

Allies, Adversaries & Enemies: AMERICA'S INCREASINGLY COMPLEX ALLIANCES



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This book is the product of more than a year of research and thinking about an emerging problem set that is increasingly a challenge with which America will be forced to contend. As with any contribution to our field, this study cannot be considered definitive: We see this volume as a starting point for studying the Allies, Adversaries and Enemies (AAE) model, with the hope that other scholars will contribute to the discussion about where such alliances may lead, and how they will impact U.S. foreign policy.

We would like to extend special thanks to Erin Elfrink of The Dershowitz Group. Erin exhibited unparalleled patience and professionalism during the writing, editing and production of this volume—characteristics shared by all members of The Dershowitz Group’s team with whom we have had the pleasure of working. From the team at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, we would like to thank David Barnett, Henry Appel, Winchester Eubank, and Phil Heaver for research contributions that helped us flesh out the contours of the U.S.’s relationship with the various states examined in this volume. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge the exceptional peer review we received from select members of FDD’s National Security Network: Matthew Braffman, Josh Cohen, Michaela Dodge, Zack Gold, Josh Grundleger, Reza Jan, Karen Kaya, Brian Miller, Blaise Misztal, Armin Rosen, Jonathan Ruhe, Jared Sorhaindo, and Alex Vatanka.

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—*Jonathan Schanzer and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross,*
Washington, D.C.

When U.S. Allies Are Also Adversaries and Enemies: A Growing Trend

JONATHAN SCHANZER & DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

Foreign policy in the Muslim world has never been simple, but it has become strikingly more complex in recent years. The Arab Uprisings blindsided U.S. planners (even regional specialists failed to see what was coming when revolutionary upheaval was just weeks away) and prompted tough foreign policy questions. Should the United States hasten revolutionary change in order to align with the “Arab street,” as it did in Libya, even though it had little idea what political factions it would empower? Should America instead prefer the stability of longstanding autocrats who, though brutal, at least squelched jihadist movements? Should the United States back heavy-handed counterrevolutionary forces that at least shared certain mutual interests, as it did following Egypt’s 2013 coup? What about countries whose policies simultaneously advance and jeopardize U.S. interests—as is the case with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which (like the United States) have worked to topple Bashar al-Assad, but also allegedly back rabidly anti-American jihadist groups?

While questions about complicated American alliances aren’t new, the increasing complexity of some of them is now palpable. A growing list of countries can be considered allies, adversaries, and enemies, all at the same time. To be sure, tensions and imperfect alliances are common in foreign policy: Every country maintains cordial or even close diplomatic ties with others that have sharp differences or diverging interests. For example, it isn’t uncommon to see countries maintain a trade relationship even when their foreign policies clash. Washington’s relationship with China is a case in point. But countries that can be considered allies, adversaries and enemies (AAEs) simultaneously are distinctive in several ways.

An *ally* is a state that cooperates with another for a particular purpose, whether military or otherwise. The distinction between *adversary* and *enemy* is somewhat subtle, yet real. When a state is an adversary, there is a real clash of interests or values, but room for compromise. As Michael Ignatieff, a former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, put it, “Today’s adversary could be tomorrow’s ally.”¹ In

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contrast, Ignatieff states that “an enemy is someone you have to destroy,” and rather than being laudable, compromise with an enemy “is appeasement.”²

Put another way, a state would like to best its adversary but not destroy it, while conflict with an enemy is a zero-sum game. During the Cold War, the People's Republic of China was a U.S. adversary rather than an enemy following President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit, which helped produce the normalization of relations between the United States and China. The Soviet Union, in contrast, was an enemy—although it can be argued that the U.S.-Soviet relationship evolved into that of adversaries after Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms finally produced a discernable thaw between the two.

What is truly unusual about the AAE phenomenon, from the U.S. perspective, is that an increasing number of countries are now behaving as allies, adversaries, and enemies all at the same time.

Consider the case of Pakistan, the U.S.'s first post-9/11 AAE. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, the U.S.-Pakistan relationship went through several sharp oscillations. Relations between the U.S. and Pakistan had soured by the end of the 1970s because of the military coup that brought General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq to power, as well as U.S. concerns about Pakistan's pursuit of a nuclear weapon. But when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, Pakistan was transformed from pariah into critical strategic asset. The United States and Saudi Arabia channeled enormous sums of money and weaponry to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI) to support Afghanistan's mujahedin factions. Pakistan's strategic importance declined significantly after the Soviet withdrawal and end of the Cold War, after which American planners viewed events in Afghanistan (inaccurately) as a third-tier problem. Just before the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan had again become a pariah for the same reasons that its international status had plummeted in the late 1970s: nuclear issues (it tested a nuclear weapon in 1998), and a military coup (by General Pervez Musharraf).

But the 9/11 attacks again transformed Pakistan into a vital strategic partner due to its geographic proximity to Afghanistan—and also, ironically, because Pakistan had been a major sponsor of the Taliban, which hosted al-Qaeda. American planners wanted to be able to route supplies for military operations in Afghanistan through Pakistani territory, and also ensure that Pakistan ended its

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support for Islamist militant groups. For these reasons, the United States provided Pakistan with billions of dollars in aid.

Pakistan did, in part, act like an ally. It allowed International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) logistics to be routed through its territory, and at times provided the United States with valuable intelligence. But it also acted as an adversary, which was best exemplified by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's long-term presence in Abbottabad. The United States did not notify Pakistan before carrying out the raid that killed bin Laden in May 2011, due to concerns that the al-Qaeda leader might learn that military action was imminent. Further, the proximity of bin Laden's compound to the Pakistan Military Academy made U.S. planners suspect that knowledge of his location was more widespread within parts of the Pakistani government than that country's establishment let on.

It is Pakistan's broader support for Islamist militancy that completes the AAE trifecta: In this area, it functioned as a U.S. enemy, bearing direct responsibility for the deaths of American servicemen. Even while Pakistan allowed ISAF's supplies to pass through its territory, elements in Pakistan provided support to the Taliban and other insurgent factions, significantly undermining the war effort.

The United States fought an impossible war in Afghanistan because Pakistan was both its most critical ally and also its most deadly state enemy. When Pakistan liaised with and armed Afghan mujahedin during the Soviet Union's war in Afghanistan, at least the Soviet Union was not providing Pakistan with billions of dollars in aid at the same time: it understood that Pakistan was acting as its enemy. In contrast, during the U.S. war in Afghanistan, America gave billions to Pakistan, which turned right around and funded insurgent groups that killed Americans.

In short, Pakistan's actions far exceeded the complexity of past U.S. relationships. Pakistan was literally functioning as ally, adversary, and enemy all at once. And the United States never quite figured out how to adjust.

* * *

The first step for Washington to better handle the challenge of AAEs is to appreciate that something unique—though not wholly unprecedented—is happening. The United States is increasingly relying on other countries that pose direct threats to Americans, and to regional or international security.

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Why can AAEs be increasingly found among the U.S.'s vital relationships? To some extent, this volume, which focuses on the Middle East and South Asia, serves as a reminder that these remain tough neighborhoods where natural alliances—based on common interests and shared values—are difficult to find.

But something broader is occurring, too. U.S. power has declined significantly since the “unipolar moment” that arrived in the early 1990s as the Cold War ended.³ We are now witnessing “the rise of the rest”; other countries have worked to improve their economies, technological innovativeness, university systems, and cultural influence, thus cutting into traditional areas of American advantage. Though the United States still enjoys many core strengths, its economy was rocked by the 2008 financial crisis, and its national debt has skyrocketed. As American power recedes, other countries are increasingly inclined to be assertive, or even to act against U.S. interests.

This is not to say that errant foreign policy has not influenced the rise of AAEs. When the United States was one of the world's only two superpowers, and later its lone superpower, America could afford the luxury of having an often amorphous foreign policy, or even making major blunders. But as the United States grows weaker and faces an increasingly multipolar system, the importance of sharpening its foreign policy must be recognized. The U.S.'s decision, for example, to announce that Assad's use of chemical weapons in Syria was a “red line,” only to reveal that there was no plan in place if that eventuality occurred, becomes far more problematic in this emerging system. Such feckless policies can further the perception that America is no longer a superpower. That perception serves only to embolden allies and enemies alike to challenge stated U.S. positions.

One common theme that runs through the AAEs examined in this book is that the United States often finds itself in a position where it depends upon these countries in some important way, thus limiting its flexibility. With Pakistan, as noted above, the United States needed crucial supply routes. Saudi Arabia, another AAE examined in this volume, is the world's most prolific oil producer.

Reducing areas of U.S. dependence—by, for example, working to ensure American energy security—is one of this book's critical recommendations. However, sometimes such entanglements are unavoidable. That is why it is important to gain a better understanding of these troubled relationships.

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Pakistan is the first AAE examined in this volume. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross argues that although the United States was clearly more powerful than Pakistan following the 9/11 attacks, Washington handcuffed itself by coming to depend so heavily on supply routes through Pakistan. He therefore warns that there is particular need for caution “in the initial decisions made in addressing any problem, such as the initial decisions made in planning logistics routes for the Afghanistan war” because path dependence makes it very difficult to change course after first investments are made.

Thomas Joscelyn explores Pakistan’s sponsorship and use of jihadist proxies from the Afghan-Soviet war onward, including its highly problematic relationship with al-Qaeda. Even before the United States declined to inform Pakistan of the coming Abbottabad operation that killed Osama bin Laden, Americans strongly suspected that Pakistani intelligence had tipped off al-Qaeda about previous military efforts designed to decapitate its leadership. This mistrust, Joscelyn argues, “is emblematic of a deeper fault line in the relationship between the two countries.” Specifically, Pakistan’s military and intelligence services had come to embrace doctrinal reasons to sponsor jihadist militancy.

Reuel Marc Gerecht offers a provocative net assessment of the war in Afghanistan, focusing on Pakistan’s impact. He looks back to the start of that war in October 2001, noting that even then, a pro-U.S. Pakistani diplomat warned that it wouldn’t end well: Islamabad would continue to support Muslim militants, while the Pakistani state would experience extraordinary damage due to the war effort. Thirteen years later, it is clear that this skepticism was warranted. But what role will Pakistan play moving forward? Gerecht asks, “Does the Pakistani military brass believe that for Pakistan to prosper—or to just survive—Afghanistan as it has been rebuilt has to die?”

The book then turns to another AAE, Saudi Arabia. The desert kingdom’s massive oil reserves have always stood at the heart of the U.S.-Saudi relationship, and have given the monarchy extraordinary leverage over the United States. There were, of course, mutual advantages to the U.S.-Saudi relationship. During the Cold War, the United States provided a “security umbrella” over Saudi Arabia and other regional monarchies to prevent Soviet incursions.⁴ In return, Saudi Arabia kept

the oil flowing and served as a bulwark against communism. At times, it played an even more active role: During the aforementioned Afghan-Soviet war, Saudi donations to the mujahedin matched those of the United States, dollar for dollar. The monarchy even increased its oil production to drop worldwide prices and thus undermine Russia financially.

But there were also significant costs. Washington looked the other way for decades while Saudi petrodollars funded schools, charities, and other institutions that spread the intolerant and often violent Wahhabi creed. It was, however, impossible to continue looking the other way after the 9/11 attacks, and the Wahhabi infrastructure came under severe scrutiny. Washington demanded that Riyadh dismantle its terrorist-funding charities and neutralize the vitriolic anti-Western rhetoric common to Wahhabi institutions. The Saudis made some progress—albeit imperfect—in this regard. Saudi Arabia, for example, grew determined in its fight against the local al-Qaeda presence after its oil facilities were targeted. However, terrorist financing and support for hard-line Wahhabi institutions emanating from Saudi Arabia has not ceased.

In recent years, Washington has leaned on Riyadh to make up for lost capacity when sanctions imposed on the Iranian regime called for the world to dial back on Iranian crude.⁵ But tensions are again rising. Saudi Arabia does not trust the Obama administration to defend its interests in the Syria conflict (toppling Assad), and Riyadh is shaken by the recent U.S. détente with Tehran. Observers are concerned that Saudi assistance may again be freely flowing to jihadists in Syria and perhaps elsewhere.

David Andrew Weinberg examines the historical and current sources of tension between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Weinberg also examines Saudi Arabia's complex relationship to jihadist militancy, which it has both fed and combated almost simultaneously.

Steven Miller then explores a more recent means of diffusion of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi ideals: hyper-connected clerics who are able to reach larger audiences than ever before through social media. Miller notes that although the kingdom made progress in curbing some of the state-sponsored clergy's xenophobia and clamped down on terrorism domestically, "radicalism is far from dead."

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Jonathan Schanzer examines the evolution of Saudi Arabia's involvement in, and efforts against, terrorist financing. Prior to the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda raised money in Saudi Arabia, while nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that received support from the monarchy provided the jihadist group with additional support. As in other spheres, Saudi Arabia has made progress on terrorist financing, but its regime remains imperfect. Today, the conflict in Syria threatens to revive financial flows to the jihadist movement, and could potentially overwhelm the progress that has been made to stanch the flow of money to jihadist causes.

* * *

While Pakistan and Saudi Arabia clearly fit the AAE model, other countries straddle the line between AAEs and more traditional complex foreign policy relationships. For the wealthy Gulf emirate of Qatar, one reason the country's possible categorization as an AAE is unclear is a dearth of information about the precise contours of its sponsorship of jihadists. As more information about Qatari policies is revealed, it may turn out that the monarchy has fully exemplified the AAE phenomenon for years.

Following its independence in 1971, Qatar was an afterthought in the international order. Its importance skyrocketed in the 1990s based primarily on energy export-driven wealth that would make the kingdom's tiny population the richest in the world per capita. Also important is Qatar's strategic geographic location. Qatar hosts the massive Al-Udeid Air Base near Doha, which is U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) forward headquarters. It is also arguably America's most strategic asset in the Middle East.

But there are significant areas of concern. U.S. officials have been puzzled and alarmed by Qatar's undeniable preference during the Arab Uprisings for supporting Islamist groups, and by its hosting and financial backing of Hamas. Then there is the question of whether Qatar is now supporting salafi jihadist groups in Syria and beyond. The emirate has had disturbing associations of this kind dating back to the 1990s, when members of the Qatari government provided assistance to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the mastermind of the September 11 attacks.⁶ Washington largely turned a blind eye to these activities—a striking parallel to its approaches to the cases of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

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David Andrew Weinberg examines Qatar's embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood and its support for Brotherhood-aligned factions during the Arab Spring. While this once seemed to be a winning strategy, one that ingratiated Qatar with groups expected to emerge as the inevitable winners from the region's upheaval, the wisdom of this approach is less clear today. Many of the factions that Qatar backed have experienced a significant decline in power, and Qatar's foreign policy has produced open conflict with countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain.

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Luke Lischin look at the extent of the ties between Qatar and jihadist violent non-state actors. Although the evidence is ambiguous, Gartenstein-Ross and Lischin argue that there is reason for concern. They also challenge conventional wisdom about the motives underlying Qatari foreign policy, arguing that it may be more influenced by religious ideology than the field typically recognizes.

David Barnett discusses Qatar's close relationship with the Palestinian militant group Hamas. While Qatar has had a longstanding relationship with Hamas, the relationship has taken on increasing importance in recent years. After Hamas split from Iran over the Syrian civil war in 2012, Qatari support has helped to reduce the impact of Hamas's international isolation. Barnett also raises troubling questions about Qatari support to Syrian jihadists.

Finally, this volume addresses the troubling policies of Turkey, which could arguably be categorized as either an AAE or a more typical complex relationship. Either way, its inclusion is somewhat surprising—and disappointing—given the strong relationship that the United States and Turkey have enjoyed historically. A NATO ally that long served as an important buffer against Middle East extremism, Turkey had played a crucial role in supporting American foreign policy in the Middle East since the end of World War II. However, it has become clear that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which first came to power in 2002, has been working at cross purposes with the United States on several key national security issues.

Jonathan Schanzer examines the relationship between Turkey and Hamas, which has changed significantly since the AKP's rise to power—as has Turkey's relationship with Israel. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been

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particularly dedicated, Schanzer writes, “to breaking Hamas out of its political and economic isolation.” Another sign of Turkey’s continuing drift in this direction was the government’s sponsorship of an ill-fated flotilla in 2010, which was designed to physically penetrate Israel’s blockade of Gaza, but instead prompted conflict with Israeli commandos on the high seas.

Emanuele Ottolenghi examines Iranian procurement networks in Turkey designed to help Iran subvert international sanctions imposed to discourage its nuclear program. As Ottolenghi demonstrates, Iran has relied on Turkey to help it procure technologies that could be used for its nuclear or ballistic missile programs. Further, Ottolenghi warns that the recent relaxation in sanctions on Iran will likely “encourage further bilateral economic exchanges,” and thus Turkey’s role in helping Iran circumvent sanctions “is likely to increase” rather than decline.

Mark Dubowitz, Rachel Ziemba and Gary Clark look at the use of Iran’s “golden loophole.” From March 2012 through July 2013, Turkey provided Iran with more than \$12 billion in gold to pay for energy exports. As the authors note, the gas-for-gold scheme “provided the Islamic Republic with an essential financial lifeline to continue its nuclear weapons development, and withstand the impact of U.S. and international sanctions.”

The Syria war, meanwhile, has been an obvious source of tension between the United States and Turkey. Tony Badran provides an analysis that is more sympathetic to Turkish concerns, and critical of the U.S.’s strategic drift. “Washington’s policy of not adopting a policy in Syria,” Badran writes, “has led regional players, including Turkey, to pursue their interests through their own limited means.”

Growing internal tensions also beset Turkey. Karen Kaya examines increasing restrictions on press freedom in Turkey, spurred in part by the country’s growing anti-government protests. She describes new and proposed laws that amount to nothing less than “a crisis of confidence in the country’s constitutional liberties, rule of law, human rights, and freedom of press, expression, and assembly.” Kaya pinpointed this trend even before Turkey’s more recent—and notorious—ban on Twitter.

* * *

Because several converging trends are driving the growth in AAEs, it is unlikely that the phenomenon will naturally recede. The key now is to limit

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America's exposure, and to dial back on the dependencies that first prompted these challenging alliances.

Clifford D. May concludes that clarity in understanding the U.S.'s complex relationships is important, but our actions are even more crucial. American policies have sent mixed messages to our allies, adversaries, and enemies alike. "Can our friends still rely upon our support—even when the going gets tough?" he asks. "Do foes still have reason to fear us—or have we become too war-weary to effectively oppose them? And those nations that profess friendship but seek to ingratiate themselves with our foes—what are we to do about them?" May argues for a clearer commitment to upholding the values that America holds dear.

Pakistan

A Handcuffed Superpower: The U.S., Pakistan, and the Afghanistan War

DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

After the September 11 attacks blindsided the United States, U.S. policymakers intent on dislodging al-Qaeda from its safe haven in Afghanistan were faced with a dilemma: What should they do about Pakistan? Pakistan was the main backer of the Taliban, which sheltered al-Qaeda's leadership, but its geographic proximity to Afghanistan also gave Pakistan the potential to become an important partner in fighting Islamic militancy. The Bush administration addressed this dilemma by dispatching deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage to warn Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf that his country had to decide if it was with America or the terrorists—but, as Musharraf later recounted, “if we chose the terrorists, then we should be prepared to be bombed back to the Stone Age.”¹

Pakistan made a number of early concessions following this threat. On January 12, 2002, Musharraf announced that organizations based in Pakistan would no longer be allowed to engage in religiously-inspired terrorism. He said that five jihadist groups would be banned, including Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. A second concession Pakistan made was allowing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the NATO-led security mission in Afghanistan, to use its territory as a route for delivering supplies to troops.

Pakistan, however, wouldn't keep the first of these promises. It would not only resume support for militant groups, but also would become the most prominent sponsor of the insurgency in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, ISAF's decision to route supplies through Pakistan also created such a dangerous dependency on Pakistan's help that the United States fettered its own ability to respond to Pakistan's support for militants. When America eventually tried to establish the Northern Distribution Network, which would provide alternative supply lines into Afghanistan, it was too late. Pakistan had already indelibly damaged the war effort.

This chapter details the evolution of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship following the September 11 attacks. The problems the United States encountered in dealing with Pakistan are, in many ways, emblematic of America's international relationships in

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the 21st century, where it will encounter a proliferation of Ally-Adversary-Enemies (AAEs), countries with which the United States is bound to have similarly vexing dealings. Understanding the course of the U.S.'s failures with respect to Pakistan can thus help America to better navigate these difficult relationships.

* * *

Even after Musharraf threw his lot in with the United States after 9/11, insurgent factions continued to find a safe haven in Pakistan, and to receive support from elements within Pakistan. This support to jihadist violent non-state actors (VNSAs) was, in fact, foreseeable: Pakistan's policies in this regard had evolved over the course of more than two decades.

Originally, Pakistan's support for Islamist VNSAs was a response to Afghanistan's own sponsorship of militant groups in Pakistan: Afghanistan was agitating for the Pashtun-majority areas of Pakistan to be able to choose whether to opt out and form their own independent state, which Afghan planners referred to as Pashtunistan. In response to an escalation in Afghan support for Pashtun separatism following Mohammed Daoud Khan's 1973 coup, Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a secular reformist who often unwittingly empowered the country's Islamists, adopted a "forward policy" of supporting Islamist VNSAs in Afghanistan.

This move had lasting consequences. Bhutto's policies forged the initial personal relationships between Pakistani military intelligence officers and Islamic militants. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the set of policies it prompted, ensured that Pakistani support for militants would endure for decades. The anti-Soviet mujahedin became the beneficiaries of the largest U.S. covert aid program since the Vietnam War, with American support (totaling around \$3 billion) matched dollar for dollar by Saudi Arabia. This aid was channeled to the mujahedin through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI).

The Afghan-Soviet war occurred at a time when the Pakistani military was undergoing significant changes, both at the top and also among the rank and file. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq deposed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a July 1977 military coup. As Husain Haqqani notes, Zia was "closely connected to several Islamists by virtue of his social and family origins."²² During his period of rule, Zia changed Pakistan's military culture in several ways. He incorporated Islamic

teachings (such as S.K. Malik's *The Qur'anic Concept of War*) into military training, added religious criteria to officers' promotion requirements and exams, and required formal obedience to Islamic rules within the military.³ These top-level changes came as the demographics of the officer corps were naturally shifting. The first generation of Pakistan's officers were from the country's largely secular social elites, while many new junior officers hailed from the poorer northern districts. Pakistani journalist Zahid Hussain observed that "the spirit of liberalism, common in the 'old' army, was practically unknown to them."⁴ He argues that their differing outlook allowed Islamic fundamentalism to more easily become a powerful force within the military.

Further, as Pakistan's support for Islamist VNSAs grew during the Afghan-Soviet war, its strategic doctrine came to embrace this support as a central means of advancing the country's interests. Pakistani planners came to believe that supporting Islamist groups in Afghanistan would give them "strategic depth" in the country's bitter rivalry with India. These planners further believed (correctly, it turned out) that Afghanistan's Islamist groups were more likely to be hostile to India, a non-Muslim power.

After Afghanistan's communist government collapsed and the country descended into civil war, the Taliban emerged from the chaos. It grew rapidly not only because the group was composed of effective fighters, but also because Pakistan's ISI backed them, "helping uneducated Taliban leaders with everything from fighting the opposition Northern Alliance to more mundane tasks like translating international documents."⁵ By 1996, the Taliban had captured both Kabul and Kandahar, and it eventually became the dominant military force in most of the country.

Pakistan tried to take advantage of the jihadist presence in Afghanistan during this period. Some jihadist groups based in Afghanistan concentrated their militant activities on an issue of great interest to Pakistan: opposing the Indian presence in the disputed Kashmir region. Additionally, the period of Taliban rule was the only time since Pakistan's creation that Afghanistan had a strong relationship with Pakistan and an adversarial one with India.

It was thus unsurprising that Musharraf's reversal of support for jihadist groups

didn't hold up. The factors driving Pakistan's support for violent Islamist groups in Afghanistan simply represented too tangled a web. In addition to the strategic calculations behind Pakistan's support for these groups, the personal relationships between Pakistani officers and VNSAs had become strong.

Pakistani support for insurgent factions in Afghanistan was increasingly discernible by the 2005-06 period. U.S. observers believed ISI advisers were operating inside Afghanistan, that the Taliban was gaining the ability to actively organize in Quetta (rather than just being allowed to live there), and that Islamist insurgents had begun to run training camps outside of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Thereafter, Pakistan's support for the insurgency only became more obvious. Senior Taliban commanders openly discussed the ISI's support for the insurgency with outside researchers.⁶ These commanders had come to see the ISI not as a peripheral or incidental supporter, but rather as central to their efforts. They described the ISI's role as being "as clear as the sun in the sky." Some commanders believed that ISI orders were critical to attacks against "road contractors, schools or aid workers." While they may not have liked these target choices (preferring to fight ISAF forces), there was a palpable feeling that they had no choice. "When we are ordered to do these things, we cannot say no," a commander based in southern Afghanistan said. "Many [Taliban commanders] have been assassinated by the ISI."⁷

A report by London School of Economics researcher Matt Waldman illustrated specific mechanisms through which insurgent commanders believed the ISI maintained influence. One was through representation on the Quetta Shura, the military command for Taliban operations in southern Afghanistan. Interviewees believed that the ISI had "representatives on the shura, either as participants or observers, and the agency is thus involved at the highest level of the movement." The ISI also wielded influence by arresting senior Taliban leaders when they ran afoul of its wishes.⁸

* * *

To be clear, there is some complexity involved in assessing Pakistan's complicity in supporting Islamic militant groups in Afghanistan, because Pakistan does not operate as a unified actor. One schism is between the civilian government and

the military. Indeed, Musharraf is one of several Pakistani military leaders who executed a coup against a civilian government. But there are also divisions within the military itself. The most notable is the distinct place of the ISI, which is often described as a “state within a state.”

So when one says that Pakistan supports jihadist groups, what does it mean? There are multiple possibilities. One is that both Pakistan’s civilian government and ISI support a particular jihadist group. A second possibility is that Pakistan’s support represents official ISI policy, and the civilian government provides an implicit green light but no oversight—functioning in a manner similar to a black budget. A third possibility is that Pakistan’s support is official ISI policy that flouts the civilian government’s wishes—meaning that the civilian government doesn’t want the ISI to adopt a set of pro-jihadist policies, but that ISI does so anyway, pursuant to orders from its leadership.

A fourth possibility is that actions are taken by “rogue elements” within ISI who are supported by neither the civilian government nor ISI at an official level (ISI leadership may still give the so-called rogue elements an implicit green light while trying to maintain its own deniability). The U.S. responded to a few incidents—including the November 2008 Mumbai “urban warfare” attacks and the July 2008 bombing of India’s embassy in Kabul—as though rogue elements of ISI were to blame.

A fifth possibility is an outer ring of supporters for jihadist militancy who are no longer part of ISI, yet maintain influence within it. Retired ISI officers from S wing (the division within ISI that liaises with militant organizations) who retain connections to militancy and have remained influential following their retirement include former ISI head Hamid Gul, who in 2003 declared that “God will destroy the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan and wherever it will try to go from there.”⁹In late 2008, the United States sent a secret document to Pakistan’s government linking Gul to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and India has demanded his arrest in connection with the Mumbai attacks.¹⁰

One illustration of the non-unified nature of Pakistan’s government is a May 2011 incident in which Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari covertly sent a letter to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen asking for U.S. help in disbanding the ISI’s S wing.¹¹ That Zardari reached out to the United States for

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assistance in changing ISI's internal dynamics, rather than taking action on his own, underscores that the civilian government isn't in a position of uncontested authority.

The disunity within Pakistan's government often made it difficult for U.S. policymakers to determine at which level Pakistan's support for jihadism was sanctioned. This, in turn, impeded an effective U.S. response after it became obvious that, contrary to Musharraf's assurances, jihadist groups continued to both operate inside Pakistan and also receive state support.

* * *

But an even greater impediment to effective U.S. action than confusion about responsibility for Pakistani support for the insurgency was ISAF's dependence on supply routes through Pakistan. The way these supply routes made conflict with Pakistan dangerous can be seen in the consequences of a September 2010 cross-border incident that caused a spike in tensions between the United States and Pakistan.

