



# Middle East Studies In Review

2012-2013

April 2014



Middle East Studies

at the Marine Corps University

## About Marine Corps University

The mission of Marine Corps University is twofold: 1) to develop, deliver, and evaluate professional military education and training through resident and non-resident programs to prepare leaders to meet the challenges of the national security environment and 2) to preserve, promote, and display the history and heritage of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps University develops the professional competence of its Marine, other service, international, and civilian students. As the Marine Corps proponent for professional military education, the University focuses on the development of leadership, warfighting, and staff operations abilities of the nation's military forces through resident and nonresident learning programs. Graduates are prepared to perform with increased effectiveness in service, joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environments at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war, across the range of military operations.

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The *Review* is available both in print and electronically through the MES website at [www.mcu.usmc.mil](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil) under the "Middle East" tab as well as on Facebook at [middleeaststudies.mcu](http://middleeaststudies.mcu). For information on obtaining print copies, please contact Mr. Adam C. Seitz, Senior Research Associate at MES, [seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu](mailto:seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu), telephone number (703) 432-5260.

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# MES Mission Statement

The mission of Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University is to serve as the Marine Corps' center of expertise on the Middle East and South/Central Asia in order to deepen the Marine Corps' understanding of these critical regions and to link the Marine Corps to the broader academic, intergovernmental, and international Middle East studies community.

Middle East Studies (MES) accomplishes this mission by:

- 1) Analyzing and assessing current events, regional trends, U.S. policy decisions and strategies, and the cultural and historical complexity of the region;
- 2) Conducting and publishing academic research related to the Middle East and South/Central Asia;
- 3) Leading classes, supporting student papers, and offering lectures and discussions on the Middle East and South/Central Asia to Marine Corps University (MCU) schools and other U.S. Armed Forces professional military education institutions;
- 4) Providing lectures and discussions on the Middle East and South/Central Asia to other services and U.S. Government agencies, foreign governments and militaries, and academia/non-governmental agencies;
- 5) Representing the Marine Corps and MCU at seminars and professional forums related to MES's areas of responsibility by participation and professional engagement.

# Forward

Since 2010, the Marine Corps University's Middle East Studies has presented internal and partnered research and analysis in three different forms in order to enrich the Marine Corps' understanding of the complex security environment of the Middle East and to provide accessible, relevant information for Marines, the broader defense community, and academia. The Middle East Studies Occasional Paper Series disseminates original, peer-reviewed research papers on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to the Middle East and South/Central Asia. The MES Monograph Series focuses on timely subjects of strategic relevance to the current and future U.S. Professional Military Education community and is meant to be published quickly to address fast-developing situations. The third and final publication forum is the Middle East Studies *Insights*, published bi-monthly since January 2010 as the newsletter of MES. This publication features short analytical pieces as well as information on events organized by MES and provides a forum for debate with our readers. In April 2012, we published *Middle East Studies in Review 2010-2011*, which presented in one volume articles from the first two years of MES *Insights*.

It gives me great honor to present *Middle East Studies in Review 2012-2013* covering articles from volumes three and four of MES *Insights*. The articles fall within three categories: Iran, the Arab World, and Afghanistan and Pakistan. Within each category, the topics range from macro to micro. Some pieces are current and indeed forward-looking while others deal with past events that continue to have links to issues of strategic and tactical concern today. The *Review* also informs readers of MES activities and of selected engagements by MES staff during 2012 and 2013.

The articles in the *Review* represent the breadth and depth of the scope of MES's research. Of note, this *Review* contains three pieces written by Afghan Hands Marine officers who were attached to MES. MES has had the pleasure of partnering with these Marines in their education and preparation to serve in selective billets in Afghanistan requiring in-depth regional and cultural knowledge and language skills.

We will continue to offer our analysis and assessment of current events and regional trends as well as the cultural and historical complexity of this strategically important region, all the while being mindful of our primary task to serve as a tool in the advancement of the MCU students and community and sister Professional Military Education institutions.

I am looking forward to your continued engagement with our work and to your support by providing us with guidance, criticism, and encouragement.

Amin Tarzi  
Director, Middle East Studies  
Marine Corps University



# MES Insights: Iran

MES Insights • Volume 3, Issue 2 • March 2012

## U.S., Israel and Arab Gulf Perceptions of Iranian Threats

by Anthony H. Cordesman

The United States, Israel, the Gulf states, much of the rest of the Arab world, and many other regional powers perceive Iran as a current or potential threat.[1] Their perceptions do differ sharply, however, in terms of risk, priority, and probability, and they evolve along with changes in Iran's behavior, military forces, and nuclear capabilities. Moreover, perceptions differ within given countries, and there are often serious differences between popular and media perceptions and those of military planners and national security elites.

Every country has its own hawks and doves, and its perceptions of the Iranian threat are heavily influenced by each country's domestic political debates. Talking about nominal threat perceptions of given countries must focus on broad trends and what key officials, officers, and experts perceive—not on the full range of different national views. Public, media, think tank, and open political debates all have an impact on national perceptions. However, such perceptions are based on positions and information that differ sharply from that of the planners, analysts, and policy-makers who have access to sensitive classified information and actually have to deal with the Iranian threat. Accordingly, it is possible to speculate on the details of national perceptions, but an examination of what is said publicly is in no sense a reliable picture of how policy makers actually perceive the Iranian threat in any detail.

These points make it dangerous to generalize about “national” perceptions, when the perceptions of given Americans, Israelis and groups in other countries can differ so sharply. However, to the extent it is possible to generalize about mainstream public perceptions, it is clear that the United States and Israel often see Iran from a different perspective. Further complicating this is the fact that Arab views often publicly take the opposite position of those in Washington and Tel Aviv, with claims of friendship with Tehran, but hold private views that Iran is a growing threat that must be dealt with.

### **Perceptions of the Iranian Nuclear and Missile Threat**

Although most governments and experts perceive Iran's nuclear and missile programs as directed towards giving Iran nuclear weapons and nuclear armed missiles, there are few indications that Americans, Europeans, or the Gulf states perceive this threat as “existential,” or assign it anything approaching the same sense of urgency as Israel. They see this aspect of the Iranian threat more as a way that Iran can increase its strategic leverage and influence, increase its ability to intimidate and



exert political pressure, and deter any military action against Iran in the face of a confrontation or crisis. While there is no consensus among the actors involved, many are more likely than their Israeli counterparts to believe that Iran is containable and deterrable through a mix of steps like missile defenses and regional extended deterrence.

U.S. and European policymakers also act on the perception that the Iranian threat should be dealt with through options like sanctions and negotiations if this is at all possible. Although the U.S. perceives the possible need for military options, it also recognizes that most European countries do not, and it will face major political and diplomatic problems in getting both European and Arab Gulf support unless there is some “smoking gun” in the form of unambiguous new evidence that Iran is developing nuclear weapons on a schedule that makes this necessary.

Although they make it clear that military options remain on the table, U.S. President Barack Obama has noted there are serious risks in trying to contain an Iran that does have nuclear weapons, and key U.S. political and military leaders have publicly voiced their opposition to any near-term strikes on a number of occasions, warning of the destabilizing effect such an option would have in the region, as well as the potential impact on the ongoing U.S. operations in Afghanistan.

Israeli perceptions of the Iranian nuclear threat take on special meaning because of the risk of Israel carrying out a preventive or preemptive strike against Iran. There is little doubt that most Israelis—both at the public and official levels—perceive Iran’s nuclear programs as directed towards producing nuclear weapons that will be deployed on long-range missiles and aimed at Israel. Senior Israeli officials and officers have repeatedly made it clear that they fear this will pose an “existential” threat to Israel in the sense that even one major nuclear strike on a city like Tel Aviv would produce enough casualties and damage to threaten Israel’s cohesion as a state. Such factors have led Israeli officials and defense planners to focus heavily on the threat posed by Iran’s missiles—which already have potential maximum ranges that put any target in Israel within range.

While most Israeli officials would prefer diplomatic solutions—or to have the U.S. take military action—at least some perceive the threat as so serious in broad terms that they are prepared to strike preventively or preemptively to deny Iran the option. It is difficult to know, however, whether Israel is actually ready for such a strike or is using such views—and the threat of preventive strikes—as a political tool in pressuring Iran to give up its nuclear efforts, and the U.S. and other nations to support steadily greater political pressure and sanctions. It seems likely that Israel’s top political and military leaders will only act if they feel they have no choice, and if the Israeli Defense Force concludes such strikes will be effective and produce acceptable costs in return for U.S. and other international interventions. These two ifs, however, are seen as critical issues and present no clear consensus on supporting an Israeli attack at any level in Israel.

Moreover, some Israeli—as well as some outside—experts disagree on whether the extent of Iran’s threat to Israel is more than rhetoric, or whether Iran would risk attacking a nuclear-armed Israel. Some feel that Iran finds Israel to be a convenient stalking horse and way of justifying a massive military and missile build-up that is primarily intended to give Iran leverage over the Gulf and its other neighbors and limit U.S. military freedom of action.

Such differences in perceptions are further complicated by major uncertainties surrounding Iran’s nuclear program—such as the number and location of facilities, how resistant underground facilities are to given methods of attacks, and the speed at which Iran’s nuclear program is advancing in a number of areas. As such, any discussion of relative perceptions of any aspect of the Iranian threat has to be kept in careful perspective. Key data are lacking, uncertain, or disputed. Perceptions of future trends in Iran’s actions range from potential worst cases to diplomatic success and claims that Iran either is not pursuing nuclear weapons or will reverse its course.

## **Perceptions of the Iranian Asymmetric Threat**

Gulf, U.S., European, and Israeli threat perceptions also focus—to varying degrees—on the broader range of Iranian threats. These include the threats posed by Iran’s ties to Syria, its role in Afghanistan, and its broader role in Central Asia. Arab states like Egypt and Jordan have expressed their concern over the potential threat posed by Iran’s relations with Syria and the creation of a “Shiite crescent” that includes Lebanon and could come to include Iraq.

While all of these concerns are shared in broad terms by the U.S., most Gulf states, and Israel, they are given different priorities based on “national” threat perceptions. The Gulf states and the U.S. feel more concerned with Iran’s influence in Iraq and the Gulf than Israel, while Israel feels more threatened by Iran’s links to Hizballah and its role in Lebanon. Even so, the Gulf states are far more sensitive to the asymmetric threats that Iran poses to their territory and petroleum exports than even most U.S. policymakers and national security analysts.

Moreover, Gulf leaders, military officials, and intelligence experts focus more on Iran’s ability to use specialized forces like the Qods Force and key elements of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), as much as its “conventional” forces in asymmetric ways and irregular warfare. This focus has been strongly reinforced in recent months by events in Bahrain, as well as the perception by many Gulf leaders that Iran has supported the Houthi rebels in Yemen and is seeking dominant influence in Iraq by influencing its Shiite political leaders. This raises problems for every Arab Gulf state with a Shiite population—especially in a Bahrain whose Sunni leaders are struggling with unrests from its Shiite-majority. This increases the risk of broader tension and clashes between Shiites and Sunnis throughout the Muslim world.

Finally, while the U.S. and European leaders share many of the concerns of the Gulf states and Israel about the threat Iran poses to the security of the Middle East and Gulf region, they must also focus on role of Iran in Afghanistan and the potential destabilizing effects it could have on ongoing operations in this theater. While Iran’s role has so far been more positive than negative—for example, Iran is now the main transit route for UN food aid to Afghanistan—Iran has also provided some support to extremist groups and could become a far more serious problem if it chooses to be one.

## **Perceptions of the Iranian Conventional Threat**

The U.S., Britain, France, and Arab Gulf states focus far more on Iran’s conventional capabilities than Israel. Israel has only limited interest in the Iranian conventional threat, as Iran does not pose any meaningful conventional land or naval threat to Israel, and has no real capability to use its strike aircraft against Israel with conventional weapons.

Although Iran’s land and naval forces appear to present a serious regional threat on paper, they are aging, of low to moderate capability, and lack modernization, due in large part to Iran’s inability to import advanced modern arms on the scale required to shift the balance. In spite of constant propaganda claims to the contrary, Iran has as yet been unable to create national defense industries that can produce the range of systems required.

At the same time, however, Iran does have large forces that it can use to supplement the forces it is developing for asymmetric warfare, and it has enough mass to make any U.S. invasion of Iran problematic at best. Iran’s conventional naval forces are large enough to present a challenge during the initial phases of any major clash, and they include submarines and minelayers, as well as advanced mines that can be delivered by any surface vessel. Its air and surface-based air defense forces may be aging and weak, but they can still have an effect, and can be used to selectively raid and attack targets in the Gulf region.

Moreover, the U.S. invasion of Iraq stripped away Iraq’s capability to deter and defend against Iran

and act as a regional counterbalance. The U.S., Britain and France, and the Gulf states are, therefore, confronted with at least a decade in which they must maintain enough conventional forces in the Gulf and credible surge capabilities to deter and defend against the full spectrum of the Iranian threat to the Gulf region. They must again focus on building up southern Gulf forces that can deal with the same spectrum of threats, compete with Iran for influence in Iraq, and create Iraqi security forces that can both provide internal security and deter and defend against Iran.

## **Dynamics of U.S. and Israeli Threat Perceptions**

Far too often, the rhetoric of alliance disguises real differences in national interest, while the rhetoric of politics exaggerates them. The U.S. and Israel share a common perception that Iran is a threat, they have agreed Iran is at the point where it has all the technology to produce nuclear weapons, and they agree that Iran could probably deploy nuclear-armed missiles within three years if its programs are not halted and a common focus on the threat posed by Iran's long-range missiles and potential nuclear capabilities. They do, however, have different priorities and perceptions of this aspect of the Iranian threat. They share some perceptions of the asymmetric threat but have a fundamentally different focus and set of concerns and priorities.

The U.S., Israel, Arab Gulf states, and other outside powers all face the problem that today's threat perceptions are based on very limited ability to project Iran's force plans and capabilities in the future. While Iran and Israel are already beginning the equivalent of a nuclear arms race, the scale and nature of this race will only be clear when—and if—Iran actually acquires and deploys nuclear armed forces.

The U.S. and Israel agree that the risks are so high that they must plan for a military option, and the U.S. seems to be less and less confident that containment is an option. At the same time, Israel and the U.S. have a different sense of urgency and different strategic priorities. They also very different capabilities both to strike and to wait out Iran's creation of more hidden and sheltered facilities, and different perceptions of the risk of exercising military options. However, many key details of U.S. and Israeli intelligence assessments and war plans are so classified that there is no way to estimate how their threat perceptions will be translated into either specific military options or their future willingness to exercise them.

Seen broadly, this means that the U.S., Israel, the Arab Gulf states, a range of state and non-state actors, and Iran are all playing the equivalent of three dimensional chess from different positions on the board. They also are playing a game where the key pieces are always in constant motion, where they can only see part of the moves of other players, where it is often unclear who is an ally or adversary in any given part of the game, and where both the game boards and rules constantly change and evolve. The only thing that is certain is that the U.S. and Israel should cooperate as fully as they can, understand they have different needs as well as many common interests, and they only way to win is to accept the sheer complexity, uncertainty, and full range of risks in playing an extraordinarily dangerous game.

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### **Notes:**

[1] For a detailed analysis of the evolving Iranian threat, see Anthony H. Cordesman and Alexander Wilner, "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance I: The Conventional and Asymmetric Dimensions," <http://csis.org/publication/iran-and-gulf-military-balance-i-conventional-and-asymmetric-dimensions>; and "Iran and the Gulf Military Balance II: The Missile and Nuclear Dimensions," <http://csis.org/publication/iran-and-gulf-military-balance-ii-missile-and-nuclear-dimensions>.

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## Disturbing Questions on Nuclear Deterrence

by Gabriel Avner

Frequently when a state finds itself in a position of genuine weakness, it will seek out courses of actions that it believes will best secure its interests at the lowest possible cost. Since its 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has attempted to ensure its status as a dominant regional power. In addition to its considerable conventional military forces and heavy handed influences in the affairs of regional states, many in the international community now contend that the Shiite regime is attempting to achieve nuclear weapons capabilities. With a rapidly deteriorating economy and a deadly fear of Western backed regime change, the leadership is desperately seeking the proper balance to ensure the continuance of their regime. While it would stand to reason that a regime on the defensive would choose to pursue nuclear deterrence, an analysis of the costs and benefits might explain why certain policies might prove to be less practical than they might appear upon first glance.

The Islamic Republic now faces its greatest perceived threats in recent memory. The economy has been hard hit with high levels of unemployment and inflation. In 2010, the rial was valued at around 9,000 rials to the dollar. It now trades for somewhere between 12,000 to 19,000 according to the inflated official and black market rates respectively. Sanctions from the West aimed at raising the cost of nuclear development have significantly affected the price of imports and are rapidly depleting crucial foreign currency reserves. The American led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan along with the decade of neoconservative political rhetoric have further convinced the Shiite theocracy that the longevity of their domestically unpopular regime is under threat.

