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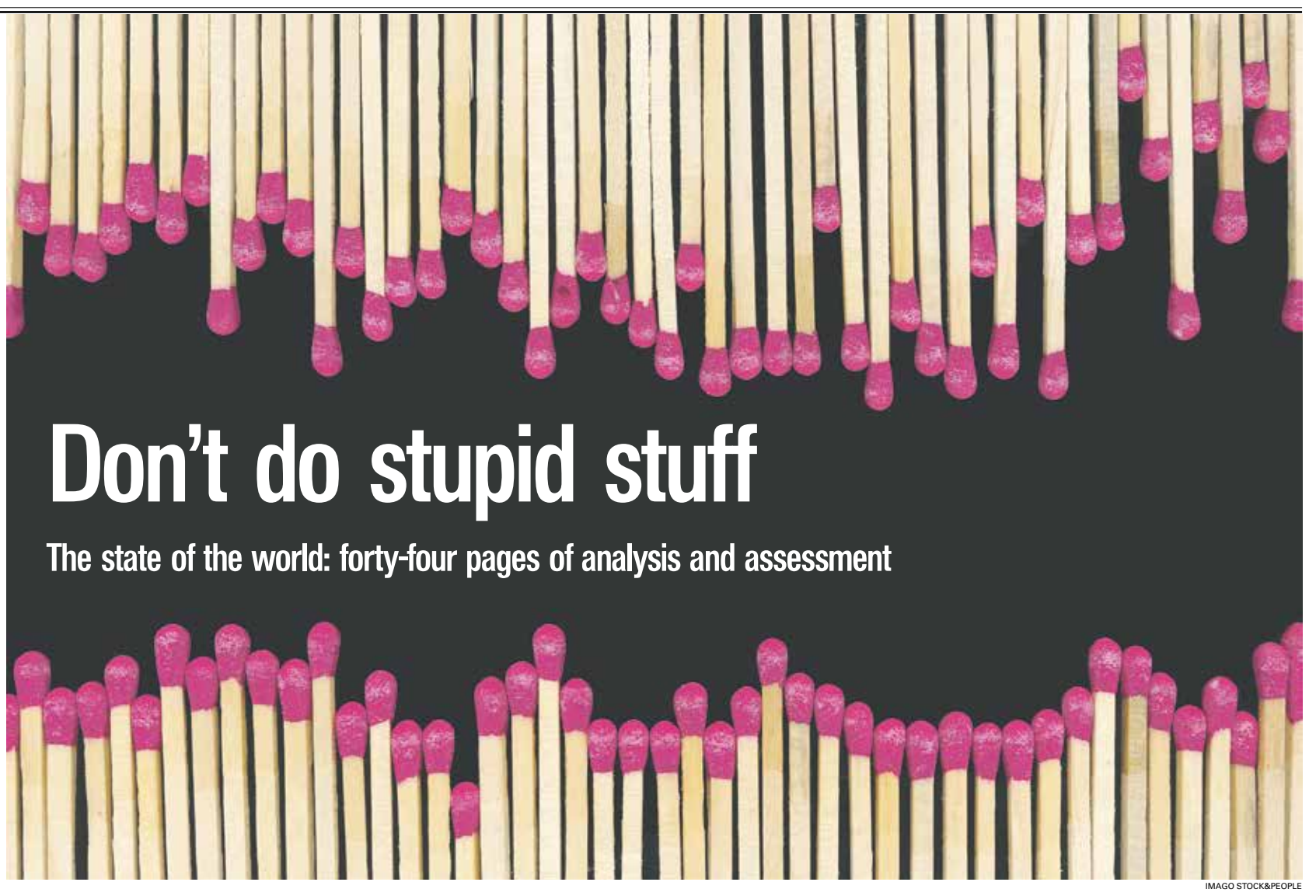

Don't do stupid stuff

The state of the world: forty-four pages of analysis and assessment

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Crisis, conflict, dialogue

German foreign policy in a tumultuous world: punching our weight

By Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier

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More than any other event in recent history, the current refugee crisis has illustrated that the world has walked through our front door – mostly without knocking first. The effect of a civil war 3,000 kilometers away is on display in German schools, gyms and on the streets. And it sheds a clear light on our responsibilities for Europe and abroad.

Two years ago at the Munich Security Conference, we discussed how shouldering international responsibility starts at home. This insight has become a reality to an extent I would not have imagined then. In 2015, Germany received over one million refugees fleeing war and violence in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts. We have lived up to our responsibility, offering protection to hundreds of thousands of refugees. And that is something we can be proud of.

At the same time, it is obvious that we will have to find ways to reduce the number of refugees coming to Germany and Europe, as the current trajectory is clearly unsustainable. But just sealing off our borders will not help, nor will defining an upper limit on the number of refugees that we will take on board.

Instead we need a strong and decisive Europe. Focusing on national solutions to this global challenge might seem tempting, yet it is nothing but an illusion. And more than that: terminating the principle of European solidarity puts the European idea as a whole at risk.

In view of a divided Europe, right-wing populism is on the rise again. Freedom of movement within the Schengen area – a major achievement of our integration process – is in danger.

We cannot allow ourselves to stand on the sideline of this conflict. We have built this continent for over half a century; we have put enormous efforts, power and strength into achieving a truly united Europe. Together we have managed to overcome huge challenges in the past and present. And yet again, we are facing truly historic tasks: to offer shelter to the truly needy, to integrate men, women and children into our societies, but also to reduce and control the steady influx of migrants to Europe.

However difficult this might seem, it also holds a good chance for success: We have already taken steps towards a European solution, the European Commission has already put forward the outlines of a broader mandate for Frontex, and we are working hard to implement the far-reaching agreement with Turkey in order to reduce and manage the flow of refugees. Clearly, we will not achieve a solution overnight. But we are already in the process of implementing a bundle of measures that will help us tackle the crisis.

I admit: this is not going to be an easy road, but it is the only one which will not lead into a dead end. Ultimately, however, we will not be able to bring the influx of refugees back down to manageable levels unless we address its root causes – most importantly by defusing the violent conflicts and crises that have been destabilizing Europe's southern and eastern neighborhood.

These are trying times for the European Union. Striking a balance between the common European interest in maintaining an effective and humane refugee policy on the one hand and the need to build and maintain political majorities in member states will remain a key challenge.

> "Germany's goals for its OSCE Chairmanship: renew dialogue, rebuild trust and restore security."

On the international stage, Germany has stepped up its efforts to contribute to political and diplomatic solutions. This is more often than not a painstaking process, requiring persistence and patience, but we have recently made important progress. The nuclear accord with Iran shows that it was possible to negotiate a solution for a proliferation crisis that had an immediate potential to become a hot war. And it may yet turn out to be a crucial milestone on the way to resolving other violent conflicts in the region.

In the case of Syria, we have managed for the first time to bring to the negotiating table all the crucial international and regional actors needed for a political solution. More importantly, these actors have agreed on a road map for a political solution – including a ceasefire and the outlines of a transition process – which was endorsed by a resolution of the Security Council. There is still a very long way to go, and none of the steps ahead will be easy – the recent escalation between Saudi Arabia and Iran bears witness to that. But crises like these can and must be alleviated by diplomacy. Our message to Riyadh and Tehran is clear: Both countries bear a broader responsibility for the stability of the region.

In Eastern Europe we have also made some real progress since we last met at the Munich Security Conference. The situation in Ukraine is far from perfect. Yet compared to the situation we had last summer, when we were almost running into an open war, Ukraine and the whole of Europe are much better off today. The Minsk process has delivered a marked reduction in violence and casualties.

Without any doubt, there is still a lot of work ahead of us: Frequent violations of the ceasefire must stop. Every shot that is fired is still one too many. At the same time, a constitutional reform for decentralization in Ukraine and the elaboration of a special status law for certain areas in eastern Ukraine remain decisive for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its intervention in Ukraine have stirred many concerns and fears, especially among our Eastern European NATO allies. That is why Germany has politically supported and militarily contributed to the alliance's reassurance and adaptation measures.

At the same time we need to complement reassurance with a reinvigoration of our dialogue with Russia: I am speaking of a dialogue that should identify areas of common interest but also clearly spell out where we have sharp differences. The core principles of European security, as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, are not up for negotiation. Reaffirming them is exactly what Germany will strive for during our OSCE Chairmanship. Our guiding motives for this chairmanship are renewing dialogue, rebuilding trust and restoring security.

In all of these endeavors – be it in the Middle East or in Eastern Europe – our transatlantic relationship is of critical importance. The diplomatic punch and the security guarantee of the United States remain indispensable. It is in this context that Germany actively contributes to conflict resolution, be it in the context of the E3+3 or the Vienna talks on Syria.

Germany wants to be a facilitator, enabling dialogue and supporting negotiation processes. We have stepped up our commitment of both diplomatic energy and resources to civilian stabilization and reconstruction, efforts that are essential to pave the way towards longer-term peace in conflict areas. A case in point is Iraq, where we are helping to quickly rebuild public services and critical infrastructure in areas liberated from ISIS. We are convinced that these measures are essential in order to restore the confidence of the Iraqi people in their public institutions. In Tikrit, this stabilization operation has allowed more than 150,000 internally displaced persons to return to their homes, and we are preparing to deliver the same support in Sinjar, Ramadi and elsewhere.

Relying on diplomacy, crisis prevention and stabilization does not rule out military engagement if and where it is a necessary component of a peace effort. We all know that a group like ISIS, which is not interested in negotiated solutions or peace accords, will not be defeated without military means.

Germany has decided to contribute reconnaissance assets, logistical support and protection to the fight against ISIS, as well as providing training and equipment to the Kurdish Peshmerga, who are fighting ISIS on the ground. Germany is also contributing, alongside its NATO allies and other partners, to international missions in Afghanistan, Sudan and Mali.

In sum, Germany's international responsibility has many facets – domestically, on the European level and with regard to global peace efforts. We must use the full spectrum of our foreign policy and security toolbox in an effective and coherent way, from conflict prevention to post-conflict stabilization. The political processes to solve conflicts and crises will always be at center stage, involving persistent efforts and patience. The conclusion of the nuclear agreement with Iran and the beginning of its implementation is a heartening example that such efforts can indeed be successful. ■

The share of good news amid a world in turmoil: In Vienna, the P5+1 and Iran reached an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program; Foreign Ministers (from left) John Kerry (US), Philip Hammond (UK), Sergey Lavrov (Russia), Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Germany), Laurent Fabius (France), Wang Yi (China), Federica Mogherini (EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs) and Javad Zarif (Iran) on Jul. 14, 2015. And in Paris, climate talks led to a path-breaking agreement that many people had demanded – including the demonstrators in polar bear costumes (below).

PICTURE ALLIANCE/HERBERT NEUBAUER

The dawn of a more unstable era

The world in 2016: Boundless crises, reckless spoilers, helpless guardians – and a few bright spots | By Wolfgang Ischinger

The world, especially as seen from the West, may indeed be in its worst shape since the end of the Cold War. Overwhelmed, sometimes helpless guardians are faced with boundless crises and empowered, reckless spoilers.

The conflicts and crises that most preoccupy the world transcend and throw into question borders and boundaries to a stunning degree. Chief among these is the war in Syria (and Iraq) with its manifold consequences and implications – from Europe's struggle to find a common solution to the influx of refugees to the overall dissolution of political order throughout the Middle East.

For reasons both structural – a more complicated international system – and self-inflicted – an initial neglect of emerging crises – the traditional guardians of a liberal international order seem to believe less and less in their ability to shape events. They are faced with a growing number of spoilers – some simply emboldened, others even reckless – who are further destabilizing fragmenting orders. While the risk of major interstate war may still be remote, for the first time since the end of the Cold War the escalation of violence between major powers cannot be dismissed as an unrealistic nightmare.