On September 30, 2010, ISAF helicopters were in hot pursuit of militants who fled across the border into Pakistan. As ISAF forces approached a post manned by Pakistan's Frontier Corps, the corpsmen opened fire. According to Pakistan, they fired warning shots, though some U.S. analysts believe the corpsmen may have actually been providing cover fire for the militants. ISAF helicopters opened fire in response to the shots taken by the Frontier Corps, killing two and injuring four. Outraged by these deaths, Pakistan shut down the Torkham border crossing, which was critical to the movement of NATO supplies into Afghanistan.

This closure proved costly. The lines of trucks and tankers that couldn't enter Afghanistan due to the closed crossing proved easy targets for militants. Tankers carrying oil for ISAF troops were particularly vulnerable, prone to having 20 or more caught in a blaze of fire at a time. At one point, attackers set more than 50 tankers aflame simultaneously in the Nowshera district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.¹²

Though the Torkham crossing was reopened relatively quickly, the message was clear: the United States and ISAF needed this supply route. At the time of the Torkham closing, the United States had already been working on developing the Northern Distribution Network, which was designed to deliver supplies to

Afghanistan from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan rather than exclusively through Pakistan. By 2011, half the cargo for ground forces in Afghanistan came in through the Northern Distribution Network, thus beginning to lessen ISAF's dependence on Pakistan.¹³ But by then, it was too late: The U.S. was focused on withdrawing from Afghanistan.

* * *

This account provides several important lessons for America as it deals with a world where an increasing number of its relationships are likely to be with AAEs. The first lesson is the need to expand the U.S.'s options wherever possible. The lack of options for supplying forces in Afghanistan gave Pakistan leverage that it never should have achieved, which in turn allowed it to undertake policies responsible for American and Afghan deaths without fear of retaliation. Similarly, several other thorny relationships explored in this volume are the product of a lack of options: The U.S.'s relationship with Saudi Arabia, for example, is complicated by America's sole reliance on oil in its transportation sector.

A second related lesson is that the U.S. must not handcuff itself in its relationships. There is a need for particular care in the initial decisions made in addressing any problem, such as planning logistics routes for the Afghanistan war. The political science concept of path dependence demonstrates that early decisions in a sequence matter more than later ones, because "once a particular path gets established... self-reinforcing processes make reversals very difficult."¹⁴ Parties make investments around the initial decisions, and institutions are organized around them. In Afghanistan, for example, later investments reinforced the initial decision to route supplies through Pakistan. These investments and institutional arrangements function as "positive feedbacks" that make it difficult to turn back from one's first choices.¹⁵

The United States will undoubtedly face many challenging relationships in the twenty-first century no matter how wise a course it charts. But America can also reduce the number of relationships where it finds itself dependent on a less powerful state; and it should make maximizing flexibility in such relationships a priority. America's relationship with Pakistan is an example of precisely what the United States should work to avoid in the future.

Pakistan's Proxies, Al-Qaeda's Allies

THOMAS JOSCELYN

For months leading up to May 2, 2011, American spies patiently collected intelligence on a curious compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The CIA considered telling the Pakistani government about the home's suspicious resident—a man Langley believed was Osama bin Laden. However, the CIA decided not to tip off the Pakistanis. Why? According to then-CIA director Leon Panetta, “it was decided that any effort to work with the Pakistanis could jeopardize the mission. They might alert the targets.”¹ Panetta was not the only Obama administration official concerned about Pakistan's duplicity in the hunt for bin Laden. One year before the Abbottabad raid, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton openly accused some within the Pakistani government of knowing bin Laden's whereabouts.²

U.S. intelligence officials were right about bin Laden's hiding place, of course. He had been living near a cantonment outside of Pakistan's most prestigious military academy for several years. After the raid, some Pakistani officials could hardly conceal their embarrassment, falsely claiming that they were informed of the operation from the beginning. In reality, the Pakistani government did not learn about the raid until after the fact, as specially equipped American helicopters launched from Afghanistan evaded Pakistan's air defenses.

Beyond the location of bin Laden's final safe house, American officials had many legitimate reasons to keep the raid a secret. Namely, the United States had targeted bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1998, but he escaped unharmed—and U.S. officials believe that Pakistan was to blame.

On August 20, 1998, President Clinton ordered the U.S. military to fire 75 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a terrorist training facility in Afghanistan, in retaliation for the twin bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that al-Qaeda carried out earlier in the month. The CIA learned that bin Laden may have been planning to attend a meeting at the training facility that evening, and the gathering was seen as an opportune time to avenge al-Qaeda's attacks. The cruise missiles killed some lower-level jihadists and their trainers from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), but missed bin Laden.

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Prior to the August 1998 strike, American officials alerted the Pakistani government of the coming missile strikes because the Clinton administration feared that Pakistan might mistake the missiles for a first strike by nuclear-armed India. That warning likely provided the window for bin Laden's escape. The CIA conducted an after-action review that concluded the cruise missiles had missed bin Laden by only "a few hours," after which U.S. national security officials "speculated that one or another Pakistani official might have sent a warning to the Taliban or bin Laden."³ Years later, one of bin Laden's chief bodyguards, Nasser al-Bahri (a.k.a. Abu Jandal) confirmed the CIA's suspicion. "One day, the Americans decided to target bin Laden on Afghan territory," wrote al-Bahri in his autobiography. But the "Pakistan services informed us of the impending attack three hours before it was due to happen."⁴ The Taliban received advanced warning, too. The U.S. government later learned that Hamid Gul, the former ISI chief and an avowed jihadist, had tipped off the Taliban.⁵

The mistrust between the U.S. and Pakistan during the years-long manhunt for bin Laden is emblematic of a deeper fault line in the relationship between the two countries. For decades, Pakistan's military and intelligence services have sponsored jihadist groups throughout Central and South Asia. During the Afghan-Soviet war in the 1980s, when the U.S. allied with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia against the Soviets, Pakistan backed the most radical of Afghan insurgent forces. While the United States shipped cash and weaponry to the mujahedin, American spies took a largely hands-off approach when it came to deciding which rebel factions were most worthy of support. Pakistan filled this void by supporting the most hardline organizations, many of which were ideologically aligned with al-Qaeda's views. Pakistan continued to support fundamentalist factions during the 1990s, when its military and intelligence establishment sponsored the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan, and also utilized jihadist groups as a tool of unconventional anti-India warfare in Kashmir.

Prior to the 9/11 attacks, Pakistan did little to assuage international complaints about the terrorist threat emanating from its backyard. Admittedly, after the attacks, President Pervez Musharraf provided Pakistani assistance in the U.S.-led war on terror. The extent, sincerity, and effectiveness of that assistance, however, are a matter of dispute.

The question is not whether Pakistan has or has not been helpful since al-Qaeda attacked America. Rather, the question is to what extent leading jihadist groups in Pakistan are nurtured by the military and intelligence “establishment.”⁶ Indeed, the groups discussed in this chapter were all either founded or sponsored by the Pakistani military and intelligence services, and continue to receive their assistance. Significantly, these groups are also allied with al-Qaeda. Thus, while elements of the Pakistani establishment may assist American efforts in some ways, Pakistan also serves to strengthen the jihadist network led by bin Laden’s successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri. As U.S. forces draw down from Afghanistan, Pakistan’s sponsorship of al-Qaeda’s allies will undoubtedly continue, thereby making al-Qaeda itself stronger.

Pakistan’s Proxies in the Jihad Against the Soviets

Osama bin Laden’s relationship with the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment began in the 1980s. The ISI then served as the main conduit for international efforts to bleed the Soviets out of Afghanistan. At the time, bin Laden shuttled back and forth between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where the government and rich donors were eager to sponsor the jihad. Bin Laden acted much like a liaison between the ISI, his Gulf benefactors, and mujahedin factions.⁷

Bin Laden’s mentor was a charismatic ideologue from the Muslim Brotherhood named Abdullah Azzam, widely considered the founding father of global jihad. Together, Azzam and bin Laden founded Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), the Services Office, a logistics organization that helped foreign fighters travel to Afghanistan and deploy to the battlefield. It was a precursor to al-Qaeda.

While the Saudis and Americans supplied weaponry and cash for the anti-Soviet forces, the ISI was in charge of distributing much of it.⁸ The ISI organized the various Afghan guerilla factions into a seven-party alliance, with four of the seven parties being fundamentalist in their outlook.⁹ While all the parties received ISI assistance and direction, the extremist factions garnered the lion’s share of resources. As one commanding officer recalled, “the fundamentalists came out on top with 67-73 per cent [of the ISI-directed resources], much to the CIA’s chagrin, but using strictly military criteria it could never be otherwise.”¹⁰

Among the ISI’s preferred clients were extremists such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar,

Yunus Khalis, and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. All three men led factions that were part of the ISI-directed seven party alliance. They were also closely allied with Azzam and bin Laden. The three extremist commanders favored by the ISI would each continue to support bin Laden and al-Qaeda after the jihad against the Soviets ended. When bin Laden wore out his welcome in Sudan in the mid-1990s, Hekmatyar and Khalis were among the first to welcome him back to Afghanistan.¹¹ Hekmatyar fell out of the ISI's favor in the mid-1990s, as the Taliban became the ISI's main proxy in Afghanistan. He lived in Iran from 1996 until 2002, then returned to Pakistan. The U.S. government designated Hekmatyar a terrorist in 2003, specifically noting his ties to al-Qaeda.¹² Hekmatyar's forces continue to fight alongside al-Qaeda and the Taliban inside Afghanistan to this day.

In 1987, while he was working with the ISI, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf took on a protégé named Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM). Sayyaf became KSM's "mentor" and provided him with military training, according to the 9/11 Commission.¹³ Before he became a top al-Qaeda operative and the mastermind of 9/11, KSM fought against the Soviets on the frontlines, and worked for a magazine run by Abdullah Azzam's MAK.¹⁴ Sayyaf himself became so revered within al-Qaeda circles that an affiliate group in the southern Philippines derived its name from his.

Al-Qaeda's most important ally in South Asia is Jalaluddin Haqqani, who served as a commander in Khalis's group. Haqqani and the ISI worked hand-in-glove in the fight against the Soviets.¹⁵ And he has remained an asset since. In September 2011, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen described Haqqani's network as a "veritable arm" of the ISI.¹⁶ Mullen's comments came the week after two deadly attacks, one on a NATO outpost and the other on the American embassy in Kabul. Mullen blamed the ISI and Haqqani Network for both.

While working with the ISI, the Haqqani Network has aided and abetted al-Qaeda. Jalaluddin Haqqani was one of the earliest supporters of the foreign fighter phenomenon in Afghanistan. Bin Laden and other senior al-Qaeda leaders forged close working ties with him very early in their careers.¹⁷

The Pakistani establishment's relationship with Haqqani has greatly complicated the fight against al-Qaeda. The Pakistani military has refused to move against the Haqqani family's strongholds in Waziristan, even though al-Qaeda

and allied groups use these strongholds. Al-Qaeda plots against the West have also been launched from this safe haven.¹⁸ Jalaluddin Haqqani, his sons, and their followers have thus become deeply intertwined in the al-Qaeda network even as they continue to collude with the ISI.

Al-Qaeda and the Taliban

After the Soviets were forced to withdraw from Afghanistan in 1989, bin Laden quickly began to look for new battlefronts. After falling out with the Saudi government over the deployment of U.S. troops on Saudi soil during the 1991 Gulf War, bin Laden spent the early 1990s headquartered in Sudan. However, the al-Qaeda leader did not abandon South Asia entirely. "During his entire time in Sudan," the 9/11 Commission found, bin Laden "maintained guesthouses and training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan." The camps "were part of a larger network used by diverse organizations for recruiting and training fighters for Islamic insurgencies in such places as Tajikistan, Kashmir, and Chechnya."¹⁹

Bin Laden eventually left Sudan in 1996, when Khartoum came under international pressure for harboring terrorists. Bin Laden relocated the base of al-Qaeda's operations back to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban, backed by the ISI, emerged as a major Afghan player in 1994, captured Kabul in September 1996, and came to control 90 percent of the country.²⁰ In short, bin Laden needed the Taliban as an ally. Pakistan's intelligence service helped facilitate the relationship.

"It is unlikely that Bin Ladin could have returned to Afghanistan had Pakistan disapproved," the 9/11 Commission found. "The Pakistani military intelligence service probably had advance knowledge of his coming, and its officers may have facilitated his travel."²¹ Bin Laden didn't just walk up to the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, and introduce himself. Rather, "Pakistani intelligence officers reportedly introduced bin Laden to Taliban leaders in Kandahar, their main base of power, to aid his reassertion of control over camps near Khowst, out of an apparent hope that he would now expand the camps and make them available for training Kashmiri militants."²²

Nasser al-Bahri, bin Laden's aforementioned former bodyguard, confirms

that the ISI supported al-Qaeda's camps in the Taliban's Afghanistan. Al-Bahri writes that the "absence of official links between us and the ISI did not prevent them from sending instructors to our camps." The trainees "could be of use [to Pakistan] in the event of an Indian attack on Pakistan or in Kashmir." Al-Qaeda even "had an agreement with the Islamabad army by which our men could train with them," al-Bahri writes. He identified 45 recruits who studied either guerilla warfare or commando training in Pakistan, with the country's military. When these operatives returned, "they taught the skills they had learned to their colleagues in al-Qaeda."²³

Pakistan's assistance described by al-Bahri and other sources took place prior to September 11, 2001. By this time, members of the Pakistani establishment had forged long-standing relationships with religious militants and also fleshed out strategic doctrines that saw these groups as advantageous for the Pakistani state. Unsurprisingly, after the 9/11 attacks, elements of the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment continued to support Islamist militancy in general and al-Qaeda operatives specifically.

Though establishment elements were extremely quiet about their support for al-Qaeda, the Taliban's relationship with Pakistan was plain for all to see. Mullah Omar and his subordinates were largely dependent on the ISI for weapons, fuel, cash, and other support prior to the 9/11 attacks.²⁴ But even after those attacks, which were famously planned inside the Taliban's Afghanistan, the Pakistani establishment refused to turn on its chief client. Mullah Omar and other top Taliban leaders have received refuge inside Pakistan for more than a decade.²⁵

Evidence of al-Qaeda's ongoing operational relationship with the Taliban was discovered in bin Laden's extensive cache of files that was recovered by American forces during the Abbottabad raid. According to the *Guardian*, the files show a "close working relationship" among bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Mullah Omar, with the three having "frequent discussions of joint operations against NATO forces in Afghanistan."²⁶

Lashkar-e-Taiba ("Army of the Pure") and al-Qaeda

In April 2012, the U.S. government announced a \$10 million bounty for

information leading to the arrest of Hafiz Saeed, the longtime leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). The bounty was, in reality, merely symbolic. Saeed was hiding in plain sight in Pakistan. Although Saeed is wanted for his alleged role in the November 2008 terrorist siege in Mumbai, India, as well as a string of other attacks, Pakistan declined to turn him in. Days after the bounty was announced, Saeed gave a defiant public sermon in Lahore. The LeT leader called on Muslims to join the group and wage jihad. "Come to us," Saeed said. "We will teach you the meaning of jihad."²⁷

Saeed created Lashkar-e-Taiba in the late 1980s, with assistance from Azzam, bin Laden's first mentor. Saeed remained one of bin Laden's faithful allies until the al-Qaeda leader's demise. LeT also became one of the ISI's two preferred proxies in its conflict with India in Kashmir.

The relationship between the ISI and LeT goes beyond the usual state-client dynamic. It is sometimes difficult to ascertain where the ISI ends and LeT begins. In his book, *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of the Global Jihad*, former U.S. national security official Bruce Riedel explains that LeT is a Punjabi organization at heart, much like the Pakistani military, and therefore "recruits from the same families and neighborhoods as the Pakistani army and ISI." One of Riedel's Pakistani sources, a general, described ties between the two as a "family affair."²⁸

While maintaining this relationship with the ISI, LeT has continued to collude with al-Qaeda. In fact, fighters have moved seamlessly between the organizations. In March 2002, senior al-Qaeda operative Zayn al-Abidin Muhammad Husayn (a.k.a. Abu Zubaydah) was captured during a raid on a LeT-controlled safe house in Faisalabad, Pakistan. The safe house was part of a "network" of LeT "houses and operatives enlisted by" Zubaydah to "help al-Qaeda's Arab fighters escape Afghanistan," according to a leaked file from Guantanamo Bay.²⁹ During the summer of 2003, American authorities tracked down al-Qaeda's "al-Ghuraba cell" in Karachi, Pakistan. The cell had been trained to hijack planes and was part of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's plan to attack the United States with operatives dispatched through Southeast Asia. The al-Ghuraba cell also received training from LeT members at a school run by the group.³⁰

Perhaps the most troubling evidence of collusion between LeT and al-Qaeda was both groups' involvement in the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks.

During the multiday siege, trained gunmen targeted a variety of sites, including a Jewish community center and locations frequented by Western tourists. More than 150 people were killed. The Abbottabad documents reportedly point to a deep relationship between LeT and al-Qaeda. “The documents and files found in Abbottabad showed a close connection between Bin Laden and [Hafiz] Saeed, right up to May 2011,” Riedel told *The Hindustan Times* after receiving a briefing on the documents. Riedel added that the files “suggested a much larger direct al-Qaeda role in the planning of the Mumbai attacks than many assumed.”³¹ Bin Laden may have even seen surveillance reports prepared by David Headley, the LeT operative who scouted out locations for the Mumbai siege.

During the U.S. trial of one of his co-conspirators in 2011, Headley testified that he worked with two handlers who were reportedly ISI officers: Sajid Mir and a man known as Major Iqbal.³² Intercepted phone calls show that Mir directed the Mumbai attackers. Jean-Louis Bruguière, a French judge, concluded after investigating the LeT’s operations that “Sajid Mir was a high-ranking officer in the Pakistani Army and apparently also was in the ISI.”³³ Mir rose to the rank of major before leaving the Pakistani Army for unknown reasons. As for Major Iqbal, journalist Sebastian Rotella reported that American and Indian officials suspected he “was a serving ISI officer and a liaison to Lashkar.”³⁴ Iqbal reportedly gave Headley \$25,000 to facilitate the surveillance of targets in Mumbai—the same surveillance reports that may have ended up in bin Laden’s hands.

Additional threads of evidence suggest that al-Qaeda had a hand in the Mumbai attacks. Headley worked for a senior al-Qaeda operative named Ilyas Kashmiri, who was subsequently killed in a U.S. drone strike.³⁵ Al-Qaeda recognized Kashmiri’s talent and promoted him to a top leadership position. During interviews, Kashmiri claimed direct responsibility for planning the Mumbai attacks.³⁶ Kashmiri also plotted Mumbai-style attacks in Europe at bin Laden’s behest.³⁷

Though unraveling the real story behind the Mumbai attacks is no simple matter, the involvement of current or former Pakistani officers reinforces that the Pakistani establishment has been deeply compromised by its decades-long promotion of jihadism.

Harakat ul-Mujahedin and al-Qaeda

On Christmas Eve 1999, five members of Harakat ul-Mujahedin (HUM) hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814 en route from Nepal to India. The hijacking was one of several high-profile terrorist operations that were set to mark the new millennium. Al-Qaeda plots in Jordan and against the Los Angeles international airport failed, but the Indian Air hijacking succeeded. The hijacked Airbus made several stops, finally landing in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where the hijackers negotiated with Indian authorities as armed Taliban guards surrounded the plane. Not all of the passengers survived, but those who did were exchanged for three notorious jihadists whom India had imprisoned. Though Pakistani authorities denied any role in the hijacking, some reports accuse the ISI of planning the attack.³⁸

But even if the ISI didn't conceive the plot, one of its longtime clients did. The U.S. government has repeatedly accused the Pakistani establishment of having strong ties to HUM. "Credible reports continued to indicate official Pakistani support for Kashmiri militant groups that engage in terrorism, such as the Harakat ul-Mujahedin," the State Department noted in its *Patterns of Global Terrorism* for 1999.³⁹ HUM participated in the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan. But according a profile of HUM created by the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), soon after the Afghan-Soviet war ended, the group "turned its attention to terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir with the support of the Pakistani government," and received "guidance" from the ISI.⁴⁰

While receiving open support from Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment, HUM was itself openly supportive of bin Laden's global jihad. In February 1998, bin Laden announced the "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders," a joint venture of jihadist groups committed to attacking American and allied interests. Among those who signed the front's founding statement was HUM leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil.⁴¹ Several months later, on August 7, 1998, al-Qaeda struck America's embassies in Kenya and Tanzania with twin truck bombs. The nearly simultaneous bombings were al-Qaeda's most devastating attacks prior to 9/11. The blasts killed 224 people, and thousands

more sustained injuries. The embassy attacks were the first strikes by al-Qaeda after the Islamic front's formation. HUM fighters were killed when America retaliated against a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan later that same month. Khalil vowed revenge against the United States.⁴²

Published accounts differ as to how involved bin Laden and al-Qaeda were in the aforementioned HUM hijacking of Flight 814 in 1999.⁴³ One of the freed terrorists, Maulana Masood Azhar, was a senior HUM official and a close ally of bin Laden's. After his release from prison, Azhar left HUM and founded Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), another ISI-supported terrorist organization focused primarily on Kashmir.⁴⁴ JeM terrorists have gone on to play key roles within al-Qaeda. As al-Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured, JeM and other Pakistan-based terrorist groups have provided a deep bench from which al-Qaeda can draw new talent. For example, Rashid Rauf, a JeM member and Azhar's relative, became an al-Qaeda operative.⁴⁵ Prior to his demise, Rauf helped plan an operation to down multiple airliners heading from Heathrow Airport in London to the United States, a plot that was thwarted in 2006.

Another operative freed as part of the Flight 814 hostage exchange was Omar Saeed Sheikh, who subsequently orchestrated the kidnapping of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. A consortium of Pakistani terrorist groups, including HUM members, took part in the kidnapping, with senior al-Qaeda operative Khalid Sheikh Mohammed ultimately taking responsibility for both the operation and Pearl's grisly slaying.

The Abbottabad documents also provided evidence of HUM's collusion with al-Qaeda. According to *The New York Times*, the cellphone used by bin Laden's courier (who inadvertently led America's spies to bin Laden's doorstep) "contained contacts" who were part of HUM. Officials told the *Times* that the "discovery indicates that bin Laden used the group... as part of his support network inside the country." The *Times* noted that HUM's leaders have "strong ties with both al-Qaeda and Pakistani intelligence," and the revelation "raised tantalizing questions about whether the group and others like it helped shelter and support bin Laden on behalf of Pakistan's spy agency."⁴⁶

Those questions remain unanswered. But the *Times* noted that Fazlur Rehman

Khalil, the HUM official who signed bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa*, "lives unbothered by Pakistani authorities on the outskirts of Islamabad."

Conclusion

After the Abbottabad raid, many in the United States and around the world, including in Pakistan, rightly wondered whether elements within the Pakistani military and intelligence establishment had been protecting bin Laden. We still do not know. The answers are likely contained in the massive archive of documents and files captured in the raid, only a fraction of which has been released to the public.

While the details of bin Laden's support network inside Pakistan should be released, to the extent that they are known, the broad brushstrokes are already visible. The Pakistani establishment has sponsored jihadist groups allied with al-Qaeda for decades. The Pakistanis see these groups as an important part of its proxy war against India and other forces in Afghanistan, Kashmir, and elsewhere. Yet they have bolstered al-Qaeda as well.

As America draws down from Afghanistan, there is cause for grave concern. Pakistan has not abandoned its jihadist proxies. Its sponsorship of these groups will continue—and may even become worse—in Afghanistan, where the al-Qaeda-allied Taliban remains a formidable foe.

Back to the Future: The Return to a Pre-9/11 World in Pakistan and Afghanistan

REUEL MARC GERECHT

In October 2001, a highly Westernized and pro-American Pakistani diplomat expressed to me his reservations about imminent U.S. military actions in Afghanistan. He didn't think the United States had the vision and stubbornness to stay in Afghanistan for the time necessary to deny the Taliban a rebirth. He was certain then that Islamabad would not forsake the zealously religious Afghan Pashtuns: They'd been a winning ally, excluding the little detour in which they harbored Osama bin Laden, and their support inside Pakistan, especially in the northern Pashtun regions, remained solid. As much as 9/11 had shocked this diplomat and his friends, many among Pakistan's civilian and military elite experienced considerable *schadenfreude* when al-Qaeda laid low the Twin Towers and Pentagon. Al-Qaeda's anti-American aggressiveness, in his view, wouldn't fundamentally alter Islamabad's regional, ethnic, and religious calculations.

Much more deleterious, he feared, would be the damage to Pakistan from U.S. military action. The Americans would have to invade Afghanistan to kill or drive out bin Laden and his allies, and Islamic militancy in Pakistan would intensify as a result. Alliances among Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, would probably grow stronger. And Rawalpindi's generals would do what they do best: try to play both sides. As my friend sardonically put it, it would be much better, from a Pakistani viewpoint, for his country to have al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban occasionally bomb America than to have Americans invade, which could tear apart Pakistani society.

Twelve years later, as the U.S. draws down troops from Afghanistan, it's fair to say that my Pakistani friend had a point. President Barack Obama appears determined to leave the "good war" behind, and Pakistan will likely turn out to be worse off because of America's invasion. From a Pakistani perspective—especially in the eyes of Westernized secular Pakistanis who, pre-9/11, loved the good life in Lahore, took vacations in the north of the country, and could still see business promise in Karachi's squalor—the American invasion of Afghanistan might be

seen as a highly destructive interregnum. The time since 9/11 has been a downhill slide. Westerners don't travel in Pakistan anymore; but Pakistanis, too, have become fearful. Since 9/11, the regionalization of the country, always a problem, has grown much worse as Islamist and ethnic violence has intensified. An affluent Punjabi now wouldn't dream of picnicking in Kashmir, or shopping in the Pashtun markets of Peshawar.

A few years hence, it may be difficult to tell the difference between Pakistani policy in Afghanistan before 9/11 and after the American withdrawal—except Islamabad may even be more aggressive in supporting an Afghan Taliban movement because of the increased religious militancy inside Pakistan. It's not at all difficult to imagine Pakistan's premier intelligence service, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI), helping Afghan and Pakistani jihadists (telling the difference between the two is often impossible) to grow stronger in a post-American Afghanistan. A nonaggression pact between a resurgent al-Qaeda and the ISI seems possible, if not probable.

* * *

Pakistan's religious radicalization, of course, began long before American soldiers destroyed Mullah Mohammed Omar's "emirate" in Afghanistan. Many Pakistanis know this, even though the urge to blame their problems on others, especially Americans, is hard to resist. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's rule from 1978 to 1988 transformed the Pakistani military: seriously religious soldiers, who had always been welcomed within the officer corps, came to dominate the mainline military.¹ It's difficult to assess the role of the religious within the ISI, but it, too, probably became a much more faithful organization under Zia. There is little reason to think that this trend stopped after Zia's death in 1988, since Zia himself was the cutting edge of rising fundamentalism in Pakistan's lower and middle classes, which have always supplied the bulk of the country's officer corps. Growing religious sentiment can make Pakistani soldiers sympathetic with certain religious causes; it can make their response to religiously inspired terrorism, even when that terrorism is aimed at the Pakistani state, more confused and conflicted; and, perhaps most important, it can make the Pakistani military more determined than ever to export the country's Islamic militancy into Afghanistan.

Before 9/11, it was gospel in the U.S. government that Pakistan interfered in Afghanistan primarily in pursuit of “strategic depth” in its rivalry with India. Islamabad needed, so the theory went, more space and manpower to use against New Delhi, especially in the disputed region of Kashmir. If India were to invade Pakistan, so the reasoning went, Afghanistan’s territory would allow Pakistan to undertake a strategic retreat, and manpower reserves could be deployed against the invading Indian army.

Pakistan’s military has never had good rapport with Afghanistan’s primary minorities—the Sunni Tajiks and Uzbeks, and the Shiite Hazara. With the Persian-speaking Tajiks, who culturally were the preeminent community in Afghanistan under the country’s Pashtun monarchy, relations have generally been atrocious. The Punjabi and Sindhi elites in Pakistan have occasionally worried about cross-border Pashtun ethnocentrism, but Pakistan’s Pashtuns have always done well in the Pakistani military, and especially the ISI. This successful integration has helped to build strong ties, if not affection, between Afghan Pashtuns and the Pakistani military. All of Afghanistan’s ethnic minorities are well aware of this pro-Pakistan sentiment among many Pashtuns; it has fueled suspicion, if not enmity, among the minorities towards Islamabad. The Pakistan army has reciprocated these sentiments.