More often than not, a regime will misplay their nuclear hand. Possession of nuclear weapons comes with certain advantages. In the case of the Islamic Republic and other semi-isolated states, it can mean a veto against foreign intervention within their sphere of influence. For some, it has ensured the continuance of their regime that otherwise would have been overthrown long ago. However these advantages often come at a great cost, turning a contentious regime into a pariah state. At the same time, abandoning one's nuclear weapons program can severely weaken a leadership that lacking their key bargaining chip, becomes vulnerable to overthrow. The two ideal cases of these principles can be seen in the dealings between the West and North Korea as well as the fall of Muammar Qadhafi. The North Korean dictatorship inherited by Kim Jung Il was a starving state facing the combined South Korean and American military forces sitting on its border threatening regime change. Kim realized that he could ensure his regime's security through developing nuclear weapons. While it is true that he has managed to secure monetary aid and assurances against intervention, Kim further established North Korea as a pariah state cut off from most of the international community. On the other side of the spectrum is Libya's former dictator Muammar Qadhafi. In the wake of the fall of Saddam Hussein, Qadhafi opted to surrender his weapons of mass destruction programs in hopes of avoiding a fate similar to the Iraqi leader. This strategy appeared to be successful until the 2011 uprising by his people that was aided by Western powers, most of whom would never have considered confronting Qadhafi had he maintained his arsenal of deterrence.

In considering these cases of cost benefit analysis gone wrong, the parameters of actions open to

Iran assists in assessing how the regime is likely to proceed with their program. Iran cannot afford to become a total pariah due to its dependency to access global energy markets. Oil exports are estimated to comprise over 60 percent of state revenues. Iran is also unlikely to give up what is a nationally popular program while fears of Western imposed regime change appear to be imminent. There is perhaps a third middle ground option that would allow both sides to save face while maintaining their primary objectives. Whether the course will include International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors at nuclear sites or assurances for continued low level enrichment, there are numerous creative solutions that could be expected to rise out of a negotiated agreement is yet to be seen. What is certain is that a continuance of the status quo is untenable for all sides involved. With the effects of sanctions biting away at the economy and the threat of an oft predicted Israeli air strike in the spring, the clock is ticking for such a compromise to be found. One can only hope that the regime will be able to sort out their internal calculations in time.

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## The Safeguard of the Iranian Regime: Nuclear Weapons Program

by Amin Tarzi

The most recent round of nuclear talks between representatives from the permanent five members of the UN Security Council and Germany (known as P5+1) and from the Islamic Republic of Iran in Geneva ended on 24 November 2013. Unlike previous sessions, these talks resulted in the signing of an interim agreement, a step towards resolving the ongoing impasse over the nature and scope of Iran's nuclear program. The fundamental, if unstated, concern in the calculations of most of the Western representatives among P5+1 as well as some other involved states is the nature of the Iranian regime. For Iranian side, the crux of its nuclear gambit is the safeguarding of Islamic Republic system established in 1979. Resolving the Iranian nuclear impasse through such negotiations will have a lasting and perhaps irreversible impact on the role and politics of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in international affairs. WMD's political currency would gain more value, as one of the means to safeguarding unsavory regimes around the world which stand in opposition to accepted international norms of behavior, specifically those that try to challenge the Western norms and policies.

### Iran's "Heroic Flexibility"

The victory by Hasan Rouhani in the June presidential elections of the Islamic Republic of Iran ushered in new hope and opportunity for the United States and its European allies to try to achieve their broadly stated strategic objective of not allowing Iran to become nuclear weapons capable. While almost all analysts of Iran regard the election of Rouhani as a great surprise, few doubt the

new president's credentials as perhaps one of the most longstanding and devoted sons of the Islamic Republic system. Going against the trend, I have argued that Rouhani's election was not a surprise and that the system or regime (*nizām*) of Iran calculated that the system required a total facelift both domestically and internationally in order to safeguard its existence.

Iran is experiencing dire economic conditions, brought on by a combination of the toughest, most effective, and broadly-backed international economic sanctions imposed on a country and the gross economic mismanagement by presidential policies. Furthermore, Iran's radical behavior, especially former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's bellicosity, has isolated Iran in the international arena. Iran has been left with few friends and vulnerable to the possibility of military strikes on its nuclear facilities by the United States or Israel or a combination thereof. Perhaps most damaging for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the impact of his hitherto unprecedented open support of Ahmadinejad before the controversial 2009 presidential elections and the regime's brutal suppression of the popular mass demonstrations following the elections. These tarnished the assumed impartiality and absolute supremacy of his office—the core of the Islamic system of Iran—bringing him to the level of *primus inter pares*. Additionally, the balance of power between the Supreme Leader and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), formed to safeguard the regime, has been shifting in favor of the IRGC, to the point that the Supreme Leader almost appeared to be becoming dependent on it. My assertion is that Khamenei and his close associates sensed that, after eight years of Ahmadinejad's presidency, the system was in danger of being challenged from within through an economic meltdown, mass protests, and political wrangling and thus orchestrated Rouhani's election.

Rouhani's main mission, with Khamenei's full blessing and support, is safeguarding the Islamic Republic system. To that end, his government's first objective is to alleviate the stifling international sanctions to better the economic environment. In my estimation, the Iranian leadership has offered to negotiate on limiting the scope of its nuclear program in the hopes of a reversal or lessening of the sanctions. Doing so would potentially regain broader support for the system, at least internally, and also help to bring Iran back from its ostracized status with the Western world.

It must be remembered that in the mindset of Khamenei and perhaps others among the top leadership of Iran, the West's animosity towards the Islamic Republic is not due to the country's nuclear program, but rather its political regime. Their mistrust of the West stems from the conviction that the West's ultimate strategic aim, especially that of the United States, is to change the Iranian regime to a subservient and dependent client system. In this line of thinking, the United States and some of its allies would regard any change of behavior by the Islamic Republic in the nuclear field as an opportunity to defang Iran and set the stage to deal with Iran in the same manner as with Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011. Therefore, the Iranian leadership has cast its recent diplomatic initiatives surrounding its nuclear program as “heroic flexibility,” invoking a truce initiated by Hasan bin Ali, Shi'a Islam's second imam, in 661 to avoid bloodshed within Muslim community. Likening his country's “flexibility” to a wrestling match, Khamenei cautioned Iran's negotiators that “a good wrestler at times shows flexibility due to technical reasons but does not forget his opponent or his main goal.”

### **WMD and Regime Survival**

At first glance, the interim deal can be regarded essentially as a positive step for nonproliferation of WMD. If implemented to its fullest stated spirit by the United States and other Western states, the deal will prevent Iran from becoming a state armed with nuclear weapons. On the other hand, it can be seen as a negative step in overall nonproliferation aims of the post-World War II international security system. Consider how six of the major global powers played to the tunes of the Iranian regime. Some of states backing the Geneva agreement have accused the Islamic Republic of Iran of being a top sponsor of international terrorism; a denier of the right of existence of another

member state of the United Nations; an interferer in the affairs of its neighbors; and a gross violator of human rights internally. So why would the West bend so much to appease such a system of government? Of course, there are myriad of external and internal reasons for each one of the P5+1 to support such an agreement beyond ensuring that the number of states with overt or opaque nuclear weapons capability stay at the current number of nine. One is to avoid an armed conflict over Iran's nuclear program. There is also a realization in most of the capitals of the Western members of the P5+1 that sustaining the current international sanctions regime may prove problematic in light of the Iranian presidential results. There has been a shift in presidential gestures towards Israel that may weaken international resolve on maintaining such a tough sanctions regime. The image of the smiling, soft-spoken Rouhani who sends personal greetings to Jews around the world on Rosh Hashanah is in sharp contrast to that of his predecessor who was denying the existence of the State of Israel and that the Holocaust had taken place. Perhaps there is also a growing fatigue in dealing with the Middle East where politics have become more complicated and have gone beyond the control of a regime or a monarch. And of course, there are the oil and gas considerations. An Iran that relatively adheres to international norms of behavior can impact positively global hydrocarbon politics, including supply, transportation and price.

Whatever their rationale, the P5+1 eagerly met with Iran at the most senior political levels and have allowed the regime in Tehran to save face, slowly emerge from under the economic burden of sanctions, and pave the way for a possible end of its political ostracism. This has provided a much-needed six-month long lifeline to the regime, a regime that since 2009 has been feeling very uneasy about its ability to preserve its system of governance.

An argument can be made that the West came to the negotiating table with Iran due to Iran's nuclear program. Tehran tried, even if it did not have the intention to produce nuclear weapons, to show that its intentions were far beyond producing fuel for nuclear energy or to produce medical isotopes. Iranian leadership's calculation is that the United States respects a nuclear weapons potential. As such, the U.S. will deal with any state that showcases a determination to acquire such a capability and not move to destabilize states which have a nuclear weapons capability outside of the P-5, which are the only recognized nuclear weapon states under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This calculation is based on the premise that U.S. behavior towards Pakistan and North Korea would have been different if these two states did not possess nuclear weapons. Iranian leadership is also convinced that the United States invaded Iraq in 2003 only after it was sure that there were no nuclear weapons in that country. In addition, Khamenei has been especially vocal in the case of Libya where he believes that Muammar al-Qadhafi had struck a deal with Washington to give up his nuclear weapons program in exchange for an agreement with the United States to safeguard his rule and perhaps that of one of his sons as his successor.

While all of the cases discussed above have involved nuclear weapons, the latest example of WMD providing a lifeline to a besieged regime has involved chemical weapons. By using chemical weapons against civilians and opposition fighters in the Syrian civil war and then agreeing to their dismantlement under international supervision, the regime of President Bashar al-Asad has in effect bought itself precious time to regroup and try to hold on to power. Inspectors from Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have concluded that it will take until mid-2014 at the earliest to destroy all of Syria's declared chemical weapons. While the Syrians are primarily responsible for destroying their own stockpile of chemical weapons, there remains a need for supervision by OPCW and United Nations inspectors, requiring security and access to Syrian governmental sites. Furthermore, some weapons have to be transported out of Syria. These require a government interlocutor on the Syrian side. Ironically, by using a prohibited weapon, the regime of Bashar al-Asad has helped its legitimacy. By continuing its cooperation with OPCW while prolonging the process to destroy its chemical weapons, it may have buttressed its survival.

For countries like Iran, the key takeaway from these examples is that WMD matters and can get

otherwise unsavory and dangerous regimes a seat at the table with the big powers and offer it legitimacy and survival.

The next six months will be crucial not only with regards to Iran, but also for the overall security architecture dealing with belligerent regimes with the potential of acquiring WMD programs. The Geneva interim deal is only a starting point. The P5+1 negotiators still have a daunting task of maintaining unity of purpose in limiting Iran's "right" to enrichment to no more than five percent while pressing for the curtailment of all other aspects of Iran's nuclear program such as production of heavy water and the technology and production of long-range nuclear capable delivery systems and deliverable nuclear warheads. Without the latter as part of a long term agreement, the Iranian regime would gain freedom from the economic sanctions as well as access to the restricted technologies currently prohibited due to the sanction regime. The Iranian regime would survive because of illicit nuclear activities and would preserve the knowhow of nuclear weapons production. In short, this would be a very dangerous precedent to set for the perceived or real value of WMD in global security calculations.

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## Iran's Policies Towards Afghanistan

by Amin Tarzi

Since the demise of the Taliban regime in late 2001, Iran's policies towards Afghanistan have seemed confused or contradictory at times; however, they have fed into Tehran's complex regional political gaming. Understanding how these apparent contradictions have served Iran's goals will assist in discerning which direction Iranian policy may take in the coming years and what Iran's power projection may be within Afghanistan post-2014. In Tehran's calculations, there are three critical phases in Iran's approach to post-Taliban Afghanistan, and each demands a multifaceted policy agenda whose goals, while interconnected, appear contradictory at times. The first phase began with the Bonn process and continued with the subsequent international military presence in Afghanistan through 2008. In 2008, the second phase started and focused on securing Iran's interests in shaping the drawdown of the NATO led-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan. The final phase will begin in 2014 as ISAF combat units withdraw. In this last phase, the shape of Iran's political agenda has yet to be determined; however, the political machinations have begun so that Tehran is positioned to serve its national interests.

Tehran has been both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in its dealings with and about Afghanistan. Tehran has foiled the success of certain United States policies in Afghanistan while at the same time safeguarded against a total failure of that country in Afghanistan. Iran provided substantial economic and reconstruction assistance to western Afghanistan, yet funded and equipped the armed opposition, including the Taliban. Additionally, Iran has acted as perhaps the most active neighbor of Afghanistan in countering narcotics, while the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps' Qods Forces are not only trafficking in narcotics, but are also using the smuggling routes to assist the Taliban. In another example, Iran has provided financial and political support to President Hamid Karzai as well as funded his opponents and critics.

There are less contradictory aspects of Tehran's goals as well. During the first two phases



identified above, Iran has sought to expand its reach into Afghanistan. This policy serves obvious economic and strategic aims of securing markets and allies to Iran's eastern flank, furthering its regional hegemonic goals, and curtailing the influence of Pakistan. Tehran has structured its policies to nurture old alliances and forge new ones among almost all ethnic groups of Afghanistan and within both the Shiite and Sunni populations to have chips on every number of the Afghan roulette table in case of the ball falls in a number not liked by Tehran in the third phase after 2014. This is reminiscent of Iran's playing host to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a staunch Sunni Pashtun, soon after the Taliban took control of Kabul in September 1996 and Tehran's favoring the Sunni, Ahmad Shah Masud, over their longstanding Shiite allies, Hezb-e Wahdat, during the Afghan civil war in the mid-1990s. Afghanistan also is part of Iran's greatness narrative—something with which both the Islamic Republic and its predecessor monarchy seemed to have been preoccupied. A large part of Iran's master narrative of imperial greatness is based on the geographic area that currently is Afghanistan. This territory was the hub of ancient Iranian culture and where Persian language witnessed its revival after the onslaught of the Arabic language and culture from the west by Muslim armies. Without Afghanistan being within Iran's sphere of influence, at least culturally, it would be difficult for future Iranian policymakers to claim the status of regional power. Furthermore, the linking of Iran's Chabahar port to the Indian-built Zaranj-Delaram highway in Afghanistan's Nimroz Province effectively circumvents Pakistan's exclusive position as Afghanistan's main access to world markets.

After the plans for the gradual withdrawal of ISAF combat forces from Afghanistan by 2014 were determined during the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit, Iran began to recalibrate in earnest its Afghan policies to reflect the new realities. From Tehran's perspective, the future of its involvement in Afghanistan remains uncertain, and it should be expected that the Iranians will continue to use both Jekyll and Hyde policies as long as the current governing structure maintains its legitimacy in Afghanistan. However, there are a few new elements that are affecting Iran's decision-making process. First, Iran is watching the reconciliation process with the Taliban and the Taliban's potential for a political future in Afghanistan. Tehran should be expected to resist a successful reconciliation process whereby the Taliban renounce violence, cut their ties with al-Qaeda, accept the provisions of the Afghan constitution, and respect the rights of women and minorities. Iran's cementing of alliances, both old and new, is partly to counter an unsavory political outcome in Kabul and to ensure Iran has military allies should the situation escalate to civil war.

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# MES Insights: Arab World

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## Ankara Moves Closer to Washington: How the Arab Spring Warmed U.S.-Turkish Relations

by Soner Çağaptay

U.S.-Turkish relations entered into a tumultuous period with the Iraq War in 2003. This difficult phase in bilateral ties appears to have ended with the beginning of the Arab Spring.

Until recently, disagreements on a number of issues—such as how to deal with Iran's nuclearization—undermined Washington's historical bond with Ankara.

Today, however, the United States and Turkey are closely cooperating, with President Barack Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan having formed what is probably the strongest relationship between a U.S. president and a Turkish prime minister in decades. The shifting political winds across the Middle East are also bringing Turkey and the United States closer than they have been since their falling-out in 2003 over the Iraq war.

### **Washington Opens a Direct Line with Ankara**

President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan have developed a close relationship and this personal rapport is the foundation of the new U.S.-Turkish relationship. Until last year, Turkey's relationship with Washington was wavering: Ankara's Iran policy was oscillating, which often challenged Washington's efforts to impose internationally backed sanctions on Tehran.

In June 2010, for example, Turkey voted at the UN Security Council against a proposal for U.S.-imposed sanctions. For about two months, it looked as though this vote would sever U.S.-Turkish ties. But the straightforward conversation President Obama had with Prime Minister Erdogan on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Toronto in July 2010 prevented that scenario.

The U.S. President chose to simply tell the Turkish prime minister how upsetting Turkey's UN vote had been to Washington. Such candor helped clear the air between the two. And Turkey's policy soon changed: Ankara stopped defending Tehran and began working more closely with Washington.

Since then, the relationship has been on the upswing. The two leaders speak often—at least a dozen times in 2011 alone—and frequently agree on policy. Turkey's statements in support of the Arab Spring led President Obama to appreciate Turkey, a Muslim NATO member that uniquely satisfies Washington's quest to find powerful allies that have a majority-Muslim population and are happy to work with the United States.

## **Ankara Reconsiders its Middle East Policy after the Arab Spring**

Whereas the personal relationship between President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan helped prepare the hypothetical groundwork for rebuilding U.S.-Turkish ties, the Arab Spring has unexpectedly made this a reality by aligning U.S. and Turkish interests in the Middle East.

In 2002, when Turkey's newly elected Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by Mr. Erdogan, began a policy of rapprochement with the country's Middle Eastern neighbors, including Syria, the hope was that this would start integration between Turkey and its neighbors, creating something similar to the 1950s "Benelux" bloc of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Ankara also hoped to benefit from this process by building soft power across the Muslim Middle East, in hope of rising up as a regional leader.

Until the Arab Spring, this policy seemed to be largely inconclusive because of the hard reality on the ground: Turkey's counterparts in rapprochement were not its neighboring peoples, but rather their undemocratic regimes.

Syria is a case in point: whereas Ankara hoped to reach out to the Syrian people, the Bashar al-Asad regime took advantage of its close ties with Turkey, a member of NATO, to gain legitimacy while oppressing its people.