To be sure, the past year has seen its share of good news. The part of the global population living in extreme poverty has fallen to 9.6 percent, from 37 percent just 25 years ago. Moreover, there were at least two diplomatic breakthroughs with potentially far-reaching implications. First, steered by the diplomacy of their French hosts, the climate talks in Paris led to an agreement that many see as path-breaking and that could prevent the most catastrophic consequences of man-made climate change. Second, the agreement on the Iranian nuclear program reached by the P5+1 and Iran prevents both an Iran armed with nuclear weapons and military action against its nuclear facilities. Either one of these two scenarios could have destabilized the Middle East in ways that would make today's turmoil look tame in comparison.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/ZUMA PRESS/MONA KUNN

But as Richard Haass has stressed, with a nod to Woody Allen: "If showing up is 80 percent of life, at least 80 percent of foreign policy is following up." Whether both agreements will be seen as truly historical achievements depends on their implementation and the momentum they provide.

Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German ambassador to the United Kingdom and the United States, is Chairman of the Munich Security Conference.

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"In many regions war and terror prevail. States disintegrate. For many years we have read about this. But we had not yet sufficiently understood that what happens in Aleppo and Mosul can affect Essen or Stuttgart. We have to face that now," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in the fall of 2015. For several years, indeed, European publics and leaders were willing to overlook the potential domestic consequences of turmoil in their eastern and southern neighborhoods.

Today's Middle East exemplifies the boundlessness of conflict. The war in Syria has become an unconfined regional crisis. In the medium term, it may well put into question existing state borders throughout the Middle East. Moreover, the war in Syria has been the main driver of the global refugee crisis, making 2015 the year with the most refugees since the end of World War II.

Yet as conflicts become boundless and the limiting effect of national boundaries further decreases, borders are making a comeback. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall over 40 countries worldwide have erected fences against more than 60 of their neighbors, with 15 new walls built in 2015 alone. In Europe, the border-free Schengen area is under threat. Furthermore, borders changed by force as well as border disputes – from Ukraine to artificial islands in the South China Sea – contribute to a more dangerous security environment.

Claims of a US retreat may be exaggerated. Nonetheless, in at least two of the defining conflicts of our time – Ukraine and Syria – the US has played a less prominent role than in previous conflicts. The key diplomatic format to resolve the Ukraine crisis – the so-called Normandy Group – does not include the US. In any major European crisis since the end of WWII, such an absence would have been unthinkable. And in Syria, the US and its European allies stopped short of intervening against the regime although Assad had crossed Obama's "red line" – further underlining that the US has only a small dog in that fight. Critics of international action in Syria, including German voices, argued in 2011 that an intervention would only fuel the conflict and the spread of violence beyond Syria. But in fact, the exact opposite happened: the hands-off approach created the conditions both for a bloody and increasingly complex civil war, and for today's regional conflagration, including Russia's military intervention.

Europe has thus far failed to build a credible common foreign and security policy – as envisaged by the Treaty of Lisbon – with institutional arrangements for decisive crisis management action. Instead, Brussels continues to be handicapped by multiple major problems: shaky agreement on sanctions against Russia; continuing question marks surrounding Greece and the euro; the threat of a "Brexit" and of re-fortified borders; and perhaps most importantly, a resurgence of illiberal right-wing nationalism and populism. As Anne Applebaum noted: "If Europe itself becomes dysfunctional, then Europe will be incapable of helping anyone else." And Europe would have no meaningful global role in the future.

China is beginning to be more involved in global issues, but still has a long way to go. Rather than becoming a "responsible stakeholder" in the liberal international order, Beijing is more likely to focus on parallel structures of international governance, which it can shape according to its own preferences.

Russia under Vladimir Putin has been keen to demonstrate its status as a key global player, but its economy tells a different story. Even after many Normandy Group sessions, the durable settlement of the Ukraine conflict envisaged a year ago has not materialized. And in the Levant, Putin has demonstrated his determination to play a role in any post-Assad Syrian arrangement, without much regard for the continuing plight of the Syrian population. The good news is that Russia played a constructive role in the nuclear negotiations with Iran, and will hopefully do so again as the Vienna talks on Syria resume.

In some of today's key conflicts, reckless spoilers have filled the power vacuums resulting from the reluctance or withdrawal of actual or potential guardians. In Afghanistan, the resurgence of the Taliban undermines progress made over more than a decade, prompting Western governments to rethink their plans for withdrawal or reduction. In countries such as Libya, Mali and Yemen, groups of local strongmen and Islamist extremists, many of whom have pledged allegiance to IS, have blocked progress towards peace or, worse, unleashed more strife.

In 2016 we are likely to witness a period of growing risks, military confrontation, uncertainty and fundamental transformation – the dawn of a more unstable international era. The challenge to leaders and their advisors is an urgent one: how to build – or rebuild – more resilient regional and global orders, and how to promote and empower the institutional arrangements necessary to ensure that the idea of a rules-based global society will not be abandoned. ■

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Iran nuclear talks in Vienna on Jun. 30, 2015.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/GEORG HOCHMUT

Doing the possible

In today's woebegone state of the world, de-escalatory diplomacy and compartmentalized cooperation are the order of the day | By Theo Sommer

Leonardo DiCaprio's frontiersman Hugh Glass is not the only revenant in 2016. Geopolitics and realpolitik are back; spheres of interest and influence are once more contested by the great powers; nationalism is again rearing its ugly head; globalization seems to be backpedaling; concepts like deterrence and containment are making a comeback; thoughts of war, even nuclear war, weigh anew on the minds of global leaders.

To describe the lamentable state of the present-day world one can hardly do better than to quote William Butler Yeats' 1919 poem "The Second Coming":

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."

These lines were written in the wake of World War I, yet there is no better description of today's woebegone state of the world. Even the title – "The Second Coming" – fits our era of revenants.

Crises have become the new normal. "We live in a time of extraordinary change," US President Barack Obama declared in his last State of the Union address. "We are living in a world that in many ways is falling apart," said World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab last month in Davos. Global business leaders are worried that nations are drifting apart rather than growing together.

Wolfgang Ischinger, chairman of the Munich Security Conference, deems our global security situation "the most dangerous since the end of the Cold War." Former US Secretary of Defense William Perry reasons that the danger of a nuclear confrontation is higher today than at any time since the termination of the East-West conflict.

The Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists finds the state of the world "so threatening that the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock must remain at three minutes to midnight, the closest it has been to catastrophe since the early days of above-ground hydrogen bomb testing."

Two facts compound the problems emanating from this portentous development. First: All major powers and power groupings are in a state of transition. Second: The time is out of joint, but there is no one to single-handedly set it right.

The political system of the US is polarized and paralyzed to the point of dysfunctionality. Its politicians have lost the ability to get things done constructively through rational dialogue and pragmatic compromise. The question of who will stand on the steps of the US Capitol to deliver his or her inaugural address on Jan. 20, 2016, agitates both friend and foe. A Trump presidency is a particularly worrisome prospect for America's allies. Their plea is like that of *New York Times* columnist David Brooks: "Stay sane America, please!"

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ARCHIVE

At the same time, the trials and tribulations of the refugee crisis strike at the heart of the European project. For the first time in half a century, one can no longer preclude that the EU, battered by economic malaise, the migrant emergency and terrorism, will collapse and splinter. The crisis has revealed fundamental differences between the member states about the nature, purpose and destination of their union.

A trend toward renationalization threatens to tear the EU into several blocs. In Eastern Europe, a lack of solidarity and, as in Hungary and Poland, a proclivity toward illiberalism gnaws at the foundations of the European project. In Scandinavia, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and even Germany, the burgeoning right wing continues to denigrate the European idea. Their aim: not only exodus from the Brussels community but *excitus* EU.

Russia, too, is a country in transition. The question is whether the country's dire economic freefall will make Putin more amenable to seek the cooperation of the West, or whether dwindling GDP will incite him to look for foreign scapegoats. His Syrian intervention has returned the Kremlin leader to the top table of world politics; that must soothe his ego. It is obvious, however, that at best he can be a spoiler, not a shaper – unless he opts for accommodation and conciliation.

China is also in the throes of fundamental change. Growth has dropped from 10 percent annually to about 6.8 percent; 4 percent, some experts argue, may be more realistic. This "new normal" is forcing the Communist party to reform its economic model while at the same time buttressing the party's leading position – a highly risky experiment. While we cannot expect Beijing to mollify its aggressive policies in the South China and East China Seas, its "One Belt, One Road" is likely to remain a grandiose scheme with little substance.

International politics has become a "G-zero world" with no shared values, standards or priorities (Ian Bremmer). Global hegemony is no longer possible. While Washington will remain preeminent for decades, it will no longer predominate. Nor can any other nation don the cap of world policeman.

The Middle East is experiencing an extraordinary level of violent turmoil. The state system is fraying in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. Except in Tunisia, the Arab Spring has ended in dictatorial winter. The self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) is imposing its writ on Mesopotamia. Saudi Arabia and Iran are engaged in intense proxy warfare. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, although no longer central to the region, continues to fester; another intifada seems more likely than any diplomatic settlement, two-state or otherwise. Afghanistan's future after ISAF is parlous at best.

The Levant stands before a long phase of turbulence. It will take decades for the Muslim arc of crisis to find its future shape, viable national borders and an enlightened attitude to religious diversity. The explosive mix of elite failure, terrorism and mass migration defies military solutions.

The same goes for many regional flashpoints in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, the smoldering conflict between India and Pakistan, the Chinese-Chinese tug-of-war over Taiwan, the dangerous Korean tinderbox and steadily increasing tensions between China and the US are cause for global concern.

Looking at the world as it is, not as we wish it were, one cannot help but feel that our leaders should welcome another revenant: realpolitik. In other words, secure your defenses but do not eschew dialogue; contain where necessary and cooperate where possible; bear in mind humanitarian principles, but not as the sole benchmark for securing your interests; avoid bluster and blame; tolerate differences among nations while simultaneously building on common interests.

Our diplomats are beginning to use a new term for this: "compartmentalized cooperation." It is a method for dealing with friends as well as rivals and adversaries: disagree where your interests diverge, but join hands wherever they coincide; turn red-hot conflicts into frozen ones rather than bull-headedly pursuing maximum objectives. Strategic patience is a virtue, not a vice. Avoiding disasters must be accorded absolute priority. De-escalatory diplomacy is the order of the day. ■

In a time of secular stagnation

Re-balancing in the global economy undermines international stability | By Robin Niblett

IMAGO/CHRISTIAN OHDE

The last twenty years have witnessed a remarkable re-balancing in the global economy and a commensurate shift in international economic and political power. Fears that these structural changes could lead to major interstate conflicts were prevalent at the last two Munich Security Conferences in 2014 and 2015, at the height of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and as China and Japan engaged in a stand-off over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. A formal outbreak of conflict was averted in both cases, even if violence persists in Ukraine and intra-state violence has proliferated across the Middle East and North Africa.

While steady global growth over the past 20 years drove the shifts in the relative balance of international political power, it also limited their disruptive effects. In 2016, however, the world has embarked upon a new phase in its economic transition. The global economy appears to have entered what some have described as a secular stagnation. Now the world could face a security downturn as well as an economic one.

Over the past six months, Chinese leaders have struggled to manage the transition to what they have termed the "new normal." Wild gyrations in the Chinese stock market may affect only a sliver of the Chinese economy, yet point to the difficulties the Chinese leadership faces in sustaining growth and employment as the export and infrastructure investment of the past decades slows, the construction booms tapers off and indebted local governments struggle to cope with dwindling sources of revenue.

In Russia, the dramatic collapse in oil prices – caused in part by the Chinese economic slowdown – poses its own risks. With the state budget based on an oil price close to $50 per barrel, President Vladimir Putin faces a double challenge. Having presided over lackluster economic growth prior to the Ukraine crisis, he must now assess whether he can continue to afford military engagements in Syria and Ukraine, which for the Russian people have exemplified their country's return to greatness on the world stage.

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CHATHAM HOUSE

Putin must also divvy up a shrinking financial pie among his circle of close political supporters. One solution in the new economic environment would be to extricate his forces from these external commitments. But it is just as likely, if not more so, that with his back to the wall President Putin could double down on his military gambles and behave even more aggressively on the international stage.