The particularly strong Pakistani distaste for the Tajiks isn’t religious: most Tajiks practice a deeply conservative Sunni Islam, more conservative than most Pakistanis in Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, or Karachi. The great Tajik warlord, Ahmed Shah Masud, who was slain by al-Qaeda operatives on September 9, 2001, had once been a pretty staunch Islamist, certainly staunch enough for even seriously religious Pakistani soldiers and spooks. Masud had his own affiliations with Arab jihadists, led by Abdallah Anas, an Algerian who became the son-in-law of Abdullah Azzam, the founder of al-Qaeda’s forerunner, the Maktab al-Khidamat (Office of Services). Anas’s militant faith declined when Azzam was assassinated in 1989, and he abandoned the idea of jihad altogether with the fall of Kabul to the mujahedin in 1992.

So Pakistan’s distaste for the Tajiks isn’t based on religious differences. Rather, the Tajiks just don’t fit into Islamabad’s strategy vis-à-vis India. Tajik Islamists have rarely been taken by the idea of some grand Islamic alliance against Hindu

India. They have rarely evinced much passion about Hindus ruling over Muslims in Kashmir. And the old Tajik-Pashtun rivalry has affected the Pakistani army and ISI, where many Pashtuns have served with distinction.

At some point in the 1990s, the Pakistani view of Afghanistan expanded to include the idea of sending Pakistani militants northward, into the ranks of the Taliban as it made war against Masud. These militants weren't just Pashtun Pakistanis: I interviewed Punjabis in Masud's prisons in 1999. Afghanistan became an escape valve for Pakistan's perfervid. By 1997, the war against Afghanistan's minorities became a war against only Masud. The intra-Muslim conflict became a magnet for global jihadist, and al-Qaeda was on the frontlines.

American foreign policy toward Pakistan during the 1990s, when both the Taliban and al-Qaeda's lethal radicalism took final form, pivoted on the country's ever tense relationship with India and its barely clandestine nuclear-weapons program, which ceased being hidden in May 1998, when Islamabad conducted a successful test. The American government's concern about Islamic militancy in Afghanistan and Pakistan was sporadic and low-level until Osama bin Laden arrived in Jalalabad from Khartoum in 1996. And even after the 1998 embassy bombings in Africa, both the State Department and CIA wanted to believe that Pakistan and its Taliban ally held the key to neutralizing bin Laden. Neither Foggy Bottom nor Langley liked hearing about Pakistan's duplicitous dealings with the United States.

An intrepid Defense Intelligence Agency Afghan analyst, Julie Sirrs, traveled with DIA approval to Afghanistan in 1999 to see the Taliban and Masud's forces firsthand; the State Department blew a gasket when she flew into the Panjshir Valley. Word was that the U.S. embassy and the CIA station in Islamabad didn't want their liaison dealings with the Pakistani military compromised by the analytical flight of fancy of a young woman. After the analyst's return from the Panjshir, the DIA yanked Sirrs's clearance, effectively firing her.²

Islamabad's refrain that it was doing all that it could about bin Laden didn't wane. Fearful of offending Islamabad, CIA officers didn't venture to see Masud in his mountain redoubt until October 2000. According to Afghans who dealt with the visiting CIA team, the Panjshir trip lasted less than a day. Even though Masud

had been fighting al-Qaeda's jihadists north of Kabul, Langley never sent officers to interrogate the prisoners Masud had taken. We still don't know the level of direct contact that existed between ISI and al-Qaeda before 9/11, although we do know that al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan were co-located with Pakistani-supported training facilities for Kashmiri radicals.³

* * *

America's willful blindness about Pakistan has ended. Washington is still understandably in a conundrum over what it can do about Pakistan's duplicitous ways, especially since the Pakistani army has, at times, provided critical information to the CIA about al-Qaeda's activities and personnel. Thousands of Pakistani soldiers and numerous ISI officers have died fighting Muslim militants. Islamabad picks and chooses its Islamic radicals, always maintaining the domestic narrative that there are good Taliban and bad Taliban. With an American withdrawal, the Pakistani army is likely to emphasize the good Taliban much more than the bad ones. If the Pakistani army sees homegrown religious militants lessen their fight against the Pakistani state after an American departure, it's not unlikely that Islamabad will forget how murderous the bad Taliban once were.

It is of course possible that the searing experience Pakistan's military has had with native holy warriors could finally lead to catharsis, liberating the military from its Islamist sympathies. Islamabad could realize that Kashmir is a no-win problem. Some civilian leaders appear to be aware that Islamic radicals have become a threat to the country, and that the old balancing tactic—state-supported Islamists countering the rogues—hasn't worked. But the pull of Afghanistan after an American withdrawal will likely be too much for the Pakistani military. The army's preferences decidedly tilted during the Afghan-Soviet war toward the Islamist hard-core of the Pashtun mujahedin: Hezb-i-Islami, led by the ruthless Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was Islamabad's favorite. The chaos produced after the collapse of Afghanistan's Soviet-backed communist regime led Pakistan deeper into Afghan politics. The Taliban were not the only Afghans to receive Islamabad's support after the fall of Kabul in 1992, but they certainly proved to be the most successful force. And with success came more Pakistani support.

We don't know now whether the American departure from Afghanistan will produce a rapid collapse of the country's central government. It really depends on whether the Obama administration maintains sufficient financial and military aid to President Hamid Karzai's successor. The central government might hold out longer against a renewed militant Pashtun advance than Afghan communists did against the mujahedin after the Soviet Union collapsed (which, naturally, ended Soviet financial support for the regime). A decade of America in country may have had more effect on Afghans and their willingness to fight for their new freedoms than many people think. The memory of how cruel life was under the Taliban isn't just a sentiment among Afghan minorities: There are many Pashtuns who hate Mullah Omar and everything that he and the "new Taliban" stand for.

But the odds of a triumphant Islamic resurgence among the Pashtuns are pretty good. There isn't really another competing ideology that can send so many soldiers into the field. A decisive advantage that Hekmatyar had during the Afghan-Soviet war, a reason why some senior CIA officers liked the Pakistani decision to distribute American materiel to him, was his tribe-free militant faith: He could operate beyond his home turf since his warriors didn't come from just one tribe or region. And the Taliban, old and new, have had an even stronger religious calling.

The Afghan Taliban movement, which isn't unified now, could fracture further as Americans leave the battlefield. But some of the past will surely repeat itself: The Pakistanis will likely watch who among the Pashtuns takes the upper hand in southern Afghanistan. They may distribute aid broadly among contending forces until the stronger players make themselves felt on the battlefield. In a context among warring Pashtuns, it's a decent bet that the most militant will be the most successful, thus gaining Islamabad's eye and favor.

Pakistan will certainly not allow a revived Northern Alliance of Afghan minorities to dominate the country. It will, again, back a Pashtun drive for preeminence, which inevitably means a Pashtun march to Kabul—but, making the situation difficult, all Afghans want a piece of the capital. The Tajiks of eastern Afghanistan see Kabul not only as their cultural capital and their primary entrepôt; they also see it as a strategic bulwark against their geographic isolation. No Kabuli Tajik wants to retreat again into the mountain vastness of the Panjshir Valley. The

Afghan Uzbeks, who still have a fearsome military reputation, are well aware that if the Pashtuns rule Kabul, the south of their region could be challenged. Uzbek power in Afghanistan was broken within a year of Kabul's fall in 1996, and it's unlikely that the Uzbeks would want to tempt fate twice.

If competition for Kabul renews ethnic conflict, that will further radicalize the Islamist Pashtun combatants. It will likely open the door to a return of al-Qaeda and its allies. Needless to say, Pakistan isn't going to allow Washington to fly Predator drones from its soil to shoot its battlefield allies. As long as a revived Northern Alliance can control the top half of the country, then Washington may have a base of operations against resurgent global jihadists, but such bases would demand substantial American aid. It's not clear if President Obama, who appears allergic to intervening in Muslim civil wars, would be willing to insert the United States decisively against the Islamist Pashtuns and Islamabad.

Iran might provide the necessary support. Masud would have perished far earlier without Tehran's assistance. But the Islamic Republic's capacity to support a new Northern Alliance in a death struggle against a revitalized Taliban is doubtful: Western sanctions and Iranian support for Bashar al-Assad's regime in the Syrian war are already serious strains. The Russians could help, too, but the Russian track record in aiding Masud was spotty.

Afghanistan is, by any measure, now in vastly better shape than it was in September 2001. Pakistan is not. Does the Pakistani military brass believe that for Pakistan to prosper—or to just survive—Afghanistan as it has been rebuilt has to die? The odds are better than decent that this is how the generals see it.

If the head of al-Qaeda comes back to Afghanistan, if Pashtun Islamic militants retake Kabul, and if Pakistani generals back that reconquest, effectively putting them exactly where they were before 9/11, any fair-minded observer has to ask: What did we accomplish through the “good war”? Was not my Pakistani friend painfully prescient?

Saudi Arabia

Sources of American Frustration with Saudi Arabia

DAVID ANDREW WEINBERG

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has deep historical underpinnings. Washington helped the country's founder, King Abdul Aziz al-Saud, fund his rule by tapping into massive oil deposits beginning in the 1930s. Saudi Arabia served as one of the two "pillars" of U.S. strategy for securing the Gulf during Richard Nixon's presidency, and it took on added importance after the collapse of the other pillar, the Shah's Iran. For more than half a century, Saudi officials have binged on more American military equipment than they could realistically use on the battlefield.

The United States protected the Saudi monarchy in 1990 and 1991, following Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The U.S. first prevented Hussein's armed forces from marching on Saudi oil fields in Operation Desert Shield, then led a multinational coalition to push the Iraqi military out of Kuwait. The period after the first Gulf War was characterized by a dramatic increase in America's regional military presence, as the U.S. attempted to contain both Iraq and Iran simultaneously. But this period also witnessed an escalation in anti-U.S. attacks by Saudi Arabia's most infamous son-in-exile, Osama bin Laden.

After bin Laden's most infamous attack on September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia began cooperating in the fight against al-Qaeda in fits and starts, especially once its cities and refineries came under attack in the years that followed. However, cooperation from Saudi Arabia on this front, and on a range of other issues, remains halting. On energy, domestic calls for reform, Egypt, Syria, and the fight against terrorism, the barrel is half empty.

The Energy Disconnect

The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia has been built first and foremost on oil. Oil executives actually preceded America's diplomatic presence in the country, and even lobbied Washington to deploy American diplomats.¹ Saudi Arabia has more oil reserves than any other country, and also possesses the lion's share of global spare

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production capacity, thus giving it crucial swing capacity to influence the price of oil. As a result, successive American presidents have looked to Riyadh to keep oil flowing.

However, this arrangement has proved disappointing. For one, the price of oil has risen to historic highs, at times increasing quite sharply in recent years. At a few notable junctures, Saudi Arabia has increased oil production in response to American requests, but more often such requests have been rebuffed. One notable exception was Riyadh's recent decision to boost production to offset Iranian oil taken off the market by sanctions. However, Riyadh's own interests—in particular, its grave threat perception of Iran—best explain this.²

At times, Saudi Arabia has imposed oil embargoes on the U.S. as punishment for American support for Israel. One such embargo failed in 1967, but the next in 1973—along with accompanying cuts in production—was excruciating. The secretary of labor told Congress that the embargo—in addition to causing massive inflation—had cost half a million American jobs.³ Meanwhile, due to the oil cartel's market power—which was rather sudden, because America's own spare production capacity had recently been consumed—Saudi Arabia's annual oil revenue climbed from \$4.3 billion in 1973 to \$102 billion by 1981.⁴

Saudi Arabia and the OPEC oil cartel have taken advantage of that newfound market power to drive up the price of oil when it suits their budgetary needs. A decade ago, Saudi Arabia's oil minister insisted that his country was committed to oil costing just \$22 to \$28 a barrel, but now he believes prices—which have quadrupled to more than \$100 a barrel—are “excellent.”⁵ The cost of oil has driven one of the biggest net transfers of world economic power in modern history.⁶ In recent years, the U.S. trade deficit in petroleum products has accounted for roughly half of the country's overall trade deficit.⁷ Dependence on oil has made America both less affluent and less influential.

Price disruptions caused by a successful terrorist attack on Saudi Arabia's oil installations could further harm the U.S. economy. Well over half of all Saudi oil is processed at Abqaiq, a facility that terrorists have targeted before.⁸ Saudi Arabia also runs the world's largest oil export terminal at Ras Tanura, and crashing a single airliner into the facility could bring America's economy “to its knees.”⁹ Saudi Arabia has more than 10,000 miles of oil pipelines that could also be targets for attack,

although a successful pipeline attack would be far less disruptive than a catastrophic attack against facilities like Abqaiq or Ras Tanura.¹⁰

America's domestic boom in oil and gas has given us some breathing room on energy costs, and consequently has been seen by prominent Saudis as an "inevitable threat."¹¹ However, this increase in production is unlikely to determine the price of oil's future direction because it is not large enough to offset surging global demand and OPEC's ability to make compensating production cuts.¹² Nor will it restore America's influence over global prices through building up swing production capacity, since oil firms in the U.S. operate on a profit incentive, not based on national strategic interests as Saudi Aramco often does. Even though some U.S. firms benefit from this domestic boom, climbing oil prices still represent a systemic threat to U.S. economic stability.

The underlying problem is not how much oil the United States produces, but rather the overall role that oil plays in our transportation sector. Whereas other dimensions of U.S. energy consumption, such as electricity generation and residential heating, are diversified in terms of the sources of energy they employ, oil provides more than 90 percent of energy in the transportation sector. And because most American automobiles are not equipped to burn anything but gasoline, when the price of gas goes up consumers are left with little choice but to pay these escalating prices. Due to the threat that high or volatile oil prices pose to our economy, it is a national-security imperative for our government to take legislative and administrative action to help break oil's artificial monopoly on the transportation fuel sector.

The Stability Mirage

Perhaps the most imminent danger resulting from oil dependence is the chaos that would ensue if the Saudi regime were to suddenly collapse. It is likely that the foundations for the regime's survival will come under increased strain in the long term. Former U.S. national security official Bruce Riedel, for one, warns that regime collapse in Saudi Arabia is one of the "black swan" events that should be of concern to President Barack Obama.¹³

When the Arab Spring broke out in 2011, King Abdullah announced \$130

billion in new investments in salary hikes, housing, religious activities, and other sectors.¹⁴ This was widely seen as an attempt to buy off his subjects. Nevertheless, one of the most popular hashtags in Twitter's history has been for a Saudi campaign complaining that wages remain too low.¹⁵

An estimated 40 percent of Saudi citizens live on less than \$10,000 a year.¹⁶ Roughly nine out of every 10 jobs in the Saudi private sector go to foreigners.¹⁷ According to official government figures—which may play down the Kingdom's challenges—unemployment is estimated around 35 percent for Saudi women and 30 percent for the country's youth.¹⁸ Yet according to *The Washington Post*, only 10 percent of Saudi women older than 15 participate in the work force, a shockingly low level for such an economically powerful country.¹⁹ Over half of Saudi citizens are 25 or younger, and it's hard to believe the Saudi economy is on target to cope with this impending youth bulge.²⁰

The kingdom's game plan for succession is also questionable. Crown Prince Salman reportedly suffers from dementia, and his skills as a manager are reputedly quite poor.²¹ The last two crown princes both died in office, and the eventual shift to the next generation of leadership beyond the sons of the kingdom's founder could be a rocky transition period, more prone than usual to factional struggles within the royal family.

All of this would be less worrisome if the kingdom were moving in a healthy direction politically, but it is not. Saudi authorities continue to block efforts to form political parties, even by supporters of the regime.²² Although hard-line religious forces could pose a serious threat to the royal family if the political system opens up, that is all the more reason the regime should be scaling back indoctrination, and empowering moderates to move public discourse in a more tolerant direction.²³ Instead, Saudi officials are pursuing a campaign of intimidation against activists who advocate peacefully for human rights, religious tolerance, women's empowerment, and accountability in government—goals that the authorities profess to support.²⁴

Saudi Leverage over Egypt?

The Saudis watched in horror in 2001 as Washington abandoned Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt.²⁵ Thereafter, it felt deeply threatened by Mohammed Morsi's Muslim

SOURCES OF AMERICAN FRUSTRATION WITH SAUDI ARABIA

Brotherhood rule. In Morsi's final months in office, the Obama administration requested, and was refused, Saudi funds to keep the Egyptian government solvent.²⁶ Then, when Morsi was deposed, the Saudis seized their chance.

Within days, Riyadh joined Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to pledge \$12 billion in grants, loans, and energy resources for the interim Egyptian leadership.²⁷ Whereas pledges of Gulf aid have often lingered unpaid in other parts of the world, these promises to Egypt were swiftly fulfilled.²⁸

After Egyptian security forces crushed Islamist sit-ins using extreme force, Saudi officials condemned Western hand-wringing over human rights. Instead, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister warned that Muslim countries would be prepared to help pay Egypt the difference to make up for any Western cuts in foreign aid.²⁹ The king himself assaulted the Western emphasis on human rights as naiveté that would only add to Egypt's civil strife.³⁰

The kingdom used to be favorably disposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, granting its members refuge from Egypt starting when Gamal Abdel Nasser clamped down on the Brotherhood in the 1950s. However, the Saudi royal family never forgave the organization for appearing to back Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, an act that also threatened Saudi Arabia's security. The Saudis also saw the Muslim Brotherhood coming to power in Egypt as a threat to their stability, since the regime in Riyadh relies upon keeping religion and mass politics relatively separate in order to maintain its authority. The Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia has for decades made the Saudi royal family uneasy in this regard, and Saudi media refer to it as an insidious "fifth column."³¹ Further, the military leader who engineered Morsi's overthrow, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, had previously spent time in Riyadh as Egypt's military attaché and was seen by the Saudis as someone with whom they could work.

Saudi Arabia's actions have certainly helped undermine whatever leverage the United States has left with Cairo. However, Saudi aid cannot substitute for American support to Egypt indefinitely.³² And even if the Saudis do not want to see a full-fledged democracy emerge in Egypt, they are going to have to permit some resumption of the political process there eventually because of internal pressures within Egypt itself.³³

Ousting Assad

Syria has become perhaps the biggest day-to-day irritant in U.S.-Saudi relations over the past year. The frustration on the Saudis' part seems to have driven them to go from being a constructive actor there in the fight against jihadist extremism to fueling the burgeoning counterterrorism nightmare in the Levant.

At first, the United States worked closely with Saudi Arabia to counteract Qatar's support for Islamists and hard-line jihadists within the Syrian opposition. Saudi Arabia was responsible for keeping Qatar from imposing its favored candidate as president of the Syrian Opposition Coalition, and Riyadh also engineered the group's expansion to dilute the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁴ When Qatar surprised Washington by putting a Brotherhood-aligned activist in charge of Syrian territory under control of the rebels, Saudi Arabia soon engineered his resignation.³⁵

Saudi Arabia was also among the first to see eye to eye with the United States on designating the Coalition's Supreme Military Command as the sole accepted channel for state military assistance to the rebels.³⁶ The Saudis joined the United States in pushing for tighter Qatari distribution channels to prevent advanced weapons from falling into the hands of the Nusra Front.³⁷

However, the Saudis aggressively pushed for U.S. strikes after a chemical weapons attack in August 2013 by the Assad regime killed more than 1,400 people in a Damascus suburb and felt abandoned when the United States backed away from military action.³⁸ Resulting frustration over Syria was one of the main reasons cited for why Saudi Arabia canceled its September address to the U.N. General Assembly and turned down a seat on the U.N. Security Council.³⁹ Soon afterward, Saudi Arabia played a major role in organizing a merger of salafist militias near Damascus into an "Army of Islam" that some described as a front against al-Qaeda, but that seemed more interested in undermining the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Opposition Coalition.⁴⁰ Hateful Saudi textbooks have emerged in jihadist-controlled territory in northern and eastern Syria, and Riyadh's funding for the Free Syrian Army appears to have dried up.⁴¹ More worrisome, U.S. intelligence sources suggest that since September Saudi Arabia has been playing a "double game," opening the spigot for hundreds of known

jihadist extremists to go join Al Qaeda in Syria—often in spite of prior travel bans or after having been released from jail.⁴²

Fighting Terror, Feeding Terror

In the past decade, Saudi officials have become relatively willing to cooperate on counterterrorism issues. Saudi intelligence has disrupted at least two recent plots by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (a 2010 plot involving the air shipment of bombs to the U.S. hidden in cargo packages and an attempted airline suicide bombing in 2012), and the king recently pledged \$100 million to the U.N. counterterrorism center.⁴³ Yet the Saudis have been considerably less helpful when it comes to addressing some of the root causes of terrorism: in particular, the strident version of Islam heavily promoted by the Saudi state itself.

The salafism promulgated by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab in the 18th century has played an important role in the royal family's past military conquests. This doctrine also had an aggressive interpretation of jihad as a religious obligation, and dehumanized adherents to different religious traditions.⁴⁴ This commitment to violent jihad and rank hatred of other faiths has contributed to the profusion in recent decades of the jihadist movement—and its accompanying use of both terrorism and vigilante violence—in the Muslim world. After all, it is a short step from the precepts of Wahhabi doctrine to the justification of mass murder of nonbelievers in the name of a religious and political agenda. Saudi Arabia's exportation of Wahhabism, endorsed at the highest levels of the state, has in fact helped fuel extremism and the violence that accompanies it in almost every corner of the globe. That includes not just the Arab world but also places as far afield as South Asia, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and even America.⁴⁵

As Steven Miller explains in the next chapter, many Saudi clerics continue to advance this hateful brand of thought. And because the royal family depends upon the good graces of religious figures to legitimize their rule, the Saudi government has played an intimate role in propagating this belief system. Official Saudi sponsorship of religious incitement deserves serious attention from policymakers. At the very least, this issue needs to be raised in high-level

dialogues with Riyadh to ensure the royal family realizes that this sort of conduct will not be ignored or accepted by the United States.

For years, terrorist financing originating in the kingdom has been another difficult issue in bilateral relations. A memo signed by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2009 reported that “donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide,” and that “it has been an ongoing challenge to persuade Saudi officials to treat terrorist financing emerging from Saudi Arabia as a strategic priority.”⁴⁶ Since then, the State Department has praised official Saudi cooperation but suggested that money continues to flow to terrorist and extremist causes.⁴⁷

For America's relationship with Saudi Arabia to be sustainable, Washington will need to prioritize the issues discussed here, and will need to see good faith efforts by the Saudis to address these concerns. Without progress on energy relations, domestic reform, Egypt, or Syria, underlying tensions in the relationship are only likely to get worse with time.

Additionally, the United States will need to take efforts to reassure Riyadh that we are a reliable partner when it comes to the threats that they take seriously. Saudi officials are particularly worried that the United States might accept a nuclear deal that would fail to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear breakout capability.⁴⁸ Further, they see the November nuclear deal with Tehran as a blessing for Iran's regional subversion efforts in Syria, as well as in the Gulf. As the Obama administration grapples with Iran's nuclear program and the ongoing civil war in Syria, it will be a continuing struggle to assure the frustrated Saudis that their interests factor into America's future vision for the region.

The Sequel: How the Saudis Are Letting the Radicalism Genie Out of the Bottle, Again

STEVEN MILLER

For decades, the House of Saud has exported Wahhabism throughout the world in an effort to accomplish two main objectives: appeasing the religiously conservative population at home, and directing that population's attention toward enemies abroad (and hence away from dissatisfaction with the monarchy).¹ Saudi monarchs have wielded their state-sanctioned fundamentalist religion to combat everything from communism to Arab nationalism, as well as to encourage a militant response to the persecution of Muslims in the Middle East and beyond.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Saudi Arabia created charities and other nongovernment organizations like the Muslim World League (MWL) and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) to spread Wahhabist ideas globally. Famously, when former Saudi Grand Mufti Abdulaziz ibn Baz was the MWL chairman during the Afghan-Soviet war, he emphasized that Islamic states and organizations were responsible for supporting mujahedin (Islamic fighters) wherever they fought. This pattern of funding Islamic fighters continued well after that war ended. As the 9/11 Commission noted, Osama bin Laden exploited conflicts in the Muslim world, from Chechnya to the Palestinian territories, to raise money through a network of Gulf charities, organizations, and individuals known as the "Golden Chain."² Fueled by petrodollars, Saudi Arabia's religious activism has not only cultivated vast global networks of Wahhabi-oriented religious schools, but has also helped radicalize untold numbers of Muslim youth.

The September 11 attacks were highly significant for Saudi Arabia. Not only were 15 of the 19 al-Qaeda hijackers Saudis, but also the terrorist organization behind the attacks drew inspiration from the Wahhabi creed. The aggressive Western response to 9/11 impelled Saudi Arabia to make changes, though they proved to be less than a complete reversal. The Saudis made efforts to curb their state-sanctioned radicalism and xenophobia, and crack down on domestic al-Qaeda cells. Furthermore, the Saudi government worked with U.S. officials

to implement better financial oversight of banks and charities, and increased monitoring of the country's mosques, schools, and websites.³

Another key aspect of the kingdom's crackdown on terrorism has relied on clergy members publicly delegitimizing al-Qaeda's worldview.⁴ On September 15, 2001, the chief mufti of Saudi Arabia condemned the attacks.⁵ Such clerical condemnations of al-Qaeda continued through Osama bin Laden's demise in 2011, when influential cleric Salman al-Odah, who had once openly supported al-Qaeda, took to Facebook and Twitter to reject the terrorist leader's actions and ideas (while simultaneously condemning Americans' jubilant response to bin Laden's death). With al-Odah and other clerics taking public stances against jihadism, the problem of state-sanctioned radicalism was reduced.

That's the good news. The bad news is that this radicalism is far from dead. The xenophobia that has long characterized the Wahhabi creed remains a key component of that ideology today, and this dangerous worldview has in some important ways been *enhanced* by new technologies. A number of influential clerics with extreme views are becoming hyper-connected through social media platforms, and have attracted millions of online followers. These tools amplify the clerics' messages, allowing them to interact with the Saudi public and wider Muslim world on an unprecedented scale.

The Saudi clerics' activism employing social media could have dangerous consequences. In the midst of dramatic changes wrought by the Arab Uprisings, including an ongoing civil war in Syria, these clerics are pouring gasoline onto sectarian and political tensions in ways that threaten to ignite the entire region.

Supporting Jihadism and Sectarian Strife

For almost two years, Saudi Arabia has been fighting a proxy war in Syria against Iran. In February 2012, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal publicly endorsed funneling weapons to various rebel factions.⁶ Then in July, the kingdom appointed Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Riyadh's former ambassador to Washington, as its intelligence chief. Because of Bandar's close ties with Washington, not to mention his key experience coordinating weapons shipment and support for mujahedin fighters in Afghanistan during the 1980s, his appointment seemingly

indicated that Saudi Arabia would play a more pivotal role supporting Syria's opposition militarily.⁷ As expected, Bandar and his brother Salman, the deputy defense minister, have since worked closely with Washington and Amman to arm and train rebels at secret bases in Jordan.⁸

Meanwhile, with Riyadh's blessing, Saudi clergy members have provided religious firepower to back this set of policies, reserving their most poisonous venom for the Alawite regime in Damascus and its Shiite allies. While their rhetoric may appear in line with Washington and Riyadh's support and training for "moderate" rebels, the clerics' activism could have disastrous consequences for the region. One major concern is that their vicious exhortations against the Assad regime could provide encouragement for jihadists from across the world to join the battle in Syria. On top of that, the explicit sectarianism in their messages threatens to polarize the Sunni and Shiite communities in neighboring countries and bring them closer to full-blown conflict.

One of the earliest clerics to agitate against Assad was Saleh al-Luhaidan, a member of the kingdom's highest religious council, who declared, "The Baath Party is fascist and malignant. It pretends to want to resurrect Arabs anew... I call on the Syrian people to be diligent in resisting the Syrian regime even if there are casualties."⁹ Escalating their rhetoric, clerics have even framed the conflict in Syria as part of a broader historic struggle between the Sunnis and Safavids, the 16th century Shiite Dynasty based in Iran that waged war against the Ottoman Empire. In the same vein, numerous clerics have openly called for Muslims to join the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and spill the blood of Bashar al-Assad and his supporters.¹⁰

Putting their words into action, a number of influential Saudi clerics in June 2012 organized a donation drive for the FSA via Twitter and Facebook, urging their audience to help the rebels slaughter Assad and Syria's Alawites. The clerics encouraged deposits to bank accounts in six Middle Eastern countries, as well as in Switzerland, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Although the drive promised to support the FSA, it was unclear which rebels would actually receive the donations.

