Marine Corps University
JOURNAL

Volume 4, Number 1　　　　　　Spring 2013

Marine Corps University

JOURNAL

Volume 4, Number 1   Spring 2013
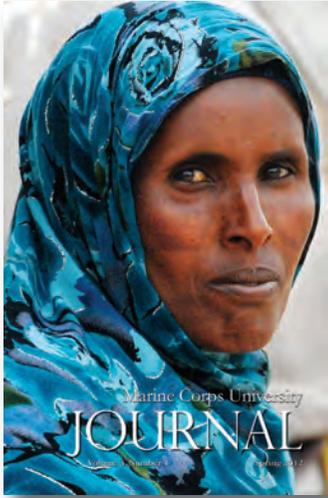
The following publication by Marine Corps University Press has been honored with an American Graphic Design Award from Graphic Design USA: the third issue of *Marine Corps University Journal* (Spring 2012), designed by Vincent J. Martinez. Congratulations to our staff for their outstanding work.

Table of Contents

President's Foreword

The world becomes more complicated by the day, and the challenges the military faces as we attempt to operate in the current environment become more complicated also. There are those who think that, with our involvement in Afghanistan winding down, there will be less for U.S. Armed Forces to do around the world. They could not be more mistaken. If anything, this issue of the *Marine Corps University Journal* serves to illustrate the chaos and violence that predominate in perennial hot spots. As our resources continue to dwindle, our options for dealing effectively with these hot spots seem just as limited. It is very likely that we will continue to be asked to do more with less.

Doing more with less is even more difficult under challenging circumstances, as is doing the right thing. For instance, when confronted by a morally abhorrent situation, how do we as a nation and as a military force respond? In these situations, nations, leaders, and peacekeeping forces are sometimes required to make the ultimate decision: strictly follow orders or do what is both moral and right. Military personnel have faced this dilemma in hostile places, such as Rwanda and Srebrenica, often with tragic consequences. In the opening article, Paolo Tripodi describes similar challenges faced by United Nations peacekeepers when civilian lives became the responsibility (or not) of force commanders. Tripodi argues that, in spite of their orders, commanders at various levels had (and still have) a moral responsibility to protect the lives of citizens, even at the risk of their own lives.

As peacekeeping forces confront the crossroads between mission and morality, Syrian Kurds also face a crossroads, with elements of their population opposing Bashar al-Assad's regime while others support Assad and aim to use the ongoing revolution for their own benefit. Winston Harris takes an in-depth look at the impact Kurdish factions—such as the Democratic Union Party and the Future Movement—may have on the political process. According to Harris, the divisions within the Syrian Kurdish political parties and the Syrian

Kurd population in general "highlight the complexity of the Syrian revolution" and point toward the possibility of increased violence and broader regional conflicts.

However, the threat of political bloodshed has not been limited to the Middle East. Valentina Bartolucci focuses her discussion on three nations of North Africa—Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, collectively known as the Maghreb—that have worked after their independence to address continued terrorist threats and control widespread violence, each albeit in a different manner. These three countries have very different pasts that most likely will result in different paths for their futures. Ultimately, Bartolucci argues that the fear of Islamists needs to be put into perspective—that a recognition of political Islam's "long history of pacifism" in the region is needed—and that a new approach couched in open dialogue and understanding may prevent another wave of violence.

The political situation in Afghanistan highlights what has become a common issue for the military—foreign policy and strategic decisions that have a significant impact on both the forces deployed and the local populations. Kathleen Reedy's article highlights the gap that currently exists between the realities troops face and the policies that guide their actions. As a result of this disconnect, Coalition forces make fewer strides in either security or governance because they must instead deal with suspicion and hostility from their "partners" on the ground. Until ground troops understand a population's internal logic, they cannot hope to eliminate the greatest points of contention. Thus, modern warfare becomes as much about building relationships as it is about fighting the battle.

The long-term instability we see in Afghanistan focuses just as much on our departure as it does on the legacy we attempt to leave behind. Terri K. Wonder offers a rich narrative of the choices Afghans must make for their government: formal law or legal integration of "customary laws," or Pashtunwali, which focuses on revenge-based conflict. Pashtunwali, however, is more of a cultural

system than custom-based law in that it simply channels the issue away from the public eye and into the home where a "scapegoat" (usually a female bride) carries the weight of a familial dispute. In essence, she becomes a possession both sacred and profane.

The articles presented in this issue offer a variety of perspectives on challenges faced by new governments, old regimes, and U.S. troops in foreign lands. Over time, the concept of warfare and military force continuously changes, particularly as populations and cultures evolve and interact in this global community. In that spirit, the Marine Corps University will remain focused on innovation and tradition to meet the needs of today's Marines.

William F. Mullen III
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps
President, Marine Corps University
June 2013

The Nyamata Memorial in Rwanda pays tribute to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Rwandans killed during the 1994 genocide. Photo courtesy of Inisheer via Wikimedia Commons.

Stopping Atrocities

Field Commanders' Moral Responsibility in Srebrenica and Rwanda

by Paolo Tripodi

On 11 July 1995, the Bosnian Serb forces that kept Srebrenica under siege for several years finally decided to take the city. Led by General Ratko Mladic, a war criminal only recently arrested by the Serbian police, these troops carried out one of the worst massacres in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Mladic's Bosnian Serb soldiers gathered all Muslim men between the ages of 12 and 77, arranged for the transportation of all women out of Srebrenica, and then slaughtered more than 7,000 and possibly as many as 8,000 men.[1]

One year earlier on 7 April, following the killing of Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, hundreds of members of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the infamous extremist militia Interhamwe assaulted Rwanda's Tutsi population and many moderate Hutus. In approximately 100 days, nearly 1,000,000 people were violently murdered. It was the swiftest genocide of the twentieth century.[2]

Although Rwanda and Srebrenica are two very different situations, the slaughter of harmless civilians occurred under the watch of United Nations (UN) peacekeepers in both locations. In Srebrenica, nearly 500 soldiers, most of whom were Dutch, were bullied

[1] Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996); David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); and Chris Klep and Donna Winslow, "Learning Lessons the Hard Way—Somalia and Srebrenica Compared" in *Peace Operations Between War and Peace*, ed. Erwin Schmidl (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

[2] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998); and Linda Melvin, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2004).

into letting the Bosnian Serb troops separate Muslim women from men; some of the Dutch soldiers witnessed the killing of several men. In Rwanda, a multinational UN mission passively witnessed the slaughter of thousands of civilians. In a few cases, peacekeepers intervened on their own initiative—and often against superiors' orders—to save the lives of several hundred civilians. The two missions represented a failure of the UN and the international community, but at the tactical level, they represented a failure of the peacekeepers to protect the defenseless.

Some of the key decisions made by force commanders are analyzed in this article as an exercise in exploring the topic of commanders' moral responsibility in peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations are extremely complex and frequently require military leaders to navigate without a clear moral point of reference. Often, the legal framework does very little to provide clarity. Commanders' decision-making processes become extremely difficult exercises; the consequences might be harmful for those they are supposed to protect as well as for those troops serving under them. It is not unusual for commanders serving in a peacekeeping mission to make important decisions in isolation. Retired Canadian Major General Lewis MacKenzie stressed this point in his 2008 memoir. He argued that "field commanders familiar with the UN's flawed decision-making process learn to deal with the ambiguities and to rely on their common sense."[3] Therefore, commanders must be aware not only of their legal responsibilities, they must also have a strong sense of moral accountability and a clear understanding of the moral responsibilities and obligations that are essential in a peacekeeping operation.

It is important to stress that commanders and their troops who serve as peacekeepers should be motivated by a desire to serve their countries and to sacrifice for the cause to which their countries have committed them. If peacekeepers' main motivation is financial, then the moral issue would be a rather different one: why are they there at

---

[3] Lewis MacKenzie, *Soldiers Made Me Look Good: A Life in the Shadow of War* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2008), 228.

all? It is deplorable to give many thousands the false hope that they will be protected but when the situation becomes risky, abandon them to become easy victims of violence. Peacekeepers' moral responsibilities and obligations are issues that must be addressed, or it is very likely that defenseless civilians will continue to be killed under their indifferent watch. Events in recent years in the Democratic Republic of Congo provide stark evidence that peacekeepers often remain hesitant to take on greater risks while civilians continue to be slaughtered and large numbers of women continue to be raped.[4] It is realistic to assume that, for those defenseless people who might become, or have already been, victims of violence, receiving no protection is probably better than receiving false assurances of protection.

> *It is deplorable to give many thousands the false hope that they will be protected but when the situation becomes risky, abandon them to become easy victims of violence.*

Srebrenica

The deployment of Dutchbat III (short for "Dutch battalion") in early 1995 came about when the situation in the safe area of Srebrenica had significantly deteriorated. It is very likely that the international community (read the UN and its bureaucracy) would have been much happier to do nothing to protect the thousands of civilians. Since the early 1990s, thousands of Muslim refugees had poured into the small city looking for shelter and survival, running away from a territory held by the Bosnian Serbs where they would have been slaughtered. Neither the UN nor many leaders of the world's most powerful nations were keen on going beyond applying diplomatic pressure to "protect" the lives of those refugees.[5] Less than a handful

---

[4] Jeffrey Gettleman, "Frenzy of Rape in Congo Reveals UN Weakness," *New York Times*, 3 October 2010; Jeffrey Gettleman, "Congo Rebels Advance; Protesters Hurl Rocks at UN Compound," *New York Times*, 27 October 2008; and Victoria Holt, Glyn Taylor, and Max Kelly, *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks, and Remaining Challenges* (New York: United Nations, 2009).

[5] See Honig and Both, *Srebrenica*, 99–117.

of nations were willing, but probably not ready, to deploy their own troops under such difficult circumstances. Yet, the situation changed significantly after French General Philippe Morillon, the commander of the UN forces in Bosnia Herzegovina, decided to challenge the siege of Srebrenica and see with his own eyes what the situation was like in the battered city.

On a cold day in March 1993, the French general, escorted by a small number of Canadian peacekeepers in armored personnel carriers (APCs), managed to reach Srebrenica. Day after day General

Morillon had read the reports coming from the city; therefore, he was prepared for what he was about to see. What he did not expect was that he, together with the small contingent of peacekeepers, would be "taken hostage" by several hundred women, children, and old men. The APCs were surrounded and unable to move. Using a megaphone, General Morillon addressed the small but determined crowd. He told them you are "under the protection of the UN."[6] In a few seconds, he became the most popular officer among the refugees and, very likely, the most detested force commander at the UN in New York. From then on, the UN made a formal commitment to protect the refugees against a formidable threat.[7]

> *It is very likely that the international community (read the UN and its bureaucracy) would have been much happier to do nothing to protect the thousands of civilians.*

In a few weeks, the Canadian contingent of about 2,000 peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia deployed nearly 200 soldiers to Srebrenica. It was an extremely small number to be taken seriously by an overwhelming force of Bosnian Serb soldiers, and yet the commitment of the Canadian soldiers was such that a modicum of normality was restored. The restricted number of troops posed great limitations on the Canadian contingent. Many observation posts remained unmanned and dangerously vulnerable to the Bosnian Serbs, and only an inadequate number of humanitarian convoys could reach Srebrenica. It was clear that the peacekeepers had to rely on themselves rather than on the outside world. Not only was this evident while they were deployed in the city, but it was reinforced when their relief in place was constantly postponed, mainly because no nation wanted to put troops in such a dangerous place.[8] The deployment

---

[6] Footage of Gen Morillon addressing civilians in Srebrenica from *A Cry from the Grave*, BBC documentary, 29 May 2011.

[7] For a direct account of Gen Morillon's experience in Srebrenica, see General Philippe Morillon, *Croire et Oser: Chronique de Sarajevo* (Paris: Grasset, 1993).

[8] Scott Taylor and Brian Nolan, *Tested Mettle: Canada's Peacekeepers at War* (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps Books, 1998).

of the first Dutch troops in the early months of 1994 was expected to make a positive impact on Srebrenica and the refugees. Because of their larger numbers and better equipment, Dutchbat was supposed to be ready to respond to any type of threat. Still, General Mladic tested the preparation and commitment of the Dutch soldiers and the UN to protect the refugees and Srebrenica. He knew that he could push them and only occasionally deal with determined officers, such as British Army General Rupert Smith.[9] Instead, Mladic dealt mostly with senior officers, such as French General Bernard Janvier, who were more inclined to concede to him than to risk the lives of peacekeepers. By the time Dutchbat III deployed in early 1995, the situation in Srebrenica had deteriorated dramatically.

Dutch Army Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans arrived in Srebrenica in January 1995 with a battalion of fewer than 500 troops. This battalion had fewer personnel and less equipment than Dutchbats I and II. Further complicating things, the overall situation Karremans faced was extremely tense. Over the course of the previous year and a half, the Bosnian Serbs had become increasingly more aggressive. They never went as far as launching a full frontal attack against Srebrenica and its defenders, but they had been bold in restricting what and who could go in and out of the city. In some cases, they held members of the peacekeeping force hostage. Since the Bosnians Serbs enjoyed unrestrained access to Srebrenica, they were also able to limit vital resources. For instance, they restricted delivery of food, gasoline, drugs, and any other items that were essential for the city's inhabitants and the Dutchbat troops. This meant that Dutchbat commanders had to ration food and water. Dutchbat II al-

---

[9] In 1995, an important confrontation took place between Gen Smith and Gen Mladic. In May, Smith wanted to reestablish the exclusion zone around Sarajevo, which in the past had been violated by the Serbians. Gen Smith ordered NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs' ammunition supplies, and he also warned the Bosnian Serb military leaders that the shelling of safe areas would not be tolerated, that such an occurrence would be met with force. As the Serbian shelling continued, he ordered an attack on limited targets. In response, Mladic ordered even more shelling, causing more than 70 civilian fatalities in Tuzla. Smith then ordered a fresh round of air strikes that destroyed other Serbian targets, while Mladic responded by taking a number of hostages and threatening their lives. At this point, UN leadership ordered Gen Smith to stop using force. Several years after these events took place, Smith wrote that for the UN "the safety of the force was more important than achieving its mandate. Mladic had won the confrontation." Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 351.

ready lacked fresh food, and the situation had only deteriorated by the time Dutchbat III deployed. In practical terms, the Bosnian Serbs were slowly strangling Srebrenica. Because their initiatives were not taken seriously by the UN, they also prevented Dutch soldiers who had been on leave from returning to Dutchbat.

Karremans could see how the morale of the Dutch troops had reached an extremely low level. He also understood that such a situation was unsustainable. In addition, the relationship between the Dutch peacekeepers and the local Muslim leaders and soldiers was hardly amicable. On one occasion, in January 1995, during the Bandera crisis,[10] Dutch peacekeepers and Muslim soldiers came close to an open confrontation. In just a few months, a sense of isolation deeply affected Karremans and his troops; they felt threatened not only by the Bosnian Serbs, but also by the Muslims—the very people they were supposed to protect. Karremans made clear to his chain of command how difficult the situation was for the small Dutch deployment. On 4 June 1995, just one month before the Bosnian Serbs entered the city, Karremans sent a report to the United Nations Protection Force Headquarters (UNPROFOR HQ) in Sarajevo; this report explained how dire the situation was. The Dutch officer wrote,

> For some months past the general situation within and around the enclave SREBRENICA is deteriorating. There use[d] to be a kind of status quo which could be monitored by Dutchbat in a reasonable way. However, due to limitations in [an] operational and logistic sense as well as in humanitarian [terms], the mission of the [battalion] is no longer feasible. Dutchbat is not able to execute any action nor can it respond on forthcoming deteriorating situations.

---

[10] In January 1995, when Dutchbat III replaced Dutchbat II, Serb forces deployed close to the enclave were able to establish new positions farther from the line that was patrolled by the Dutch peacekeepers. The Bosnian Serb commanders asked the Dutch peacekeepers to reestablish conditions on the ground to where they were before Dutchbat III deployed. However, because they were unable to do so, the Bosnian commanders decided to restrict the Dutch troops' access to the area, known as the Bandera Triangle. The tension created by this crisis set the tone of future relations between the Dutch military leaders and the Muslim military commanders. For more details on the Bandera crisis, see Peter de Vin, "Srebrenica: the Impossible Choice of a Commander" (paper, Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, 2007–8); and UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/55: "The Fall of Srebrenica,"* A/54/549, 15 November 1999.

Being [a] hostage of the BSA [Bosnian Serb Army] for over more than three months, something has to be done.[11]

In the many reports sent by Karremans, the fact that he did not believe that his troops would have any chance in a confrontation with the BSA was made clear. The Dutch soldiers were in a disadvantageous position, being smaller in number than the Bosnian Serb force and with somewhat unreliable weapon systems. Thus, the only viable course of action to defend the enclave totally relied on the use of close air support (CAS); there was no contingency plan prepared should CAS fail, as it did.

The second week of July 1995, when Mladic launched the final attack on the enclave, his troops encountered no resistance; they took Srebrenica and carried out their criminal plan to massacre around 8,000 Muslim men.

Rwanda

When Canadian General Romeo Dallaire[12] was appointed to lead the UN mission in Rwanda, only a few experienced observers understood how complex the situation was in this small African country. While a successful mission in Rwanda would have helped the UN to improve its tarnished image after the recent failure in Somalia, most of the bureaucrats and practitioners, many of whom made key decisions for the newly established mission, held the misguided notion that peacekeeping operations in Rwanda would be easy.

In October 1993, General Dallaire arrived in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, to establish the mission, oblivious of the difficulties he was

---

[11] Thom Karremans has included copies of the reports he sent to the UN in his book published in Dutch. Thom Karremans, *Srebrenica, Who Cares?* (Nieuwegein, the Netherlands: Arko Uitgeverij, 1998), 312.

[12] Several officers who served in the UN mission in Rwanda wrote compelling memoirs about their experiences. Canadian Army Maj Romeo Dallaire and his aide, Brent Beardsley, wrote *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003); Ghanaian BGen Henry Kwami Anyidoho, Dallaire's deputy commander, authored *Guns Over Kigali* (Ghana: Woeli Publishing Services, 1997); and Belgian Army Col Luc Marchal, head of the Kigali Sector, published *Rwanda: la descente aux enfers. Témoignage d'un peacekeeper: Décembre 1993–Avril 1994* (Paris: Éditions Labor, 2001).
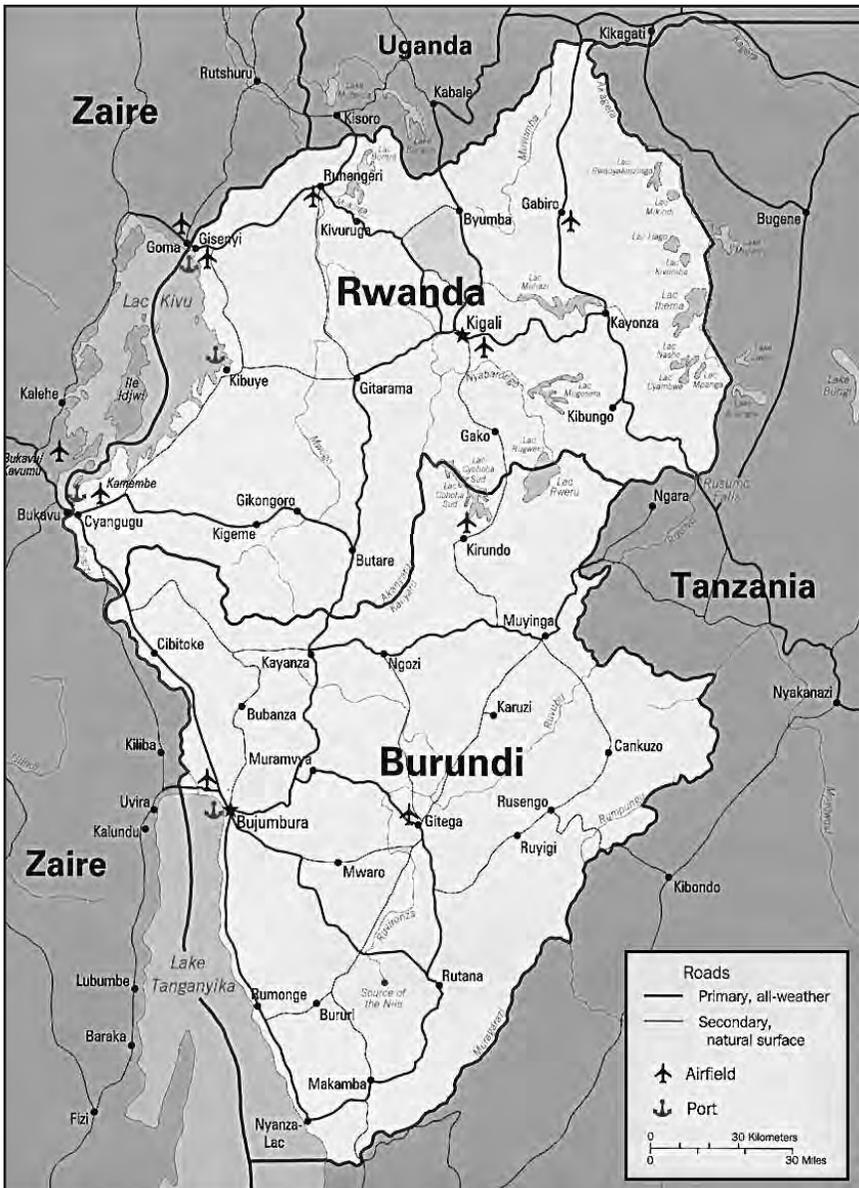
about to face. It took him just a few weeks to understand that he was up against a much more complex situation than the one presented to him at the UN. During an exploratory visit to the country in August 1993, he estimated how many troops and vehicles he might need to

succeed. When he shared his plan with some senior colleagues at the UN, he was told that his request would meet resistance and the mission might not be approved. He then asked for about half the number of the troops he thought he needed. The mission was approved and, in the space of a few months, UN peacekeepers deployed to Rwanda.

Tensions in Kigali and in the north of the country grew at a slow but intense pace. The isolated killings of civilians continued, as did the assassinations of some political figures key to the peace process. The killing of Rwandan President Habyarimana on the night of 6 April 1994 was the final blow to an extremely volatile situation. Then, on the morning of the seventh, 10 Belgian peacekeepers, the moderate Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, and many moderate political leaders were brutally murdered. These initial events that took place in less than 24 hours may have been the defining moment of the entire mission. It is difficult to say if such actions were masterminded by the perpetrators of the genocide, but they had a major immediate impact. The UN force was unable, unwilling, or more likely too confused to take a serious and aggressive stand to defend its troops.

That morning General Dallaire actually passed in front of the military compound where the Belgian peacekeepers were about to be lynched. He got a glimpse of what was happening and decided to proceed to an emergency meeting called by senior active and retired Rwandan armed forces officers, some of whom, like retired colonel Theoneste Bagosora, were among the key organizers of the genocide. General Dallaire explained,

> I've never doubted that that morning I took the right decision… There was no way to get those guys [the Belgian peacekeepers] out of there without risking the mission, the people, and an enormous number of other casualties, and potentially falling right into the trap that those bastards wanted me to, [to] become a belligerent and have to be totally pulled out.[13]

---

[13] Interview with Gen Romeo Dallaire in fall 2003 from "Ghosts of Rwanda," *Frontline*, PBS, posted 1 April 2004, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/dallaire.html.

Dallaire remained totally focused on his perception of the mission, even though circumstances on the ground had dramatically changed the appearance of his assigned mission. It took him several days to realize that the UN mission in Rwanda (called the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda, or UNAMIR) was protecting the lives of thousands of people who otherwise would have been killed. By the time UNAMIR leaders had acknowledged this and actively organized sanctuaries to protect civilians, many thousands had already been killed. As a result of the violence and the slaughter of the Belgian peacekeepers, the UN had cut down the number of troops to a force of a few hundred.[14] Many more civilians were slaughtered until July 1994 when the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) was able to defeat the perpetrators of the genocide. It is estimated that several hundred thousand people had been killed by the time the RPA took Kigali early in July 1994.

Most of the bureaucrats and practitioners . . . held the misguided notion that peacekeeping operations in Rwanda would be easy.

Those were terrible months for General Dallaire. He protected a few key places, such as the Amahoro Stadium in Kigali where thousands of refugees found shelter. Yet he had to deal with the fact that many were killed, and by the time he decided to take a more proactive and assertive approach, it was too late to be effective and to save many more lives. He asked to be relieved from his command at the beginning of August 1994.

Commanders' Moral Responsibility

The thousands, and the hundreds of thousands in the case of Rwanda, of defenseless civilians who were slaughtered generate a major moral question: should the UN peacekeepers have done more and do they bear some degree of moral responsibility for what hap-

---

[14] On 21 April, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 912 that reduced the number of peacekeepers in Rwanda from more than 2,500 to 270.

pened? The issue here is whether commanders at different levels in Srebrenica and Rwanda should have risked the lives of their own troops to save the lives of countless unknown civilians.

When deployed in a peacekeeping operation, commanders have three different levels of legal and moral responsibility. Their first duty is to accomplish the assigned mission; they are legally and morally responsible to do whatever is in their power to comply with the orders they have received. Second, they are morally responsible to the troops they lead. They must be ready to sacrifice the lives of those serving under them and, at the same

> *A commander's greatest moral responsibility is to continue to offer protection to refugees, regardless of whether this was in the original mandate of his or her mission.*

time, do whatever they can to protect the troops from unnecessary risks. Third, commanders are morally responsible to those they are protecting. This last level should have a high priority, and the following pages explore why commanders in a peacekeeping operation should consider protecting civilians their most important moral responsibility.

It should be noted that after the crises escalated in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the original objectives of the respective missions could no longer be accomplished. The legal requirement for commanders was lost in the chaos. As a result, commanders no longer had a legal frame of reference that might have provided guidance for their actions. Yet, although the legal frame had vanished, a moral framework should have provided them with as strong, or even stronger, guidance. When commanders deployed in peacekeeping operations cannot accomplish the assigned mission—monitoring different factions, for example—they should understand the role their troops have performed and the moral implications associated with it. When mission accomplishment is no longer the objective, commanders must then focus on the basic intent of the deployment. Often the indirect consequence of the deployment has been to provide protection to

refugees; therefore, even though they cannot accomplish the mission, they should continue to protect defenseless civilians.

Thus, a commander's greatest moral responsibility is to continue to offer protection to refugees, regardless of whether this was in the original mandate of his or her mission. Whenever a peacekeeping mission deploys, civilians who are long-term victims of violence will immediately look to soldiers as their main hope for protection—they will see the blue UN flag and berets as signs of survival.

In Srebrenica and Rwanda, thousands of civilians relied on the peacekeepers for protection, security, and ultimately survival. It is safe to assume that the large majority of those who look at the UN soldiers as protectors will not question if and when those soldiers will use force to provide active protection. They will leave any discussion on mandates and rules of engagement to experts and practitioners and will only focus on what those soldiers represent for them: survival. Therefore, whether or not those peacekeepers have the legal support to use force to defend the refugees, they certainly have a moral responsibility to provide shelter for them. For the refugees, these peacekeepers represented their only hope of survival.

In extreme situations, such as in Srebrenica and Rwanda, commanders face conflicting responsibilities. Soldiers are placed at a greater risk as commanders increase refugee protection. Some might argue that commanders should not accept such a risk in situations where refugees and protecting peacekeepers are killed. This argument distracts attention away from a commander's moral responsibility; it is a utilitarian approach and offers moral justification for inaction. If commanders are confronted with a choice between losing all their troops and all the refugees, or saving most of their troops but still losing all the refugees, they will choose the second option. Indeed, there might appear to be some validity in this approach rather than addressing a real-life scenario, since it evokes a situation such as the ticking time bomb and the use of torture.

In this situation, some might morally justify the use of torture on a terrorist who has just been captured in the belief that by extracting key information, thousands of people will be saved from the nuclear

device that is about to detonate in the downtown of a major city. Although some scholars and practitioners have made a strong intellectual defense of this approach, realistically the time bomb scenario will remain a topic for heated philosophical discussion rather than a real-life situation. Likewise, the argument that "all peacekeepers would have been killed and so would have the refugees" seems to be unrealistic. In the history of UN peacekeeping missions, such an event has never happened. As explained later in greater detail, in Rwanda the determination and bravery of a few peacekeepers against all odds meant the difference between life and death for many defenseless refugees. Even Robert Siekmann, a lawyer who made a strong legal point in defense of the Dutchbat commander's decision not to risk the lives of his troops in Srebrenica, does not provide strong evidence as to why a different course of action—the Dutch troops opening or responding to fire from the BSA—would have meant death for them all.[15] Would Mladic have killed dozens of Dutch soldiers, risking harsh criticism from NATO? Or would the UN and the Dutch military, whose F-16 fighter jets were deployed in Italy, have allowed Karremans and his troops to be slaughtered by the Bosnian Serbs? Such a utilitarian approach has little validity, and it serves mainly to provide moral justification for inaction.

In the years that followed the end of the UN mission in Rwanda, General Dallaire spent much time reflecting on each and every decision he made on 7 April 1994. Many of those decisions had devastating consequences for him as an individual and, despite his best intentions, often had morally catastrophic consequences. On the morning of 7 April, he saw some of his Belgian peacekeepers violently attacked and slaughtered by an undisciplined crowd of Rwandan soldiers. He decided that it would be too risky to try to rescue them; more soldiers might have been killed, and the mission could have been seriously compromised. This is what he asked himself a few years later: "If I had done something differently, could I have

---

[15] Robert C. R. Siekmann, "The Fall of Srebrenica and the Attitude of Dutchbat from an International Legal Perspective," *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law,* vol. 1 (The Hague: Asser Press, 1998).

saved my Belgian soldiers when they were in the custody of the Rwandan Presidential Guard? Should I have ignored the direct orders I received from New York—orders *not* to protect Rwandan civilians and *not* to use force until fired upon?"[16]

This is a key issue for a commander. If the commander receives an unlawful order, he is legally obligated to refuse the order. If he executes an unlawful order, he becomes a perpetrator of a war crime. However, if he complies with a legal order whose consequences are morally catastrophic, he will not be legally responsible for what occurs. Yet he should be held morally accountable for his action or omission. The fundamental difference between the two scenarios is whether there is moral equivalency between killing and allowing someone to be killed, and whether we should give equal weight on the scale of justice to actions and omissions whose consequences are both morally catastrophic.

This raises the following question: how significant is the moral difference between killing someone and allowing someone to be killed? The legal approach is quite clear. Only in a few cases will individuals be legally responsible for "allowing" someone to die. Commanders who perpetrated an atrocity will be responsible for those they killed. However, if commanders and their troops deployed in a peacekeeping operation allow refugees they are protecting to be killed, their legal responsibility will be minimal. Their inaction will be assessed against the Rules of Engagement, the UN Mandate, and the resources available. From a moral point of view, if commanders who have a large number of refugees under their protection decide to withdraw that protection, and consequently allow the refugees to be killed, they should be morally responsible for taking such a course of action.

A strong case comes from April 1994 during one of the most critical periods of the mission in Rwanda, involving the decision made by Belgian Army First Lieutenant and company commander

---

[16] Dallaire and Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, xi.

Luc Lemaire to abandon the refugees who found shelter at the school compound where the Belgian paratroopers were deployed. As soon as the Belgian peacekeepers abandoned the Don Bosco School compound, more than 2,000 refugees were killed. The paratroopers had no legal obligation to protect those refugees. Before becoming a de facto refugee camp, the school served as the camp for the Belgian company. Yet, it is quite clear that refugees went to the compound because of the Belgian company and because they believed that the presence of the Belgian soldiers would provide protection, as it did until they left. Thus, the practical purpose of the Belgian paratroopers' presence at the school was to protect thousands of refugees. This clearly placed a major moral responsibility on them and their company commander. Despite the fact that the company commander had several possible courses of action available, he opted for the one that was the safest for his troops, yet this was the most morally catastrophic choice as all the refugees were slaughtered.[17]

David Jones provides a sound explanation of moral responsibility: "Questions of responsibility may be raised not only by persons' positive acts—what they do . . . but also by their omissions—what they do not do." In addition, he stresses that "some acts and omissions are required while others are prohibited; in short, they are matters of duty."[18] Philip Zimbardo defines omissions as "the evil of inaction." According to Zimbardo, "Our usual take on evil focuses on the violent, destructive actions of perpetrators, but the failure to act can also be a form of evil, when helping, dissent, disobedience, or whistleblowing are required."[19] He then explains,

> In situations where evil is being practiced, there are perpetrators, victims, and survivors. However, there are often observers of the ongoing activities or people who know what is going on and do not intervene to help or to challenge the evil and thereby enable evil to persist by their inaction.[20]

---

[17] Paolo Tripodi, "When Peacekeepers Fail, Thousands Are Going to Die. The ETO in Rwanda: A Story of Deception," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 17 (2006).

[18] David Jones, *Moral Responsibility in the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 19.

[19] Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect* (New York: Random House, 2007), 314.

[20] Ibid., 317.

In a peacekeeping operation—and in all situations in which civilians are involved in the battlefield—commanders must be ready to provide protection to defenseless civilians. Therefore, they will have to use force to protect them even if this implies taking additional risks. Gareth Evans, who together with Mohammed Sahnoun led the international commission that produced the *Responsibility to Protect* report in 2001, recently wrote, "Hard as it may be for many to instinctively accept, if there is one thing as bad as using military force when we should not, it is not using military force when we *should*."[21]

Evans probably intended to reach an audience concerned more with the political, strategic, decision-making level, yet it is quite clear that his vision has great applicability at both the operational and tactical levels. Therefore, such a concept should provide commanders with the necessary "moral" understanding of when to use force.

> *"Questions of responsibility may be raised not only by persons' positive acts . . . but also by their omissions."*

Peacekeepers: Bystanders or Rescuers?

In Rwanda and Srebrenica, it was evident that both commanders had been "abandoned" by those who could and should have come to their aid. In the case of Rwanda, the UN Security Council and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, headed by Kofi Annan, decided for several months to ignore General Dallaire's desperate requests for help. Even after the genocide began, they continued to turn a blind eye. A frustrated General Dallaire has often blamed himself for not being able to effectively communicate what was happening in Rwanda. However, it is reasonable to wonder if anyone at the UN was willing to listen. Major Brent Beardsley, General Dallaire's aide, said, "We could have packed up dead bodies, put them on a Herc [Lockheed C-130 Hercules], flown to New York,

---

[21] Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 128.

walked in the Security Council, and dumped them on the floor in front of the Security Council, and all that would have happened was we would have been charged for illegally using a UN aircraft. They just didn't want to do anything."[22]

Similarly, in Srebrenica Lieutenant Colonel Karremans sent dozens of alarming reports to his chain of command, emphasizing that the situation was desperate for the small UN contingent. When Mladic finally launched the attack on the UN positions, Karremans' many requests for CAS were evaded by UN headquarters. In one case, he was told that the request could not be processed because it was presented on the wrong form.[23] In the end, only two ineffective bombs were dropped close to the Bosnian Serb position by an F-16 Fighting Falcon. That was all the support Karremans was to receive from the outside world. A senior noncommissioned officer with Dutchbat said, "We should have known better because the feeling that the whole world, the UN, Holland, everybody, let us down—we had it for months. I think from April [1995]. That nobody would care about us, and more important, would not care about the refugees."[24]

> *"Hard as it may be for many to instinctively accept, if there is one thing as bad as using military force when we should not, it is not using military force when we should."*

Thus, both commanders might have wondered whether they had any moral responsibility toward the people in Srebrenica and Rwanda when the international community decided to ignore them. Hugh LaFollette in *The Practice of Ethics* provides an interesting discussion on this point. LaFollette elaborates on Peter Singer's drowning child case in which an individual who is passing by a pond notices that a child has fallen in and is in serious danger of drowning. LaFollette agrees that

---

[22] Interview with Maj Brent Beardsley on 15 November 2003 from "Ghosts of Rwanda."