Even last year's nuclear agreement between Iran and the permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany, is having destabilizing effects in the current economic environment, at least in the short term. Saudi Arabia's profound dismay over the deal has intensified as the fall in oil prices forces King Salman to cut subsidies and social payments that have traditionally helped sustain public support for the government. As Iran seeks to reclaim its share of the global oil market and tensions with Saudi Arabia grow, finding a route to peace in Syria and Yemen may prove even more difficult in 2016 than in 2015.

The US and Europe, which still face their own economic challenges, are not well-positioned to manage the risks that the decelerating global economy generates. EU governments are in a desperate race to establish processes, structures and laws to cope with the unprecedented influx of refugees from the Middle East and North and East Africa. They are attempting to do so, however, at a time when levels of trust between the East and West, as well as between the northern and southern EU member states, have severely eroded as a result of both the political battles waged to stabilize the eurozone and differing approaches to migration. German leadership, which had been grudgingly welcomed in 2014, now elicits greater ambivalence in the wake of Chancellor Angela Merkel's generous yet unilateral decision to welcome refugees and Germany's hard-nosed desire to concentrate the delivery of Russian gas to Europe via the Baltic Sea.

Should the 2015 drop in commodity prices destabilize African governments that had hoped to use the resource boom to drive employment and growth, a much-feared expansion of sub-Saharan African migration to Europe could start to materialize this year, placing even greater stress on the EU's internal decision-making and leaving even less time to confront the continuing chaos in Syria and Libya.

Although the EU is still a relative pole of stability in an uncertain world (hence its status as the top destination for refugees and migrants from its neighborhood), its fragile recovery could easily be knocked off the rails if the slowdown in emerging economies were to gouge the profit margins of leading European exporters of industrial equipment, infrastructure goods and services, and high-end consumer products, from cars to luxury apparel. Another major terrorist attack or a disorderly collapse of the EU's Schengen area would also have economic knock-on effects that could exacerbate the EU's internal political acrimony.

And looming over the EU is the upcoming UK referendum on whether or not to remain a member of the EU. A majority vote in favor of a "Brexit" would have a severe impact on EU cohesion at a time of strengthening populist parties across Europe, a metastasizing Islamic State and a still unpredictable Russia.

The US is thus embarking on its presidential election year with international security at the top of the agenda and its main ally, Europe, on the back burner. Worryingly, the global economic slowdown is likely to heighten many Americans' deep frustrations that they are not benefiting from the international economic order the US helped build.

Further declines or devaluations of trading nations' currencies could heighten that sense of frustration, whether with allies like Japan or competitors like China. Whatever the critiques by those inside and outside the US about President Obama's recalcitrant approach to foreign policy, US public opinion is unlikely to give its next president much more room to manoeuver.

The shift from west to east in the global economy's center of gravity, which began twenty-five years ago, reflected a natural re-balancing of the international economy to a more healthy convergence between the size of a country's population and its overall GDP. Whatever worries existed that this re-balancing would lead to dangerous competition between its winners and losers have been overridden by the dominant sense that globalization has offered absolute gains to the vast majority participating in it. In this context, regional and international initiatives that would further enlarge the benefits of deeper economic integration, from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to the planned Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), remain on track.

Today, however, China's difficult and unpredictable transition from a developing to a middle-income economy – mirrored in a number of other countries finding the struggle even harder, e.g. Turkey, Brazil and South Africa – could lead to more of a zero-sum environment in which borders harden and domestic regulations become more discriminatory to outsiders. Policy makers would do well to remember that when international economic dislocation coincides with a major geo-political transition, as happened in the 1930s, they face a most dangerous moment in international relations. ■

IMAGO/KYODO NEWS

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What is the relation between China's economic slowdown and the quarrel over the islands and reefs in the South China Sea? China wants to divert public attention from the country's economic turbulence, possibly creating greater risks.

A new cold war?

The next US president must avert one

The fight against the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), al-Qaeda or other jihadist terrorist groups is not going to make or break America. When the West overreacts to their attacks, the jihadists win. We have too often been played by the terrorists, who, like judo fighters, leverage our own strength against us with minimal effort and sustainable capacity.

As tragic as it is, the situation in the Middle East is, in the end, a matter for battling local and regional players to settle. Have we not learned from 15 years of war since 9/11, only to see the rise of IS, that outside intervention is counter-productive?

For the first time since the end of the Cold War, two major world powers with distinctly different cultural and political orientations – the US and China – are contending to shape the global order. By lifting itself out of poverty and rising to the top ranks of the world economy, China has enabled other emerging countries to grow and has become an indispensable engine for global prosperity in the decades ahead.

IMAGO/ZUMA PRESS

The 21st century will only find peace and security if America and China work together and do not become enemies. To avoid such a historic blunder, mutual respect and understanding must be built through a working relationship between the next US president and China's President Xi Jinping.

While standing firm on American interests such as cyberdefense and opposition to changing borders by force, the next US president must also seek to avert pushing China and Russia into a more formal alliance. Russia, like the US itself, is refurbishing its nuclear arsenal.

The worst development would be if the world once again were to break up into rigid blocs, fortified by a new nuclear arms race. Even if the ethical calculus is not clean, working with Russia is essential for global security. In many ways, President Putin just wants respect. The US should grant that respect with no less illusions than during the stable years of détente with the Soviet Union.

For the West to remain strong in facing this new competition with the East, the US needs a powerful civilizational ally in Europe. Europe today, however, is no longer functional as a reliable partner. On the contrary, it is paralyzed by every crisis it faces – from Greek debt to refugees – and is disintegrating before our eyes.

As the de facto leader of the West, the next American president should press for a Europe that, at a minimum, federates fiscal and foreign policies, as well as immigration and energy policies – in short, a common Europe that is the other pillar of the West. Otherwise, America will have to rely on a series of nations, each too small to matter alone, yet each also hobbled by the straightjacket of being part of a dysfunctional European Union. *Nicolas Berggruen*

The time is out of joint

Ukraine, Iran, Syria: Russia and the West will have to make tough choices, even if national interests collide | By Michael Stürmer

"The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to set it right" – Hamlet's complaint after encountering the ghost of his father sounds very modern (above: chromography, late 19th century).

IMAGO/LEEMAGE

The Cold War is over. That's the good news about a monumental achievement that should not be forgotten. The bad news is that the world is still a dangerous place, even more so. At a recent conference including Russia and the Western powers in search of backchannel solutions, a seasoned US diplomat stated that over the course of his career spanning 50 years, disaster has never so close at hand. He even mentioned the w-word. If this was alarmist, an even more harrowing fact was that no one among the participants questioned the validity of so somber a statement. The new confrontation calls for an agonizing reappraisal and a return to realpolitik.

"The time is out of joint," as Shakespeare's Prince of Denmark is often quoted these days. Some security experts allow themselves to recall when the Cold War united the two superpowers in a cartel of war prevention, as French philosopher-strategist Raymond Aron adroitly observed at the time.

Even during the heyday of nuclear arms control and détente, the crisis over intermediate-range nuclear forces was the dominant conflict between the Soviet Union and NATO – led by the US – until Mikhail Gorbachev recognized that the Soviet system was doomed. To save it, he tacked from a course of confrontation to one of cooperation.

When the endgame began, US President Ronald Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz were shrewd enough to avoid triumphalism. The Soviets saving face and preventing collapse were overriding features of US diplomacy at the time, providing a soft landing for its antagonist of more than half a century.

The underlying pattern had been, and remained so well into the 1990s, a long, carefully negotiated and well-circumscribed nuclear peace. Each side of this secular confrontation had been careful to keep its distance from any potentially entangling maneuver, let alone from the experimental excursion into uncharted territory, which would become rather common in the post-Cold War era.

Germany was the issue that dominated postwar Europe. Each side of the conflict denied its opponent full control over the divided city of Berlin and, to cite the 1945 Potsdam formula, over "Germany as a whole." Once the German question had been put to rest with the "Two plus Four" treaty – and the Soviet Union collapsed, along with oil prices, wreaking chaos – the rough balance of the past was gradually replaced by an eastward expansion of Western institutions, especially NATO and the European Union. Although the NATO-Russia Council and its Founding Act were offered as a consolation prize, just when it was needed most, the conflict in Kosovo and then, with much more urgency, the crisis in Ukraine made any further cooperation highly unlikely. Western politicians had forgotten Otto von Bismarck's time-honored caution that revisionist history is more precise than even a Prussian bureaucrat.

It was in October 2014, in a luxury hotel more than a 1,000 meters above the city of Sochi, when members of the Valdai Club, an informal gathering of international Russia experts, were greeted by a slogan capturing the new mood in Russia: "New order or no order." The Kremlin, playing the host, was announcing that Russia was back in the Great Game, that it wanted to be respected as a global power second to none, and that Russian elites were unwilling to live by values other than their own – at whatever the cost.

In an assertive speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin had warned the West to avoid stepping too near the grizzly bear's den. He was now staging, step by step, an exercise in brinksmanship to remind Americans that Russia had the power of unlimited escalation and could deny the US most or all of its global ambitions; to mobilize patriotic sentiment at home and turn Russian dreams away from Western-style democracy; and to intimidate Russia's immediate vicinity, which he menacingly referred to as the "near abroad."

For today's Russia, in spite of a never-ending litany of criticism and complaints, the East was caused by US actions: "We told you so."

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US is still the measure of all things. This was truer during the 1990s, when Russia embarked on a stormy voyage towards the distant shores of Western-style modernity, a market economy and democracy, but has become less true since the Kosovo War that Russia tried to prevent but was ultimately unable to control. Russia also opposed the ill-advised US invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, reminding the world ever since that much of the turmoil across the Middle

A major shift in the global "correlation of forces" – to borrow a phrase from Soviet-speak – took place on Putin's watch. It was built on a steady rise in the price of oil and resulted in a military modernization that the West ignored – at its own peril. While the "sole surviving superpower" fell victim to its own hubris in the Greater Middle East, Putin's Russia was the beneficiary of the rising price of hydrocarbons coupled with the enthusiasm of Western industrial democracies to invest in Russia. The weakness of state and society was conveniently ignored.

The good days are over. Western enthusiasm has all but evaporated, chiefly due to Russia's takeover of Crimea and its hybrid war in the Donbass region. Once again, Russia is "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" – as Winston Churchill famously declared. But Churchill added that the only sure guide to Russia's behavior was its own national interest. That was true then, and it's still true now.

Mixed signals are coming out of Moscow and Western countries will be faced with tough choices, beginning with the Minsk II agreement, regarding which the Ukrainian side is even more reluctant – and perhaps more impotent and incompetent – than Russian leaders. "Punish Putin" was the knee-jerk reaction by the US administration to the formal annexation of Crimea, which Russia maintains was a secession confirmed by a hasty referendum. While history is on Russia's side, international law falls more on the side of US and EU sanctions.

By now the West, under the gloss of righteousness and massive pressure from the US Treasury, is deeply divided over the future of the various layers of sanctions. Germany is following the US lead, but grumbling ever more loudly and even signing up for a second North Stream gas pipeline, much to the dismay of eastern and southern allies. German industry and banks are conspicuously averse to the sanctions, complaining of US interference in their livelihood.

The West has thus far remained unified. But for how much longer can this hold? By nature, sanctions are neither peace nor war, but something in between. Moreover, experience shows that more often than not they are subject to the law of unintended consequences, such as with Japan and Italy in the 1930s. Russia is looking for partners all over the world. But is it in Western interests to sponsor the "strategic partnership" between Russia and China? As yet, it is neither strategic nor a partnership, but should the West really encourage any sort of mutual understanding?

Ukraine is a basket case, balancing on the brink of collapse and bankruptcy. As Raymond Aron once observed, a country cannot be saved against its will. To pin hopes for a global strategic balance on a player like Ukraine amounts to insouciance, inviting not only misunderstanding – "sleepwalkers" was the term used in 2014 – but disaster.

It is high time to forge compromises, find face-saving solutions such as a non-alignment status for Ukraine, put the Crimea dossier into deep freeze for a decade or so, hold a referendum and see what happens. The whole of the Balkans, Bismarck once said in a similar context, is not worth the healthy bones of one Pomeranian grenadier.