The Arab Spring has ended the political mirage. Even though Ankara repeatedly asked President Al-Asad to stop killing civilians, he chose to ignore these calls—demonstrating that there was never true rapprochement between Turkey and Syria, and that Ankara had been unsuccessful in establishing effective soft power over Damascus.

Subsequently, Ankara has slammed Al-Asad, emerging instead as the chief regional opponent of his policies. This is Ankara's new policy toward the Arab Middle East: leading the world in dropping dictators in favor of the pro-democracy movements, from Egypt to Libya to Syria.

After Ankara concluded that dictators such as Libya's Muammar al-Qadhafi and Syria's Al-Asad would fall—sooner or later—once they are challenged by the masses, Washington and Ankara began coordinating their policies on the Arab Spring.

Cooperation has been especially deep toward Syria. Turkey has emerged as the region's key opponent of the Al-Asad regime's crackdown on demonstrators, which also is approved by Washington, which hopes for a "soft landing" in Syria—an end to Al-Asad's rule without the country descending into chaos. Washington appreciates that Ankara is willing to bear the burden of policy toward Syria, from imposing sanctions against Al-Asad to supporting the opposition, following a strategy led by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

## **While Iran Drives Turkey Closer to Washington**

The upswing in U.S.-Turkish ties is likely to last also because of increasing tensions between Ankara and Tehran.

In 2002, when Mr. Erdogan took office, Ankara decided to warm up its ties with Tehran. Then, with the start of the Iraq War in 2003, Turkey and Iran became, in a sense, friends. Alarmed by the U.S. military presence to its east in Afghanistan and to its west in Iraq, Tehran concluded that it needed to win its neighbor Turkey to break the grip of the U.S.-led ring of isolation forming around it. Iranian support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) ended the day U.S. troops started landing in Iraq.

Eight years later, Tehran is re-evaluating its strategic environment. With U.S. troops leaving Iraq and Iran gaining more influence there, Tehran feels that it can act differently towards Turkey.

What is more, Turkey's return as a major player in the Middle East has stirred competition with the region's other country seeking hegemony, Iran. A soft rivalry started between the two countries when they supported opposing factions in Iraq's 2010 elections. This struggle has given way to outright competition over Syria, with Tehran supporting and funding the Al-Asad regime and Ankara supporting and hosting members of the opposition.

Turkey has emerged as the key opponent of the Syrian regime's crackdown. It has threatened action against Al-Asad if the killing does not stop. In response, Damascus has decided to make things difficult for Turkey. U.S. and Turkish officials suggest that the Syrian regime might, once again, be allowing PKK activity in its territory.

Since Damascus is aware that it would likely face a Turkish invasion if it were to allow PKK attacks from its territory into Turkey, it has turned to its ally Tehran for assistance.

Tehran, already annoyed that Turkey is trying to diminish Iranian influence in Iraq, has been glad to help. Iran desperately needs to end Turkey's policy of confronting Al-Asad. If not countered, this policy will usher in the end of the Al-Asad regime in Syria, costing Iran its precious Levantine client state. Hence, Iran's age-old strategy against Turkey has been resuscitated: using the PKK to attack Ankara from another country in order to pressure Turkey.

Accordingly, since the beginning of summer 2010, the PKK has attacked Turkey from Iraq, killing almost 150 Turks as well as kidnapping dozens of people.

Thus forms the Middle Eastern "PKK circle": the more people Al-Asad kills, the more hard-line Turkey's policies will become against Syria. This will, in turn, drive Iranian-Syrian action against Turkey through PKK attacks from Iraq.

Turkey, Iran and the Al-Asad regime are locked in a power game over Syria's future. Either Ankara will win and Al-Asad will fall, or Tehran will win and Ankara, hurt by PKK attacks, will quit and let Syria be.

In the long term, the Turkish-Iranian rivalry will bring Ankara closer to Washington, and perhaps even to Israel, or at least halt further deterioration of Turkish-Israeli ties.

Events in Iraq already provide the basis for further cooperation between Washington and Ankara. With the United States having withdrawn its troops from Iraq, Turkey and Iran will be competing economically and politically to gain influence in Iraq, and this issue is already bringing Ankara closer to Washington.

Accordingly, not a day goes by that yet another Iranian official threatens Turkey. Take for instance, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Hoseyni Khamenei's military adviser Major-General Yahya Rahim-Safavi's October 2010 warning: "Turkey must radically rethink its policies on Syria, the NATO missile shield and promoting Muslim secularism in the Arab world or face trouble from its own people and neighbors."

Such threats have driven, at least in part, Ankara's 2011 decision to take part in NATO's missile defense project. In fact, this decision can be seen as the sharpest Turkish rebuke to Iran over the past decade.

Today's Middle East-oriented Turkey, anchored in NATO, is a greater threat to Iranian interests than the merely pro-Western Turkey of the past. Accordingly, there is a chance that Iran might become even more aggressive towards Ankara. Some analysts suggest that the Iran's Qods Force, the special-operations unit of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, might be connecting with the PKK in northern Iraq to target Turkey and also the Iraqi Kurds.

## Looking Forward

There are still some tensions between Washington and Ankara, including the future of Turkish-Israeli relations. However when a flotilla sailed from Turkey to Gaza in early November 2011, the White House asked Ankara to allow no Turks on board the ships, in order to avoid a repeat of the May 2010 incident in which nine Turks on Gaza-bound ships were killed by the Israelis. Ankara obliged, and a crisis was averted.

Nonetheless, there is hope for the future of the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Just as Israel appears keen to find a way to build bridges with Ankara, Turkey, too, would be well served to repair its relationship with Israel. Ankara is currently enjoying increased power in the Middle East. To maximize its influence in the region, though, Turkey will need good ties with all the states in the region, including Israel. This means moving past the 2010 flotilla incident to rebuild these relations.

What is more, both Turkey and Israel face a new and challenging regional landscape. Consequently, both countries would be well served to focus on pressing security issues, rather than devoting precious resources to confronting each other.

Israel's current security situation is a prime example of why it should not wish to add another state—especially one as powerful as Turkey—to its "watch list." Iran poses the most serious challenge to Israel by marching toward a nuclear weapons program. In addition, Iran can mobilize Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other radical terror groups to target Israel and the peace process with the Palestinians. Israel also faces new security challenges, such as the Arab Spring's historic transformation of its neighbors. Not only has Egypt become a bigger concern for Israel than in the past, but Israel must also devote resources to watching Syria if and when President Bashar al-Asad falls.

Turkey also stands to benefit from improved relations with Israel. Until recently, Ankara's policy of "zero problems with neighbors" yielded positive results in the Middle East: Turkey's relations with Iran improved and Ankara and Syria became close allies. Turkey also pacified the terror attacks of the PKK, and even mediated peace between Israel and Syria.

Now, Turkey's problems with its neighbors have resurfaced. Ankara's opposition to the Al-Asad regime's crackdown on demonstrators has earned Damascus' hostility once again, and has placed it on a collision course with Tehran, which defends Al-Asad's crackdown. Turkish-Iranian competition, which began with Tehran and Ankara's support of opposing factions in Iraqi elections, will be further exacerbated if Syria descends into even greater chaos. Signs are emerging that Iran may even resort to its past policy of using the PKK against Turkey.

Given the new environment in the Middle East, Israel appears to be thinking of restoring ties with Turkey, and analysts suggest that Ankara seems interested in doing the same. This time, though, the Turkish-Israeli relationship might have a different foundation: whereas Turkey and Israel allied in the past because they needed the other's friendship, they must now ally because they do not need the other's enmity. Fortunately, a solid foundation for renewed relations already exists: despite their political differences, trade between the two countries is booming, having risen by over 30 percent in 2011, and there are reports of back-room diplomacy already happening.

After a decade of discord with the United States, Turkey's ties with Washington have improved significantly over the course 2011. While the Obama-Erdogan relationship has established a new foundation for U.S.-Turkish ties, it appears that the two countries will be bound by common interests in the Middle East even after these leaders leave office.

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## Bahrain's New Security State Breeds Instability

by Kristin Smith Diwan

On September 4th, a Bahrain appeals court upheld the conviction of 20 opposition figures, including eight leading activists sentenced to life terms. The decision marked the latest decisive step away from a political solution to Bahrain's domestic unrest, which has been unrelenting since the crackdown of the Pearl Uprising in March 2011. It is clear that Bahrain's government is unwilling—or unable—to engage its domestic opposition. Having survived a broad popular mobilization for political reform or, for some, revolution, the ruling al-Khalifa family seems content to manage the inevitable fallout of near constant domestic political protests and intermittent international criticism. Those in power have calculated that the protective embrace of Saudi Arabia, whose entry at the head of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force closed down Bahrain's Arab Spring, will help the monarchy weather any economic and security challenges that arise.

Yet one should not mistake the security of the monarchy for social stability. Divisions in the ruling family and the competition among royal factions are fomenting deep rifts within society. This divide is most apparent in Sunni-Shiite polarization, but divisions are also increasing within each sect. Moreover, the extremists among them are gaining over the moderates in the absence of any political program for reconciliation and reform. The position of the United States in the country is also imperiled as both Sunni and Shiite hardliners fuel resentments against it. The dangers of fragmentation at both the state and societal level are particularly troubling within the regional environment of GCC-Iran tensions and struggle over Syria, enabling the mobilization of Sunni and Shiite networks from the Gulf to the Levant.

### **The Pearl Uprising and the deepening sectarian divide**

Bahrain's Pearl Uprising of February-March 2011 presented the population with two competing narratives. The youth movements that initiated the protests sought to link them to the Arab popular revolts in Tunisia and Egypt against regime corruption and authoritarianism. The opposition political societies that joined the demonstrations—including the Shiite Islamist al-Wafaq and the secular leftist al-Waad—then worked to harness them to serve their longstanding goals of achieving constitutional and electoral reforms that would empower the popularly elected parliament and enforce accountability on the monarchy. The monarchy countered this challenge by hinting at Iranian designs on the country and stressing that the cleric-led Shiite opposition could not be trusted with greater political influence. Their strategy thus relied on playing up sectarian divisions within the population.

The initial protests came in response to an anonymous call posted to Facebook by a previously unknown youth movement. While the date of February 14th was chosen for domestic resonance—as a counterpoint to the 10-year celebration of the National Action Charter reforms initiated by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa—it fortuitously followed directly on the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, providing genuine momentum to the uprising. People were drawn by the demands for personal dignity and for a political citizenship that transcends social divisions. However, the

linkage with the protests in Egypt and Tunisia had another important implication: it raised significantly the expectations of the protestors, setting a precedent of regime change. After the initial brutal response of security forces resulted in deaths, calls for the complete overthrow of the monarchy began to grow. This culminated in the formation of a revolutionary alliance by the more hardline movements al-Haq and al-Wafa, whose leadership had just been released from prison or permitted to return from exile, perhaps in a calculated move by the al-Khalifa family to radicalize the opposition. Their pronouncement of a “Coalition for a Republic” was seized upon by the monarchy as evidence of the opposition’s desire for an “Islamic republic.”

The geography of the protests also played a key role in setting perceptions about the nature of the uprising. The gathering of citizens in the Pearl roundabout—a traffic circle in the center of Manama associated with the nation’s pearl diving history and with the founding of the Gulf Cooperation Council—provided positive associations with Egypt’s Tahrir Square. More importantly, its central location provided a neutral setting, allowing Bahrain’s somewhat segregated communities to come together on national, not sectarian, grounds. Yet two key dynamics worked to undermine this fight for unity.

The first was the counter-protest held at the al-Fatih mosque on February 21st. As opposed to the Pearl roundabout, the al-Fatih mosque had clear sectarian associations, being Bahrain’s largest Sunni mosque and one associated by name with the tribal conquering of the island by the al-Khalifa family. By design, then, the gathering signified the division of the population and *implied* the Shiite character of the Pearl protestors. The leader of the al-Fatih gathering was also important. Sheikh Abd al-Latif al-Mahmud is a shariah faculty scholar who had been active in the petitions’ movement pushing for political reform in the 1990s. He was thus ambiguously positioned between staunch support and loyalist reform, and was able to attract citizens fearful of revolution, but also Sunnis disaffected with the nation’s politics who may have considered going to the Pearl roundabout. Al-Mahmud was also linked to al-Azhar, but unaffiliated with the two main Islamist political parties, and so was able to create a broader movement free from the narrow confines of the Islamist party affiliation.

The second weakening of the unity at the Pearl roundabout came at the hands of the opposition itself. The Coalition for the Republic and other supporters chose to expand the protests beyond the roundabout to symbolically resonant sites—the al-Khalifa’s tribal stronghold in Riffa and the Bahrain Financial Harbor. While evocatively highlighting key grievances against privilege and corruption, these moves directly provoked the tribal elite and their business allies. The move away from the circle also provided an opening for a counter mobilization of irregulars bearing sticks and knives, who confronted the protestors directly in an ominous presage of civil—and sectarian—strife.

These confrontations, likely orchestrated by the hardliners in the al-Khalifa family, undermined the talks between al-Wafaq and the other official opposition societies and the ruling family’s leading reformer, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa. The Crown Prince, in a struggle for influence within the ruling family, had proposed entering formal negotiations on seven principles identified as the most important to the opposition. It was at this stage—with the reformists progressing in preparatory talks, and the hardliners clashing in the streets—that the Pearl Uprising was shut down by the arrival of Peninsula Shield Forces led by Saudi Arabia. The protestors were driven from the Pearl roundabout, and a state of emergency was announced.

Since then, the relationship has been on the upswing. The two leaders speak often—at least a dozen times in 2011 alone—and frequently agree on policy. Turkey’s statements in support of the Arab Spring led President Obama to appreciate Turkey, a Muslim NATO member that uniquely satisfies Washington’s quest to find powerful allies that have a majority-Muslim population and are happy to work with the United States.

## **Fracturing within regime and opposition**

The Pearl Uprising and its denouement crystallized the increasing factionalization of the ruling family, amplifying divisions that had first appeared following the succession of King (then Amir) Hamad in 1999 and his implementation of a limited reform program. Many of the new economic institutions promoting labor market reforms and economic diversification were championed by the King's son, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa. These institutions were pro-actively used to co-opt the leadership of the Shiite opposition and to attract a new generation of foreign-educated Bahrainis behind this modernizing project. This institutional base was also used to siphon decisionmaking and political influence from the Prime Minister who opposed the changes. At the same time, a more ideological opposition arose from within the security services and the royal court. Centered on two brothers, Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defense Forces Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Khalifa and Royal Court Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Ahmed al-Khalifa, the "Khawaled," as this faction is popularly known, viewed the integration of the Shiite into state institutions as a security threat. Their views rose in influence as sectarian struggle engulfed Iraq, and Shiite political parties rose to power in that neighboring country. A number of programs initiated from within the royal court thus sought to counter Shiite political societies and social organizations, curtailing their influence within the economy and the government. The extensive security crackdown of the past 18 months, accompanied by widespread arrests and the purge of Shiite politicians and professionals, betrays a dramatic expansion of these activities.

These divisions in leadership and policy resulted in a fracturing of the Shiite opposition. The rise of the Khawaled was mirrored by the rise of the "boycott" wing of the opposition, reflecting rising skepticism about the intentions of the al-Khalifa family and the effectiveness of engaging with them. The main Shiite opposition party, al-Wefaq, which embraced a policy of political participation and incremental reform, lost support, especially among the youth who were attracted to the more confrontational tactics of al-Haq, al-Wafa, and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. The move to the street, led by the February 14th youth who initiated the Pearl Uprising, flowed naturally from this development.

In the post-uprising environment, al-Wefaq has struggled to keep ahead of these movements which mostly argue for the complete removal of the monarchy through civil disobedience, human rights activism, and street protests. Al-Wefaq's parliamentary bloc resigned their seats in protest of government suppression back in February 2011 and boycotted the elections to replace them which took place the following September. The lack of a formal national platform has, therefore, left al-Wefaq competing with these movements for the street. The success of the government in preventing protests in central Manama has forced protests back into the Shiite villages. This isolation has tended to augment the sectarian nature of the opposition, for while al-Wefaq is exclusively Shiite and cleric-led, it has made its political appeals for constitutional reform across the sectarian divide. In contrast the "sacred defense forces" created in the exclusively Shiite areas have framed their mission in Shiite religious discourse. This fragmentation of street action has also weakened al-Wefaq's ability to enforce peaceful tactics, and protestors are increasingly confronting security forces with burning tires and Molotov cocktails. In the absence of any advancement in political reforms, it is easy to envision a further devolution to the kinds of bomb making explosives allegedly found by the Bahraini Interior Ministry in June 2012.

## **The instrumentalization of Sunni politics**

While the unrelenting pressure on Shiite communities has led to their fragmentation, the new security environment has opened up more space for the proliferation of Sunni movements. State airwaves were thrown open to anti-Shiite rhetoric and public campaigns against individuals associated with the gathering at the Pearl roundabout. Loyalty pledges to the ruling family were distributed in schools and businesses, and popular boycotts of Shiite businesses were undertaken.



These campaigns served both to mobilize and to radicalize the broader Sunni public, by enabling those willing to take on Shiite “traitors” and silencing those who disagreed with the course of action chosen by the government.