[23] For additional details on this event, see *Srebrenica: Reconstruction, Background, Consequences, and Analysis of the Fall of a Safe Area*, vol. 2, part 3 (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, 2002), 396. The report in English is available at http://www.srebrenica.nl/Content/NIOD/English/srebrenicareportniod_en.pdf.

[24] Extract of an interview with a Dutchbat noncommissioned officer from *Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave.*

the morally correct course of action for the individual is to rescue the child, also considering that the rescue can be done "with relatively little effort and no danger." LaFollette reflected on Singer's example:

> Imagine that ten people are standing around a pond where two children are drowning. I jump and save one. The indolent nine do nothing. Singer claims that under these circumstances I am obligated to rescue the second as well. Had others fulfilled their *responsibilities*, I would not have had to do so. . . . However, they did not act; there is still a child in need and I can rescue her with relatively little effort and at no risk to myself.[25]

Others' inaction changes our responsibility and compels us to act, while they have decided to ignore the children crying for help.

The purpose of applying Singer and LaFollette's example to peacekeeping is to assess the risk and effort that soldiers should accept. LaFollette emphasizes that the rescue of the drowning children happens with little effort and no risk. Individuals passing by the pond might be willing to accept greater effort and risk than LaFollette himself. What one should bear in mind is that both LaFollette and the other individuals are bystanders. They have a moral responsibility to help the drowning children, yet they might decide to risk nothing in the process. Peacekeepers and their commanders are rescuers: not only do they have the moral responsibility that we all share to help someone in distress, they have a moral obligation to rescue the drowning children; they must be ready to accept a higher level of risk than bystanders would. In a peacekeeping context, we should think of the 10 people standing around the pond as 10 lifeguards who have a duty to rescue the drowning children and are aware that in performing their duties, they will have to accept a higher level of risk than any other bystander. Peacekeepers are rescuers and in the performance of their duties, they should act accordingly. The problem is that often peacekeepers and their commanders consider themselves bystanders and thus avoid dealing with such a duty.

---

[25] Hugh LaFollette, *The Practice of Ethics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 260.

The case of Rwanda provides us with excellent examples of peace-keepers who saw themselves as rescuers rather than bystanders. They decided to play an active role in the protection of refugees, even when this course of action meant ignoring superiors' orders and, in the process, facing greater risk. One such example is that of Captain Mbaye Diagne, a Senegalese UN military observer, who together with a few more observers based at the Hotel des Mille Collines in the Rwandan capital Kigali, saved hundreds of refugees. Unarmed and against the order issued by General Dallaire, Captain Mbaye took large numbers of refugees to the hotel and hid them there until he could take them to safer locations. He began saving people immediately.

On 7 April, as he arrived on the scene where the Rwandan prime minister had been killed, Mbaye found the prime minister's hidden children and provided them with a place to hide until he was able to help them leave the country. His activity was known to many. Mark Doyle, a BBC correspondent in Kigali, had a chance to experience firsthand what the young Senegalese captain did. Doyle and Gromo Alex, the head of the UN humanitarian assistance team in Kigali, provided touching memories of Mbaye. Alex also spoke about the bravery of individual peacekeepers:

> Quite amazingly, these people who were very brave, managed—here and at the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] hospital—to prevent armed people from coming in, saying, "Stop. You're not allowed in here. This site is protected by the UN." You ask yourself, well, here's one guy with no gun sitting on a wooden chair all day and all night, not sleeping, and he's able with no gun to convince people that they're not allowed in here to kill people. Yet the whole system, with guns or whatever, couldn't do anything. . . . I mean, there were some powerful, brave things that were being done by UN soldiers, completely devoid of any support from New York.[26]

---

[26] Interview with Gregory "Gromo" Alex on 18 October 2003 from "Ghosts of Rwanda."

The best example of organized reaction to the violence in Kigali came from the small, but well-led Tunisian contingent. Major Mohammed Belgacem, the Tunisian company commander, did not hesitate to order his 60 soldiers to do whatever they could, and whatever they had to, to shelter the refugees under their protection. Over the course of the 100 days during which Kigali was devastated by a terrible wave of violence, Tunisian soldiers responded forcefully to any attack, and whether it came from the government or the rebel troops did not make any difference to them. It took General Dallaire and Brigadier General Anyidoho, the second in command, very little time to appreciate how important this small contingent was to UNAMIR. The Tunisians manned key positions, such as the hospital and several hotels. Refugees found protection in many of these places, which included the Hotel de Mille Collines. Both Dallaire and Anyidoho praised Belgacem and his troops for their resolve, bravery, and commitment to save as many lives as possible. Anyidoho noted that, despite the decision taken by Belgacem to expose his troops to the highest level of risk, none of the Tunisian peacekeepers were killed or seriously wounded.[27]

Commanders' Moral Responsibility and Moral Dilemmas

It is not unusual for commanders in peacekeeping operations to be presented with situations in which they might have to protect refugees while exposing their soldiers to considerable risk. Often they will be in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between these two courses of action. In extreme cases, such as Srebrenica and Rwanda, it will be impossible to provide protection to the refugees without incurring casualties. Commanders will then have to deal with a moral dilemma.

Despite many outstanding scholarly studies[28] on moral dilemmas, a definition that best applies to those who deal with peacekeeping or

---

[27] Anyidoho, *Guns over Kigali*.

[28] Carol Harding, ed., *Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Reasoning* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010); and Philippa Foot, *Moral Dilemmas and Other Topics in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

warfighting is provided by *Leading Marines*, a Marine Corps publication. According to *Leading Marines*, a moral dilemma is "the necessity to choose between competing obligations in circumstances that prevent one from doing both. Action is at the heart of ethical behavior. An academic understanding of what is right and wrong is irrelevant unless it is coupled with appropriate action. And even then, the answer is not always clear."[29]

This is an important point. In a situation of great pressure and stress, it might be extremely difficult to identify the best course of action. A commander's poor or incorrect understanding of his moral responsibility and obligations might compromise his ability to adopt the right course of action. General Dallaire, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, and Lieutenant Lemaire did what they thought was right. They obeyed superiors' orders and protected their troops from any possible harm. As a result, thousands of civilians were slaughtered under their watch. They probably understood the moral dilemma and fulfilled what they perceived was their most pressing legal and moral responsibility. A commander who would be concerned with the morally catastrophic consequences of yielding to these two responsibilities might have decided to risk his or her troops, even if this meant ignoring superiors' orders and taking casualties.

> *A moral dilemma is "the necessity to choose between competing obligations in circumstances that prevent one from doing both."*

In the days following the killing of President Habyarimana, commanders at different levels in Kigali made key moral decisions that maximized protection for their troops and were in line with the guidance received from the UN. If they had taken a different course of action in defense of the refugees under their protection, they might have stopped the genocide. However, they might have been held legally responsible for compromising the lives of a number of their troops while disobeying the order they had received from the UN.

---

[29] U.S. Marine Corps, *Leading Marines*, MCWP 6-11 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps), 39.

Had General Dallaire ordered the peacekeepers to provide an active and forceful protection to all the refugees, it is possible that a few or maybe several peacekeepers might have been killed. Even if General Dallaire had successfully prevented the genocide, he still would have had a hard time explaining why he took such a risk with his troops while ignoring orders. It is reasonable to believe that he might have been disciplined. He might have found it extremely difficult to explain that, from his unique position, the course of action he took was the right thing to do.

Based on what we know today about Rwanda and Srebrenica, no one would question losing a number of peacekeepers to save thousands of civilians. This is one of the great burdens of responsibility and obligation for commanders in peacekeeping operations. Unfortunately, too many others tend to focus on a utilitarian approach instead of "doing what is right."

Democratic Union Party (PYD) supporters in 'Afrin, Syria, in 2012. The PYD, whose interests are aligned with the outlawed Turkish-based Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), often finds itself divergent from the rest of the Syrian Kurdish population. Screen capture from video by Scott Bobb, Voice of America.

The Syrian Kurds

A House Divided

by Winston Harris

The Syrian revolution marks a unique crossroad for the Middle East that could radically change the region. This revolution could see the collapse of an established authoritarian regime, a fracturing of the Axis of Resistance,[1] and a shift in the region's balance of power. It could sow the seeds for Syrian democracy and human rights, but could also descend the state into sectarian violence and Sunni extremism. These factors could have a strong impact on a major segment of the Syrian people, the Kurds.

This article argues that even though the Kurds are a repressed minority in Syria, they are not a united ethnic bloc. The Syrian revolution has amplified the division of the Syrian Kurds into separate factions, with each seeking its own outcome. Elements of the Syrian Kurdish population reject Bashar al-Assad's regime, with some factions seeking to actively oppose the regime while others preferring a more passive, neutral opposition that embraces neither the regime nor the anti-Assad Sunni revolutionaries. Yet other elements of the Kurdish population support the Assad regime and seek to use the revolution as an opportunity to strengthen their influence.

This article will first shed light on the dilemma the revolution poses to the Syrian Kurds. Next, Kurdish political actors, governance structures, and foreign support to gauge the power and influence of the various Kurdish factions will be examined. Finally, this article will look at efforts by pro-regime Kurdish factions to dominate their political rivals and control Syrian Kurdistan.[2]

Harris is an analyst specializing in Middle East and North African affairs. He holds an MA degree in global politics from the London School of Economics and Political Science and a BA degree in international studies and French from West Virginia University.

[1] The Axis of Resistance is an anti-Western, anti-Israeli alliance among Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah. It should be noted that Syria's ruling elite are Alawites, an esoteric offshoot of Shia Islam that contains many practices that conflict with Shia Islam's central dogma. Despite these theological differences, Syria's Alwaite Shia are close allies to both Iran and Hezbollah.

[2] Kurdistan is the name of the Kurdish majority areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Armenia. In this case, Syrian Kurdistan is another name for the Kurdish majority area of Syria.

The Syrian Kurdish Dilemma

The Kurds are a sizeable minority in Syria. With an estimated two million members, the Kurdish community represents a tenth of Syria's overall population.[3] While the Kurds account for a large segment of Syria's minority population, the Syrian Kurdish community is smaller and less influential than neighboring communities in Iraq and Turkey.[4]

The Syrian Kurds primarily reside in the north and northeast portions of Syria along the border with Turkey and Iraq. Al-Hasakah Province, in the northeastern corner of Syria, is the center of gravity for the Syrian Kurdish population, with the exception of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) supporters.[5] The province is also home to influential Kurdish cities, including al-Hasakah City and al-Qamishli. The Kurds are the dominant ethnic group in the northern part of Aleppo Province, particularly in the cities of 'Afrin and 'Ayn al-'Arab.[6] Outside of the northern border regions, sizable Kurdish populations can be found in most of Syria's major cities, including Damascus.[7]

Unlike their Kurdish counterparts in Turkey and Iraq, the Syrian Kurds have not seriously attempted to become independent from Syria.[8] They respect their nation's territorial integrity and demand an autonomous federal system that would provide them with equality

---

[3] Piotr Zaleski, "Syria's Kurds: Are They About to Join the Uprising Against Assad?," *Time*, 21 October 2011, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2097529,00.html.

[4] The Iraqi Kurdish population numbers approximately 5 million, which constitutes nearly a fifth (19 percent) of Iraq's total population. See Permanent Committee on Geographic Names, *The Kurdish Toponymy of Northern Iraq* (2003), http://www.pcgn.org.uk/The%20Kurdish%20Toponymy%20of%20Northern%20Iraq.pdf. The Kurdish population in Turkey is between 10 and 12 million, which accounts for 20 percent of Turkey's total population. See Amir Hassanpour, "The Kurdish Experience," *Middle East Report* 24 (July–August 1994), http://www.merip.org/mer/mer189/kurdish-experience.

[5] The center of gravity for the PYD, which is the Syrian counterpart of the outlawed Turkish-based Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), is the city of 'Afrin in Aleppo Province. The PYD, whose interests are aligned with the PKK, often finds itself divergent from the rest of the Syrian Kurdish population.

[6] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "[Kurdish] Cities," KurdWatch, http://kurdwatch.org/html/en/html/index.php?cid=183&z=en.

[7] "A Decade in Power, Part 4: Syrian Kurds—Bolder, But Still Oppressed," *Damascus Bureau*, 21 July 2010, http://www.damascusbureau.org/?p=864.

[8] Unlike the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq, the Syrian Kurds are in a much weaker position to declare independence or autonomy. The Syrian Kurdish region is spread out and more closely integrated into the rest of Syria than in

and the freedom to embrace their cultural heritage. Such a system would establish a Kurdish "state within a state" in Syria, similar to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq.[9] This system would allow the Syrian Kurds to enjoy national rights, such as citizenship and property rights. It would also allow the Kurds to receive an "equitable distribution" of the Syrian national budget, which they could then determine how to spend. Federalized autonomy would provide the Kurds with the right to speak and teach in the Kurdish language,[10] as well as permit them to observe cultural events, such as the Kurdish New Year celebration of Newruz, without fear of government repression.[11]

While the Kurds have long aspired to greater political and cultural freedoms, they have instead endured constant repression at the hands of the Syrian government. Since the 1950s, the government of Syria, including the present Baathist regime, has adhered to an ideology based on Arab nationalism. This ideology defines Syria as an "Arab nation," which essentially relegates the Kurds to foreigner status within their own country.[12] Consequently, the Syrian government enacted a series of policies designed to marginalize the Kurds.

The first major incident took place in 1962 when the Syrian government denied citizenship to 120,000 Kurdish immigrants on the

---

either Iraqi or Turkish Kurdistan. The Kurds in Syria represent a much smaller percentage of the population (10 percent) than the Kurds in Iraq (19 percent) or Turkey (20 percent). This renders the Syrian Kurds more vulnerable to retaliation from the Syrian government. Finally, while the Kurds in Turkey and Iraq represent a minority, they live in mountainous terrain that overcomes their numeric deficiency; conversely, the Syrian Kurds live on much flatter terrain. Combined, these factors strongly suggest that had the Syrian Kurds declared independence, they would have been crushed.

[9] European Center for Kurdish Studies, *Who is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition: The Development of Kurdish Parties, 1956–2011* (Berlin: KurdWatch, 2011), 16, http://www.kurdwatch.org/pdf/kurdwatch_parteien_en.pdf.

[10] Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Kurds Struggle for Recognition in Syrian Revolt," Reuters, 29 March 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/30/us-syria-kurds-idUSBRE82T05C20120330.

[11] Michael J. Kennedy, "Kurds Remain on the Sideline of Syria's Uprising," *New York Times*, 17 April 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/18/world/middleeast/kurds-remain-on-sideline-in-syrias-uprising.html? pagewanted=all.

[12] It should be noted that Baathist Arab nationalism, while exclusionary of the Kurds, actually benefited many of Syria's smaller religious minorities. For instance, both the Christians and the Druze received relatively equal standing with the Syrian Alawites and Sunni Arabs due to their common Arab ethnicity, while the Kurds, who shared a common Islamic heritage with the ruling Alawites and the nation's majority Sunni Arabs, were marginalized because they were of a different ethnicity.

basis of their not being born in Syria. The children of these immigrants were also denied, resulting in generations of Syrian-born Kurds who could not claim citizenship. In 1973, the government then enacted a policy of "Arabization," through which it confiscated a 180-mile strip of Kurdish land along Syria's northeastern border with Turkey and Iraq and resettled the land with Arabs. In 2004, the Assad regime killed at least 30 Kurds and wounded a further 160 in Qamishli, following a wave of unrest triggered by ethnic tensions during a soccer match between Arabs and Kurds. On top of these transgressions, and until recent concessions by the Assad regime, the Syrian Kurds were denied the right to provide their children with an education in Kurdish or celebrate traditional Kurdish holidays.[13]

While the Kurds have long aspired to greater political and cultural freedoms, they have instead endured constant repression at the hands of the Syrian government.

In addition to the Alawite Assad regime and its supporters,[14] the Kurds are equally wary of the Sunni Arabs. The Kurds were discriminated against by the current regime because of Arab nationalism, which rendered them as second-class citizens. They fear that if Sunni Arab revolutionaries overthrow the regime, they too will adhere to Arab nationalist ideology and continue the Assad regime's policy of marginalization.[15]

The Syrian Kurds also fear the Sunni Arabs due to the influence of Islamists within the Sunni Arab population.[16] The problem the Arab Islamists pose is not due to religious differences, as the Syrian

---

[13] Kennedy, "Kurds Remain on the Sideline."

[14] The Kurds maintain a poor relationship with many of Syria's other minorities. Most of Syria's other minorities, including the Alawites and Christians, are key components of the ruling regime's base of support. As such, these populations, which are predominately of Arab ethnicity, receive preferential treatment from the regime, thus stoking Kurdish resentment.

[15] Kennedy, "Kurds Remain on the Sideline"; Wladimir van Wilgenburg, "Syrian Arab Opposition Fear Kurdish Demands," *Rudaw* (Erbil, Kurdistan), 7 April 2012, http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/4602.html.

[16] Kennedy, "Kurds Remain on the Sideline."

Kurds are overwhelmingly Sunni as well, but rather involve the ties between the Arab Islamists and Turkey. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) enjoy strong ties with the Syrian Sunni Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood. Ali al-Bayanouni, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leader from 1996 to 2010, and Muhammed Riad al-Shaqfa, the current Syrian Muslim Brotherhood leader, emphasized these ties by stating their "willingness to adopt the AKP model."[17] Conversely, the Kurds are deeply distrustful of the Turks, due to a long, violent history between them. The Syrian Kurds strongly believe that Turkey maintains too much influence over the Sunni Islamists and fear that if Sunni Islamists are victorious, Turkey will be able to influence them to adopt anti-Kurdish policies.[18]

These factors combine to pose a sizable dilemma for the Syrian Kurds: with whom should they align themselves? Historically, the Assad family and the Baathist elites marginalized the Kurds; therefore, it is questionable whether or not the regime can be trusted to truly provide equality for them. Additionally, if the Kurds support the Assad regime, they risk possible retaliation by the Sunni Arabs.

On the other hand, if the Kurds support the Sunni Arab revolutionaries, there is no guarantee they will receive better treatment. Due to the Sunni Islamists' connections with Turkey, the Syrian Kurds may find themselves ostracized to prevent the growth of international Kurdish independence movements. Or after decades of Assad rule that limited Sunni influence and sidelined Sunni Islamist ideology, victorious Sunni revolutionaries could create a Sunni Arab or Islamist state that would again marginalize the Kurds. Additionally, the Syrian Kurds risk repression from the Assad regime or a non-Assad led Baathist regime in the event that the Sunni revolutionaries fail.

---

[17] Gönül Tol, "The Kurdish Dimension to Turkey's Syria Problem," *Foreign Policy*, 10 April 2012, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/10/the_kurdish_issue_in_turkey_s_syria_policy.

[18] Bayram Balci, "Turkey's Relations with the Syrian Opposition," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 13 April 2012, http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/13/turkey-s-relations-with-syrian-opposition#.

Another potential option—neutrality—also holds risks. If the Kurds do not participate in the revolution, they are increasingly likely to lack influence in formulating a post-Assad constitution or government. Thus, they could find themselves sidelined once again by a prospective post-Assad government. A lack of support during the conflict may also lead to resentment by the eventual victor, such as the Assad regime, the Sunni revolutionaries, or a non-Assad-led Baathist regime. This resentment could further ostracize the Kurds and increase the Arabization of Kurdish lands.

The Kurds may adopt a more extreme "neutral approach" and attempt to become independent from Damascus. However, given that Syrian Kurdish terrain is not conducive to an armed Kurdish rebellion, unless Syria devolves into a failed state, the eventual victor will likely attempt to reclaim Syrian Kurdistan by force. An attempted declaration of Kurdish independence, even if Syria is a failed state, could result in a regional conflict, especially if the Syrian Kurds align with the Turkish Kurds. Turkey is worried that a Kurdish independence movement in Syria could spark increased efforts by the Turkish Kurds to secede from Turkey. Consequently, if the Syrian Kurds attempt independence, there is an elevated risk of Turkish intervention.

> *The potential risks associated with each policy option for the Kurds highlight the fact that there is no single "silver-bullet" solution.*

The potential risks associated with each policy option for the Kurds highlight the fact that there is no single "silver-bullet" solution. Not surprisingly, since there is no clear-cut solution, the various Kurdish political parties and factions have adopted distinct, sometimes confrontational, policies toward the revolution. The dilemma posed by the revolution accentuates the fact that the Syrian Kurds are not a unified people. The following sections identify the various Syrian Kurdish factions, indicate their distinct views toward the regime, and provide examples of how a particular faction is using the revolution to defeat its rival Kurdish factions and seek dominance over Syrian Kurdistan.

The Kurdish Political Structure in Syria
The Kurdish Political Parties and the Youth Movements

There are two principal types of actors that constitute the Syrian Kurdish political establishment. The first is the traditional political parties; the second is a newer phenomenon—youth movements.

Nearly all of the 14 active Kurdish political parties[19] trace their origins to the first political party, the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS),[20] with the major exception of the PYD, which was founded in 2003 as a Syrian offshoot of the Turkish-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).[21] From its formation in 1957, the leftist KDPS served as the only Kurdish political party focused on the needs of Kurds living in Syria. However, from its outset, the KDPS was plagued by internal divisions and political infighting.[22] By the mid-1960s, the KDPS began to divide into a political "left wing" and a "right wing," and by the 1970s it had splintered into a variety of parties across the political spectrum.[23]

Syrian Kurdish political parties are dynamic, frequently splitting from and joining with other Kurdish parties to form new political entities. Frequently, these changes are not the result of ideological differences but are due to personal leadership divisions or differing tactical methods. The ideological separation is so small that it is not uncommon for left wing Kurdish parties to form alliances with right wing parties.[24] None of the Syrian Kurdish parties demand independence from Syria or to be unified within a "greater Kurdistan."

The 14 active political parties can be divided into four broad categories: right wing, left wing, KDPS successor parties, and independ-

---

[19] There are more than 14 Kurdish political parties in Syria; however, these additional parties are smaller and less influential than the 14 named parties covered in this paper.

[20] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 3–5.

[21] Ibid., 15. The other exceptions are the Future Movement, which formed independently of KDPS influence in 2005, and Rêkeftin, which broke off from the PYD in 2004.

[22] Christian Sinclair and Sirwan Kajjo, "The Evolution of Kurdish Politics in Syria," Middle East Research and Information Project, 31 August 2011, http://www.merip.org/mero/mero083111.

[23] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 13–15.

[24] Sinclair and Kajjo, "The Evolution of Kurdish Politics."

ents.[25] The three parties that comprise the Kurdish right wing are the Progressive Party, the Patriotic Party, and the Equality Party. The four left wing parties are the Azadi Party, the Left Party, the Yekiti Party, and the Democratic Yekiti. The KDPS successor parties include the Syrian Kurdish Party, Abdulhakim Bashar's el-Partî, Nasruddin Ibrahim's el-Partî, and Abdurrahman Aluji's el-Partî.[26] Finally, there are three independent parties: the Future Movement; the PYD; and Rêkeftin, a splinter group from the PYD.[27]

Because of the Syrian government's authoritarian nature, all political parties are banned, save the ruling Baath Party and its cadre of loyalist allies. That all of the Kurdish political parties are inherently illegal in Syria renders it difficult to openly assess their true size and influence due to their "covert nature."[28] Party membership is a closely guarded secret: only 2–3 percent of Kurdish political party members are known publicly. The Middle East Research and Information Project asserts that between 60,000 and 200,000 Kurds are members of a political party.[29] All available figures on party membership are based on internal numbers released by the party; consequently, it is difficult to verify their veracity.[30]

Also, membership is not the exclusive indicator of support for a party. Since Kurdish political parties are illegal, some potential candidates for membership will not join due to fear of state repression. Few parties offer a financial incentive to join and, due to the lack of a democratic hierarchy, there are few opportunities for regular members to

---

[25] In an effort to reduce confusion, this article utilizes the common English names associated with these parties. For more detailed information regarding the naming conventions of these parties, see European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?"

[26] On 24 May 2012, Abdurrahman Aluji died following a long illness. At the time of writing, it is uncertain what effect this will have on his el-Partî faction.

[27] Rêkeftin is also referred to by its Arabic name: al-Wifaq. European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?"

[28] Despite being illegal, the Assad regime historically "tolerated" the existence of the Kurdish parties; however, the Syrian intelligence services closely monitored the parties and maintained contact with the party leadership, as per Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo), *Kurds in Syria: Groups at Risk and Reactions Against Political Activists* (Oslo: Landinfo, 2010), 11, http://www.landinfo.no/asset/1513/1/1513_1.pdf.

[29] Sinclair and Kajjo, "The Evolution of Kurdish Politics."

[30] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 21–22.

advance into policy-making or leadership roles. These factors also limit broad public membership in Kurdish political parties. Most individuals who become members of a political party do so only out of ideological support for the party's platform.[31] Consequently, many individuals choose to become supporters of a political party rather than members. The Kurdish parties recognize and utilize these individuals.[32] While supporters are unable to be actively involved in policy and decision making, they can be mobilized to support party policies via demonstrations or other public displays.[33]

According to the European Center for Kurdish Studies, by comparing available membership data with the groups' public activity (i.e., demonstrations, participation in public ceremonies, and ability to influence public perception), it becomes apparent which parties hold more influence. The more influential Syrian Kurdish political parties are the Progressive Party, Abdulhakim Bashar's el-Partî, Yekiti, Democratic Yekiti, Azadî, the Left Party, the Future Movement party, and the PYD. The less influential parties include Nasruddin Ibrahim's el-Partî, the Patriotic Party, the Equality Party, the Syrian-Kurdish Party, Abdurrahman Aluji's el-Partî, and Rêkeftin.[34]

Robert Lowe, a Syrian expert at the British think tank Chatham House, believes that the PYD is likely the most popular of these parties. Lowe cautions, however, that despite its popularity, the PYD does not have the support of the majority of the Syrian Kurdish population.[35] Nonetheless, the PYD surpasses its rival parties as the single most influential individual party in Syrian Kurdistan.

Joining the traditional parties is a new element within Syrian Kurdish political society: the youth movements. In the early days of

---

[31] Ibid.

[32] According to Landinfo, *Kurds in Syria*. In some parties, supporters are part of the recognized political structure. For example, Yekiti divides its proponents into three categories: full members (*adu*), candidates for membership (*murashih*), and supporters (*muayid*).

[33] Landinfo, *Kurds in Syria*, 10.

[34] Ibid., 25.

[35] Omar Hossino and Ilhan Tanir, *The Decisive Minority: The Role of Syria's Kurds in the Anti-Assad Revolution* (London: Henry Jackson Society, 2012), 11, http://www.scpss.org/libs/spaw/uploads/files/Reports/03-2012_Henry_Jackson_Soc_Rpt_re_Role_of_Syr_Kurds.pdf.

the Syrian revolution, young Syrian Kurds, like their Arab counter-parts, formed antiregime protest groups. These youth groups represent a new form of political empowerment for the Kurds. Unlike the traditional elite-driven party system with its secret members and weak democratic traditions, the youth protest groups represent the direct will of the Kurdish people.

There are numerous Kurdish youth groups in Syria, the largest of which is the Kurdish Youth Movement (Tevgera Ciwanên Kurd), which triggered anti-Assad protests in March 2011.[36] The Kurdish youth groups, along with other Kurdish protest movements, such as the Kurdish Local Coordination Committees, are excellent mobilizers, capable of organizing effective antiregime rallies. These youth groups act independently of the traditional Syrian parties, although the Future Movement strongly supports them and seeks to work with the Syrian Arabs to overthrow the regime.[37]

PYD surpasses its rival parties as the single most influential individual party in Syrian Kurdistan.

Despite their apparent willingness to work alongside Syrian Arabs, even the youth groups have their reservations regarding the Sunni opposition. In a 15 February 2012 interview with the Anatolia News Agency, Ibrahim Murad, the secretary general of the Syrian Kurdish Youth Committee, repeated a long-standing Kurdish concern. He stated that "in fact, Kurds are not willing to see an Islamic administration after the Assad regime because they are afraid of the Muslim Brotherhood." Murad went on to state that the Kurds want a secular, democratic state.[38]

---

[36] Thomas McGee, "Syria's Kurds: Part of the Revolution?," *Guardian* (London), 26 April 2012, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/apr/26/syrias-kurds-part-of-revolution.

[37] Sinclair and Kajjo, "The Evolution of Kurdish Politics."

[38] "Kurdish Youth Committee Pledges Support for Overthrowing Assad," *Today's Zaman*, 15 February 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/news-271560-kurdish-youth-committee-pledges-support-for-overthrowing-assad.html.

Kurdish Political Coalitions

The Assad regime historically utilized a "divide and conquer" strategy to prevent its opponents from unifying against the government. In response to the Assad regime's strategy, the Kurdish political parties strive to speak with a single, unified voice. Since the 1990s, the Kurds have formed a variety of political alliances that allow political parties that are otherwise diametrically opposed to one another to issue joint political proclamations and hold events inclusive of all Syrian Kurds.[39] Despite their intent, however, rarely have the alliances resulted in a single, unified voice.

The first attempt at a pan-Syrian Kurdish alliance was the "Kurdish Democratic Alliance in Syria." Party membership within the alliance fluctuated constantly. Some parties often quit the alliance only to rejoin a few years later, while other parties formed separate, smaller unions outside the alliance. Still yet some parties, such as the PYD, refused to participate in any form of political union with the other Kurdish parties.[40]

In May 2011, following the start of the Syrian revolution, necessity finally forced the Syrian Kurds into a more unified, singular entity: the Kurdish Patriotic Movement.[41] This alliance marked the first time the PYD participated in a pan-Syrian Kurdish political bloc. All the major Syrian Kurdish parties joined the Kurdish Patriotic Movement, save Rêkeftin and Abdurrahman Aluji's el-Partî splinter groups, both of which were blocked from joining by the more influential groups from which they splintered.[42]

The Kurdish Patriotic Movement served as a vehicle for the Syrian Kurds to project their unified objectives from the nascent Syrian revolution. The Kurdish Patriotic Movement called for the abolishment of single-party rule in Syria, equality for all citizens, rule of law,

---

[39] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 19.

[40] Ibid., 19–20.

[41] The Kurdish Patriotic Movement is also known as the National Movement of Kurdish Political Parties.

[42] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 20.

and a secular state.[43] The Kurdish Patriotic Movement enjoyed some early success, forcing the Assad regime to negotiate with the Syrian Kurds as a whole, instead of holding talks with a select few parties as the regime originally desired. However, the longevity of the Kurdish Patriotic Movement was short-lived. Only weeks after the movement's formation in late May 2011, the Future Movement party quit the coalition, citing the Kurdish Patriotic Movement's "failure" to adequately support antiregime activists.[44] By fall 2011, the Kurdish Patriotic Movement had dissolved.[45]

The Syrian Kurds attempted to develop further political alliances, but these alliances lacked the unified voice of the Kurdish Patriotic Movement due to divergent views about the Kurdish response to the Syrian revolution. The majority of the Kurdish political parties formed a new alliance, the Syrian Kurdish National Council (KNC), in October 2011. With the exception of the influential PYD and the Future Movement, this coalition includes all the remaining political parties. Also participating in the KNC are the Local Coordinating Committees (LCCs) and the Kurdish youth groups. Neither are traditional parties, but both represent the direct sentiments of Syrian Kurds opposed to the regime.[46]

The KNC opposes the Assad regime and refuses to negotiate with them. However, differences over the role of the Kurds in a post-Assad society and general Kurdish skepticism toward the Sunni Islamists prevent close collaboration with the much larger Arab-led Syrian National Council (SNC). The KNC is led by Dr. Abdulhakim Bashar, head of the Abdulhakim Bashar el-Partî faction of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria.[47]

---

[43] Hossino and Tanir, "The Decisive Minority," 3.

[44] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 20–21.

[45] Hossino and Tanir, "The Decisive Minority," 3.

[46] Ibid. Initially, multiple KNC member parties also participated in other opposition alliances, such as the Syrian National Council and the National Coordination Body. However, the KNC threatened to suspend their membership if they participated in any other coalition than the KNC. Therefore, only the PYD and Future Movement Party, who were already outside the KNC, remain active in other opposition coalitions.

[47] Ibid., 5.

However, the SNC has not provided the Kurds with sufficient guarantees of postrevolution protection and autonomy to convince the SNC and KNC to unify. Currently, the SNC and KNC are under intense international pressure to reach an agreement that would render the SNC politically suitable for the KNC to join.[48] As of late July 2012, the KNC remained independent of the SNC, and no evidence suggested it was likely that the KNC would join the SNC in the foreseeable future.[49] Therefore, while the KNC opposes the regime, it remains effectively neutral in the conflict, unwilling to actively support either side.

The Future Movement, however, joined the SNC. Like the KNC, the Future Movement opposes the Assad regime and wants to see Bashar al-Assad replaced. However, unlike the KNC, the Future Movement actively participates with the SNC in fomenting revolution against Assad.[50] This position is unique among the Syrian Kurds, as it appears to be the only Kurdish faction to adopt active opposition toward the regime.

The PYD joined the National Coordination Body (NCB), an alternative Syrian opposition council. Instead of revolution, the NCB calls for dialogue with the Assad regime; due to this position, it is often seen as a "pro-Assad opposition group."[51] The PYD's participation in the NCB strongly suggests the group adopted a much more favorable position toward the Assad regime than its Kurdish counterparts. This marks a major division within the Syrian Kurdish community and sets the stage for inter-Kurdish violence.

The above analysis of the Syrian Kurdish parties indicates the Kurds are divided into three camps: an anti-Assad camp that is neutral toward the revolution, an anti-Assad camp actively participating in the revolution, and a pro-Assad camp opposed to the revolution. The

---

[48] Ibid., 7–8.

[49] Aymenn Al-Tamimi, "Syria's Kurds Stand Alone after Rejecting Rebels and Regime," *National* (Abu Dhabi), 23 July 2012, http://www.meforum.org/3291/syria-kurds.

[50] Hossino and Tanir, "The Decisive Minority," 7–8.

[51] Ibid., 8–9.

anti-Assad faction neutral to the revolution led by the KNC appears to be the largest single faction as it encompasses the vast majority of the Syrian political parties as well as the protest movements. The pro-Assad faction is led by the PYD, the largest single Kurdish party in Syria, which wields significant influence in Syrian Kurdistan. The Future Movement party, although smaller than the KNC and PYD, maintains considerable influence over the Syrian Kurdish population. Due to its popularity and de facto leadership of the Kurdish anti-Assad, active opposition faction, the Future Movement is capable of influencing the general Kurdish population despite its smaller size.

