There is some effort to present the Moroccan point of view. Again, this is highly fictionalized but reminiscent of numerous nineteenth and twentieth century episodes, wherein the moral issues tended to be more complex and the battlefields bloodier and everything was not resolved in the final reel.

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**Kyle Balzer** recently completed his doctorate at Ohio University, where he studied diplomatic and military history. His dissertation, “The Revivalists: James R. Schlesinger, the Nuclear Warfighting Strategists, and Competitive Strategies for Great-Power Rivalry,” explores the development of limited nuclear options and diagnostic net assessment in the late 1960s and 1970s. Balzer, who received his MA in history from Northern Illinois University, was also a student at Ohio University’s Contemporary History Institute. For the 2022–23 academic year, he is the America in the World Consortium’s postdoctoral fellow at the Clements Center for National Security, University of Texas–Austin. His research interests include nuclear strategy, the development of competitive strategies, and the maturation of diagnostic net assessment during the Cold War.

**Sara Belligoni** is a postdoctoral research associate at Rutgers University’s School of Environmental and Biological Sciences–Department of Human Ecology. She is working on a project addressed to develop a climate adaptation framework for communities in the tristate area of New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania with the Megalopolitan Coastal Transformation Hub. Prior to that, Dr. Belligoni earned her PhD in security studies at the University of Central Florida’s School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs. She dedicated her career to investigating civil-military coordination in response to disasters. She collected data in the field and conducted interviews with several actors involved in emergency response operations between Europe, the Caribbean, and the United States. Before pursuing her doctoral degree, Dr. Belligoni was a trainee under the Exchange Visitor Program of the U.S. Department of State. With 30-plus published policy commentaries, she is an active researcher, public speaker, and educator, supporting policy makers, military actors, and local authorities in better preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters.

**Ipshita Bhattacharya** completed her PhD in 2020 from Barkatullah University, India. Her dissertation work focused on the defense relations of India with the United States and China in trilateral comparative fashion since post-independence India. Her work mainly examined the strategic failures on India’s part in defense policies vis-à-

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vis China and the United States since 1947. Currently, she is an assistant professor at Jagran Lakecity University of Central India, wherein her engagements are teaching and research. Her interests include teaching and research for the last eight years. Her area of research and study includes Asian and European politics, international relations, and international security issues.

**Bestami S. Bilgiç** holds a PhD degree in history from the George Washington University. He received his BA and MA degrees in international relations from Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. He previously taught in several universities in Turkey, Kosovo, and Northern Macedonia. Currently he teaches at the Religion and Culture Department of Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg. Dr. Bilgiç has published several books, book chapters, and articles on late Ottoman, Modern Turkish, and post-Ottoman Balkan and Middle Eastern politics.

**Tuba Ünlü Bilgiç** is currently a visiting scholar at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, and an associate professor of international relations at Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. She holds a PhD degree in government from Georgetown University. She received her BA and MA in international relations from Bilkent University. She served as a career diplomat at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, worked as a research assistant at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and at the St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. She has published books and articles on various aspects of Turkish politics including Islam, civil-military relations, foreign policy, and Turkish-American relations.

**Colonel Han Bouwmeester**, PhD, MMAS, is an associate professor of military strategy and land warfare on the faculty of military science at Netherlands Defence Academy. He is both an artillery officer and a scientist. Among other things, he commanded an artillery battalion and the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Afghan province of Uruzgan. He also studied at the U.S. School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and obtained his PhD degree at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. He publishes regularly on Russian military operations, deception warfare, and various ways of influencing people.

**James Bowden**, MA, is a specialist in Middle East history with a predominant focus on military history, national security, and defense issues from a Middle Eastern perspective. Mr. Bowden is a graduate of American Military University and has been published in leading history journals and magazines for the last 11 years. He has taught in international schools in Mongolia and has taught in other school settings in South Korea and Japan.

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**David Campmier** is currently an adjunct professor of history at Adelphi University and has taught a wide range of courses in American, European, and global history. Dr. Campmier received his doctoral degree in history in 2020 from the City University of New York Graduate Center. He is a subject matter expert in military history and specializes in the history of the U.S. Civil War.

**Edward Hunter Christie** is a senior research fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA). He served as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) official from 2014 to 2020, holding analytical roles pertaining to defense economics, strategic foresight, and Russia and Ukraine, followed by roles in technology and innovation policy. During his time at NATO, he participated in official visits to Kyiv and in NATO staff assessments of ongoing reform processes in Ukraine. An economist by background, his early career was focused on applied research in international economics and on energy security issues, with a regional focus on Central and Eastern Europe.