Confrontation is in the cards, but so is cooperation. It was – and is – national interest that made Russia an active member of the P5+1 group that secured the containment of Iran: Moscow had to weigh its interest in non-proliferation against the oil glut and the fall in oil prices bound to occur with the lifting of Iran's sanctions and the added presence of Iranian oil on the world market.

Perhaps the situation most emblematic of the state of the world is the Syrian drama. Russia is defending its interests on the Mediterranean coast. It is doing so "by invitation," as Russia likes to say. To secure Russia's military base in Tartus, Putin must pretend that Assad is a legitimate ruler, notwithstanding past performance. But to contain militant Islam both at home and throughout the Middle East, Putin must also lend some support to the US-led alliance. Once again, the motive is Russia's national interest.

The Cold War is over, but the world is, more than ever, a dangerous and increasingly unpredictable place. As Shakespeare wrote, "'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good." When it comes to Russia and the West, any German government will have to perform a balancing act between a resurgent Russia and the US tendency to run Europe and the Middle East by remote control. While the US is still the "indispensable nation" for keeping the world in some kind of order, Europeans will have to embrace a more serious posture in global affairs. The future bodes more trouble – between Washington and Berlin as well. ■

Monitoring mission: The OSCE special commission confirms weapons withdrawal from the contact line in the Donetsk People's Republic.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/SERGEY AVERIN

Letting go

Even if full implementation of Minsk II seems unlikely, the EU and US should continue pressing all parties to meet its provisions | By Steven Pifer

Approaching its one-year anniversary, the February 2015 Minsk II agreement to end the conflict in eastern Ukraine's Donbass region is not faring well. All of its provisions were to have been implemented by Dec. 31, 2015. Few were. Yet Minsk II remains the only settlement arrangement on offer and continues to command at least rhetorical support in Kiev and Moscow. For the foreseeable future, however, it appears that Donbass is destined to occupy a place on the list of frozen (or not-so-frozen) conflicts dotting the post-Soviet space.

Following Russia's military seizure of Crimea, an armed separatist conflict broke out in eastern Ukraine in April 2014. Moscow gave the separatists significant support: leadership, funding and heavy weapons as well as political backing. When the Ukrainian military appeared on the verge of retaking the Donbass in August 2014, regular units of the Russian army intervened.

A ceasefire was hastily brokered in Minsk in September 2014, but it never seriously took hold. Fighting continued while discussions in the trilateral contact group – chaired by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and involving representatives of the Ukrainian government, separatists and Russian government – made little headway. In February 2015, with a looming possibility of a resumption of full-scale conflict, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Hollande brokered the Minsk II agreement between Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine.

Minsk II provided for a ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact within two weeks' time. Other provisions laid out the terms for a political settlement, including the release of prisoners, a special status for Donbass, local elections, constitutional reform to provide for the decentralization of authority to local governments and the restoration of full Ukrainian control over its border with Russia.

Implementation of Minsk II got off to a poor start. Separatist and Russian forces ignored the ceasefire and instead launched a major attack at the key rail center in Debaltseve. While the line of contact separating the two sides subsequently stabilized, the sides continued to exchange fire. In August 2015 the Ukrainians reported as many as 200 ceasefire violations per day.

Things improved somewhat in autumn. The ceasefire took better hold in September and the sides withdrew much of their heavy weaponry, though not all fighting came to end. In October Poroshenko, Putin, Merkel and Hollande met in Paris and agreed that local elections in the separatist-occupied parts of Donbass should be postponed until they could be organized in accordance with Ukrainian law and under OSCE observation, as provided for by Minsk II. The separatists, under some pressure from Moscow, agreed to the postponement.

Kiev and the separatists have yet to agree on terms for holding the elections. The separatists demand that Donbass receive special status before the elections are held, while the Ukrainian government demands that the elections should be held first and then certified by OSCE to have met democratic standards. In another possible complication, a separatist leader has said that pro-government political parties would not be allowed to compete in the local elections.

Furthermore, Ukrainian officials argue that the separatists and Russians have failed to meet key Minsk II provisions, including the withdrawal of foreign forces and military equipment from Ukraine, full access for OSCE to the Donbass, the release of all illegally detained persons and the restoration of Ukrainian control over the border. The separatists claim that Kiev has not yet granted amnesty and has not enacted constitutional reforms to provide for decentralization.

Concerning decentralization, on Aug. 31, 2015, the Rada (Ukraine's parliament) passed a constitutional amendment on first reading with 265 votes. The vote generated controversy as opponents criticized it for rewarding the separatists. The Radical Party, one of five that constitutes the pro-government coalition, left the

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vote in protest. The amendment must pass on second reading with a constitutional majority of 300 votes. In a new twist, Prime Minister Yatsenyuk suggested on Jan. 24 that the amendment instead be put to a referendum.

Most disturbingly, perhaps, leaders of the "People's Republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk have repeatedly stated that they will not accept a restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty, which is, of course, the ultimate objective of Minsk II.

All the agreement's provisions were to have been implemented by the end of 2015. In a Dec. 30 phone conversation, Poroshenko, Putin, Merkel and Hollande agreed to extend the deadline into 2016, but did not fix a specific date.

> "Russia is not yet prepared to reach a settlement of the crisis in eastern Ukraine, at least not on terms that would be considered reasonable for Kiev."

While Russia moved promptly to annex Crimea in March 2014, it has given no indication of similar intentions regarding Donbass. Crimea has historical significance for Moscow and hosts the Black Sea Fleet. Moreover, it is proving a financial burden, and most analysts believe that Donbass would impose an even heavier burden. The Kremlin appears to regard Donbass as a means to destabilize Kiev and to make it more difficult for the central government to proceed with needed reforms and implementation of the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement.

Moscow's apparent support for ratcheting down the violence in Donbass and for postponing local elections there, coupled with the appointment of Boris Gryzlov, a Kremlin insider, as Russia's point-person for the conflict, have led some to suggest that Russian policy may be changing. They argue that Kremlin policy has hit a dead end in Donbass, that Moscow has now turned its attention to Syria, and that the Russian economy is in more difficult straits than anticipated. The economy contracted by 4 percent in 2015 and, faced with the low price of oil and Western economic sanctions, is expected to contract further in 2016.

Kremlin policy may be changing. But it is also possible that Moscow has concluded that, at this point in time, no further destabilization is necessary. Politics in Kiev has become more difficult over the past half-year. In addition to the Radical Party's departure from the pro-government coalition, rifts have reportedly broken out between Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk while public approval ratings for both leaders and the government's performance have plunged.

Absent a more serious effort by Moscow to implement the Minsk II provisions, all indicators point to the conclusion that Russia is not yet prepared to reach a settlement of the crisis in eastern Ukraine, at least not on terms that would be considered reasonable for Kiev.

The most likely state in which Donbass will remain into the foreseeable future is thus a frozen (or not-so-frozen) conflict, where there is no major fighting yet no complete ceasefire, and where negotiations on implementing Minsk II continue yet show scant real progress. That would allow the Kremlin to ratchet up the conflict at a later point if it desired to further pressure Kiev.

The Ukrainian government, while regularly reiterating its desire to implement Minsk II and restore sovereignty over all of Donbass, may consider a frozen conflict acceptable for the near to medium term. Kiev is not in a position to assume economic responsibility for Donbass, which would require significant humanitarian assistance and reconstruction funds to repair the heavy damage caused by nearly two years of fighting. Some privately question whether Ukraine should seek the return of Donbass or just let it go. It is not apparent, however, that letting Donbass go would settle matters with Russia, particularly as Moscow appears to use Donbass as leverage to pressure Kiev, rather to pursue securing the territory as part of Russia.

The EU and US should continue pressing all parties to implement the Minsk II provisions, even if full implementation seems unlikely. That means urging Kiev to do its share. If, or when, it is concluded that Minsk II has failed, the Ukrainian government should be in a position to say that it did everything in its power to honor the agreement, so that the blame will rest squarely with Russia and the separatists.

The key to settling the conflict continues to lie in Moscow, which has decisive influence on the separatists. Western policy should aim to change the calculation of costs and benefits underlying the Kremlin's policy toward Ukraine.

The West should continue to give Kiev political support and – provided that the government accelerates economic and anti-corruption reforms – additional financial assistance, with the aim of bolstering Ukraine's resilience. Additional military assistance should be provided with the objective of driving up the costs of any renewed offensive by separatist and Russian forces.

The West should make clear to Moscow that a return to more normal relations will depend on the Kremlin changing its policy toward Ukraine. In particular, the EU and US should hold to their position that sanctions will be eased only after Minsk II is fully implemented. As for the separate issue of Crimea, Kiev has wisely said it should be addressed in the longer term. Western sanctions linked to Crimea should continue to apply.

Above and beyond Ukraine, the West must take into account the broader implications of Moscow's use of military force against Ukraine. While the likelihood of Russian military action against a NATO member state is low, it cannot be entirely discounted. NATO should take steps to bolster its conventional forces and deterrent capabilities in the Baltic States and Poland.

In many quarters of the West there is interest in engaging Russia, which should certainly be a part of the EU and US approach. But the West should recognize that the more effectively it bolsters Ukraine and demonstrates NATO's readiness to deter other Russian provocations, the more likely it will be that engagement will prove fruitful. ■

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NATO's next strategic adaptation

The alliance must improve military readiness, reinforce its collective defense posture and accelerate decision-making

By James Hackett

PICTURE ALLIANCE/AP PHOTO
PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/MARCIN BIELECKI

More crises in more places: With an assertive Moscow, IS and vulnerabilities on its southern and eastern flanks, NATO is improving its military readiness, reinforcing its collective defense posture and accelerating decision-making. Above: the results of a bombing attack by Russian Sukhoi Su-30 aircraft in Damascus, Jan. 31, 2016; and French soldiers during a NATO exercise in Poland, May 29, 2015.

The use of military force to redraw national boundaries on Europe's borders was a stark reminder to NATO that relations with Russia could deteriorate as well as develop. The alliance began to craft a response to Moscow's aggression at its 2014 Summit, and the credibility of this response will be measured at NATO's Warsaw Summit this July.

It was no surprise that Russia's actions in 2014 – annexing Crimea and supporting separatist forces in eastern Ukraine – caused considerable concern in NATO capitals, particularly in its eastern member states. As leaders agreed in the Wales Declaration at the end of the 2014 Summit, "Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace."

The capabilities Russia has recently employed highlight that despite budgetary concerns, Russia's armed forces have benefited from significant technical and financial investment. And these capabilities are being used. In Syria Russia has recently demonstrated its advanced guided weapons, launched from both air and sea, and continues to mount large-scale military exercises with tens of thousands of troops.

An assertive Moscow, however, is not the only challenge confronting NATO. The actions of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) along with the continuing fragility and failure of states on Europe's southern and southeastern periphery have had growing impact at home – notably as a cause of the 2015 refugee crisis – and have reminded Europe's defense planners of the complex security challenges they face.

With vulnerabilities on its southern and its eastern flank clearly on display, NATO is trying to improve its military readiness, reinforce its collective defense posture and speed up alliance decision-making. The Wales Summit ushered in another phase of strategic adaptation for NATO. It saw member states agree on a new Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to reassure NATO's eastern members regarding solidarity and the collective defense commitment, and adapt NATO's forces to better respond not just to the renewed challenge from Moscow, but also to instability in Europe's south and southeast. There was an accompanying ambition, for those then spending under 2 percent of GDP on defense, to "aim to move towards the 2 percent guideline within a decade," i.e. by 2024.

Since 2014 NATO's exercise activity has developed both in frequency and scope, in line with the "assurance" side of the RAP. Of the roughly 270 exercises planned for 2015, approximately half took place in NATO's eastern territories. Most significant were those exercises designed to test new structures under the RAP, such as Noble Jump in Poland in June and Trident Juncture in October and November, which tested rapid deployment capacity and interoperability. Trident Juncture was NATO's largest exercise in over a decade, but was still relatively modest compared to some of Russia's exercises.