Foreign Support for Syrian Political Entities

Popular support is not the sole factor that determines the influence of a party, protest movement, or alliance. The influence of any Syrian Kurdish political entity can be magnified by foreign support. If a party receives backing, it increases its influence within Syrian Kurdistan. Moreover, foreign backing can provide a political entity with a financial or military advantage over its rivals. These amplifiers could provide a minority political faction with the power and influence to dominate its larger rivals. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the effects of amplifiers on the pro- and anti-Assad factions to determine the Syrian Kurdish balance of power.

The KNC is supported by a variety of regional and international actors. The Iraqi KRG is supportive of the KNC, although it opposes arming the Syrian Kurds.[52] KRG President Massoud Barzani and his Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) are close to Abdulhakim Bashar's el-Partî. The latter is even considered an affiliate of the Iraqi KDP.[53] Additionally, Abdulhamid Hajji Darwish's Progressive Party is the sister party of the other major Iraqi Kurdish faction, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Iraqi Vice President Jalal Ta-

---

[52] Josh Rogin, "Kurdish Leader: No to Arming the Syrian Opposition," *Foreign Policy*, 5 April 2012, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/04/05/kurdish_leader_no_to_arming_the_syrian_opposition.

[53] Hossino and Tanir, "The Decisive Minority," 4.

labani. The relationship between the Syrian Kurdish parties and their Iraqi counterparts is such that neither Syrian Kurdish sister party will take actions contrary to the interests of the KDP or PUK.[54]

That Abdulhakim Bashar is the head of the KNC is especially significant when considering KRG support for the KNC. Since the KDP and Bashar are historically close, and because the latter acts in accordance with the KDP, there is a strong implication of support from the KDP and President Barzani for the KNC. In an article in *Foreign Policy*, President Barzani was quoted as stating that the KRG would provide "moral support, political support, [and] financial support. And we will use our influence to help solve their problems." However, Barzani was clear that the KRG would not provide the KNC with ammunition or military support against al-Assad.[55]

The above quote by Barzani clearly outlines the parameters of the KRG's support for the KNC.[56] While pressure from the pro-Assad government in Baghdad is likely a key factor in limiting the KRG's support to only peaceful means, KRG support to the KNC is still vital. The KRG is able to provide the KNC with political organization and a key interlocutor with Turkey and the West, and to strengthen the KNC's domestic legitimacy.[57]

The KNC also receives support from the West. Diplomats from Britain, France, and the United States have met with the KNC and pledged to support Syrian Kurdish rights in a post-Assad society.

---

[54] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 22.

[55] Rogin, "Kurdish Leader: No to Arming the Syrian Opposition."

[56] It should be noted that KRG support for the Syrian Kurds is not strictly altruistic. Support for the KNC provides the Iraqi Kurds with two benefits. First, the Iraqi Kurds are able to increase their influence over the Syrian Kurds while furthering ties with Turkey. Second, the KRG is able to counter the regional influence of the PKK. Both of these benefits strengthen the KRG's regional power.

[57] In January 2012, President Barzani organized a conference in Erbil, Iraq, aimed at coordinating Syrian Kurdish policy with that of the Arab Syrian opposition. The KRG also maintains a relatively positive diplomatic relationship with Turkey, a rarity for Kurdish groups. The KRG and Turkey work together to limit the influence of the PKK and its partners, including the PYD. As such, the KRG can serve as a "trusted mediator" for the KNC and the Turks. For more information, please see Gönül Tol, "Turkey Cozies Up to the KRG," Middle East Institute, 24 May 2012, http://www.mei.edu/content/turkey-cozies-krg; and Ekurd.net staff writers, "Iraqi Kurdistan's PM to Make First Official Visit to Turkey," Ekurd.net, 27 March 2012, http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2012/3/state6031.htm.

KNC head Abdulhakim Bashar claimed that a senior U.S. official promised to sanction any post-Assad government that does not recognize Kurdish rights.[58] However, it is unclear as to the validity of this statement. It is possible that such a statement was only an attempt by the KNC to increase its domestic legitimacy.

Aside from Bashar's claim that the United States will "sanction Syria if Kurdish rights are not respected," it is unclear as to what extent the West is actually supporting the KNC. The West appears to be offering moral and political support, but it does not appear to be providing the KNC with financial or military support. If the West were to further strengthen its emerging partnership with the KNC, it could greatly amplify the latter's power.

These divisions will prevent the Syrian Kurds from speaking in a unified voice for the foreseeable future.

The PYD receives strong support from the PKK. The PYD was formed in 2003 in Iraq's Qandil Mountains by members of the PKK as a means of reestablishing the PKK's influence in Syria.[59] The PYD is actually not so much an independent movement supported by the PKK as it is the "Syrian franchise" of the PKK. Both organizations view Abdullah Öcalan as their leader and share similar manifestos and rhetoric, including their mutual opposition to Turkey and support for "democratic confederalism." The major rhetorical difference between the PKK and the PYD is that the PYD seeks to reverse the "Arabization" of Kurdish lands in Syria, while the PKK makes no

[58] Hiwa Osman, "Syrian Kurdish Leader Claims Western Powers Will Support Kurds," *Rudaw*, 6 February 2012, http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/4392.html.

[59] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition?," 20–21. The PKK was formed in the then-Syrian controlled Beka Valley of Lebanon in 1978. The PKK and the Hafez Assad regime enjoyed close ties for the next two decades, in which Assad allowed the PKK to maintain anti-Turkish bases in Syria, and in exchange the PKK did not seek to foment anti-Assad sentiment among the Syria-Kurdish population. However, in 1998, Turkey threatened to invade Syria unless the PKK was expelled. Syria acquiesced and the PKK was denied its Syrian bases. See Soner Cagaptay, "Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 5 April 2012, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syria-and-turkey-the-pkk-dimension.

mention of this issue. Additionally, the PYD is believed to take orders directly from the PKK leadership.[60]

It is significant that the PYD is essentially the Syrian extension of the PKK. This means that the PYD has access to the PKK's resources. This includes an alleged 1,000–2,000 militants of the PKK's total 3,000–5,000 fighters that have transferred from the Qandil Mountains along the Iraq-Iran border into Syria.[61] The PYD almost certainly receives funding from the PKK, which generates hundreds of millions of dollars annually from donations, "taxes," extortion, smuggling, and other black market "trades."[62] The PKK also provides the PYD with access to an international audience via the former's political and propaganda wings.[63] This significantly amplifies the power of the PYD beyond that of any of its individual rivals. Even though the KRG supports the KNC, the support the PYD receives as a PKK affiliate is much greater.

Unlike the KNC and the PYD, the Future Movement party lacks significant foreign ties.[64] Despite the lack of foreign backers, the Future Movement's alliance with the SNC suggests that it is not completely isolated; however, the extent to which the SNC empowers the Future Movement remains unclear.

These divisions will prevent the Syrian Kurds from speaking in a unified voice for the foreseeable future. The PYD, the largest and strongest party due to its relationship with the PKK, purportedly supports the Assad regime. The remaining political parties, as well as

---

[60] Ibid.

[61] International Crisis Group, *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, Europe Report 213, 20 September 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/213%20Turkey%20-%20Ending%20the%20PKK%20Insurgency.pdf; and Cagaptay, "Syria and Turkey: The PKK Dimension."

[62] Alakbar Raufoglu, "Turkey Focuses on Cutting PKK's Financial Sources," SES Türkiye, 7 May 2012, http://turkey.setimes.com/en_GB/articles/ses/articles/features/departments/national/2012/05/07/feature-01.

[63] "Turkey Says Unveiled Syria's Support of PKK's Urban Branch," *Today's Zaman*, 17 May 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/news-280702-turkey-says-unveiled-syrias-support-of-pkks-urban-branch.html; and Cuneyt Yilmaz, "The U.S. Interest in Addressing Germany's PKK Problem," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 December 2011, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-u.s.-interest-in-addressing-germanys-pkk-problem.

[64] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Who Is the Syrian-Kurdish Opposition," 1–34.

the youth movements and LCCs, oppose the regime, but only the Future Movement actively opposes it. These three divisions are significant because they are confrontational. The positions of the Future Movement and the PYD are diametrically opposed and suggest an increased risk for violent conflict.

Reported PKK and PYD Efforts to Dominate the Syrian Kurdish Political Landscape

The previous sections identify three camps into which the Syrian Kurds are divided. The first camp, led by the KNC, opposes the Assad regime, but has adopted a neutral position toward the conflict. The second camp, led by the Future Movement, also opposes the regime but has joined with the primary antiregime revolutionary movement to help overthrow Assad. The third camp, consisting of the PKK and PYD, opposes regime change in Syria.

The PYD and the PKK adopted an aggressive stance toward influencing and controlling the Syrian Kurds. Turkish and Kurdish news outlets allege that the PYD and the PKK engaged in a wide variety of repressive measures in Syrian Kurdistan, the first of which was the suppression of anti-Assad protests in PYD strongholds. A 27 April 2012 article in the Turkish newspaper *Today's Zaman* claimed that the PKK and PYD operated checkpoints in 'Afrin and Qamishli to threaten opponents and deny them freedom of movement. This resulted in a sharp decline in the number of protests in the area.[65] The German-based Center for Kurdish Studies also indicates that the PKK and PYD used force to disrupt a 10 May 2012 protest in the al-Hilaliyah District of al-Qamishli Province as well as dual protests on 08 February 2012 in 'Afrin and al-Antariyah District, al-Qamishli Province.[66] In a 26 January interview with Turkish-based *Hürriyet*

---

[65] Serkan Sağlam, "Syrian Kurds Take Up Arms Against Assad and PKK," *Today's Zaman*, 27 April 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=278778.

[66] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qamishli: PYD Supporters Attack Demonstrators," KurdWatch, 10 May 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2527&z=en&cure=245; and European Center for Kurdish Studies, " 'Afrin/al-Qamishli: PYD Sympathizers Attack Demonstrators in 'Afrin and al-Qamishli," KurdWatch, 8 February 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2449&z=en&cure=245.

News, Syria's former ambassador to Sweden, Mohammad Bassam Imadi, stated that the "PYD strived to suppress the protests by acting together with the Assad regime."[67] Finally, the Qatari-based news outlet *al-Jazeera* published documents allegedly smuggled out of Syria by a defected civil servant, Abdel Majid Barakat, stating that the PKK, in coordination with the Assad regime, was "to place [the] Kurdish areas under surveillance and to quell protests and protesters."[68] Reporting on instability in the Kurdish region also suggests that the PKK and PYD often attempt to "hijack" anti-Assad protests and turn them into pro-PKK, pro-Abdullah Öcalan rallies. These attempts frequently result in violence between the anti-Assad protestors and the pro-PKK demonstrators.[69]

Moreover, the PKK and PYD seek to control their political rivals and the general Kurdish population through assassinations. The European Center for Kurdish Studies' Kurd Watch Web site alleges that the PYD is responsible for the 7 October 2011 assassination of Mishal Temmo, the leader of the Future Movement party, as well as an earlier attempt on Temmo's life on 8 September 2011.[70] The PKK and PYD were then accused of kidnapping and murdering Temmo's successor and nephew, Muhammed Xelef Ciwan, in March 2012.[71] The PYD and PKK are linked to the assassinations of prominent anti-Assad and anti-PYD critics Nesridin Mihemed Berhik—a member of Abdulhakim Bashar's el-Partî—and Kurdish tribal leader

---

[67] İpek Yezdani, "Esad'ın Türkiye'ye karşı silahı PKK," *Hürriyet* (Turkey), 26 January 2012, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/19775023.asp; and Oytun Orhan, "Syria's PKK Game," *Today's Zaman* (Turkey), 14 February 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=271361.

[68] "Turkey Tightens Security Measures on Syrian Border to Prevent PKK Entry," *Today's Zaman*, 21 March 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=274953.

[69] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qahtaniyah: Security Forces Prevent Demonstration," KurdWatch, 9 January 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2381&z=en&cure=245; "Al-Qamishli: Number of Demonstrators in the Kurdish Regions Has Grown," KurdWatch, 15 November 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2198&z=en&cure=232; and European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qamishli: Security Forces Use Tear Gas on Demonstrators," KurdWatch, 28 July 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1825&z=en&cure=232.

[70] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qamishli: Mish'al at-Tammu Assassinated," KurdWatch, 10 October 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index?aid=2077.

[71] İsmail Avci, "PKK Allegedly Kills Another Kurdish Politician in Syria," *Today's Zaman*, 28 March 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=275696.

Abdullah Bedro along with his three sons.[72] The PYD allegedly kid-napped and murdered popular Kurdish activist Khalaf Muhammad al-Qatna.[73] The PYD and the PKK are even linked to the murder of Dr. Serzad Hac Reshid, the head of the PYD's Aleppo branch, who challenged his party's leadership by supporting the overthrow of the Assad regime.[74]

Intimidation and violence are other tactics used by the PYD and PKK to suppress their political rivals and control the Syrian Kurds. On 23 February 2012, four medical professionals from 'Afrin claimed they were threatened by the PYD because they had criticized and "insulted" the PYD. On 12 February 2012, a high-ranking official from the Yekîtî party claimed the PYD and PKK abducted five par-ticipants who attended the Erbil Conference on the Syrian Kurdish issue organized by KRG President Massoud Barzani.[75] PYD supporters burned the al-Qamishli photography studio of Abdullah Bedro, who had been assassinated by the PKK and PYD a few weeks prior.[76] Also on 25 January 2012, members of the PYD threatened to murder Kurdish activist Sa'dun Sino because the latter criti-cized the PYD over Bedro's murder.[77] PYD activists kidnapped a Kurdish youth who regularly participated in antiregime demonstra-tions in 'Ayn al-'Arab on 1 September 2011, under the pretext of

> *The PKK and PYD seek to control their political rivals and the general Kurdish population through assassinations.*

---

[72] Sağlam, "Syrian Kurds Take Up Arms."

[73] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Ad-Darbasiyah: Khalaf Muhammad al-Qatna's Kidnappers Have Been Identified," KurdWatch, 14 April 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2503&z=en&cure=245.

[74] İsmail Avci, "PKK Presence in Syria Grows to Fill Power Vacuum," *Today's Zaman*, 17 February 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailn.action?newsId=271721; and Sağlam, "Syrian Kurds Take Up Arms."

[75] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qamishli: Participants in the Erbil Conference Abducted During the Return Trip," KurdWatch, 12 February 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2453&z=en&cure=245.

[76] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Qamishli: Photo Shop of PYD Victim Burned Down," KurdWatch, 25 January 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2433&z=en&cure=245.

[77] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Al-Darbasiyah: PYD Threatens Critic with Death," KurdWatch, 25 January 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2432&z=en&cure=245.

"teaching the youth a lesson for selling drugs."[78] A female member of the Future Movement in Damascus reported that on 27 August 2011, two high-ranking PYD officials came to her home, called her a traitor, and threatened her life because of the Future Movement's anti-Assad stance.[79] On 11 August 2011, PYD members kidnapped and beat two prominent antiregime activists in Ra's al-'Ayn.[80] In addition to the threats of violence, the PKK is intimidating Kurds in 'Afrin by levying a "tax" of 25 tins of olives or olive oil from every household engaged in olive growing or 60 tins of olives or olive oil from the owners of any olive processing plant.[81]

In addition to suppressing and controlling the Syrian Kurdish population, the PKK and PYD are alleged to actively participate in the regime's counterrevolutionary violence. A 6 March 2012 report in *Today's Zaman* claimed that the PKK formed pro-Assad paramilitaries similar in style to the Shabiha.[82] The Turkish newspaper goes on to allege that these "PKK Shabiha" units captured 15 Free Syrian Army defectors in Qamishli and transferred them to regime authorities.[83] The PKK also issued threats against foreign intervention in support of the Syrian revolutionaries. In March 2012, PKK field commander and de facto leader, Murat Karayilan, stated that if Turkey intervened in Syria, particularly in Syrian Kurdistan, the PKK would turn all of Kurdistan into a war zone.[84]

---

[78] European Center for Kurdish Studies, " 'Ayn al-'Arab: Another Activist Kidnapped and Mistreated by PYD," KurdWatch, 20 September 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2014&z=en&cure=232.

[79] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Damascus: PYD Threatens Future Movement Activist," KurdWatch, 30 August 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1936&z=en&cure=232.

[80] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Ra's al-'Ayn: Two Activists Kidnapped and Tortured by Members of the PYD," KurdWatch, 11 August 2011, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=1879&z=en&cure=232.

[81] Adem Demir, "PKK Said Cooperating with al-Asad Regime in Syria," *Turkiye Gazetesi*, 29 January 2012, http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com/haber/522492/esad%E2%80%99in_pkk%E2%80%99li_askerleri.aspx.

[82] The Shabiha, which translates as "ghosts," is the pro-Assad paramilitary force in Syria. The Shabiha is allegedly responsible for some of the worst instances of regime-sponsored violence against the Syrian people, including the Houla massacre, in which 108 villagers were killed, including entire families who were shot in their homes.

[83] İsmail Avci, "Syrian Defectors Captured by PKK, 'Northern Syria's Shabiha,' " *Today's Zaman*, 6 March 2012, http://www.sundayszaman.com/sunday/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=273504.

[84] Jon Hemming, "Kurd Militants Threaten Turkey If It Enters Syria," *Daily Star* (Lebanon), 22 March 2012, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Mar-22/167604-kurd-militants-threaten-turkey-if-it-enters-syria.ashx#axzz1xP6NxSzx.

Despite the allegations and evidence that the PKK and the PYD support the Assad regime, it should be noted that there are multiple instances of conflict between the two sides. On 15 February 2012, a gunfight erupted between the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Service and the PYD in 'Ayn al-'Afrin.[85] In mid-March, proregime supporters attacked a PYD television station in the Sheikh Maqsud District of Aleppo.[86] Again on 9 May 2012, clashes erupted in Aleppo between proregime elements and the PYD.[87] In addition to the reports of conflict, a leader within the PKK's Union of Communities in Kurdistan umbrella group stated on 27 March that the PKK sought to oust the Assad regime. He went on to state that reports to the contrary were nothing more than Turkish propaganda.[88]

One must be cautious not to view the above reports on PKK and PYD activity in Syria as dogmatic truth. While all the information comes from credible sources, the fog of war, political agendas, and propaganda inherently inject a measure of exaggeration and sensationalism. Nonetheless, the reports of PKK and PYD activity constitute a significant body of evidence that indicates the PKK and PYD are spoilers to a unified Syrian Kurdistan.

The above reports also indicate that PKK and PYD support for the Assad regime is opportunistic, not ideological. Turkey, not Bashar Assad, is the greatest enemy for the PKK and PYD. While the reports of violence between the regime and the PYD suggest there is little affinity between Assad and the PYD-PKK, the current unrest appears to provide the PYD and PKK with an opportunity to consolidate their control over Syrian Kurdistan. The vast majority of reported PKK and PYD repression in Syria is not against the Free

---

[85] European Center for Kurdish Studies, " 'Ayn al-'Arab: At Least One Dead After Gunfight Between PYD Supporters and Employees of the Air Force Intelligence Service," KurdWatch, 22 February 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2461&z=en&cure=245.

[86] European Center for Kurdish Studies, "Aleppo: One Dead Following Gunfight in the District of Shaikh Maqsud," KurdWatch, 15 March 2012, http://www.kurdwatch.org/index.php?aid=2478&z=en&cure=245.

[87] Wladimir van Wilgenburg, "PYD-Assad Clashes Raise Doubts about Alleged Syrian-PKK Cooperation," *Rudaw*, 27 May 2012, http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/4778.html.

[88] Idris Abu-Bakir, "PKK Official Denies Supporting Syrian Regime," AK News (Iraq), 27 March 2012, http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/298082/.

Syrian Army or rebellious Sunni Arab communities, but against the PKK's and PYD's Kurdish political opponents.

Domination of the Syrian Kurdish community is not an endgame objective for the PKK and its sister party, the PYD. It would be a victory that would allow the PKK to open a new front in its ongoing war against Turkey. Consequently, the PKK and PYD will continue halfhearted support for the Assad regime as long as it is beneficial to them. Continued instances of violence provide the PYD and PKK with plausible deniability against the charge that they are Assad regime puppets and will facilitate their shift to anti-Assad actors if the regime's collapse appears imminent.

If the PKK and PYD succeed in dominating the Syrian Kurdish community, it is increasingly less important that Bashar Assad remains in power. But a strong, pro-Turkish Muslim Brotherhood–dominated state is not in the best interest of the PKK either. If regime change becomes inevitable, the PKK will likely support a shift that maintains the ruling Baath Party system or will seek a drawn-out, disorderly armed conflict that fractures Syria and inhibits the formation of a powerful central government.

In addition to its implications within Syria, the current intra-Kurdish violence led by the PYD-PKK axis threatens to expand into a regional conflict. Turkey is unlikely to act passively and allow the PKK and its PYD allies to establish a "pro-PKK zone" in Syrian Kurdistan that could threaten Turkey's southeastern flank. If the PYD and PKK appear poised to dominate Syrian Kurdistan, there is an increased risk of Turkish intervention.

Efforts by the PYD-PKK axis to dominate Syrian Kurdistan underscore the supposition that Syrian Kurds are not only divided, but also actively engaged in violent conflict. PYD and PKK efforts to suppress and eliminate their political rivals strongly suggest the two groups are unwilling to share power. The PYD-PKK faction is clearly using widespread unrest caused by the Syrian revolution to create a Syrian Kurdistan subservient to its worldview. This aggression by the PYD and the PKK highlights that the revolution amplifies complex

conflicts within Syria that cannot be solved solely by determining the fate of Bashar al-Assad.

Conclusion

The Syrian Kurds are a house divided. The Future Movement chose to actively oppose the Assad regime and joined the SNC, while the KNC selected a more "neutral opposition." The KNC distrusts the Assad regime and wants to see Bashar al-Assad replaced; nevertheless, the KNC is wary of joining the SNC and does not seek active opposition to the regime. Finally, the PYD alongside its PKK allies nominally support the Assad regime. Yet, the PYD-PKK axis does not support the regime out of ideological affinity, but rather uses the regime as a temporary ally of convenience to dominate Syrian Kurdistan. A Syrian Kurdistan dominated by the PYD and PKK would then be used to support and empower Kurdish rebels in Turkey.

The Syrian revolution has amplified the divisions between the three most influential Kurdish actors in Syria. Despite efforts by Kurdish leaders to develop an effective, all-encompassing governance structure that would present a powerful, unified Kurdish front, separate policy objectives broke the Syrian Kurds into smaller factions. Furthermore, the divisions between the three primary factions are so great, and often confrontational, that unity is unlikely. This point is exemplified by the PYD-PKK decision to use armed force to suppress its political rivals and attempt to directly control the entire Syrian Kurdish population.

The divisions within the Syrian Kurdish population highlight the complexity of the Syrian revolution. If the divisions leading to the present intra-Kurdish violence are not addressed, the risks of a Syrian Kurdish civil conflict, simultaneous to the broader Syrian revolution, are increased. Moreover, if the present violence within Syrian Kurdistan escalates, the possibility of a broader regional conflict increases. Turkey remains concerned that a Syrian Kurdistan dominated by the PYD and PKK will provide the Turkish-based PKK with recruiting grounds and a base of operations to launch cross-border attacks. To

prevent such a scenario from developing, Turkey may be forced into an armed intervention.

The ongoing revolution has exposed multiple layers of conflict that cannot be resolved by either regime change or regime confirmation alone. To prevent Syria from devolving into a failed state that could potentially spread conflict throughout the region, a nuanced solution that addresses all these issues is required. While the prospect of resolving the differences between the Syrian Kurds remains difficult, ignoring these divisions and treating the Kurds as a singular group with a common aspiration is risky. Realizing that the Syrian Kurds are not a monolithic bloc is a step toward addressing the complexities of the Syrian revolution. Recognizing the divisions, as well as their causes, will improve understanding of the Kurdish community and provide context for its reactions to the revolution.

Algerian soldiers stand guard at a natural gas plant in In Amenas, Algeria, after a four-day hostage standoff ended in a bloody showdown between Algerian commandos and Islamist kidnappers. A total of 37 foreign hostages and 29 kidnappers died during the January 2013 incident. Photo by Asahi Shimbun (Japan) via Getty Images.

Understanding Terrorism and the Islamist Challenge in the Maghreb

by Valentina Bartolucci

This article aims to provide an overview of the threat and spread of nonstate terrorism and the Islamist influence in the Maghreb. It will also assess the counterterrorism approaches of the three countries under review: Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia.[1] While all three countries were confronted with similar challenges after independence, each reacted in a different manner, as the domestic features of these countries impacted both the manifestation and magnitude of the terrorist threat and each country's ability to contain violence.

In North Africa, the specter of terrorism looms far and wide. No state in the region has escaped it. The Maghreb is home to some of the most devastating acts of terrorism, particularly during the 1990s when a number of groups resorted to violence as a tactic against the state of Algeria and its representatives. Although Morocco and Tunisia have managed to contain the immediate threat through different historic and political realities, the occurrence of terrorist violence is on the rise. The invasion of Iraq by the United States further stimulated the development and spread of recruitment networks in these and neighboring countries.

In the last few decades, Algeria has been a hot spot of domestic terrorism and is now a major source of international terrorism. It was

---

Bartolucci is an expert on criminality and terrorism and a Middle East and North Africa analyst. She is a lecturer in the politics of terrorism at the University of Pisa, Italy, and in religion and politics in the Middle East at the Lorenzo de Medici Institute, International Graduate School, Florence, Italy. Bartolucci holds a PhD in international relations from the University of Bradford (UK).

[1] Academic literature on terrorism in the Maghreb is scarce. Among the few authors who have written on the subject are Rehda Malek, "Islamist Terrorism in Algeria: An Experience to Ponder," *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings and Manuals of al-Qaeda, Hamas and Other Terrorists from Around the World and Throughout the Ages*, ed. Walter Laqueur (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2004); Annelli Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism*, Institute for Security Studies Monograph no. 144 (2008), www.iss.co.za/uploads/MONO144FULL.PDF; Paul Aussaresses, *The Battle of the Casbah: Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Algeria*, 1955–1957 (New York: Enigma Books, 2002); and Marvine Howe, *Morocco: The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the fourth largest supplier of "anticoalition" fighters to Iraq—26 Algerians were held at the U.S. base at Guantanamo Bay, and several have been arrested on terrorism charges in the past few years all over the world.[2] Morocco, on the other hand, had a different colonial experience, resulting in a distinct form of government. Algeria achieved independence following a bloody revolution and emerged as a republic with military or military-backed governments, while Morocco made a more peaceful transition from French control. It has a centuries-old monarchic state with a high level of public legitimization in which the king is both the highest political and religious authority. Its border with Algeria closed 17 years ago, following retaliation for Moroccan accusations of Algeria's involvement in the (alleged) 1994 terrorist attack in Marrakech. In the last decade, however, Morocco has experienced two major terrorist attacks, a number of plots have been uncovered, and minor terrorist events have also occurred. Tunisia, on the other hand, has long been regarded as one of the most stable countries in the region. Nevertheless, a number of Tunisian nationals have been arrested in the past few years on terrorism-related charges, and the government claims to have uncovered a number of plots.

The first section of this article discusses the spread and threat of terrorist organizations in the Maghreb. Particular attention is devoted to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—its structure and activities and the influence of al-Qaeda on its establishment and consolidation. The second section provides an assessment of counterterrorism strategies initiated by the three countries, including political strategies, socioeconomic restructuring, and religious control and education. The third section discusses the Islamist challenge in the Maghreb.

Recognizing that neither the international nor the academic community can agree on a single definition of terrorism, this article will define the concept as specified by each of the three countries. In

---

[2] Carol Migdalovitz, *Algeria: Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service report for Congress, CRS7-5700, RS21532 (2009), fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/124770.pdf.

Algeria, Decree No. 93-03 defines a subversive or terrorist act as "any offence targeting state security, territorial integrity, or the stability or normal functioning of institutions."[3] Moroccan Dahir 03-03 defines terrorism as "any crime committed intentionally in relation to an individual or collective activity with the goal of causing serious disruption of public order by intimidation, terror, or violence."[4] As for Tunisia, Act No. 75/2003 states that "anyone who incites the commission of a terrorist offence or conspires to commit such an offence or intends to commit such an offence, where the intention is accompanied by any act preparatory to the commission of such an offence, shall be guilty of a terrorist offence."[5]

The term "Maghreb" (*al-maghrib* in Arabic) refers to the western area of North Africa that comprises Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. In all three countries, the state religion is Islam, the population contains a majority of Arabs and Berbers, and the two official languages are Arabic and French. The term "Islamism" and its direct derivative, "Islamist," refer to a politico-religious phenomenon linked to the events of the twentieth

> *The Maghreb is home to some of the most devastating acts of terrorism.*

century that professes a holistic vision of Islam with the final aim of restoring the Caliphate.[6]

The analysis herein has been largely based on publicly available materials. Given the paucity of materials that can be found on the Internet and the lack of scholarly attention to terrorism and Islamism in the Maghreb, interviews with key officials, human rights activists, and Islamists have been deemed necessary. Subject matter expert in-

---

[3] Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations (UN), *Report Submitted by Algeria to the Security Council Committee, Established Pursuant to Resolution 1373*, 27 December 2001, http://www.algeria-un.org/default.asp?doc=1427.

[4] UN Security Council, "Letter Dated 4 December 2003 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1373 (2001) Concerning Counter-Terrorism Addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/200371173, 15 December 2003.

[5] UN Security Council, *Counter Terrorism Committee Report from Tunisia*, S/2006/278, 26 September 2006.

[6] Mehdi Mozzafari, *Bin Laden: Terrorism and Islamism* (Denmark: Aarhus University, 2001).

terviews are valuable primary data, as they enrich what is in fact a thin body of literature.

Interviews in Morocco and Tunisia have been carried out in the capital cities, and interviewees from Algeria were interviewed outside the country. All interviews were conducted at different times between 2008 and 2010. All interviewees requested confidentiality and anonymity, with the exception of Nadia Yassine and Mohammed Darif, both of whom were interviewed in Morocco.

An Overview of Terrorism in the Maghreb
Algeria

Algeria is a "showcase" of terrorism in North Africa; terrorism and insurgency have plagued the country recurrently over the last several decades, especially during the 1990s. The Algerian military's nullification of the 1991 elections, in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win, was followed by a bloody civil war that engulfed Algeria in long-lasting violence. It is estimated that up to 200,000 lives were lost to terrorism in Algeria between 1992 and 2000 from regular confrontations between the military-backed government and its Islamist opposition.[7] Those confrontations also resulted in the disappearance of thousands of people abducted by security services or members of the dissolved FIS.[8]

Currently, Algeria remains plagued by bouts of violence. In April 2006, Henry A. Crumpton, U.S. ambassador for counterterrorism, stated that "pressed by Algerian counterterrorism successes, the once Algeria-centric GSPC [Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat] has become a regional terrorist organization, recruiting and operating all throughout the Maghreb—and beyond to Europe itself."[9] Although the number of attacks has dropped dramatically compared to the mid-1990s, terrorist groups have continued to launch fatal at-

---

[7] Migdalovitz, Algeria: *Current Issues.*

[8] RAND, *More Freedom, Less Terror?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008).

[9] *Islamist Extremism in Europe*, U.S. Senate Subcommittee Hearings, 109 Congress, II session, 5 April 2006.

tacks, directed mostly—but not exclusively—at military and police targets.[10] Various bomb and suicide attacks have occurred in the last few years; foreign workers and their means of transport are regular targets for attacks. Clashes between suspected militants and the security forces occur across Algeria on a daily basis. AQIM is also being held responsible for kidnapping several European Union citizens. According to Archer and Popovic, Algeria "is central to the regional security complex and arguably the cause of the terrorism in the wider Saharan region."[11]

Two Algerian terrorist groups are U.S. State Department-designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs): the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and AQIM. The GIA was most active from 1991 to 2001 with the last attack reported in 2006. In 1998, the GSPC—a local Algerian Islamist group turned pan-Maghreb jihadist organization—split from the

Algeria is a "showcase" of terrorism in North Africa.

GIA. In 2003, it declared its allegiance to al-Qaeda, uniting officially with it on 11 September 2006 and taking AQIM as its name. The GSPC has openly stated its allegiance to the goals and tactics of al Qaeda;[12] GSPC founder Hassan Hattab's successor as "emir" of GSPC, Nabil Sahraoui, who was killed in June 2004, publicly stated that "we strongly and fully support Osama bin Laden's jihad against the heretic America."[13] Furthermore, Abu Musab Abdelouadoud, the current "emir" of AQIM, has referred to bin Laden as "our Commander."[14] Despite these claims, "it is still hard to be certain from

---

[10] Human Rights Watch, *Algeria: Human Rights Watch World Report* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011), http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011/algeria.

[11] Toby Archer and Tihomir Popovic, *The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2007), 24.

[12] International Crisis Group, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?*, Africa Report 92, 31 March 2005, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/west-africa/092-islamist-terrorism-in-the-sahel-fact-or-fiction.aspx.

[13] "Algerian Group Backs al-Qaeda," BBC News, 23 October 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3207363.stm.

[14] "Interview with Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, Commander of the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC)," Globalterroralert.com, 26 September 2005, http://www.globalterroralert.com/images/documents/pdf/1205/gspc1205.pdf.

open source information to what extent there is operational cooperation between al-Qaeda and the GSPC."[15]

The AQIM is one of the most vocal and active terrorist groups in North Africa. It originated as a resistance movement to the Algerian government and "gained support from the Algerian population by vowing to continue fighting the government while avoiding the indiscriminate killing of civilians."[16] Its avowed enemies are the Algerian government and the "infidel" West, France in particular. It has taken responsibility for a number of terrorist incidents in the region and in recent years might have been trying to pursue a more global direction.[17] Although Algeria has seen a gradual decrease in the number of deaths in the past few years, 2007 witnessed a change in tactics, particularly suicide attacks, which were not previously seen in Algeria. AQIM is particularly active in northern Algeria and increasingly in the south of the country, especially along the borders with Mali and Niger.[18] It has been reported that AQIM's operations have moved into Mauritania, Nigeria, and Mali, with wider aspirations.[19] RAND reports that the group has managed to develop transnational links in Africa, Europe, and the rest of the Maghreb.[20] AQIM is also considered a major source of concern for Europe, especially for Spain and France, but also for Italy and Germany.[21] While the number of AQIM members is estimated at around 1,000,[22] there are indications that terrorism in North Africa is on the rise.[23] AQIM in particular

---

[15] Archer and Popovic, *The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative*, 26.

[16] Andrew Hansen and Lauren Vriens, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)," Council on Foreign Relations, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/north-africa/al-qaeda-islamic-maghreb-aqim/p12717.

[17] Ibid.

[18] U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State Publication, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2008).

[19] Migdalovitz, *Algeria: Current Issues*.

[20] RAND, *More Freedom, Less Terror?*

[21] EUROPOL, *TE-SAT 2011: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report* (The Hague: European Police Office, 2011), www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/.../te-sat2011.pdf; and International Institute of Strategic Studies, "Algeria and Terrorism: A Complex Web," *Strategic Comments* 9 (2003).