The campaign was reminiscent of other recent Saudi fundraising efforts. For example, during the Palestinian Intifada from 2000 to 2005, Saudi telethons and donation drives raised money for families of suicide bombers. Indeed, when Saudi

clerics posted bank accounts for Syria donations online, they listed one of the financial conduits as the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society of Kuwait, which the United States (2008) and the United Nations (2002) designated a terrorist entity due to its support of al-Qaeda.¹¹

Some of the clerics behind the online fundraiser also traveled abroad to call Muslims to action in Syria. One of those clerics was Aidh al-Qarnee, who boasts 4.3 million Twitter followers. Al-Qarnee made a high-profile visit to Irbid, Jordan, in April 2012. Before a crowd of thousands gathered at a sporting complex, he preached about the need to spread Islam throughout the world. Near the beginning of his speech, al-Qarnee broke down in front of the crowd as he asked God to relieve the Syrian people of their suffering.¹²

Though al-Qarnee did not explicitly call the masses to battle, his decision to speak in Irbid is noteworthy in itself. The city was a central “transit point for Salafijihadists heading to Iraq or Lebanon” between 2004 and 2007.¹³ Moreover, it is located close to the Syrian border, and is home to the prominent jihadi ideologue Abu Mohammed al-Tahawi—thus suggesting that Irbid may again be a channel for jihadists heading to the battlefield.

Al-Qarnee was not the only cleric to take his message outside the Kingdom. In June 2013, Mohammed al-Arefe gave a fiery Friday sermon in Cairo, in which he railed against the crimes committed by Shiites allied with the Assad regime and Iran in Syria. Notably, he called on the mujahedin to “assemble against one enemy.”¹⁴

The clerics’ activism reached a fever pitch in May 2013, as Sunni rebel fighters faced off against Hizballah and Syrian regime loyalists in the town of al-Qusayr. The battle in Qusayr marked the first time that Hizballah openly acknowledged engaging in a war against fellow Arabs and Muslims. Moreover, Hizballah’s participation solidified the clerics’ fears about Shiite expansionism and posited the battle within a far larger struggle. Al-Arefe, a Saudi social media firebrand, hailed al-Qusayr as a “decisive battle in modern Islamic history” to his 6.5 million Twitter followers.¹⁵ Salman al-Odah, who has tried to rebrand himself a moderate in recent years, tweeted, “Those who are dying [in Qusayr] are going as martyrs. . . Let Allah purify those who believe, and annihilate the unbelievers.”¹⁶

On the face of it, the clerics' agitation against Hizballah—a U.S.-designated terrorist entity—might not seem troubling. But their widespread condemnation of Shiites risks exacerbating the growing sectarian fissures that Syria has produced. Indeed, conflict between Sunnis and Shiites is now spilling over from Syria into neighboring countries.

Lebanon is now getting an especially heavy dose of this violence. In August 2013, two major bombings targeted Hizballah-controlled areas of Beirut. On August 15, a powerful car bomb in the Ruwais neighborhood killed 18 and wounded 300.¹⁷ In an apparent retaliatory attack nearly one week later, several bombs exploded outside Sunni mosques in Tripoli, killing at least 42 and wounding hundreds more.¹⁸

But the violence was far from finished. On November 19, two suicide bombers from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Abdullah Azzam Brigades struck the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, killing more than 20 people, including Iran's cultural attaché to Lebanon.¹⁹ Though the Abdullah Azzam Brigades took credit for the attack, Hizballah's secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, pointed the blame directly at Saudi Arabia.²⁰ Those suspicions likely deepened two weeks later when unknown assassins gunned down one of Hizballah's military commanders, Hassan al-Laqqis, outside of his apartment in Beirut.²¹ Incidentally, just moments before the hit took place, Nasrallah finished a televised interview in which he again accused Saudi Arabia of fomenting violence in Iraq and facilitating operations for various al-Qaeda branches.²²

These are not sporadic bouts of violence. A pattern has started to form, as attacks continued into 2014. Thus, these attacks appear to represent the opening salvos in a growing sectarian conflict. As the fighting in Syria drags on, and violence spills outside of its borders, Sunni and Shiite communities across the region will likely become increasingly polarized. Adding the voices of powerful clergy members to the sectarian divide only makes it more probable that simmering tensions boil over.

The Future of Clerical Extremism

Since the outbreak of Arab Revolts in 2011, the Saudi government has benefitted from broad clerical support to help quiet any potential storms at home. The kingdom has also relied on a select group of its prominent clerics, who have become increasingly influential through social media, to check the state's enemies abroad.

Since those clerics have generally respected the government's domestic red lines, they have largely been granted free reign. But Saudi policy may now be shifting. In March 2014, the kingdom released a terrorism designation list that included several key actors on the Syrian battlefield.²³ As the clerics continue expanding their social media presence, Saudi government officials may find it harder to control the messages of clerics who disagree with the new rules of the game.

The prospect of Saudi clerics becoming more independent from the state also poses challenges, not only for the monarchy, but also for the United States. These clerics have played a role in turning the Middle East into a breeding ground for sectarian tensions, both before and after the Arab Uprisings began. Sectarian violence from the Syrian conflict has already started to spread to Lebanon and elsewhere, and it is likely that as the fighting in Syria rages on, sectarian strife will only grow.

The conflict in Syria could threaten to reverse the somewhat limited gains made over the past decade with respect to Saudi Arabia's fight against al-Qaeda-inspired militancy. Until now, the potential for clerical extremism to spiral out of control has not been a primary concern for the House of Saud or the United States, but as the kingdom continues funneling weapons to rebel factions, it will rely on firebrand Saudi clerics to provide theological cover. We've seen this movie before, and it doesn't end well.

Saudi Arabia: Terror Finance Before and After 9/11

JONATHAN SCHANZER

When al-Qaeda attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, the American military response was swift. Saudi Arabia, home of the Wahhabi ideology that inspired 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers, reacted somewhat more slowly. At the time, American critics rightfully lashed out at the House of Saud for its track record of funding anti-Western hatred through state-funded mosques and similar institutions around the world. As the 9/11 Commission Report noted, Saudi Arabia “was a place where al-Qaeda raised money directly from individuals and through charities,” and some of the “charities with significant Saudi government sponsorship” might have diverted funding to the terror group.¹ Washington subsequently pressured Saudi Arabia to do its part to drain al-Qaeda of its funds.

While Saudi Arabia is less problematic on this front today than it was a decade ago, areas of significant concern remain. The Saudis have produced, thanks to proceeds from the West’s insatiable thirst for petroleum, far more religious philanthropy than any other Muslim country. One former State Department official estimates that Saudis donate between \$3 and \$4 billion annually to various Islamic causes.² According to one analyst, from 1973 to 2002 the Saudi government spent some \$80 billion on institutions such as mosques, Islamic centers, Muslim colleges, and Islamic schools.³

Terror finance analysts have tried and failed to pinpoint the exact percentage of funds earmarked for terrorism or extremist causes, but even if it is just 10 percent, the numbers would still be deeply concerning. Admittedly, the numbers are down relative to the past, and American officials have praised the Saudis for this. But with the recent rupture over America’s Iran and Syria policies, Saudi Arabia could return to form. The civil war in Syria, in particular, is an area where American policymakers should watch for illicit financial flows.

* * *

Before 9/11, Washington didn’t appear alarmed about the flow of these toxic funds. This was a mistake. During the 1990s, when al-Qaeda developed into a

deadly terrorist network, Saudi citizens and organizations funded its operations in a variety of ways, including through an informal financial network of charities and nongovernmental organizations known as the “Golden Chain.”⁴

After 9/11, Washington was less permissive, to put it mildly. The Saudis, under unprecedented pressure, began taking tentative steps to mitigate the public relations damage caused by their radical philanthropy. But even then, they appeared to believe they could outlast U.S. pressure. Although it was in their interest to undermine the al-Qaeda network—Osama bin Laden had turned against the monarchy years ago—they slow-played the George W. Bush administration.

The Saudis soon paid in blood for this hesitation. In 2003 and 2004, domestic Saudi cells affiliated with al-Qaeda launched more than 30 attacks inside Saudi Arabia, killing more than 130 and injuring hundreds more.⁵ Only then did the royal family truly take ownership of the problem, cracking down on terrorists inside and outside its borders. What followed was a combination of successful preemptive counterterrorism operations, a rather unsuccessful charm offensive in the West, and a failed deradicalization program for jailed jihadists.⁶ Notably, as of June 2010, the deradicalization program has seen the return to terrorism of 25 former Guantanamo Bay detainees—about 20 percent of the 120 detainees who were transferred back to Saudi Arabia.⁷

But of all the steps taken by the Saudis, Riyadh’s somewhat limited cooperation with Washington on terror finance has arguably been the most valuable. Though Washington and Riyadh quietly tackled the problem between 2004 and 2007, concerns persisted. In April 2008, for example, Stuart Levey, then the undersecretary of the treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence, told the Senate Finance Committee that although Saudi Arabia is “serious about fighting al-Qaeda in the kingdom... the seriousness of purpose with respect to the money going out of the kingdom is not as high.” Levey added that “Saudi Arabia today remains the location where more money is going to terrorism, to Sunni terror groups and to the Taliban than any other place in the world.”⁸

By 2011, a full 10 years after the 9/11 attacks, Treasury Department officials admitted begrudgingly that U.S.-Saudi cooperation on terror finance had improved further. As one former official who worked very closely on this issue stated, “To be

sure, it's a different atmosphere. There is much more political will in Saudi on the issue than before.”⁹ Indeed, Saudi authorities have taken some steps to clamp down on both money laundering and terrorist financing.¹⁰ Measures have included the establishment of a joint task force with the United States to investigate terrorist financing, closing down charities linked to terrorist groups, passing anti-money laundering laws, and supporting *fatawa* condemning terror financing.¹¹

These steps, unsurprisingly, have elicited praise from the United States. For example, in May 2013, a State Department report commended Saudi Arabia for continuing “its long-term counterterrorism strategy to track and halt the activities of terrorists and terrorist financiers.” The report, however, also noted that “despite serious and effective efforts to counter the funding of terrorism originating from within its borders, entities in Saudi Arabia continue to serve as an important source of cash flowing to violent Sunni extremist groups.” In addition, it noted that “Saudi officials acknowledged difficulty in following the money trail with regard to illicit finance due to the preference for cash transactions in the country.”¹²

The Paris-based Financial Action Task Force has similarly noted that the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) regime implemented by Saudi Arabia is not as developed as the country's anti-money laundering regime, and that it “needs improvement.”¹³ Two months before the FATF's mutual evaluation, the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia issued a fatwa on terror financing that General David Petraeus, then the commander of U.S. Central Command, subsequently praised.¹⁴ “This ruling makes clear that the struggle against terrorist financing is not just an American or Western concern, but a global threat,” Petraeus said. “In addition, the council's ruling buttresses with its interpretation of Islamic law the international legal provisions on financing of terrorism.”¹⁵

* * *

Despite some progress, the problem has not been solved. While the Saudis have reduced funding to al-Qaeda, it hasn't dried up. Saudi funds continue to flow to both al-Qaeda and also other jihadist causes.

The Haqqani network is a case in point. A jihadist group with close links to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the Haqqani network has had clusters of its network designated in several tranches by the Treasury Department in recent years.

One Treasury release notes that the network has been relying on Saudi largesse since 2004.¹⁶ In late 2010, Pakistani authorities arrested five key figures in the Haqqani network. According to Taliban sources, they were “returning from the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, a trip that also had included substantial fundraising activities.”¹⁷ Another Haqqani network financier was yanked from a plane in Kabul in November 2010 that was destined for Saudi Arabia, where he was expected to raise funds.¹⁸

Saudi support for extremist forces in the ongoing civil war in Syria also provides a continuing example of the problem. In 2012, for example, after the Syrian regime massacred more than 100 civilians in Houla, a group of well-known Saudi clerics launched a campaign to raise funds for the Syrian opposition. One of the conduits for donations was the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society of Kuwait (RIHS), which both the United States (2008) and the United Nations (2002) had designated as a terrorist entity for arming and financing al-Qaeda.¹⁹ The group’s involvement was particularly troubling due to al-Qaeda’s steadily growing presence among the Syrian rebels.

Saudi cleric Saad al-Buraik was among the more zealous Saudi clerics exhorting his followers to donate to the RIHS campaign. In May 2012, he announced on his Facebook page that he and his family were donating around \$25,000 to the Syrian opposition, and that one of his sons was traveling to Kuwait (where the RIHS is based) to deliver the money in person.²⁰

Fortunately, Saudi Grand Mufti Abdulaziz Al al-Sheikh disavowed the clerics’ efforts to collect funds without official oversight, and the government warned them against accepting “indiscriminate donations.”²¹ But this statement by no means addresses all concerns, given the Saudis’ 2000-2005 campaign in support of the Palestinian intifada that funneled significant funds to the families of suicide bombers.

There is also now a question of how much influence the United States has with Saudi Arabia on this front. While bringing down Bashar al-Assad’s regime was once believed to be a common interest for both Saudi Arabia and the United States, that changed in September 2013 when the Obama Administration reversed course and elected not to intervene militarily after Assad’s regime launched a chemical

weapons attack on Syrian civilians. Washington and Riyadh drifted further apart on this issue after America's dramatic and rather sudden rapprochement with Iran has that led to a nuclear disarmament agreement in November 2013.

The Saudis, to put it mildly, were unhappy. It is unclear what unilateral action they have taken since with regard to the arming and funding of rebels in Syria. While such activity was initially welcomed by the United States, which does not wish to put boots on the ground, or to lose treasure to a conflict where U.S. interests are not entirely clear. But the longer the civil war plays out in Syria, the more it has become clear that al-Qaeda elements are on the rise.²² It is unclear to what extent Saudi financing has played a role in this alarming development. What is clear is that the Saudis have a track record, and Washington would ignore this at its own peril.

Qatar

Qatar's Muslim Brothers: A Failing Regional Strategy

DAVID ANDREW WEINBERG

Perhaps the most perplexing feature of Qatar's foreign policy has been its relatively recent embrace of the Muslim Brotherhood. Though the country's own branch of the Brotherhood was dissolved in 1999, Doha's rulers have, since the advent of the Arab Uprisings, turned to Brotherhood groups as their favored protégés across the region.¹ Qatar has backed the *Ikhwan* in countries that include Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, as well as the Gaza Strip. Though many of the specific allegations about Qatari support are cloaked in rumor, the general trend line of Qatar's strategy is clear.

Qatar's continued support for the Muslim Brotherhood motivated several of the country's Gulf neighbors—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain—to withdraw their ambassadors from Doha in an act of protest this March.² Doha's decision to back the Brotherhood is in many ways a departure from its previous foreign policy. The tiny Gulf emirate first made a name for itself as the Switzerland of the Middle East. Its initial attempts at seeking an outsized foreign policy influence involved mediating between longtime enemies such as warring factions from Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon, or among the Palestinians. However, Qatar's post-2011 foreign policy has been predicated on explicitly taking sides.³

Qatar chose to back Muslim Brotherhood factions regionwide for several reasons. Foremost is that the emirate believes the Brotherhood is a good horse to bet on, seeing the Islamist group as “the political future of the Arab world.”⁴ Additionally, tapping into the Brotherhood's established networks, membership, and infrastructure offers Qatar a way of turning money into power that helps compensate somewhat for the tiny Gulf country's limited population.

The architect of this strategy, Qatar's longtime emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, abdicated in June, handing the reins of power over to his son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. But there are reasons to be skeptical of suggestions that the country's 33-year-old ruler will somehow usher in a more “mature” and “consensual” foreign policy approach.⁵ After all, Sheikh Tamim was intimately

involved in crafting policy toward Libya and Syria—the two countries where Qatar was arguably most active *and* most aggressive—under his father.⁶ Moreover, Tamim accompanied Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal on a junket to Jordan in 2012 and received Meshaal just two days after his coronation as emir.⁷

There are also parallels regarding how both men seem to relate to the Brotherhood. Hamad embraced Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the Brotherhood's "spiritual fathers," and gave him the platform on the state-run Al Jazeera network that made him a regional superstar.⁸ Similarly, Sheikh Tamim kissed the firebrand preacher on his head and shoulder after taking office.⁹ Sheikh Tamim is also reportedly more religiously observant and interested in political Islam than his father.¹⁰

This chapter surveys the breadth and depth of Qatar's backing for Muslim Brotherhood groups in many parts of the Arab world that have been particularly affected by the Arab Uprisings: Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen.

Tunisia

Tunisia was the first state to experience an Arab Uprising revolution, and its Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, Ennahda, is so close to Doha that the Qataris have been described as its "strongest ally."¹¹ The party's leader, Rached Ghannouchi, visited Doha as his first foreign trip after Ennahda won a majority in Tunisia's first free elections in October 2011.¹² His son-in-law, Tunisia's foreign minister, previously was director of studies at Al Jazeera's think tank in Doha.¹³

Andrew Hammond, a journalist and keen observer of the region, claimed that Al Jazeera "heavily promoted" Ennahda during the elections.¹⁴ In fitting with this assertion, Ghannouchi later praised the channel as a "partner in the Arab revolutions."¹⁵ Ennahda's representative stormed out of a meeting of Tunisia's electoral commission that June to protest new measures that blocked candidates from receiving foreign funds, or doing interviews with foreign news channels.¹⁶ When Ennahda upgraded its headquarters "from a dilapidated office outside Tunis to a glossy tower block in the city centre, which used to house the state telephone company," there were rumors that it did so using Qatari funds.¹⁷

In January 2012, Sheikh Hamad visited Tunis to celebrate the one-year

anniversary of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's expulsion from power. Qatar would make two other highly symbolic moves over the course of the year. In September, the emirate agreed to expel Ben Ali's nephew; and in December 2012 it pledged \$20 million in assistance for Tunisians wounded in the revolution.¹⁸ Qatar has also agreed to build a \$2 billion oil refinery to quadruple Tunisia's capacity, granted the Tunisian central bank \$1 billion in loans, and has opened talks to deliver \$1 billion more.¹⁹

Libya

Qatar was the first Arab state to turn against the long-serving Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi, providing aircraft for the multinational intervention force's use, and recognizing the National Transitional Council (NTC) before other members of the Arab League.²⁰ Qatar also helped the rebels market oil from territory under their control, and hosted an anti-Qaddafi television channel from Doha.²¹ Though some of these policies obviously advanced the NTC's objectives, the weapons and financial support Qatar supplied also served to undermine the NTC because they primarily went to Islamists outside its orbit. Qatari favorites included Abdulhakim Belhadj, whose Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) had been designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the U.N. due to its ties to al-Qaeda, and Islamist preacher Ali Sallabi, who had just returned from exile in Qatar (where he was close to Qaradawi).²² By August 2012, the NTC's chairman estimated that Qatar had spent \$2 billion backing these groups.²³ The NTC's deputy prime minister complained that, "what they have done is basically support the Muslim Brotherhood."²⁴

Before elections cut Sallabi's faction down to size, he was considered perhaps "the most influential person" in Libya.²⁵ No shrinking violet, he called the NTC "extreme secularists," explaining that they were "worse than Qaddafi" and were in the process of starting "a new era of tyranny."²⁶ When Belhadj marched on Tripoli, Al Jazeera broadcast it live, and an officer accompanied him from Qatar's armed forces.²⁷ Soon afterward, Belhadj broke up an important meeting in Tripoli aimed at centralizing Libya's armed forces, reportedly with the chief of staff of Qatar's armed forces physically by his side.²⁸

The Islamist parties linked to Qatar did relatively poorly in Libya's July 2012 elections, with some observers arguing that their ties to Doha scared off voters.²⁹ Regardless, when Qatar sought arms for its Brotherhood-oriented proxies in Syria, its allies in Libya were happy to oblige.³⁰ *The Washington Post* recently interviewed a Qatari businessman who admitted to a \$15 million deal to provide Libyan Islamist militias with 100 armored land cruisers.³¹

In one example of the continued unrest in Libya, an Islamist militia kidnapped the country's prime minister, Ali Zeidan, in October 2013. Zeidan accused MPs considered close to Belhadj and LIFG, as well as an unnamed political party that had failed to oust him through parliamentary procedure, understood by some to mean Libya's main political party associated with the Brotherhood.³²

Egypt

Egypt had been the crown jewel in Qatar's Brotherhood agenda, so the collapse of Mohammed Morsi's government was an enormous setback for Doha. As the most populous Arab nation, Egypt offered the tiny Gulf state a tempting platform for its regional influence.

Two months after Morsi came to power, Qatar granted Egypt a \$2 billion loan.³³ It followed this in January 2013 with \$2 billion more deposited in Egypt's central bank, and \$500 million in grants to ward off a currency crisis.³⁴ Qatar then sent an additional \$3 billion to Egypt's central bank that April.³⁵

While some Egyptians were wary that Doha had acquired too much leverage, Qatar assured the Egyptian people that it simply did not want to see their country go bankrupt.³⁶ In January 2013, Qatar's prime minister announced plans to invest \$18 billion in developing Egypt's northern coast and the Suez Canal.³⁷ Whereas Washington hoped to use the prospect of IMF loans as an incentive to force Egypt to implement structural reforms that would make its economy more self-sufficient, Qatari backing enabled Egypt's Brotherhood-led government to avoid taking these domestically unpopular steps—arguably to the detriment of Egypt's long-term economic health.

Morsi's fall from power put Qatar in an awkward position. On the one hand, Qatar felt pressured to stand by its *Ikhwan* allies. Al Jazeera was notably silent

during the protests that helped topple him from power—a marked contrast to the channel's “breathless boosting” of protests that brought down Mubarak in 2011.³⁸ Afterwards, Qatar strayed from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) flock to condemn Egypt's interim authorities for their harsh crackdown on Brotherhood sit-ins during August 2013. But on the other hand, Qatar continued to send Egypt discounted gas, presumably as a means to save face, and retain a modicum of influence with the new regime.³⁹

Qatar now seems to be reaping the whirlwind for backing the *ancien régime* in Cairo. According to business analysts, all Qatari aid since 2011 has now been returned, Egypt turned down a Qatari request to increase bilateral air traffic, Qatari investors were absent from a recent investment dialogue between Egypt and the Gulf states, and gas supply talks have been put on hold.⁴⁰ Eight Al Jazeera employees held in Egyptian custody faced trial on charges of aiding the Muslim Brotherhood, which Egypt had blacklisted as a terrorist organization in December 2013.⁴¹ In March 2014, Egypt formally withdrew its ambassador from Qatar.⁴²

Syria

Qatar has spent between \$1 billion and \$3 billion providing arms and financial support to the Syrian rebellion against Assad.⁴³ The emirate eagerly backed the Syrian National Council, an exile group dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Doha reluctantly was pressured by other “friends of Syria” into helping supplant the SNC and dilute the Brotherhood's influence by endorsing the broader Syrian Opposition Coalition in November 2012.⁴⁴ Saudi Arabia helped further dilute Qatar and the Brotherhood's role in May 2013 by widening the Coalition to include more members of the Free Syrian Army and Michel Kilo's secularist bloc.⁴⁵

In what skeptics saw as a bid to “hand post-Bashar Syria to the Muslim Brotherhood,” Qatar surprised Washington and Riyadh by putting its protégé Ghassan Hitto in charge of Syrian territory under rebel control.⁴⁶ However, Hitto was soon forced to resign because of ongoing resistance from Saudi clients within the Coalition. The Qataris also tried to impose Mustafa al-Sabbagh, who oversees Qatar's Ikhwan-influenced bloc, as the president of the Coalition, but he lost to

another opposition candidate considered closed to Riyadh, Ahmed Assi Jarba.⁴⁷ When Jarba was reelected in January 2014, the bloc of members associated with Qatar and the Brotherhood stormed out in feeble protest.⁴⁸

Doha has looked to the Muslim Brotherhood to help it identify and liaise with potential partners within the rebel movement against the Assad regime. Qatari support has bolstered the Islamist and jihadist character of Syria's armed opposition, with weapons, funds, relief supplies, or favorable media coverage reportedly going at various points to factions such as Ahfad al-Rasoul, Ahrar al-Sham, Liwa al-Islam, Suqour al-Sham, Liwa al-Haq, and Kataib Ansar al-Sham.⁴⁹ In April 2013 President Barack Obama warned Sheikh Hamad that Qatar needed to impose tighter channels on weapons distribution to keep advanced weapons from falling into the hands of the Nusra Front.⁵⁰

Qatar's activism has helped keep the opposition flush with arms, but it has also contributed to its fragmentation. Qatar's flirtation with questionable hard-line partners has led to tangible operational setbacks. When a Qatar-backed Islamist group defected to the Syrian government, it caused a major defeat for the rebels at Wadi El-Deif, and reportedly led an outraged Saudi Arabia to seize control of the opposition from Qatar by pressuring Doha and its clients into letting Riyadh take charge of more battlefield activities and expanding the opposition coalition.⁵¹

Since then, Qatar's proxies have taken extremely disappointing stances toward al-Qaeda affiliates operating inside of Syria. Although some Qatari-backed groups, such as Ahfad al-Rasoul, engaged in fights during September with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), at the time one of the two al-Qaeda affiliates in the country, others did not.⁵² When ISIS went on the offensive against a member of the Free Syrian Army, many analysts expected a group that Qatar has supported, Liwa al-Tawhid, to come to its rescue. Instead, al-Tawhid tried to negotiate a ceasefire.⁵³ Since then, al-Tawhid has signed a declaration with Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda's other main affiliate in Syria at the time) and Ahrar al-Sham that condemns the Syrian Opposition Coalition, and calls for an Islamic state under sharia law.⁵⁴

At the start of 2014, the Islamic Front (which includes factions backed by Qatar) declared war on ISIS, but members of the Islamic Front continued to

maintain a cozy relationship with Jabhat al-Nusra. It also emerged that Ahrar al-Sham, purportedly a favored recipient of Qatari support, has had its senior ranks populated with longtime al-Qaeda fighters such as Abu Khaled al-Suri, Osama bin Laden's onetime favored courier who was assassinated in February 2014.⁵⁵

Yemen

Yemen's Muslim Brotherhood played a major role in the Arab Spring protests that ultimately forced the country's longstanding president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to resign. Doha quickly became "perhaps the GCC's most publicly proactive player as the political crisis deepened" in Yemen, and Qatar's prime minister became the first Gulf leader to publicly call for Saleh's resignation in April 2011.⁵⁶ Observers suggest that Al Jazeera has shown "systematic support" through Yemen's opposition Islah Party for figures associated with the Brotherhood, "even prior to the Arab Spring."⁵⁷ Local outlets reported that Qatar had purchased a television channel in 2011 called "Yemen Youth" that is run by the Brotherhood and bashes Saudi policies.⁵⁸ In January 2011, Saleh called Emir Hamad to complain about Al Jazeera's coverage; by May the channel had been shuttered and several of its reporters expelled.⁵⁹ Qatar kept up diplomatic pressure on Saleh until he finally left office in February 2012.

As a result of this recent involvement, local analysts believe that "the compass of the Muslim Brotherhood is now exclusively pointing toward Doha."⁶⁰ Qatar also reportedly built strong ties with Yemeni General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who was pivotal for aligning army units with the protesters and, according to *The New York Times*, "has ties" with the Brotherhood.⁶¹

Yemen's branch of the Muslim Brotherhood is heavily represented in the opposition movement al-Islah. A prominent leader of Islah's salafi faction, Abdul Majeed al-Zindani, has been named a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the U.S. Treasury Department for aiding al-Qaeda and has been placed on the UN sanctions list for the same reasons. As Bill Roggio of the *Long War Journal* points out, Zindani and other Islah members may also have sheltered Anwar al-Awlaki, a senior al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula leader, in his home shortly before the latter's death.⁶²

Islah leaders deny receiving funds from Doha, although they do admit to paying a thank you visit to Qatar for its enthusiastic backing of Yemen's uprising.⁶³ However, in May 2012 the *Yemen Observer* cited disgruntled sources within Islah who claimed that Qatar had been sending the party \$80 million a month (a sum that they alleged was largely being pocketed by party official Hamid al-Ahmar).⁶⁴ Similar allegations of Qatari funding have also surfaced in several other countries, and sometimes it is difficult to separate politically convenient fabrications from fact.⁶⁵ Still, Qatar has built up considerable influence in Yemeni affairs. Perhaps most tellingly, Yemen's new president Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi decided in July 2013 to break with tradition by visiting Doha instead of Riyadh before coming to Washington to meet with President Obama. Saudi Arabia, which recently outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood and has sought for some time to marginalize the group in Yemen, indicated in October that it was cutting back its aid to Sanaa; soon afterward, Qatar pledged \$350 million to a compensation fund considered important for sustaining Yemen's national dialogue process.⁶⁶

Consequences

Qatar's policy of backing the Brotherhood has won it new allies, but also new enemies. Bernard Haykel, a Princeton scholar of Islam and the Gulf, described the policy as a success in early 2013 because it had won the royal family plaudits at home and turned the *Ikhwan* into a force multiplier for Qatari policy.⁶⁷ However, events have obviously shifted against Qatar in the region since then, most notably with the collapse of the Morsi regime in Egypt later in 2013 and the withdrawal of several Arab ambassadors from Doha in 2014.