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The other key strand in NATO's response is "adaptation." On Sep. 1, 2015, the first NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) were inaugurated in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. They are expected to be fully operational in advance of the Warsaw Summit. Others are planned for Hungary and Slovakia. Numbering about 40-50 personnel, these are intended to aid rapid deployment of NATO forces.

In particular, NATO is trying to enhance the NATO Response Force (NRF), increasing it from 13,000 to 40,000 troops. NATO has also set up a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) to operate as the spearhead of the NRF. The VJTF is scheduled to be deployable in 2016; the concept was tested during the Noble Jump and Trident Juncture exercises in 2015. However, one lesson learned was that in peacetime – which might well be the condition in which the VJTF is deployed – bureaucratic measures can cause the movement of munitions, weapons and equipment across European borders to take upwards of 14–30 days.

Member state forces are also changing. US European Command, its leaders acknowledge, has been focused since 2002 on counterinsurgency training for other nations. In October 2015, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) said that "our force level in Europe now is not adequate to the larger Russian task that we see," though he acknowledged that "our current permanent force structure" is unlikely to change. As such, the US is relying on pre-positioning equipment: a heavy brigade set of army equipment (the European Activity Set) has been distributed to maintenance bases in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria – all due to be operational in 2016 – and is ready to be drawn on by US forces rotating through these countries on exercises. Separately, the US has been working to establish two Aegis Ashore sites in Poland and Romania as part of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense.

In the three Baltic States, Lithuania reintroduced conscription in 2015. All are procuring artillery, armored vehicles as well as anti-armor and air defense systems. Poland is also boosting its budget and there are proposals to acquire Patriot air defense systems, AGM-158 air-launched cruise missiles and a range of maritime systems that include new submarines, possibly with the capability of carrying cruise missiles as well. Though the change in government late in the year has raised questions concerning the details of some of these plans, the upward trajectory is clear. In Norway – already one of the few states to have increased spending since 2008 – the government has proposed a 9.8 percent real-term defense budget increase for 2016.

Questions have been raised over Finland and Sweden's relationships with NATO. Increased cooperation is the likely trajectory, but both are examining their capabilities and plan to bolster bilateral cooperation.

However, maintaining the common purpose shown by NATO since 2014 and resourcing future defense plans may be challenging. In 22 of Europe's 26 NATO states, the average share of GDP spent on defense in 2015 was 1.1 percent. Figures provided in the IISS Military Balance 2016 indicate that if all of Europe's NATO states had met the 2 percent target, spending as a whole would have risen by nearly 45 percent. Allocations have increased in Northern and Eastern European member states most concerned about Russia's actions, but among some Southern European NATO states, in particular those hit hardest by the effects of the financial crisis, the economic situation will complicate attempts to meet the target of 2 percent.

Furthermore, while responses to Russia's actions have given NATO renewed purpose – only a few years after its post-Afghanistan relevance was called into question – member states must now reckon with more crises in more places, and these crises may not resonate to the same degree in all countries. For example, many southern member states are directly affected by instability in the Middle East and North Africa, resulting in an increased flow of refugees. In response, Italy allocated significant military assets to its Operation Mare Nostrum before it was replaced by the EU's Operation Triton in 2014.

In 2015 France suffered two major terrorist attacks and as a result significantly boosted defense outlays. While it has taken an active role in NATO's assurance measures, France's principal military focus is now on domestic security and tackling IS, as well as on its existing commitments in Africa. These examples indicate the remaining importance of developing a cohesive perception of European security concerns in order to develop and maintain a system of unified response.

The military assurance and adaptation measures agreed in Wales are important capability developments, but more remains to be done. As an example, some observers may consider recently established forces and facilities, such as NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), to be a tripwire for triggering NATO involvement in the event of an attack, while some allies in the East are calling for a more permanent NATO presence in their territories.

Furthermore, although the RAP has addressed NATO decision-making structures – long seen as a possible hindrance to potential rapid reaction – and SACEUR has been given the authority to prepare NRF troops for deployment up to the point of issuing an activation command, the type of crisis states may face could complicate decision-making. For instance, regional states may face non-military or "hybrid" threats as well as military challenges, and there remains debate on which threats and actions, short of military attack, should invoke an Article 5 response. With deployment of the NRF (and VJTF) still subject to North Atlantic Council (NAC) approval, adversaries could create or exploit seams between allies, which has the potential to affect deployment decisions.

But in the Eastern European context, the assumption remains that after a decision to deploy, NATO is indeed rapidly able to reinforce its allies. In the past few years, Russia has deployed capabilities in its Western Military District, including the movement of Iskander missiles into Kaliningrad, the Bastion coastal defense missile system and advanced combat aircraft and air-defense systems. These deployments could impede access to the region and constrain freedom of action in the Baltic Sea. Anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) had been previously mentioned, mainly in the context of the Asia-Pacific; now it concerns NATO in Europe.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in January 2016 that "NATO does not have the luxury of choosing between either responding to challenges stemming from the south or the challenges stemming from the east, we have to do both at the same time." Progress has been rapid towards meeting the goals agreed in Wales, but with challenges only multiplying, the process of change for NATO is likely to be a more fundamental and time-consuming exercise than observers initially realized. While the Wales Summit ushered in a phase of strategic adaptation for NATO, there will be pressure in Warsaw to continue this process, and to decide how and in which ways NATO must further transform itself to address the range of security threats facing the alliance. ■

Russia's Syria gambit

Putin's overriding goal in the Levant is not defeating terrorism, but elevating Russia's place in the world order

By Dmitri Trenin

IMAGO/ITAR-TASS

Vladimir Putin's goal: changing the world order, and elevating Russia's position within it.

Four-plus months into Russia's military operations in Syria, it is time to look at the results it has produced thus far, the objectives Moscow pursues and the risks that are involved.

The Kremlin's rationale for going in was rather straightforward. No government takes lightly the decision to put military forces in harm's way. Those who argue that President Vladimir Putin went into Syria to replace on Russian TV screens the picture of a stalemate in Donbass with one of Russian Air Force prowess in the skies over Syria should know better. The first thought average Russians had upon hearing of their country's involvement in Syria was "Afghanistan." Such a move is far less likely to win political capital than to spend it.

Russian airpower was deployed to Syria after Moscow had concluded that the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's military was imminent. If allowed to happen, that would have almost inevitably led to the takeover of Damascus by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS). Such a triumph would have greatly enhanced the extremists' appeal not only in the Middle East, but across the entire Muslim world. Putin, thinking he both could and had to prevent it, proceeded to order Russia's first-ever offensive military operation in an Arab country. The immediate objective of the intervention has been reached. With Russia's support in the air, Assad's military was able to stabilize the situation on the battlefield and gain some ground, at the expense of other jihadi groups more than of IS itself.

Putin's longer-term objective was to have as many jihadists killed in Syria as possible, particularly those hailing from Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. Russian forces intervened in the Middle East to avoid having to fight at home. It is still too early to assess the success of this strategy. A month into the Syria campaign, terrorists bombed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, causing 224 deaths; and on New Year's Eve an IS-affiliated group attacked Russian servicemen on a tour of the ancient fortress in Dagestan.

Yet it is not a given that if Russia had not intervened in Syria, its citizens would have been spared. Terrorism has been a threat to Russians for over two decades, but Moscow has only now gone abroad to address the problem militarily at its source.

Yet, Putin's overriding goal in the Syrian war is not Syria, or even defeating terrorism, but changing the world order, and elevating Russia's position within it. The Russian leader had consistently aimed at a sustainable arrangement in which all major global security decisions would be made by a committee of more or less co-equal great powers, with Russia as a permanent member of the group.

In Putin's view such an arrangement cannot simply be granted, or even amicably agreed. One must fight for it, sometimes literally so. By inserting the Russian military into the Syrian conflict, Putin has sought to impose Russia on the United States as a major independent party in the fight against IS, and to bolster Russia's credentials as a co-chair of the Vienna peace process.

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Within a few months after the fact, Russia has become an indispensable power in matters of war and peace in Syria. Putin's offer to Washington, first made in 2013, to engineer a peace settlement in Syria brokered by Russia and the US – a sort of "Dayton-à-deux" for the Middle East – has finally found takers in the Obama administration. If successful, the military-diplomatic gambit in Syria would give the Kremlin what it craves most in the international arena: America's recognition of Russia's role as a great power in the post-Cold War world.

This result is of course anything but assured, and the gambit itself is not without risks. The Middle East is not only a graveyard of historical empires; more recently it has been littered with the debris of numerous peace efforts. On the political front, Russia faces huge difficulties with the notoriously fractured Syrian opposition, much of which is hostile to Moscow – as a result of recent Russian bombardments – and overly dependent on outside sponsors. Nor is Russia having a particularly easy time with its nominal ally, Bashar al-Assad. Having saved his regime with its airstrikes, Moscow feels positioned to demand more flexibility from Damascus, but Assad is not always amenable, and often requires Putin to perform heavy lifting to get what he wants.

Putin has also faced difficulties from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who are eager for the end of the Assad regime. The Kremlin leader was unpleasantly surprised by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, a longtime partner who ordered the downing of a Russian warplane near the Turkish-Syrian border. The two men killed in the incident remain the only Russian military casualties of the Syria campaign. The Russo-Turkish relationship, strategically important and economically productive, has suffered a serious blow. Moscow has also had to downplay the image of Russia siding with the Shia regimes in Tehran, Baghdad and Damascus in a region bitterly divided between the minority Shia and the majority Sunni sects. The combined effect of these factors places huge demands on Russian diplomacy.

The Russian military intervention in Syria has thus far paid off, but the future remains unclear. In response to a question at a press conference last December, Putin suggested that Russia would find it easy to withdraw from Syria once its mission there is accomplished. Accomplishing its mission, however, would require a successful completion of the Vienna process and some sort of breakthrough in the fight against IS in Syria. Neither looks imminent at the moment. Even if the mission is accomplished, it is unlikely that Russia, which aspires to a major global role, would vacate a position it has won in the heart of the Middle East.

Russia, meanwhile, would need to prosecute its first "US-style" war, in which the Air Force and Navy engage the enemy with often spectacular strikes while suffering no combat casualties. Above all, Vladimir Putin would need to ensure that the intervention he has ordered does not escalate toward a more traditional military engagement, with Russian ground troops and the inevitable casualties drawing disturbing parallels with the failed Soviet intervention in Afghanistan three decades ago. ■

PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/RIA

A Russian Sukhoi Su-34 fighter bomber, equipped with short- and medium-range air-to-air missiles, being prepared for a mission, Dec. 1, 2015.

Managing the confrontation

Towards a new equilibrium between NATO and Russia

By Łukasz Kulesa

Since the Russian annexation of Crimea, and quite unexpectedly for Western audiences, pictures of military hardware and troops exercising in Central Europe have begun to make regular appearances in the evening news. On their own TV screens, Russian viewers have seen an intensification of hostile, anti-NATO propaganda and even more images of mass drills and parades of modern Russian weaponry. And the escalation of tensions has found physical expression as well; there has been a notable increase in dangerous encounters between the Russian military and those of NATO members. In November 2015, the Turkish Air Force shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber, killing one of its crew members.

In the coming months an even more dangerous military reality may emerge on both sides of the NATO-Russia border, from the High North to the Black Sea. It could include the deployment of additional military forces and new categories of weapons into the area – along with nuclear warheads – and even more frequent exercises. Another incident would increase chances of NATO-Russian tensions spiraling into a graver crisis.

NATO's response to the crisis has thus far focused on strengthening its collective defense capabilities. A number of allies have argued that, given Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its assertive behavior elsewhere, NATO must update its thinking on deterrence and establish clear "red lines" against Moscow's adventurism. If a credible NATO military presence in border areas can be established through deployments and exercises, so the argument runs, Russia would be deterred from initiating aggressive actions against the area protected by NATO.

For its part, Moscow seems happy to perpetuate a confrontational mode of relations with the alliance and to use NATO's increased military activity as a pretext for more military spending and for beefing up its own forces; the Russian Ministry of Defense recently announced that three new armored divisions will be created in its western region "in response" to NATO's actions.