[22] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2010 Human Rights Report: Algeria*, U.S. State Department, 8 April 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154458.htm.

[23] Hansen and Vriens, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb."

is making use of some unpopular "Western policies," such as the intervention in Iraq or the French banning of the veil, to recruit new members. It is also possible that residual cells of the now-fragmented GIA still operate from mountain hideouts in the east and west of Algeria.[24] The GSPC, albeit in reduced numbers, is still operating by trying to oust the Algerian government. The Free Salafist Group is also active but has been predominantly involved in crime and trafficking rather than terrorism.[25] Moroccan, Libyan, Tunisian, and Mauritanian terrorists were incorporated into Algerian terrorist organizations over a number of years, probably because extremists in Tunisia and Morocco were unable to establish the same level of activities as in Algeria.

Morocco

Morocco, characterized by a greater sociopolitical openness than its peer states and praised for its moderate version of Islam, was for a long time thought to be "immune" to terrorist acts. The violent events of the last decade have led to the burial of Moroccan "exceptionalism" in terms of vulnerability to terrorist planning and attacks.[26] The Casablanca bombings of 16 May 2003—in which 12 suicide bombers killed 33 people in coordinated strikes—demonstrated that this was no longer the case. On 11 March 2007, a suicide bombing marked the three-year anniversary of the Madrid bombings.[27] On 10 April 2007, three suicide bombers attempted an explosion inside an Internet café, and on 11 April two suicide bombers detonated their devices near the U.S. consulate.

---

[24] Senior political officer, interview by author, off the record, Rabat, Morocco, 17 June 2009.

[25] RAND, *More Freedom, Less Terror?*

[26] Valentina Bartolucci, "The Moroccan Exception, and A King's Speech," OpenDemocracy, 11 March 2011, http://www.opendemocracy.net/valentina-bartolucci/moroccan-exception-and-kings-speech.

[27] On 11 March 2004, 10 explosions (the devices were packed into 13 rucksacks and detonated by cell phones) occurred on 4 commuter trains at the height of Madrid's rush hour, killing 191 civilians and injuring more than 1,800. See http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/ops/madrid.htm.

The events of March and April 2007, and the latest attack in April 2011 (described later in this section), further thrust Morocco toward central stage. Not only has the presumed "exceptionality" been proven to be illusionary, but Morocco is also increasingly being seen as a "producer" of terrorist violence internationally, especially after the involvement of Moroccans in major terrorist events in Spain (the 2004 Madrid bombings, for instance) and elsewhere.[28] Moroccan immigrants in Europe have also been implicated in a number of failed terrorist plots, were reported to have carried out several suicide attacks in Iraq, and were implicated in the murder of Dutch filmmaker and author Theo Van Gogh.[29] Due to these events, "Morocco look[s] increasingly important to jihadi terrorism worldwide."[30] Terrorism emerged as a security concern in Morocco only following the 2003 Casablanca bombings; however, a violent episode had already occurred in 1994 during which two Spanish tourists were killed in the lobby of a hotel in Marrakech. This event showed that the country was not entirely immune to violence by religious fanatics. It is believed to have been Morocco's first violent attack against foreigners.

> *Morocco, characterized by a greater sociopolitical openness than its peer states and praised for its moderate version of Islam, was for a long time thought to be "immune" to terrorist acts.*

The most recent terrorist attack in the country, in which 17 people were killed, occurred on 28 April 2011 at a very popular café in the world-famous Djelma el-Fna Square in Marrakech. The primary suspect arrested after the event, Adil Othmani, appears to have been attempting to join al-Qaeda in Iraq and Chechnya before deciding

---

[28] Selma Belaala, "Morocco: Slums Breed Jihad," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2004.

[29] This refers to the murder of Van Gogh, whose movie *Submission* featured a beaten, naked Muslim woman covered in writings from the Koran. The killer, a Dutch-born Muslim of Moroccan origin, shot and then tried to decapitate Van Gogh, before pinning a note to the corpse threatening Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Dutch Muslim who co-wrote the script. See http://www.economist.com/node/7854010.

[30] Archer and Popovic, *The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative*.

to engage in violence directly against Morocco.[31] The events came only a few days after the ruling king, Mohammed VI, pardoned a raft of political prisoners—including some alleged Islamists.[32] A few days after the event, thousands of people demonstrated against terrorism, reiterating once again the Moroccan population's general opposition to terrorist violence.[33] AQIM denied direct responsibility for the attack; nevertheless, according to the Moroccan Ministry of Interior, AQIM had been trying to establish itself in the country for a while. On 5 February 2011, 27 people had been arrested under suspicion of involvement in the planning of terrorist attacks in Morocco and other countries. This was the first time Morocco publicly announced the arrest of an active member of AQIM in its territory.[34]

The following violent groups are active in Morocco:

- **Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group**: dedicated to the creation of an Islamist state in Morocco and supports al-Qaeda's objectives. It is a U.S. State Department–designated FTO.

- **Salafiyya Jihadiyya**: believed to be one of the largest terrorist groups in the country and committed to ousting corrupt Arab regimes through the use of violence. It consists of an assortment of several groups. It is suspected to be an arbitrary label used by Moroccan authorities to pursue all Islamists.

- **Takfir wa Hijra**: a pan-religious group—Ayman Al-Zawahiri and the late-Abu Musab al-Zarqawi are believed to be members.

---

[31] Jack Kalpakian, "Current Moroccan Anti-Terrorism Policy," *Analysis of the Real Instituto Elcano* 89 (13 May 2011).

[32] Damien Pearse, Eduardo Marin, and Giles Tremlett, "Briton Killed in Marrakech Bomb Attack," *Guardian* (London), 29 April 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/30/briton-killed-marrakech-bomb-attack.

[33] Reuters, "Manifestations contre le terrorisme au Maroc," Le Devoir.com, 9 May 2011, http://www.ledevoir.com/international/actualites-internationales/322890/manifestations-contre-le-terrorisme-au-maroc.

[34] RFI, "Démantèlement au Maroc d'une cellule d'AQMI," 6 October 2011, http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/ 20110106-demantelement-maroc-une-cellule-aqmi.

Tunisia

Although Tunisia has experienced less terrorism than its surrounding states, there are signs that the threat level is rising. The Algeria-based AQIM is actively recruiting members among Tunisia's growing population of unemployed young males and directing some men to stage attacks within the country. In the last few years, Tunisian security forces have eliminated several plots by al-Qaeda-linked militants. On 11 April 2002, a truck bomb targeted a synagogue on the island of Djerba, killing 21 people and injuring 30 more.[35] The Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Sites, allegedly connected to al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility, and a Moroccan was implicated in the events.[36] Between December 2006 and January 2007, 14 people were killed in a number of armed clashes between Tunisian security forces and members of an armed group called the Soldiers of Assad Ibn al-Fourat (linked to AQIM), near the town of Soliman. Violent clashes between security forces and armed men were reported in 2011.[37] The risk of kidnapping also remains high.

The following violent groups are believed to be active in Tunisia:

- **Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Sites**: linked to al-Qaeda and responsible for the major attack of April 2002.

- **Tunisian Combatant Group**: seeks to establish an Islamist regime in Tunisia.

- **Soldiers of Assad Ibn al-Fourat (linked to AQIM)**: responsible for attacks between December 2006 and January 2007.

- **Zarzis group**: mostly active in the area of the Libyan border, its members have been accused of plotting terrorist attacks over the Internet.

---

[35] "Two Jailed over Tunisian Bombing," BBC News, 5 February 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7873543.stm.

[36] Botha, *Terrorism in the Maghreb*.

[37] Ibid.; "Soldier Seriously Wounded in Bomb Blast in Eastern Algeria," BBC Monitoring Middle East Reports, 18 March 2007.

In 1992, following a couple of violent events, Algeria tried 265 alleged members of the Islamist movement Ennahda in a trial that some human rights organizations described as "unfair."[38] Under former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Islamists faced severe repression and were often imprisoned under terrorism charges. Tunisia's current interior minister, Ali Larayed, a senior member of the Ennahda party that was in power following the uprisings, reported on 13 February 2012 that his government was able to break up a "terrorist organization" linked to al-Qaeda and arrest 12 people seeking to set up an Islamic state.[39]

Counterterrorism in the Maghreb
Algeria

Between 1995 and 1999, Algeria's counterterrorism strategy was based on three pillars: a military offensive by the army, security forces, and the intelligence services; a political dimension, known as "national reconciliation"; and a more subtle propaganda war. Since the late 1990s, counterterrorism approaches (on a purely security-focused level) have been largely effective in quelling most of the violence in Algeria. However, abuses have occurred and are still occurring. Tens of thousands of people have been arrested, injured, or killed under antiterrorism provisions, especially suspected members or sympathizers of the FIS, which was outlawed in March 1992. The use of torture and ill treatment has been widespread.[40] Under the official

The Algeria-based AQIM is actively recruiting members among Tunisia's growing population of unemployed young males.

---

[38] Martin Scheinin, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism—Mission to Tunisia*, advance edited version, UN Human Rights Council, 28 December 2010, http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Terrorism/Pages/Annual.aspx.

[39] Reuters, "Tunisia Says It Has Cracked Islamist 'Terrorist' Unit with Ties to Libya," *Al Arabiya*, 13 February 2012, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/13/194458.html.

[40] Alkarama Foundation, *Algeria: List of Issues, Committee Against Torture* (Geneva, Switzerland: Alkarama, 2010), http://en.alkarama.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=180&Itemid=80.

justification of combating terrorism, Algeria declared a state of emergency on 9 February 1992, followed by a "Decree Against Terrorism." Security services acted almost with impunity: "During the curfew … thousands of people were summarily executed, abducted, tortured, and disappeared."[41] Following accusations against Algeria for being too harsh in its fight against terrorism, the government moved away from dedicated legislation to address terrorism as a criminal act within the penal code.

In April 2011, Algeria, which has the largest and most well-armed military in the region, launched a sweeping counterterrorism offensive named Operation Ennasr (Victory) that targeted AQIM. Algeria remains an active ally of the U.S. global counterterrorism effort and Washington has recently reassured Algeria it is a vital part of America's counterterrorism strategy.[42] In January, the Algerian government lifted the state of emergency in a concession designed to avoid the tide of uprisings sweeping the Arab world. The announcement, however, was coupled with the president's declaration that he would introduce two new, stringent antiterrorism laws.

Tens of thousands of people have been arrested, injured, or killed under antiterrorism provisions.

The Algerian government has also taken steps to confront the religious and ideological foundations of AQIM and other violent organizations. The Algerian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Endowments has been trying to strengthen the influence of the Maliki school of Islam as a means of deterring the infiltration of "foreign" (i.e., Salafist) forms of Islam that espouse *takfiri* practices (the declaration of other Muslims as apostates deserving of death) that are believed to form the ideological foundation of terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda.

---

[41] Ibid.

[42] Andrew McGregor, "Algeria Launches Nation-Wide Counterterrorism Offensive," *Terrorism Monitor* 8, no. 16 (2010), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36301&cHash=6735fea25d.

Algeria continues to experience widespread human rights violations, and abuses in the name of counterterrorism are constantly registered. As recently as 2009, security forces allegedly killed, injured, or arrested approximately 1,935 suspected terrorists.[43] There are still widespread restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly enforced by the authorities under the guise of combating terrorism. Islamists continue to be regularly harassed and each year there are "disappearances."[44] The population is "kept in fear and the military power present[s] itself more than ever as the only protection against 'Islamist fundamentalism.' Following 11 September 2001, the Islamist threat was turned into revenue; it guarantees unconditional support from Western states and aid, including in arms."[45]

Morocco

Moroccan antiterrorism policy was born largely in response to the 2003 Casablanca bombings. Morocco had previously attempted to adopt counterterrorism legislation following the events of 11 September 2001, but this had been rejected by the parliament, as terrorism was not seen as applicable to the Moroccan reality. However, quickly after the 2003 bombings, a stringent antiterrorism law was approved, accompanied by social assistance programs and reform of the religious sector—a multidimensional strategy that has had both successes and failures.[46] Moroccan antiterrorism law has worked fairly well in preventing further terrorist attacks. From a security perspective, the multidimensional strategy designed to counter terrorism in Morocco was effective in both reducing the number of terrorist occurrences in the country and preventing the transformation of Morocco into an open space for al-Qaeda, as had occurred in Algeria. The law played an important role in dissolving many violent cells

---

[43] Human rights activist, interview by author, off the record, Salé, Morocco, 13 June 2009.

[44] Human rights activist, interview by author, off the record, Rabat, Morocco, 14 February 2010.

[45] Jeanne Kervyn and Francois Geze, *The Organisation of the Forces of Repression* (extracts of a report presented by the Justice Commission for Algeria at the 32nd Session of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on Human Rights Violations in Algeria, 1992–2004, 5–8 November 2004), 13, algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf_en/forces_repression.pdf.

[46] Kalpakian, "Current Moroccan Anti-Terrorism Policy."

(e.g., the Belliraj network in 2007).[47] The religious reforms led to positive changes in terms of better education and female inclusion in the religious establishment. Some progress was made regarding social reforms, especially in the housing sector and in launching a "National Initiative for Human Development," under the premise that even if poverty does not cause terrorism, it certainly exacerbates the threat.

The law, however, has been the target of attacks by human rights activists, Islamists, and more recently, segments of the prodemocracy movement of 20 February 2011, who complain about its unfair application and the excesses that are believed to have been committed in law enforcement. Abuses occurred and are still occurring—some recognized by the king himself. As of the beginning of 2011, "Hundreds of suspected Islamist extremists arrested in the aftermath of the Casablanca bombings of May 2003 remain in prison. Many were convicted in unfair trials after being held in secret detention and subjected to mistreatment and sometimes torture. . . . Since further terrorist attacks in 2007, police have arrested hundreds more suspected militants."[48] The law's unfair application resulted mainly from two issues: one was the vagueness of the definition of terrorism and the other one was the harsh treatment of suspects in the name of fighting terrorism. Far stronger powers than necessary have been used to detain and arrest Islamist militants, even on the basis of suspicion alone, as well as to give longer prison sentences and apply the death penalty for serious crimes. Vermeren, for instance, reported that more than 5,000 people have been arrested under the antiterrorism law in the space of a few months, often in a nontransparent way.[49]

The religious sector reforms reasserted the state's monopoly over religion, further strengthening the influence of the Maliki version of

---

[47] The so-called Belliraj network was believed to be the largest terrorist network in Morocco. Its dismantlement, following the arrests of 35 suspects by the Moroccan security service, raised debate beyond Morocco as the network was allegedly linked to Islamist leaders and sympathizers. Six political leaders from the authorized Islamist parties were arrested and are behind bars—among them, Mustapha Moatassim, leader of the al-Badil al-Hadari party.

[48] Human Rights Watch, *Algeria*.

[49] Peter Vermeren, "Dans le nouveau Maroc, le Palais seul face aux islamistes?," *Esprit*, 2004, 103–14, http://www.esprit.presse.fr/archive/review/article.php?code=8086.

Islam but at the expense of religious dissenters, especially those following Wahhabi or Shiite Islam.[50] Furthermore, if government support increased for the members of the political Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Islamists of the illegal but tolerated Justice and Charity movement were increasingly seen as the group to be kept under control. Members of this movement have reported increased harassment by the Moroccan authorities and arrests on the basis of suspicion alone. Nadia Yassine, spokesperson for the movement and daughter of Sheikh Yassine, has been strongly attacked for her support of a democratic system and has been prosecuted several times.[51] Press freedom has also been notably restricted, and the government is still using "repressive legislation and complaisant courts to punish and imprison peaceful opponents."[52]

> *Moroccan antiterrorism policy was born largely in response to the 2003 Casablanca bombings.*

Tunisia

Shortly after George W. Bush's speech on 20 September 2001 in which he warned, "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," Tunisia declared its support for the American-led war on terror. In 2003, the country approved sweeping antiterrorism laws that criminalized many nonviolent activities. Tunisia's multidimensional counter-terrorism approach has four pillars: political, sociocultural, human de-

---

[50] Maliki is one of the schools of religious law within Sunni Islam. It is prevalent in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Lybia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. At the foundation of the Maliki school of jurisprudence, there is a hadith (statement or action of the Prophet Muhammad) collection called the Muwatta' of Imam Malik.

[51] Nadia Yassine, interview by author, Salé, Morocco, 13 October 2009. Sheik Yassine is leader of the very popular Islamist group called Al Adl Wal Ihsan (Justice and Charity). He wrote an open letter to King Mohammed VI upon his coronation, challenging him to hand his royal fortune back to Morocco's people. More than 20 years ago, he wrote the old king, Hassan II, another open letter accusing him of tolerating corruption and encouraging Western-style moral decay. Sheik Yassine found a very receptive audience among people disillusioned by the country's grinding poverty and widespread unemployment.

[52] Human Rights Watch, *Algeria*.

velopment, and legal. This approach advocates that security and law enforcement measures should be accompanied by social and economic programs (e.g., health and educational programs) to ameliorate the conditions that experts believe are exploited by terrorist groups for recruitment and propaganda purposes.

However, the lack of a clear definition for what constitutes an act of terrorism has resulted in unfair applications, such as the arrest and torture of thousands of innocent people, solely on the basis of their religious and political beliefs. There are claims that 2,000 Tunisians have been convicted of offenses under the antiterrorism legislation since 2003,[53] and some of them have allegedly been killed.[54] Amnesty International reports that "nearly all of those convicted and imprisoned have been accused of planning to join jihadist groups abroad or inciting others to join, rather than of having planned or committed specific acts of violence."[55]

According to human rights activists interviewed for this article, the United States overlooked the human rights violations of the Ben Ali regime in return for Tunisia's cooperation in the war on terrorism, and political repression actually increased in that period.[56] Martin Scheinin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, noted that "the most disturbing experience during my mission was the existence of serious discrepancies between the law and what was reported to me as happening in reality."[57] Unfortunately, in view of the number of arrests, Scheinin has concluded that "counterterrorism legislation does not [only] apply to a small group of very dangerous individuals but also to a considerable number of people."[58] The

---

[53] Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2011: State of the World's Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International, 2011), http://www.amnesty.org/en/annual-report/2011/downloads#en.

[54] It is worth noting that in response to the claims that 2,000 people have been sentenced under the antiterrorism law, the minister of justice stated in May 2009 that only 300 people were detained on terrorism charges. See Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2010 Human Rights Report: Algeria*.

[55] Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2011*.

[56] Human rights activists in Tunisia, interviews by author, 13–18 November 2009.

[57] Scheinin, *Mission to Tunisia*.

[58] Ibid., 6.

use of torture and ill treatment in police stations and prisons to extract information and confessions has been reported, and people prosecuted under the antiterrorism law have been sentenced to long prison terms after unfair trials.[59] Islamist political parties and associations have been targeted in particular on the basis of conceivably posing a terrorist threat. Human Rights Watch reported that "the government frequently uses the threat of terrorism and religious extremism as a pretext to crack down on peaceful dissent, while state security agents use surveillance, arbitrary detention, and physical aggression to intimidate and persecute those whom the government deems to be a 'threat.'"[60]

At the end of 2010, the country's security forces were shaken by the revolt that ousted former ruler Ben Ali. The riots that brought down the government began when police seized a young fruit vendor's cart and he immolated himself as an act of protest.[61] Under Ben Ali's rule, Islamists faced severe repressions, and current Interior Minister Ali Larayed, a senior member of the Islamist political party Ennhada that is presently running the country, was himself incarcerated for years. It can indeed be argued that Tunisia became one of the Bush administration's most reliable allies in the war on terrorism precisely because the Ben Ali regime was considered to be a bulwark against Islamism.

The Islamist Challenge in the Maghreb
Algeria

Islamism in Algeria has a complex history. Indeed, "the interplay of religion and politics in Algeria reveals the complexity of a movement that defies easy characterization. Algerian Islamism has deep roots and a long pedigree of resistance, first to French imperialism and later to the authoritarianism fostered by the military regime."[62]

---

[59] Amnesty International, *Annual Report 2011*.

[60] Human Rights Watch, *Algeria*.

[61] Unfortunately, the young Tunisian man, who died as a result, was not alone in his desperation; during the same period, other people set themselves ablaze in Algeria and Egypt as well.

[62] Ray Takeyh, "Islamism in Algeria: A Struggle between Hope and Agony," Council on Foreign Relations, Summer 2003, http://www.cfr.org/world/islamism-algeria-struggle-between-hope-agony/p7335.

Along with moderate expression of Islam, a radical strand has always been present, acclaiming the virtues of violence as a means of fostering social change. In its long years of struggle, resistance, and accommodation, different visions and diverse figures have emerged. Today, Algerian political Islamism encompasses multiple voices, many of which are peaceful. Since the 1990s nullification of elections (out of fear of the stunning popularity of the Islamist party) and consequent civil war, the Algerian situation has been at an impasse. Violence still continues in Algeria and the sociopolitical situation is fragile. The cycle of violence will seemingly only end if all parties recognize that a stable Algeria will have to be a democratic, inclusive state providing for individual sovereignty, while accepting moderate Islamist groups as part of the political landscape.

SOCIOPOLITICAL UNREST AND THE ISLAMISTS

Major protests broke out in January 2011 over food prices and unemployment. The government responded by ordering cuts to the price of basic foodstuffs and repealed the 1992 state of emergency law.[63] In April 2011, two months after the suspension of the state of emergency, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika gave his first televised speech promising socioeconomic measures and announcing political reforms. A series of strikes and protests, led by unemployed youth

> *The lack of a clear definition for what constitutes an act of terrorism has resulted in unfair applications, such as the arrest and torture of thousands of innocent people.*

but attracting people of all ages, were seen in the early days of 2012. Demonstrations were followed by a wave of self-immolations, most of them in front of government buildings.[64] While riots on this scale have been unprecedented since the 1991 election, their wider political

---

[63] "Algeria Profile," BBC News Africa, 10 January 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14118852.

[64] "Algerian Dies from Self-Immolation," Al Jazeera, 17 January 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/01/20111162363063915.html; and "Vague de tentative de suicide par le feu en Algérie," Jeune Afrique, 17 January 2011, http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20110117084410/.

implications are not yet clear. Some unrest still persists and the government responded to the protests by increasing spending and allowing registration of new political parties ahead of the May 2012 parliamentary elections,[65] with a new constitution also promised. However, "while it is clear that the 74-year-old president, Bouteflika—in power since 1999—is aware of the danger of not responding to changes in the region, it is likely that moves toward greater democracy will be slow. And it is possible that tensions will continue to build ahead of the presidential elections due in 2014."[66] The claimed participation of Algeria's largest opposition party to the May parliamentary elections (ending a 15-year boycott) has to be seen as a positive step toward a stronger democratization of the country.[67]

Morocco

Moroccan Islamism is classifiable around three subtendencies: *Islam intégré*, aiming at political inclusion and participation, exemplified by the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR) and the PJD; *Islam contestataire*, refusing the political status quo, exemplified by Justice and Charity; and *Islam élitiste*, represented by the left parties Parti de l'Alternatif Civilisationelle (legalized in 2005 and dissolved in 2008 following the dismantlement of the Belliraj network) and Parti de la Umma (not yet legalized).[68]

Islamist tendencies initially appeared in Morocco in the early 1960s, and the Moroccan government has held an ambivalent position toward them. Islamists were initially encouraged by the Palace (a metonymic term similar to "White House" that refers to the ruling

---

[65] The results of the 2012 Algerian parliamentary elections reaffirmed the status quo. The two winners were the parties of the ruling coalition—the Front de Libération Nationale (FNL), led by President Bouteflika, and the Rassemblement National Démocratique (RND), led by the Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia. The three Islamist parties united under the Green Alliance got 49 seats out of 462, maybe a signal that the spectrum of the 1992 elections and their tragic cancellation is still alive among the population.

[66] *Algeria: Country Economic Forecast, 2 Feb 2012* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Economics, 2012).

[67] Lamine Chikhi, "Algeria Opposition Ends Boycott to Run in Elections," Reuters, 2 March 2012, http://af .reuters.com/article/algeriaNews/idAFL5E8E23M220120302.

[68] Professor Mohammed Darif, interview by author, Casablanca, Morocco, 8 June 2007.

monarch) to oppose the "danger" coming from the Left.[69] Morocco turned to Saudi Arabia for help, giving the Saudis, in return, the freedom to introduce Wahhabism in Morocco through publications, preachers, audiotapes, and monetary contributions.[70] However, after initially being supported by the government, Islamists soon became the target of negotiations, masking the Palace's desire to control them. In response to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's aim to export Iran's Islamic revolution—even in Morocco—King Hassan II commanded the repression of Islamists, especially those suspected of having links with the Shiites.[71] Following this episode, the government decided to legalize the Islamists of the PJD in the belief that they would be easier to control; they became the "Islamists of the Palace." The other major Islamist movement in Morocco, Justice and Charity, is not legalized but is tolerated by the government, although its members are often harassed.[72] Despite the Justice and Charity party's repudiation of the divine character of the monarchy, all Moroccan Islamists have emphasized their total repudiation of violence.

Sociopolitical Unrest and the Islamists

On 20 February 2011, thousands of Moroccans joined in nationwide protests in which they called for political reforms. Following the protests, King Mohammed VI, unlike other Arab autocrats who dithered when uprisings erupted, unveiled a new constitution within weeks, promising real change.[73] Following the 1 July 2011 referendum, constitutional amendments were introduced. The new constitution now ensures that the prime minister is selected from the party that receives the most votes in elections, rather than being chosen by

---

[69] Taieb Chadi and Ali Amar, "La Chabiba Islamiya nid de terroristes?," *Le Journal Hebdomadaire 339* (March 2008), 25–31.

[70] Wahhabism is an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Koran, see "Analysis: Wahhabism," *Frontline*, PBS, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/saudi/analyses/wahhabism.html.

[71] Ibid. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was the leader of Iran's 1979 Revolution in which the Shah was overthrown. He became the first Supreme Leader (religious and political leader for life) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. For more information, see http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm.

[72] Nadia Yassine, interview by author, Salé, Morocco, 10 June 2010.

[73] Bartolucci, "The Moroccan Exception, and a King's Speech."

the king. The prime minister becomes the "president of the government" and is able to appoint government officials, an authority previously held by the king. Within a year, King Mohammed VI accepted the electoral victory of the main opposition party, the Islamist party PJD. Abdelilah Benkirane, Morocco's new prime minister and PJD leader, runs a broad coalition that includes liberals, ex-communists, conservative monarchists, and socialists. However, skeptics who believe that "nothing will really change" remain, and protests still recur, especially in the poorest rural areas. It can nevertheless be argued that Morocco has shown its distinctiveness once again.[74] The king remains popular among the general public and is widely believed to act as the guarantor of political stability and social cohesion and as arbitrator between opposing factions. The result is that very few people in the country want to depose the king or seek outright revolution. This path of change itself follows the democratic reforms —of the family code, the religious sector, and justice—that have occurred in Morocco since Mohammed VI's accession to the throne in 1999. And finally, the king's strategic approach has been able to defuse the ostensible threat of terrorist groups resorting to violence in a way that has won praise from European observers.[75] This strategy reinforces the claim that Moroccans, in their vast majority, are deeply hostile to violence.[76]

> *Following the protests, King Mohammed VI, unlike other Arab autocrats who dithered when uprisings erupted, unveiled a new constitution within weeks, promising real change.*

---

[74] Valentina Bartolucci, "Morocco's Silent Revolution," Open Democracy, 17 January 2012, http://www.opendemocracy.net/valentina-bartolucci/moroccos-silent-revolution.

[75] Nelcya Delanoe, "Morocco: A Journey in the Space between Monarchy and Islamism," Open Democracy, February 2003, http://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/article_951.jsp.

[76] Bartolucci, "Morocco's Silent Revolution."

Tunisia

At one time, Islamist parties formed the strongest opposition force in the country, but as a consequence of Ben Ali's repression of these parties in 1989, they were not a factor in Tunisian politics again until March 2011. In 1987, Rached Ghannouchi, leader of the Movement of the Islamic Tendency (MTI), was arrested by security forces. Soon afterward, Ben Ali claimed the presidency, which he held until January 2011. The MTI, hoping to forge a new Tunisian future, changed its name to Hizb al Nahda, the Party of Renaissance. In the 1989 elections, it became the most successful opposition party in the country. Following the 1991 Islamists' march against the U.S.-led war in Iraq, the government began to fear the Islamist opposition. Many Islamists were killed and Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi fled to France.

Sociopolitical Unrest and the Islamists

Following the so-called Arab Spring revolution and the ousting of Ben Ali on 14 January 2011, Islamist parties have been able to reform themselves. Ghannouchi, the exiled leader of Hizb al Nahda (the largest Islamist party in Tunisia), was greeted by large crowds upon his return and reportedly told them that the path to democracy was "still long. Unite and consolidate—democracy cannot happen without national consensus and development can only happen with justice and democracy."[77] His statement confirmed that "any Tunisian government that excludes Islamists, marginalizes them, or denies their needs, no matter how democratic it appears, will only perpetuate the contradictions and tensions that ultimately ended Ben Ali's rule." Despite the government's ambivalence, there does not presently appear to be tension between secularism (as Tunisia is a secular state with liberal policies, such as abortion rights and the outlawing of polygamy) and the country's political Islamist movements. Indeed, the party's leaders have stressed that they oppose the imposition of Islamic law and have reaffirmed their commitment to democracy. Hizb

---

[77] Lin Nouelhed and Tom Perry, "Tunisian Islamists Show Strength at Chief's Return," Reuters, 30 January 2011, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/30/us-tunisia-idUSTRE70J0IG20110130.

al Nahda leaders have recently worked hard to reassure Western observers, especially. Tunisian activist Rajaa Basly wrote, "Al-Nahda entered the new era with a flexible political discourse, seeking to turn over a new page and provide reassurance that it is committed to the values of democracy, human rights, nonviolence, and the Personal Status Code."[78]

Nevertheless, even accounting for the moderate tone of political Islam in Tunisia, some observers see early signs that the gulf between Islamism and secularism may pose difficult security questions in the future. For instance, the *New York Times* recently reported on religious protests against legally sanctioned brothels. Police were called to disburse rock-throwing protesters shouting slogans, such as "No to brothels in a Muslim country!"[79] Women's groups, in particular, have expressed concern that the revolution could lead to an unwelcome move away from the country's secular tradition.[80]

Discussion and Conclusion

The terrorism threat in the Maghreb is difficult to assess. While Algeria has suffered from incidences of terrorism for a long time, the terrorism threat was unknown in Morocco until 2003. Tunisia appears to be "a place with many terrorists but no terrorism."[81] Undoubtedly, however, while states in the Maghreb have partnered with the United States in the war on terrorism, Washington—and European states as well—has been turning a blind eye to "terrorism from within," especially regarding government officials and the security apparatus.

This brief introduction to the Maghreb shows that the story is more complex than one may think. Moroccans, Tunisians, and Algerians have recently shown the world their desire for true democracy and have demanded dignity, freedom, and more equality.

---

[78] Ibid.

[79] Tunis (AFP), "Tunisia's Islamists Call for Closing Brothels," Al Arabyia, 18 February 2011, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/02/18/138208.html.

[80] Tunisian activists, interviews by author, 20 May 2011.

[81] Russell Fraser, "Tunisia Has Many Terrorists but No Terrorism," Tunisia Human Rights Delegation (blog), 17 March 2011, http://tunisiahrdelegation.wordpress.com/2011/03/17/tunisia-has-many-terrorists-but-no-terrorism/.

The analysis in this article highlights the extent to which Africa has been neglected and points to the limitations of this war on terrorism. Poverty and sociopolitical marginalization are the key factors to focus on to achieve sustainable regional security. Indeed, it is becoming clear that the fears of both an Islamist threat and the menace of terrorism have been overexaggerated by politicians and the media alike. All three countries under analysis have, to various degrees, used the fear of terrorism to their advantage, arguably to attract international funding. Indeed, in all three countries, the antiterrorism legislation has imposed undue restrictions on freedom of expression, movement, and association. Similarly, all three governments have been able to leverage the fear of an Islamist/radical takeover and the terrorism threat to further their domestic agendas in terms of territorial expansion (e.g., in the Western Sahara) or the harassment, if not the disempowerment, of individuals and groups deemed a potential threat to the government (especially Islamists, often represented as violent and as terrorists).

Furthermore, the absence of Islamist claims in the waves of protests occurring in the name of "the Arab Revolutions" has emphasized the fact that people are more concerned about their freedoms and rights than in establishing a caliphate.[82] At this point, it is interesting to note that some Arab political leaders have tried to portray the uprisings as somehow "terrorist related"[83] in an attempt to delegitimize the protests. The three governments' (and also Europe's and the United States') zeal for countering terrorism and the Islamists has played an important role in the crushing of political opposition.[84] Stricter counterterrorism legislation has allowed political leaders and officials to further domestic agendas to the detriment of human rights, and also possibly as a means to legitimize state violence.

---

[82] Bartolucci, "Morocco: The Silent Revolution."

[83] Yasmin Ryan, "Anti-Terrorism and Uprisings," Al Jazeera, 25 February 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/02/201121310169828350.html.

[84] Valentina Bartolucci, "Analysing Elite Discourse on Terrorism and Its Implications: The Case of Morocco," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3 (2010), 119–35; and Jeremy Keenan, *The Dark Sahara: America's War on Terror in Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2009).

The current and long-term political situation in the Maghreb is unclear, and deep socioeconomic problems, which have been (and are) obscured by the fight against terrorism, remain. These problems need to be urgently addressed. Moreover, one must be mindful, when discussing the Maghreb, not to generalize. As shown in this article, the three countries that compose the Maghreb consist of very different histories and present different likely trajectories for the future. In particular, Algeria, with its recent violent past and current repressive policies, represents the most worrisome case for potential instability and thus demands a greater deal of attention from the scholarly community. On the other hand, Tunisia, with its recent successful overthrow of a hated dictator, represents the best opportunity of the Maghreb states for a transition to a plural democracy. Finally, one can contrast the situation in Morocco with that in Algeria, as it has fairly low levels of violence in comparison to its neighbors and is arguably the most stable state in the region, a fact linked to its unique political history and political system.

Finally, the fear of Islamists should be put into perspective. Even though violent components are present in all Maghreb countries, political Islam in the region also has a long history of pacifism. Because of the consequences of repressing Islamists in the past, it can be argued that a different approach, based on dialogue and mutual comprehension with secular parties rather than open confrontation, is deemed necessary to avoid a new spiral of violence.