**Joanne Cummings** teaches political science at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and is a distinguished senior fellow on national security at the Middle East Institute. She retired from the U.S. State Department in 2020 and during her career she thrice served as a policy advisor to senior military commanders in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in the broader Middle East. She also led U.S. programs on governance, displacement, and transboundary waters. Ms. Cummings holds a BA in history from the American University of Beirut and an MA in geography from the University of Texas–Austin. She has lived and worked in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran, as well as Afghanistan and Micronesia. Among her areas of expertise are civilian-military affairs, counterterrorism, U.S. Middle East policy, ethnosectarian relations, conflict and post-conflict displacement, political geography, Islam and democracy, and transitional justice.

**Eugene M. Fishel** is a deputy director in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. He has also served as senior advisor for emerging threats, senior advisor for Russian malign activities and trends, National Security Council director for Russian, Ukrainian, and Eurasian affairs, special advisor to the vice president, and assistant national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia. Dr. Fishel has worked at embassies in Kyiv and Minsk and taught at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs and Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service. He holds degrees in political science, international relations, national security strategy, and public policy.

**Frank T. Goertner** is director for federal and veteran affairs at the University of

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Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business. A retired U.S. Navy foreign area officer and aviator, his military career focused on security assistance operations, plans, and policy in Europe, Eurasia, Africa, and the Middle East as well as analysis of future force designs to enhance cooperative deterrence. His civilian career focuses on preparing next generation business and defense professionals to advance novel international security solutions. He is published in *The Hill* and with the U.S. Naval Institute, Rainey Center for Public Policy, and Center for International Maritime Security.

**Ambassador John Hennessey-Niland** (Ret) is the former U.S. ambassador to Palau. He is one of the most experienced “Pacific hands” in the Department of State. He has served previously at the White House on the National Security Council, as a UN war crimes investigator in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, and at a number of posts in Europe and in the Pacific, where he served in Fiji, Australia, and Hawaii, where he was the foreign policy advisor to the commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific. Hennessey-Niland was recognized by the State Department as the policy advisor of the year while with the Marines. He was entrusted by the White House to be the first U.S. ambassador to visit Taiwan since 1979 and is an advocate for expanding U.S. engagement with Taipei. He is also a leader on climate. His efforts—working closely with Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Secretary John F. Kerry—helped ensure the annual Our Ocean Conference was held in 2022 for the first time in the Pacific and on an island nation. He has a distinguished record and is a proven foreign policy and national security leader with 35 years of diplomatic experience as a member of the U.S. Foreign Service.

**Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett** (Ret) represented the United States in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in a State Department career focused on international security and post-conflict governance. His senior positions included ambassador to Kosovo; chargé d'affaires (acting ambassador) in Turkey and Iceland; and deputy chief of mission (deputy ambassador) in Uzbekistan. Kosnett served four tours in Iraq and Afghanistan—as a provincial administrator with the Coalition Provisional Authority; foreign policy advisor at Multinational Corps–Iraq; deputy political-military counselor at U.S. Embassy Baghdad; and political-military counselor at U.S. Embassy Kabul. He also held economic, counterterrorism, and environmental diplomacy portfolios at U.S. missions in Japan and the Netherlands and served in policy and crisis management positions in Washington. Since leaving federal service, Ambassador Kosnett has taken on roles in consulting, policy analysis, education, and humanitarian action. He has also re-embraced his first calling, from student days, as a wargame designer.

**Yaropolk Taras Kulchyckyj** is a career foreign affairs officer with the U.S. Depart-

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ment of State in the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism. Between 2016 and 2018, Kulchyckyj served as the director for budget and administration in the Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. Kulchyckyj is a former United States Agency for International Development (USAID) democracy officer, Fulbright Scholar, White House Leadership Development fellow, and holds a doctor of international affairs and a master's in international public policy from the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. During Dr. Kulchyckyj's career in diplomacy, development, and defense, he has been consulted as an official source on Ukraine by the *Economist*, the *Financial Times*, the *Independent*, *International Herald Tribune*, and the *New York Times*.

**Lieutenant Colonel Mirjam Grandia Mantas**, PhD, currently holds the position of the Netherlands defense attaché in Israel and is the founder of the project team Military Diplomacy of the Netherlands Ministry of Defence. In her military career, she has been deployed on various missions to Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia and held various international positions such as at NATO's Joint Forces Command in Naples and as NATO advisor to the Peace and Security Operations Department of the African Union. She is a research fellow of the military faculty of the Netherlands Defence Academy and has written various publications and recently published the book *Inescapable Entrapments?: The Civil-Military Decision Paths to Uruzgan and Helmand* (2021).

**Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann** (Ret) is the president of the American Academy of Diplomacy, an organization of former senior U.S. diplomats dedicated to improving American diplomacy. Ambassador Neumann was ambassador to Algeria (1994–97), Bahrain (2001–4), and Afghanistan (2005–7) as well as a deputy assistant secretary of state for the Middle East and a senior officer in Iraq (2004–5). Earlier, he served in Senegal, the Gambia, Iran, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates. He returned frequently to Afghanistan after his retirement in 2007. He is the author of *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (2009); *Three Embassies, Four Wars: A Personal Memoir* (2017); as well as numerous articles and book chapters. He was an infantry officer in Vietnam and holds the Combat Infantry Badge. Other awards include the Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, Army Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, and State Department Superior and Meritorious medals. Ambassador Neumann holds a BA in history and an MA in political science from the University of California at Riverside. He is on the boards of the Middle East Policy Council and School of Leadership Afghanistan and the Advisory Council of Spirit of America.

**Hester Postma** is a project officer on military diplomacy at the Netherlands Ministry



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of Defence. She holds two master's degrees (international relations and diplomacy and intercultural communication) and has previously researched the nonstate regulation of the supply chains of "conflict minerals" for the University of Antwerp, with field work in Rwanda. She served the European Parliament (Secretariat for the Committee on Development), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Embassy of the Netherlands in Mozambique), and a nonprofit organization that established the first secondary learning center for stateless persons and refugees in Malaysia (IDEAS Academy).

**Michael Skaggs** is an associate contractor consulting for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. In this capacity, he is a senior research analyst, developing the Defense Support of Civil Authorities Lessons Learned program, capturing and validating crisis security cooperation observations for the Ukraine-Russia conflict. In 1997, Skaggs began his career as a Marine armor officer, leading a tank platoon and reconnaissance platoon and commanding a tank company in Fallujah in 2004. In 2005, he transferred to the newly established Marine Special Operations Command, where he was a Special Operations Team leader and Marine Raider Regiment Future Operations officer. Combat deployments include Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2012, he was selected into the Defense Attaché Service. He served as the Marine attaché in Ukraine from 2013 to 2016 and as the Marine attaché in London from 2016 to 2019. In 2019, he assumed duties as chief of staff, Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps, Henderson Hall. In 2020, Skaggs retired from the Marine Corps after 32 years of enlisted and officer service. His education includes a BA in history from University of Illinois and an MA in security studies from Kansas State University. He teaches a graduate course in Russian foreign policy as an adjunct professor at the Elliot School of Foreign Affairs, George Washington University. His hobbies include travel, fly fishing, and reading. He currently lives with his wife, Robin Graham Skaggs, and daughters in Burke, Virginia.

**Heather Steil** joined the State Department in 2005. In her 17 years as a foreign service officer, she served overseas in a variety of positions in Europe, the Middle East, and South and Central Asia, including as a staff assistant in Iraq, and public diplomacy positions in Lithuania, Afghanistan, and Nepal. Domestically, Steil worked for the State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, and from 2019 to 2022 she was a foreign policy advisor at U.S. Central Command. In 2022, she began a two-year assignment as chief of staff at the U.S. embassy in Islamabad.

**Alison Storsve** is a U.S. Department of State foreign service officer since 2003. She served in bilateral embassies and consulates in Kosovo, Pakistan, and Lesotho and on a Provincial Reconstruction Team in eastern Afghanistan. Experienced in multilateral diplomacy, she conducted operations and policy negotiations for the U.S. engagement in

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Afghanistan at the U.S. Mission to NATO (2008–11); since 2020, she has negotiated global food security and UN governance matters at the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome, Italy. During domestic assignments in Washington, DC, Storsve implemented U.S. assistance programming to support law enforcement capacity building and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, led a team in the Department of State’s 24-hour operations center, and trained fellow diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute. She has worked closely with Department of Defense and military counterparts in Afghanistan, at NATO, and at Naval Air Station Sigonella during her career. Hailing from Columbus, Ohio, Storsve has a bachelor’s degree in political science from the Ohio State University. She is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer (Turkmenistan), speaks Albanian and some Norwegian, and has studied French, Pashto, and Turkmen languages.

**Stallion Yang** is a United States foreign service officer. He served at U.S. Embassy Ankara as a political military affairs officer from 2016 to 2019. In addition to Ankara, Yang has served in Beijing, Seoul, Kyiv, and Washington, DC. He is married with two children.