On the more formal level, the initiative moved from Bahrain’s Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi political societies represented in parliament to broader Sunni social movements.[1] The popular gathering at the al-Fatih mosque was transformed by Sheikh Abd al-Latif al-Mahmud into a political organization under the name of The Gathering of National Unity (TGONU). In time, however, as this movement showed increasing signs of independence from the government—Sheikh al-Mahmud was famously quoted as saying that the Prime Minister would eventually need to step aside—TGONU was itself outflanked by a new group. The al-Fatih Youth Awakening appears to operate as enforcers for the most hardline Khawaled faction within the ruling family. It has worked to counter any moves towards reconciliation with the political opposition, including a number of campaigns against American diplomats viewed as promoting such moves. They have also played a prominent role in Bahrain’s latest campaign—to promote unity with Saudi Arabia.

### **Pax Arabia is no Pax Americana**

The intervention by the Saudi-led Peninsula Shield Forces effectively ended the political negotiations of the Crown Prince and elevated the Prime Minister and the Khawaled faction over the reformers in the ruling family. The reform strategy initiated by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa and championed by Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa sought to broaden the governing coalition and promote international outreach in an effort to lessen economic and political dependence on Saudi Arabia. That direction has now been reversed, with talks taking place between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia for the past several months to enact a more formal confederation between the two countries.

Bahrain has certainly experienced Saudi dominion in the past, but there are reasons to believe that this time the alliance may prove different. Past Saudi relations were managed pragmatically by Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman, who used Saudi patronage to sustain the tribal dominance of the al-Khalifa family through clientalist relations with both Sunni and Shiite merchants. However, today with the more ideological Khawaled cementing the partnership, a more exclusionary and explicitly sectarian policy is taking root. While the exclusion of the Shiite minority from the public sphere has been accomplished in Saudi Arabia through instrumentalization of Wahhabi ideology and institutions, the exclusion of a majority within Bahrain will likely be much more difficult to sustain.

Recent events do suggest that elements of the ruling family are employing Sunni Islamist movements to counter the mobilization by the Shiite opposition. Closer Saudi relations are, therefore, likely to augment this trend by opening more space for transnational Salafi networks to operate. Indeed, there is already evidence of the penetration of more Wahhabi discourse and thinking in the Khawaled - backed media and within some Islamist groupings. At the same time, a deeper confederation between the two countries may further cement the connection between the Shiite of Bahrain and those of the Eastern province, whose mutual sympathies can already be seen in the chants of “Down, down Hamad” heard in Awamiya, Saudi Arabia, and in al-Wefaq’s condemnation of the Saudi arrest of a prominent activist cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, in July. The extension of this sectarian discord within the Gulf is certainly a troubling development, given its projection in Syria and the escalating sectarian violence in Iraq. The U.S. now faces an arc of instability from the Levant to the Gulf, with weak states wracked by escalating sectarian tensions, often fueled by outside groups and interests.

This trend should be particularly troubling to the United States given the anti-Americanism that has accompanied the radicalization of politics on both sides of the sectarian divide. In Bahrain,

opposition movements have held protests condemning specific U.S. policies—most recently to criticize the decision to resume arm sales to the government in May 2012. But while the opposition criticizes the U.S. for doing too little to support their struggles, regime supporters accuse the U.S. of intervening too much. Indeed, the more frequent and more vociferous anti-American rhetoric has come from Sunni detractors who blame the United States for empowering the Shiite in Iraq and fear that Washington will orchestrate a similar fate in Bahrain. It seems likely that Sunni groups are likewise being used by regime factions close to Saudi Arabia in order to weaken their reformist rivals who hold much closer relations with the United States. Indeed, the talk of formalizing the confederation between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain may be directed as much at deterring American mediation in Bahrain as it is at sending a message to Iran.

While Saudi and U.S. concerns about an expansion of Iranian influence must be considered, it is unlikely that stability will be won through policies of exclusion and sectarian radicalization. In the context of the transformational demands of the Arab Spring, state building policies that work to integrate all citizens—perhaps within a political program that respects Saudi red lines on foreign policy—are more likely to bring order to the Gulf.

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**Notes:**

[1] For two different takes on the new Sunni mobilization, see Justin Gengler, “Bahrain’s Sunni Awakening,” *MERIP*, 17 January 2012 and Hasan Tariq al-Hasan, “Too Big to Succeed: a case of Sunni politics in Bahrain,” *openDemocracy*, 23 July 2012.

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## Winter or Spring: Islamists, the Military, and Post-Revolution Politics in Egypt

by David Schenker

The so-called “Arab Spring” has forever changed the face of the Middle East, and it’s not finished. While the revolts that toppled longtime autocrats in Tunisia and Libya were remarkable accomplishments, these states are of little strategic interest to the United States. Unlike Libya and Tunisia, what transpires in Syria—an ally of Iran that possesses a substantial chemical weapons stockpile—could have significant implications for Washington. But Syria remains a work in progress. To date, the most important development in the region for the U.S. has been the fall of Egypt’s longtime president Hosni Mubarak. Since 1977, Egypt has been a strategic partner of the United States—providing essential political support to U.S. policies in the Middle East—and an important peace partner of Israel in a hostile region.

The fall of Mubarak heralds a change in the regional strategic architecture that had been in place since 1979. For decades, the regional balance of power pitted U.S.-oriented Egypt, Turkey, and Israel against anti-Western, terrorist-supporting regimes in Iraq and Iran. While the structure had

changed slightly before February 2011—Iraq dropping off the “adversaries” list in 2003 about the same time that Turkey under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) moved out of the pro-West camp—Egypt remained a key friend to the United States. With the tectonic political and social shifts in post-Mubarak Egypt, however, it is unclear how long this friendship will continue, and what U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relations will look like going forward.

Much of Egypt’s strategic importance stems from its status as a regional trendsetter. With 83 million people, what happens in Egypt has an impact across the region. In the coming months and years, there are several key trends to watch for in Egypt, and, by extension, throughout the Middle East. What follows is a list of some these trends and issues that will shape Egypt in the months and years ahead:

**The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).** In Egypt’s recent parliamentary elections held from—November 2011-January 2012—the MB’s political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), took 46 percent of 508 seats in the People’s Assembly—the lower house of the Egyptian parliament. The group’s impressive electoral performance came as little surprise. Although the MB was illegal under Mubarak, it operated for decades, and was not as suppressed as some of Egypt’s more liberal organizations. Indeed, after the revolt, the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party emerged as the state’s leading political organization, with its hierarchy, infrastructure, and message already in place. The MB already had a significant advantage. Egyptian society has for decades been becoming increasingly religiously conservative. The increased prevalence of hijab-wearing women in Egypt may be some anecdotal evidence of this trend: when I lived in Egypt in the early 1990s, only about 10-15 percent of women wore hijab, while now the percentage is closer to 80. When I asked the former MB Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib about this phenomenon during an interview in Cairo back in 2009, he explained: “We won—the people are with us 100 percent.” That the Islamist Ennahda party, Tunisia’s iteration of the MB took 40 percent of the seats in parliament—in one of the most secular states in the region—is testament to the group’s popularity.

Some observers were actually relieved that the “moderate” MB took control of the parliament, and not the more militant Salafi Islamists. But the MB is far from moderate. To wit, Muhammad Badie—the group’s General Guide who spent time in jail with Sayyid Qutb, one of MB founders—predicted in a December 29, 2011 speech that the Islamist government in Cairo would “lead to a rightly-guided caliphate that will instruct the world.”

**The surprise of the Salafis.** While the MB parliamentary plurality was more or less expected, the true surprise of the Egyptian elections was the performance of these more conservative Islamists, who won an astounding 27 percent of the seats in the People’s Assembly. Combined with the seats won by the FJP, Islamists hold nearly 75 percent of the People’s Assembly.

If indeed the MB ever was moderate, it won’t be for long; as the Salafis will be attacking the Brotherhood from the right, pressuring the group to adopt even more conservative social legislation. In December 2011, I was an election monitor in Menoufiya in the Nile Delta, and had the opportunity to chat with several Salafis. We discussed the many changes to come in Egypt, including the imposition of the jizya tax levied on non-Muslims, the encasing of Pharaoh statue’s faces in wax (to prevent prohibited idolatry), the banning of alcohol, making hijab wearing mandatory, and the institution of the hudud—the cutting of the hands of thieves. The Salafis agree with the MB about the institution of a caliphate. Essentially, the key difference between the groups lies not in the proscriptions of Islam, but in how quickly or severely sharia is implemented. What we are seeing develop in Egypt right now is not necessarily democracy but competitive theocracy.

**Post-Mubarak populist politics and Egypt’s future orientation.** Both the FJP chairman, Muhammad Morsi, and vice chairman, Essam al-Erian, claim that the United States and the international community owe Egypt financial assistance, irrespective of what policies they pursue regarding women, human rights, or protections of minorities. It is viewed as compensation for

supporting an authoritarian government in Egypt during the Mubarak era. Notwithstanding the request for financial assistance, the Islamists and the military-appointed government in Egypt are taking provocative positions vis-à-vis Washington—and Israel—which will complicate the bilateral relationship.

Consider the NGO crisis earlier in 2012, where a decision was taken to prosecute several U.S. citizens working on democracy promotion in Egypt and prevent them from traveling abroad. Going forward, it is conceivable that Egypt may continue to deliberately generate crises, to prove the state's relevance to Washington and ensure continued U.S. financial assistance. To avoid, or de-escalate, these situations, the U.S. and the international community will be obligated to pay what essentially amounts to a rent.

Objectively, this kind of populism makes sense. The Egyptian economy is in free fall, and populist politics are a useful distraction. They also provide useful scapegoats. Egyptians already have a low opinion of the U.S.—according to public opinion polls, 70 percent of Egyptians do not want U.S. financial assistance. Leaders in Tehran also poll more favorably than those in Washington. This trend may have repercussions for long-term bilateral relations, including priority U.S. access to the Suez Canal, over flights with little warning, and the maintenance of the peace treaty with Israel.

**The peace treaty with Israel.** It is little secret that the MB does not like Israel much. Indeed, the MB has hinted that it might put the Camp David treaty to a popular referendum. Already, Essam al-Erian has announced that should the U.S. cut its financial assistance package to Egypt, it would cause Cairo to review and perhaps modify the treaty. In Spring 2012, the parliament passed a hand-vote resolution declaring Israel to be Egypt's "number one enemy," calling for the Israeli ambassador to be expelled from Cairo, and demanding an end to Egyptian sales of natural gas to Israel. While the resolution is non-binding, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) remains in control, the military has indicated its intention to return to its barracks following the June presidential elections. What happens then remains to be seen. I think, however, that the treaty is safe in the short-term, due to the state of the economy. The MB knows that stability is key to rebuilding. Still, in late April 2012, Egypt suspended gas sales to its peace partner.

**The SCAF's imminent return to the barracks.** Some observers suspect there have been behind-the-scenes dealings between the SCAF and the MB, even a tacit agreement on a division of labor going forward, with the military continuing to determine foreign policy and national security issues while the MB focuses on domestic politics and social issues, such as the further Islamization of society. Whether or not such a deal ever existed is unclear. If there ever was, though, it probably is no longer in force. In spring 2012, tensions between the SCAF and the MB were on the rise after the MB announced (in contradiction to previous statements) its intention to run a presidential candidate and the subsequent permanent disqualification of the MB's front-runner candidate by Egypt's presidential electoral commission. The Islamists' calls for the dismissal of the SCAF-appointed government of Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzuri—and the dispute over the MB's participation in the upcoming presidential elections—have only further strained the ties, to the point that the SCAF has threatened a crackdown on the MB.

Conflict between the SCAF and the MB is inevitable, as both groups want to implement a Turkish model in Egypt. For the SCAF, the model is that of the pre-AKP before the Erdogan premiership, when the military served as guardian of secular society in Turkey, periodically removing Islamist governments from power. The MB, however, looks to the Erdogan model, where Islamists control the parliament and the executive, and over time, bring the military to heel. Given these divergent views, it is just a matter of time until a SCAF-MB showdown.

**SCAF Competency?** Since day one, Washington has had an abiding confidence in the SCAF's competence. At the time of the revolution, the United States applauded the military for not opening fire on the crowds. The White House even took credit for its restraint: \$66 billion in financial assistance since 1979, so the argument went, bought the United States influence and prevented more bloodshed. In reality, the U.S. has little influence on the SCAF today.

The confidence in the SCAF is misplaced, as the council has in fact proven itself grossly incompetent. In the months leading to the formation of the Constituent Assembly, for example, the SCAF changed its rules multiple times, first announcing that the newly elected parliament would select the members of the constitutional drafting committee. However, as a result of the elections, the Islamists took control of parliament. Therefore, the SCAF changed its mind and allowed the Islamists to select only 20 percent of the seats and appointed the other 80 percent itself. When the Islamists protested, the military backed down completely. The committee now is comprised almost entirely of Islamists. The SCAF also grossly mismanaged the NGO crisis, allowing a situation in which Sam Lahood—the son of U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray Lahood—was essentially prohibited from leaving Egypt. Yet another failing of the SCAF has been its inability to reestablish security in Egypt since Mubarak’s ouster.

**Insecurity.** Ever since the revolution, Egypt has faced difficulties in reestablishing security. Initially, the combination of economic stresses, a diminished security apparatus, and the flight of criminals from state jails contributed to a rise in the crime rate. The near absence of tourism and foreign direct investment and a serious case of inflation over the past year have only raised the poverty rate and collective sense of desperation. Today, heretofore violent crimes in Egypt—car jackings, armed robberies, and kidnapping, for example—are becoming routine.

Chances are also better than ever that if you perpetrate a crime, you will not be caught. Demoralized, underpaid, and no longer encouraged to subsidize paltry incomes through corruption, police officers have not been showing up for work. Meanwhile, State Security—the former regime’s repressive apparatus and domestic counterterrorism organization—has lost much of its capacity. Indeed, State Security shredded a significant portion of its files during the uprising to insulate itself from accountability. Currently, the organization is reportedly undergoing a process of “restructuring.” The prospects for an improved security situation anytime soon—something critical to jumpstarting the tourist economy—are slim.

**Terrorism.** The Sinai has long proved fertile ground for terrorists, and the situation in the peninsula has only deteriorated since the revolution. Terrorists escaping jail during the revolution flowed back into the Sinai, and an al-Qaeda affiliate named Ansar al-Jihad set up shop there. The result is an increasingly lawless, if not ungoverned, territory, in which the terrorist threat is severe. It is unclear at present exactly how much success Ansar al-Jihad is having recruiting local Bedouin, but there are some signs that these jihadists are making headway. In August 2011, after the al-Arish police station attack, a statement was issued by “al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula,” demanding the implementation of sharia and the establishment of an Islamic emirate in the Sinai. That same month, via the internet, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri congratulated the terrorists who bombed the pipeline in July—and exhorted his followers to target more Israelis. Earlier this year in January, Ansar al-Jihad announced its support for Zawahiri, as well as its plans to attack the SCAF and U.S. interests abroad. Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations are also becoming a problem, crossing into the Sinai and attacking Israel from Egyptian territory. In addition to being dangerous, terrorism in the Sinai is undermining the tourist economy there.

**Egypt’s economy still in crisis.** Egypt is on the brink of an economic crisis, with reportedly as little as \$11 billion remaining in foreign reserves, and depleting at a rate of nearly \$1 billion a month. The absence of security and a concern about the future direction of the state have spooked tourists and investors alike. Without foreign direct investment and tourism, Egypt’s economy has worsened, and hardship has increased. Polling suggests that economic factors contributed greatly to the revolt. Likewise, when polled, a majority of Egyptians said they expected their personal economic situations to improve as a result of the uprising. It is safe to say that to date, at least economically, the post-Mubarak government has not met popular expectations. With poverty on the upswing, in May 2011, General Mahmud Nasr, a member of the governing Supreme Military Council, held a Cairo news conference last month and announced that if the situation did not improve, there would be another revolution in Egypt—“a revolution of the hungry.” Improving

the economy will be a key priority of the Brotherhood's ruling Freedom and Justice Party in the coming months and years. In the interest of pragmatism, this overriding priority could serve to constrain some of these Islamists excesses, in particular, the full implementation of sharia, in the near term. Notwithstanding, it is unclear that even a less corrupt and economically competent Muslim Brotherhood will be able to ameliorate the longstanding economic difficulties of Egypt.

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## Egypt's Democratic Process Among the Victims of the Gaza Conflict

by Amin Tarzi

Post-revolution Egypt's role in the weeklong November 2012 conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza introduced the possibility of Egyptian involvement in an armed conflict involving the Israeli state. This dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been present since the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978. While the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians has fluctuated between open hostilities and periods of hopefulness, the situation has been largely managed by Israel and its main ally, the United States, and kept from transforming into a wider war such as the 1967 or 1973 examples. One can argue that the primary reason for this management has been the absence of Egypt as an adversary of Israel.

Egypt's January 25, 2011 revolution inspired hopes of democratic transformation within Egypt. While Egyptians experienced relatively free voting, the revolution did not result in what some in the West had hoped would set the precedent for democracy in the Middle East. Their desire for a liberal, pro-Western system respecting the human rights for all of its citizens was left unfulfilled. Rather, the Muslim Brotherhood won the majority of the parliamentary elections, and one of its members, Muhammad Mursi, became Egypt's first ever democratically elected president. Mursi's primary obligations to his constituents are to deliver on the basic promises of the Muslim Brotherhood, which include Islamizing Egypt, social justice, explicit or implicit independence from foreign control, and economic improvement of Egypt's downtrodden; however, he cannot ignore the group's staunch pro-Palestinian position. This has been woven into much of the Muslim Brotherhood's overall message internally and has been an instrument to expand the group's reach into other Muslim states or territories. Indeed, Hamas was founded in the mid-1980s on this premise and as an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

As such, during the latest armed crisis in Gaza, Mursi, unlike his predecessor Hosni Mubarak, was very vocal in his support of Hamas, and Egypt became symbolically and effectively the main powerbroker between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The United States and others in the region praised Mursi's efforts and diplomatic skills. The question beyond this conflict is how a Muslim

Brotherhood-dominated Egypt will influence the future of the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, specifically as it relates to Hamas. Hamas' actions will depend on which course Egypt decides to take. One can argue, on the one hand, that Hamas will become more cavalier in its relations with Israel because it feels it has a friend in Cairo. On the other hand, if Egypt decides to withhold major logistical or military support from Hamas, the organization will need to find a way to live with the reality of Israel as a powerful state—despite its aversion to such a concept.