Ali Muhammed Khel Village, Wazi Zadran District, Paktiya Province. These villagers were cold toward Coalition forces and wanted nothing to do with the patrol that was just out to say hello. This village is somewhat of a problem area. Photo courtesy of Kathleen Reedy.
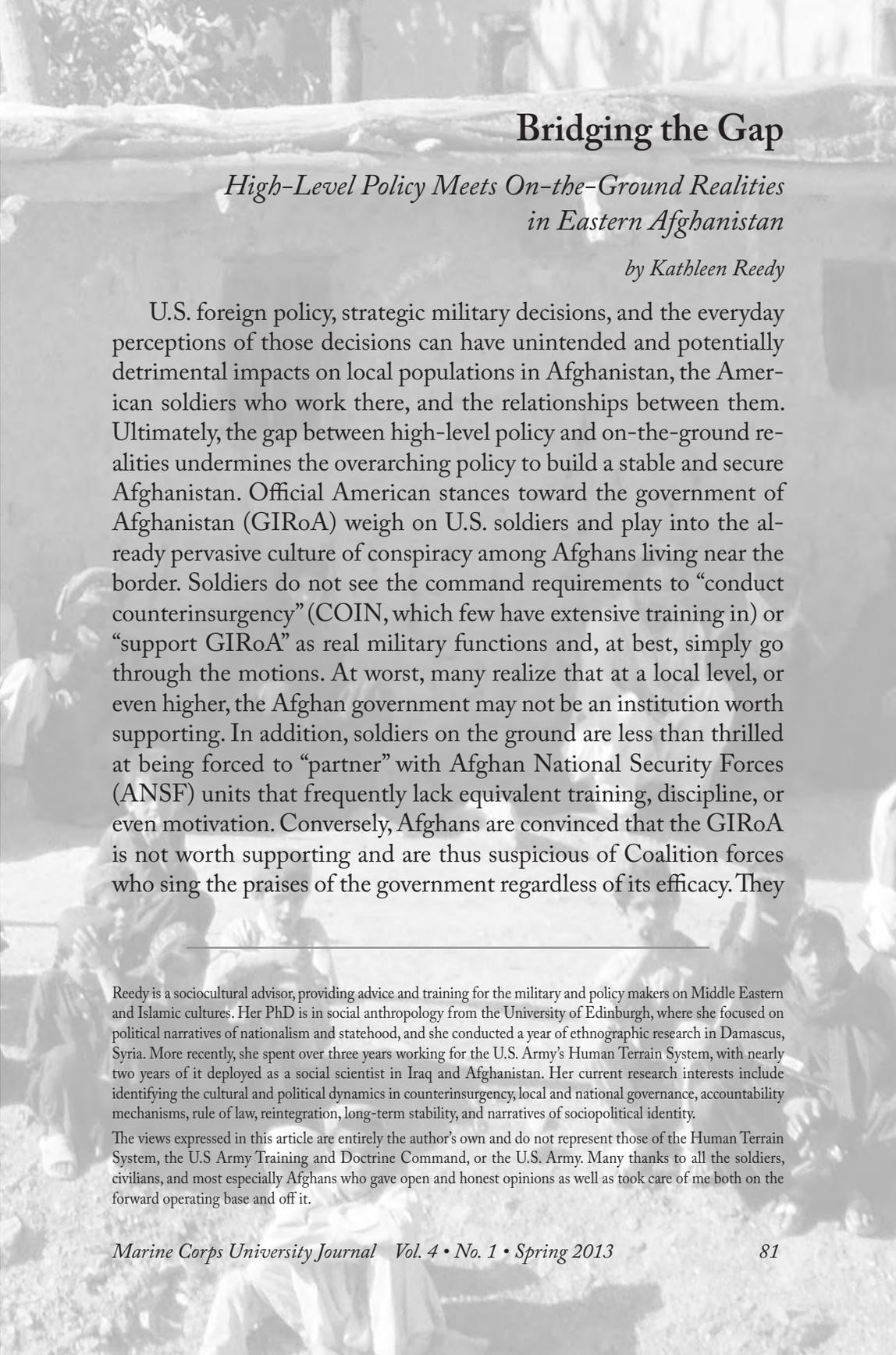
Bridging the Gap

High-Level Policy Meets On-the-Ground Realities in Eastern Afghanistan

by Kathleen Reedy

U.S. foreign policy, strategic military decisions, and the everyday perceptions of those decisions can have unintended and potentially detrimental impacts on local populations in Afghanistan, the American soldiers who work there, and the relationships between them. Ultimately, the gap between high-level policy and on-the-ground realities undermines the overarching policy to build a stable and secure Afghanistan. Official American stances toward the government of Afghanistan (GIRoA) weigh on U.S. soldiers and play into the already pervasive culture of conspiracy among Afghans living near the border. Soldiers do not see the command requirements to "conduct counterinsurgency" (COIN, which few have extensive training in) or "support GIRoA" as real military functions and, at best, simply go through the motions. At worst, many realize that at a local level, or even higher, the Afghan government may not be an institution worth supporting. In addition, soldiers on the ground are less than thrilled at being forced to "partner" with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) units that frequently lack equivalent training, discipline, or even motivation. Conversely, Afghans are convinced that the GIRoA is not worth supporting and are thus suspicious of Coalition forces who sing the praises of the government regardless of its efficacy. They

---

see American policy toward their country as a mission to uphold a corrupt puppet regime at the expense of the general population.

Further, to Afghans, the American policy toward Pakistan appears to be nothing short of either schizophrenic or diabolical, as few Afghans have a handle on the internal workings of the Pakistani government or the United States' relationship with that country. In Afghan eyes, to send funding to Pakistan is to directly support their Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), which Afghans claim is responsible for the vast majority of terrorist activities in the south and east of Afghanistan. To their minds, Americans appear to be funding both sides of the war, and the soldiers are dupes playing into this charade, if not outright conspirators. The resulting attitudes of suspicion and hostility on both sides sharply limit the Coalition force's ability to make real strides in security, much less in the realm of governance.

Inconsistent foreign policy and vague strategic goals not only demoralize Coalition soldiers and civilians, they may actually endanger them.

Policy decisions and statements have unintended consequences on the daily interactions that happen on the ground, which, in turn, affect the degree of impact the Coalition forces can truly have in Afghanistan. The consequences may be even more dire than that. Poor and worsening relations between soldiers and Afghan civilians may give the latter even more reason to support or allow insurgent activity in their area. And a recent study indicates that ANSF fratricides against Coalition forces are more often due to personal tensions and distrust (including that borne of funding and policy decisions) than the ANSF containing a large number of "sleeper" insurgents (see below). Inconsistent foreign policy and vague strategic goals not only demoralize Coalition soldiers and civilians, they may actually endanger them.

This article recommends that policy and decision makers rethink their objectives and consider how what they say can have real and unintended impacts on the ground. Policy design should start by con-

sidering the everyday realities on the ground rather than theoretical assumptions about those realities and should have clearly articulated measures of effect so that all invested parties (Americans and Afghans) know exactly what the end state will look like at their level. In particular, decision makers should carefully weigh their statements about and interactions with Pakistan to ensure they fully align with the ultimate goals for Afghanistan and do not undermine the United States' legitimacy (and, by extension, the legitimacy of the Afghan government) in the eyes of the Afghan public. And above all, there must be clear and consistent communication—both with Afghans and with our own people—about all of these processes. Transparency as to the whys and wherefores of policy decisions directed toward American military personnel and to the Afghan population may help reduce the confusion, resentment, and distrust that currently define the everyday interactions between Coalition forces and Afghans.

Methodology

The observations and analysis in this article are based on research conducted during my 15-month deployment to Afghanistan. The research with Afghans was primarily qualitative, based on semistructured interviews that I conducted directly and that were field-tested and validated by several other researchers. I interviewed several hundred Afghans across the eastern provinces of Khost, Paktiya, and Paktika by participating in routine patrols with platoons in villages and cities. I also interviewed approximately 50 local and provincial Afghan officials and military and police personnel. There is an inherent sample bias, especially in my interviews with the general population, as I primarily had access to eastern Pashtuns, though I did get to speak with about 50 people from Tajik, Hazara, or Kuchi backgrounds. My interviewees were also self-selecting, as I never entered a home or interviewed a person who did not come out to greet us of his or her own volition.

From the American perspective, my data collection was primarily participant-observation as I lived and worked for extended periods of time with soldiers on eight different bases (six in the east, one in Kan-

dahar, and one in Helmand). Their immediate experiences were limited to working in similar Pashtun-centric environments, but many had multiple deployments that included other parts of Afghanistan that they frequently discussed.

The analysis of this data was qualitative content and narrative analysis.

From the Ground Up:
Everyday Experiences of Afghans and Coalition Forces

COIN as Limiting

Frustration, a misunderstanding of American foreign policy and upper echelon military decisions, and the consequent tensions with the local population start with our own people, as their attitudes color how they approach interactions with Afghans. U.S. personnel operating at the lowest levels are often baffled and infuriated by decisions regarding whom to support, how to fight this "war," or if warfighting is even their primary mission. They hear the phrases "counterinsurgency" and "hearts and minds" and are quick to deride them, but they have little understanding of what these things actually mean or how (or why) they should be doing them. Many feel lost in the directive to support and build the capacity of the Afghan government because they are not trained governance advisors. They feel like invisible high-level people are making decisions with little input from the ground and little awareness of what things really look like at the ground level. More than once, I had commanders ask, "Where are we going with all this?" And if it is hard for an American officer to understand the direction, goal, or purpose for our continued presence in Afghanistan, it is no small wonder that Afghans feel the same way.

Soldiers make light of it, but grim humor is often a safe way to express dissatisfaction. For example, Specialist "Reno" states:

> I think I'm going to go home and design a Call of Duty [video] game based on what really happens here in Afghanistan. It would have scenarios like "Police up cigarette butts," "Hide from the Sergeant Major," and "Wait for hours for your ANA [Afghan

National Army] partners to show up, scramble to find them fuel for their trucks because they don't have any, and then call off the mission." Oh, and next to the jump and shoot buttons, it would have a KLE [Key Leader Engagement] button.[1]

A host of acronyms lies at the core of how to conduct COIN as currently implemented (on paper) in Afghanistan. KLE (Key Leader Engagement), SLE (Street Level Engagement), ASCOPE-PMESII (Area, Structure, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events and Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure), SWEAT-MS (Sewer, Water, Electricity, Academics, Trash, Medical, Security), CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program), and others all outline how soldiers and various civilian and military enablers should analyze and interact with their environment. These methods tend to be decidedly nonlethal and usually come with a predetermined list of bullet points that outlines exactly who should be saying what and why to achieve a (frequently rather vague and amorphous) set of goals along various "lines of effort."[2] The key word is "saying." Not "shooting" or "pursuing." Despite what many soldiers expect of war, any given patrol is as much or more about relationship building and capabilities assessments as it is "finding bad guys." What usually happened was the platoon leader went to a village, found an elder, and rattled off that predetermined list of things to say to an elder without giving it a whole lot of thought or genuine interest. On a good day, he would drink some tea. Neither he nor the soldiers of his platoon usually had any idea why exactly they were doing this or what the greater mission was. Not surprisingly, they were often pretty bad at building even basic levels of rapport.

In the military units I worked with, on average, only one out of five of the commanders' lines of effort was "security" (i.e., what soldiers are trained to do). Partnership—specifically, the training of the ANSF to be more like American security forces—was picking up momentum, but the other focus areas usually included such things as

---

[1] U.S. Army Spec "Reno," interview by author, Afghanistan, 2010. (Name has been changed for anonymity.)

[2] A commander's typical verbalization of his or her ultimate goals for a deployment.

governance, development, agriculture, the economy, and similar themes that the average soldier was not adequately trained to assess, improve, or positively impact. While it is beyond the scope of this article to analyze the efficacy of COIN training or doctrine,[3] what I was able to observe at the platoon and company levels is that the men and women who were out patrolling every day were frustrated with the way they were told to do their jobs by high-level decision makers. The complaints varied according to age, training, and experience (more so than rank or the enlisted/officer divide, interestingly enough) but usually centered on the fact that conventional military units, especially Army ones, train primarily on practices and techniques for handling a traditional enemy in a symmetrical war. The Afghanistan environment is anything but this. The Marines' training is and has historically been more tailored for irregular warfare,[4] but given the smaller size of the Marine Corps, they make up a relatively low proportion of the boots on the ground.

The frustration for soldiers stems from a lack of realistic expectations—young and new soldiers train for and expect high levels of violence, gun battles, and engagement with the enemy. The young men who comprise the majority of the line units are eager for this kind of fight. Hit-and-run rocket-propelled grenade attacks in the mountains (where giving chase in body armor is all but impossible), bombs buried beneath roads, and the occasional indirect attack on a base that forces everyone into a bunker during the middle of chow are not quite what they expected. Patrols that involve visiting the district governor, then going to a village, finding the elders, and determining how best to spend CERP funding do not quite meet their expectations either. It then grates on them when these kinds of visits have little visible impact on security or even the other lines of effort. Older

---

[3] Others certainly have, though. See Gian Gentile, "Time for the Deconstruction of Field Manual 3-24," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 58 (2010); Michael Murray, "White Paper on COIN Instruction," *Small Wars Journal* (August 2011); and Robert Haddick, "This Week at War: COIN.com," *Foreign Policy*, 3 June 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/03/this_week_at_war_coincom.

[4] For a lengthy list of relevant articles, see Stephen S. Evans, *U.S. Marines and Irregular Warfare, 1898–2007: Anthology and Selected Bibliography* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008).

and more experienced soldiers, especially those who have deployed before, start out cynical and go through the motions because they know it is their mission. They delight in any real security-related operations they can squeeze in, more because these operations are "fun" than because they believe they will have any real effect. They gripe that the rules of engagement restrict them from doing their job of hunting and killing the enemy, though most will admit that even identifying "the enemy" is a nigh-impossible task.

I expected these kinds of complaints. What surprised me were the occasional insights noncommissioned officers and enlisted men and women had as to how they were hindered in their roles as COIN operators. Some saw it as a historical problem: "It's too little, too late. We should have started doing serious KLEs and development work across the board years ago. Trying to play catch up now does nothing and makes us look stupid." Others saw manning and even the terrain as an impediment: "We should be getting out and talking to people, just saying hi, and seeing the same people all the time. But we have one platoon of 20 guys to cover a district with 50 villages. How are we supposed to get to them all regularly?" And some saw the problem stemming from policy and funding decisions from on high: "If you want us to hunt and kill bad guys, that's fine, but they don't let us do that. If you want us to be development gurus, that's fine too, but they just cut off our CERP funding[5] so now we can't do that either. Our hands are tied from every direction. What are we supposed to do?" Even the imperative to engage in a partnership is a lot messier on the ground than on the paper some general or politician signs: "Partnership? Yeah right, our 'partner' platoon has changed twice since we got here, they don't care, they don't want to train, they don't show up for patrols, if we get in a firefight they shoot at us half the time. Someone just wants an OER [Officer Evaluation Report] point and doesn't know or care how it actually works down here."[6]

---

[5] For a period of time during spring 2011, CERP funds were not available for use, presumably due to budget pressures, though the reasons were never made entirely clear to those of us on the ground.

[6] Interviews with multiple soldiers by author, Afghanistan, 2010–11.

Underlying all the relationship building, development, and partnership efforts is a directive to support the Afghan government and our GIRoA partners at all times. A key component of gaining long-term success in a counterinsurgency is ensuring that the host government offers the best alternative for all of the governance functions, to include realms like rule of law, civil services, and internal and external security. While the military is poorly equipped for nation building beyond bolstering the ANSF, they and their civilian counterparts can have some influence on the political and governmental processes.[7] But the Afghan government itself is part—perhaps the main part—of the problem in successfully conducting COIN; to say government officials are corrupt and ineffectual is to state the obvious. More than one soldier told me, "If I was an Afghan

> *More than one soldier told me, "If I was an Afghan and these were my options, I'd probably be an insurgent too."*

and these were my options, I'd probably be an insurgent too."[8] However, because the U.S. government has committed to unconditionally supporting the Afghan government, soldiers have a politically driven mandate to support and encourage Afghans to support the Afghan government, however hypocritical it may make them feel. That disjuncture between what they see on the ground and what they have to do adds to their feeling of mistrust in their own government and makes doing their jobs with conviction nearly impossible.

In other words, soldiers and leaders on the ground are confused as to what their mission is and how to accomplish it. The only thing they are certain of is that they are too poorly equipped, too poorly trained, and too poorly staffed to do any of it. These confused messages and dictates leave them angry and cynical, attitudes that they (unintentionally or otherwise) direct toward the Afghans they meet and work with, poisoning those relations from the very beginning.

---

[7] David Ellis and James Sisco, "Implementing COIN Doctrine in the Absence of a Legitimate State," *Small Wars Journal* (October 2010).

[8] Interview with an American soldier by author, Afghanistan, 2011.

Though such relations may seem like a small issue in the grand scheme of the war, a Red Team study found that the daily interactions and relationships between Americans and Afghans can have a significant impact on security and levels of violence.[9] I suggest there is an increasing trend of ANSF-on-Coalition forces attacks and that many of these stem not from insurgent infiltrators in the ANSF, but rather from a wealth of sources of personal dislike and mistrust. Though the Red Team study focuses on security forces' fratricide, it stands to reason that if these perceptions are some of the most prevalent drivers of violent action among the ANSF—who have the most reason to trust and value Coalition forces' support—it is likely they have a similar effect to an even greater degree among a general population that does not have any immediate foundation for approval of Coalition forces. What, on the surface, may seem like minor everyday tensions and hostility between Americans and Afghans may turn out to be a greater driver of instability than we realize. If an Afghan soldier is willing to kill his American partner because of a perceived slight or a rocky relationship, it is very likely that the same complications may lead an Afghan villager to turn a blind eye to the insurgent burying something in the road.

In fact, I have seen how small attitude changes can have a large impact. The Shembowat area of Nader Shah Kot District, Khost Province, is renowned for being a hotbed of insurgent activity during fighting season. During the winter, Coalition forces and ANSF can show up in the main bazaar and people will be polite (if not exactly warm) and business will continue as usual. However, during the summer when there is an increased number of insurgents in the area (who are passively supported by the people who allow them to remain in the region), the bustling bazaar will empty in seconds the moment a convoy is spotted coming up the road.

I was able to view how this happened with two units. The second unit I worked with employed less abrasive engagement techniques

---

[9] Jeffrey Bordin, *A Crisis of Trust and Cultural Incompatibility: A Red Team Study of Afghan National Security Force Personnel and U.S. Soldiers in Understanding and Mitigating the Phenomena of ANSF-Committed Fratricide-Murder*, 12 May 2011.

Shembowat Bazaar, Nader Shah Kot District, Khost Province. In winter, it is business as usual when Coalition forces and the ANSF come through on patrol. Photo courtesy of Kathleen Reedy.

than the first. The soldiers in the second unit made a point of always walking through the main bazaar, rather than driving through it with the big trucks, and were friendly and open. The change in demeanor alone had an impact on the population, which went from polite-but-somewhat-hostile with the first unit to polite-and-merely-cautious with the second. And while it was still a dangerous place to go, the bazaar went from being somewhere one would definitely get shot at to one where the chances were closer to one in three. It may not seem like a momentous difference, but for the Afghans and Americans who lived and worked there, a seemingly small change made a significant impact on their interactions.

Backing the Wrong Horse

Though by policy, soldiers cannot voice their concerns about whether their mission is worthwhile or whether the Afghan govern-

Shembowat Bazaar. In summer or fighting season, people desert the bazaar in minutes. Photo courtesy of Kathleen Reedy.

ment is really part of the problem, their perceptions of the government were pretty close to that of average Afghans. If an American soldier has come to the conclusion that the Afghan government is weak at best, Afghans are completely convinced that their government is nothing but a self-serving organization. I cannot count the number of times people insisted that their government officials were corrupt all the way to the top. A man from a rather poor village in Khost Province told me how a nearly 10-year-old murder case in his village was not even being considered in the local courts (and had been ignored for years) because one of the parties had the money to pay off a judge. A middle-class man who was trying to get his wife back and get someone to address the death of his two children had been going to the district center every day for the past several years. He claimed no one assisted him because the defending party had more money. In fact, people generally laughed when I asked about

local courts and judges, saying that only the rich could afford to get a "fair" settlement in court.

And that was when districts had judges or lawyers at all, much less ways to enforce their rulings. All levels of the government have a *tashkil*, or list of approved civil servants, but many positions at the district level go unfilled or have "acting" figures in the role. Additionally, all are appointed rather than elected positions, and many are handed out as part of a patronage system. This means that the district governor is the most powerful figure at this level, but is in no way accountable to the people of the district.[10] Some governors, therefore, are active, engaged, and idealistic enough to resist the temptations of skimming off the surface of contracts, participating in rampant favoritism, or living with the very-justified fear of painting a target on himself by being too positive a GIRoA figure, but just as many or more succumb to these pressures. The best people in a district can hope for is someone who quietly does his job and creates practical détentes with the insurgents.[11] Corrupt or highly biased officials are more the norm, and there is nothing people can do about it. They have no way to vote someone out—their best option is to complain to the occasional American patrol and hope they can influence the assignment process, but these complaints are practiced and rote, as if no one really expects anything to be done about it.

> *If an American soldier has come to the conclusion that the Afghan government is weak at best, Afghans are completely convinced that their government is nothing but a self-serving organization.*

And if getting a district governor to be accountable is difficult, it is that much more so for the provincial governor. Though there are

---

[10] The Afghan political system does call for an elected district council to balance out the power of the governor, but as of August 2011 none were in place in the Khost, Paktiya, and Paktika (P2K) regions. How much official power they will have is unclear in the law, and if the provincial councils are any indication, they will wield little to no real authority.

[11] Which is, in and of itself, a strange form of reconciliation and reintegration in its own local and pragmatic way.

provincial councils, very few citizens can name a single council member, much less describe how to go about petitioning him. Similarly, people just shrugged when I asked them who their parliament representatives (*wolesi jirga*) were, unless they happened to be related to them. When I wanted to know what their jirga members did for them, people scoffed and said that they went and disappeared into Kabul where they made a name and a whole lot of money for themselves. Cynicism about these relatively distant levels of government was something I expected. However, issues at the district level are problematic because that is the most local and personal face of the government of Afghanistan, the one space where the government really has the opportunity to connect with people. But more often than not, it is a weak or corrupt face, leaving people disenfranchised with little hope of a solution.

The one glimmer of hope is that the district governor is not quite the sole face of the Afghan government in the districts. The ANSF provides alternatives, as do employees in public clinics and schools. Coalition security forces have marginally more influence over ANSF partners than they do with local politicians to try and curb corruption, but they cannot be present everywhere and when unofficial checkpoints for searching people appear, or arrests for money are made, there is not a lot the Coalition forces can do. Although the population tends to appreciate them, qualified doctors and teachers are hard to find, especially in some of the more remote and dangerous areas. More urban districts tend to have pretty good access to education and health care, even for girls, but outside these, schools and clinics stand empty or are only open part time. As government employees, workers are threatened and intimidated. I met one private teacher in Gerda Serai District, Paktiya Province, who was so scared at the thought of being targeted as a civil servant that he refused to take the position of teacher when a new public school opened—it was safer to remain a private instructor, though the public position would have paid better and served more children. Even nonsecurity or nonpolitical GIRoA figures, then, provide an inconsistent and sometimes subpar option for interacting with the government.

Eastern Afghan attitudes toward government add another complication to the relationship between the state and its citizens. Regardless of how efficient or dedicated civil servants are, average Afghan villagers do not want a lot of government involvement in their lives. Years of corrupt or violent regimes mean they have little desire to be ruled by a centralized system that does not really offer them much. What they do want and expect, though, are some basics, like health care, education, legal adjudication, ID cards, development projects, disaster management, and security. The health, education, and legal institutions are challenging; security and stability are still works in progress; development can be complicated and corrupt; and for the one natural disaster I witnessed (heavy flooding in August 2010), the government did little to nothing for many of those affected. Officials can generally manage ID cards at least, but generally the things people do expect their government to provide (e.g., health care, education, security, justice, etc.) often become a source of frustration and disappointment. At a local and immediate level, the Afghan government largely fails its people, leaving them isolated, self-reliant, and with little reason to support the government in any active sort of way. Given that the status quo is to provide passive support for insurgents by tolerating their presence without reporting it, the lack of active support for the government is fairly harmful to the Coalition's mission to achieve a stable, secure Afghanistan.

Despite these flaws and the apparent lack of any substantive attempt to fix them from the Afghan side, the unceasing call from American policy and decision makers is to support the Afghan government. Such a directive makes sense from a political point of view, but on the ground, it leaves soldiers encouraging people to support a government that locals and soldiers both know is ineffective and often corrupt. Both sides are highly cynical, but when soldiers stick to their predetermined list of things to talk about, Afghans often do not see their potential sympathy and instead see only naive puppets singing the praises of a generally useless institution. The Afghans' guard goes up and, rather than genuinely interacting, they often say what they should, merely going through the motions. They have been at it for 10 years now, and any hope of real change they may once

have harbored has worn away. Hollow promises have long since lost their luster.

The Afghans' positive (if feigned) responses when asked about their government, though, reinforce an idea on the Coalition forces' side that everything is in order and leaves decision makers scratching their heads as to why the overall situation is not improving. Additionally, it makes the soldiers' jobs even harder because they know that the Afghan government is a far cry from being a good government and yet they are forced to play this game. If pressed to really consider it, most probably agree with the Afghans that the Americans and other Coalition forces are backing the wrong horse, but it is not their role to question, so their cynicism increases and, by the middle of their tour, they are left feeling that none of it is worthwhile. This is a bitter pill to swallow when they have seen so many of their friends and peers die for this cause. Their frustration and anger further colors any interactions they have with the local population, making daily relations even more strained.

Funding Both Sides

You Americans want this war to keep going.
You're funding both sides!

—*Anonymous Afghan villager[12]*

Having worked and lived in the Middle East, I am no stranger to conspiracy theories and can usually sense when I am in for a good one. For example, once I was speaking to a group of Afghan men who worked at the district center (a government office) in Shamal District, Khost Province. Some were police. One was the cook for the Afghan Uniformed Police unit stationed at the center and was from the north of Afghanistan; two others made ID cards and were from a neighboring district in Khost. They may not have been part of the educated elite, but neither were they illiterate, poverty-stricken farmers in some rural village.

---

[12] Interview with an Afghan villager by author, Afghanistan, 2010.

Conspiracy theorists in Shamal District Center, Khost Province. Photo courtesy of Kathleen Reedy.

Curious, I allowed that it is widely accepted that the United States and other international agencies inadvertently wind up funding insurgents through graft and corruption that occurs in the aid and development process.[13] But this was not quite what they meant. They were certain the plot was far more sinister in nature.

"No, you give money to the Afghan government," they said, "but you also give it directly to the insurgents so they can keep buying weapons and supplies and keep fighting. It's good business for you to be here, so you pay both sides."

I assured them that the United States was most certainly not paying the insurgents to attack our own or Afghan people, but they snorted, explaining, as if to a child, that America gives money to Pakistan, a large portion of which goes to the ISI, which is the true financial and ideological source of the insurgency. The Haqqanis,

---

[13] See U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Evaluating U.S. Foreign Assistance to Afghanistan*, S. Prt. 112-21 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011).

Hekmetyars, and Mullah Omars of the world are nothing more than front men fighting a proxy war. This is common knowledge and it goes without saying that the American government is well aware of it, so surely the United States knows that by giving money to Pakistan, they are giving it to the insurgents. It stands to reason, then, that this seemingly inconsistent financing is our ultimate goal.

The tricky thing about conspiracy theories is that they have an internal logic that makes them very hard to argue against if someone really buys into them, so I did not try. The best I could do was insist that the average American soldier wants nothing more than to go home and, if our government is being underhanded, all of us on the ground were victims. I assured them that this was not the case and they murmured polite assent, but the conversation left us all walking away doubting the other's ability to think rationally.[14] How could I, or any other American, take people who think in such a conspiratorial way seriously, and how could the Afghans trust people they see as naive or, worse, as outright two-faced? It made finding common ground, much less trust or respect, difficult. American foreign policy—i.e., the fact that we do give substantial funding to Pakistan, which is suspected of supporting or having supported some of these insurgent groups—contributes to an already intense climate of doubt and dislike that only further fuels hostility and violence in the daily interactions between U.S. military personnel and Afghan civilians.

Of course, while Afghans may not be privy to the inner workings of the American government or even the news sources we rely on to elucidate some of what happens in Washington, these Afghan conspiracies were not entirely unjustified. The United States' financial relationship with Pakistan consists of a long cycle of funding and not funding, to include recent confusion about cuts of $800 million in aid,[15] but what is fairly clear is that the military does receive much of the money we give. Rather than focusing on the Taliban or other insurgent networks hiding out in the hinterland, the Pakistani military

---

[14] For work on the rationality of conspiracy theory, see Kathleen Reedy, "From the Ottoman to the American Empire: Syrian Narratives of Global Power," *Social Analysis* 54 (Spring 2010).

[15] Karen Brulliard, "U.S. Lawmakers Seek Cuts in Pakistan Aid Package," *Washington Post*, 14 August 2011.

instead uses it to bolster (largely unnecessary[16]) defenses against India. In addition, vast portions of the aid money have been "lost" due to corruption and a general lack of oversight or accountability for spending.[17] From the perspective of the Americans, the Pakistanis have grossly misused this funding that is mostly intended to bolster

the civilian and development sectors and contribute to the Global War on Terrorism. It is certainly not in the Pakistani military's interest to see this revenue stream cut off, so they likely would have preferred to remain in the "looking-for-bin-Laden business"[18] as long as possible. Similar to the way

> *The tricky thing about conspiracy theories is that they have an internal logic that makes them very hard to argue against.*

American funding in the region dried up after the withdrawal of the Soviets, the end of al-Qaeda (or at least Osama bin Laden) could herald the end of America's expansive support. So the Afghans are not necessarily wrong when they suggest that it is in someone's interest to keep fueling the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Though harder to validate, there are indications that the Pakistani military, via the ISI, has had a hand in directly funding the Taliban and providing them with safe haven. Prior to 2001, the ISI actively supported the Taliban regime and had helped it grow and take power. There are reports that the ISI helped Jamaat el-Islami, an Islamist organization powerful in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as Lashkar-e-Taiba later on, who are suspected to have provided safe houses for al-Qaeda members who fled to Pakistan after Coalition forces entered Afghanistan in 2001. However, given that the Pakistani Taliban has more recently begun to attack ISI, military, and other government targets in Pakistan, some analysts think that the

---

[16] Recent meetings between Afghan and Indian officials may indicate that Pakistani fears are not as unjustified as we might initially think, however. "Afghanistan and India Sign 'Strategic Partnership,'" BBC News, 4 October 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15161776.

[17] Azeem Ibrahim, "How America is Funding Corruption in Pakistan," *Foreign Policy*, 11 August 2009, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/11/assisting_corruption.

[18] Lawrence Wright, "The Double Game: The Unintended Consequences of American Funding in Pakistan," *New Yorker*, 16 May 2011.

ISI has lost control of its creation. Much of this is hearsay or speculation and the Haqqanis completely deny any such association,[19] but if credible American authors do not wholly dismiss such ideas, it is small wonder that average Afghans are convinced that it is the ISI supporting the insurgents. And because Americans are supporting Pakistan, the conclusion that the United States is in fact playing both sides is not an entirely unreasonable one. They do not see the political positioning and delicacy (and possibly just naïveté) that surrounds the question of supporting Pakistan or the political dynamics within Pakistan itself where there are sharp demarcations between the civilian and military rulers. That information does not filter down to the ground. What does trickle down to the experiences of ordinary Afghans are the final effects of violence and war that seem to be ongoing because Americans wish it to be so, for whatever reason—presumably because they are benefiting from it in some way. And Coalition forces on the ground doing daily patrols become the reminders and representatives of an erratic political stance that is surely benefiting everyone except the Afghan population. Small wonder that many are hostile toward or resentful of the Americans they see.

> *Because Americans are supporting Pakistan, the conclusion that the United States is in fact playing both sides is not an entirely unreasonable one.*

To further complicate matters, such attitudes and distrust stemming from America's financial support of Pakistan are not limited to the general population. According to the aforementioned Red Team study, the ANSF buys into this theory as much as the common people and, while they do not hold U.S. soldiers accountable per se, "they found it more difficult to trust them because of it." Quotes from Afghan soldiers include "There is no explanation or excuse for such a stupid policy" and "They are both our enemy. You know it, but still give them great amounts of money in aid."[20] Foreign policy therefore

---

[19] "Haqqani Network Denies Killing Afghan Envoy Rabbani," BBC News, 3 October 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15143513.

[20] Bordin, *A Crisis of Trust*, 9.

has impacts on all sorts of day-to-day interactions that Coalition forces personnel engage in. "Partnership" and mentoring of the ANSF is challenging enough and, rather than enabling these relationships to develop smoothly, high-level decision making of this kind serves to make the whole process more difficult. As we saw above, what applies to Afghan soldiers is even more likely to apply to civilians. To a certain extent then, Afghan perceptions of American foreign policy may move beyond merely complicating the day-to-day interactions of American forces, to being a factor in security conditions that are at best sustaining when not outright deteriorating.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The root of the problems that soldiers encounter while conducting daily operations lies in a sharp disconnect between the strategic and tactical levels, especially when the strategic levels involve political and policy decisions in addition to military ones. On the ground, neither U.S. military personnel nor Afghan civilians see any significant improvement arising out of the Coalition force's presence, while both feel that American policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan is dangerously inconsistent. The result is increased antagonism between the population and soldiers as they interact on a regular basis. Not only does this increase the risk of violence for all those operating on the ground, it also bodes ill for the future of relations between the two countries, as their populations have grown to distrust and sometimes despise each other. This is especially true in the Pashtun south and east, where people are already prone to supporting insurgent actors rather than Coalition forces or their own government.

After spending significant time working at brigade, battalion, and company levels, I offer the following thoughts and recommendations on how to bridge this gap. Planners and decision makers at these levels often feel that they are hamstrung in their targeting and operations because they are not fully enabled to carry out operations (lethal and nonlethal) and they are trying to match these to a directed end state that is vague and inconsistent. These midlevel decisions have a heavy impact on the safety and morale of the platoons that are re-

sponsible for carrying out and embodying American goals in Afghanistan; the more confused they are, the more men and women are at risk and the less likelihood there is of achieving any kind of tangible success.

Consistent Policy

As seen from the ground, the primary problem is the vagueness of American policy regarding Afghanistan. Despite mission statements, many do not see a clear-cut end state or goal for the Coalition force's presence in Afghanistan; it is not that one is absent, but that no one on the ground seems to know what it is or to be invested in it. As it stands, rather than having some clearly articulated and measurable objective to work toward, soldiers and civilians on the ground are reduced to marking time. It generates a sense of apathy among the Coalition forces and one of frustration amongst Afghans, who have to suffer intrusions into their lives with little to no benefit. The government of Afghanistan, and the American policy of supporting it in spite of its critical flaws, is as much a part of the problem as the solution. Unconditionally supporting a heavily centralized and highly corrupt regime only further establishes the American presence as one that supports only its own interests instead of the greater Afghan good.[21] It may be too late to develop a true end state as such, but adopting clear and consistent attitudes toward the ultimate goal and the Afghan government that do not change with every new election is an essential starting point.

> *As seen from the ground, the primary problem is the vagueness of American policy regarding Afghanistan.*

Part and parcel of this is making it clear to ourselves whether the United States is fighting a war or engaged in nation building (supporting, developing, etc.). Many claim we are not doing the latter,

---

[21] See Ellis and Sisco, "Implementing COIN Doctrine," for recommendations on how to encourage improvements in the governmental structure.

but on the ground the lines of effort (as dictated by higher-level mission statements) make it look as if we are. "Both" is an acceptable answer, but we have to be clear about it, and this clarification must extend across areas of operation and through RIP/TOAs (relief in place/transfers of authority) to ensure long-term sustainability of any new decisions.