Since Qatar took on a more assertive regional role backing the Brotherhood in 2011, incensed protesters have brutalized effigies of the Qatari Emir in Tunisia, Libya, and the West Bank; angry demonstrators, including in Egypt and Libya, have also taken to burning the Qatari flag.⁶⁸ Armed gunmen, resentful of Qatar's tendency to play favorites, even forced a Qatar Airways plane to turn back from the Libyan capital's Mitiga Airport and stormed the airline's offices.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, the Qatari network Al Jazeera's credibility among mainstream Arab viewers has taken a hit, having been used in a pro-Brotherhood partisan

role in nearly every one of the locales described above.⁷⁰ Al Jazeera news teams have come under physical attack in various countries for their perceived political favoritism.⁷¹ The channel was banned in both Yemen and Egypt, and its employees in both places have faced politicized prosecutions.⁷²

Qatari support for democratic openings to empower the Brotherhood abroad has also put the royal family under increasing pressure at home. Doha sentenced a poet to life in prison—later commuted to 15 years—for writing that “we are all Tunisia in the face of repressive coteries.”⁷³ In 2011, Doha announced plans to hold parliamentary elections in 2013 that had been postponed for over a decade.⁷⁴ In other words, Qatar’s domestic political announcements were almost certainly caused by pressure over the contradiction between its backing of democracy abroad while maintaining autocratic control at home. Given that Qatar’s ruling family has ignored over two-thirds of all recommendations from the country’s only democratically elected body, the Central Municipal Council, it’s hard to believe that even parliamentary elections will truly result in accountability and public empowerment.⁷⁵ When Sheikh Hamad abdicated in favor of his son last summer, he canceled plans for legislative elections in 2013 by renewing the term of Qatar’s sitting Shura Council.⁷⁶

Qatar’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood abroad has also come at a cost in its ties with the countries of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.⁷⁷ Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have been extremely critical of Doha behind the scenes for well over a year now, and this tension has ruptured into an undeniable public dispute, with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt withdrawing their ambassadors from Qatar in protest. It is reported that Qatar’s Gulf neighbors were considering more tangible punishments as well, such as closing Saudi airspace and land borders to Qatar as well as expelling Doha from the GCC.⁷⁸

It’s now clear that Qatar’s brand is no longer soaring, as the viability of Doha’s preferred allies looks increasingly questionable. None of the Brotherhood-affiliated political parties backed by Qatar has actually been able to successfully govern. In Libya and Yemen, they simply failed at the ballot box. In Egypt, their winner-take-all governing style led to their downfall. In Tunisia, they were forced to resign by sustained public protests and coalition crises.⁷⁹ The Qatar-backed

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Syrian rebels face repeated setbacks on the battlefield, while Qatar's favored clients have also lost power among the political opposition in exile.⁸⁰

In short, Qatar's strategy of backing the Brotherhood has produced shaky and uneven results. The country's new emir seems prepared to carry on with the same old approach of supporting the Brotherhood throughout the region. But this increasingly appears to be a case of throwing good money after bad.

Qatari Foreign Policy and Islamist Violent Non-State Actors

DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS & LUKE LISCHIN

Qatari support for Islamist non-state actors has been an escalating source of tension for the monarchy in some of its vital relationships. At the beginning of March 2014, three other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain—withdrawed their ambassadors from Qatar due to the emirate’s sponsorship of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. In addition to Qatar’s support for the Brotherhood, media accounts and intelligence analysts have raised suspicions that Qatari institutions may be supporting jihadist violent non-state actors (VNSAs). Qatar’s alleged support for jihadist VNSAs is less clear than its backing of the Brotherhood, as evidence is seldom direct and often circumstantial. While Qatar’s current policies related to VNSAs, shrouded as they are in secrecy, are unlikely to be fully understood for years, there is nonetheless reason for concern.

Qatar’s support for Islamist groups has damaged the country diplomatically, even apart from the recent rupture with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain. Many of the emirate’s policies that appeared to put the country in a strong position at the start of 2013—including sponsoring Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, becoming deeply involved in Libya, and heavily backing rebels seeking to overthrow Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria—now look like losing bets. There is a stark contrast, for example, between the gratitude Libyans felt for Qatar when rebels first captured Muammar Qaddafi’s Tripoli palace and hoisted Qatar’s flag before any other, and the hostility Qatar engendered a mere two years later, when protesters burnt its flag in Benghazi.¹

If suspicions about Qatar’s support for jihadist VNSAs prove to be generally accurate, this would not be the first time that its state institutions have been used to bolster these actors. As this chapter discusses, in the 1990s both the Qatar Charitable Society and Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani, the country’s minister of religious endowments and Islamic affairs, supported al-Qaeda. But after the 9/11 attacks, due in no small part to U.S. pressure, Qatar

instituted financial controls over the country's charitable institutions that reduced support for salafi jihadist groups (although open Qatari support for Hamas continued). Then, once the Arab Uprisings began, Qatar strongly supported both Islamist political parties and VNSAs affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and perhaps jihadist VNSAs as well.

Why has Qatar supported Islamists during the Arab Uprisings? The majority of Gulf analysts describe Qatar's foreign policy decisions as pragmatic rather than driven by ideological affinity. Analysts have provided several reasons that Qatar may have chosen to support Islamists. First, the emirate may be trying to side with eventual winners in order to magnify its influence and reach. According to this hypothesis, Qatar's support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, or of Tunisia's Ennahda Party, or of various Libyan and Syrian Islamist factions, is based on the probability that these factions will eventually triumph electorally or militarily.²

A second, related explanation is that Qatar is eager to build its brand. Mehran Kamrava, a political scientist at Georgetown University who directs its Center for International and Regional Studies in Doha, writes that the emirate's broader branding campaign is "meant to give international recognition to the small country as an international educational, sporting, and cultural hub and a good global citizen."³ Shadi Hamid, a researcher at the Brookings Institution who directed its Doha Center until January 2014, explains that having a distinctive foreign policy can also be seen as a means of building Qatar's brand.⁴ This is particularly true from the perspective of the country's larger-than-life former foreign minister, Hamad bin Jassim (popularly known as "HBJ"), who was primarily responsible for Qatar's hyper-activist policies under the country's then-emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

A third possible reason for Qatar's support of Islamists is that the state is more familiar with these actors. As Hamid notes, Doha has long hosted exiled Islamists, and thus when the Arab Spring erupted, those were the actors whom Qatar already knew. "You can't build something from scratch," Hamid said of how Qatar had positioned itself politically in the post-Arab Spring environment, "and say, 'Well, who are the Egyptian liberals? How do we establish a relationship with them?'"⁵

There is clear merit to all three of these explanations. However, this chapter contends that a fourth possibility also deserves consideration: that Qatar's support for Islamists is in part ideologically driven. The argument for ideology's relevance relates to the specific personalities that may shape state policy. Qatar's small size—only about 250,000 citizens—means the country's foreign policy bureaucracy is vanishingly small, and hence its foreign policy is highly centralized, with the emir and foreign minister having extraordinary leeway to shape or change the country's policies. Hence, a key question about the role that religious ideology may play is: Who influences the outlook and paradigms of the emir and foreign minister? This chapter examines two prominent Qataris, the aforementioned Sheikh Abdallah and also Abd al-Rahman bin Umayr al-Nu'aymi, whose cases suggest that some of the people influencing Qatari decision-makers may be heavily ideological.

This chapter begins by examining historical support for jihadism by Qatari officials and institutions before turning to relevant open-source evidence concerning the country's support for jihadism after the onset of the Arab Spring. It then evaluates the conclusions we can draw from this evidence, before turning to the broader question of whether ideology may be one force driving Qatari foreign policy.

Qatar's Historical Support for Jihadism

The most prominent case of Qatari support for al-Qaeda prior to the 9/11 attacks involved Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), the mastermind of those attacks. KSM and his family moved to Qatar in 1992 at the invitation of the country's then-minister of Islamic affairs, Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani.⁶

From 1992 to 1996, KSM served as a project engineer for Qatar's ministry of electricity and water, and used this position to facilitate his travels worldwide. While working for the government, KSM became involved in several international terrorist plots. His first known connection to a major plot during this period was his relatively minor involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. KSM wired \$660 to Mohammed Salameh, a co-conspirator of attack mastermind Ramzi Yousef (KSM's cousin), from a Qatari bank account. After that, KSM assisted Yousef's operations in the Philippines, including the bombing of a movie theater and a transpacific flight from Manila, as well as the failed Bojinka plot that aspired

to blow up a dozen commercial airliners over the Pacific using liquid explosives. (The attack template from Bojinka would resurface in 2006, in al-Qaeda's foiled transatlantic air plot that sought to simultaneously blow up a number of Britain-U.S. flights.) After the Bojinka plot failed, Philippine authorities began to close in on KSM and Yousef's Manila cell, but not before KSM retreated back to the safety of his government post in Qatar.⁷

From 1994 to 1996, KSM traveled from Qatar to such countries as Brazil, Malaysia, Sudan, and Yemen, though the details of his visits are unknown. He also cultivated a network of wealthy patrons who supported al-Qaeda operations.⁸ By 1996, KSM's terrorist activities caught the attention of U.S. authorities—first the CIA and later the FBI. A CIA case officer in Doha sought to keep KSM under surveillance. Though several U.S. government officials reportedly advocated for a scheme to abduct him, the CIA case officer and National Security Council officials believed that any such plans could run into trouble because “if the United States officially asked for the assistance of the Qatar government, Mr. Mohammed would be tipped off, since it appeared that he was living in Doha under the government's protection.”⁹

KSM's major government patron was the aforementioned Sheikh Abdallah, who “allowed Arab extremists who had fought in Afghanistan to live on his farm.”¹⁰ Given Sheikh Abdallah's apparent jihadist sympathies, as well as suspicions that he was not the only one with such leanings in the Qatari government, the CIA and Department of Defense (DOD) devised an operation that could capture KSM without alerting Qatari authorities. Ultimately, though, the CIA determined that it lacked the required assets in Qatar to conduct an extraordinary rendition.¹¹

With the prospect of a covert mission dashed, the task of apprehending KSM fell to the FBI and U.S. ambassador to Qatar Patrick Theros.¹² FBI director Louis J. Freeh filed a request with Qatari officials asking for permission to apprehend KSM. The request was met with delaying tactics. In January 1996, the monarchy finally agreed that the U.S. could carry out the operation, but the CIA's fears that KSM might be warned about any operation proved well-founded: A Qatari official tipped KSM off about his impending arrest. The terrorist mastermind managed to flee the country in a government-owned executive jet just hours before the

United States was set to apprehend him.¹³ Though it is widely believed that the tip came from Sheikh Abdallah, a former CIA official later told ABC News that “there were others in the Qatari royal family who were sympathetic and provided safe havens for al-Qaeda.”¹⁴ Though he was briefly placed under house arrest after aiding KSM’s escape, Sheikh Abdallah retained his position as minister of Islamic affairs; later, in 2001, he was promoted to become Qatar’s interior minister, a post he retained until 2013.¹⁵

KSM’s time in Qatar was not the only instance of the emirate’s support for al-Qaeda prior to the September 11 attacks. As evidence submitted by the U.S. government in a criminal trial noted, in 1993 Osama bin Laden named the Qatar Charitable Society as one of several organizations that financed al-Qaeda’s overseas operations. In 1995, the charity’s funds were used to support an assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.¹⁶

Following the 9/11 attacks, Qatar came under U.S. pressure. The country implemented terrorist financing reforms, but more than 10 years later, these reforms remain somewhat incomplete. The new anti-money laundering regime governing the oversight of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) in Qatar is founded primarily upon Law No. 13 of 2004, dealing with private institutions and associations. Law 13 created several categories of civil society associations, of which “licensed charitable associations” is a subcategory. To become licensed, charitable associations must submit an application to the ministry of civil service and housing affairs with a clear statement of purpose. Once the ministry licenses a charitable association, all aspects of its activities, from the holding of meetings to the execution of financial transactions, are subject to oversight. Further, Law 13 requires that charitable associations maintain records for all financial transactions for a period of 15 years, and institutions are required to report suspicious activities observed in such transactions to the Qatar Financial Intelligence Unit (QFIU).

This legal regime is positive but not ironclad. Although Qatar received a respectable rating in 2008 of being “largely compliant” from the inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force (FATF), flaws in Laws 13 and 14 prevented Qatar from receiving a rating of “fully compliant.”¹⁷ These flaws concerned the established ability of Qatar’s emir to exempt any NPO from oversight (an authority that is

not known to have been invoked since its inception), and the possible lack of an oversight mechanism for charitable trusts. And despite Qatar's reforms, some of the country's charities continue to be suspected of supporting jihadist VNSAs.

Libya

Qatar's first set of policies designed to back VNSAs during the Arab Uprisings were aimed at toppling Muammar Qaddafi's regime in Libya. The Libyan rebels' first state backer, Qatar is said to have spent approximately \$400 million on the rebellion, and shipped 20,000 tons of weapons, ranging from small arms to anti-tank missiles.¹⁸ Qatar also played an operational role, taking the lead among Arab countries that joined NATO's mission and deploying special forces to train rebels in the use of heavy weaponry. And Qatari special forces were seemingly even more involved than that: As the *Guardian* has reported, "in the final assault on Qaddafi's Bab al-Aziziya compound in Tripoli in late August, Qatari special forces were seen on the frontline."¹⁹

In its support of the anti-Qaddafi rebels, Qatar favored Islamists at the expense of more secular factions.²⁰ Regardless, the monarchy's Libya gamble initially seemed to pay off. As previously noted, the rebels felt so much gratitude that the first flag they hoisted after capturing Qaddafi's Tripoli palace was Qatar's. The leaders of militia groups backed by Qatar went on to prominent roles in Libyan politics and society after Qaddafi's ouster. One such group is Hizb al-Watan, or the "Homeland Party." Al-Watan is led by Ali al-Sallabi, a salafist cleric who lived in Qatar prior to the Libyan revolution, and who reportedly played a pivotal role in coordinating the distribution of arms from Qatar to Islamist militias.

One fighter who received Qatari support was Abdelhakim Belhadj, a former commander in the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Though Belhadj had a number of connections to al-Qaeda, he was part of the jailed LIFG faction that released a series of "revisions" while incarcerated that rejected any allegiance to al-Qaeda.²¹ However, it bears noting that LIFG quickly abandoned another pledge it had made as part of the revisions, that it would end its fight against Qaddafi's regime. Additionally, Belhadj allegedly has a very close relationship with the salafi jihadist group Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, now named a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity by the U.S. Treasury Department, with regional sources claiming

that Belhadj shelters its exiled leadership and provides training to its members.²²

Even after the fight against Qaddafi's government ended, Qatar continued to "arm and fund various militia groups," specifically favoring Islamist militias.²³ Many Libyans took notice, and began to resent what they saw as foreign meddling in domestic affairs. Several Libyan officials complained to the media about Qatari interference. General officer Khalifa Hiftar said, "If aid comes through the front door, we like Qatar, but if it comes through the window to certain people [and] bypassing official channels, we don't want Qatar."²⁴

Other visible signs of discontent with Qatar's role abound. Three legislators were sued for libel after accusing members of the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Justice and Construction Party of taking money from Qatar, illustrating how politicians are hesitant to be seen as associated with the emirate.²⁵ And as noted previously, residents of Benghazi burned Qatari flags in the summer of 2013. Discontent with Qatar also apparently prompted an armed group to seize control of an air traffic control tower at Tripoli International Airport on August 4, 2013, to prevent a Qatar Airways flight from landing.²⁶

Syria

Before massive civil unrest hit Syria, the Assad regime's relationship with Qatar was cordial. One factor contributing to this cordiality is that Qatar had a less hostile relationship with Syria's close ally Iran than any other member state in the Gulf Cooperation Council, save for Oman (although the Qatar-Iran relationship was still fraught with tension). As violence escalated in Syria, Qatar initially approached the situation with trepidation, imploring President Bashar al-Assad to reach a peaceful resolution with demonstrators while simultaneously decrying the slaughter of civilians. Qatari entreaties did little good, and in July 2011 Qatar shut its embassy in Damascus as a sign of its dissatisfaction.

From that point on, Qatar stood at the forefront of the Arab League's growing challenge to Assad's regime. In August 2011, Saudi Arabia announced its open support for the Syrian rebels, and in January 2012 Sheikh Hamad urged that Arab troops should intervene in Syria. Though this proposal was quixotic, it signaled Qatar's deepening focus on the conflict in Syria.

It's difficult to pinpoint precisely when Qatar began to arm the Syrian rebels. Syria's state media claims that Qatar had been arming rebels even before the emir's bold pronouncement favoring an Arab intervention, arguing that Qatar had armed rebels "since the start of this crisis."²⁷ HBJ denied these allegations.²⁸ But regardless of when Qatari arms began to flow to rebels, it is clear that Qatar has heavily backed them in recent years. Hugh Griffiths, an arms researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, observed that 90 Qatari military air cargo flights left the joint U.S.-Qatar owned Al-Udeid airfield for Turkey from January 2012 through April 2013.²⁹ These shipments contained assault rifles (primarily AK-47s) and RPGs. In total, Qatar has shipped somewhere between \$1 billion to \$3 billion in assistance to elements of the Syrian opposition.³⁰

The big question with respect to Qatar's Syria policy is whether its support reached the worst of the worst, such as the al-Qaeda-aligned Jabhat al-Nusra or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham. Hard evidence is sparse in open-source reporting, but interviews conducted with Doha-based foreign policy analysts for this chapter reveal a variety of suspicions, albeit from slightly different perspectives, on the precise contours of such assistance. One analyst, speaking on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, said there was concern that Qatar had "started to lose its marbles," countenancing the idea of supporting even Nusra, particularly as Assad appeared more likely to survive and the emirate became obsessed with defeating him. This analyst believed Qatar had contacts with Nusra, and considered supporting the group, but that the emirate's actual support to Nusra was somewhat limited and deniable in its execution. "Did Qatar turn a blind eye to groups which defected to Jabhat al-Nusra or to ISIS? Sort of," the analyst said. "Did they know that some handoffs they made might make their way to these groups? Yes. Was it plausibly deniable? Yes."

Another Doha-based researcher who also asked not to be quoted by name on this topic said that he believes Qatar does support jihadist groups—but, rather than doing so for ideological reasons, it likely backed jihadist factions because of their effectiveness as fighters. And Mehran Kamrava, speaking from his Doha office, noted that when Qatar sent arms to Libya, they would eventually "end up in places or in people's hands that the Qataris didn't intend." Similarly, Kamrava argued

that due to its lack of a foreign-policy bureaucracy, Qatar's support to Syrian rebel factions could be reaching hard-line groups as an unintended consequence.³¹

Mali

There have also been numerous allegations about Qatar's relationship with the jihadist groups that gained control of North Mali prior to the January 2013 French military intervention to dislodge them. When observers tried to account for jihadist groups' rapid advances, Qatari support was a popular hypothesis, especially among French officials and analysts.³²

However, evidence of Qatari support for jihadist groups in North Mali is murky. As David Roberts, a Doha-based researcher with King's College London, wrote, "Examining exactly what Qatar is doing in Mali is difficult. Qatar never enlightens anyone of its foreign policy strategies or tactics and nor are there sufficient reliable sources of information in and around Mali."³³ Indeed, several analysts are highly skeptical of claims that Qatar directly supported Malian jihadists, arguing that such a policy is at odds with the direction of Qatari foreign policy. As Roberts wrote:

There are many reasons as to why Qatar is highly unlikely to be meddling with al-Qaeda groups in the Western Sahel. Despite Qatar's reputation as a Wahhabi and Brotherhood-supporting country, Qatar's most important allies are America, the U.K., and France. Qatar has a limited domestic capacity to defend itself and finds itself in a region that has seen three wars in as many decades and where it is sandwiched between the two regional behemoths, Iran and Saudi Arabia, both of whom have somewhat antagonistic histories with Qatar. The Qatari leadership is under no illusion as to where its security reliance lies; resolutely in Western hands.³⁴

Despite these uncertainties, it's clear that Malian jihadist groups did receive indirect support from Qatar. Specifically, Qatar Charity—successor to the Qatar Charitable Society—operated in North Mali when it was jihadist dominated. The UN news agency IRIN reported in October 2012 that displaced Malians were actually risking a return to the north, in part because Qatar-backed NGOs

were offering tempting economic opportunities. IRIN reported, for example, that 35-year-old Moussa Touré returned to jihadist-held Gao because Qatar Charity would pay him twice the salary that he made previously.³⁵

So the question is whether this was done with the intention of supporting Mali's VNSAs, or whether that was simply a consequence of providing humanitarian aid to an area of the country that was suffering. Analysts are divided, though even some who are sympathetic to Qatari foreign policy view its support of Islamists in Mali as more purposeful than incidental. Michael Stephens, a Doha-based researcher at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, wrote that Qatar's policies were driven by the fact that the monarchy "likes to back winners, and it views the Islamist movements in Mali as worthy of support because they are on the ascendancy and may play a significant future role in the governance of the nation."³⁶ However, Stephens rejects the view that Qatar is "some sort of proto-jihadist sponsoring rogue state," and argues that its policies in Mali can be explained by two sets of national interests: putting itself in a strong business position, and being able to influence rapidly moving events in the region (and thus building "brand Qatar").

The Horn of Africa

Qatar's engagement in the Horn of Africa, through its relationship with Eritrea, is problematic. Relations among countries of the Horn—namely Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea—have long been volatile, even escalating into border skirmishes between national militaries, and proxy fights through VNSAs. One of the core conflicts is the seemingly intractable conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

After decades of bloody insurgency, Eritrea achieved its independence from Ethiopia in 1993. By 1998, border disputes between the two countries escalated into a two-year conventional war that claimed 70,000 to 100,000 lives. Though a ceasefire was attained in 2000, the border remained contentious and tensions remained high. Both countries financed an array of separatist and dissident groups within each other's borders.³⁷ But proxy wars spilled out beyond the borders of the two states and into other parts of the Horn of Africa, most notably Somalia.

Somalia's UN-recognized government has been battling an Islamist insurgency

for the better part of a decade, receiving support from both Ethiopia and also African Union forces. Ethiopia's interest in the conflict stems from its experiences in the mid-1990s, when an Islamist group called al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI) controlled territory close to its border following the collapse of General Mohamed Siad Barre's regime and Somalia's subsequent descent into anarchy.³⁸ AIAI was able to hold the town of Luuq, near the border with Ethiopia and Kenya. Committed to the idea of a "Greater Somalia"—that is, a larger state that would also encompass the majority-Somali areas of neighboring countries—AIAI stirred up separatist unrest in Ethiopia's Ogaden region, and from 1996 to 1997, Ethiopia experienced a "string of assassination attempts and bombings by al-Ittihad in Addis Ababa."³⁹ In response, Ethiopian forces intervened in Luuq and destroyed AIAI's safe haven.

When another Islamist group called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) captured Mogadishu in June 2006, Ethiopia was extremely concerned because the ICU was obviously a successor to AIAI, based on the group's leadership. (The militant group al-Shabaab, which is now an official al-Qaeda affiliate, was originally the ICU's youth wing.) In December 2006, Ethiopia intervened militarily to push back the ICU's countrywide advances. In a continuation of the proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Eritrean government sponsored the insurgency against Ethiopia in a variety of ways, even openly hosting an opposition conference in September 2007. Illustrating the depth of international concern about Eritrean support for insurgents in Somalia, in December 2009 the UN Security Council "imposed sanctions on Eritrea for supporting insurgents trying to topple the government in nearby Somalia."⁴⁰ The Security Council then imposed additional sanctions in 2011.

Due to concerns about Eritrean support for VNSAs in Somalia and beyond, Qatar's close ties with Eritrea troubles other Horn of Africa countries. Ethiopia severed diplomatic ties with Qatar in 2008, citing Qatar's relationship with Eritrea and also its alleged support for Ogaden separatists (the allegation was that Ogaden National Liberation Front rebels received training in Qatar).⁴¹ The Somali president, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, expressed similar umbrage over Qatar's relationship with Eritrea to U.S. assistant secretary for African affairs Johnnie Carson at a July 2009 African Union summit in Sirte, Libya. Sheikh Sharif also alleged that Doha was directly supporting al-Shabaab.

A 2011 report of the UN monitoring group on Somalia and Eritrea offered a pertinent observation about the relationship between Qatar and Eritrea:

Qatar is perhaps Eritrea's most important economic partner at the moment, and Qatari officials have acknowledged to numerous foreign diplomats that their Government has provided significant, direct financial support to the Government in Asmara. According to numerous interviews conducted by the Monitoring Group with diplomats, former Eritrean officials and businessmen, much of this support is provided in the form of cash.⁴²

That Qatari aid came in the form of bulk cash transfers raises some rather obvious issues pertaining to oversight of aid. Of the many forms that support for violent actors can take, cash transactions are among the most difficult to trace. Unless a transaction is physically witnessed, there might be no way for observers to keep track of where currency is delivered, and in what quantity.⁴³ While Qatar's dealings with Eritrea raise clear concerns, the UN report concluded that the emirate did not violate the sanctions regime through its provision of aid.⁴⁴

Although Qatar continues to maintain close relations with Eritrea, it managed to restore its relationship with Ethiopia in 2012, and recently pledged \$18 million in support to Somalia.⁴⁵ There is obviously a great deal of ground to criticize Qatar's policies toward Eritrea and the Horn of Africa, but Qatar's engagement has also yielded some positive some results. Most notably, Qatar's offer to mediate the Eritrea-Djibouti border conflict resulted in a ceasefire between the states and negotiations that continue to this day.⁴⁶

Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw about Qatari support for Islamist VNSAs? Some conclusions can be drawn from the various cases explored in this chapter, but there are also a great many questions about both Qatar's precise policies and also the intentions behind them. To recap the four cases:

- In Libya, Qatari military support during the anti-Qaddafi rebellion favored

Islamist factions, and Qatar continued to support militia groups in Libya—particularly Islamist militias—even after the collapse of Qaddafi’s government. There is somewhat more clarity about Qatar’s role in Libya than in some of the other cases, as the policies it pursued are relatively clear, though the question of why it evinced such a preference for Islamist factions remains.

- In Syria, Qatar has unambiguously been arming and supporting rebel factions, generally Islamist fighters. The real question where open-source information is indecisive is whether Qatar has also been supporting jihadist factions, and if so, whether this was a matter of state preference or a second-order consequence of providing assistance to other rebel groups.
- There are allegations—mainly from French analysts—that Qatar directly supported the jihadist groups who controlled North Mali, although many observers are skeptical because they believe direct support is inconsistent with the direction of Qatari foreign policy. It is clear that Qatari NGOs indirectly helped jihadists through their provision of aid in jihadist-controlled territory, though the question remains whether this was the intention of the aid, or whether the purpose was humanitarian, with the benefit to jihadists being an undesired second-order consequence.
- Qatar was known to be Eritrea’s most important economic backer at a time it was an international pariah for a variety of reasons, including its support for Islamist VNSAs in Somalia. The major question regarding this relationship involves Qatar’s intentions in backing Eritrea.

Overall, the Qatari government’s level of involvement with Islamist VNSAs looks like a sine wave. Relative to other states, Qatari officials and charities rather heavily backed Islamist VNSAs—jihadist groups in particular—in the 1990s, when an ideologically driven Sheikh Abdallah sponsored KSM and al-Qaeda took advantage of the Qatar Charitable Society’s largesse. The emirate’s support for Islamist VNSAs significantly declined following the 9/11 attacks, but rose markedly again with the advent of the Arab Uprisings. There is a great deal of ambiguity about both the level and intent of Qatari support for jihadist VNSAs during this latter period, but that it supports Islamist VNSAs is not in dispute.