In this most recent crisis, despite the symbolic recall of his ambassador from Israel and the dispatch of his prime minister to Gaza in a show of solidarity, Mursi, from the outset of the conflict, genuinely tried to lessen the armed hostilities and broker a ceasefire. If an Egyptian president who seemingly shares Hamas' ideological and religious sentiments does not support its military adventurism, then who would? One such country has been the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Fajr-5 rockets that reportedly were used to reach Tel Aviv and possibly Jerusalem are of Iranian origin.

Initially, Iranian reaction to the revolution in Egypt was very positive. However, Tehran's enthusiasm has been dampened by Cairo's refusal to march to the tune of Iran's version of Islamism. While Mursi made headlines in August 2012 by becoming the first Egyptian head of state to visit Tehran to participate at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit, he quickly disappointed his hosts by openly criticizing the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Asad, Iran's most steadfast Arab ally. During the latest crisis between Israel and Hamas, Mursi reportedly declined the request of the Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi to visit Gaza. Turkey and Qatar supported Egypt's resurgence as the regional powerbroker, dealing a blow to Iran's visions of regional prowess.

In fact, it seems that Iran's marriage of convenience with Hamas is in trouble. The Palestinians are being courted by their brethren among the Islamist Sunnis who are now in power in Egypt and form the base of the opposition against al-Asad in Syria. While Israel may celebrate this shift, it is under no pretense that a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Egypt would stop its support of the Palestinians, especially Hamas. However, the Gaza crisis has illustrated that Mursi is, for now, sticking to his country's peace treaty with Israel.

### **But at what price?**

Mursi's sentiments are most likely much more sympathetic to the views and aspirations of Hamas than the security of the State of Israel—a pillar of which is maintenance of peace with Egypt. Unlike the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's main short- to medium-term goals are Egypt-centric, and Mursi has to balance his group's popular mandate with a multitude of factors to achieve them. Among many challenges facing Mursi's government, four require immediate attention, lest his victory in the polls be his swansong. The most immediate concern pertains to the finalization of the writing of Egypt's new constitution, which the Muslim Brotherhood is trying to manipulate to its advantage. Thereafter, the relationship between the Mursi's group and the Salafis—whose party, al-Nur captured 27.8 percent of the vote in Egypt's parliamentary elections of November 2011 and January 2012, has to be in the minds of Muslim Brotherhood leadership. They cannot relinquish the mantle of Islamism to the newcomers to the Egyptian politics who accuse the Brotherhood of not being true Muslims, in part for Egypt's continued adherence to the Camp David Accords. The delicate relationship between the elected president and the Egyptian armed forces is the third challenge. Mursi needs to provide room for the military to preserve its budgetary freedom and continue to receive U.S. aid and to respect the peace treaty with Israel. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly in its popular standing, Mursi's government has to take immediate steps towards improving Egypt's economic situation since blame can no longer fall on the bureaucrats, generals or foreigners for the continuation of social injustice in the country.

The Egyptian president may loathe what realpolitik forced him to do in Gaza, but as someone who

has stated that his group's goals are long-term in nature, Mursi's handling of the Gaza crisis has illustrated that he is not a revolutionary, but rather a calculated politician with an ideology, the triumph of which he may not see during his term in office, but towards which he seems to be steering his country step by step. After receiving international recognition for his handling of the crisis in Gaza and reestablishing Egypt's role as a partner of the United States and Israel in peace-making in the region—perhaps also curtailing the longhand of Iran in Gaza—Mursi did not waste but a day to announce a Constitutional Declaration effectively providing himself with broad legislative, executive, constitutional and judicial authorities and immunity from judicial oversight.

It seems that in addition to those who died during the weeklong conflict between Israel and Hamas, the nascent democratic experience in Egypt also has received a near fatal blow.

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## Military Restructuring and Yemen's Stalled Transition

by Adam C Seitz

One year ago, on November 23, 2011, President Ali Abdullah Saleh signed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative, ending his 33 year presidency and transferring power to then Vice President Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi as a first step in Yemen's transition. Nearly one year after Saleh signed the GCC Initiative, the preparatory committee for national dialogue announced that Yemen's Conference for National Dialogue had been pushed back to early 2013. The Dialogue is an essential element of the Initiative aimed at unifying a deeply divided country and laying the foundation for the drafting of a new constitution. The November announcement marked the latest delay since the April 2012 date for National Dialogue was first announced, highlighting the challenges Yemen still faces moving forward with implementing the GCC Initiative. One barrier that continues to stand in the way of National Dialogue, and further implementation of the Initiative as a whole, is the restructuring of the armed forces. Although the restructuring of the Yemeni armed forces is stipulated as a part of the first phase of the GCC Initiative, ambiguity within the document has left room for Saleh's relatives to maintain their posts in the military in post-Saleh Yemen.

This is especially troublesome given the fact that, while no longer the president, Saleh continues to exert influence over Yemen's affairs through his relatives continued control of key military posts and his role as head of the General People's Congress, which under the GCC Initiative shares power with the Joint Member's Party (JMP). Saleh's continued influence through his familial ties to military commanders raises the risk of armed conflict among Yemen's competing factions, especially in the event that the Dialogue fails. It is for this reason that the Yemeni youth movement and the JMP see the restructuring of the military as a prerequisite for their participation in the Conference for National Dialogue, stipulated as part of the second phase of the transfer of power in the Gulf Initiative. Due to the role of the JMP in the unity government and the role of the revolutionary youth in the 2011 uprisings, their absence would likely doom the Dialogue from the start. Although Hadi has made several decrees aimed towards restructuring the armed forces and limiting Saleh's influence over the military, concerns of premature Dialogue absent significant progress in the restructuring of the Yemeni armed forces should not be ignored.



## **Out with the Old Guard?**

During Saleh's reign the military had become an indispensable tool of control for the regime. It played an essential role in Yemen's patronage system, and in recent years had become a tool to marginalize potential rivals to Saleh and his dynastic aspirations. In early 2011, the Saleh regime faced widespread anti-government protests. As the tactics against demonstrators became more violent, the regime lost support at home and abroad resulting in the fracturing of the military, with the most prominent defection being the commander of Yemen's northwestern military region, Major General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar—a former member of Saleh's inner circle who, over the past decade, was sidelined as a potential challenger to Saleh's plans for his son, General Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, to succeed him. Following the November 2011 transfer of power the military remained divided between competing factions that were dominated, on the one side, by units commanded by Saleh's kin and, on the other, forces under the command of Major General al-Ahmar.

The use of the army in crackdowns on demonstrators and the fracturing of the Yemeni military during the 2011 uprisings further underscored the need for comprehensive reform of the armed forces. The restructuring of the armed forces became a key demand of the opposition to the Saleh regime. To this end, articles 16 and 17 of the "Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen" of the GCC Initiative stipulate that in the first transitional phase the Vice President (Hadi) shall establish and chair a Committee on Military Affairs for Achieving Security and Stability. During the two transitional phases, the Committee is tasked to, among other things, "create the necessary conditions and take the necessary steps to integrate the armed forces under unified, national and professional leadership in the context of rule of law." Just days after the GCC Initiative was signed, Hadi moved forward with the establishment of a committee aimed at restructuring the military, however vague the committee's mandate may be.

## **And In With the New?**

As a first step toward reforming the Yemeni military, President Hadi announced a reshuffle of a number of commands in April 2012, replacing several Saleh loyalists and kin, including a nephew of the former president, who commanded the Presidential Guard, and one of Saleh's half-brothers, who served as the commander of the Air Force. The reshuffle, however, left Saleh's family in command of a number of key posts, including the elite Republican Guard, commanded by the ex-president's son, General Ahmed Ali Saleh, and the Interior Ministry's Central Security Forces, headed by one of Saleh's nephews, General Yahya Muhammad Abdullah Saleh. Although the move was championed as an important first step at purging Saleh loyalists from the military, the decrees were seen as not going far enough, as Saleh's relatives still held key commands within the military, giving the former president continued influence over Yemeni affairs. The decree also left Major General al-Ahmar in command of the army's 1st Armoured Division. The continued control of units commanded by rival Generals Saleh and al-Ahmar divides the military's loyalties between the two camps, further hindering a process intended to a unified and professional, national military.

In an attempt to limit the powers of the competing military factions led by General Saleh and General al-Ahmar, the Hadi government announced the completion of the first stage of army restructuring in August 2012 with Presidential Decisions 32 and 33. The decisions reduced the size of the forces under Saleh's son, General Ahmed Saleh, and General al-Ahmar, and at the same time established a Presidential Protection Force, which fell directly under the control of the President. The completion of the first stage of military restructuring should be viewed as a rebalancing of forces controlled by competing factions rather than moves to unify the armed forces.

While in the short-term such decisions provide Hadi more room to maneuver and establish a power base to wrestle control from Saleh, as well as other factions, they do little in the way of moving

towards a military based on national interests, rather personal loyalties and patronage. In the long term this risks further factionalization, and possibly plunging Yemen into a protracted civil war, if such moves are not followed up with more comprehensive reforms aimed at establishing a unified national command structure.

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## In Yemen, "If Not Drones, Then What?"

by Adam C. Seitz

The use of unmanned drones for the targeted killing of suspected terrorists remains a hotly debated topic among academics, human rights groups, and policymakers alike. Drone strikes following the December 4th 2013 attack on the Yemeni Defense Ministry have reinvigorated the debate, especially as the Yemeni government's security committee and local officials appear divided on the details of the December 12th drone strike. Much of the debate continues to revolve around the legality of extrajudicial targeted killings and the associated collateral damage, including civilian casualties, rising anti-Americanism and the undercutting of Yemen's political transition. Such arguments, however, miss the mark when it comes to the overall effectiveness of drones when compared to the alternatives, and fail to put forth a convincing answer to the question: "If not drones, then what?" The reality in a case like Yemen, at least in the near-to-medium term, is that no viable alternative options exist for combating Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates, especially given the post-2011 political and security environment.

### **U.S.-Yemen Counterterrorism Partnership Under Saleh: Sowing Seeds of Division**

Many of the critics of drone strikes largely ignore the unparalleled role drones have played in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings. A combination of political instability and military factionalization has created security and political vacuums, which have allowed terrorist groups like al-Qaeda to flourish, and has challenged counterterror operations in the region. Such an environment has only increased the utility of drones as a tool for disrupting al-Qaeda's ability to plan and conduct attacks against U.S. partners, assets, and interests when compared to alternatives that depend upon military-to-military partnerships.

Soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh met with U.S. President George W. Bush in Washington. Following their meeting President Saleh agreed to partner with the U.S. in its Global War on Terror. With the exception of a U.S. drone strike that killed six militants in November 2002, the counterterrorism partnership between presidents Bush and Saleh focused on advising, training, equipping and providing intelligence to the Yemeni military.

In the years that followed, Saleh used his relationship with Washington and the counterterrorism aid his government received to build up the Republican Guard forces commanded by his son, and heir apparent, General Ahmed Ali Saleh, and to create specialized counterterrorism and internal security units outside of the existing military and intelligence command structures. During this time

Saleh was essentially using U.S. counterterrorism funds to create praetorian forces and sideline potential opposition to the regime, including Major-General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who was then the commander of the Yemeni Army's 1st Armored Division. These praetorian forces and the rivalry between the Salehs and General al-Ahmar played a significant role in dividing the military during the 2011 uprisings and in the continuing factionalization within the Yemeni armed forces under the transitional government.

### **Political Instability, Military Factionalization and Counterterrorism**

It was not until December 2009 after an attempt by AQAP to bring down a U.S. bound commercial airliner on Christmas Day that Saleh agreed to permit counterterrorism strikes by U.S. drones, cruise missiles, and manned aircraft. The timing of the decision also coincided with the U.S. reassessment of the Yemeni military's inability to combat the growing threat from AQAP. The Saleh regime had become increasingly focused on the domestic challenges posed by the Houthi insurgency in the North and a secessionist movement in the South. The growing internal instability came to a head in 2011 when protestors took to the street calling for Saleh to step down. This resulted in Saleh's handing over power to a transitional government headed by then Vice President Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi, as part of the U.S. backed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative.

When Hadi took office, he did so with a deeply divided military at his disposal, with many commanders remaining loyal to either Ali Abdullah Saleh and his son or General al-Ahmar. Also, AQAP and its affiliate, Ansar al-Sharia, were making gains amid the security vacuum presented by a weak and divided security sector. President Hadi seems to have recognized this in his taking of ownership of the drone program in Yemen soon after his election in February 2012. He stressed that he had knowledge of every drone strike conducted by the U.S., going as far as saying that he approved each mission prior to execution. Furthermore, Hadi himself has repeatedly underscored the lack of viable alternatives to drone strikes. In a September 2012 speech at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington DC, President Hadi acknowledged this, stating that the United States "helped with their drones because the Yemeni Air Force cannot carry out missions at night." Hadi went on to assert that drones "pinpoint the target and have zero margin of error, if you know what target your aiming at," and that "the electronic brain's precision is unmatched by the human brain."<sup>[1]</sup>

One of the principal tasks bestowed upon Hadi's transitional government was the restructuring and reforming of the Yemeni armed forces. This was not only stipulated in the GCC Initiative, but was also a major demand of the protesting Yemeni citizens in 2011. Since taking office, Hadi has announced a number of significant decrees that address the restructuring and reforming the armed force as well as aim to wrestle military support from Saleh and al-Ahmar.<sup>[2]</sup> Such moves, however, have come at cost, with continued military defections, corruption, discontent and factionalization raising concerns as to the effectiveness and reliability of the Yemeni armed forces, not only as a national security asset for the government, but also as a viable counterterrorism partner for the U.S.

The December 4, 2013 attack on the Yemeni Ministry of Defense in Sanaa underscores the weakness of the Yemen security sector. Through this action, AQAP is sending the message that it has the ability to hit the Yemeni government where it is strongest. Furthermore, this was not the first attack against Yemeni military targets, but is part of an increasingly alarming trend of assassinations of military officers, soldiers and foreign trainers, and attacks on security installations. These actions should raise concerns as to AQAP's penetration of the Yemeni security apparatus and give pause to those advocating for a deeper military-to-military partnership to counter terrorism in Yemen.

## **An Alternative Counterterrorism Approach in Yemen?**

The case of Yemen highlights a reality, no matter how inconvenient it may be, that in certain cases there may be no viable alternative to drones for combating terror groups. This is especially true in countries where indigenous security forces do not have the ability to effectively combat the threat posed by such groups. In the long term a comprehensive plan that includes building governance, development capacity and military-to-military cooperation is needed to dismantle and ultimately destroy AQAP. However, given the current realities of Yemen's security sector and dire security situation in general, drones should remain a major part of any short term strategy seeking to disrupt AQAP's ability to plan, coordinate and conduct attacks against the U.S and its allies.

### **Notes:**

[1] Scott Shane, "Yemen's Leader Praises U.S. Drone Strikes," *New York Times*, September 29, 2012.

[2] See Adam C. Seitz, "Military Restructuring and Yemen's Stalled Transition," *MES Insights*, Volume 3, Issue 6, November 2012.

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# MES Insights: Afghanistan and Pakistan

MES Insights • Volume 4, Issue 1 • January 2013

## U.S. Strategy Pivot to Asia. But Where in Asia?

by Lieutenant Colonel William G. Rice, USMC, AFPAK Hand

With over a decade of military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States is in the midst of reshaping its military and redefining its strategy overseas. During President Obama's November 2011 trip through Asia, he announced his Administration's "pivot to Asia." The Secretaries of State and Defense shortly afterward reinforced this shift in U.S. strategic focus to Asia as did U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns in December 2012.[1] Yet *where* in Asia is the focus of this pivot in strategy? With China's growing economy and with it an expansion of its military, it is assumed that the U.S. pivot would focus on the region where China is in such close proximity with its Pacific neighbors, some who are strong U.S. allies: Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the Koreas. Though this area of Asia is important, it is not where future U.S. strategy should myopically focus. The pivot of future U.S. strategy in Asia needs to include a focus on Southwest Asia, specifically the area along the Makran Coast. This region, stretching from the Straits of Hormuz in the Gulf of Oman eastward to the outskirts of Karachi, possesses many volatile elements that provide a strong probability that this area will be a future friction point among countries impacting not only regional powers, but potentially influencing and destabilizing international relations to the point of military conflict.

### THE MAKRAN COAST

Expanding eastward from the Straits of Hormuz to the west side of Karachi, the Makran Coast traverses both Iran and Pakistan. With roughly 400 miles of this coastline falling within Pakistan, it contains such prominent Pakistani ports as Ormara, Pasni, and Gwadar, with Gwadar potentially becoming one of the key regional friction points in the future. Roughly 44 miles west of Gwadar, also along the Makran Coastline is the Iranian port of Chabahar. This is important to note since the port of Chabahar is being developed with assistance of the Indian Government. Also of interest is that the port at Gwadar is under development primarily by the Chinese. Investment by both China and India in ports so close to the Straits of Hormuz, where 40 percent of the world's seaborne oil passes, combined with each country's growing need for natural resources to fuel their expanding markets, makes it imperative that future U.S. strategy include this region in its "pivot to Asia."