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It is high time to chart a way out of the current cycle of military actions and counteractions. Unfortunately, pushing a "reset" button and simply returning to a pre-2014 state of relations between NATO and Russia is not an option. It must be assumed that the relationship will continue to be adversarial and a return to business as usual is impossible.

Our efforts should focus on establishing a new set of rules for managing the NATO-Russian confrontation at lower political and financial costs, and with a reduced chance of a military crisis or escalation. The aim should be to establish a new military equilibrium, which is understood as a situation where each side avoids introducing military measures that can be interpreted by the other side as provocative or escalatory, but is satisfied that its military posture is adequately robust to deter an armed attack or an attempt at military coercion.

Initial plans should avoid seeking a grand bargain between Russia and NATO or far-reaching arms control agreements, but rather focus on relatively simple confidence-building mechanisms and adjustments to deployment and policy.

The key to establishing a sustainable equilibrium lies in introducing restraint concerning deployments of conventional military forces by Russia and NATO in the border areas. In the run-up to the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, it is understandable that the question of possibly permanent deployments of NATO forces in Central and Eastern Europe attracts most of the attention.

However, it would be a mistake to call on NATO to show restraint while turning a blind eye to Russian military activities. In order to stabilize the Russian-NATO relationship, both sides must signal their willingness to decrease tensions.

WIKIPEDIA

Polar opposites? NATO and Russia.

For Russia, that could include refraining from the deployment of major new units and the establishment of new military bases in the border areas – including Crimea – and abstaining from the addition of more military forces in Belarus. In response, NATO should agree in Warsaw to keep its "persistent" presence in the Baltic States and Poland limited and within the confines of previous pledges of no permanent stationing of "substantial combat forces" in the East.

Second, we need more warning of military exercises, particularly those held in the border regions. Similar to the NATO practice of publishing an advance exercise schedule, a list of major Russian exercises planned for 2016 could be made available by the Russian Ministry of Defense. One particular source of NATO anxiety are Russian "snap exercises," which often involve the sudden mobilization of substantial military forces and their deployment close to NATO-protected territory. As a confidence-building measure, Moscow could voluntarily decide to reduce the frequency and size of such exercises.

Third, NATO and Russia should resume substantive dialogue on their military doctrines and postures. Russia has concerns about the "aggressive" scenarios of NATO exercises in Central and Eastern Europe and the purpose of developing a territorial missile defense in Romania and Poland. In NATO, many experts worry about the threat of hybrid warfare against the Baltic States and about Moscow's apparent readiness to use its nuclear weapons at an early phase of a crisis, in line with its concept of a "de-escalatory nuclear strike." European security will be served well if these concerns are openly discussed by experts from both sides, with the inclusion of the military establishment.

Finally, both sides should refrain from increasing the role of nuclear weapons as more central tools for confrontation. It can be argued that nuclear weapons are already a background element of the current crisis. Russian nuclear saber-rattling has prompted calls for NATO to re-emphasize its own reliance on nuclear deterrence.

However, the absence of restraint could have dire effects. Many in NATO would see certain Russian actions – such as the deployment of nuclear weapons in Crimea, their redeployment to Kaliningrad or withdrawal from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty – as a serious escalation of the crisis, which would increase pressure on NATO to beef up its nuclear posture, leading to a possible deployment of nuclear weapons closer to Russia.

Taken together, the implementation of the steps suggested above can form a basis for stabilizing the relationship between Russia and NATO in a state of manageable confrontation and minimize the chances of the relationship sliding deeper into hostility. While still a far cry from the lofty visions of a NATO-Russian partnership based on mutual respect, the most likely alternative to managed confrontation is an endless crisis, peppered with the occasional outburst of military threats and dangerous incidents. Such is a future that – hopefully – no one in Europe wants. ■

Jens Stoltenberg: The best defense against extremism is unity

Today, we are facing greater challenges to our security than we have experienced for a generation," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in an article for *Newsweek* in late January.

Stoltenberg calls out Russia for "illegally annexing Crimea," making it "the first European country to take part of another by force since World War II."

Russia has now entered the war in Syria on the side of President Bashar al-Assad, complicating matters still further. "I would like to see Russia playing a constructive role in the fight against ISIS, our common enemy," Stoltenberg said. The secretary general considers the challenges the world faces to be complex and multifaceted and sees the transatlantic alliance playing a key role in trying to resolve them.

Stoltenberg wants NATO to strengthen its collective defense. The organization, he writes, has increased its military presence in Central and Eastern Europe. It has more than doubled the size of the NATO Response Force to over 40,000 troops: "NATO is doing what is necessary to stay strong and keep its people safe. There is no contradiction between having a strong defense and being open to dialogue. Being strong means being more able to engage in dialogue with countries such as Russia."

Stoltenberg considers NATO to be at the forefront of the fight against international terrorism. The aim of the organization's biggest-ever operation had been to deny safe haven to international terrorists in Afghanistan.

The former prime minister of Norway also mentioned NATO's efforts in training Iraqi officers in areas such as countering roadside bombs, de-mining, cyberdefense and military field medicine. NATO was working with Tunisian intelligence and the country's special forces to fight terrorism, and stood ready to support Libya should the situation have called for it.

The organization also helped Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to better defend themselves.

In Iraq and Syria, all NATO allies took part "in the global coalition to degrade and destroy ISIS," Stoltenberg said. "They have agreed to additional assurance measures for Turkey, and NATO will continue to enhance Turkey's own air defenses. NATO fully supports all efforts to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria, including a political transition and democratic elections." ■

IMAGO/THOMAS EISENKRETH

How to play the Ukraine card? The board game Risk *was originally released in 1957 and has been reissued many times. It allows for all kinds of strategic alliances and unofficial treaties.*

Game of thrones

Europe needs security arrangements that take Moscow's legitimate interests into account without relegating certain NATO and EU aspirants to a permanent zone of limited sovereignty | By Michael Rühle

Russia's annexation of Crimea and its ongoing undeclared war with Ukraine have created a radically new situation for NATO. Two major premises upon which the alliance's post-Cold War reform was based – that Russia's evolution would remain benign and the enlargement of Western institutions could be reconciled with Russia's interests – no longer apply.

Russia's intervention does not necessarily amount to a direct threat to NATO. However, if Ukraine's wish to associate itself with the European Union is already a casus belli for Moscow, the security of Europe's post-Cold War order, which includes the right of countries to freely choose their alignments, has experienced a major setback.

Worse, with its military intervention in Syria, Russia has now become part of the IS conundrum at NATO's southeastern borders. The West, notably the United States, has been forced to realize that any vacuum it allows to develop in the Middle East will be filled by other actors.

These developments have sparked NATO's largest political and military reorientation since the end of the Cold War. But the Allies must also consider the policy they want to pursue towards Russia. As Russia will be an important factor in shaping political and military developments in both the eastern and southern reaches of NATO, allies must do more than simply lament the failure of earlier hopes for a stable European order.

NATO's initial reaction to the Russia-Ukraine crisis was swift and clear: it increased its military presence and activities in the east. However, transforming these initial reflexes into a posture that is both militarily coherent and politically acceptable will be more demanding.

This has already become evident with regard to the centerpiece of NATO's military response, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which emphasizes the rapid delivery of reinforcements to Central and Eastern Europe. RAP is designed to remain compliant with the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, whereby NATO will not deploy substantial combat forces or nuclear weapons on the territory of its new members.

While it can be argued that Russia's behavior has pulled the rug out from under these assurances, NATO has thus far sought to avoid irreversible steps that could undermine a new rapprochement with Russia. To put it bluntly, RAP was meant to assure Russia as much as NATO's eastern allies.

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The opinions he expresses are solely his own.

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However, given the steady improvement of Russia's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, such as the deployment of modern air defense and anti-ship missiles in Kaliningrad, some are calling for a shift from "reassurance" to "deterrence." They envisage a posture focused less on reinforcements and more on standing, in-theater military capabilities. This should deny Russia the opportunity to use its regional military superiority to create a fait accompli, for example through a limited incursion into a Baltic State.

NATO need not hold changes to its strategy or posture hostage to Russian (mis)perceptions; however, it must carefully ponder the messages such a shift would send to Russia as well as to its member states. What may deter Russia may not necessarily reassure all NATO states. Thus, while NATO's reinforcement paradigm is likely to be augmented by equipment pre-positioning or similar measures, it is unlikely to morph into posturing reminiscent of the Cold War's substantial military deployments.

A similar logic pertains to the nuclear dimension of deterrence. Russia's nuclear saber-rattling has provided a new rationale for nuclear deterrence as a basis of defense, but any revisiting of NATO's nuclear policy will not result in a mirroring of Russian doctrinal and rhetorical excesses. Here, too, reassuring NATO's own members is as important as deterring Russia.

NATO's southern states, where security is determined less by Russia than by instability in North Africa and the Middle East, must also be reassured that NATO remains their best insurance policy. While southern member states have less specific defense requirements than those in the east, their concern about a perceived overemphasis of NATO's eastern dimension is palpable. For NATO to avoid a bifurcation into two regional groupings with different security concerns, it must maintain its ability to conduct expeditionary missions in full, whenever and wherever necessary. The fight by many member states against IS demonstrates as much.

The debate in Europe over the flow of refugees from the Middle East has further bolstered the rationale for addressing the crisis in the region. While the Russia challenge is mainly a matter of deterrence, IS is an immediate threat requiring an immediate military response.

Adapting NATO's military posture is a major challenge, yet developing a new policy towards Russia will be equally difficult; not only have various member states traditionally held different views on Russia, but Russia itself has changed in such a way that a reliable analysis is both necessary and daunting.

Most observers agree that Putin's 2012 return to the office of president has shifted the issue of maintaining power to center stage. Russia's military doctrine strongly reflects the fear of "color revolutions" like those in Georgia and Ukraine, as well as the Arab Spring.

Putin's aim is thus not an elusive reconstruction of the Soviet Union, but rather to maintain the regime and prevent any further waning of Russia's political clout. With Russia's territorial amputations in countries it considers to be within its traditional sphere of influence, Moscow is creating a string of "frozen conflicts" to prevent these countries from joining Western institutions.

At the same time, Russia is propping up Syria, its last ally in the Middle East. Whether it's improvised activism or part of a master plan, most observers agree that this policy is here to stay.

Given this backdrop, attempts to resurrect the overhyped NATO-Russia Strategic Partnership seems futile. However, notions that NATO could remain in wait-and-see mode or that it must build up more military muscle before engaging Russia in a new dialogue are equally shortsighted. Russia's permanent seat on the UN Security Council gives it veto power over NATO-led operations of a nature considered beyond collective defense – a fact that calls for at least some sort of dialogue. The same goes for the need to reduce the risk of military incident.

However, an even more important reason for engagement is the unresolved issue of Russia's future role in European security. The current focus on military balances obscures the fact that the real issue at stake is a geopolitical one: Russia's place in Europe. The West's twin strategy of enlarging NATO and the EU while forging an ever-closer relationship with Russia was contingent on a cooperative environment, i.e. on Russia's acquiescence. Now that Russia has demonstrated that it will violently oppose the further expansion of NATO and the EU into its sphere of interest, the game has changed.

Convincing Russia of the benign nature of NATO and EU enlargement appears a lost cause. Europe needs security arrangements that take legitimate Russian interests into account without relegating certain NATO and EU aspirants to a permanent zone of limited sovereignty. Developing such arrangements will be difficult, particularly as Russia's behavior has all but destroyed its credibility as a guarantor of agreed norms. For the tragedy of a wayward Russia not to become a tragedy for all of Europe, the previous focus on institutions and memberships must be supplemented by policies prioritizing functional cooperation over formal affiliation. More years of hard work are still required for Europe to become truly "whole and free." ■

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A new Warsaw pact

As NATO prepares for this July's summit in Poland, it must face the nature of the Russian threat | By Tomasz Chłoń

IMAGO/ITAR-TASS/ALEXEY KUDENKO

The return of territorial aggression in Europe: Russia's annexation of Crimea will be celebrated again in St. Petersburg on Mar. 18.