The shadowy nature of much of the evidence about Qatari support for Islamist VNSAs in the Arab Spring environment makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the parameters, level, and intentions of this support. But it is worth asking: why has Qatar shown a preference for supporting Islamist non-state actors, including VNSAs?

The academic literature's dominant reading of Qatari foreign policy, including its support for Islamist VNSAs, avoids ideological explanations. To be clear, ideological explanations need not amount to seeing Qatar as "some sort of proto-jihadist sponsoring rogue state," in Michael Stephens's words.

Though the various pragmatic explanations for Qatar's foreign policy are persuasive, they do not preclude ideology as another factor underlying the country's choices of whom to support. Indeed, two examples are strongly suggestive that individuals in the emirate's inner circles of decision-making are strongly ideologically influenced.

The first of these examples is Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani, whose support for KSM and subsequent promotion to interior minister was discussed above. When prominent former members of the U.S. intelligence community learned of Sheikh Abdallah's elevation to interior minister, they expressed shock. Former CIA agent and author Robert Baer told the *L.A. Times*, "He's a sympathizer, a fellow traveler." Similarly, former White House counterterrorism director Richard Clarke added he was "shocked to hear" of Sheikh Abdallah's appointment.⁴⁷ Interior minister is obviously an important position in Qatar that may have placed Sheikh Abdallah in the emirate's inner decision-making circles.

Another Qatari notable the U.S. government more recently has accused of supporting jihadist VNSAs is Abd al-Rahman bin Umayr al-Nu'aymi, whom the U.S. Treasury Department named a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on December 18, 2013. The press release explaining Nu'aymi's designation notes:

In 2013, Nu'aymi ordered the transfer of nearly \$600,000 to al-Qaeda via al-Qaeda's representative in Syria, Abu-Khalid al-Suri, and intended to transfer nearly \$50,000 more.

Nu'aymi has facilitated significant financial support to al-Qaeda in Iraq, and served as an interlocutor between al-Qaeda in Iraq leaders and

Qatar-based donors. Nu'aymi reportedly oversaw the transfer of over \$2 million per month to al-Qaeda in Iraq for a period of time. He also served as an interlocutor between these Qatari nationals and al-Qaeda in Iraq leaders. Between 2003 and 2004, Nu'aymi provided support to the Iraqi insurgency more broadly and served as a conduit for their broadcast materials to media outlets.

Nu'aymi as of mid-2012 provided approximately \$250,000 to two U.S.-designated al-Shabaab figures, Mukhtar Robow and Sheikh Hassan Aweys Ali, the latter of whom is also designated by the United Nations. Also in 2012, Nu'aymi provided financial support to a charity headed by Yemen-based Abd al-Wahhab Muhammad Abd al-Rahman al-Humayqani, who channeled funding to AQAP.⁴⁸

The support for al-Qaeda affiliates mentioned in this designation is substantial. But was Nu'aymi influential in Qatar's decision-making? While it's impossible to answer this question definitively due to the opacity surrounding Qatari policies, some evidence suggests that he was. Nu'aymi's relationship with the emir and Qatari government is complex, as he relates to them both as an adviser and an agitator. On the one hand, Nu'aymi has had an accomplished career, including as a professor of history at Qatar University, president of the Qatar Football Association, a founding member of the Sheik Eid bin Mohammad Al-Thani Charitable Foundation, and a board member of a Qatari bank. As the Washington Post noted following his designation, "when Qatar's royal family was looking for advice on charitable giving, it turned to a well-regarded professor named Abd al-Rahman al-Nu'aymi."⁴⁹ On the other hand, in 1998 Nu'aymi was arrested, and incarcerated for several years, after circulating a letter criticizing the emir for granting women the right to vote and hold office. He was arrested again in 2009 for a similar offense, though the details of his detention are unknown. It is therefore clear that Nu'aymi hasn't always been in the emir's good graces, but he nonetheless managed to remain influential within Qatar despite his agitating.

The influence Nu'aymi enjoys at the emirate's top decision-making echelons cannot be known definitively, but his case and Sheikh Abdallah's suggest that individuals with strong ideological commitments may influence the country's

heavy tilt toward Islamist groups. If individuals with these kinds of ideological commitments are influencing state policy, they need not state their arguments for supporting a certain set of actors in starkly ideological terms, but may frame them as a matter of national interest.

Why does it matter whether ideology is one element influencing Qatari support for certain non-state actors? For one thing, understanding this possibility adds a new dimension to the discussion on Qatari foreign policy. For example, if—as Michael Stephens believes—one purpose of Qatar's charitable efforts in North Mali was to aid the Islamist groups there, these policies may make little sense from a perspective of national interests. After all, these groups represented one of the most brutal manifestations of Islamism, and their rise was so alarming to both Mali's neighbors and also European states that an eventual military intervention to dislodge them was foreseeable.

Many analysts have predicted that Qatar's new emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who assumed office in June 2013, will reverse Qatar's support for Islamist groups. After all, many of these policies—such as Qatar's approach to Egypt, Libya, and Syria—now appear to have backfired. Such a reversal may appear quite likely if one believes Qatar's policies are driven primarily by national interest. However, if ideology is also an important factor, one might assess this sponsorship of Islamist groups as more likely to continue.

Ideology should not be written off *a priori* as an influence, as is now the case in major scholarly works about Qatar. Indeed, the marginalization of religious ideas as a causal force is rather consistent in both political science and international relations. That it has been generally ignored should come as no surprise. As Maryann Cusimano Love, an international relations scholar at The Catholic University of America, has noted, both state leaders and major academics “consistently and spectacularly get religion wrong in world affairs.”⁵⁰

One likely reason that academics underestimate the causal role of religious ideas is because the paradigm for understanding religion and political violence within the social sciences is doomed by a false binary. As R. Scott Appleby, a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, has explained, debates concerning the role of religion in conflict tend to hew to one of two extreme views.

One of these views, which has a sour perspective on religion, sees it as inherently producing conflict and opposing progress. Appleby contends that the more pro-religion view—which is more frequently encountered in political science and international relations—is equally unhelpful, as it tends “to explain away acts of terrorism, murder, and sabotage committed in the name of religion.”⁵¹ Appleby bluntly describes this binary method of analyzing the role of religion as “patently absurd.” He notes that skeptics of religion often overlook “the profoundly humane and humanizing attributes of religion,” while those who trumpet a more positive perspective on religion make the converse error by failing “to consider that an authentic religious precept—a sincere response to the sacred—may end in subordinating human life to a higher good.”

In addition to the often crude framing of religion, there are other reasons that it likely tends to be marginalized by academic analysis. Love argues that there are historical reasons rooted in the politics of the Cold War era, where two of the major approaches to international relations—the realist and idealist schools—both thought, for different reasons, “that religion ought to be kept out of politics.”⁵² And it is also worth acknowledging that religion as a topic in the context of jihadist violence makes most Western scholars uncomfortable: not only do they not understand the Islamic faith well, but dwelling too much on religious ideology surely risks accusations of bigotry.

Whatever the reason, though, this tendency to marginalize religious ideas as a causal force potentially leaves us with analytic blind spots. This is true in several areas related to the study of VNSAs,⁵³ including—potentially—the question of why Qatar chooses to support Islamist non-state actors.

Both Qatar’s foreign policy and also the decision-making driving it are frustratingly opaque. But in light of Qatar’s continuing support for various Islamist VNSAs—including, possibly, jihadist groups—it is worth taking seriously the possibility that Qatar’s policies are motivated by something more than just state interests.

Qatar's Support for Hamas: A Pattern of Support for Militancy

DAVID BARNETT

In April 2013, President Barack Obama hosted Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Qatar's then-emir, at the White House. The two leaders spoke assuredly about their mutual interests across the Middle East.¹ But it has become increasingly clear that U.S. and Qatari interests are not always aligned, particularly when it comes to the financing of terrorist groups banned in the United States.

Recent concerns stem from Qatar's Syria policy, through which Doha has reportedly indirectly facilitated the transfer of cash and weaponry to jihadist groups in Syria. Meanwhile, some Qatari nationals are directly involved in the financing of such groups, as revealed in the December 2013 U.S. Treasury Department designation of purported human rights activist Abd al-Rahman al-Nu'aymi, who stands accused of funneling millions to al-Qaeda affiliates and operatives worldwide, including in Syria.²

But Syria is only the most recent area of concern when it comes to Qatari illicit finance. Another long-standing concern has been Qatar's financial and material support to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.

* * *

According to Qatar scholar Allen Fromherz, "after Jordan closed the offices of Hamas in 1999, Qatar offered to allow [Hamas leader] Khaled Meshal and some of his deputies to relocate to Qatar as long as they did not engage in overt political activities." Fromherz noted that Meshal reportedly "regularly shuttle[d] between Doha and Damascus," where Hamas's external leadership maintained its headquarters until 2012.³ During that time, Hamas also drew close to Iran, and Qatar's role in supporting the militant group was overshadowed.

In recent years, however, Qatar's support for Hamas has become impossible to ignore. In 2006, for example, after Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections, prompting the United States to cut its funding to the Palestinian Authority, Qatar offered to provide the government with \$50 million in what can

only be viewed as explicit support for the creation of a Hamas government.⁴ In addition, since 2006, Qatar has hosted Hamas officials regularly in Doha.⁵

Relations between Qatar and Hamas reached a zenith after the outbreak of Syria's uprising in 2011. With its external headquarters located in Damascus, Hamas faced the stark choice of supporting the Assad regime's brutal slaughter of Sunni Arabs (including Palestinians), or abandoning its long-standing alliance with the Iranian axis.⁶ When Hamas publicly supported the Syrian rebels, it immediately paid the price. Iran slashed its funding to the group, while Hamas's external leaders were forced to search for new headquarters and patronage.⁷

For Khaled Meshal, the search did not take long. Thanks to his long-standing relationship with Qatar, he quickly found Doha to be a suitable alternative. According to the Congressional Research Service, Meshal now "appears and speaks at public events" in Doha, where he "conducts his regular engagement with regional figures."⁸

Troublingly, though unsurprisingly, the Hamas leadership's commitment to violence against Israel has not wavered while it has been based in Qatar. In a speech in Doha in April 2012, Meshal argued that "we should decide that the resistance and the gun are the only and real course to regain and purge Jerusalem."⁹ Similarly, in early February 2012, Hamas's Ismail Haniyeh delivered the Friday sermon at Qatar's Grand Mosque, saying that "we are now on the door of the battle to liberate Jerusalem."¹⁰

There have been sporadic reports of Qatar-based Hamas terrorists planning operations against Israel.¹¹ However, such reports are isolated and rare. Nevertheless, Qatar has allowed Hamas to use its soil in other important ways. In March 2012, the state funded a mass wedding for several Palestinian terrorists who were released in the Gilad Shalit exchange deal and deported to Qatar. (Shalit was an Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian militants, led by Hamas, in June 2006. Hamas held him in the Gaza Strip until October 2011, when Israel and Hamas implemented an exchange that saw the release of more than 1,000 Palestinians prisoners. Of the released Palestinians, 15 were deported to Qatar.) Wedding attendees included Meshal and controversial Sunni cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi.¹² Qaradawi, who has been based in Qatar since 1961 because of

persecution by Egyptian authorities, has famously issued statements justifying Hamas suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.¹³

After the Shalit deal, Qatar made clear that it would only host a few individuals from Hamas, not the group itself. The Gulf emirate's position was almost certainly influenced by a fear of jeopardizing the massive U.S. airbase and new missile-defense station, which serve as important defenses against the threat posed by Iran.

But this did not, in the end, stop Qatar from furnishing huge sums of aid to the Hamas government in Gaza, where it bankrolled multiple construction projects to the tune of \$250 million in early 2012.¹⁴ Later that year, during a visit to the Gaza Strip, the emir pledged a whopping \$400 million to Hamas.¹⁵ Sheikh Hamad's visit to Gaza was the first by any world leader since Hamas violently took over the coastal enclave from the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in 2007.

When Sheikh Hamad abdicated the following June to make way for his son Tamim, speculation arose that Tamim might adopt a different Hamas policy. Such speculation was compounded by the dramatic fall of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi in early July. Qatar had invested heavily in the success of Morsi and other politicians and parties affiliated with the Islamist group. As the Brotherhood's political fortunes appeared to plummet across the region, so did those of Hamas, which was founded in December 1987 as a Brotherhood splinter. As the Egyptian military cracked down on the remnants of the Morsi regime, Hamas faced a barrage of charges (all of which it vehemently denied) about its members' alleged illicit activity in Egypt. Hamas, which viewed Morsi's election as the beginning of a "new era," grew increasingly isolated. Doha may have begun to view the group as a political liability after Morsi's fall from power, especially given how quickly the "Arab street" soured on the tiny gulf emirate. Some reports even suggested that Tamim directly asked Hamas to leave Qatar.¹⁶

* * *

Whether Tamim breaks with his father's policy on Hamas has become a secondary area of concern, given the troubling questions surrounding Qatar's financial and military support of the Syrian opposition. While Qatar has coordinated some of its efforts to provide military equipment to the opposition with the Central

Intelligence Agency (CIA), Qatar has also reportedly ignored American requests not to supply the rebels with advanced heat-seeking shoulder-fired missiles.¹⁷ The flow of these weapons and other advanced weaponry has Obama administration officials worried about the possibility of the weapons landing in the hands of jihadist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra. President Obama said as much to Sheikh Hamad during the emir's visit to the White House in April 2013.¹⁸

The December 2013 Treasury Department designation of Qatari national Abd al-Rahman al-Nu'aymi is another clear sign of the uneasy relationship between Doha and Washington on this issue. It is rare to see designations issued against citizens of allied nations. The public naming and shaming of Nu'aymi may be an indication that bilateral discussions regarding his illicit activities did not yield a compromise behind closed doors.

Nu'aymi's case is also a reminder that Doha's record on al-Qaeda is not spotless. Elements of the Qatari government have supported al-Qaeda in the past, including Sheikh Abdallah bin Khalid bin Hamad Al-Thani, who used his perch in government to sponsor 9/11 architect Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.¹⁹

U.S. officials have long suspected that high-level Qatari officials thwarted their attempt to capture KSM in 1996. But according to the Congressional Research Service, "any discussions by U.S. officials with the government of Qatar regarding [this and related allegations] have not been made public."²⁰ In addition, U.S. officials have been concerned about al-Qaeda's ties with Qatar-owned television station Al-Jazeera, which always managed to obtain Osama bin Laden's new messages before any other media outlet.²¹

Broadly speaking, the Obama administration has sought to avoid conflict with Qatar, given U.S. reliance on the emirate in Syria, as well as America's significant investment in the al-Udeid Air Base, which lies just west of Doha. However, in 2013 legislators issued a letter to the emirate's ambassador in Washington, calling for a closer alignment of counterterrorism policies.²² Interestingly, they quoted no less a figure than Secretary of State John Kerry, who in 2009 stated in his capacity as U.S. Senator: "Qatar . . . cannot continue to be an American ally on Monday that sends money to Hamas on Tuesday."²³

Turkey

Turkey Exploits Iran's Golden Loophole

MARK DUBOWITZ, RACHEL ZIEMBA & GARY CLARK

While the United States and its allies attempted to use sanctions to persuade the Islamic Republic of Iran to meet its international obligations to end its illicit nuclear weapons program, Turkey provided Iran with more than \$12 billion in gold as payment for its energy exports between March 2012 and July 2013. This massive gold transfer, which declined only after the imposition of congressional sanctions in July 2013,¹ helped Tehran replenish its dwindling foreign exchange reserves—a principal hedge against a balance of payments crisis. With Turkish assistance, Iran was able to keep paying for its essential imports and to mitigate the severity of the currency devaluation, hyperinflation, and fiscal austerity that precipitated the deep recession that Iran suffered in 2012 and 2013.

In the race between nuclear physics and Western economic pressure, Turkey's exploitation of Iran's "golden loophole" gave the Islamic Republic an essential financial lifeline to continue its nuclear weapons development, and withstand the impact of U.S. and international sanctions. The result has been a stronger Iranian negotiating hand during nuclear talks with the P5+1, an interim nuclear agreement riddled with loopholes, and a more difficult path to a comprehensive nuclear agreement.

The "gas-for-gold" scheme is now also a critical component of the massive corruption scandal that rocked Turkey's Islamist government at the end of 2013, and led to allegations of financial crimes against Turkish ministers, their offspring, and business tycoons. The eye-popping bribes allegedly paid to facilitate this scheme may explain why the Turks—NATO allies who assured Washington that they oppose Iran's nuclear program—brazenly conducted these massive gold transactions even after the Obama administration tightened sanctions on Iran's precious metals trade in July 2012.²

Iran Advances Toward Critical Nuclear Capability

In January 2014, the P5+1 and Iran implemented an interim agreement called the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA). The agreement temporarily reduces some important

elements of Tehran's nuclear weapons capability, including its stockpiles of near weapons-grade uranium, suspends most of Iran's activities at its Arak heavy water reactor, and adds additional verification and monitoring requirements. If verifiably implemented, these requirements would extend Iran's nuclear breakout time from about a month to about two months, while making it easier to detect an Iranian nuclear breakout. Despite these new requirements, the Islamic Republic continues to retain many essential elements of its nuclear program—including enrichment capacity, centrifuge research and development, ballistic missile development, and other military-nuclear work—that it needs to achieve critical breakout capability.

Low enriched uranium has both civilian and military applications, and is required for both civilian nuclear power generation and nuclear weapons. Uranium enriched to 3.5 percent achieves 70 percent of the work that is required to produce weapons-grade uranium, while uranium enriched to 20 percent provides 90 percent of what is required to produce weapons-grade uranium. Centrifuges, cylinder tubes that spin at rapid speeds, are used to convert natural uranium into its enriched form.

According to a February 2014 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report, Iran has about 19,000 centrifuges installed at its Natanz and Fordow enrichment facilities, including more than 1,000 IR-2m centrifuges. The IR-2m centrifuges are three to five times as efficient at enriching uranium than the standard IR-1 models.³ Since the signing of the JPOA, Iran has grown its stockpile of low enriched uranium and continued research and development work on fourth, fifth, sixth and even eighth generation centrifuges.⁴

Prior to the JPOA, Tehran had produced nearly a bomb's worth of 20 percent low enriched uranium, which it was required to eliminate under the terms of the interim agreement.⁵ Iran had also produced a stockpile of approximately five to seven bombs' worth of 3.5 percent low enriched uranium, which it continues to increase despite the requirement that Tehran end the six-month term of the JPOA with the same quantity of low enriched uranium that it possessed at the beginning.

Tehran remains in noncompliance with its safeguard obligations regarding the construction of the Arak reactor, which could be used to reprocess plutonium for a nuclear weapon. In March 2014, when speaking about the future of the Arak reactor, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif responded, "We are not going to close it."⁶

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The IAEA also reported in February 2014 that there has been no new progress from Iran in addressing questions related to military dimensions of its nuclear program. For example, Iran has yet to permit access to Parchin, where Tehran is suspected of conducting high-explosive testing for nuclear weaponization purposes.⁷ It also has prevented IAEA verification of these activities by asphaltting the site.⁸

All these activities violate multiple UN Security Council resolutions, which since 2006 have required that “Iran shall without further delay suspend... all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities,” and require Iran to “provide such access and cooperation as the IAEA requests” to resolve the IAEA’s concerns about Iran’s research into nuclear-weapons design.⁹ Multiple IAEA reports, including from November 2011 and March 2012, have provided extensive descriptions of Iranian research related to the development of a nuclear explosive, and noted that some of this research “may still be ongoing.”¹⁰ Yet the interim agreement does almost nothing to require Iran to come clean, or to provide access and cooperation to ensure that such research is not continuing. The Security Council resolutions also explicitly require Iran to “not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.”¹¹ However, the interim agreement includes no Iranian commitments related to its ballistic-missile program.

In the absence of verifiable Iranian commitments not to proceed with nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile research, there is nothing to stop Iran from having a designed bomb and ballistic missile in place. Once Tehran completes a dash to weapons-grade uranium, it can insert the warhead and quickly have a deliverable nuclear weapon.

Thus, even if the Islamic Republic faithfully implements each of its commitments under the interim agreement, it could find itself, in July 2014, a mere month further away than it was at the start of the JPOA period from having weapons-grade uranium—but six months closer to having the rest of a deliverable nuclear weapon.

Iran’s “Golden Loophole” Gives Tehran Critical Foreign Exchange (FX) Reserves

With Iran advancing toward critical nuclear capability, the United States and its

allies tightened sanctions against the regime, with the goal of persuading Iran's leadership to meet its international obligations. These sanctions had a significant impact on Iran's economy (as will be discussed below). However, gold emerged as a major loophole in U.S. sanctions laws, with Turkey playing a leading role in Iranian sanctions busting. Through "gas-for-gold" transactions, Ankara allowed Tehran to replenish its FX reserves, repatriate its energy profits through gold imports, and forestall a severe balance of payments crisis—a situation in which foreign exchange reserves would fall to levels that precipitate a currency devaluation, fuel inflation, force fiscal austerity, and plunge Iran into a deep recession.

The loophole system was simple. Iran received payment for energy exports directly in gold or Turkish lira. Iran then used the lira to buy gold, which was subsequently repatriated back to Iran. Iran received more than \$12 billion in payment in gold for its energy exports between March 2012 and July 2013, and more than \$8 billion after July 2012, when the Obama administration first banned gold sales to the government of Iran. Although congressional sanctions passed in January 2013 (but only legally imposed in July 2013) hindered gold shipments, Iran received about \$2.5 billion in gold from Turkey during the January to July 2013 period.

The golden loophole undercut U.S. and international sanctions designed to reduce the quantity of Iranian oil exports, and prevent Tehran from earning hard currency for these exports. In December 2011, new congressional legislation targeted international banks involved in processing Iranian crude oil transactions with the Central Bank of Iran. Countries importing Iranian crude, such as Turkey, could only receive exceptions from sanctions if they significantly reduced their purchases. On July 1, 2012, the European Union (EU) intensified these oil-export sanctions when it imposed an embargo on all Iranian crude oil imports. The ban removed about 600,000 barrels per day of Iranian oil that the EU collectively bought from the Islamic Republic, accounting for approximately a quarter of Iran's total oil exports. In addition, EU insurance-related sanctions had a particularly damaging effect on the tanker insurance market for Iranian crude oil, given Europe's dominance in this market. Non-European importers of Iranian crude were forced to try to find insurance alternatives through sovereign guarantees from their countries, or to depend on less reliable Iranian insurance companies.

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The sanctions targeted Iranian revenues from crude oil (around 80 percent of Iran's hard-currency export earnings) with the goal of pressuring Iran to meet its nuclear obligations. The measures succeeded in reducing Tehran's oil revenue from estimated monthly revenues of \$8 billion in the first half of 2011 down to \$6.3 billion per month in the first half of 2012, and \$3.4 billion per month in 2013. At the end of 2011, Iran exported 2.5 million barrels per day. By 2013, Iranian oil exports were down to about 1 million barrels per day.¹²

In January 2013, with the passage of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (IFCA), Washington broadened sanctions, including on precious metals, including gold, transactions: IFCA prohibited gold transactions with all Iranian persons, whether or not they were connected to the government. The new sanctions also tightened Executive Order 13622, which penalized those who helped Iran acquire gold or other precious metals. IFCA closed the previous loophole that banned gold trade with the government of Iran but permitted private sales of gold to Iran, which resulted in the Iranian government using "private" front persons to access gold. However, with P5+1 talks scheduled for spring 2013, IFCA was only made effective as of July 1, 2013.

On February 6, 2013, a powerful provision of the Iran Threat Reduction & Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 came into force, which limited the payment for Iranian crude to escrow accounts held on Iran's behalf in banks based in energy-importing countries, such as Turkey, China, India, Japan, and South Korea. The new measure prohibited the repatriation of these funds or their use for third-country non-humanitarian trade, and forced Tehran to spend the escrowed monies on non-sanctioned goods from local exporters. The new measure did, however, permit Iran to purchase humanitarian goods from any country.

According to U.S. government figures, of Iran's \$3.4 billion in monthly crude oil revenue generated in the first half of 2013, the Islamic Republic could find only about \$1.9 billion in non-sanctionable goods to purchase with these escrowed funds; the remaining \$1.5 billion in monthly oil revenue was accumulating in the designated escrow accounts unspent.¹³ As a result, monthly Iranian oil revenue that Tehran could use for import spending had dropped from \$8 billion in the first half of 2011 to \$1.9 billion in the first half of 2013, a drop of more than 75

percent. As a consequence of the February 6 provisions, monthly oil revenue that it could use to repatriate back to Iran without restrictions dropped from \$8 billion to zero.

Economic sanctions on Iran cut the size of its FX reserves, inhibited Tehran's access to those funds, contributed to devaluation of the Iranian rial, and increased inflation. According to estimates by Roubini Global Economics and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, as a result of sanctions Iran's FX reserves fell from \$100 billion in 2011 to \$70-80 billion in mid-2013, but more than 60 percent of these funds (about \$40-\$50 billion) were only partly accessible (for use in purchases from the countries that buy Iran's oil) or were completely inaccessible to the Iranian government. As noted, of the \$3.4 billion in new monthly oil revenues, almost half of these funds were effectively "frozen," as Iran was unable to find enough goods in Turkey, China, India, Japan, and South Korea to import.

Iran's economy was hammered by tough sanctions through 2012 and early 2013. The World Bank estimates that Iran's GDP shrunk by 2.9 percent in 2012 and 1.5 percent in 2013.¹⁴ Iran's current account balance as a percentage of GDP also dropped steeply from 2.8 percent to -0.9 percent as its oil revenues fell sharply. The Institute of International Finance, which draws on data released by the Central Bank of Iran, estimates that real Iranian GDP contracted 5.6 percent between April 2012 and March 2013, and nominal GDP fell to as low as \$381 billion.¹⁵

A key indicator of the economic climate in Iran is the value of the rial. The black-market rial exchange rate experienced a three-year free fall from 10,440 to the dollar in January 2010 to a rate of 41,000 in October 2012, representing a loss of almost 75 percent.¹⁶ Official inflation rose to 37 percent in December 2012 and 45 percent by June 2013 (with some estimating inflation to be as high as 70 percent). Official data suggests that the housing component of the Consumer Price Index has risen more than 80 percent year-over-year, reflecting a 2013 asset bubble in Tehran real estate—a symptom of economic weakness.

With Iranian foreign exchange reserves, oil revenue, and the Iranian rial under intense pressure, Tehran turned to gold in an attempt to forestall a severe balance of payments crisis. Specifically, Tehran turned to Turkey.

Gold Relief in Exchange for No Nuclear Concessions

Despite U.S. gold sanctions being on the books since July 2012, their efficacy has been undercut by the Obama administration itself. During the P5+1 negotiations with Iran in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in April 2013, precious metals concessions were offered to Iran as a form of sanctions relief. This would have allowed Iran to receive gold in exchange for its energy exports, and it amounted to a considerable easing of economic pressure on Iran. Although Iran did not accept the P5+1's proposal, and offered no nuclear concessions, the Obama administration chose not to impose sanctions on gold exports to Iranian government entities and their agents, even though it had the explicit authority to do so. This nonenforcement of existing sanctions and offer of sanctions relief through gold led to an uptick in gold sales from Turkey. Iran received an average of \$300-\$400 million in monthly gold sales from March to July 2013, providing valuable foreign exchange.

Turkey was without question the most significant conduit of gold-for-energy payments to Iran. The Turkish-Iranian trade is also burgeoning more broadly: Turkey's total bilateral trade with Iran is projected to reach \$30 billion, according to Turkey's customs and trade minister, a projected increase in trade of 36 percent from the \$22 billion reached in 2012.¹⁷ Historically, the trade has been imbalanced, with Turkey importing significant energy while Iran finds fewer Turkish consumer goods to purchase. Gold provided a way to balance out this trade.