### The Region

Development of both Gwadar and Chabahar ports are billed as commercial endeavors. Gwadar

potentially gives China the future means to extract natural resources out of Central Asia, while gaining an alternate route to access its western provinces. Likewise, the development of Chabahar gives India potential access to these same Central Asian resources, while circumventing their regional nemesis Pakistan. Yet this same development can easily serve the future strategic military desires of both countries. Having ports in such close proximity to the Straits of Hormuz provides either country the ability to have their respective navies closely monitor activity passing through such a vital sea-lane and potentially inhibit or block transit of ships through this area if tensions escalate. This is important given that China and India are both rapidly advancing industrial nations, requiring increasingly more natural resources to fuel their economic progress. With the Straits of Hormuz providing such a geographically narrow area for ships to traverse, along with both countries competing for the same natural resources, not only amongst each other but with other countries as well, these ports provide immediate access to an area that is sure to be leveraged in time of conflict. To complicate matters, the countries that host each of these ports, Iran and Pakistan respectively, could potentially be drawn into any future conflict if any military action were taken against foreign ships utilizing their ports.

### **The Port of Gwadar, Pakistan**

Pakistani officials envision the deep-water port of Gwadar as being a future economic rival to Dubai. It has been, and continues to be, under Chinese development since 2002. China has other strategic investments in the region. For example, China is negotiating to upgrade the Karakorum Highway, which links China's Xinjiang Province to Northern Pakistan. This project is seen as not only expanding the highway to accommodate more traffic, but also providing a link from the Chinese region that contains its largest natural gas and oil reserves to the Arabian Sea through the port of Gwadar. Though the port falls within Pakistan, it is being developed primarily by the Chinese with the Chinese importing not only the materials and machinery for the project, but also their own work force. This has left many locals, who may have benefited economically from the project, totally excluded. Instead of helping what is the most impoverished province in Pakistan, the project has only fueled the rage and disillusionment of those who have traditionally lived in this region, the ethnic Baluch. The Baluch are further enraged by the Pakistani military's selling of land in the region that has historically belonged to the Baluch. The Pakistani military, which is dominated by the ethnic Punjabis, and the ethnic Baluch have had several armed conflicts over the years (1948, 1958, 1962, 1973-1977), and there is an ongoing campaign by the Pakistani government to quell any potential uprising.

### **The Baluch**

Populating the harsh and barren region along and inland to the Makran coast, Baluch tribes have historically inhabited an area known as Baluchistan, which includes sections of southwest Pakistan, southeast Iran, and southern Afghanistan. According to estimates, approximately 3.65 million Baluch live within Pakistan, with another 1 million living within Iran and an approximate 90,000 living in the southern Afghan border region.[2] Within Pakistan the majority of Baluch are found in the Pakistani province aptly named Baluchistan, where a violent conflict between the Baluch and Pakistani security forces smolders and occasionally flares. In spite of the violence, the Baluch provide a more secular counter-weight to the uneasy détente that Pakistan has with the radical Islamists that inhabit the northern tribal regions.

### **The Port of Chabahar, Iran**

Forty-four miles west along the Makran Coast is the Iranian port of Chabahar. Developed in

collaboration with the Indian government, this port is useful to the Indians in helping to marginalize Pakistan, expanding trade with Iran, and gaining access to Afghanistan and other Central Asian countries. The strategic plan India has for the region is seen beyond the port and is found in the development and financing of the 134 mile/215km Delaram-Zaranj Highway (Route 606). Constructed by the Indian Border Roads Organization, this highway was completed in January 2009 at an estimated cost of \$135 million U.S. Dollars. It not only links the remote city of Zaranj to other parts of Afghanistan, it also serves as a link from Zabol, Iran, which sits adjacent to Zaranj, and links directly to the Port of Chabahar to the south.

### **Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline (IPI)**

The IPI was envisioned over fifty years ago as a natural gas pipeline running from the South Pars gas field, in the Persian Gulf to New Delhi. This pipeline is to begin in Asaluyeh, Iran, traverse Pakistan (with an offshoot feeding the energy needs of Karachi), while terminating in New Delhi, India. Though the pipeline is planned to begin in Asaluyeh, Iran, it is currently seen running due east through the volatile Baluch region of Pakistan as it makes its way toward India. With the port of Chabahar being developed in collaboration with the Indian Government, this port could provide a viable option to divert the pipeline to, if the Baluch in Pakistan choose to hinder such a project running through their territory. Furthermore, with Iran having the natural resources that India as well as other countries desire, it is conceivable that a pipeline would terminate at the port to help facilitate access to foreign markets.

### **Asia Friction Points**

Friction points abound in Asia. The most common are land disputes among several countries laying claim to the same territory, for example, the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, Taiwan, or China's current dispute with Japan over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Japan and China's name respectively) in the East China Sea. Disputes over these islands are viewed as issues of national sovereignty and power in the region and are amplified by the changing politics within China and Japan. This is illustrated by the newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe desiring to redefine the Japanese military by seeking to amend the country's constitution. Such an amendment would allow the military to participate in matters beyond those of national defense and humanitarian assistance. Abe's hawkish views are inflamed by the Chinese government's continuing build up and modernization of its military and the increase in Chinese patrols around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Japan's concerns of a rising naval force are further reinforced by the Chinese government's emphasis on expanding and modernizing its navy more rapidly than the rest of the Chinese military. Of additional concern, China has increased its drone development, unveiling eight new models during an air show in November 2012 and planning to construct 11 drone bases along its coastline, with construction completed by 2015.[3] Though this activity is taking place in the area that currently dominates U.S. Asian strategy, they are relationships that most likely will influence actions along the Makran Coast, as both powers compete for resources as current/future tensions escalate.

With the Chinese developing the port of Gwadar, while simultaneously modernizing and expanding their navy, it is highly possible that the port will have both commercial and military applications. This may or may not be a stabilizing factor for Pakistan, given the Baluch unrest in the south, unrest with the Pashtuns in the northern tribal region (to include the infiltration of radical Islamists there as well), and the long standing conflict with India over Kashmir. However, the Chinese investment in the area may provoke Pakistan into action to ensure stability in the region. Yet it is sure to alarm some, if not many, in the Pakistani military that India is working with Iran to develop the port of Chabahar, less than 50 miles west of Gwadar. Potentially serving both

commercial and military capabilities, Chabahar is ideally located to counter the port of Gwadar. Maintaining a naval presence out of Gwadar negates the need to navigate around their regional competitor India; yet this same strategy could force India to maintain a forward presence out of Chabahar. Each port could serve as a hub for forward Indian (Chabahar) and Chinese (Gwadar) naval presence in the region, escalating tensions.

With the U.S. refocusing its strategy overseas while drawing down its military strength and with that its capabilities, it needs to have regional allies assume a greater role in patrolling vital sea-lanes. The U.S. Navy cannot be everywhere, all the time. U.S. allies need to understand and begin to assist with such missions in their respective regions. Though the U.S. Navy is sure to continue patrols within the Persian Gulf, and have a presence in the Makran Coast as they transit to and from the Persian Gulf, U.S. strategists need to be cognizant of the many factors at work within this region, such as Chinese strategists having the view that “the United States and its allies would deny supplies of oil and metal ores to China during a military or economic crisis and that the U.S. Navy could block China’s access to strategically crucial sea-lanes.”[4] Having the ports of Gwadar and Chabahar in such close proximity to the Straits of Hormuz is going to increase the likelihood of a potential clash not only among military ships, but also among the aircraft and drones that are sure to operate in conjunction with any naval contingent in the area. As future competition and tensions escalate among nations, U.S. strategists need to keep a close eye on the Makran Coast so that the U.S. is prepared to act in its strategic interest should conflicts arise in the region.

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#### **Notes:**

- [1] Burns, William. "The U.S. Role in the Middle East - William Burns." *Manama Dialogue 2012*. Bahrain: International Institute for Strategic Studies Manama Dialogue regional security summit, 2012.
- [2] Harrison, Selig S. *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981): 1.
- [3] Kaiman, Jonathan, and Justin McCurry. "Japan and China step up drone race as tension builds over disputed islands." *The Guardian*. January 8, 2013.
- [4] Nathan, Andrew J. and Andrew Scobell. "How China Sees America; The Sum of Beijing's Fears." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (September/October 2012): 38.

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## Transition in Afghanistan: Lessons from the Past

by Amin Tarzi

As the United States is preparing its gradual disengagement from its longest foreign armed conflict ever, myriad issues remain unresolved. If not recognized and dealt with prior to the final downsizing of U.S. and other NATO troops in 2014, these could, and most likely will, result in



Afghanistan's returning to a state of civil war or a highly dysfunctional state, deepening political instability in region and potentially beyond.

## **Threat Mitigation**

The core status of Afghanistan as a political entity to the United States' national interests after 9/11 has been threat mitigation. Yet this reality is somewhat lost not only in the political parlance and understanding in Washington, but also more importantly in the actions taken inside Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime. These thoughts and actions have inflated the Afghan political players' sense of their country's importance, both regionally and internationally, leading to an exaggerated perception of political viability and willingness to take risks.

Had Afghanistan not become the hub for terrorists with international reach in the aftermath of the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and the ensuing civil war, the country would have remained at the same level of importance to the U.S. as Tajikistan—a land-locked, mountainous state with mineral resources which are too costly to extract by anyone except for regional powers such as China, Russia or India. Currently, Afghanistan's importance to the U.S. has little to do with Afghanistan itself but rather the important political ramifications for U.S. power and prestige.

## **Mission Creep**

The United States and its allies began Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in October 2001 to destroy al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and Taliban military installations and to bring the terrorists to justice. By December, the Taliban regime had fallen, and al-Qaeda leadership had scattered, been killed, or fled across the border to Pakistan.

At this time, the mission of OEF crept outside the terrorism mandate for the first but not last time. State-building, democratization and human rights—albeit selectively and haphazardly in all cases—were adopted as the marching orders of the international community in the untested laboratory called Afghanistan. In retrospect, a broader mission beyond the destruction of al-Qaeda was necessary for the international community to cultivate the ground for a viable Afghan state and civil society to germinate. This necessity is stipulated in the preamble to the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement) which opens with a determination to “end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country.” However, in reality, the various international actors—states and organizations alike—involved in Afghanistan since 2001 did not connect the need for state reorganization in some aspects and formation in others with their fundamental reason for involvement in that country. In some cases, threat mitigation was altogether forgotten and aspects of state-building became the primary objectives. While in others, fighting terrorism actually undermined efforts such as institutional building. A blending of these actions under a more cohesive strategy would have facilitated the emergence of an Afghanistan on the road to becoming a peaceful member of international community.

Eleven years later, the vision of the Bonn Agreement has only been partially realized. Parts of each of the five sections have been achieved or at least tackled, but none has been completed. As the United States and its allies look towards a new horizon in Afghanistan, the next decade and beyond will be shaped, by design or not, by the intended and unintended programs of state- and nation-building that have crept into the original mission of OEF. Securing U.S. interests in Afghanistan and the region requires both long-term strategic vision with short-term realistic and achievable goals and the ability to understand the more immediate Afghan political landscape and how to

influence it in the short-term while a greater degree of coercive power is still available on the ground.

### **Afghan Political Canvass**

Under the Bonn Agreement, the head of the executive branch of the Afghan government, more precisely the person of Hamid Karzai, was designed to be the mechanism through which the country would begin the process of state reconstitution that would ultimately lead to an established democracy.[1] Constitutionally, Karzai cannot remain in power beyond 2014 and has announced his decision to abide by the rules. However, in his long tenure as the Afghan ruler (second in duration in more than a century), he not only has been able to mold the executive branch so that his proxies will continue in his stead, but also has manipulated the judiciary, rendering it almost solely a tool of the executive, and managed to make the legislative body irrelevant. Karzai, not unlike previous successful Afghan rulers, has surrounded himself with concentric rings of immediate family and patrons, important allies of many persuasions, and even adversaries who are seeking upward mobility. Karzai's success has depended on keeping membership in his circles fluid. This model, of course, has not served well the current Afghan political structure, based on institutional democracy not monarchy as before, and has elevated the individual over the institution as the most important factor of stability and resulted in shifting loyalties for self preservation becoming the norm rather than exception.

As Afghanistan moves closer to the expected uncertainty of the post-2014 period, the fluidity of these loyalties among the elite has increased not only within the Afghan political spectrum, but also with foreign countries, especially Pakistan, Iran, India, some of the Gulf Arab states, and Russia. The Afghan elite, including Karzai, while regarding the United States as a vital partner in their own survival and perhaps in the survival of their country as it stands today, has moved its private distrust of and antagonism towards the United States to the public sphere and wear their objection to U.S. policies in Afghanistan as a badge of honor vis-à-vis their wider Afghan constituency. There seems to be an overarching debate on how to balance the potential value of maintaining a U.S. military presence to limit the expected political and cultural encroachments from Pakistan and Iran with the shared understanding that closeness with the United States is becoming a political liability within Afghan political calculations. The only groups well disposed towards the U.S. in deeds and words are the majority of urban women and youth and the nascent and increasingly significant civil society, again mostly concentrated in the major urban centers. These groups share two commonalities which partly explain their positive disposition towards the United States. They owe their resurgence in the Afghan political arena to the U.S., and they are not armed nor have alliances with or trust any of the armed groups within Afghanistan, including Afghan National Security Forces. They also share the view that Afghanistan's future most likely will be one dominated by Islamists and/or their apologists, no matter which one of the current elite groupings manages to stay on top—or if the country reverts to civil war.

### **Looking to History for Insights**

The history of Afghanistan provides some lessons worth examining. Perhaps it is time to debunk the notion of Afghanistan as the graveyard of empires. Undoubtedly, the invasion and ensuing war in that country contributed to the eventual demise of the Soviet Union. However, in the British case, when viewed strategically, the British Raj did not lose in Afghanistan. All of the policies of the British in India—i.e. the “Forward Policy,” the “Stationary School,” or “Masterly Inactivity”—had one main objective: Safeguarding India from Russian possible advancements. After the Clarendon-Gorchakov Agreement of 1872-73 between Russia and Britain defined part of the Afghan-Russian boundary and Russia pledged that Afghanistan was outside of her sphere of

influence, Afghanistan became part of the so-called “Great Game” between the two imperial powers. Afghanistan was never an objective in itself. Rather it was to serve as a buffer between the two expanding empires. Surely, the result of the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-41, part of the “Forward Policy,” was a stunning defeat for the British; however, the main objective for the British was achieved perfectly. The Russians since the minor Panjdeh incident of 1885 through the duration of the British rule of India in 1947 never crossed their agreed upon frontier with Afghanistan. In fact, the boundary was respected until 1979. If the British experience in Afghanistan can be summed up as a defeat, then the Allies lost the Second World War as surely there were defeats in battles.

### **Bottom Line**

Afghanistan has been the recipient of much more U.S. attention in terms of national interest priority than the country has ever merited, and the country and its constituency have not had the capacity to absorb the impact of such attention. Thus, Afghans of almost all persuasions have come to believe that the future stability of their country is a major pillar of United States national security. As such, as 2014 approaches, the main goals of the United States with the support of its allies ought to hinge on discerning and prioritizing which issues related to Afghanistan have direct links to U.S. national interests. Related to this, Afghanistan’s elite needs to understand—in a discreet but forceful manner—that their country is not as pivotal as the last decade might have indicated and that threat mitigation will be the principal policy outcome they should expect from the U.S., which can be done with or without their support. Should the upcoming Afghan government be supportive, there could be incentives which would help both the individual elites and the county at large. Otherwise, the U.S. could seek to prevent Afghanistan’s devolving into a black hole of transnational violent terrorism by aligning with different elements within Afghanistan and of regional states. While the last point is neither the preferable option nor its achievement guaranteed, if at all feasible, it has remained for some time the talk among Afghan circles. Thus, it could serve as leverage for achieving the preferred outcome.

Looking to history for insights, the final British policy worked to achieve their strategic objectives. They provided the ruler with financial, military, and political support in exchange for his commitment to keep the Russians out. While that period presented different circumstances, one lesson that could be taken from this is that Afghanistan is best managed when left alone within its own borders but with outside support with clearly and simply defined objectives. Again, very little details from this historical experience remain today. Yet, the overall theme of leaving the Afghans to manage their own country with international financial, technical and political support—including the training and maintenance of their armed forces—might very well be the best scenario as OEF comes to an end. The Afghans’ responsibility: Not allowing their country to reemerge as fertile ground for terrorists with international reach. This would be a strategic victory for OEF, the longest U.S. military involvement anywhere.

### **Notes:**

[1] Amin Tarzi, “Afghanistan: Political Reform” in *Beyond Settlement: Making Peace Last after Civil Conflict*, edited by Vanessa E. Shields and Nicholas D.J. Baldwin (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), p. 44.

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# Cautious Optimism: Comparing the Final Days of the Communist Regime in Afghanistan with America's Drawdown

by Major Brad Fultz, USMC, AFPAK Hand

The approaching withdrawal of international forces by the end of 2014 officially concludes the current mission of the United States in Afghanistan under the International Security Assistance Forces mandate. The U.S. plans to transition to a smaller remain-behind force tasked with assisting the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) in maintaining a secure environment. What will happen beyond that date is still yet to be determined, but legions of groups and media pundits are warning of a Taliban return and/or a renewal of the chaos that gripped Afghanistan during the civil war (1992-1996) and Taliban (1996-2001) eras. Such predictions are based on experiences following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union and the United States so called “abandonment” of the country when the threat of communist expansion was eliminated.[1] Here I will take a short, historically based examination of the era of Soviet departure from Afghanistan during February of 1989. Thereafter, I will briefly compare the condition of the Afghan government and overall stability in 1991 and 1992 to what the United States will be leaving behind when current operations cease on December 31, 2014. Based on core variables with a specific historical perspective of military, political, and economic development, I argue that GIROA is considerably better equipped today than the Afghan government was in 1992 to maintain central state authority.