For the last 67 years the aims of NATO have been peace and stability based on a rock-solid collective defense, co-operative security and an active role in crisis management. In the post-Crimea security environment, these foundations of NATO strategy remain as valid as ever, but we will have to get our priorities straight. The nature of the threat and our response to it will be the focus of attention when NATO leaders convene at the summit in Warsaw this July.

Russia's annexation of Crimea highlighted the return of territorial aggression in Europe. But it was during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, which resulted in Georgia losing control of part of its territory, that this long-forgotten threat had re-appeared. Moscow's continuous support for the separatists in East Ukraine has further shown its contempt for the territorial sovereignty of its neighbor. Russia's aggression has threatened the very fabric of European security order.

The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was a great opportunity for the Ukrainians, but the Kremlin viewed it differently – as an apparent threat. Ukraine wanted to replicate the transformation and economic success of its Central European neighbors. Although once sharing the same misery of being a Soviet satellite, they are now in far better shape and strongly anchored in Western institutions.

The international security environment around NATO has become unstable. In the East, Russia fails to comply with the Minsk Agreements. While verbal threats such as invading the Baltic States or launching a nuclear attack on Turkey can be considered merely an element of information warfare – or political cockiness aimed at pleasing domestic audiences – military exercises, including the scenario of a nuclear strike (e.g. on Warsaw), and hundreds of provocations in the air and at sea should be treated in all seriousness.

NATO's response to the new security situation at the Wales summit was quick and carefully considered with the clear goal of reassuring eastern allies. It set in motion a military re-adaptation process. NATO approved its Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to strengthen its guarantees under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The RAP envisaged shortening the reaction time of NATO forces if members are threatened. The agreed plans also included creation of a "spearhead unit" within the already existing NATO Response Force (NRF), which would be a very-high-readiness force able to deploy within two to five days. In June 2015, NATO's defense ministers decided to increase the size of NRF to as many as 40,000 troops (up from 13,000 envisaged at the start of 2015). The Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin will also be expanded, and small NATO C2 units (also called NATO Force Integration Units) spread along the entire eastern flank are being activated.

In sum, the agreed measures have increased NATO operational capabilities, a step in the right direction to reassure allies and strengthen NATO's collective defense posture in proportion to the growing threat. At the Warsaw Summit in July, Eastern Europeans expect a further improvement of capabilities, more military presence in the East, better adapted planning and command structure, and sustainability of these processes should they be tested. To do that, allied nations will have not only to muster political will, but also to reach deeply into their purses.

Since the Wales decisions are being implemented gradually, we would like leaders gathered at the upcoming NATO summit to agree on a strategic adaptation that will go further than the RAP: more military forward presence, immediate reaction forces, follow-on troops and rapid deployability, robust national defense, accurate situational awareness, host nation support, a renewed nuclear posture, sound planning and Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities. This should all be comprehensively covered in Warsaw.

In the face of threats from Russia, individual allied nations have already declared their intention to strengthen their presence on the eastern flank. The US is planning a pre-positioning of supplies and military equipment while the UK has already announced a long-term presence of company-sized British army units in Poland and the three Baltic States. In addition, NATO members conducted over 200 military exercises in 2015, and their number and size should grow in 2016.

As much as we appreciate this, we are aware that there is no consensus within NATO as to what further substantive measures should be adopted. The threat perception diverges, which is why we need the determination of all member countries to agree on the threats as well as on a common response to those threats.

Germany is an indispensable power that carries a historical co-responsibility for keeping peace in Europe. Rolf Nikel, Germany's ambassador to Poland, has said recently that Polish-German relations are a treasure to be guarded. Results of these relations include a strengthening of the Multinational Corps North East, the twinning of military units and the deployment of generals from one country to command units from another country. Yet Germany remains restrained about increasing NATO's presence in the east.

During the Cold War, the annual Reforger military exercises, conducted by NATO as a deterrence instrument, involved the participation of as many as 125,000 allied troops in the 1980s.

How can we interpret the Russian-Belorussian Zapad 2013 exercises, with 100,000 troops practicing a simulated nuclear strike on Warsaw? Or Russia's recent plans to strengthen its Western Military District by creating three divisions potentially equipped with nuclear weapons? Or the threat that Russian troops and weaponry already stationed in the Kaliningrad Oblast pose to the Baltic States because of the Suwałki Gap?

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The opinions he expresses are solely his own.

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The scope of threats is even more complicated today, with the "frost from the East" alongside the heat emanating from the "Southern arc of instability." The worst possible mistake by NATO would be to split its threat perception according to narrow regional perspectives. We instead need to see things clearly, and act decisively. The threat posed by Russia is strategic in nature, including its nuclear dimension. Countermeasures require solid collective defense measures supported by credible modern deterrence. The complex of problems to the south calls for a different set of measures, building on two other NATO missions: crisis management and co-operative security.

The Warsaw summit has produced a wise action plan. NATO should continue to do what is has done successfully over the past 67 years, by not seeking conflict, yet staying vigilant and, most importantly, prepared. ■

On the sidelines no more

Two years into Germany's "new" foreign policy

By Volker Perthes

PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/AXEL HEYTHOLD

Two years ago, at the 2014 Munich Security Conference, Germany's President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen all signaled that Germany, henceforth, was willing to play a more substantive role in international politics, particularly with regard to crisis management. Most of Germany's partners and foes have indeed seen that something has changed in Berlin's foreign policy behavior. Some, quite naturally, still criticize Germany for contributing too little; others applaud what they see in terms of leadership; and still others worry about the way Germany leads where it does. This was particularly evident with regard to the refugee crisis, where more than a few EU partners complained that Berlin had failed to consult them.

Even in previous years, Germany was not exactly *machtvergessen*, i.e. oblivious to its international weight and power. Just ask policy makers from Greece. The last two years, however, were something like a crash course in geopolitical realism for post-Cold War Germany. Lessons included the Russian annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine; the explosion of Syria; the participation of jihadists with German or other European passports in the Syrian war; terrorist attacks in Europe; and an unprecedented influx of refugees.

While the European Union has only received some 3 percent or less of all refugees worldwide, the number of arrivals has significantly strained the capacities of states at the EU's external borders as well as of major recipient countries. The stream of refugees has triggered tensions within the EU and has furthered right-wing populist movements almost everywhere on the continent.

More generally, Germans and Europeans are increasingly coming to realize that their idea of institutionalized multilateralism and multilateral decision-making is not shared by most of their partners in the rest of the world. They have had to accept that the United States is no longer prepared to take the lead in any crisis at any time, while rising or re-emerging powers, notably China, India and Brazil, seem yet unprepared to contribute effectively to the global order. As a result, regional orders have been threatened, not only in the neighborhood of Europe, but in Europe itself.

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swp

At the same time, dividing lines between the domestic and international spheres have all but disappeared. The refugee crisis, for example, demands policy approaches that span diplomacy, defense, development, European integration, homeland security and social policy.

Crises that have impact on German and European security are no longer separable from one another: Refugees, Syria, Russia, terrorism and EU problem-solving capacity have merged into one single crisis landscape.

Germans and other Europeans have had to learn that conflicts on their periphery will not simply burn out and may not be containable. They were also forced to acknowledge that major crises in their vicinity will not be resolved, at least not in the short term, but will need to be managed over extended periods.

This changing environment has certainly helped German policy makers develop their country's international profile. Germany has taken the diplomatic lead in the crisis of Russia's presence in Ukraine; it was a key participant in the nuclear negotiations with Iran; it is involved, as a member of the International Syria Support Group, in recent efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian war; and it has accepted the OSCE presidency for 2016. Moreover, Berlin has beefed up its contribution to NATO reassurance measures in the Baltic region and Central Europe. It is also increasingly prepared to contribute military forces to crisis interventions outside NATO's area: as part of UN efforts in Mali, as one of the countries prolonging their military engagement in Afghanistan, with arms deliveries and training activities in Northern Iraq, and more recently with reconnaissance flights over Syria and other measures to support France and the US-led coalition against the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS).

Gearing up: German soldiers help to protect the Afghan army's Camp Shaheen near Masar-I-Sharif in December.

Policymakers in Berlin are aware that their European and international partners expect this new level of international coleadership to become a regular feature of German policies, not just an accidental one. Berlin no longer sees this as a challenge. Rather, these expectations are matched by a growing interest in sustaining the influence Germany has won, not least in diplomatic formats where, despite not being a permanent member of the Security Council, it figures prominently, such as the P5+1 on Iran and the "Normandy Quartet" to address the crisis in Ukraine.

German policy preferences are relatively stable. Even with an increased preparedness to use military force in UN, NATO or EU operations, Germany does not see itself as a military power. Influence can also be won by political and economic means, indeed, in the view of the German elite, much more effectively.

Germany will remain a promoter of a rules-based international order – both in the pan-European realm and globally – and still prefers to act and, where appropriate, lead in association with partners such as France, rather than alone. German policy makers may yet have to learn that it is not always enough to do what is "right" when partners who may even share Berlin's objectives don't feel sufficiently consulted.

Ironically, perhaps, the more Germany assumes leadership roles internationally, the more it becomes dependent on other international actors. The outcome of the US elections will also determine the coherence of the Western community of states; the possible electoral success of the Front National in France could make Germany feel rather lonely in Europe. Further state failures in Europe's south will have all EU states, including Germany, opting for security rather than partnership vis-à-vis the south. And China's regional posture, along with the way Washington and Beijing manage their strategic relationship, will affect German and European efforts to promote multilateral solutions for global challenges such as climate change and cybersecurity.

> "Refugees, Syria, Russia, terrorism and EU problem-solving capacity have merged into one single crisis landscape."

For all these reasons, we should expect Germany to increase its resources available for foreign and security policy over the next few years. Berlin neither meets NATO's 2-percent-of-GDP target for defense nor the 0.7 percent Official Development Assistance (ODA) quota; however, unlike some of its partners it has not slashed its defense budget and has substantially increased funding for diplomacy. Berlin is likely to further develop its diplomatic toolbox, focusing on the opportunities of digital diplomacy and on a more networked national and European foreign policy that takes the activities and possible contributions of non-state actors into consideration. Also expect Germany to become more conscious and transparent about its national interests.

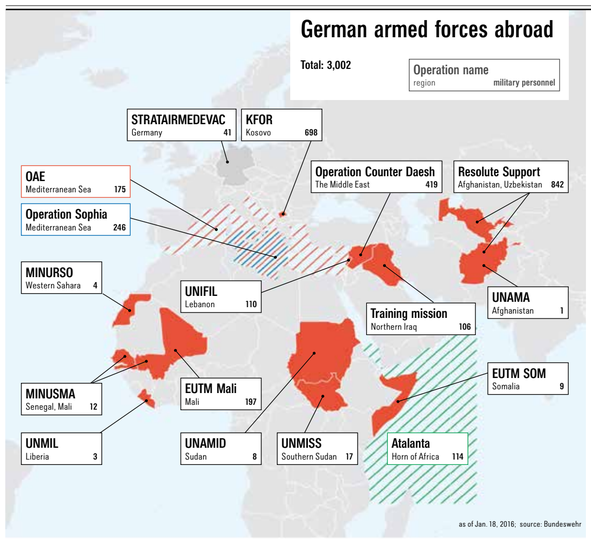
Given the high level of international connectivity not only of the German economy, Germany is vulnerable even to geographically distant developments. As a middle power, however, it cannot be present everywhere with the same level of involvement.

The freedom of the seas in general and more specifically the prevention of military conflict in the South China Sea constitute obvious and fundamental German interests. An aggressive Chinese pursuit of hegemonic aspirations would not only threaten regional stability, but also undermine the international order at large, which Germany and Europe see as vital for their security and well-being.

For Berlin, the solution is not to reduce its engagement in and with China. Rather, Germany is in the process of politicizing its approach to Asia: i.e., engaging in a more open political debate with Chinese leaders while simultaneously increasing its cooperation in all policy fields with like-minded countries in the Pacific Rim, such as Australia or South Korea.