Turkey is heavily dependent on imported energy and, while it has cut back on oil purchases from Iran, Ankara has made clear that it cannot simply stop buying Iranian oil and gas.¹⁸ Before March 2012, Turkey's gold exports to Iran were nonexistent. In 2010-11, Turkey exported only \$199 million in gold per month, none to Iran, and absorbed most of its imported gold at home as it ran a gold trade deficit. Exports started rising only in mid-2012, as Iran looked for ways to earn hard currency after the imposition of tougher sanctions put pressure on major buyers of Iranian crude to reduce their purchases, and on Iran to secure hard assets.¹⁹

Turkey's gold exports to Iran began with the imposition of SWIFT sanctions. Unusually high exports of Turkish gold to Iran first became apparent in March 2012, the month Iran was cut off from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) global payments network, thus barring

Tehran from accessing the formal financial system. This effectively blocked Iran from performing international electronic financial transactions.²⁰ Turkish gold exports to Iran for March 2012 were \$480 million, and began to rise significantly during the subsequent months: \$1.2 billion in April 2012, \$1.4 billion in May 2012, and \$1.3 billion in June 2012, before peaking at \$1.8 billion in July 2012.²¹

In November 2012, Turkey acknowledged that a surge in its gold exports was related to payments for imports of Iranian natural gas, thus offering the most striking example of how Iran has used creative ways to sidestep Western sanctions.²² In fact, due mostly to the gold trade, Iranian-Turkish trade was largely balanced in 2012, unlike Iran's trade with key Asian trading partners (China, India, and Japan) from whom it struggled to find goods to buy.

Turkey redirected gold exports to the United Arab Emirates in July 2012. In August 2012, a new U.S. executive order (EO 13622) prohibiting gold trade with the Iranian government caused a sudden plunge in Turkey's direct gold exports to Iran. As a result, Turkey's gold trade with Iran plummeted to \$180 million in August 2012, down from \$1.8 billion in July 2012.²³

Turkey, however, developed a gold workaround. Turkey would pay its oil and gas bills to Iran with Turkish lira, held in Turkey's Halkbank. Iranians used those lira to buy gold in Turkey, and couriers carried this gold in luggage to Dubai, where it was sold for foreign currency or shipped to Iran.²⁴

Historically, Turkey exported only minimal amounts of gold to the UAE, with exports accounting for only \$7 million in July 2012.²⁵ However, following the July 2012 executive order, Turkey's gold exports to the UAE increased rapidly. Total exports of gold to the UAE rose to \$4.6 billion in 2012 from \$280 million in 2011.²⁶

One trader in Turkey said Tehran shifted to indirect imports because the direct shipments had created bad press. "Now on paper it looks like the gold is going to Dubai, not to Iran," he said.²⁷ With that trade now under scrutiny, it is unclear whether trades are now primarily limited to the black market, or whether they have actually dropped precipitously.

Turkish gold payments to Iran declined in 2013. In H1 2013, Iran received an estimated \$1.8 billion (or 37 metric tons, based on the average gold price of \$1500/t. oz during these periods) in gold payments through Turkey and the UAE.

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Direct exports alone from Turkey to Iran totaled \$1.372 billion (8.67 metric tons). Even as gold exports to Iran fell in late 2012 and early 2013 from their record levels, Turkey continued to export gold to the UAE, but did so at a much more moderate level of \$850 million in the first half of 2013. Although not all Turkish exports of gold to the UAE are necessarily bound for Iran, Turkey has historically exported only minimal amounts of gold to the UAE, and direct exports from Turkey to Iran appear to have shifted suddenly to the UAE when the Obama administration introduced precious metal sanctions in July 2012. Dubai's Emirates NBD bank said in November 2012 that it would stop buying and selling all gold bars from Turkish refineries, but exports to the UAE continued before dropping dramatically and reaching negligible amounts by April 2013.

Turkey sold no gold to Iran in January 2013, according to data from the Turkish Statistics Institute, as banks and dealers eyed the new sanctions laws warily.²⁸ Surprisingly, however, Turkey exported \$117.9 million worth of gold to Iran in February 2013, \$381 million in March 2013, \$303 million in April 2013, \$314 million in May 2013, \$255 million in June 2013, \$137 million in July 2013.²⁹

Turkish Statistics Do Not Capture the Black Market Trade

Turkish statistics, which are based on customs data on declared gold exports, likely capture only part of the Iranian gold trade; the size of the black market is unknown. The head of the Iranian Gold Producers and Exporters Association reportedly told Fars News Agency (controlled by the Iranian state) that 70 percent of gold imported into the country is contraband, and amounted to 100 tons in March 2010 to February 2011 (\$370 million per month).³⁰ Given the increase in sanctions and public pressure, more illicit activity can be expected now, as sanctions have been driving the trade underground. For example, a plane grounded in January 2013 by Turkish authorities en route from the UAE to Iran was believed to be carrying 1.5 metric tons (\$70 million) of gold from Ghana.³¹ According to recent reports, Iranian businessman Riza Sarraf, also known as Reza Zarrab, is at the heart of a ring of bribery, forgery and gold-smuggling that has helped lead to hundreds of arrests in Turkey and the resignations of three Turkish cabinet ministers. As the U.S.-led coalition placed sanctions on Iran's banks, Zarrab helped create the market

where gold could be used to pay Iran for its only major export: oil and gas. Reports indicate that Zarrab used his connections in Iran and Turkey to move almost a metric ton of gold, worth more than \$28 billion, to Iran every day for over a year.³²

Switzerland, the UAE and Sub-Saharan African producers (namely South Africa and Ghana) are major exporters of gold to Turkey with gold sales running through Switzerland and Abu Dhabi.³³ These represent other potential sources of gold for Iran. There are also possible new gold routes opening up through the Caucasus, Georgia as well as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.³⁴

Turkey continued to import historically large volumes of gold (\$1.6 billion in July 2013 alone, and more than \$2 billion in June 2013) even as global oil prices fall. Not all of Turkey's gold imports are destined for Iran, and indeed Turkish banks and households may be trying to replenish their own gold supplies. However, exports and reserve accumulation far outpaced imports in the second half of 2011 through 2012, which suggests that either sizable amounts of gold were entering Turkey illegally or that significant Turkish private holdings have been sold.

In 2013, this trend reversed, with Turkey becoming a sizable net gold importer, adversely affecting its current account and trade deficit. With Turkey's gold reserves falling as the country faces balance-of-payments pressure, the sharp increase in gold imports suggests either restocking of Turkey's private holdings of gold at a time when gold prices are low, perhaps to fuel future gold exports (to Iran), or that Turkish data is understating the re-export of these gold holdings.

Iran's Government Captures Most of Turkey's Gold Exports to Iran

Iran's government captured most of Turkey's gold exports to Iran, at least as an initial buyer. Sinan Aygun, a deputy in Turkey's Republican People's Party (CHP), is reported to have told the English-language daily *Today's Zaman* in September 2012 that "gold is being used as an instrument for payment. Under the guise of exportation, gold is being sent to Iran in exchange for oil."³⁵ This suggests that the Central Bank of Iran was accepting gold as payment for oil and gas. Mahmoud Bahmani, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran, is reported by the state news agency, IRNA, to have said in February 2012 that Iran would allow trade partners to pay in gold instead of U.S. dollars.³⁶

TURKEY EXPLOITS IRAN'S GOLDEN LOOPHOLE

“In essence, gold exports [to Iran] end up like payments for our natural gas purchases,” Ali Babacan, Turkey’s deputy prime minister and top economic policy maker, said in November 2013. “Turkey is depositing the payment for the gas we purchase from Iran to Iran’s account in Turkey... I don’t know exactly how they then transfer it.”³⁷ According to Babacan, gold was being sent to Iran in exchange for oil as well.³⁸ This disclosure was made in answers to questions from the parliament’s budget committee.³⁹

Not all the gold exports to Iran have gone to the regime; some have gone into private holdings directly or through exports to the Central Bank of Iran, which mints coins and resells the gold to the private secondary market. High inflation and the depreciation of the rial prompted Iranians to liquidate domestic and foreign assets to buy gold and American greenbacks, exacerbating pressure on the exchange rate. As a result, demand for central bank gold coins and paper future gold sales were high, with the regime using sales as a way to soak up liquidity in an attempt to control inflation.

Moreover, Iran’s government used the gold sales as a way to transfer funds to loyalists selling coins cheaply to some segments of the population. There is little data available on Iranian gold demand, but it is telling that domestic gold prices (released by the central bank) ran far ahead of global gold prices in 2008-11 (the most recently available data). The World Gold Council published a study of the Iranian gold market in 2004 (the first since the Iranian revolution) showing demand of 11.6 tons per month (or \$460 million).

Iran Has an Insatiable Appetite for Gold but Data Is Sketchy

The Central Bank of Iran’s foreign currency and gold reserves have not been reported in recent years, so it is not known if gold has been added to these reserves. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) put Iranian gold holdings at 168 metric tons in 1996, and estimated 300 metric tons in 2007, but Iranian sources suggest these volumes rose to 500-907 tons by 2012. In January 2012, the head of Tehran’s Chamber of Commerce said Iran had 907 tons of gold (\$38 billion).⁴⁰ In February 2012, Governor Bahamani said that Iran’s gold reserves were 500 tons (\$21 billion).⁴¹ Unconfirmed reports suggest Iran has repatriated gold holdings from Switzerland and elsewhere.⁴²

Private sector demand is high in Iran. A World Gold Council report on Iran's gold economy surveyed from June 2004 through July 2005 (the first since the Iranian Revolution) estimates that total private Iranian gold consumption in the form of jewelry, net bar hoarding, and coins, including scrap recycling (35 tons), amounted to 139 tons in 2004, growing from 109 tons in 2002.⁴³ This made Iran the world's sixth-largest gold jewelry-consuming country in 2004, after India, the United States, China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

Turkey undercut sanctions designed to peacefully resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis. Ankara provided Iran with more than \$12 billion in gold for its energy exports between March 2012 and July 2013, including \$8 billion directly and another \$4-5 billion through the UAE. This massive transfer of gold helped Tehran replenish its dwindling foreign exchange reserves, which are its principal hedge against a severe balance of payments crisis and economic recession.

The United States and its allies have used sanctions to target Iran's foreign exchange reserves and increase the economic costs to Tehran of refusing to meet its international obligations with respect to its nuclear program. With the help of Turkey's exploitation of Iran's "golden loophole," Tehran continued to advance to the point of critical capability, or the point at which Iran could dash to produce enough weapons-grade uranium or separated plutonium for one bomb so quickly that the IAEA or a Western intelligence service would be unable to that nuclear breakout.

To enhance the efficacy of sanctions, and increase its leverage for a desired outcome, the Obama administration needs to crack down on whatever remains of the illicit gold trade and impose sanctions against Turkish and other persons involved in the sale, supply, or transfer (direct or indirect) to or from Iran of a precious metal to *any entity* in Iran. The gas-for-gold scheme has reportedly come to a halt. But since then, America has offered limited sanctions relief on Iran's gold and precious metal trade as part of the Geneva package (specifically, Iran can trade in gold but cannot pay for gold out of its escrow accounts), while other countries have devised similar sanctions-busting schemes that threaten the efficacy of the U.S.-led international sanctions regime.

TURKEY EXPLOITS IRAN'S GOLDEN LOOPHOLE

With gas-for-gold in the rearview mirror, Moscow is now posing a similar challenge to the U.S. sanctions regime. Reuters recently revealed a lucrative and illegal oil-for-goods deal between Russia and Iran. The proposed deal, worth possibly \$1.5 billion per month or \$18 billion annually, would include Russian purchases of up to 500,000 bpd of Iranian oil—boosting Iranian exports by as much as 50 percent—in exchange for Russian equipment and goods.⁴⁴ The deal would ease further pressure on Iran's battered energy sector and at least partially restore Iran's access to oil customers with Russian help. And those sums don't include the potential for further Iranian-Russian illicit finance and sanction-busting schemes that the deal could provide, including the transfer of sanctioned nuclear, ballistic missile, and other military equipment to Tehran, and the establishment of Russian-Iranian financial channels to facilitate other illicit transactions.

The Obama administration has denounced the proposed deal as contrary to the interim agreement and a violation of U.S. sanctions, but will President Barack Obama take on Vladimir Putin, on whom U.S. policy now depends to get both Tehran and Damascus to abandon their WMD programs, and especially in light of the recent confrontation between Washington and Moscow over Ukraine? If Washington can't stop this deal, it could serve as a signal to other countries that the United States won't risk major diplomatic disputes at the expense of the sanctions regime.⁴⁵

As international companies test the waters in an environment of de-escalating sanctions pressure, the Obama administration may find itself facing the difficult choice of permitting sanctions-violations from Turkey, Russia, China, and other key partners and watching the sanctions' architecture unravel, or sanctioning companies from these countries, including our P5+1 partners, with the potential for severe diplomatic blowback.

The Iranian regime represents a severe proliferation risk to the Middle East and a major threat to American national security. As nuclear negotiations with Iran reach a critical stage, Washington needs to crack down on Iranian sanctions busting, especially from American allies like Turkey. This behavior is expected of adversaries and enemies, not allies.

Turkey's Role in Syria

TONY BADRAN

It is by now conventional wisdom that the Syrian revolution has presented major challenges to Turkey's regional policy of "zero problems" with its neighbors. At the same time, Syria has also upended the Obama administration's vision for an Islamist yet docile Middle East, along with its conception of Ankara's leadership role in that political order. In other words, the Syrian revolution has shattered American and Turkish illusions.

But the problems don't end there. The White House's handling of the Syrian war has had detrimental effects on Washington's regional alliances. Turkey, perhaps the most vocal U.S. ally, has clamored for increased American involvement. Determined to stay out of the conflict, the White House has repeatedly turned down Ankara's advances. Washington's policy of not adopting a policy in Syria has led regional players, including Turkey, to pursue their interests through their own limited means.

* * *

Before the Syrian revolution broke out, the White House saw Turkey as a mediator for the Middle East. President Barack Obama initially looked to Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as the leader who could help him reduce the U.S. footprint in the Middle East, engage Iran and Syria, broker a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, and sponsor unity between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, in preparation for a comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian deal. This vision dovetailed nicely with the president's view that the United States was "over-weighted" in the Middle East, and underweighted in other regions, such as the Asia-Pacific.¹ It also complemented Turkey's "zero problems" policy, which guided Ankara's rapprochement with Tehran and Damascus. But the Syrian uprising quickly put an end to this.

At first, the Obama administration didn't believe the Syrian protesters' challenge to President Bashar al-Assad would endure.² In fact, the administration looked visibly apprehensive about the prospect of yet another Arab revolt, especially in

a country where it sought to pursue engagement and a peace deal with Israel.³ As protests against the regime continued, and Assad escalated his use of violence in response, the White House coordinated closely with the Turks in an attempt to manage the growing crisis. The administration believed that Erdoğan's personal relationship with Assad, as well as Turkey's supposed "soft power" influence, afforded Ankara important leverage. Indeed, the Turks sought to position themselves as Syria's handlers, and brokers of a political settlement.

In the early months of the revolution, Washington and Ankara refrained from calling on Assad to step down, and instead spoke of regime-led reforms. The Turks tried to convince Assad to enter into an arrangement with the "Sunni opposition"—which, for Ankara, meant the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. Even before the revolution, the Turks had been trying, unsuccessfully, to mediate between Assad and the Brotherhood. This fit a larger pattern: Erdoğan was a proponent of the Brotherhood's various branches across the Middle East, from Egypt to Tunisia and beyond.

In early April 2011, Turkey allowed the leader of the Syrian Brotherhood to hold a press conference in Istanbul, which was taken as an indication that Ankara was looking for a political settlement with Assad that included the Brotherhood.⁴ Predictably, Assad shot it down unequivocally. Turkish efforts to broker a settlement between Assad and the Muslim Brotherhood continued into the summer, to no avail. In August, as the body count continued to rise in Syria, the White House finally called on Assad to "step aside" in a written statement.⁵ But Erdoğan was less eager to directly challenge Assad. It took three additional months for him to follow suit.⁶ The delay possibly had to do with the realization that, once this Rubicon was crossed, Turkey's regional mediator role would unravel, with direct consequences on its relationship with Iran, Syria's top patron. However, once Washington had effectively declared a policy of regime change, Turkey decided to do the same.

Turkey's concerns regarding Iran's response are understandable. In August 2011, Tehran sent the Turks an unmistakable message about what they should expect if they assumed an active anti-Assad posture. The Iranians, acting on intelligence provided by Turkey, arrested the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) acting leader, Murat Karayilan, in an operation in the Kandil Mountains. Then, a few days later,

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they set him free.⁷ Most Turkish observers understood the move as a signal from Tehran that it was willing to make common cause with the PKK against Ankara, depending on the latter's Syria policy.

These signals notwithstanding, Turkey finally moved to embrace regime change in Syria. The Turkish calculus rested on two assumptions that would prove wrong. First, the Turks apparently thought that the U.S., having adopted regime change as a policy, would act to see it through. And second, they thus calculated that Assad wouldn't survive for long.

But as months passed and Washington dithered, Turkey's dilemma deepened. Erdoğan's anti-Assad rhetoric intensified, along with his backing of the Syrian opposition, especially the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. By then, there was no turning back. Anything short of Assad's removal from power was unacceptable. Ankara proceeded to push for that outcome on two fronts: by supporting the Syrian opposition, and by marshaling an international effort, through the Friends of Syria framework (a group of U.S. allies organized to help the opposition and pressure the Assad regime, while bypassing Russia's veto power at the U.N. Security Council) to oust the Syrian dictator.

* * *

Turkey was destined to play a key role in the Syrian drama by virtue of its geographic location. This became clear as the war dragged on. Aside from hosting Syrian refugees, Turkey also opened its doors to both the political and military opposition, with special preference for the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) share similar ideologies. Additionally, the Turks had a history of cooperation with the Brotherhood, which was one of the few Syrian groups in exile to have a coherent structure.

The Muslim Brotherhood joined in the formation of the Istanbul-based Syrian National Council in August 2011. The Brotherhood soon came to dominate the council, which didn't include broader segments of the Syrian social and political scene, especially the Kurds. These exclusions were due to the Brotherhood's intransigence, and its attempt to maintain a majority within the council. Some also blamed its two main sponsors, Qatar and Turkey, since the Brotherhood was their

vehicle to exercise influence in the body. But in the summer of 2013, Saudi Arabia pushed to dilute the Brotherhood's sway by including secular and tribal opposition figures in a new, expanded framework, the National Coalition for Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. Ankara and Doha had no choice but to go along.⁸

However, when it came to the Kurds in particular, Turkey was pursuing a complex policy, both in Syria and Iraq. As the "zero problems" policy collapsed, Ankara's already frail relations with the pro-Iran government in Baghdad deteriorated. Turkey, meanwhile, pursued an increasingly strategic relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government, whose ties to the central Iraqi government of Nouri al-Maliki were strained.

Both Ankara and Erbil had common cause to work with their local allies to contain the influence of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the local affiliate of the Kurdish PKK and its armed militia in Syria. They were unsuccessful until August 2013, when the Kurdish National Council (KNC) finally reached an agreement with the Saudi-backed National Coalition. The breakthrough with the KNC was the outgrowth of a deft decision by Erdoğan to start peace talks with imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. The talks, which began secretly in November 2012, followed an exceptionally violent summer of confrontation with the PKK. Turkish intelligence saw worrying signs of Iranian logistical support for PKK operations in southeast Turkey, and was further concerned that Assad had ceded control of certain Kurdish areas in northeast Syria to PKK affiliates. This sparked fears that the PKK could establish additional logistical bases for operations against Turkey. Through peace talks with Ocalan, Erdoğan neutralized Iran and Assad's ability to turn the PKK in Syria against Ankara.

Turkey's awareness of its vulnerabilities drove Ankara to seek a more aggressive U.S. role in Syria. In February 2012, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu came to Washington and presented then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton with a number of forward-leaning joint options that Turkey endorsed, such as serious support for the FSA and the establishment of safe zones. Clinton shot him down repeatedly.⁹ The Turks also sought American support in creating a political structure that could partner with Syria's rebel military groups to funnel arms to vetted factions. Washington again demurred.

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The U.S.'s unwillingness to intervene in Syria accentuated the chasm between Erdoğan's rhetoric and his ability to decisively guide the dynamics of the Syrian conflict. It also exposed Turkey to retaliation from the Syrian regime and its allies. For example, in addition to shelling Turkish border towns, in June 2012 the Assad regime shot down a Turkish reconnaissance jet over international waters near Syria's coast.¹⁰ Tellingly, unnamed U.S. officials cast doubt on the Turkish assertion that the jet was in international waters when it was fired on.¹¹

Furious, the Turks threatened to invoke Article 5 of the NATO charter, which would require the states in the alliance to assist the member state that came under attack, including through the use of armed force.¹² However, it was evident that the United States did not back such a move, and viewed Turkey's maneuver as an attempt to drag it into the Syria conflict—something Washington was determined to avoid at all costs.

Turkey's options were thus narrowed considerably. Ankara provided refuge to Syrian military defectors and Free Syrian Army commanders; it also established channels to various groups operating along its border in northern Syria. Turkey's basic strategic goal appeared to be supporting rebel formations in northern Syria in order to clear out a de facto buffer zone stretching from its border to Aleppo and the northern mountains of Latakia. The objective was to push Assad away from the border area, and ensure he never returned.

By 2012, the Syrian-Turkish border was a critical conduit of arms to the Syrian rebels. Washington warned against smuggling certain weapons, such as advanced anti-aircraft systems, and Ankara also came under fire for allowing jihadist groups to operate along its border, including Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian al-Qaeda franchise. Kurdish PYD officials, whose group has clashed with Nusra, charged that Turkey has even allowed Nusra fighters into Turkish territory for treatment at Turkish hospitals. The head of the PYD accused elements of the Turkish government of arming the jihadist group.¹³

There is little doubt that Turkey is communicating with the groups operating on its border. However, Turkey's core motivation may be cooperating with them to target Syrian regime assets responsible for bombings in Turkey. A report from March 2013 relates that Turkish security forces contacted groups such as the

Farouq Brigades, the Fatih Sultan Mehmet brigade (a Turkmen unit), and Jabhat al-Nusra to help locate the perpetrators.¹⁴

The Turks don't seem to think that Jabhat al-Nusra fighters pose a long-term problem to Turkish security interests. An anonymous senior Turkish official told the International Crisis Group (ICG) in April that Nusra, which Turkish officials estimate to field no more than 1,500 fighters, was "containable." Acknowledging Washington's displeasure, another official explained to the ICG: "Jabhat al-Nusra does have links to al-Qaeda, we know that. But they have no political future, except perhaps as destabilizing spoilers. We don't say [the U.S. has to] cooperate with them. We just say, don't exaggerate, don't make them into [an official anti-Western force], it gives them an oversized ego."¹⁵ More recently, Turkish officials like Davutoğlu have publicly denied Turkish involvement with Jabhat al-Nusra, saying that such groups were betraying the revolution.¹⁶ In addition, Turkish officials have complained to the United States that the lack of American support for the moderate opposition has empowered more extremist groups.¹⁷

Against this backdrop, tensions between Washington and Ankara over Syria surfaced in May 2013 during Erdoğan's visit to the White House. The Turkish prime minister brought his intelligence chief with a portfolio of evidence of Assad's use of chemical weapons. This was Turkey's last attempt to get the U.S. president to abide by his declared red line and intervene in Syria. Once again, Turkey was rebuffed. Obama stressed that there was only a political, not a military, solution to the conflict, and that he would strengthen the opposition "politically." Obama appeared to be referencing Turkey's permissive border policy during the joint press conference, when he stressed that a future Syria should be "a source of stability, not extremism, because it's in the profound interest of all our nations, especially Turkey."¹⁸

As clashes between the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other rebel factions broke out in earnest in late 2013, Davutoğlu accused ISIS of being in a behind-the-scenes "partnership" with the regime, and called on "all foreign elements" to leave Syria.¹⁹ Turkey also fired on ISIS positions and convoys in October 2013 and January 2014.²⁰ It wasn't just that ISIS was fighting Turkey's allies in the FSA, but also that it was targeting Syrian Turkmen leaders, who have

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close relations with Ankara. ISIS even kidnapped and killed workers from the Humanitarian Relief Foundation, or IHH, which delivers aid across the border. As a result, the charity's head noted, the IHH "can't deliver aid to areas controlled by ISIS."²¹

* * *

In June 2011, Secretary of State Clinton stressed that the administration listens "very closely to what people in the neighborhood, in the region, say" about Syria.²² More than two years later, that is no longer the case. As President Obama became more resolute against any interference in Syria, he kept Turkey (as well as Saudi Arabia and Qatar) at arm's length. The President may be concerned about Turkey's loose policy toward jihadist groups like Nusra. But more fundamentally, the President's desired endgame in Syria is now likely at odds with that of America's regional allies. It was clear following the August 21 chemical weapons attack in Damascus that Obama broke fully with his regional allies, and partnered exclusively with Russia on a deal to secure Assad's chemical stockpiles. This allowed him to climb down from his threat to strike the Assad regime, leaving Turkey, along with other regional allies, strategically isolated and questioning the benefits of its alliance.

To be sure, Erdoğan's regionwide support for the Muslim Brotherhood has annoyed many, and has even led to tensions with U.S. ally Saudi Arabia over the two countries' competing Egypt policies. After the rise of various Muslim Brotherhood branches to power in North Africa, many analysts thought Erdoğan's star might be on the rise in the region. He tried to capitalize on it with a victory tour to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. However, that moment proved brief, as these elected Islamist governments began to stumble or crumble.

By contrast, what the Syria crisis has highlighted foremost is the limits of Turkish power. It was always a mistake to believe that Turkey had the ability to advance U.S. interests in the region in the absence of clarity and guidance from Washington. Thus, it was a mistake to believe it could assume a leadership role or affect the strategic balance of the Middle East on its own.

Turkey's Risky Business with Hamas

JONATHAN SCHANZER

During the 1990s, when Hamas carried out a wave of suicide bombings to disrupt the U.S.-brokered peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis, Turkey viewed the group with disdain and hostility. Such was the role of a U.S., NATO and Israeli ally. However, after the collapse of the Oslo peace process in 2000, the political rise in Turkey of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002 and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2003, Turkey's posture on Hamas has changed. So has its relationship with Israel. Initially, the relationship could be described as less warm. Over time, however, it has become hostile. Today, Erdoğan is openly at odds with Israel while Ankara's ties to Hamas have grown steadily stronger.

To be sure, the AKP and Hamas share ideological roots. Hamas is a splinter of the Muslim Brotherhood. The AKP, an outgrowth of other Islamist parties that have since been edged out of Turkey (including the National Order Party, the National Salvation Party, the Welfare Party, and the Virtue Party) is today the political party in Turkey with strong political and ideological ties to the global Islamist movement. But Erdoğan's full embrace of Hamas did not come until the group won the Palestinian parliamentary elections of 2006. The U.S.-backed Palestinian Authority refused to allow Hamas to form a government following its electoral victory, and a stalemate ensued until 2007, when Hamas overran the Gaza Strip by force, thereby creating an Islamist mini-state in the coastal enclave. Immediately thereafter, Israel imposed a blockade around the Gaza Strip in an effort to prevent weaponry from entering the coastal enclave. More importantly, Israel and the United States sought to isolate Hamas politically, exhorting the international community to withhold support. The result, in the eyes of Islamists worldwide, was that Hamas won a free and fair election, but was blocked from power because of its Islamist beliefs.

Erdoğan, after the imposition of the blockade, dedicated himself to breaking Hamas out of its political and economic isolation. One of his first notable attempts played out on the world stage. The Turkish prime minister lambasted Israeli President Shimon Peres, who won a Nobel Prize for his efforts to make peace with

the Palestinians, at a 2009 panel at the World Economic Forum in Davos. In a heated disagreement over Israel's Gaza policy, Erdoğan shouted, "When it comes to killing, you know well how to kill," and promptly stormed off the stage.¹

While that episode was troubling, Erdoğan escalated tensions further when his government sponsored an ill-fated flotilla in 2010.² Designed to physically penetrate Israel's blockade of Gaza, the flotilla instead led to a conflict with Israeli commandos on the high seas. With the flotilla nearing Israel's territorial waters, Israeli commandos boarded one ship, the MV *Mavi Marmara*, and were assaulted by a number of activists. The commandos responded with force, killing nine activists.

The Turkish charity that spearheaded the effort, IHH (the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief, *İnsan Hakları Ve Hürriyetleri Vakfı* in Turkish), has a history of extremist ties. IHH reportedly popped up on the CIA's radar in 1996 for its radical Islamist leanings.³ The charity belongs to a Saudi-based umbrella organization called the Union of Good (*İttilaf al-Kheir*), which is chaired by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who is infamous in the West for religious rulings that encourage suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.