GIROA is functioning and developing in an uneven but consistent manner. A successful polity is certainly not pre-ordained, but money and support committed by the international community provides Kabul latitude to expand influence and grow in three key areas. First, the professionalism of the security forces will develop. Consequently, the insurgency continues to face stronger, better-equipped, centrally loyal armed forces, which will gain considerable legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people as western forces withdraw. Second, Kabul's government is present in most of the 364 districts in the country and Kabul has significant influence in the 34 provincial capitals. The current political system, although experiencing numerous challenges, is comparatively pluralistic and relatively absorbing of the various competing interests of the diverse nation. Third, the international community led by the United States is committed to providing needed funds while helping Kabul achieve increasing degrees of economic independence. From the perspective of military strength, political stability, and economic growth, conditions in Kabul today compared to the situation in 1992 when President Najibullah turned over the country to a United Nations led interim government are considerably more stable. For these reasons, despite the countless mistakes, a violent resistance and billions of wasted dollars, the established governmental system in Afghanistan will endure the current hardships and unevenly develop into a stable regional actor.

## Background

The Geneva Accords, signed on April 14, 1988 paved the way for the Soviet departure from Afghanistan and a UN led process to a transitional government led by the Islamic resistance (Mujahedin) parties based in Pakistan. Soviet forces began departing in May of 1988 and on

February 15, 1989; the final Soviet soldier left Afghan soil. Remaining was a military of questionable loyalty, thousands of militias fighting an established enemy with a legitimate cause, an unresolved divided and contested political climate, dwindling funds, and an uninterested international environment more focused on a crumbling Soviet Union than mitigating perceived local disputes in Afghanistan. Afghan President Najibullah continued to receive support from the Soviet Union as Pakistan and the U.S. colluded to create a unified polity from the seven Pakistan-based resistance groups to the communists. The Soviet aid enabled a functioning government that held out extensively longer than anyone predicted. The end of 1991 however, witnessed the enactment of a mutually agreed suspension of funds both from the Soviets to the Najibullah regime and from the United States to the resistance parties via the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence. Without economic incentives to purchase loyalty amongst the numerous armed groups, Kabul fell within months. In April of 1992 President Najibullah officially turned the country over to a UN sponsored interim government. He was never able to leave the country, trapped in the UN compound in Kabul. The competing factions could not come to agreement and the UN interim government crumbled nearly as quickly as it was created. So was the political environment prior to the civil war of 1992-1996.

### **Military Comparison**

In early February of 1989 the Soviet Union left behind a large and relatively competent military capable of securing population centers and key lines of communication. Despite predictions of a quick disintegration of the security forces and the communist government, Najibullah's regime endured and defeated a major insurgent offensive in Jalalabad during March of 1989. The \$3-4 billion annual Soviet aid package proved sufficient enough to hold the military together. By 1990 however, foreign funding decreased by 40 percent and at the end of 1991, ceased completely.[2] Consequently the outcome of the 1991 Battle of Khost was different. Much of the army deserted and the Mujahedin scored a major battlefield victory. With the dwindling of funds, the loyalty of thousands of soldiers and officers disappeared, the majority of whom ultimately were absorbed into various ethnic groups competing around the country. With no centralized and paid security apparatus, lawlessness amongst the competing ethnic groups broke out, and the rural areas fell under the control of local warlords.

In comparison to the disappearance of funds in 1991, the current environment looks considerably different. The Security Partnership Agreement signed in May of 2012 commits the United States to Afghan stability and development well into the future. The international community has committed to funding the 352,000 members of the Afghan security forces at \$6 billion annually until 2018. The current Afghan National Army (ANA) consists of five corps located strategically around the country. These forces will continue to be funded, equipped and advised by the international community led by the United States. The Afghan army's performance has been admirable fighting against the insurgency. Despite concerns regarding ethnic factionalism, the ANA has increasing representation at the highest levels from all ethnic groups. With the required funds provided and the strengthening security forces receiving sufficient arms, the Taliban face an extended battle against a professionalizing force scheduled to take the lead in all military operations throughout the country during the spring of 2013.[3]

### **Political Comparison**

The political situation in Kabul in 1991/2 is unrecognizable compared to today. When President Najibullah announced his resignation from power in March of 1992, the UN scrambled to consolidate the various resistance parties into an organized system that could rule peacefully. The Peshawar Accords signed April 26 were bound to fail as the two primary Mujahedin parties of

Jamiat-e Islami and Hizb-e Islami of Gulbudin Hekmatyar (HIG) never fully agreed on the power sharing agreement. By May, HIG forces were rocketing Kabul, and before the end of the summer of 1992, over 1800 civilians had been killed in the lawlessness that engulfed Kabul.[4] The communist government had initially been so exclusive and brutal that many tribes and potential members of the government were driven to the insurgency. Najibullah and the communists were incredibly unpopular in the countryside. Thus, the resistance enjoyed wide-spread support and legitimacy.

In contrast to the exclusive and brutal nature of the communist regime, the current Afghan political system enjoys substantially more participation. Twenty-one political parties are represented in the lower house of parliament, none of which are allowed to identify themselves based on ethnicity.[5] Many of the former “warlords” of the Mujahedin era currently work within the government in either elected or appointed positions. Although struggling and still a minority, civil-society groups made up of intellectuals and businessmen are gaining influence and a voice in politics. The Taliban maintain limited support and legitimacy and attract minimal sympathy for their resistance to the government.[6]

### **Economic Comparison**

As the Soviet Union declined and eventually crumbled, international aid to the Afghan state ceased. The limited amount of revenue the government collected from customs and indirect taxes was quickly consumed by rampant corruption among the leadership ensuring meager sums trickled down to the Afghan people. In addition to fund shortages, basic commodities such as food and fuel were increasingly scarce, further limiting the ability of the central government to project any influence and the military to conduct operations. “In the end, the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul was not defeated in the field, rather it disintegrated when it became clear it was running out of resources.”[7]

The economic situation in Kabul today is greatly improved, but not yet fully stable. Ninety-five percent of the nations GDP is sourced from foreign aid, and GIRoA predicts that \$10 billion in annual aid will be required until 2025.[8] During the Tokyo Conference of July 2012, international economic support was promised through 2017. To transfer the aid-dependent economy to a licit independent one, the international community is placing high priority on curbing corruption and integrating Afghanistan into the regional economy with development and investment in the transportation, telecommunications and mining sectors holding priority. International donor aid combined with a growing economy, and development in key sectors at a minimum will provide sufficient revenue to keep the government working, the security forces loyal, and the bureaucracy intact.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout history, creation of modern nation-states is a complex, uneven, and with few exceptions a violent undertaking. Afghanistan’s development will be no different. One thing for certain is Afghanistan will progress in its own way and in line with the traditional norms of acceptable behavior. These norms cannot be injected from outside social engineers, but must be organically accepted. Although each nation develops in its own way, certain structural aspects promote future stability. A strong, centrally-loyal military, a broadly legitimate political system, and a source of revenue to provide financial opportunities all exist in Afghanistan and with the assistance of the international community, will strengthen vis-à-vis potentially spoiling actors.

This piece is admittedly limited and perhaps even a bit simplistic in scope and predictions. In no

way does it intend to mask the incredible challenges yet to be confronted by the Afghan state, but aims to provide a sobering perspective on the doomsday scenarios being widely predicted. The underpinnings of a nation-state are established in Afghanistan. Political growth and development in Kabul and a strengthening military, in the context of an economically committed international community combine to provide the foundations for a reliable nation-state in a historically insecure region.

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**Notes:**

[1] Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 260-270. Although it can be debated, the term “abandoned” assumes that the United States provided aid to the Mujahedeen via the Pakistani government in order to assist the Afghan nation in the first place. In fact, U.S. policy was limited and clear. The U.S. aided and armed rebels via Pakistan in order to stop the spread of communism into Afghanistan. The Declaration of International Guarantees contained in the Geneva Accords clearly stipulates that the U.S. and the Soviet Union “Undertake to invariably refrain from any form of interference and intervention in the internal affairs of the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.” Such a stipulation was believed necessary to guarantee the Soviet Union would cut off arming and aid to the Najibullah government.

[2] Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan: 1978-1992* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 274.

[3] Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RL30588, April 9, 2013, 26-34.

[4] Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 272.

[5] Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance,” Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RS21922, November 30, 2012, 5.

[6] Mohammad Osman Tariq et al., *Afghanistan in 2011: A Survey of the Afghan People* (The Asia Foundation, 2011), 48-52.

[7] Giustozzi, War, *Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 237.

[8] Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy,” 58.

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## Improving VSO

by Captain Cory Ross, USMC, AFPAK Hand

In order to compel another person or group to execute a task or mission effectively, it helps if they believe in the mission or feel they have somehow been a part of its conception. In addition, public perception of the mission must lend credit to the target actor in order to motivate that individual to ensure mission success. This overall concept of ownership of the mission has been a challenge for most advisors in Afghanistan throughout the different Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) elements and the government. This article is aimed at identifying some key elements of

Village Stability Operations (VSO) in Afghanistan that can be improved upon in the United States' next endeavor, should the U.S. decide to implement VSO or a similar program in another theater. The overall concept and national implementation of VSO are adequately described in many readily available open source documents that discuss the VSO methodology.[1] In the Afghan case at the village and district level, VSO exists to provide the community with a method and a structure to protect their people and to connect their local government services to the provincial and national levels as local citizens resist the insurgency. VSO theoretically leaves behind a trained and funded force of local citizens that are integrated into the Ministry of Interior (MOI) under the pillar of the Afghan National Police (ANP).

There are four phases to VSO: shape, hold, build and transition. The first phase is the "shape" phase where U. S. Special Operations Forces (USSOF) enter an area and begin talking with sub-national government officials, local ANSF leadership, local power brokers and village elders. Intelligence assets are also employed at this time to map the human terrain and enemy disposition and strength. USSOF are assessing the feasibility of VSO based on the acceptance of the local populace and the defensibility of their embed site in this initial phase.[2]

The next phase in the VSO methodology is to "hold" the terrain and in this case, the population. The Village Stability Platform (VSP) will focus on stabilizing the district through efforts at improving security, governance and development. The VSP consists of a USSOF team and attachments which usually include but are not limited to: a District Augmentation Team (DAT) or Civil Affairs Team (CAT), Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Joint Terminal Attack Controller, counterintelligence, infantry augmentees, interpreters and cultural advisors, and in many cases an Afghan Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha. The USSOF team will initially partner with local ANSF in the area and conduct patrols in order to maintain pressure on the insurgents, continue mapping the human terrain, and initiate Afghan Local Police (ALP) validation efforts with the local elders. Holding the terrain and population is essential to the success of VSO and will still require continuous targeting operations. Validation of the ALP is then conducted by the local shura (council). This step in the process is critical for continuing the mission because the elders must validate each and every ALP recruit as well as the program as a whole. Failure of the program to attain validation will most likely lead to termination of the VSO mission in that specific location. Not all districts in Afghanistan are suited or ready for ALP even if the national level ANSF leadership has deemed a district to be key terrain and therefore a priority for VSO.

Upon successful validation by the local shura, the VSO platform enters the "build" phase and ALP will be recruited by the ANP with the assistance of the National Directorate for Security (NDS) Chief, District Governor, elders throughout the district, and USSOF. The recruits will then be trained by USSOF, checkpoints will be established throughout the district, and the ALP will begin to provide security for their villages. Also during the build phase, the DAT or CAT will partner with the District Governor and his line managers to increase the efficiency of the local government by creating or strengthening the link to the provincial government and conducting training at the district level.

Once the ALP is established, USSOF will work toward transitioning the district into tactical over-watch. In order to meet the criteria to enter this next phase where USSOF are no longer co-located with the ALP, the ALP must be able to conduct security, administrative, and logistical operations without assistance from USSOF. Typically, the ALP is able to provide security for their district long before their logistics operations function at an acceptable level.

When using a local police force, there are many dynamics that must be considered as early as the shaping phase of the VSO process. For instance, some argue that the creation of a local police force is setting the stage for future warlordism by empowering certain individuals or groups over others.[3] One could also argue that there are plenty of other ANSF in these areas that just need to increase their effectiveness vice creating another branch of ANSF. While these are both valid



points, the unique quality that ALP forces bring to the fight is that they are stakeholders in the future of their villages. Their families live locally and the recruits have a personal allegiance to the land they will protect. Therefore, they also own the problems associated with their village and will presumably work harder than an outsider would to prevent infiltration by insurgent forces. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the ALP and prevent warlordism, the implementing force should consider a more deliberate vetting process and create a sense of ownership of the program amongst the local leaders.

## Vetting

An important aspect to ensuring a respected and legitimate force in the eyes of the people is to choose quality recruits and vet them properly. The process of vetting recruits from a population that does not have an accurate census and has rampant fraud within the identification card system of its citizens is challenging. The current vetting process includes background checks by the NDS, the Counter-Terrorism Division and several other offices within the MOI. This part of the vetting process is almost identical to the ANP vetting process. In addition to the MOI vetting, the strongest, or perhaps the weakest, aspect to the ALP vetting process is the validation by village, tribal and district elders. In line with Afghan custom and in the spirit of generating local acceptance of the program, vetting relies heavily on local elders to support the program, but not just any elder is sufficient. The elders must be legitimate and possess a certification from the Afghan subnational government stating that they are allowed to validate the character of the ALP recruits. This is a potential gateway for infiltration into the ranks of ALP. Insurgents have figured out that instead of just choosing recruits to infiltrate the vetting process, they can be much more effective by choosing elders that will allow a multitude of recruits to infiltrate the ALP ranks. This compromise to the integrity of the elder validation process presents a much more high-profile insider threat and the potential for rampant corruption following USSOF departure.

There are several tactics and techniques that United States can implement in order to improve the effectiveness of the vetting process. The USSOF VSO mission in Afghanistan began with a conditions-based approach as a key element to the VSO methodology that fosters trust and respect within the community. Even with a somewhat open-ended timeline for each VSP, it was generally understood that the mission would normally take between one and two years to enter the transition phase. Currently, however, the USSOF teams conducting VSO are operating under a time-based approach. They are expected to be entering transition near the six month mark due to political time constraints. These constraints severely cripple the “shape” and “hold” phases of VSO, and this can lead to a lower quality force. During the “shape” and “hold” phases of VSO, USSOF teams should broaden their focus from site selection and clearing space for operations to include identification of quality elders far in advance of the recruiting effort. These elders seldom surface on initial contact between USSOF and the populace, and even if they do, time will be a large factor in creating a profile for each elder and their possible motives. Once the key players in a district are identified and observed using multiple collection methods, only then can they be considered for a “license” to validate potential ALP recruits. While this suggested improvement to the vetting process will help expedite candidate validation, it will not be effective with the current time constraints. It requires a future VSO environment that is conditions-based for each phase instead of time-based.

In addition to deliberate elder selection during the early phases of VSO, the Preliminary Credibility Assessment Screening System (PCASS) or a similar polygraph type system should be used on one hundred percent of the ALP recruits. PCASS is used to verify the statements made in the ALP recruit’s application. One of the main objectives of the system is to find out whether the recruit has recently been or is currently participating in insurgent activities. While it seems that this type of technology would be used on all applicants, it is often sacrificed for the sake of time. Usually, only a small number of the recruits are screened based on suspicion of ties to the

insurgency. Using this tool to its full potential will improve the vetting of ALP recruits, and elders will undoubtedly improve the quality of the force and, in turn, appeal to the populace in a positive manner.

## **Ownership of the Program**

The effectiveness of the VSP can be dramatically affected by the level of observed involvement by USSOF. Currently, there are some districts that wholeheartedly embrace USSOF presence and have relentlessly requested ALP for their districts. Conversely, there are some districts that are deemed as key terrain by the MOI and USSOF command, but the populace is not ready to accept and support ALP. USSOF are very visible within the community due to their embedded posture. Embedding among the population is a major tenet of VSO methodology that may work well in some areas, but has also proven to be counter-productive in others.

If the population views the ALP as a force that is being created by the Americans and forced on them, they will likely be less accepting and supportive of the program than they would if it appeared to be an MOI initiative with some support from USSOF. One method for creating this appearance of an Afghan initiative would be to bring in the District Governor, NDS Chief, and Chief of Police for a deliberate training seminar about VSO. This seminar would outline in detail the objectives of VSO and its process and educate them to the point that they could answer questions and advocate for the program to the local populace. The goal of the seminar would be to minimize the outward appearance of USSOF involvement, understanding, of course, that the USSOF team will still be used to assist in the vetting and at least initial training of an ANP cadre for future ALP classes.

The District Governor should then present the program to the local shura without a U.S. force physically present. To ensure accuracy of the message, the USSOF team can use a local agent to record the meeting. Once the training and socialization process is complete, the subnational government leaders, District Chief of Police, NDS Chief and local shura leaders should conduct the recruiting and vetting process on their own with the exception of PCASS. USSOF can also provide ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance), air support and a quick reaction force for the district leaders as they visit rural contested areas with the ANP or Afghan National Army. Along with the recruiting and vetting of ALP recruits by Afghan district leadership, the majority of leaders must choose the ALP Commander, who must also be vetted by USSOF.