The issue with Pakistan has, of course, its own set of political problems and requires a certain delicacy. However, while making decisions regarding interactions with and sending funding to Pakistan, policy makers should consider the local impacts of their decisions on popular attitudes in both Pakistan and Afghanistan and demand transparency to ensure funding does not wind up in the hands of insurgents. Having a clear understanding of the unintended consequences will hopefully allow them to craft their policies in a way that does not undermine their own efforts. Otherwise U.S. policy makers (and the personnel on the ground who act as the representatives of U.S. policy) appear foolish or possibly underhanded, acting for some secretive, self-serving purposes that do little to endear the United States to the Afghan population. Whatever other failings the insurgents may have, from an Afghan perspective, at least, they are open and consistent regarding their goals.

Consistent Enactment of Policy

Consistency, then, is the name of the game. Not just in what we are trying to accomplish, but in how we are trying to accomplish it. If we are warfighting or nation building or both, we need to clearly delineate who is responsible for what. Asking a cavalry squadron with limited manpower in tough terrain to do everything stretches the soldiers beyond the limits of their capacity and their training, meaning they will fail to make any significant improvement on any front. A "civilian surge" of untrained professionals who have little to no experience working in a military-heavy environment with unclear lines of authority creates friction with commanders and leaves the civilians with little power or ability to effect change in their assigned realm of governance or development. Uncertain budgets and restrictive rules

of engagement hamper soldiers attempting to engage in either development or more traditional roles of "hunting bad guys."[22]

One example of the impact, or lack thereof, arising from this kind of high-level inconsistency is the employment of military and civilian enablers. There is a wealth of them, each with different abilities, but without any overarching and consistent guidance as to what the mission is, their hands are as tied as the military's. It is left to ground-level commanders to decide if or how to use them, degrading their potential and often reducing them to a drain on resources. Line units see them as a hassle because they do not understand how they fit into a greater mission goal. Clarifying these roles from the top to reflect their capabilities and establishing uniform procedures on just what everyone should be doing on the ground and to what specific end could vastly improve the productivity of all units and enablers. Flexibility and adaptability will always happen on the ground, but too often a lack of any guidance means everything is left to chance.

And the question everyone has is whether COIN as a guiding strategy is in or out. It seems to be in limbo for the time being. If it is out and being replaced by something else, that needs to be clarified sooner rather than later. But if it is here to stay, then (and this has been stressed by many authors) everyone down to the lowest level must be trained in it. It is not enough to train leaders for a week or two and hope it

The question everyone has is whether COIN as a guiding strategy is in or out.

filters down. Enlisted men and women on the ground are the primary representatives and enactors of U.S. policy in Afghanistan. If they do not fully and intimately understand what they are doing and why, they develop unrealistic expectations as to their jobs and, ultimately, the policy itself is doomed to failure. They must be enabled with the training and the necessary tools they need to do COIN if it is to be properly executed.

---

[22] Interview with an American soldier by author, Afghanistan, 2011.

Consistent Measurement and Feedback

Though assessment feedback loops are in theory part of the military decision-making process (MDMP), that somehow seems to get lost in the world of Afghanistan. Again, this starts with policy decisions—too often it seems that decision makers do not assess the local impacts of their stated policy directives. If the daily interactions that stem from attempting to follow these directives do not match up with the ultimate goal of the policy, or wind up achieving the opposite, then despite all good intentions, the policy is nothing but hollow rhetoric. In other words, rather than hoping that idealistic policy intentions filter down, decisions regarding strategy and policy should be driven by ground realities. It would stand to reason, then, that there need to be measures of performance and effect established for these high-level decisions similar to those for tactical operations. They need to be ongoing and honest—too often visiting officials are treated to operations and information briefs (i.e., an overview of what is happening in the area) complete with rose-colored glasses. If there are unintended consequences of policy and strategic decisions that are negative, the units and civilians on the ground must be willing to express that and VIPs must be willing to genuinely listen and incorporate that feedback. Commanders and even civilians often resent overly strict guidance and dictates, but as long as that guidance reacts to their needs and realities, it would be less offensive (and frankly, any kind of firm direction may well be welcomed at this point). Policy and strategic-level decisions need to be flexible to match the realities on the ground. Otherwise, we risk perpetuating the same sort of disconnect right up until the day we leave, leaving nothing but a mess in our wake.

Currently, tangible measures of performance and effect only happen at the lower levels, at least as far as anyone operating at these levels can tell. Inconsistency rules here as well, as such measures are tied to the amorphous and self-assigned tasks and objectives that task forces develop for themselves, rather than some higher, clearly defined strategic goal. That is, when they happen at all. In theory, they are part of the targeting process, but without specific direction from

higher-level command units, the specifics of measures and objectives can change from place to place and over time. In addition to creating and disseminating articulated strategic goals, policy and decision makers need to take on the task of how to consistently measure on-the-ground effects and pass on this guidance to the lowest levels. The District Stability Framework is one attempt at this, but its failing is that rather than forcing a qualitative measure of real effects, it often becomes just another spreadsheet to fill out. This is largely because "district stability" is a rather amorphous concept as an end state and there is little direction on how it falls in with other directives. Soldiers intent on warfighting cannot spare the time to fill out the report, leaving it to civilians and enablers who do not have the same kind of intensive ground experience as the soldiers. Inconsistent direction, goals, use of enablers, and training all combine to undermine any use-fulness such a tool has.

Consistent Messaging

Finally, while actions speak louder than words, messaging is a crucial step of this entire process. Messaging needs to be both consistent across the board and a regular feature, both internally and externally. Internally, decision makers need to make their well-defined and mea-sureable decisions clear to everyone, from the highest levels to the soldiers and civilians working to enact them. We harp on trans-parency as being an important part of governance, but it equally applies to MDMP—obtaining honest feedback, making changes based on that feedback, and getting the content of those changes regularly pushed to all parties. Successes and failures should be highlighted and, above all, everyone should know what the end state is. Having a specific goal and

We need to be more open about our own foreign policy in relation to Afghanistan.

task and knowing that they will get the support they need to achieve them will vastly improve the attitudes of the personnel on the ground. Clearly telling each 20-year-old soldier what he is doing and why,

from the very beginning, will alleviate a lot of the morale issues borne of war not quite looking like the video games. Soldiers will have a way to measure progress and know that they are accomplishing something, or at least know that if they are not, the mysterious "decision makers on high" will adjust to match their realities.

Equally important, especially for the safety and security of all parties, is clearly communicating our intentions to the Afghans. Part of this is leaning on GIRoA figures, especially those at the local government level, to be more open about the political processes they engage in. Community news bulletins with regular updates on projects or monthly district-wide shuras to discuss progress would be a start. And while we encourage the Afghan government to be more transparent, we need to be transparent ourselves, highlighting where and how we are helping the government to be open and accountable. It may even be as simple as soldiers on patrol explaining that they know the Afghan government is a mess, and comparing it to examples in the United States and other European countries where there have been problems but the common people have been able to force changes and enforce—even informally—a degree of accountability. At least it would make the soldiers look less like mindless puppets and more like fellow cynics who have reasons for some optimism in the government process.

Additionally, we need to be more open about our own foreign policy in relation to Afghanistan. American and the Coalition force's policy decisions have a significant impact on the Afghan population (and ANSF partners) and rather than leaving them in the dark to compose conspiracy theories, we can at least make an attempt to clarify our position. This is especially true regarding foreign policy decisions involving Pakistan. In the border regions, the issues with Pakistan are often more imminent than the issues with the government of Afghanistan, and clarifying our position on the two—and the reasoning behind our decisions—may help improve Afghan opinions of Americans. If nothing else, they may at least be more understanding and therefore receptive toward soldiers they encounter, reducing some of the tension and hostility. Most large bases have ra-

dios-in-a-box (RIABs) that could perhaps schedule an international news and policy hour. And like the Afghan government, we can use regular shuras, meetings, or newsletters to explain what American foreign policy is all about, what our (new and improved) goals in Afghanistan are, and how we aim to implement them.

The key is to be regular and consistent in this messaging all the way up and down the chain of policy making. Conspiracy theories are not likely to go anywhere, and trust between American troops and Afghan civilians and security forces is not likely to develop overnight, but sharing as much information as possible internally and externally, having straightforward objectives with clear measures, and being responsive to the ground-level realities are steps toward improving everyone's attitudes and the daily relations between Coalition forces and Afghans. As it stands, the impacts of foreign policy regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan often have unintended and counterproductive consequences. If we can ensure that our policy reflects and is based on the real effects it has, we can help mitigate some of the damage and maybe even succeed in getting somewhere.

Afghan women in Helmand Province in 2009. Photo by LtCol David Benhoff, USMCR.

Agnatic Rivalry, Social Instability, and Scapegoating

The Consequences of Integrating Pashtunwali with Afghan Formal Law

by Terri K. Wonder

As the deadline for withdrawal of all occupying forces from Afghanistan draws nearer, arguments for a so-called bottom-up integration of "customary law" with centralized rule of law in Afghanistan have displaced the top-down rule of law imposition argument championed by international prodemocracy and human rights institutions during the earlier phases of the war. The legal integration argument coincides with a belief that an end to the conflict involves a negotiated political settlement with the Taliban, a Pashtun-dominant ethno-religious movement that derives its sense of justice from *Pashtunwali* (also spelled Pashtunwalli or Pushtunwali), the "Pashtun way of life," inasmuch as and perhaps even more than it does from religion. Legal integrationists claim that their argument supports a realistic assessment of Afghanistan's most formidable ethnic group, the Pashtuns, who historically have rejected governance under a centralized system of formal law. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) maintains a similar point of view. As Colette Rausch, speaking on behalf of USIP's Rule of Law Innovation Center, states, "You can't ignore reality."[1]

Indeed, most major revolts in Afghanistan in the past 100 years were Pashtun-led movements against women's equality, domestic slavery, forced labor, tax collection, identity cards, and nepotism abatement.[2] In other words, Pashtun rebellions were against anything

---

Wonder earned her doctorate at the University of South Florida in 2008 and is a former social scientist with the U.S. Army's Human Terrain System. She was awarded a Superior Civilian Service Award for her high-visibility research for U.S. forces in Iraq. Comfortable in both qualitative and quantitative research methods, Wonder is an expert in political Islam, the social psychology of collective violence, and institutional research.

[1] Thomas Omestad, "USIP's Afghan Rule of Law at Work: Strengthening Long-Term Security," U.S. Institute for Peace, 7 June 2011, http://www.usip.org/publications/usips-afghan-rule-law-work-strengthening-long-term-security.

[2] Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of Its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002).

that challenged Pashtunwali, an ethos characterized by a fierce sense of independence from formal governance. Even when Pashtun monarchs ruled Afghanistan and attempted to modernize the country, Pashtuns outside Kabul rejected the change and waged war on the central government.[3] In 1923, for example, one such rebellion crystallized after the enactment of modern family law that banned "child marriage, marriages between close relatives, excessive dowries, and the exchange of women as 'blood money' in payment of interfamilial disputes."[4] As always, the rebellion was successful and Pashtuns returned to their customary way of life. After 2001, the renewed momentum for establishing pure rule of law ignored that history of rebellion and the Pashtun ethos that drove it. Therefore, so the new argument goes, Afghanistan and its world partners in nation building will once again perpetuate social conflict, insurgency, and civil war if they exclude unwritten customs such as Pashtunwali from the nation-building enterprise. Instead, the legal integration argument recommends codifying Pashtunwali into Afghanistan's formal legal system.

While many observers cite the Taliban's conservative religious orientation as the group's guiding source of motivation, more recent analysis suggests that the Taliban's ethnicity carries considerable weight. That analysis, too, seems supportive of the legal integration argument. Joanna Nathan, for example, points out that the group communicates largely in Pashto, "the language of the ethnic constituency from which the movement sprang and continues to draw most of its supporters."[5] Arabic, known as the language of Islam, in other words, is of peripheral value when it comes to stimulating fellow Pashtun sympathizers whose legitimate grievances are about local problems. The Taliban know that and so their jihad addresses Pashtun problems in the Pashto language. Thomas Ruttig also describes a movement that draws deeply from its ethnic tradition:

---

[3] Ibid.

[4] Hannibal Travis, "Freedom or Theocracy? Constitutionalism in Afghanistan and Iraq," *Northwestern University Journal of International Human Rights* 3 (Spring 2005), 4.

[5] Joanna Nathan, "Reading the Taliban," in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giutozzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 23–42.

> The non-Ghilzai tribes of the South-East live mainly in mountain valleys. The limited space for settlement provides that they are relatively small and closely knit. Their traditional tribal institutions … are significantly stronger than those of the lowland tribes. … The South-Eastern Pashtuns strongly adhere to their ancient code of behavior, the Pashtunwali, although it might differ slightly from tribe to tribe.[6]

Moreover, Ruttig notes that the Taliban's overall force across the Afghan border in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (formerly the North-West Frontier Province) is largely the result of ethnic and not Islamist affiliation. Moreover, the Taliban would not be the first reform movement in Afghanistan's modern history to have expressed itself along ethnic lines. A previous one had asserted itself when the region and international actors were immersed in discussion about another nation-building effort: the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent.[7] At that time, one of the key challengers was a "nationalist movement in the 1950s" that "was dedicated to reuniting the Pashtuns by creating an autonomous state called Paktunistan (or Pashtunistan)."[8]

Another basis for legal integration stems from policy analysis that suggests Pashtunwali is similar to other honor-driven, in-kinship systems throughout the world in that the ethos is said to preserve social order through marriage alliances among exogamous groups. Claude Levi-Strauss characterizes such kinship systems as highly closed modes of exchange predicated on alliances and not love and intimacy between two people.[9] By "closed," Levi-Strauss means that for each female transferred from one exogamic group to a second, another female from the second group will be transferred either to the first exogamic group or to a third one.[10] The binding of families, clans,

---

[6] Thomas Ruttig, "Loya Paktia's Insurgency: The Haqqani Network as an Autonomous Entity," in Giutozzi, *Decoding the New Taliban*, 57–100.

[7] Amin Tarzi and Robert D. Lamb, *Measuring Perceptions about the Pashtun People* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

[8] Ibid., 2.

[9] Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

[10] Ibid.

subtribes, and tribes to one another also serves a defensive purpose during periods when some or all of the groups in the segmented tribal system come under threat.[11] In Afghanistan and, indeed, in other world cultures with customs similar to Pashtunwali, deviation from the unwritten regime is tantamount to a transgression of honor, the commission of a crime, a threat to the social order, and—from a psychocultural standpoint—a threat to individual, small-, and large-group identity.

Purpose of the Study

While he is little, play with him. When he grows up,
he is a cousin, so fight with him.

—*Pashtun proverb*

This study interrogates the Pashtun ethos by examining its interrelated subtexts of agnatic rivalry, social instability, and scapegoating, each of which seems to perpetuate blood feuds among competitive males who have been reared to preserve their personal dignity at all costs. The study therefore illuminates what Patti Lather would refer to as a "regime of truth"[12] about the presumed benefits of Pashtunwali's use of *jirgas* (assemblies) to assuage *badal*

> Nang *(honor) is sacred.*
> *Social stability is not.*

(revenge-based conflict) through reciprocity, including matrimonial exchange. This study's alternative interpretation of Pashtunwali, then, exposes the instability of patterns of meaning about a way of life that, on one level, are said to be truthful, but upon closer investigation betray their own claim to truthfulness. To do so, I adopt a psychocultural perspective that stresses that, in a hierarchy of importance, the acquisition and maintenance of *puth* (self-respect, dignity)—circumscribed by the Pashtun concept of *nang* (honor)—are far more important to Pashtuns than is the social stability offered through jirgas.

---

[11] Philip C. Salzman, *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, MA: Humanity Books, 2008).

[12] See Patti Lather, "Fertile Obsession: Validity after Poststructuralism," *Sociological Quarterly* 34 (1993), 673–93.

Nang surpasses social stability. It also clashes with anything that might be socially stabilizing. Nang is sacred. Social stability is not. To have nang is to commit *tor* (to kill for honor), to practice *tora* (bravery), and to assert one's puth. I thus recontextualize the discussion of reciprocity in Pashtunwali by delving into its ritual sanctioning of violence.

But the study takes the analysis one step further, for after unpacking that first regime of truth—the supposed importance of jirgas—I call into question a second one: that integrating Pashtunwali—the code of honor of the Pashtun-dominant Taliban—with the formal legal system of Afghanistan will stabilize the country. Legal integrationists market the process as a so-called bottom-up compromise that favors the "customary laws" of local people. On the surface, legal integration sounds like a culturally sensitive alternative to so-called top-down imposition of the rule of law. Nevertheless, the new strategy demands change to what Clifford Geertz would define as a "primordial" social order vehemently geared toward the protection of its status quo.[13]

Moreover, the idealized view of Pashtunwali propounded by legal integrationists fails to account for the anthropological literature, which suggests that social stability is not the core objective of Pashtunwali. Akbar S. Ahmed, for example, states that the core objective of Pashtunwali is to uphold honor.[14] And, in fact, Ahmed concludes that Pashtuns typically reduce that process to a group of related key concepts: nang, tor, tora, puth, and *tarborwalli* (agnatic rivalry).[15]

Therefore, after I illustrate the paradoxes of Pashtunwali's own inside "truths," I then uncover the contradictions of outside "truths" that claim Pashtunwali is compatible with Western notions of justice.

---

[13] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[14] See Akbar S. Ahmed, "An Aspect of the Colonial Encounter in the North-West Frontier Province," *Asian Affairs* 10 (1978), 319–27.

[15] Ibid.

A Theory of Agnatic Rivalry, Social Instability, and Scapegoating in Pashtunwali

Whose son and brother have been murdered who has restrained his own hand?

—*Pashtun proverb*

Arguments for integrating the ethos of Pashtunwali and other unwritten customs into Afghanistan's formal justice system typically are predicated on a corpus of classical anthropological literature that examines reciprocal exchange through materialist interpretations of human organization. Those interpretations hold that an agreement among parties culminating in an exchange of something (e.g., blood money, virgin brides) resolves disputes and thus restores social order. Classical anthropology invokes two principles to illustrate the process of that presumed restoration: *reciprocity*, the giving of possessions, such as cattle and brides; and *balanced opposition*, the obligation of kinship groups to engage in mutual defense of one another because they are bound communally through reciprocal exchange. These terms and the determinant meanings ascribed to them, however, have since been modified as the discipline of anthropology itself has become "an interpretive [discipline] in search of meaning" as opposed to an "experimental science in search of a law."[16]

The interpretive approach to the discipline of anthropology has led to provocative new studies of agnatic cultures. For example, Annette B. Weiner exposes the paradoxes of reciprocal exchange, showing how "the norm of reciprocity developed as Western cultural construction "transformed to fit different Western and 'primitive' economic situations, whereas the most ancient and powerful economic classification, inalienable possessions [imbued with sacred power], was ignored."[17] Weiner also states that classical anthropology's focus on matrimonial relationships in agnatic kinship groups overlooks the

---

[16] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 5.

[17] Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 17.

salience of brother-sister relationships, whose bonds of familial intimacy precede and are more enduring than exogamous ones.[18]

Another scholar, Rene Girard, challenges classical understandings of reciprocal marriage customs, whose assumed purpose is to "impose uniformity and eliminate differences," but upon closer inspection, these symbolic acts of sacrifice "never succeed in establishing harmony."[19] For Girard, marriage exchange in an agnatic culture is a form of symbolic sacrifice considered necessary to control violence.[20] For example, he discusses the similarity of events that precede both the exchanges of brides and the outcomes of folktales in agnatic cultures. Both the actual and the mythical accounts tell of rivalries among persons or characters whose envy of one another escalates into public displays of vengeance.[21] The quid pro quo violence is "symmetrical" (reciprocal), spirals out of control, and threatens group extinction.[22] Here, I submit that this symmetry of violence manifests in blood feuds among the Pashtuns, as it does in other cultures immersed in agnatic rivalry. Eventually, the mob identifies a scapegoat onto which it discharges its collective violence.[23] The selection might be symbolic, such as the designation of brides or cattle traded among the conflicting parties, or in other cases the sacrifice might be literal, as in animal or human sacrifice.[24] Finally, at that point when the community murders a scapegoat, or sacrifices a sacred possession, "the unanimity-minus-one of the collective violence recreates mythic differences" and once again becomes "asymmetrical."[25] Even more significantly, the selection of a surrogate victim *absolves rivals of their responsibility for the chaos they had engendered*.[26] Girard refers to the de-

---

[18] Ibid.

[19] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 246.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 37–39.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 246.

[26] Ibid.

nial of responsibility as "concealment."[27] Hence, the scapegoating or symbolic sacrifice vis-à-vis the exchange of brides does not produce social stability. I would add that the scapegoating narrative's entire process effectively guarantees future violence because the memories among the agnatic rivals in the kinship group transcend immediate temporal realities.

Classical interpretations overlook the asymmetrical endings of sacrificial narratives. For example, Girard demonstrates that the descriptive analysis invariably ends on a positive note, with the expected restoration of the social order in the selection of surrogate victims. These interpretations hold that one, the violence renders all people in the community the same, and two, the murder is an unfortunate tragedy; however, the finality of the murder is necessary to end the outbreak of violent rivalry in the community and hence to restore a condition of peace. Tacitly, legal integrationists accept the classical interpretation of the sacrificial narrative as it symbolically plays out in the symbolic sacrifices of jirga decisions. Tom Ginsburg's treatment of legal integration, for example, suggests that the honor code "seem[s] to be designed to minimize the escalation of private violence, and hence to preserve social order."[28] Ginsburg also discusses Pashtunwali's concealment of responsibility in that jirgas treat disputes as private matters outside the jurisdiction of a state authority.

So we can apply this sacrificial explanation of reciprocal exchange to Pashtunwali, whose elders negotiate marriages to stave off rivalry by persuading contentious males to trade or sacrifice something of theirs that is valuable (e.g., cattle, women) because the exchange is honorable. This interpretation, with elders acting as confidence men to rival males in the agnatic kinship system, is not the romantic reading of marriage exchange that is de rigueur among observers of Pashtun rivalry today, but it has implications for understanding cross generational blood feuds in Pashtun culture. If jirgas in their ritual function really "settled disputes," as the legal integrationists commonly suggest, then Pashtun blood feuds would never last beyond

---

[27] Ibid., 247.

[28] Tom Ginsburg, "An Economic Interpretation of the Pashtunwali," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 89 (2011), 114.

one generation. They would be forgotten after the first jirga reckoning. So, mutually concluded jirga agreements do not end blood feuds; they merely *postpone* them. Moreover, as a concession rendered in a jirga arrangement, matrimonial exchange sublimates conflict to the private domain of Pashtun life, which can be a sorry misfortune for the bride, for she now possesses a future that will include physical isolation and perhaps emotional abuse, physical assault, and murder as well.

This paper's exposition of Pashtunwali thus appraises the ethos in a manner that competes with more fashionable interpretations. The bride in these reciprocal exchanges is, as Weiner asserts, an inalienable possession, meaning that, even as she is given away physically to an agnatic rival family, she is not given away cognitively and emotionally.[29] I believe that this paradox of the bride exchange provides the psychocultural basis of blood feuds that continually reassert themselves in spite of the many jirgas that are supposed to end

> *The selection of a surrogate victim absolves rivals of their responsibility for the chaos they had engendered.*

the conflicts. Once transferred to her new possessors, this inalienable sacred object soon becomes a surrogate victim of abuse in the new family. In this scenario, those who have exchanged her—her father and brothers—now see that their inalienable possession has been abused and therefore so has their nang. That is the moment at which the breaking of the jirga agreement begins and the blood feud reignites. Hence, the bride's abuse by agnatic males in her household not only renders her to a subordinate position in the new family, it also subjects her father and brothers to a humiliating, subordinate position in the exogamous community. Because the basis of Pashtunwali is to uphold the honor of individual Pashtun males, the abuse of one's daughter or sister would be quite untenable among males who have been acculturated since birth to accumulate nang and puth and to protect them at all costs. So the restoration of social order pro-

---

[29] Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*.

duced through matrimonial exchange is not sustainable because it only temporarily contains the blood feud whose memory never fully abates among the males who are party to it.

Matrimonial Exchange, Sacrificial Violence, and the Cultural Equivalency Fallacy of Jirgas

> *Enmity with outsiders disappears,*
> *but not with one's cousins.*
>
> —*Pashtun proverb*

To reiterate, scapegoating, whether through exogamy or murder, punishes the scapegoat not for what the scapegoat does but for what perpetrators do. So in Pashtun marriage exchanges aimed at staving off conflict in the public domain, brides are not the actual source of conflict. Their agnatic fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins are the source because they are the ones in the culture who are raised to fight one another. The purpose of jirgas is therefore to conceal the problem and not to end it: "Sacrificial substitution implies a degree of misunderstanding. Its vitality as an institution depends on its ability to conceal the displacement upon which the rite is based."[30] Thus, despite the marriage sacrifice the parties make to end a blood feud, the blood feud never really ends. Hence, the "restorative justice" notion is an illusion conceived by outsiders imposing their own assumptions on a ritual purposefully designed to mislead its participants.

With Girard's explanation of the concealment of the source of agnatic rivalry and violence in mind, I now turn to the cultural equivalency fallacy of the jirga as "restorative justice" or, in the case of one scholar examined below, "women's justice." Here, I examine more closely the arguments of legal reintegration advocates, who also participate in the concealment of social instability and scapegoating in Pashtunwali precisely because of their desire for a civil order that fundamentally conflicts with the ethos they are trying to shape.

---

[30] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*.

Geertz speaks to the cultural equivalency fallacy and the resistance of many an ethnic group to it:

> To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications in favor of a generalized commitment to an overarching and somewhat alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition as an autonomous person, either through absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass or, what is worse, through a domination by some other rival ethnic, racial, or linguistic community that is able to imbue that order with the temper of its own personality.[31]

Geertz's observation of the colonial tensions of the past speaks freshly today regarding the push to bring an ethos, or as some would say "customary law," such as Pashtunwali into the fold of Afghanistan's formal legal system. The feasibility of the enterprise rests, I believe, in the willingness of the majority of Pashtuns who reside outside Kabul to forsake their cherished way of life for an orderly, centralized system of governance. Pashtuns might do

Mutually concluded jirga agreements do not end blood feuds; they merely postpone *them.*

so only if they were convinced that their honor could be upheld by reclaiming territory in northern Afghanistan and in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Amy Senier, Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi, Thomas Omestad, and Palwasha Kakar recommend integrating Pashtunwali with formal law in Afghanistan in ways that obviate those aspects of the Pashtun ethos that perpetuate conflict. Barfield and Nojumi laud Pashtunwali as an honor regime that is "highly functional and grounded in local perceptions of *fairness and trust.*"[32] Furthermore, they write that it "remains the dominant system today in rural Afghanistan, where people rarely depend on formal government in-

---

[31] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 258–9.

[32] See Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi, "Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability," *Middle East Policy* 17 (Winter 2010), 40–53.

stitutions to regulate their local affairs."[33] Senier further locates "fairness" and "trust" in Afghanistan's customary tradition of arriving at community consensus through jirgas and similar decision-making bodies.[34] These writers do not seem to understand that Pashtunwali is a way of life designed to perpetuate the conflict it claims to end. They, too, have bought into the confidence game of the jirga ritual.

Like Barfield and Nojuni, Senier uses Western terms, including legal ones, to describe the assumed benefits of customary law:

> While the precise makeup of the *tribunals* varies from elders to imams, the local *mediation/arbitration panel* is common among Afghanistan's customary legal traditions. Afghan traditional systems also share the core principles of *apology* and *forgiveness*. These are seen as necessary precursors to reconciliation. Most Afghan customary systems are based on the principle of *restorative justice*. While many tribes utilize sentences of *poar* (blood money), such remedies are accompanied by requests of forgiveness and are intended to eliminate enmity between parties and restore harmony to the village.[35]

Senier further claims that integrating customary law, such as Pashtunwali, into the formal legal system of Afghanistan will have numerous advantages, chief among them the ability to "engage with and embody citizens' sense of justice," "win the support of those [that reformers] aim to serve," "afford parties a level of comfort that state courts cannot," and "function [in places] where the state cannot."[36] Omestad, reporting for the USIP, supports those aforementioned assumptions: "The informal procedures have the advan-

The purpose of jirgas is therefore to conceal the problem and not to end it.

---

[33] Ibid.

[34] See Amy Senier, "Rebuilding the Judicial Sector in Afghanistan: The Role of Customary Law," *Fletcher School Online Journal for Issues Related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization* (Spring 2006), 1–10.

[35] Ibid., 2.

[36] Ibid., 4.

tages of retaining considerable *public trust* and drawing on *voluntary participation*."[37]

In contrast to the aforementioned authors, Varun Gauri, a legal policy analyst for the World Bank, offers a competing perspective that questions the validity of liberal-democratic terms (e.g., fairness, trust, voluntary participation, mediation/arbitration panel, apology, forgiveness) italicized in the excerpted material above. For example, Gauri points out that the substance of a cultural mode of behavior such as Pashtunwali differs dramatically from the formal law of liberal-democratic states:

> Usually, customary laws do not allow women to inherit assets, to manage jointly held property, or to seek divorce. . . . Customary laws not only tolerate inequalities in status and power but often . . . grant unique prerogatives to elder males and other locally powerful individuals. Kin and coethnics of the dispute resolvers receive preferential access to and treatment under the law. Assault, rape, and murder are sometimes conceived as property crimes. Weak individual, or collective, land titles dampen investment incentives. To redress a crime or even an insult, collective punishment on the family or village of the perpetrator can be appropriate. Ostracism from the social community is acceptable under some conditions. Processes of adjudication and punishment employ thin standards of *procedural fairness*.[38]

Were Gauri to apply his argument specifically to Pashtunwali, he would find that standards of procedural fairness are not thin; they are nonexistent. Procedural fairness implies consistency of standards applied across multiple cases regardless of the actors, be they men, women, ethnic minorities, or those of a particular social status. Typically, elders who serve on jirgas are not literate. Nor are most of the people they are said to represent. Therefore, nothing that the elders do or decide in a jirga is written down, and everyone's memory of

---

[37] Omestad, "USIP's Afghan Rule of Law at Work," 2.

[38] Varun Gauri, *The Publicity "Defect" of Customary Law*, Policy Research Working Paper Series (New York: World Bank, 2010), 2.

what the elders did and said is selectively different. Consequently, anything that resembles a "procedure" changes across time and space, from one case to the next. The customs of Pashtunwali are therefore bound to produce confusion because no one in a community or studying a community can truly know what the community norms are if nothing is written down. That, in turn, means that the Pashtun ethos is an ethos of normlessness. The irony here is that

> *Finality of a decision is simply not possible in a belief system that hinges upon an unwritten ethos.*

for 11 years counterinsurgents and nation builders repeatedly have sent personnel into conflict-ridden Afghan villages to determine what those norms might be. In that respect, good intentions often have been met with repeated frustration because, even where there is a semblance of norms, what passes for norms is highly plastic. Pashtunwali wants it that way.

The absence of "procedures" or norms thus casts doubt on the traditional anthropological assumptions applied to arguments for legal integration because, in an uncodified cultural system like Pashtunwali, jirga decisions are arbitrary, and the so-called social order that jirgas supposedly restore is therefore unstable. So, legal integration advocates, at the very least, should know that Pashtunwali lacks a parallel term that equates to "procedural fairness." A jirga is an organized ritual whereby elders make decisions about what they believe is best for the community, but that does not mean that their decision will stand forever or be applicable in similar disputes at a later point in time. Finality of a decision is simply not possible in a belief system that hinges upon an unwritten ethos. By contrast, honor and the socially disruptive behavior required to uphold it are forever. They last beyond the lifetime of each and every Pashtun male and are therefore always more important than stability, which is temporary. Moreover, badal does not equal "justice." It equals revenge. And revenge is not procedural, nor is it fair.

Gauri further challenges the ability of customary systems, such as Pashtunwali, to enforce decisions undertaken by village elders: "Unlike state law, customary law systems generally do not possess the co-

ercive authority needed to enforce contracts, incarcerate criminals, or confront the executive. Indeed, it is for this reason that some scholars argue that customary law is not really law at all" but social convention.[39] Thus, Gauri finds fault with the new "legal pluralism," which he credits anthropologists for having created. "The justifications for dispute resolution decisions," he writes, "may not, generally speaking, be sufficiently public to stabilize expectations and promote rationally motivated cooperation among members of the society."[40] In other words, what we call "customary law" is unlike formal law in that customary law lacks stare decisis. By stare decisis, I mean a system of reference that allows stakeholders in the law access to previous decisions about similar cases that would, in effect, ensure the sense of *fairness* and *trust* that Barfield and Nojumi claim is embedded in "customary law" in Afghanistan.

Gauri refers to the absence of stare decisis as a "publicity defect" in which "dispute resolvers in customary systems—local chiefs, religious leaders, village elders, respected community members, and the like—make decisions [that] do not typically reference the many other decisions that have been made in related cases . . . that would be persuasive for community outsiders as well as insiders."[41] Ginsburg also discusses this problem of publicity in direct context

> *Badal does not equal "justice." It equals revenge. And revenge is not procedural, nor is it fair.*

to Pashtunwali, whose Pashtun people in Afghanistan and Pakistan are largely illiterate and therefore have no means to record decisions made in their jirgas.[42] Nevertheless, Ginsburg supports legal integration and believes that Pashtunwali's normlessness is capable of becoming procedural and substantive if and only if Pashtuns will accept literacy as a social condition that "undermine[s] the Pashtunwali."[43]

---

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid., 3.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ginsburg, "An Economic Interpretation."

[43] Ibid., 113.

Here, I believe that Ginsburg is theoretically correct about literacy's ability to subvert the Pashtun ethos by codifying it, but he and other advocates of legal integration make their claims without due consideration of other potential effects—ethno-religious conflict and civil war, cross border irredentism into Pakistani-held territory, and the codification of spouse abuse as chastisement doctrine—problems that I consider in the conclusion of this paper. In addition, the feasibility of a literacy campaign that would otherwise "undermine" Pashtunwali is questionable in the sense that the Pashtuns are one of the world's largest ethnic identity groups, consisting of approximately 40 million people who traverse a rugged, inhospitable terrain that spans two contiguous states.

If many Pashtuns lack the literacy required to record consensus, then they also lack the ability to record dissensus. But why would an ethos like Pashtunwali want any record if the purpose of its jirga ritual is to conceal responsibility for socially unacceptable behavior? In addition, Pashtunwali eschews dissent because dissent is precisely the thing that might undermine the honor and personal dignity that individual males are raised from birth to accumulate through fighting. In this system, the absence of a codified law and policy based on coercion therefore upholds the very identity of Pashtun males. To eliminate or to modify Pashtunwali would be tantamount to causing an identity crisis among Pashtuns:

> In tribal societies based on balanced opposition, male children are raised to be . . . ready and able to engage in sanctioned violence against designated enemies. . . . No mechanisms of coercion are available to force group members to act. . . . Ultimately it is up to each individual to decide and act. The honorable man has no ruler and bows to no man, but stands on his own feet and his own reputation as an equal to all others.[44]

Pashtunwali is thus not the type of system that presents itself as amenable to integrating with some other system of law that would

---

44 Salzman, *Culture and Conflict*, 16.

otherwise reposition the Pashtun male and his ethos into a condition of servility to formal law.