On November 12, 2008, a press release from the U.S. Treasury announced the umbrella group's designation as Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT), stating that the Union of Good was "created by Hamas leadership to transfer funds to the terrorist organization." According to Treasury, Hamas's leadership created the Union of Good in 2000—just after launching an armed campaign against Israel—as a means for supporters worldwide to transfer funds to Hamas. At the time of designation in 2008, Treasury believed that the Union of Good was transferring "tens of millions of dollars a year" to Hamas-controlled entities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As the Treasury release explained, "The Union of Good acts as a broker for Hamas by facilitating financial transfers between a web of charitable organizations—including several organizations previously designated... for providing support to Hamas—and Hamas-controlled organizations in the West Bank and Gaza. The primary purpose of this activity is to strengthen Hamas' political and military position in the West Bank and Gaza."⁴

After these revelations were made public, Erdoğan distanced his government from IHH, and has since found other ways of advocating for Hamas. Erdoğan

famously told an American television audience in 2011, “I don’t see Hamas as a terror organization. Hamas is a political party.”⁵ His government is believed to be providing Hamas with significant financial assistance. In December 2011, Erdoğan reportedly “instructed the Ministry of Finance to allocate \$300 million to be sent to Hamas’ government in Gaza.”⁶ Both Turkey and Hamas denied this, but both Reuters and the Israeli daily *Haaretz* were apparently sufficiently convinced to publish subsequent reports citing this financial relationship.⁷

It is, of course, in Ankara’s interest to obscure its direct assistance to Hamas. Turkey has a reputation to uphold among its NATO allies that have designated Hamas for its terrorist activities. But other Turkish assistance to Gaza is easier to document. For example, it is undeniable that Turkey has bankrolled hospitals, mosques, and schools in Hamas-controlled Gaza, with additional funds intended to help Hamas rebuild its territory after the November 2012 war with Israel known as Operation Pillar of Defense, during which Israeli planes targeted Hamas long-range missiles smuggled from Sudan.⁸

Along with providing funding for various projects in the Gaza Strip, Prime Minister Erdoğan, who has hosted Hamas officials in Ankara,⁹ has on numerous occasions expressed a strong desire to make an official visit to the Gaza Strip. However, after the Egyptian military toppled the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated government in July 2013, after only one year in power, Erdoğan’s plans appear to be in permanent suspension.¹⁰

If Turkey’s financial support to Hamas were not troubling enough, Ankara has also allowed senior Hamas official Saleh al-Aruri to operate freely in the country. Al-Aruri, who was released from Israeli prison in March 2010, is a member of the Hamas Politburo. More disconcerting is that he is the founder of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’ armed faction, in the West Bank.¹¹ As of summer 2013, al-Aruri—who reportedly oversaw a 2011 swap in which Hamas exchanged Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners—runs Hamas’s operations in the West Bank out of Turkey.¹²

In April 2013, Israel’s internal security apparatus, Shin Bet, announced the arrest of two Palestinians, Mohammed Sawalma and Ahmed Sawalma, who were smuggling money for Hamas from Jordan to the West Bank.¹³ During interrogation, Sawalma

admitted that he was smuggling funds for al-Aruri.¹⁴ And according to Israel's security services, there are further indicators that Hamas may be actively recruiting in Turkey.¹⁵

Support for Hamas is not Turkey's only terror finance challenge. Weak laws and insufficient technical capabilities prompted the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international counter-terror finance body, to put Ankara on notice for several years running. In February 2013, Ankara was forced to scramble to adopt legislation on the financing of terrorism to avoid being blacklisted, along with North Korea and Iran.¹⁶

To its credit, Turkey has since adopted legislation that sufficiently criminalizes terror finance.¹⁷ However, this did not need to be such a difficult process. Ankara was first notified of its deficiencies in 2007, when a FATF team alerted the Turks that, after a "mutual evaluation" (in which member states conduct a standardized assessment of the laws and practices put in place by a given country to combat illicit finance), it had fallen short of its obligations.¹⁸ Nor, according to FATF, had it done enough to put in place infrastructure that could help identify and freeze terrorist assets.

According to Amit Kumar, a former terror finance official at the United Nations, the expectation was that Turkey would move quickly to redress the situation. But Turkey did nothing for five years, until the FATF issuing a blacklist warning on October 19, 2012.¹⁹

It's not clear why Turkey's response to the FATF was so slow. One reason perhaps is that the ruling AKP defines terrorism differently than FATF does. To be sure, Turkey would not be the only country in the Middle East to view the problem of terrorism differently than other parts of the international community. This has been a consistent problem, particularly with regard to Hamas.

To what extent (if any) Turkey's Hamas policies played a role in the FATF proceedings is not known. But it is clearly an issue that needs to be resolved between Washington and Ankara. Hamas is dedicated to derailing the peace that Secretary of State John Kerry wishes to achieve between Israel and the Palestinians. And Turkey's policy of backing Hamas makes it more difficult for President Barack Obama to achieve his stated goal of patching up the alliance between Turkey and Israel. More importantly, this issue reveals a moral and ethical gap between the two countries, which will only make it more difficult for Washington to rely on Ankara as other regional challenges emerge.

Iran's Turkish Proliferation Networks

EMANUELE OTTOLENGHI

In February 2011, U.S. officials announced the indictment of Milad Ja'afari, an Iranian businessman who relied on two Turkish companies to procure materials for Iran's missile program from European and other overseas suppliers.¹ In August 2012, German investigators arrested three Iranians and a German in Hamburg for procuring and illegally transferring valves to Iran's Arak heavy water nuclear reactor. The procurement network was using a Turkish-incorporated front company as a conduit for the transfer.² And in March 2013, a combined operation by Turkish and German authorities led to the arrest of another seven Iranians, also linked to a procurement network running supplies to Arak.³ Iranian-run companies registered in Turkey were used as fronts to buy and resell the merchandise.

As these examples show, a pattern has emerged in recent years. It is now clear that Turkey is central to Iran's strategy of circumventing sanctions and procuring Western technologies for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The recent relaxation in Western sanctions against Iran under the interim nuclear deal is likely to encourage further bilateral economic exchanges. Turkey's role, therefore, as a platform for Iranian sanctions' circumvention, is likely to increase.

Turkey, with its significant negative foreign trade balance, sees Iran as a partner with great potential. Opening Turkish markets to Iranian investment and capital flows is neither controversial nor economically disadvantageous as far as Turkey is concerned. This is why controls have been lax, which is why Iran has chosen Turkey as one of its procurement transit points. This essay examines this phenomenon in greater detail.

* * *

Turkey's ministry of trade reported in late November 2012 that more than 2,000 companies were established in Turkey by Iranian foreign direct investment.⁴ Of these, up to three-quarters were incorporated after new sanctions were imposed upon Iran by United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1929 in June 2010, and after the European Union (EU) introduced additional independent

measures in July 2010.⁵ Most of these Iranian companies are located in Istanbul, Turkey's financial and industrial hub.

To be sure, many Iranian-funded companies have nothing to do with Iranian efforts to evade sanctions. Iran has experienced significant capital flight since new sanctions have come into effect, which the country's hyperinflation and subsequent plunge in currency value have only exacerbated.⁶ Turkey, a neighboring Muslim country, is an attractive investment refuge for many Iranians who want nothing to do with their government. But Turkey also presents a friendly environment for those seeking to aid and abet Iran's efforts to evade sanctions. There are at least four reasons for this:

- Iran and Turkey share a vast, and mostly mountainous, border with three crossings where strictness of controls vary and, in some places, can be quite lax. This is especially true of the Kapikoy train crossing, which lacks basic modern scanning equipment for vehicles. No less important is that Iran and Turkey have a visa-waiver agreement that allows Iran's expatriate community to travel visa-free.
- Turkey and Iran have an ambitious bilateral trade agreement. According to the Turkish ministry of trade, bilateral trade should expand from \$10.6 billion to \$30 billion in 2015. Trade is facilitated by a currency agreement that obviates the need for foreign currency payments. Turkey has also become home to many Iranian banking institutions and companies.
- Turkey's port facilities along the northeastern Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts offer ideal transshipment points for goods travelling to Iran from Europe.
- Due to its political proximity to Europe and the West, Turkey has virtually unrestricted access to merchandise that Iran's regime covets. Turkey has an Association Agreement with the EU, and is in accession talks with the EU. European suppliers are thus generally less suspicious of orders coming from Turkish companies than from Iranian companies. Turkey is also a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), making it easier to import dual-use goods to Turkey. Indeed, Turkish membership in NATO and legal arrangements with the EU mean there are fewer or no restrictions on the export of controlled goods to Turkey.⁷

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Of course, dual-use goods—those goods containing technology with both civilian and military applications—come with end-user certificates. In other words, the purchaser of such goods cannot sell those goods to another buyer. They thus cannot be legally re-exported from Turkey. But by setting up front companies inside Turkish borders, Iran can create an intermediate transit point for goods, where orders of sensitive material may arouse less suspicion with local authorities. Thus, Iranian fronts in Turkey can ensure that necessary goods are procured, provided false documentation, re-shipped to Iran, and properly concealed so as to elude port and border controls.

Given the tightening of international sanctions since 2011, it is hardly surprising that the number of companies Iran has incorporated in Turkey has spiked. But even without the sanctions regime, Turkey would be a desirable place for Iranian agents to conduct business because the Turkish government has, until now, been reluctant to take action against Iranian entities sanctioned by the United States but not by the United Nations. Bank Mellat, for example, which is penalized under U.S. and EU sanctions, but not by the United Nations, has long operated freely on Turkish soil. Mellat was designated by U.S. authorities for carrying out “banking services in support of Iran’s nuclear entities.”⁸ In 2012, Turkish media reported that three additional Iranian banking institutions (Bank Tejarat, Bank Pasargad, and another unnamed bank) had sought licenses from Turkey’s financial regulators.⁹

* * *

Turkey has endeavored to cooperate with European and Western authorities on a number of occasions. When alerted about suspicious shipments, Turkey has acted to enforce international sanctions. But it also appears to take a lax attitude to Iran’s potentially problematic operations on Turkish soil. Admittedly, Turkey is in a tough spot. As Turkish commentator Abdullah Bozkurt noted last year in the English-language daily *Today’s Zaman*:

Because of the sensitivity of the issue with the neighboring country [Iran], which is an important energy supplier to Turkey, Ankara is avoiding making public evidence collected concerning Iranian attempts to breach

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UN Security Council decisions imposing embargos on Tehran, despite being required to report any infraction to the monitoring committee at the UN.¹⁰

However, Turkey has not taken significant action to reverse this trend. Iranian fronts continue to operate undisturbed.

There were 2,337 Iranian-funded companies registered in Turkey as of November 2012. Given the ease of the bureaucratic process, it's understandable why there are so many. To set up a small company in the country requires a minimal investment of 50,000 Turkish lira, about \$25,000. Once the company is established, ownership of the entire business, or a majority of it, can then be transferred to Iranian individuals or companies. From there, the company proceeds to purchase technology that it re-exports to Iran.

One notable example is MAPNA Group, an important energy industry conglomerate controlled by Iranian government entities: Iran's Power & Water Investments Industries Co., or SABA, owns 49.8 percent of MAPNA, with another 20 percent controlled by the MAPNA Employees Investment Fund. MAPNA is also suspected of being owned or controlled by Iran's Revolutionary Guards' Corps (IRGC), for several reasons. First, Free Syrian Army elements in 2011 captured and paraded MAPNA personnel in Syria as operatives from the overseas IRGC Special Forces contingent (Qods Force). MAPNA is also increasingly involved in prominent energy sector projects in Iran, including several phases of the largely IRGC-controlled South Pars. Key MAPNA managers have been chosen from the IRGC's senior ranks. Further, in 2011 the British government listed a number of MAPNA's subsidiaries as "entities of concern for WMD-related procurement."

MAPNA appears to own two companies in Turkey: Özgüneş Elektrik Parçaları Ticaret Ltd.ŞTİ., and MS Uluslararası Enerji Yatırım Anonim Şirketi. Interestingly, they do not bear MAPNA's name, but are controlled by MAPNA either directly or through MAPNA's managers.¹¹ Of the two companies, Özgüneş Elektrik Parçaları Ticaret Ltd.ŞTİ. is of particular interest because it is a joint venture with Turkish energy giant Som Petrol.

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MAPNA is not the only Iranian company with strong links to the regime and a possible role in proliferation to have set up subsidiaries in Turkey. Another such case involved former Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) senior officials, who partnered with a Turkish shipping company as majority shareholders in a London-based joint venture. The company folded in 2009, but at one point it included six subsidiaries, all managed jointly by Mehdi Shamszadeh, the former IRISL director for Europe, and then-IRISL Chairman Ali Ashraf Afkhani. The company did not contain IRISL in its name or any reference to Iran, but had clear associations with the state-owned shipping line. Since 2010, IRISL has been under EU sanctions for its alleged role in facilitating nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation.

* * *

The above examples show how Iran can exploit Turkey's business environment. Under the current administration, Turkey is not likely to redress the problem. Turkey has clearly signaled that the lifting of sanctions under the interim nuclear deal, albeit limited in time and scope, is a green light to boost business ties with Iran. In January, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan traveled to Tehran to sign three important trade agreements. The Erdoğan government insists that all such trade is not just beneficial to the Turkish economy, but that it is also legal under international sanctions. Iran will thus be able to continue to exploit the friendly business environment of a NATO member and strategic U.S. ally.

Turkey's Human Rights and Press Freedom

KAREN KAYA

During a January 2013 television interview, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dropped what was later called a “geostrategic bomb” when he implied that Turkey wanted to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and abandon its decades-long European Union (EU) accession process. He added that the SCO was “better and much stronger” than the EU. Since the countries of the SCO (including Russia, China, and Central Asian republics) lean authoritarian and do little to embody values such as democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression, many questioned whether Turkey was heading in a new direction. Indeed, Turkey’s human rights record raises troubling questions about the extent to which U.S. and Turkish values converge.

While questions about Turkish human rights violations aren’t new, the issue was revived following the protests that swept Turkey in May 2013. The protests were provoked by a police raid on a peaceful sit-in by about 500 environmentalists contesting the planned demolition of Gezi Park in central Istanbul, adjacent to the central Taksim Square, to build a shopping mall. Police used excessive force, including pepper spray, tear gas, and water cannons, to break up the demonstrators. This only exacerbated the crisis: tens of thousands of protesters from all over Turkey joined together in response.

Since its first election in 2002, the Islamist-oriented Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been re-elected twice (in 2007 and in 2011), increasing its share of the vote both times. In 2011, Erdoğan gave a famous victory speech pledging to be the prime minister of all of Turkey, not just the 50 percent who voted for him. But less than two years later, large segments of the other 50 percent seethed with rage at what they claimed to be an increasingly authoritarian prime minister who wasn’t governing inclusively. Many complained that Turkey was also becoming less secular as Erdoğan pushed his Islamist agenda.

In an effort to make themselves heard, at least three and a half million people attended peaceful demonstrations in almost all of Turkey’s 81 cities starting in late

May 2013 and lasting throughout the summer, before fizzling out at the end of August.¹ According to results of a poll conducted in the early stages of the protests, the primary reason for the demonstrators' frustration was the prime minister's authoritarian attitude (92.4 percent). This was followed by complaints about the police (91.3 percent), the violation of democratic rights (91.1 percent), and the government's silencing of the Turkish media (84.2 percent).²

The Turkish government's reaction to the protests exposed a crisis of confidence in the country's constitutional liberties, rule of law, human rights, and freedom of press, expression, and assembly. Remarkably, the crisis erupted only two weeks after Erdoğan visited Washington, where the White House welcomed him and his delegation in a manner typically reserved for the U.S.'s closest allies.

Erdoğan's response to the protests was undoubtedly a cause for concern in Washington. On June 15, 2013, in a pro-government rally, he said, "Police can use water, pepper spray. It is written in the EU documents; [this is how it is] in the U.S., in Russia and China. And in some countries, they even fire bullets."³ Consistent with this bellicose rhetoric, by April 2014, police crackdowns on the demonstrations had left eight people dead, 11 people blinded by tear gas canisters, and over 8,000 with injuries, including 104 serious head injuries.⁴ Meanwhile, unknown numbers were detained.⁵ Those detained included doctors and lawyers who helped the injured, and peaceful demonstrators whose only "crime" was using Twitter to exchange information about the protests.⁶

Erdoğan didn't just target social media, however. The Turkish government slowly strangled the mainstream media, too. This phenomenon is not new. But it has increased since the protests. Even as international networks showed breaking news of the protests, Turkish channels aired cooking shows and documentaries about penguins. In fact, penguins became a symbol of how the Turkish media chose not to report on one of the more consequential domestic stories in recent memory.⁷ Respected journalist Yavuz Baydar, who was the ombudsman to the daily *Sabah* newspaper, discussed this culture of complicity in *The New York Times*, where he criticized the role of Turkey's media conglomerates in subverting press freedom.⁸ He claimed that corrupt alliances between the government and media companies obstructed true investigative journalism, because media managers were becoming

submissive to the will of politicians in an effort to win public-works contracts. Four days later, he was fired for insulting his newspaper.

Press freedom deficiencies extend beyond too-cozy relations with the Turkish government, though. As Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists point out, Ankara has systematically intimidated the Turkish press. This is evident in the increasing number of arrests and prosecutions of journalists, government interference in the media, the harassment or firing of journalists, and vague anti-terror laws under which many journalists are charged. The 2013 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders, notes that Turkey is “the world’s biggest prison for journalists,” with approximately 70 journalists jailed. Turkey ranks 154th in press openness out of 179 countries.⁹

This culture of fear led to a sharp increase in the use of social media. In the absence of accurate reporting by the mainstream media, people resorted to Facebook and Twitter to exchange information, post videos of blocked streets, warn others of impending tear gas attacks, and show the world what was happening in Turkey. Erdoğan later slammed the “scourge that is called Twitter. The best examples of lies can be found there. To me, social media is the worst menace to society.”¹⁰ Erdoğan blocked Twitter and YouTube in the lead up to the 2014 municipal elections.

This move did not come out of the blue. In February 2014, Turkey passed legislation that allows the government to arbitrarily and significantly monitor, restrict, and control what Turks can view on the Internet. While the intention behind the law was purportedly “protecting children and families,” many believe that the government’s true aims were to protect itself from politically embarrassing revelations and allegations that it fears may surface as part of an anti-corruption and bribery investigation that has been shaking the government since December 17, 2013.

The corruption scandal that erupted on that day has led the government to propose further alarming legislative and judicial changes as well. Parliament passed a judicial bill—which as of this writing is awaiting the president’s approval—that would give the government control of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, effectively ending judicial independence and separation of powers. In light of the government’s reaction to the corruption investigation—it has transferred or removed thousands of police officers, removed prosecutors, and banned media

from certain police buildings—the Internet law and the judicial bill are viewed as the government's attempts to block the investigation. The judiciary's lack of independence and the government's control over it is nothing new either. In recent years, several prominent court cases have highlighted a growing crisis of confidence in the judicial system. Two controversial cases alleging that conspiratorial networks planned to overthrow the government have led to the imprisonment of hundreds of military officers as well as journalists, university professors, and others. Critics charged that the trials were a means for the government to systematically silence its opponents. And both cases were rife with allegations of problems, including forged digital evidence, lack of transparency, and falsified documents.

All of these problems are symptomatic of a bigger problem in Erdoğan's Turkey: The prime minister is a majoritarian ruler, rather than a pluralistic one.¹¹ As journalist Mine Kırıkkanat wrote in the secular daily *Cumhuriyet*:

Erdoğan did not understand that people in this country... where he rules with such an authoritarian style were sick of his stubbornness; and that they were saying “enough” to the increasing way he silenced them and interfered in every aspect of their lives from what they ate and drank, to how many kids they should have, to what they should think.¹²

One example of this interference can be seen in the government's mid-2013 decision to introduce legislation restricting the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. The law was rushed through Turkey's legislature in the early hours of May 24 (one week before the Gezi Park protests erupted) without public debate or consultation.¹³ Other proposals that Erdoğan has floated include a ban on abortions and C-sections, while he regularly reminds women that they should have at least three or even four children.¹⁴

Aside from the public's general frustration at Erdoğan's stance on such social issues, influenced by his Islamist leanings, there is also concern about the absence of public debate about the massive infrastructure projects planned for Istanbul, a city whose beauty Turks guard jealously. Erdoğan currently has plans for a new mega-airport and a third bridge across the Bosphorus. The new bridge raises concerns

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beyond aesthetics. Erdoğan insists on naming it after Ottoman sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim (ruled 1470-1520), who massacred tens of thousands of Turkey's Alevi minority. Alevis, who make up about 15 percent of the population, are deeply offended, and point to this project as proof that Erdoğan is not the inclusive leader he promised to be.

The new bridge sums up the challenges Turkey now faces. Erdoğan and the AKP are building a new Turkey, but they are doing so at the expense of the people and their rights. This is a challenge that has, until now, been largely ignored. However, it is in the West's interest to address this challenge if it wants a stable Turkey. The Gezi Park protests were unprecedented in Turkey, and reflected the boiling over of anger that had long been simmering. The longer the West ignores this challenge, the more likely we are to see more protests flare up and burn even more intensely each time, threatening economic and domestic stability in Turkey, as well as its international standing, which has already taken a severe blow.

Navigating a World of Allies, Adversaries, and Enemies

CLIFFORD D. MAY

Less than a generation after World War II, in the midst of a cold war whose outcome was far from certain, John F. Kennedy famously proclaimed that Americans would “support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”¹ More than half a century later, in an era fraught with conflict and tension, it may be time to ask: Is that still our credo?

In particular, are Americans still committed to liberty—a word that has come to sound old-fangled? Can our friends still rely upon our support—even when the going gets tough? Do foes still have reason to fear us—or have we become too war-weary to effectively oppose them? And those nations that profess friendship but seek to ingratiate themselves with our foes—what are we to do about them? These questions, I suspect, will require a great deal more study, thought, and debate before they can be adequately answered. But this volume’s authors have made a helpful start.

For example, it should be clear from the preceding chapters that Pakistan, which declared itself the world’s first “Islamic republic” in 1956, is, at best, America’s least reliable ally. Since becoming nuclear-armed in 1998, it has been responsible for the proliferation of nuclear technology to any number of rogue regimes. Within the country’s powerful military and intelligence services, there are influential individuals whose sympathies lie with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. And does anyone seriously believe that no senior Pakistani officials knew that Osama bin Laden—along with three of his wives and a passel of children—had taken up housekeeping in the hill resort of Abbottabad not far from the Pakistani capital of Islamabad?

Not long ago, the Republic of Turkey was regarded as the most Western of Muslim-majority nations, a proud member of the NATO alliance. But since Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, leader of the Justice and Development (AK) Party, was elected prime minister in 2003, Turkish nationalism has taken on an increasingly Islamist coloration. Erdoğan has not contributed to Western efforts to use economic pressure to prevent Iran’s terrorist-sponsoring and global revolutionary regime from

obtaining a nuclear weapons capability. And he has openly expressed the striking view: “Democracy is like a streetcar. When you come to your stop, you get off.”²

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has spent untold billions of petrodollars spreading Wahhabism, a fundamentalist and bellicose interpretation of Islam, around the world. At the same time, the Saudis have felt, and continue to feel, more secure with great-power protectors—the British before World War II, the Americans after. The Saudis are pragmatic enough to recognize the difference between a useful enemy (that would be Israel, a state that would never attack them without provocation) and a threatening enemy (that would be Iran, whose rulers disdain monarchical rule in favor of *velayat-e faqih*—the “guardianship of jurists,” meaning mullahs who interpret Islamic law and combine religious and political power). Realism on our part recognizes that oil from beneath the sands of Arabia is essential to the West’s economic health, but that freedom and democracy are not among the goals of the kingdom’s rulers.

The State of Qatar hosts America’s most important military base in the Middle East as well as a number of campuses affiliated with American universities and think tanks. Qatar also funds and directs Al Jazeera, the popular Arabic television channel that promotes anti-Americanism, blood libels against Israelis and Jews, and outrageous conspiracy theories. In June 2013, Qatari emir Hamad bin Khalifa was replaced by his son, Tamim. Will the young ruler move his small but rich and influential state closer to the United States and the West? Or will he seek to accommodate Iran and/or al-Qaeda’s growing network? Or will he continue to play both ends against the middle?

America’s Middle East “frenemies” have been discussed at length in this book. But some countries are harder to characterize. Egypt, for example, was not allied with the U.S. during the short time it was under Muslim Brotherhood rule; nor can its current military rulers be seen as allies, though they are among the few Muslim rulers seriously fighting Islamism and jihadism, particularly in the Sinai. Supporting them in that project while not appearing to condone domestic authoritarianism is a challenge—one to which American diplomacy has not yet proved equal.

Libya, since the fall of Muammar Qaddafi, has failed to become a cohesive nation-state. There are Libyans who want law, order and freedom, not to mention

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a close working relationship with the United States and Europe. Other Libyans want to slaughter infidels, apostates, and heretics. Still others just want power, and the wealth that comes with it in a small territory with ample petroleum resources.

American blood and treasure liberated Iraq from a despot. The hope was that Iraq would become the first true Arab democracy, with tolerance prevailing among its three major ethno-religious groups: Shia, Sunni and Kurd. But in the wake of the American withdrawal, the jihadist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham has regrouped and resurged in its Sunni areas. The Shia-dominated government is more dependent than ever on Iran. Iraqi Kurdistan is increasingly autonomous and self-sufficient—and more friendly to America and Americans than any other territory in the so-called Muslim world.

Thirty-five years after Iran's Islamic Revolution, and 13 years after the attacks of 9/11, we Americans may not always know who our regional friends are, but at least should know who our enemies are. By now we should have settled on a strategy aimed at defeating them. But we don't. And we haven't.

There is a reason for this. Many of us turn away from an uncomfortable truth: The ideologies most hostile to America and the West have arisen in the Muslim world and are derived from fundamentalist—not heretical—interpretations of Islamic scripture. These ideologies are not just intolerant but supremacist—which is why, within Muslim-majority nations, religious minorities (Christians in particular, but also the Baha'i in Iran, and Sikhs, Hindus, and the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan) face increasing oppression, persecution and, in many cases, “religious cleansing,” a trend Western governments, the United Nations and most of the media prefer not to discuss.

Most Muslims do not embrace these ideologies. But for a host of reasons—fear undoubtedly high among them—neither are most Muslims battling them or even denouncing them publicly and without equivocation.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair—no ideologue—has been both candid and articulate in his criticism of those who insist that Islamism derives from poverty or misunderstandings, or “legitimate grievances” that the West needs to address. He takes issue with those who have convinced themselves that Islamists “are as they are because we have provoked them and if we left them alone they would leave us alone.... They have no intention of leaving us alone.”³

Blair also has made clear that he does not see the Islamic Republic of Iran as a “normal” state, one seeking stability and interested in nuclear technology only to provide electricity to schools and hospitals or, at most, in response to understandable security concerns. Rather, the ruling regime, he has said, has an ideological agenda and is “prepared to back and finance terror in the pursuit of destabilizing countries whose people wish to live in peace.” That leaves America and its allies with a choice that Blair phrased concisely: “to be forced into retreat or to exhibit even greater determination and belief in standing up for our values than they do in standing up for theirs.”

Blair made that statement in 2007. Over the years since, which alternative have Western leaders chosen? At the Munich Security Conference in February 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry said: “I can’t think of a place in the world from where we’re retreating.”⁴

We may not have left the Middle East, but we have failed to stand our ground. This can be seen by the growing list of countries that simultaneously qualify as allies, adversaries and enemies. More importantly, it can be seen in our seemingly endless flexibility in negotiating with the Iranian regime.

A poll conducted in late 2013 by Luntz Global found that only 7 percent of respondents believe Iranian rulers when they say they are not working to develop nuclear weapons. And more than three out of four fear that the Iranian regime would provide nuclear weapons to terrorist groups hostile to America and the West.

This may suggest that the average American understands better than do many within our political elites that those vowing “Death to America!” are our foes, and that they are unlikely to become our friends no matter how much “confidence-building” we do. Intuitively, if not analytically, they may know, too, that our allies are those threatened by the same enemies—and brave enough to side with us in common defense.

It is often said that nations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests. That may not always hold true. And even if it does, some nations’ permanent interests permanently align. Those committed to the “survival and success of liberty” are our friends for the long haul; those intent on the destruction of liberty are not. It really is as simple—and as complex—as that.

Endnotes

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Jonathan Schanzer and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross

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Thomas Joscelyn

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Karen Kaya

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ENDNOTES

CONCLUSION

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Cliff May

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