VSO is a complex mission with many variables that will affect the outcome. These variables are dynamic due to the human factors associated with a counterinsurgency environment and the unpredictability of an insurgent enemy force. In future VSO type missions, the vetting process should be conducted deliberately to a set condition. In addition the USSOF approach to ALP should put the majority of the burden on the local leadership to conduct the shura and recruiting process in order to allow the program to be accepted by the local populace. Using these lessons learned can only assist in building a strong Village Stability Platform to allow for a long-lasting and reliable Afghan Local Police force.

*Captain Cory Ross is a Marine AFPAC Hand who recently returned from Eastern Afghanistan where he served as a District Augmentation Team Leader under Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan. He is currently assigned to Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University.*

### **Notes:**

[1] Mann, Scott. "Village Stability Operations - 101." *The Donovan Review* 2nd Edition (January 2012): 3-31; Mark L. Brown, Jr. "Village Stability Operations: An Historical Perspective From Vietnam to Afghanistan." *Small Wars Journal*, March 2013.

[2] Mann, 2012.

[3] Yoshikawa, Lynn, and Matt Pennington. *Afghan Local Police: When the Solution Becomes the*

*Problem.* <http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com>. October 27, 2011; Just Don't Call It a Militia. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2011.

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# MES Hosted Events

## **2012**

- 12 Jan: MES hosted Dr. Soner Çağaptay, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Turkish Model: Turkey’s Role in the Arab Spring.”
- 31 Jan: MES co-hosted with the Minerva Initiative at MCU a symposium entitled “To Join or Not to Join the Nuclear Club: How Nations Think About Nuclear Weapons.”
- 7 Feb: MES hosted Dr. Christopher Swift, University of Virginia School of Law, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Drawing the Dagger: Local Insurrection and Global Insurgency in Contemporary Yemen.”
- 29 Mar: MES hosted Mr. David Schenker, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Winter or Spring: Islamists, the Military, and Post-Revolution Politics in Egypt.”
- 19 Apr: MES hosted Prof. Kristin Smith Diwan, American University, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Bahrain’s Political Uprising: From Political Reform to Sectarianism.”
- 16 Aug: MES hosted Mr. Uzi Rubin, Rubincon Ltd., as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Israel’s Response to Regional Missile and Rocket Threats.”
- 20 Oct: MES co-hosted with the Marine Corps War College (MCWAR) a panel discussion entitled, “Revisiting the Iranian Challenge,” featuring Mr. Karim Sadjadpour, Carnegie Endowment for Middle East Peace, Mr. Ray Takeyh, Council on Foreign Relations, and Dr. Amin Tarzi, MCU, as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series.
- 1 Nov: MES hosted Prof. Efraim Inbar, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Israel’s Security Amidst Regional Turmoil.”

## **2013**

- 7 Feb: MES hosted Prof. Meir Litvak, Tel Aviv University, as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “The Palestinians and the ‘Arab Spring’.”

- 27 Feb: MES hosted Amb. Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Princeton University, as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Iran’s Nuclear Dossier and Relations with the U.S.”
- 8 May: MES co-hosted with MCWAR a panel discussion entitled, “The Reemergence of Turkey,” featuring Dr. Sinan Ciddi, Georgetown University, Ms. Nigar Göksel, Turkish Policy Quarterly, and Prof. Ömer Taşpınar, U.S. National War College as part of the 2012-13 Lecture Series.
- 29 Oct: MES hosted Ms. Ines Amri, Will and Citizenship Organization, as part of the 2013-14 Lecture Series revisiting the Arab Revolts, for a roundtable discussion entitled, “A Voice from Tunisia’s Grassroots Revolution.”
- 5 Nov: MES co-hosted with MCWAR a panel discussion entitled, “Roadblocks to U.S.-Iran Rapprochement,” featuring Amb. Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Princeton University, Mr. Karim Sadjadpour, Carnegie Endowment for Middle East Peace, and Dr. Amin Tarzi, MCU, as part of the 2013-14 Lecture Series.
- 20 Nov: MES hosted Amb. Theodore H. Kattouf, AMIDEAST, as part of the 2013-14 Lecture Series revisiting the Arab Revolts, for a presentation entitled, “Syria’s Civil War – No Resolution in Sight.”
- 3 Dec: MES hosted Prof. Nathan J. Brown, George Washington University, as part of the 2013-14 Lecture Series revisiting the Arab Revolts, for a presentation entitled, “Egypt in Upheaval.”

# MES PME Support

## 2012

- 5 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Iran: Regime Breakdown or Calculated Ascendency of the IRGC?” to the Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS), MCU.
- 11 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theatre: Ways Forward and Out,” to the Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (PME) Course, MCU.
- 18 Jan: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 6 Feb: Amin Tarzi led a discussion on Iran with EWS students involved in a simulation exercise, MCU.
- 7 Mar: Amin Tarzi played the role of the King of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister of Pakistan with the AfPak Fellows Program participants at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defence University (NDU), Fort McNair, Washington, DC.
- 4 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theatre: Ways Forward and Out,” to the Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (PME) Course, MCU.
- 6 Apr: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 26 Apr: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course “The Arab Spring: An Introduction to Middle East Security Issues,” MCU.
- 30 Apr: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Iran, MCU.
- 1 May: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Afghanistan and Pakistan, MCU.
- 9 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “The Islamic Republic of Iran: Deciphering Legend from Authenticity,” to Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 10 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghan Legal History and the Evolution of Afghanistan as a State,” to the 4th Rule of Law Course at the Army JAG School, Charlottesville, VA.

- 17 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Afghanistan: the Road Ahead,” to Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 18 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Arab Spring A Year Later: What Is Growing?” to Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 21 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Islamic Republic of Iran’s *Weltanschauung*,” to Training Command, Military Academy of the Czech Republic, Vyškov.
- 21 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Arab Spring A Year Later: What is Growing?” to Training Command, Military Academy of the Czech Republic, Vyškov.
- 3 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Is the Tehran Fall Upon Us?” to Senior Planners Course, MCU.
- 11 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “Islamic Republic Iran’s *Weltanschauung*,” to the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) Forward (FWD), Camp Lejeune, NC.
- 11 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “The Durand Line: Key to Long-Term Security to Pakistan-Afghanistan Region?” to II MEF (FWD), Camp Lejeune, NC.
- 22 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “A Survey of the Turmoil Middle East and the Future of U.S. Policy Options,” to Senior Planners Course, MCU.

## 2013

- 9 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theatre: Ways Forward and Out,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 16 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “The Muslim Brotherhood’s Victory and Security Issues in Egypt,” to the Geostrategic Intelligence Seminar – Egypt at Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC.
- 6 Feb: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 14 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “The Changing Political Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” to EWS, MCU.
- 27 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan in Our Rearview Mirror,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.

- 23 Apr: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 26 Apr: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course entitled “After the Arab Uprisings: An Introduction to Middle East Security Issues,” MCU.
- 29 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture to EWS entitled “Afghanistan-Pakistan Dilemma,” MCU.
- 29 Apr - 10 May: Adam Seitz supported the two week School of Advanced Warfighting planning exercise, serving as a regional SME and playing the role of the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to the Government of the Republic of Yemen, MCU.
- 7 May: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Afghanistan and Pakistan, MCU.
- 25 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan in Our Rearview Mirror,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 19 Jun: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 16 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Islamic Republic of Iran’s Eleventh Government,” to the Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 23 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan in Perspective,” to the Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU
- 21 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan in Our Rearview Mirror,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 17 Sep: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 20 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Rouhani’s Iran,” to Training Command, Military Academy of the Czech Republic, Vyškov.
- 20 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Egyptian Military as Guardians of a Popular Revolution,” to Training Command, Military Academy of the Czech Republic, Vyškov.
- 25 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan: Imaginations and Realities,” to the Senior Planners Course at MCU.
- 18 Nov: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Diplomacy and Statecraft Course entitled, “After Arab Uprisings: Egypt and Syria,” MCU.



- 20 Nov: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR's Diplomacy and Statecraft Course on Afghanistan and Pakistan, MCU.
- 4 Dec: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, "Southern Afghanistan: Birthplace of a Country and an Ideology," to the 1st Cavalry Division Command Group, Fort Hood, TX.
- 11 Dec: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, "Iranian Strategy After Rouhani," to the National Defense University's Eisenhower School, Fort McNair, Washington, DC.

# MES Outreach

## 2012

- 13 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghan Reconciliation Process: A Regional Outlook,” at The College of New Jersey, Ewing Township, NJ.
- 17 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a discussion on the “Afghan Governance and Responses” panel at a roundtable entitled “Support for Democratic Actors in Afghanistan’s Transitions,” National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, DC.
- 20 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Arab Spring a Year Later: What Is Growing?” at University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 2 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Taliban: From Adversary to Partner?” at a symposium entitled, “War Termination: How Terrorist and Radical Groups End,” MCU.
- 11 May: Adam Seitz chaired the panel entitled, “Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives,” at the 79th Annual Meeting of The Society for Military History, “The Politics of War,” Arlington, VA.
- 15 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran: The Domestic Scene,” at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA), Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel.
- 16 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Peering into Post-Ahmadinejad Iran,” at The Alliance Center for Iranian Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel.
- 22 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Between Green Movement and Arab Revolts: Tehran's Quest for Legitimacy,” at International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), Ankara, Turkey.
- 27-30 May: Amin Tarzi participated at an international conference entitled, “New Security Challenges in the Greater Black Sea Area: Towards a Cooperative Agenda,” held at Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 10 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Quest for Regime Security,” to the visiting international officers as part of Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at National Defense University, MCU.
- 23 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Islamic Republic of Iran: Deciphering Legend from Authenticity,” to visiting Marshall Fellows, MCU.

- 26 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a paper entitled, “The Role of the Egyptian Armed Forces in Post-Mubarak Egypt,” at a colloquium entitled, “Armées et révolutions arabes,” hosted by Ecoles de Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan, Rennes, France.
- 27 Sep: Amin Tarzi held talks with representatives of the Centre de Recherches des Ecoles de Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan for potential collaboration between MES and French Military Academy on the issues related to the Middle East studies, Rennes, France.
- 30 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Harvest of the Arab Spring: Historical and Theoretical Review,” at St. George’s Episcopal Church, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 14 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Harvest of the Arab Spring: Case Study of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya,” at St. George’s Episcopal Church, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 27 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “What Every American Needs to Know about Iran,” at the Iran and The Geopolitics of the Middle East conference sponsored by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Pittsburgh, PA.
- 8 Nov: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Politics of Dissent and the Prospects of Political Change in Afghanistan,” as part of a Lecture Series entitled, “Social Justice and the Politics of Dissent in the Muslim World,” at The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ.
- 5 Dec: Amin Tarzi presented a paper entitled, “Threats and Opportunities for the United States in Afghanistan between 2014 and 2030,” at the U.S. Central Command’s Academic Consortium “Scanning the Horizon,” organized by the University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

## 2013

- 11 Jan: Adam Seitz presented a paper entitled, “The ‘Arab Spring’ and Yemeni Civil-Military Relations,” as part of the panel discussion “Yemen: Regional and Global Context,” at the international conference “Yemen: Challenges for the Future”, hosted by the University of London SOAS, UK.
- 20 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Egyptian Winter: Muslim Brothers Playing Pharaoh,” to 157th Joint Reserve Detachment, Capitol Hill at Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.
- 28 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Future of Egypt and the Role of the Armed Forces,” to the board of Trustees of the Marines’ Memorial Club, San Francisco, CA.

- 5 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented the Keynote Address “Towards a ‘Whole of Government’ Approach to Maritime Security and Transnational Threats,” at the 5th International Maritime Conference sponsored by the National Centre for Maritime Policy and the Pakistan Navy and held at the Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan.
- 10 May: Amin Tarzi participated in a simulated negotiation for a local ceasefire in Syria sponsored by the Public International Law & Policy Group, representing the Syrian Military, Washington, DC.
- 26 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Role of the United States in the Mediterranean South,” at the 2013 International Neighborhood Symposium hosted by Center for International and European Studies, Heybeliada, Turkey.
- 12 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Post-Ahmadinejad Iran,” to Marshall Fellows visiting MCU, Quantico, VA.
- 26 Jul: Adam Seitz participated in a negotiation simulation hosted by the Public International Law & Policy Group entitled, “Negotiating an Interim Period in Syria,” representing the member of representing Russia as a member of the mediators delegation, Washington, DC.
- 4 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a paper, “The Persian Heritage of Afghan Historiography,” to the Sixth Biennial Congress of the Association for the Study of the Persinate Societies, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 3 Nov: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iranian Grand Strategy under the Ayatollahs,” to the Foreign Policy Research Institute’s History Institute for Teachers held in Pittsburgh, PA.
- 6 Dec: Amin Tarzi presented a lesson entitled, “South Asia,” to the Senior Executives in National and International Security Course at Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA

# Outside Publications by MES Staff

## 2012

- Mar: Amin Tarzi, “Pakistan in Context,” in the *The Wilson Quarterly*, Spring 2012, pp. 6-7.
- Mar: Adam Seitz, Anthony Cordesman et al. “Introduction” and “Types and Levels of Competition” in the e-book *U.S. and Iranian Strategic Competition* (Center for Strategic and International Studies).
- Apr: Amin Tarzi, “Political Struggles over the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands” in *Under the Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*, edited by Shahzad Bashir and Robert D. Crews (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 17-30.
- Oct: Adam Seitz, “Yemen” in the American Foreign Policy Councils *World Almanac of Islamism* online edition. <<http://almanac.afpc.org/>>.
- Nov: Amin Tarzi, “Islam and Constitutionalism in Afghanistan,” in the *Journal of Persianate Studies*, 5 (2012), pp. 205-243.
- Dec: Amin Tarzi, “Taliban” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*, edited by Gerhard Bowering et al. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

## 2013

- Feb: Amin Tarzi, “The Maturation of Afghan Historiography,” in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45 (2013), pp. 129-131.
- Jun: Amin Tarzi, “Transition in Afghanistan: Lessons from the Past,” *Small Wars Journal*, 14 June 2013, <<http://smallwarsjournal.com>>.
- Jun: Amin Tarzi, “The Diplomatic Push for Afghan Peace,” Council on Foreign Relations, 27 June 2013, <<http://cfr.org>>.

# In The News

## **2012**

- 18 Jan: Amin Tarzi was interviewed by *Voice of America* in Dari on Afghanistan's unity as a state.
- 27 Aug: Amin Tarzi was interviewed by the *Voice of Russia* on the Non-Aligned Movement's summit in Tehran.

## **2013**

- 6 Mar: Amin Tarzi was quoted by *Dawn* as part of a piece entitled "Regional maritime security moot begins."

# MES Staff

**Amin Tarzi** is the Director of Middle East Studies (MES) at the Marine Corps University (MCU) in Quantico, Virginia. Dr. Tarzi established MES in 2007 and provides MES strategic vision, management, and personnel oversight. He establishes annual MES strategic goals and missions and associated budget requirements and determines MES program initiatives and emphasis. Beyond his administrative responsibilities, Dr. Tarzi supports MCU by providing a resident scholar with expertise on the Middle East and South/Central Asia. Dr. Tarzi teaches at the Marine Corps War College and other Marine Corps and sister service Professional Military Education programs, represents the Marine Corps at various academic and professional forums, and mentors the AfPak Hands Marines assigned to MCU. Prior to joining MCU, he was with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Regional Analysis team as the Afghanistan and Pakistan analyst where he initiated and compiled the weekly publication, "Afghanistan Report." While working at RFE/RL, he also taught courses in political Islam, cultural intelligence, terrorist organizations, and similar topics at the Washington-based Center for Advanced Defense Studies. Before joining RFE/RL, Dr. Tarzi worked as Senior Research Associate for the Middle East at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, where he established the Middle East section. His primary area of research was Iran and its missile and nuclear developments and policies. He also taught a graduate seminar at the Monterey Institute on Middle East security policies and threat perceptions. Dr. Tarzi's prior experience includes holding the post of Political Advisor to the Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations dealing with the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Somalia; the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty extension; Iranian behavior in the United Nations; and Security Council expansion. After his tenure with the Saudi government, Dr. Tarzi held the position of Researcher/Analyst on Iranian affairs at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Dr. Tarzi has a PhD and a master's degree from the Department of Middle East Studies at New York University and a bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science from Queens College of the City University of New York.

**Adam C. Seitz** is the senior research associate for Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia, focusing on Yemen, Iran and the Gulf Region. Prior to joining MCU, Mr. Seitz was a research associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy where his research focus was in Middle East and South Asia security studies, weapons of mass destruction, weapons proliferation, terrorism and asymmetric warfare. Mr. Seitz has published a number of papers and reports on these subjects, including a book he co-authored with Anthony Cordesman entitled *Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Birth of a Regional Nuclear Arms Race?* (Praeger Security International, 2009). Mr. Seitz served in the U.S. Army as an Intelligence Analyst and is an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, serving in Anbar province in 2003 and 2004.

Mr. Seitz earned his B.A. in International Affairs from the University of Colorado at Boulder and is completing his M.A. in International Relations and Conflict Resolution at American Military University (2014). His latest works are "Yemen" in the American Foreign Policy Council's *World Almanac of Islamism* 2011 and 2014 editions (Rowman and Littlefield), and "Ties That Bind and Divide: The 'Arab Spring' and Yemeni Civil-Military Relations" in *Why Yemen Matters: A Society in Transition* (Al-Saqi, 2014).

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