Largely absent in the spate of arguments for merging customary law with Afghanistan's formal legal system are the consequences that such integration would have for women, women's issues, and women's rights. Barfield and Nojumi and Omestad elide the subject completely.[45] Senier touches upon the subject in a one-paragraph literature review of legal policy papers about judicial reform in Afghanistan but insists that "Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights treaties can forestall abuse at the local level by providing grounds to appeal abusive customary practices in the state system."[46] Senier also avers that "given the human rights concerns and patriarchal nature of the customary legal system, serious and gender-based crimes should be reserved for the state system."[47] The most reasoned attempt to consider the knotty details of women's issues and legal integration comes from Ginsburg, as explained below, but even his solution to the problem, like that of Senier, seems quixotic at best.

> *But why would an ethos like Pashtunwali want any record if the purpose of its jirga ritual is to conceal responsibility for socially unacceptable behavior?*

Women's and human rights advocates occasionally challenge the concept of legal integration in Afghanistan, but they are sometimes met with counterdefenses, which hold that such honor regimes as Pashtunwali support what Afghan women want. Palwasha Kakar, for example, claims that Pashtunwali actually gives women power:

> A woman can "call out" (*nariqawal*) the man she wants to marry, when she is being married to a man against her wishes, by presenting herself as a guest in the house of the man she wishes to marry. He is

---

[45] Barfield and Nojumi, "Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan," 40–53.

[46] Senier, "Rebuilding the Judicial Sector in Afghanistan," 5.

[47] Ibid., 6.

obliged to marry her and settle the matter with her father, though she loses face by resorting to this tactic. If her father disagrees, it can lead to a revenge cycle.[48]

The operative language in the excerpt above is "though she loses face by resorting to this tactic," which, again, serves as a barometer of the scapegoating of women in Pashtun culture. Kakar offers no explanation of what happens to a woman who "loses face" when that woman rejects matrimonial exchange.

To understand the gravity of "losing face" in Pashtun culture, we have to study the results in documentaries such as *Love Crimes of Kabul*, which reveals what happens to women *even in an urban context*.[49] Women in this documentary are imprisoned and put on trial, suggesting that deviation from the unwritten regime is an intolerable reality throughout the agnatic Pashtun culture. In Kabul, women who refuse marriage exchange do not just lose their own face; they also lose the face of their fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins. Then their families and communities ostracize them. The fathers of those who, along with their daughters, eventually agree to settle these disputes through matrimonial exchange explain to their interviewers that they are well aware of the would-be brides' servile futures in their new families. And in one case, in which the calling out of a Pashtun groom involves mixed ethnicity, the groom's father refers to the girl, of Hazara stock, as a "witch."

Kakar further states that *purdah* (seclusion of women from public observation) and *namus* (Arabic for "honor"), both customs that regulate gender boundaries, determine the movement of men inasmuch as they determine the movement of women:

> In other words, men are as bound by the rules of namus, and thus are as restricted from stepping into space reserved for women as women

---

[48] Palwasha Kakar, "Afghanistan Tribal Law of Pashtunwali and Women's Legal Authority," (Harvard University Islamic Law Project, [2003?]), 4, accessed 18 January 2011, http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/kakar.pdf.

[49] *Love Crimes of Kabul*, first broadcast 11 July 2001 by Home Box Office, directed by Tanaz Eshaghian.

are from entry into men's space. . . . Extreme purdah can lead to many restrictions for women but segregated spaces also allow for freedom from male interference.[50]

Kakar engages in no little apologetics for the practice of purdah, as if what women want is freedom from both men and public participation. Again, she does not explain what those "many restrictions" entail, what the penalties might be, and why they are in place. In addition, she does not define "male interference."

We can explain the Pashtunwali practice of isolating women as the logical consequence of scapegoating according to the internal logic of a vengeance-driven ethos that, in order to sustain itself, relies on the symbolic sacrifice of matrimonial exchange. First, as is the case for all kinds of cultural, religious, and legal systems where people are sacrificed, literally or symbolically, others in those systems perceive the surrogate victim as a "guarantor of cultural stability."[51] So Pashtunwali, as a cultural system, guards that condition at all costs and therefore enacts strict behavioral rules for preserving what it calls "women's honor," which is really a referent for the most exalted agnatic male honor. Pashtuns therefore would regard deviations from purdah as "portents of apocalyptic upheaval."[52]

> *In Kabul, women who refuse marriage exchange do not just lose their own face; they also lose the face of their fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins.*

Second, Girard remarks that scapegoats tend to live on the margins of their societies: "We notice on first glance beings [that] are either outside or on the fringes of society. . . . Their status as foreigners or enemies, their servile condition, or simply their age prevents these future victims from fully integrating themselves into the community."[53] Even in cases of king sacrifice, the revered king, too, fits the

---

[50] Kakar, "Afghanistan Tribal Law," 4–5.

[51] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 280.

[52] Ibid., 281.

[53] Ibid., 12.

bill: "His position at the center . . . isolate[s] him from his fellow men."[54] Prior to the introduction of Christianity and other institutionalized religions to some agnatic cultures (e.g., the Acholi of East Africa, afflicted by another ethno-religious group, the Lord's Resistance Army), these kings were so honored and their powers so vast that their elders sacrificed them when they became ill in order to ward off impending catastrophes such as plagues, drought, and warfare. Often, these kings willingly accepted their fates. The kings in these cultures, much like the women in Kara's analysis of Pashtunwali, were therefore complicit in their sacrifice. Girard, in turn, explains that complicity is but another feature of scapegoating and is quite prevalent in sacrificial narratives, chief among them the myth of Oedipus and the story of Jesus.[55]

Third, Pashtunwali imposes purdah on a woman so that the agnatic males to whom she has been traded can abuse her without reprisal by her father and brothers who may have traded her but still recognize her as their inalienable possession. As Girard further explains, the "considerable importance of this freedom from reprisal has for the sacrificial process makes us understand that sacrifice [or matrimonial exchange in an agnatic culture] is primarily an act of violence without risk of vengeance."[56] So, Pashtun matrimonial exchange and the domestic violence that often follow conceal the guilt of the agnatic rivals.

Finally, Kakar writes that the matrimonial alliance making found in Pashtunwali empowers women, provided that women accept an ethos that paradoxically encourages their emotional and physical abuse: "Women's networks derive power from their control, extending through marriage, and they arbiter conflicts ranging from women's contracts to the revenge cycle. In order for women to achieve authority status, they must prove that, like men, they are honorable by following the norms of Pashtunwali."[57] Of course, given Ginsburg's and

---

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 13.

[57] Kakar, "Afghanistan Tribal Law," 7–8.

Salzman's interpretations of Pashtunwali as an ethos whose purpose is to uphold individual male identity, one immediately recognizes the weakness of Kakar's argument. If Pashtun women achieve "authority status," then that achievement comes not so they can be "like men" in following the norms but so they can be *for men*. Women in Pashtun society are never "like men." They are like cattle, traded as the property of men, isolated by men, and abused and sometimes even murdered by men. Women's abasement thus serves to conceal male responsibility for keeping their own ethnic community in a perpetual state of war.

> *Women in Pashtun society are never "like men." They are like cattle, traded as the property of men, isolated by men, and abused and sometimes even murdered by men.*

Conclusion: Legal Integration's Unintended Consequences

The right to search for truth implies also a duty that one must not conceal any part of what one has recognized to be true.

—Albert Einstein

Some readers might say that it is presumptuous to eschew the legal integration argument, so let this paper serve as a reminder of what the stakes might be. Those who believe that integrating Pashtunwali into Afghanistan's formal system might stabilize the country should remember the salience of nang, which is transcendent and surpasses any immediate material benefit a jirga decision might bring. Second, I suggest that proponents put an end to their comparisons of supposedly similar cultural terms, for this study reveals that the differences between Pashtunwali and "restorative justice" are too great to be obviated and ignored. Indeed, this study shows that what is most similar between Pashtunwali and formal law is actually their sacrificial character, which accepts violence, especially when custom and formal law relegate violence to private domains of human organization.

The assumption that jirgas establish social stability distracts people from seeing an underlying, oppositional truth—that, ultimately, honor trumps social stability in Pashtun culture. Indeed, a realistic assessment of the overriding importance of nang precludes Pashtun acceptance of legal integration. Consider historical examples of Pashtun vengeance against anything that might be an affront to nang, which often translated into violent blows against the state. These occasional civil paroxysms during the early twentieth century in fact led one British minister to conclude the following about the Pashtuns:

> The advantages of anarchy seem to have been better appreciated than its drawbacks, and the tribes were asking themselves why they should resign the freedom which they have enjoyed for the past year, and submit again to a central authority which would inevitably demand payment of land revenue, customs duties and bribes for its officials, and possibly the arms looted from government posts and arsenals.[58]

Of course, what appears as anarchy to a British minister is an assertion of honor to a Pashtun rebel. Jirga decisions may momentarily prevent outbreaks of public violence in Pashtun communities, but the agnatic rivalry of the Pashtun kinship system always exists because the Pashtun ethos itself condones rivalry among individual males, whose warrior ethos is bred in the bone. At the societal level, these reclamations of honor rise to the level of massive civil violence against formal systems that place Pashtunwali in a servile position relative to the state.

Pashtuns, therefore, would accept legal integration only if they were convinced it might empower them. Yet, a legally strengthened Pashtunwali could destabilize Afghanistan and the region around it. A successful legal integration might lead to an undesirable intermediate outcome: civil war, a logical consequence of a large-group force of balanced opposition that tries to crush other ethnic groups in the north

---

[58] Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History*, 139.

to reclaim territory lost after the 2001 invasion and overthrow of the Taliban. In other words, the Taliban and the Pashtun culture from which it arose might find the solidification of their cherished honor code in written law a means to a greater end that the Pashtuns have held for the better part of 500 years: to conquer all of Afghanistan by ethnic right of rule.[59] Such a future contest would occur under a Pashtun-dominant central government that finds itself able to engineer the legal system in a way that represses other ethnic groups and ignites ethnic grievances. The many other small-scale ethnic groups who reside in northern Afghanistan would find their own customary "ways of life" subsumed in the overall process of legal integration.

This projection of consequence is not unreasonable and finds confirmation in past history. In the past, Ewans writes that the "Tajiks, the Hazaras, and the Nuristanis have all been the victims of Pushtoon [Pashtun] expansionism, and these and other antagonisms persist to the present day."[60] If that happens, then we have bought into a narrative that offers only a mere semblance of truth in the pursuit of an ephemeral political settlement. Recall that Taliban leaders and followers are primarily Pashtun. While in part they are a religious movement, it is not the glorification of a god that motivates them; Pashtuns seek power and territorial control. Their victims are not non-Muslims, per se, but women and ethnic minorities—people who are perfect scapegoats because they live on the margins of the Pashtun way of life, if they are part of it at all.

It would be a travesty that in Afghanistan we get what we pray for in an attempt to knit together competing tribal and civil paradigms in the making of a new state. Geertz would characterize the civil war envisioned here not as the outgrowth of "civil discontent" but as "primordial discontent":

> It is this crystallization of a direct conflict . . . this "longing not to belong to any other group". . . that gives to the problem variously called tribalism, parochialism, communalism, and so on, a more

---

[59] See Nigel J. R. Allan, "Rethinking Governance in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs* 56 (2003), 193–202.
[60] Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History*, 11.

ominous and deeply threatening quality that most of the other, and also very serious and intractable, problems the new states face. . . . There are many other competing loyalties in the new states, as in any state—ties to class, party, business, union, profession, or whatever. But groups formed of such ties are virtually never considered as possible self-standing, maximal social units, as candidates for nationhood. . . . No matter how severe they become, they do not threaten, at least not intentionally, its existence as such. They threaten governments, or even the forms of government, but they rarely at best. . . . threaten to undermine the nation itself because they do not involve alternative definitions of what a nation is. . . . Civil discontent finds its natural outlet in the seizing, legally or illegally, of the state apparatus. Primordial discontent strives more deeply and is satisfied less easily. If severe enough, it wants not just Sukarno's or Nehru's or Moulay Hasan's head, it wants Indonesia's or India's or Morocco's.[61]

Throughout the past 150 years, especially, nang and puth have found their own expression in Afghan versions of these "primordial" conflicts, which gave rise to a Pashtun nationalism that desired unification of all Pashtuns in one territory, much to British, Indian, and Pakistani consternation. So, with Geertz's observation about "primordial" conflict in the development of postcolonial nations, we must question how the integration of the Pashtun "way" in Afghanistan's legal system might proceed geopolitically.

Whereas above I speculated that the Pashtuns who dominate the southern part of Afghanistan might push north, here I suggest another long-term consequence of the integration: Afghan Pashtuns might claim the territory of their ethnic brothers across the Durand Line in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, thus challenging the Pakistani state, as ethnic irredentists tend to do. Indeed, Afghanistan's Pashtuns have more in common with their brothers across the border in Pakistan, so it is not unreasonable to project that a legally strengthened Pashtun-dominant Afghanistan would make a cross-border territorial claim. Ewans points out, for example, that the creation of

---

[61] Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 261.

the Durand Line in 1887 interfered with the ruling Pashtun objective to create an Afghan state that included the entire Pashtun nation. The result was another Pashtun rebellion that required 35,000 British troops and two years of engagement to quell.[62]

To employ liberal-democratic terms to market a pragmatic legal integration strategy in Afghanistan or to broker peace with the Taliban constitutes an error that many a Christian missionary has made before in teaching his religion to native cultures. In this paper, I referred to that error as the cultural equivalency fallacy. In previous centuries, Christian missionaries believed that they could persuade indigenous people to adopt a new belief system by explaining to them that a particular spirit they believed in corresponded to, for example, the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit. In many cases, this analogical method of intercultural understanding backfired.

> *Pashtuns, therefore, would accept legal integration only if they were convinced it might empower them.*

Indigenous people incorporated new Christian spirits (e.g., the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost) into their existing cosmologies, which in turn increased the overall sense of power an individual person had, above and beyond that of other members in his group. In some regions, the reinvention of an indigenous belief system galvanized some natives, who syncretized old values with new values and then again into revolutionary regimes of meaning, which, in turn, resulted in highly unwelcome ethno-religious uprisings. New knowledge plus violence equaled the accumulation of power, or dignity, or puth. The syncretization of indigenous systems of meaning with foreign ones therefore did not bring peace but, rather, amplified existing indigenous justifications for blood feuds carried out among large-group populations.

This conclusion would be remiss if it did not attend the consequences of legal integration for Afghan women. Here, we can turn to Brian R. Decker, who applies Girard's thesis to domestic violence in

---

[62] Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History.*

American society and law. Decker observes features of formal law and justice in America that I already have touched upon with respect to Pashtunwali—the sublimation of the public transgressions of rival males to the private domain of Pashtun life through the exchange or sacrifice of brides. Similar to my exposition of Pashtunwali's propensity to obscure the responsibility of agnatic males in their commission of reciprocal violence, Decker discusses a similar propensity codified in American law in the 1800s. Known as *chastisement doctrine*, this principle holds that a husband and a wife are "one legal unit" in which the courts permit the husband "the power of restraining [his wife]" and a legal "defense for battery" against her.[63] Decker further illustrates that well into the twentieth century, American formal law responded to domestic violence as a private issue that denied women equal protection under the law. In his application of Girard's thesis to domestic violence in America, Decker states,

> To Girard, society opts to tolerate ordered violence because of the belief that it might mitigate disordered violence. In this model, the private sphere provides the needed order: private violence is ideally limited geographically (to within or around the home) and temporarily (to those times when the victim and the abuser are together) and selects victims from a limited pool (sometimes children, usually wives or partners, and almost always women). Hence society tolerates private violence because it views the private sphere as an outlet, a container for violence. Male dominance and violence in the home will stave off violent disorder in the streets.[64]

Decker's analysis of the deception of sacrificial violence in a formal legal system thus supports one of Girard's most profound conclusions in *Violence and the Sacred*, that differences between modern justice and primitive vengeance are slim: "No matter how sturdy it

---

[63] Brian R. Decker, "Violence and the Private: A Girardian Model of Domestic Violence in Society," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Law and Social Change* 11 (2007).
[64] Ibid.

may seem, the apparatus that serves to hide the true nature of legal and illegal violence from view eventually wears thin."[65] In addition, according to Girard, "The procedures that keep men's violence in bounds have one thing in common: they are no strangers to the ways of violence. There is reason to believe that they are all rooted in religion. . . . The curative procedures are also imbued with religious concepts—both rudimentary sacrificial rites and the more advanced judicial forms."[66]

So sublimating agnatic rivalry through the scapegoating of women in Afghanistan will not accomplish much for women. If Pashtuns accept legal integration, the abuse of women in Afghanistan likely will follow the trajectory of formal law in modern societies that scapegoat women through applications of chastisement doctrine. The codification of domestic violence in formal law thus does not change the culture in that the basis for the law remains the same: the concealment of men's responsibility for domestic violence and women's oppression.

Legal integration advocates presume that Pashtuns outside their elected kinsmen in Kabul would accept the proposition to formalize Pashtunwali. But how could that be if historically Pashtuns have proven themselves staunch rejectionists of alterations to their most exalted way of life? Indeed, one legal integration proponent describes an ethnic culture whose geographical reach and population size is so extensive that those factors alone might doom the project he advocates:

> The Pashtunwali is one of the larger "quasi-legal" systems in the world in terms of the number of people subject to it, and may be the largest such system of any stateless society. This Article explained how many of its norms and institutions seem designed to minimize the escalation of private violence and preserve social order in an area where state law has minimal reach.[67]

---

[65] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 23.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ginsburg, "An Economic Interpretation," 113–14.

The estimated number of Pashtuns living within Afghanistan's borders is 14 million; in Pakistan, 27 million.[68] These figures exclude the Pashtun diaspora, which total millions more in other contiguous countries, such as Iran.[69]

In the end, I predict that enhanced ritualization of Pashtunwali through its codification into Afghan formal law will not stabilize the country and will make life worse for women, ethnic minorities, and contiguous countries. Pashtunwali's infamous practice of bride price and abuse of women in the name of upholding honor will simply transform into chastisement doctrine for women. Pashtunwali, as Girard would observe, turns guilty parties into beleaguered victims, scapegoats those close to the truly guilty, and absolves its men of responsibility and guilt. It performs those tasks through jirga "decisions" and bride "exchanges" that merely cast what Girard would call "a glimmering veil of rhetoric over the sordid realities of life."[70] In the coming decade, the more urbane, educated, and politically clever Pashtuns, the "kingmakers in Kabul"[71] will simply restructure Afghanistan's laws to support an ethos that has always been known and is not likely to diminish even as the eyes of the world are upon it. The renewed political power afforded to Pashtuns through legal integration would simply lead to a claim of a greater Pashtunistan.

> *The renewed political power afforded to Pashtuns through legal integration would simply lead to a claim of a greater Pashtunistan.*

Scapegoats, which are a kind of inalienable possession, resemble those who give and keep them. But because their givers and keepers imbue in them both sacred and profane qualities, scapegoats find themselves in a terrible double bind. Their assumed mythic role is to return a community to a condition of stasis, but their very existence

---

[68] Selig S. Harrison, "U.S. Encroachment Infuriates, Radicalizes Pakistanis," National Interest, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/us-encroachment-infuriates-radicalizes-pakistanis-5258, 4 May 2011.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 1.

[71] Ruttig, "Loya Paktia's Insurgency," 57–100.

ignites memory of the rivalry that preceded their selection or sacrifice. The overall cost to a culture whose main purpose in organization is to uphold the honor and dignity of its men is that scapegoats remind those men of the blood feud their jirgas presume to end. Hatred and guilt as expressed in sacrificial narratives, enshrined in cultural customs, or codified into law are thus projected onto innocent victims—whether they are women, ethnic minorities, or even other nations. However, the supposed end to the conflict that the jirga ritual offers is not permanent, as currently popular understandings of jirgas claim.

No amount of legal integration will change Pashtunwali in the time required to stabilize Afghanistan and prevent it from once again becoming an al-Qaeda sanctuary. About the only means to alter this ethos so beholden to perpetuity of blood feuds would be the introduction of clinical psychology into their routine affairs. Clinical psychology helps people see through and come to terms with their most cherished illusions. But making an ethnic group that lives in two contiguous states conscious of the contradictions embedded in its ethos is unrealistic. Agnatic rivalry and scapegoating will remain therefore a permanent foundation of Pashtun identity, a point of reference that requires endless feeding even if it means keeping swaths of territory, kinsmen, women, ethnic minorities, and other nations in a chronic condition of stress.

Given this fresh interpretation of the Pashtun way of life, we must question the value of even referring to Pashtunwali as "customary law." One legal integration proponent, Ginsburg, agrees in that he states Pashtunwali is not so much law as it is a "cultural system" consisting of a set of "metarules" that does not prevent threats to the social order inasmuch as the system "channels" those threats from the public to private domain.[72] Comparing the terms of Pashtunwali to those of restorative justice thus represents the international community's latest fallacy of cultural equivalency. This fallacy causes stakeholders to overstate the significance of one ritual aspect of Pashtun culture, the jirga, and to understate the sacerdotal significance of the

---

[72] Ginsburg, "An Economic Interpretation," 91.

individual concepts of nang and puth. The fallacy of cultural equivalency also presumes that Pashtuns will accept the subornment of their way of life to that of a central state system, in effect, rendering them servile to a new way of life. Selling policy makers the grand idea that "Pashtunwali equals social restoration" is part of an overall strategic recommendation to defeat the Taliban. This strategy does not depend on force but on a so-called political solution in which people make compromises with one another because they have had enough of violent campaigns and countercampaigns that impede what everyone really wants—peace. Surely, the Taliban are convinced that the Pashtun way of life is on their side. The upholding of Pashtun honor transcends the considerations of state formation in ways that preclude making one way of life subordinate to another. The other ethnic groups and their political-military representatives seem aware of that problem, too, in that they currently express concerns about a second major Taliban advancement that would take advantage of their geographical weaknesses and historic inability to form a stable united front.

> *It is questionable whether America and the world can construct a stable government in Afghanistan that is sustainable past 2014.*

It is questionable whether America and the world can construct a stable government in Afghanistan that is sustainable past 2014. The best hope for Afghanistan is to commit to small-scale projects with the hope that people who are not Afghan elites will remember us for our generosity. Grand idea schemes, such as legal integration, are simply too unrealistic to succeed in a country that has some 14 million Pashtuns within its borders and another 27 million across the Durand Line who have greater affiliation to each other than they do their respective states.

Book Reviews

Turkey's European Future: Behind the Scenes of America's Influence on EU-Turkey Relations. By Nathalie Tocci. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2011. Pp. 240, $55.00 cloth.)

Nathalie Tocci's book examines Turkey's prospects for full membership in the European Union (EU). The book seeks to address the challenges of Turkey's full membership by focusing specifically on the Copenhagen Criteria and Turkey's ability to reform in order to join the union. Tocci successfully reveals the interrelationship between the United States and Turkey's membership in the union, and captures all intricacies in the triangular relationship between the United States, Turkey, and the EU. The hypothesis that gives substance to this book is the direct and indirect influence of the United States on EU-Turkey relations. The author successfully articulates a set of theory-informed questions aiming to guide the analysis by explaining U.S. impact using creative diagrams. These diagrams clearly illustrate the influence of different types of American power (material, ideational, discursive), mapping the impact of direct and indirect U.S. power. Additionally, the book offers a clear account of the "fit and misfit" transatlantic debates on Turkey. It also provides a comprehensive explanation

AYLIN GURZEL received her PhD from Bilkent University (Ankara, Turkey). She is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Eastern Mediterranean University and teaches Turkish foreign policy, Middle East politics, and security issues in world politics courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. She is the author of the op-ed "Between Iran and a Hard Place" (*Project Syndicate*, October 2012), and she has lectured on security issues in several advanced NATO workshops and seminars.

of both the European and American stakeholders (state institutions, political parties, businesses, unions, professional associations and civil society, churches, media, and diaspora communities).

In the very first chapter, Tocci claims that an understanding of American direct and indirect influence at different levels and through different power channels is necessary, and she explains the multiple channels that shape Turkey's European integration. In the second and third chapters, Tocci outlines the areas of "fit and misfit" in transatlantic debates on Turkey. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters attempt to uncover the multifaceted American impact on EU-Turkey relations, which, she argues, varies across time and issue area, as well as audience. The book concludes by putting forth general policy recommendations so that American policy, if it is to continue promoting Turkey's integration into the union, might engage in its objective more effectively.

The main innovative contribution of the book is its attempt to address the question of whether America should use material, ideational, or discursive power and through which channels and what style it should pursue committing to Turkey's European integration. She stresses the transatlantic debate and the role of Turkey in reaching transatlantic goals in explaining the triangular relationship. To substantiate the nature of Turkey's role in the Transatlantic Alliance, the author contends that Turkey has been a long-standing NATO ally and partner. The significance Turkey holds for the United States and equally for the EU is contested. One interesting point that emerges from this analysis is the conclusion that the EU rejects these arguments because it perceives Turkey as an American "Trojan horse" in the EU that might sabotage its deepening process.

Tocci's study is an excellent, as well as complicated, analysis. First, from an international relations theoretical point of view, the approach of the book is sufficiently comprehensive. It not only takes into consideration state institutions but also other actors that are key to understanding the practice within Europe and the United States, and the interrelationship between state and nonstate actors such as businesses, unions, professional associations and civil society, churches, media, and even diaspora communities. Second, a further strength is the use of clear methodology. The framework of the study is very well organized and

not only gives a comprehensive account of multiple channels but also elaborates the key role that style and language play in negotiations. Discourse analysis is also adapted to the study. Third, regarding the empirical data collection in this book, primary sources have been used extensively. Interviews with former and current Congress officials, State Department and EU Commission officials, diplomats, nongovernmental organization representatives, academics, analysts, and journalists as well as reports from the European Commission, Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, and Turkish Industry and Business Association have complemented the secondary sources.

The study, however, has a few minor shortcomings. There is needless repetition of some points in chapters 2, 3, and 4. The title *Turkey's European Future* gives the misleading impression that the book will attempt to elaborate on future prospects of Turkey's full membership in the EU, yet it only gives a few suggestions to American policy makers. There is no attempt to make predictions about Turkey's future. Nevertheless, the purpose of the book is not to tell the future—far from it—but is rather to explain the triangular relationship between the United States, Turkey, and the EU in order to achieve a better understanding of it. To that end, this book provides insightful information on how American policy can indirectly influence EU-Turkey relations so that Turkey stays anchored to the West.
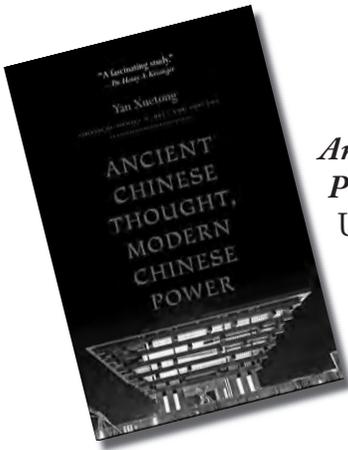
Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power. By Yan Xuetong. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. Pp. viii, 300. $32.50 cloth.)

When it comes to influential Chinese philosophy, Confucius and Mencius tend to receive the most attention. Developing their ideas during a period known as the "Warring States" (c. 476–221 BCE), they were just two of many philosophers who espoused ideas as to what constituted an ideal state. *Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* is a collection of essays, followed by commentaries from other authors, on this highly influential period in Chinese history and the many names who contributed to the development of the country's political system. The work examines what lessons contemporary China, and the world, can learn from these ideas.

MITCHELL NEWTON-MATZA, PhD, is the European and Asian Regional Culture and Language Studies Expert for the Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) in Quantico, Virginia. He is the author of numerous journal articles and reference pieces, and the editor/chief contributor for the book *Jazz Age: People and Perspectives* (2009). He also teaches history part-time at Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria campus.

Besides the aforementioned philosophers, the essays also examine other names such as Laozi, Mozi, and Xunzi, referred to as "pre-Qin" thinkers. The essays compare and contrast what these individuals believed and why, demonstrating how these past ideas could influence current international relations. The essays also assess what constitutes and influences a state's power, whether these aspects are political, economic, or military.

Yan, a survivor of Mao Zedong's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, is not trying to create a new theory of international relations; rather, he is arguing for an understanding of past thought in order to create a new model. In appendix three of the book, he also wonders, "Why is there no Chinese school of international relations theory?" believing the variety of views has prevented the development of such a theory. Yan is calling for this theory while not attempting to create one himself.

The final chapter of the book is Yan's response to the commentaries. This portion is not so much engaging the other authors in a debate as it is promoting this development of a new, unified theory. Yan realizes that international norms change over time and that it is imperative to understand how past societies viewed the norms that regulated their lives. The book also contains several appendices. One of these is an interview with Yan about how his experiences during the Cultural Revolution helped shape his own thinking.

A major theme in the book is that of *hegemony*, which is often misunderstood in contemporary times. Hegemony in itself is not an evil, but how it is practiced; strong states are not always taking advantage of weaker ones. A hierarchy does not necessarily mean inequality. Yan also argues that more highly developed countries should observe international norms more strictly than less developed ones (p. 219). At times, he compares the Chinese notions of international relations with those of the United States and states how the former should not try to imitate the latter.

There is also considerable discussion on how these philosophers viewed the role of a state leader. Whether the leader is a "sage king" or "tyrant," the ability to administer a state, and command the respect and loyalty of its citizens, depends upon how such a leader exhibits morals. Furthermore, a leader's behavior will also affect what is now called foreign policy and the ability to command respect from other states.

Besides having proper morals, the book demonstrates that effective leadership also relies upon competent ministers to carry out state administration. Greed and a lust for power can undermine the most noble of intentions of a leader to care for his people. Any political system is dependent upon human nature. Mencius believed in the goodness of people, whereas Xunzi sees how evil nature "is the basic cause of interstate

conflict." Controlling human desires will serve to benefit the state, although Xunzi believes that human nature is evil.

The one problem with the book is that of repetition. Halfway through the book one will encounter the same points over and over. Since this is a collection of essays from several contributors, this might have been unavoidable. One other drawback is that discussions of current trends are not as detailed as those of the pre-Qin thinkers. The book would benefit from more analysis on how past philosophy has a bearing on today's issues. A greater balance would be helpful, and perhaps this is something that could be addressed in future editions.

This is an invaluable book for those who have an interest in all aspects of Chinese history or those who study current events. While having a background in China would be helpful to the reader, the work is accessible to those who wish to learn more about how traditional Chinese politics operated. It is particularly ideal for a graduate seminar as well as for the seasoned professional. The translation from Chinese to English is perfect, and the subject matter is never unclear or convoluted. *Ancient Chinese Thought* is an excellent source for understanding what formed the basis of a Chinese society that lasted for over two thousand years.
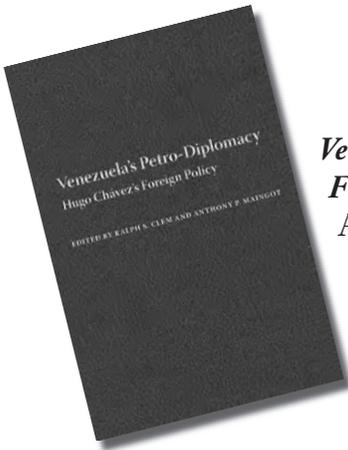
Venezuela's Petro-Diplomacy: Hugo Chávez's Foreign Policy. Edited by Ralph S. Clem and Anthony P. Maingot. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2011. Pp. 144. $65.00 cloth.)

In 1914, Shell installed Venezuela's first oil well. Thereafter, Venezuelans sought to harness oil's power to achieve a measure of domestic well-being and have a global impact: rapidly modernizing in the 1950s, helping to found OPEC in 1960, and projecting an exceptionalist self-image vis-à-vis the rest of Latin America in the 1970s. Ambitions often exceeded realities, but oil still shaped how Venezuela engaged with the world and vice versa. What has changed under Hugo Chávez?

This question runs through the 12 essays assembled by Richard Clem and Anthony Maingot that aim "to trace the deep-rooted and enduring orientations of Venezuelan political culture and their influence on foreign policy, with special attention to the historical role petroleum has played in these considerations" (p. 1). The collection brings together Latin American, European, and American-based analysts to produce a wide-ranging, if uneven, introduction to various aspects of oil's role in shaping Venezuelan foreign policy in the Chávez era. Essays mainly focus on the Western Hemisphere, though Clem and Julia Buxton offer insightful chapters on Venezuelan relations with Belarus and England, respectively. Most contributions are brief, allowing for little development of arguments. Much evidence is limited to press

ALEJANDRO VELASCO is assistant professor at New York University's Gallatin School where he teaches Latin American studies and writes on modern Venezuela. He holds a PhD in history from Duke University and is completing a manuscript examining urban protest and electoral politics in Caracas between the 1950s and 1990s.

reports and editorials hostile to Chávez, resulting in what the editors acknowledge is "the critical slant of most essays" (p. 9).

As a whole, the collection offers two dissonant accounts of foreign policy under Chávez. In one, policy is shaped by the impetuous whims of a charismatic leader driven above all by ideological aims: anti-Americanism, Latin American unity (so-called Bolivarianism), and socialism. It seeks to mold, overtly or covertly, Latin America in its image through spendthrift distribution of oil wealth, and as such represents a strategic threat to the region. In the other, foreign policy is informed, but not determined, by a broader ideological agenda. It seeks cohesion and adhesion when it can, but can be and is pragmatic when it must. Beyond personal antics, then, lay an interest-driven approach to world affairs, based as it has long been on oil's primacy.

Within this spectrum, insights emerge. Harold Trinkunas notes that Venezuelan governments have long used oil wealth to influence hemispheric affairs and seek global partners, aggressively and even covertly. "What is new . . . in the Chávez regime is its identification of the United States as the main threat to Venezuela, and of U.S. hegemony as a threat to the international community that should be contained by the development of alternative poles of global power" (p. 17). Spreading oil wealth has allowed Chávez to marshal hemispheric support for his project, mainly by stymieing efforts to isolate Venezuela. But it has failed to usher either a "cohesive continental project" or a "multicolor world in which Venezuela has a leadership role" (p. 26). Military doctrine too, now based on asymmetric warfare, remains operationally weak. For Trinkunas, these shortcomings suggest that U.S. preoccupation with Venezuela may be overstated.

In separate essays, Maingot and Norman Girvan examine Venezuela-Caribbean relations (excepting Cuba) and likewise find tenuous the idea of a Chávez-led ideological transformation. Chávez initiatives like ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) and Petro-Caribe—offering aid and cheap oil, respectively—have certainly taken root in the Caribbean, responding to the specific needs of individual nations. But for Maingot, traditions of autonomy as well as "the sophistication of Caribbean democrats" mitigate against ideological pretensions by Chávez (p. 113). For Girvan, it remains unclear whether Chávez ac-

tually harbors such designs, since the language that characterizes Venezuelan integration efforts is vague and nonbinding. Caribbean nations needing oil or aid accept Venezuela's largesse precisely because it comes with few strings attached. In exchange, Chávez receives not ideological adhesion but cover for his revolution's permanence in Venezuela (p. 132).

But according to Javier Corrales, this is precisely what marks Venezuela as a threat. Rather than "hard" or "soft" power to achieve geopolitical aims, Venezuela uses "social" power—"based on generous handouts peppered with a pro-poor, distributionist discourse" (p. 32). For Corrales, social power is fundamentally antidemocratic: it erodes democracy at home because unfettered spending requires a lack of institutional checks, and it promotes the erosion of democracy abroad through "the export of corruption" in the form of free cash (p. 35). Yet social power is also unsustainable, according to Corrales, as it creates conflicting goals. For instance, spending abroad—especially with limited returns—means less spending at home, generating dissatisfaction domestically. Public opinion polls analyzed by John Magdaleno seem to suggest as much. Among Chávez supporters and detractors alike in Venezuela, foreign spending consistently meets with significant disapproval (p. 62). For Magdaleno, Chávez spreads oil wealth to seek international support, but doing so mines domestic support for his revolution.

As most essays were written in 2009, at times the collection seems dated. Venezuela's ties with China receive only passing treatment though they have deepened considerably of late. Several authors predict declining oil prices will restrain Chávez, but oil prices have remained high and show few signs of abating. Essays by Maria Teresa Romero and Román Ortiz forecast tensions with Colombia following revelations of Venezuela-FARC ties. But the Juan Manuel Santos administration has surprised many for its rapprochement with Venezuela, for balance of trade reasons, not ideological affinity. Also, former Mexican foreign minister Jorge Castañeda anticipates Venezuela's isolation, but such recent hemispheric ventures as CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations)—rightly critiqued for lack of substance as yet—suggest that such claims are premature.

All told, readers seeking a panoramic introduction to the interplay of oil and diplomacy in contemporary Venezuela will find much of interest in this collection. It has opened pathways for more sustained, better-sourced inquiries to follow.
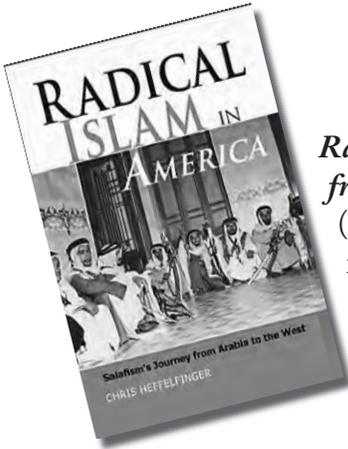
***Radical Islam in America: Salafism's Journey
from Arabia to the West.*** By Chris Heffelfinger.
(Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011. Pp.
x, 181. $23.96 cloth.)

Chris Heffelfinger is an FBI fellow and a good writer. But readers
of his *Radical Islam in America* will have to trust his sources for knowl-
edge about Islamism, radical Islam, or Salafism. Little original research
is contained in this collection
of essays that summarize sec-
ondary sources on the ideol-
ogy. The bulk of the text, a
total of less than 100 pages,
rehashes an Islamophobic nar
rative that the attacks on New

MOHAMED NIMER is assistant professor
with the Washington Semester Middle East
and World Affairs, American University. His
most recent publication is "The Americani-
zation of Islamism," *American Interest*
(July/August 2011).

York and Washington are rooted in the ideology of Salafism, which Hef-
felfinger uses interchangeably with "radical Islam."

No discussion of contrary evidence or conceptualization of this re-
ligious social movement or its alleged connection to jihad and 9/11 is al-
lowed. And although the book is titled to reflect interest in the
American context, most events discussed in the book have taken place
overseas over the course of two and a half centuries. When organiza-
tional links and a money trail fail to pinpoint the connections between
profiled actors and events, ideology is thrown in to fill the gaps in the
story of how radical Islam came to America.

There is much controversy about the meaning of the core terms used
by the author and who fits the definitions of the different categories, but
the book stays away from this discussion. Heffelfinger based his narra-
tive on trusted sources only, without even acknowledging that there are

experts who may disagree with the narrative he chose to promote. This book is written for readers in the law enforcement community struggling to secure the homeland against extremists without violating civil liberties. Unfortunately, this book does not even acknowledge this debate. Nor does the book admit that there are analysts within the law enforcement community who disagree with his "bad cop" approach.

The narrative promoted by Heffelfinger is as follows: Salafism, which started as a call to return to the original sources of Islam by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab in Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century, is antimodern and fundamentalist. The movement's capacities and tactics may have evolved, but not its ideas or goals. Against the judgment of respected scholars in the political and intellectual history of the contemporary Muslim world, the book posits that Wahhabi thinking has been echoed in the intellectual movements in other parts of the Middle East, particularly in Egypt. The oil wealth of the twentieth century offered the movement the resources to expand its reach, allowing it to reach America.

Salafists, who are bent on jihad or "holy war," grasped the opportunity to fight the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The subsequent Russian defeat and the breakup of the Soviet Union gave rise to the most extreme Salafi-jihadis, who then took the fight elsewhere while using Afghanistan as a base. In America, they used Saudi funds to organize. Soon they turned their guns against the remaining superpower. Most major Muslim organizations in America are connected to the movement because they received Saudi funds.

In the American context, the author fails to draw a contrast between a few radical converts and the vast majority of converts who engage in civic activism to express their faith. One chapter includes brief profiles of white and black converts convicted in terrorism cases to show that radical Islam has infiltrated the United States. The answer then is to identify leaders and mosques where radical ideas are preached.

This book came out during the Arab Spring, which revealed to a worldwide audience much diversity and change in the movements of Islamic activism that Heffelfinger lumped under the rubric of Salafism. In Tunisia and Egypt, Salafists joined the prodemocracy demonstrators, then formed at least nine parties in Egypt and two in Tunisia. It turns

out that there is an apolitical scholarly trend within the Salafist move-ment alongside a new political Salafist orientation attempting to take advantage of the margin of freedom created by the revolutions. These two trends are distinct from the larger movement of the Muslim Broth-erhood, which includes a liberal brand in Tunisia and moderately liberal-to-conservative streams in Egypt. None of these trends are connected to Salafi-jihadis or al-Qaeda. Maybe there is reason to believe that Islamic activists who have chosen a path of nonviolence are counting on ex-tremists to deal with America on their behalf.

Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza. By David E. Johnson. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2011. Pp. xxxii, 227. $27.50 paper.)

In an intriguing essay entitled "The Future of Strategic Studies," Thomas G. Mahnken speculated on the main concerns of strategic studies in the next 25 years. Among others he cited were "the applicability of deterrence to terrorists," "to understand the nature of the current conflicts . . . with Al-Qaeda and like-minded groups," and "more research into how militaries transform themselves."* David Johnson's *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza* is a masterful contribution to an understanding of all these issues. Based on meticulous empirical analysis, it draws doctrinal, strategic, and historical lessons from two recent conflicts between a state and extremist nonstate actors. Based on intimate familiarity with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and careful

TAMIR LIBEL is a Marie Curie postdoctoral fellow at University College Dublin. After being awarded his PhD in political science from Bar-Ilan University, he served as a Legacy Heritage Fellow at Kinneret Academic College. He specializes in European security, Israeli military doctrine, and educational and intelligence studies, and has published several articles on these topics in peer-reviewed journals.

analysis of many sources (including rare interviews with senior Israeli officers), he offers a comprehensive review of modern armed forces efforts to adapt to what he termed "hybrid warfare" and its failures and successes.

---

*Thomas G. Mahnken, "The Future of Strategic Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26 (2003), x–xviii.

The book "examines the Israeli experiences in the Second Lebanon War (2006) and Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009) to assess the challenges posed by hybrid adversaries and the military capabilities needed to prevail over them. It describes what happened during the war in Lebanon, why the IDF had difficulty fighting Hezbollah, what corrective measures the IDF took after Lebanon, and what happened during the operation in Gaza" (p. 2). This outline structures the book. After the first chapter explains the purpose and methodology, the second analyzes the Second Lebanon War, "describing the basis of the conflict, the state of the IDF, the challenge posed by the opponent, and the way the operation unfolded . . . [as well as] an assessment of IDF performance" (p. 7). The third chapter analyzes the same aspects of the IDF experience in Operation Cast Lead. The fourth chapter draws lessons for the U.S. Air Force and Army as well as broader U.S. strategy.

Overall, the book succeeds. Its scholastic analysis of these issues is well-balanced and accurate. In several areas, such as the evolution of Israeli air-ground operations, Systematic Operational Design, lessons learned by the IDF and military-intelligence cooperation, Johnson's coverage and analysis are a genuine contribution to scholarship on the Israeli military. Its first-rate collection of maps tracing the development of these conflicts is also commendable. The extensive bibliography will certainly benefit anyone interested in these issues.

A major conceptual weakness of the study is its limited attention to the legal and human rights implications of operational planning and execution in hybrid warfare. Minimizing collateral damage is of special importance, as Johnson himself mentions (p. 130), because nonstate actors often try to drag states to violate international humanitarian law and then conduct "lawfare" against them. While the study mentioned IDF efforts to minimize collateral damage and international scrutiny, especially the Goldstone report, it missed almost entirely extensive IDF efforts to incorporate legal advice during operational planning, its growing attention to shaping a legal framework for national and international forums for discussing the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the diplomatic ramifications of the Second Lebanon War and Cast Lead operations. It could be argued that tactical and especially operational IDF successes were irrelevant because of diplomatic fallout. If war is indeed the continuance of diplomacy by violent means, then Johnson missed a growing

component of the Middle East conflict—the legal front—that increasingly turns Israel's military "successes" into diplomatic troubles, insofar as military victory can engender (diplomatic) failure.

This lack of attention is especially evident regarding the doctrinal and political implications of Israel's growing reliance on firepower. Despite the author's attention to Israeli efforts to minimize collateral damage during the Cast Lead operation (pp. 128–30), his discussion is lacking in two aspects. First, it does not discuss strategic implications. Second, he fails to capture the organizational cultural implications of the perception among Israeli political and military elites that the operations were a "success." Judging from frequent public declarations by senior officers and politicians regarding future conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon, massive collateral damage is a "necessary evil" of ground maneuvers and has become the norm in operational planning. Again the result is operational thinking without strategic awareness or attention to how military force can be used for the implementation of policy aims. As Johnson mentions, this was lacking both in Lebanon and Gaza (pp. 86–89; 121–23). However, he ignores the inherent relationship between choosing a problematic military means (in diplomatic terms) and ignoring the need to relate the use of force to strategic aims.

Finally, one of the book's major strengths is also a potential pitfall. As mentioned earlier, the book relies on an impressive corpus of sources. However, synthesizing so many different kinds of sources creates problems of bias. The book does not differentiate among the types of sources used, which hardly matters when dealing with conflicting opinions, such as casualty figures (pp. 120–1), as Johnson cites the motives and sources of each side. However, it can impact discussions of operational and doctrinal issues, especially regarding the IDF. The Israeli media often rely on the IDF spokesperson unit and are rigorously censored by the military. Thus, press articles about IDF doctrine, force structure, and modus operandi are usually factually accurate but biased in their presentation. They should have been cited more critically or corroborated by more than interviews with IDF officers, as was often done (pp. 32, 38, 43, 44, and 100). As for one of Johnson's major achievements—obtaining access to so many officers and a peek into internal debates and organizational culture—this too creates bias. The two campaigns were causes of contention and those interviewed may have personal agendas. Using their

views and argumentation as the sole source for vast segments of the analysis risks biased analysis. Johnson's close familiarity with the IDF culture, modus operandi, and records mitigates this problem to a large extent, but a more explicit and cautious discussion of that aspect should have been included.
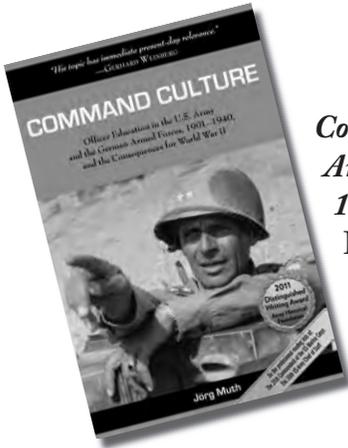
Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II. By Jörg Muth. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2011. Pp. 366. $29.95 cloth.)

Jörg Muth's *Command Culture: Officer Education in the U.S. Army and the German Armed Forces, 1901–1940, and the Consequences for World War II* is a well-researched, careful study comparing the selection, training, and education of American and German army officers in the years prior to the Second World War. There are myriad works covering both of these armed forces during World War II, including the works of Martin von Creveld, Allan R. Millet, John Ellis, John Spector, Geoffrey P. Megargee, and Richard Overy, among many others. Despite this vast scholarship, Muth has found an original question that has not been covered in quite this manner in the past. He explains his central thesis in the work's introduction, in which he argues that the American

PAUL WESTERMEYER is a historian with the U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA, and the author of *U.S. Marines in Battle: Al-Khafji* and the forthcoming *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990–1991: Liberating Kuwait.*

system produced subpar officers who were rigid, close-minded, and poorly prepared to lead, in contrast to the German system, which produced excellent officers who were innovative, open-minded, and flexible.

The work is neatly organized into three parts, each consisting of two chapters. The first part focuses on the initial training of potential officers. One chapter examines the U.S. Military Academy and what its students are taught and the other chapter addresses the *Kadetten* of Germany. In the second part of the book, Muth compares in a similar manner the American Command and General Staff School, as well as the Infantry

School, with the German *Kriegsakademie*. In the final part, Muth discusses his conclusions, from the pre–Second World War U.S. Army to that of the twenty-first century.

Muth's bibliography is extensive and his annotations are well done, but his examination of the American side suffers from an overreliance on anecdote and personal observation. This is explained in part by Muth's assertion that the curriculum itself was flawed in the American system, so the schools were not judging their students on the proper skills and thus not recording the sort of data that would prove or disprove his central thesis.

Muth's thesis rests on the premise that the German *Heer* (army) consistently outperformed the American Army in the Second World War. German officers after the war were certainly happy to proclaim that they were only defeated by superior numbers and materiel, but this differs little from the German military's use of the "stab in the back" myth (or *Dolchstoßlegende*) to explain its defeat in the First World War. And many American officers found the German *Wehrmacht* a convenient example to use when pushing their own reformist agenda.

The relative superiority of the *Heer* over the American Army is a popular idea, and Muth dutifully addresses the work of historians, such as John Ellis, who have strongly supported this view. Muth's notes and bibliography make it clear he is aware of the more recent scholarship that questions the legend of German military efficiency in the Second World War, but he never addresses how this impacts his thesis. The result is a work that extols the virtues of the German officer corps' selection and training while condemning the same for the Americans. Yet the work never addresses how this can be reconciled with the American Army—and its allies—thoroughly defeating the Germans in 1945. The leadership of German officers is praised, but Muth does not discuss the role that coercive military justice played in persuading German soldiers to follow their officers' orders.

Muth may be correct in his conclusions concerning the merits and flaws of the two systems, but in order to show this, much more work would need to be done comparing the German and American armies' performance in the Second World War.

It is difficult to find anyone willing to argue that military officers should be rigid, close-minded, and poor leaders. As history, *Command Culture* presents an excellent examination of the two competing systems of selection and education. Its conclusions comparing the two systems may be flawed, but Muth's description of the German and American officer education systems is of great value.
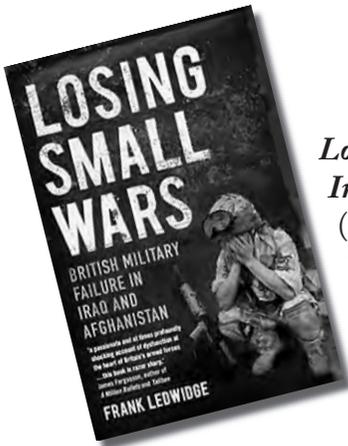
Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan. By Frank Ledwidge. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011. Pp. 308. $38.00 cloth.)

In his discussion of British military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, Frank Ledwidge breaks apart the narrative that Britain is especially adept at fighting small wars, including insurgencies. In a sweeping indictment of British efforts in Basra (after 2003) and Helmand (after 2006), the author argues that although historically the military has been held up as the driver behind the country's small wars successes—the campaigns in Malaya and Northern Ireland are frequently cited—today's British military culture is the cause of its most recent counterinsurgency failure.

A retired naval officer who deployed to Bosnia and Iraq, and later became a civilian adviser to British forces in

BLAGOVEST TASHEV is a researcher at the Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). He is coeditor of *Old Europe, New Europe and the US: Renegotiating Transatlantic Security in the Post 9/11 Era* (2005) and *Establishing Security and Stability in the Wider Black Sea Area: International Politics and the New Emerging Democracies* (2007).

Helmand, Ledwidge does not provide accounts of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, rather he uses them to dissect the British military's— primarily the army's—strategic, structural, and cultural failings in the wars. Although the author does not hide his admiration of the efforts and abilities of soldiers and junior officers, almost no institutions or levels of leadership come out looking good in his analysis. The political leadership is blamed for failing to define clearly Britain's objectives and end states in both conflicts and, accordingly, skipping the essential task

of overseeing the formulation of an overall strategy. However essential the political leadership in war might be, this is not the focus of this book. Ledwidge points out that, facing this lack of political guidance, military commanders failed to make any provisions of their own or to advise political leaders that the absence of political objectives and, in the case of Iraq, preparations for the aftermath of invasion, would seriously endanger the mission.

The lack of strategic focus and planning were worsened by other structural and cultural shortcomings. Although the British army has always been split between its image as a major warfighting service and a counterinsurgency organization, the fact is that its current doctrine, ethos, weaponry, and training define it as a conventional high-intensity warfighting force. This has crucial consequences for how the British army approached the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Trained and equipped to fight limited expeditionary maneuver warfare, the forces, once in nominal control of Basra and Helmand, quickly found themselves fighting a very different war for which they neither planned nor were adequately prepared. Accordingly, lacking an overall strategy, British forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan resorted to capability-led planning. In other words, the missions were defined by what capabilities were available rather than by an overarching strategy. In Helmand, the forces emphasized kinetic operations, leading to mass casualties among the civilian population which, due to memories of British interventions in the province in the nineteenth century, did not want the British forces in the region in the first place. The preference for kinetic operations was also reinforced by the six-month rotation schedule, which forced senior officers to make their mark in the area of operations quickly. The author points out that every single brigade deployed to Helmand had a signature operation—required or not—involving high-intensity kinetic action.

Ledwidge also points out that the British ability to fight insurgencies, and perhaps any conflict, is severely hampered by the structure of the forces. When General Richard Shirreff took command of the British forces in Basra in 2006, he was shocked to find out that, of the 7,000 personnel under his command, only 200 troops were available for patrolling the streets of the city. The rest were committed to providing support and force protection. And if this seemed like an isolated problem

specific to this operation, the author points out that the British armed forces are bloated with overhead; there are, for example, no fewer than 500 general officers (brigadier or above) in a force smaller than the U.S. Marine Corps.

In addition to structural shortcomings, Ledwidge finds British military culture to be inadequate to confront the challenges the army faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. While valuing initiative, action, and warrior ethos, the armed forces do little to nurture critical thinking in officers. This is identified as a problem of education, rather than of training, in which the author claims the army is superb. Comparing the British approach to the American, Ledwidge points out that the armed forces do not spend nearly enough on the lifelong education of their personnel. While in a learning environment, primarily in military institutions, officers and noncommissioned officers are not exposed to diverse opinions and perspectives, while critical examination, let alone dissent, is not encouraged. Very few officers are able to pursue advanced degrees in civilian institutions, while military institutions of higher learning lack in quality. This has a profound effect on the British officers. Facing the chaos of civil wars, they were unable to critically reexamine the problem and adapt accordingly. Instead, they fell back on what they wrongly believed to be the lessons from previous counterinsurgency campaigns. Ledwidge points out that there are lessons to be had from previous campaigns, but British forces seemed to have ignored them. The lessons of previous campaigns were very valuable, the author believes, but the British applied them without taking into account the Basra and Helmand contexts.

Another cultural problem in the armed forces is the lack of sufficient institutional openness and honesty. This is critical as no institution can learn, adapt, and improve unless it encourages critical examination of its own experience. Instead of accepting its responsibility for the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan and learning from them, the British armed forces, particularly the leadership, either blamed the shortcomings on politicians or tried to dominate the public discourse, presenting the missions as success.

In spite of these strong points, the book has two main weaknesses. First, the author frequently uses the U.S. military as the foil to the

British military culture, without critically analyzing the American military experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although critical of the failure of American political leadership to formulate political and strategic objectives, especially in Iraq, the author uncritically accepts the American military culture as better suited to fight in the two wars. Second, part of the book is devoted to pondering what a successful counterinsurgency strategy may look like. This discussion lacks depth and serves as a digression from the narrative's main focus on British military culture.

Overall, the book is a must-read for anyone interested not only in the British experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in how military organizations fight, change, learn lessons, apply lessons learned, and adapt. It challenges long-held beliefs about the performance of an ally and poses a reminder about what can happen when an organization has high regard about its abilities, while doing little to build and maintain actual capabilities.

The opinions expressed in this review are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of either CAOCL or any other governmental agency.
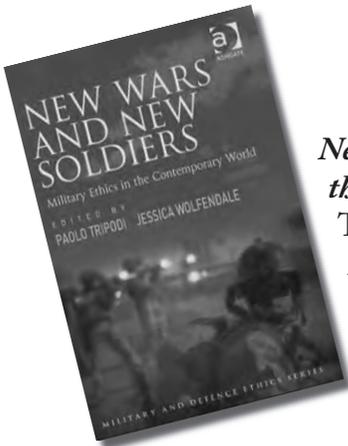
New Wars and New Soldiers: Military Ethics in the Contemporary World. Edited by Paolo Tripodi and Jessica Wolfendale. (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011. Pp. xii, 296. $34.95 paper.)

New Wars and New Soldiers takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of military ethics and the challenges of modern conflict. Consisting of 15 chapters spread over 5 ambitious parts, the editors, Paolo Tripodi and Jessica Wolfendale, have assembled a range of expert opinions from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to "provide a nuanced view of when and how new forms of combat present new ethical dilemmas, and how these dilemmas might be resolved" (p. 4).

The first section steps back from the immediacy of recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to take a fresh look at the claims that the "just war tradition" either needs to be ditched or radically revised. Part two reexamines the question of humanitarian intervention, while part three explores the ethical implications of modern weapons development—specifically the development of what is known as "neurowarfare" and the increasing use of robotics and autonomous weapons systems on the battlefield. The final two parts of the edition explore the question of new actors in the battlefield, such as private military security companies and military anthropologists, and the ethical challenges faced by individual soldiers on the battlefield, specifically in counterinsurgency.

CHARLES REED is the foreign policy advisor to the Church of England as well as a Research Fellow at the London School of Economics' Mackinder Centre for the Study of Long Wave Historical Events. He is the coeditor (with David Ryall) of *The Price of Peace: Just War in the Twenty-First Century* (2007).

All too often, edited collections lack cohesion and are rarely more than the sum of their individual parts. This is not the case with *New Wars and New Soldiers*. Each of the chapters stands on its own, especially those in the final section that deal with combat behavior and training, but the book's underlying premise provides it with a clear sense of structure and direction. The cross-referencing between the chapters is helpful and points to the fact that many of the chapters were first given as papers at a workshop hosted by the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne in 2008.

The strength of this edited collection is the persuasive case that it makes for bringing the insights of theoretical philosophical analysts into conversation with other more recognizable scholars of contemporary military ethics. As Tripodi and Wolfendale set out in the introduction to this edition, "Philosophical and theoretical analysis is crucial to military ethics, since too often developments in the conduct and resort to war outstrip careful analysis of the ethical issues raised by those developments" (p. 4).

In practice, philosophers and theorists have always been an integral part of the ongoing conversation about the ethics of war. The challenge in recent years, however, is whether they can keep pace with the speed and depth of changes taking place. Although there is a regrettable but inevitable time lag in the production of manuscripts such that the focus of study can sometimes appear outdated even before the book hits the bookstores, this is not the case here.

Many of the ethical challenges that the contributors discuss remain pressing even if, as Nicholas Evans and Robert Sparrow make clear in their respective chapters, technological developments are changing and will continue to change the face of warfare, how we prepare for it, and how we rationalise it. As with previous generations of weapons technology, the anticipated developments are likely to challenge our understanding of moral agency and human responsibility and in so doing call into question the elasticity of existing ethical and political frames of analysis.

Yet, in a helpful opening section, Jessica Wolfendale, Stephan Coleman, and Tony Coady take the reader back to first principles to make the all-important point that existing frames of analysis, such as the just war

theory, continue to have utility and traction, but only so long as we remain faithful to the moral principles underpinning the theory. To do otherwise is to risk undermining the normative structure of a theory that is already open to abuse.

In so doing they, and the other contributors, show that from a philosophical and theoretical perspective there is nothing new and unique about modern conflicts that render traditional ways of thinking about the nature and ethics of war either inadequate or redundant. They do show, however, that if these traditions are to help us grapple ethically with the challenges of contemporary warfare, then the continued insights from a wide range of disciplines, especially applied philosophy and public ethics, will be necessary to ensure their evolution. *New Wars and New Soldiers* is a valuable and informative contribution to this process.
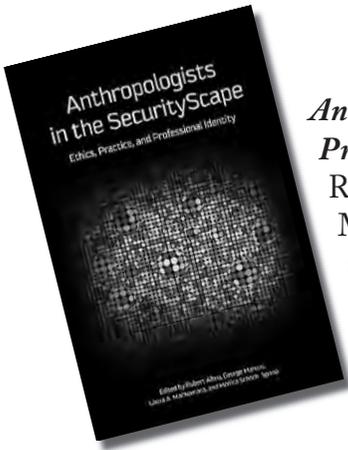
Anthropologists in the SecurityScape: Ethics, Practice, and Professional Identity. Edited by Robert Albro, George Marcus, Laura A. McNamara, and Monica Schoch-Spana. (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012. Pp. 277. $94.00 cloth; $34.95 paper; $34.95 e-book.)

American anthropology's concerns over the treatment of human subjects in national security contexts date back to the 1960s. In 2005, when the Human Terrain System (HTS), which embeds cultural anthropologists with military units, was proposed as a way to help counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it raised the specter of the Vietnam-era Phoenix Program, which used cultural intelligence to target Viet Cong members. Many anthropologists worried that social scientists would be pressed into intelligence roles such as targeting, thereby violating a basic ethical tenet of the profession to use information gained from human subjects responsibly. The HTS program is now institutionalized in the Department of the Army, but it continues to play the role of lightning rod for anthropologists' ethical concerns about working in the military and other national security roles.

AMY ZALMAN designs methods to improve national security analysis at Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), and she owns Strategic Narrative, which promotes people, processes, and tools that use narrative strategically to solve complex problems. Her PhD is from the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. She blogs at http://strategic-narrative.net.

The recent wars, and the potential ethical quandaries they raised for anthropology, are also the provocation for *Anthropologists in the SecurityScape*. The book project began as an outgrowth of the American Anthropological Association's (AAA's) Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities,

which was founded in 2006 in response to CIA efforts to recruit through the AAA. Luckily for its readers, the book does not retread the ethical ground of the mid-2000s, or the all-too-easily caricatured battle of worldviews between people who are trained to kill and break things, and those who take it as axiomatic that the more you know about someone else, the less likely you are to want to kill or break things. (The conflict and the history of HTS are fascinating, but they are ably discussed elsewhere).

When editors Albro, Marcus, McNamara, and Schoch-Spana began looking for contributors to the ethical casebook they had planned, they had an anthropological "Eureka!" moment. Instead of ethical anxiety, they discovered among their contributors a "heterogeneity and diversity that belied often sweeping generalizations about what 'anthropology' would bring to 'security' and what 'security' would do to 'anthropology'" (p. 9). Even more confounding, when asked to talk about their ethics issues at work, many contributors "simply could not identify a specific [ethical] dilemma" (p. 9). This is not to say that ethics disappears from *SecurityScape*. But, as contributors repeatedly make clear, their professional experiences have tended to make their views more nuanced. Rebecca Goolsby, a program officer at the Office of Naval Research, finds her predisposition to see "military culture being one shade of green" replaced with interest in the military's diversity. As she puts it, from her vantage point at the Pentagon, "There are not doves and hawks; nothing is that simple anymore" (p. 19). Not everyone who works in the "SecurityScape" is concerned with counterinsurgency or even war. And, not least, contributors describe many of the same professional concerns as their counterparts in academia, such as finding funding for projects or making sure their research priorities were voiced.

As a result of these discoveries, the editors shift course, and the book becomes a kind of ethnography of the intersecting worlds of national security and anthropology, formatted as a set of dialogues between the editors and 16 practitioners working in various security-related roles. The structure of the book is integral to what it appears ultimately to propose: that the conversation between anthropology and national security has only just begun, and that an ongoing dialogue—like all good relationships—could change both for the better. Each chapter has four parts. Following an introduction by the editors formally describing their po-

sition, each contributor writes an essay about his or her work. A few focus on ethics, but others address concrete aspects of their daily work, and some choose to discuss issues specific to their institutional roles. There are nuggets of advice for others tucked into some: Peter van Arsdale, one of the founders of the program in humanitarian assistance at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, describes the development and execution of a student training initiative carried out with the Romanian military, which he concludes with a set of best practices for field exercises of this sort. Others, like Jessica Glicken Turnley, use a more conversational style to discuss their professional journeys. Turnley charts her efforts to introduce methodological rigor in various roles at Sandia National Laboratories and later at U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Special Operations University. Each contributor's essay is followed by a response from the editors who highlight anthropological issues that the writers raise and connect them to those in other essays. Finally, each contributor responds briefly to the questions or issues raised by the editors.

I admit that as a general reader, I found the contributor essays to be the most compelling part of the book. The individual voices are strong and interesting; the editors' responses sometimes veer into the jargon or specialized tropes of their discipline. However, the dialogues and the editors' carefully drawn links between issues and essays should make the chapters very useful in training and educational settings. Anthropologists in training and those considering careers in national security will certainly benefit, but the national security community is as important as a readership. The globally interconnected nature of the contemporary security landscape requires creative, interdisciplinary approaches to solving problems that acknowledge—even embrace—the complexities of human behavior. The government is going to need people like editor and contributor Monica Schoch-Spana, a senior associate with the Center for Biosecurity of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Schoch-Spana has had a long career in biodefense policy and practice and sees her unique contribution as having challenged the "pernicious image" (p. 105) of everyday citizens as "panic-stricken, socially volatile masses who quickly resort to violence" to get to medicine or shelter. Schoch-Spana is now well known for bringing the concept of "creative coping" to bioterrorism discourse (p. 105), where it has helped change

the nature of community disaster planning. For her, it is "a sense of obligation and commitment to help articulate forms of government" to address health events that keeps her in a sometimes frustrating job (p. 106). Like her 15 equally committed colleagues represented in this volume, Schoch-Spana serves in the valuable role of liaison between two communities that have much to offer each other, but which have distinct and often conflicting worldviews.

Ostkrieg: Hitler's War of Extermination in the East. By Stephen G. Fritz. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011. Pp. 640. $39.95 cloth.)

Between 1941 and 1945, a complex and extensive campaign occurred for the control of the European heartland between two continental powers. By all qualitative and quantitative measures, this was a war in its own right within the context of the global conflict. The author, Stephen Fritz, anchors the war's military events within their larger ideological, racial, economic, and social contexts. By analyzing the broader forces behind many of Hitler's seemingly irrational military decisions, many of his choices begin to make more sense. According to the University Press of Kentucky, the campaign had received surprisingly little attention from Western historians, and this work provides a deeper understanding of the complexity and immensity of Hitler's plans.

CHARLES D. MELSON is chief historian for the U.S. Marine Corps History Division. His most recent book, *Operation Knight's Move*, recounts the German raid against Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito in 1944. It was published by Marine Corps University Press in 2011.

In the past, much of our understanding of the Eastern Front came from the German perspective, as Soviet sources were unavailable, marred by ideology, or limited in circulation. Standard narratives of the Eastern Front focused narrowly on the sweep of military events and ignored the intersection of the war with Hitler's overtly philosophical, racial, and economic plans for the conquered eastern territories. Fritz reestablishes the German-Soviet war as the pivotal theater of World War II, claiming that contrary to popular belief, Hitler did not blunder into the east. The

campaign in the USSR was driven by a complex set of motives: German ideology, desire to create a vast "greater" Germany, material success and rewards, and fear of communism. Hitler understood that a war against the Soviet Union could secure Germany's economic future and expansion, which would guarantee the Reich's racial future. Fritz places the Eastern Front in the context of these motivations, explaining that without a sense of the comprehensively murderous nature of Hitler's aims, the full scope of the war cannot be grasped.

While this broad view of the Eastern Front is informative, this reviewer also appreciated new operational and tactical insights, such as the "legendary" Battle of Prokhorovka in July 1943, which has been portrayed in Western and Soviet literature as the so-called "turning point" of the Kursk offensive and one of the great tank battles of all time. The Germans record that the Soviets lost more than they gained on the battlefield. In order to protect themselves from Stalin's wrath, Guard Tank Army Commanders Pavel Rotmistrov and Nikolai Vatutin, along with Commissar Nikita Krushchev, claimed German losses to equal theirs, and this is what the postwar archives proved false.

Fritz teaches history at East Tennessee State University, and this is his third book about soldiers, civilians, and conflict during World War II from the German perspective. His previous efforts have examined the war as experienced by the common man and woman. In some ways, he has raised his sights with this work, in part, because a broader view was needed to grasp what he considers to be the critical theater of the war. In this he has succeeded in providing a broad narrative that does much to put the events of the conflict in perspective. His explanatory approach helps make a readable narrative.

Fritz's editors felt that he added an important layer to the written history of World War II, synthesizing decades of research by German, British, Russian, and American historians into an accessible and coherent narrative. *Ostkrieg* covers all aspects of the Eastern Front, demonstrating the interrelationship among military events, economic policy, resource exploitation, and racial policy that first motivated the invasion. This in-depth account challenges accepted notions about World War II and provides a greater understanding of one of the most pivotal decisions of modern military history. The author makes use of the variety of

archival and interpretive material that has become available in the last 65 to 70 years. Both German and Russian terms are used in the book without becoming tiresome. The maps and pictures are basic and more could have been done in this area to move the narrative forward, but the text itself is clear enough not to depend on them for understanding.

There are numerous books about World War II and the conflict between Hitler and Stalin from 1941 through 1945. The obvious question is, why is this one worth reading? One answer is this: if one only has time and energy for a single book, then it had best be the most comprehensive narrative available. The author's aim in this case is to provide the broadest coverage of a complex topic. Since 2006, I have read at least six books on the World War II Eastern Front along with two other broader titles on the "war against the Jews" in the East—and Fritz's book fills the need for a comprehensive view under one cover. As such, the military reader will find it of use for both general knowledge and professional military education. It also illustrates the fact that historical events can benefit from continual reevaluation in the light of new evidence.

PCN10600001400