At the same time, there is little doubt that the main focus of Germany's foreign and security policies will be on the eastern and southern vicinities of the EU and on Europe itself. After all, geography remains a critical factor. Immediate security risks tend to emanate from nearby rather than from distant regions; societies are more closely linked; and the capabilities Germany and the EU can muster to manage conflicts, stabilize countries and support economic and political transformation will be more effective in their immediate environment than in other parts of the world.

The EU will certainly remain Germany's main framework of action. Given the turbulence in the world around us, Germany has a fundamental interest in strengthening the foreign policy and security policy dimensions of the EU. It is one thing for German policy makers to enjoy the heightened global demand for German contributions to international politics and privileged relations with Germany. But they must also do more to explain at home that without the EU, Germany – like France and the UK – would be a much less relevant, less secure and less prosperous international actor. ■



PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/CARMEN JASPERSEN

Make love and peace! As the Bundeswehr becomes more engaged in international missions, German soldiers are being sent off – and welcomed back by their wives.

Convergence Divergence

Russia, China, ISIS: Achieving consensus between Europe and the US may prove no less daunting this year than in the past | By Bruce Stokes

The transatlantic alliance faces both challenges and opportunities in 2016: threats of terrorism, the ramifications of a US presidential election, a possible British vote on leaving the European Union, ongoing tensions with Russia, a slowing Chinese economy that may compound already slow European growth and a disappointing US recovery. At the same time, Brussels and Washington continue to negotiate a groundbreaking single transatlantic marketplace, which, if successful, promises creation of an ever-deeper transatlantic relationship.

How Europe and the US respond to both these challenges and opportunities is likely to be shaped by the public mood on both sides of the Atlantic. Such sentiment is decidedly mixed, notably within Europe.

None of this is new. During the Cold War Americans and Europeans differed over how to deal with the Soviet Union. They disagreed on economic policy in the late 1970s and again in the wake of the Great Recession. And they have long seen China through a different lens. Thus today's convergence and divergence in transatlantic public opinion ensures that achieving consensus between Europe and the US may prove no less daunting this year than it has in the past.

A generation after the end of the Cold War, Europeans and Americans have a number of common strategic concerns, albeit many of them are new. But they also differ markedly on what to do about certain common challenges, especially the renewed threat posed by Russian expansionism.

Europeans and Americans share an intense worry about the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS). A median of 70 percent of Europeans in the six most populous EU nations and 68 percent of Americans said they were very concerned about the Islamic terrorist group, according to a Spring 2015 Pew Research Center survey. This poll was conducted before the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 and in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015.

Given these events, it is entirely possible that European concern over IS is now even higher. This already appears to be the case in the US: A December 2015 survey found that 83 percent of Americans thought that IS was a major threat to the national well-being.

Europeans and Americans also share a less intense apprehension about global climate change (42 percent of both are very concerned) and similar worries about tensions between Russia and its neighbors (43 percent very concerned in the US, 41 percent in Europe).

But the transatlantic allies differ greatly in their perception of other international threats. There is a 24-percentage-point differential between American (59 percent) and European (35 percent) concerns about cyberattacks on governments, banks and corporations, and a 20 point divergence in worry about Iran's nuclear program (62 percent of Americans, 42 percent of Europeans).

Notably, neither the American (30 percent) nor the European (17 percent) publics are very troubled by such out-of-area issues as territorial disputes between China and its neighbors. However, the nearly two-to-one differential in their level of concern is a reminder that, thanks to geography and history, the US has Asian interests and responsibilities not shared by its European allies.

When it comes to actually doing something about transatlantic challenges, the allies are united in their support of limited military action against IS. Eight-in-ten Americans and a median of two-thirds of Europeans support current US military actions in Iraq and Syria against the Islamic militant group.

Solidarity is lacking, however, when it comes to dealing with Russia over its actions in Ukraine, raising serious questions about NATO cohesion in the face of the security alliance's gravest challenge since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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KAVEH SARDARI

Seven-in-ten Poles and nearly six-in-ten Americans say Russia is a major military threat. But only about four-in-ten Germans agree. Most Europeans hold the security alliance in high regard: 74 percent in Poland, 64 percent in France and Italy and 60 percent in the United Kingdom.

But just 49 percent of Americans say they have a favorable view of the security alliance. And German backing for NATO has actually fallen 18 points in the last six years, from 73 percent in 2009 to 55 percent in 2015.

Moreover, publics within the transatlantic alliance disagree about their mutual obligation to come to each other's defense. About half or more in Germany (58 percent), France (53 percent) and Italy (51 percent) believe that their country should not use military force to defend a NATO ally that is a neighbor of Russia. And merely 49 percent of the British, and 48 percent of the Polish and Spanish publics, are willing to live up to their mutual defense commitments. Only in the US (56 percent) and Canada (53 percent) does over half stand ready to go to the aid of a NATO partner against Russia.

Pew Research Center findings also highlight other serious divisions within the alliance that arise out of differing perspectives on what to do about Ukraine. 62 percent of Americans favor offering NATO membership to Ukraine, but only 36 percent of Germans agree. Meanwhile, while the American public is divided over sending arms to Ukraine, Germans are clearly against such action: 77 percent oppose while 19 percent support.

Europeans and Americans are closer in their views of China's strategic role in the future. Both anticipate a larger role for Beijing. A median of 59 percent in Europe voice the view that China has already or will one day replace the US as the world's superpower. Americans are again divided on the subject (46 percent say China has or will supplant the US, 48 precent say never), hardly a vote of confidence in the trajectory of US global dominance.

Just as strategic challenges both unite and divide transatlantic publics, Europeans and Americans see eye-to-eye on some of the economic opportunities they face. However, they differ on others. And some of the greatest differences exist within Europe, not across the Atlantic. Both Europeans and Americans share pessimism about the economic well-being of the next generation. A median of 64 percent in Europe and 60 percent in the US believe that when children today grow up they will be worse off than their parents.

There is a more positive common outlook on globalization. A median of 83 percent in six major EU nations and 68 percent in the US believe that growing international trade and business ties are good for their country.

More specifically, half of Americans think that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), currently under negotiation, would be a good thing for the US. And 53 percent of Europeans favor such a deal, according to the most recent Eurobarometer poll.

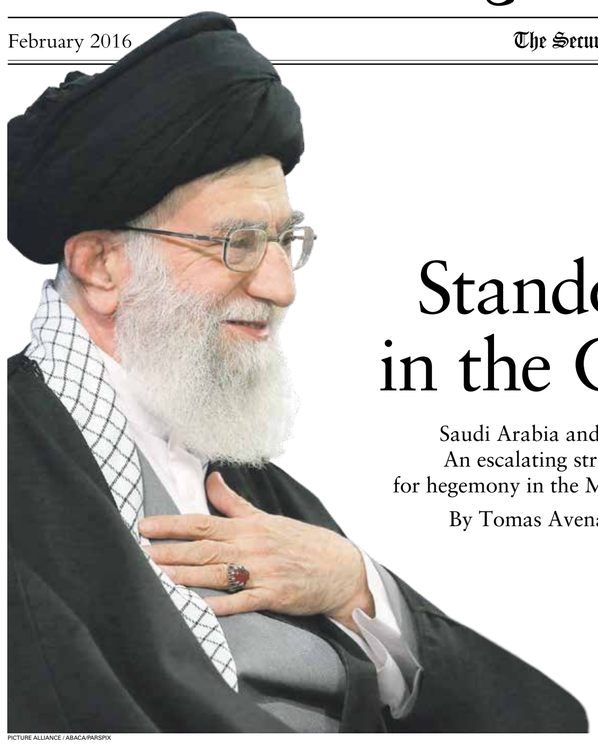
But there is significant dissent within Europe over TTIP. Over half in 24 of the 28 EU nations support such a transatlantic deal. But such backing is falling in most nations, and 70 percent in Austria and 59 percent in Germany actually oppose it. (Just 21 percent of Americans think TTIP would be bad for the US.)

At the same time, European and American publics differ over some of the aspects and consequences of globalization. Half of Americans believe that trade destroys jobs. But a median of just 25 percent of Europeans agree (European public opinion varies widely: 49 percent of the French say trade is a job killer while just 19 percent of the British hold that view).

Meanwhile, Europeans and Americans both embrace and reject foreign investment. A median of 75 percent of Europeans and 75 percent of Americans hold the view that foreign companies building factories in their country is a good thing. Who can object to foreigners creating jobs? At the same time, a median of only 36 percent of Europeans and 28 percent of Americans believe that foreign-led mergers and acquisitions are good for their country,.

Similarly, China, the economic elephant in the room, both unites and divides transatlantic publics. Just 36 percent of Americans believe China is the world's leading economy today. A slightly greater median of 42 percent across six EU countries see China as number 1. There is, however, division within Europe about China: 49 percent of the French but only 25 percent of the Poles see China as the leading economic power.

Postwar history teaches that the US-European alliance does not need Americans and Europeans to see eye-to-eye on every issue. But experience also suggests that the relationship is severely more complicated when transatlantic public opinion diverges. In the months ahead, policy makers will ignore both public sentiment and such divergence at their peril. ■



PICTURE ALLIANCE / ABACA/PARSPIX

Standoff in the Gulf

Saudi Arabia and Iran: An escalating struggle for hegemony in the Middle East

By Tomas Avenarius

PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/BERND VON JUTRCZENKA

Adversaries: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (left), and Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, King and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia.

Whenever the topic is the Middle East, its oil, overt or covert civil wars, Islamist terrorism or Islam itself, we keep hearing a well-worn bit of wisdom from Western diplomats, policy makers and the business community: No one can afford the luxury of alienating Saudi Arabia.

That's true. The Arabian Desert kingdom is an oil super-heavyweight, the leading Arab power in the Gulf as well as the global lead nation of Islam.

However, even before the international nuclear agreement with Iran was signed and sealed in July 2015, a second insight challenging the old doctrine began gaining currency: that today, no one can safely ignore the Islamic Republic of Iran, a rising petro power aspiring towards regional hegemony, a growth market of the future and the most important voice for Shiite Muslims, not least within the Arab world.

The problem with this bilateral configuration on the Persian Gulf is not only that, even for the most hard-boiled policy makers, both states set unattractive examples with respect to their treatment of civil and human rights, democracy and rule of law. The two regimes are world leaders in their use of the death penalty; both in part employ Sharia law; both suppress any real opposition.

In Saudi Arabia, except for one experiment at the local level and – unlike Iran with its highly restricted yet thoroughly active parliament – there's no voting at all. Women's rights are a grim matter not only among the Saudis, but in many respects the Iranians as well.

The view is no more upbeat concerning direct or indirect support for terrorist groups, militias or resistance movements as extended policy arms. Whether it's Tehran's backing of Hezbollah in Lebanon, other Shiite militias in Syria's civil war or the fighting in Iraq, or the Saudi patronage of Syrian rebels and parts of the anti-government forces in Iraq, both countries are extremely problematic and often dubious allies – but also deep-pocketed business partners and indispensable regional actors.

Even more explosive for pragmatically inclined Western politicians is the fact that the two predominant Gulf powers, Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran, have been deeply hostile for decades. That makes relations with these states at the Straits of Hormuz – through which a quarter of the world's traded oil passes – an enormously delicate matter. The Saudi-Iranian conflict, after escalating for months, has by now taken on the dimensions of a Middle East cold war.

The struggle that began three and a half decades ago in 1979 with the Iranian Revolution in Tehran is now being conducted through proxy wars and thinly veiled political conflicts throughout the Middle East. Saudi and Iranian interests collide and clash mercilessly in the wars in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. They each have a barely concealed hand in Lebanon and Palestine. Even the global petroleum market is a theater in this conflict. Saudi Arabia is waging a pricing war on the global oil market. The price of a barrel of crude oil has fallen dramatically during the past year. Energy analysts think the market could go to as low as $20 per barrel, with only a medium-term rebound on the horizon.

Saudi Arabia's ever-higher output is flooding the global market with cheap oil – much to the detriment of its own revenue, which is all but completely dependent on oil. This tactic is no longer aimed chiefly at the US and its rising production levels thanks to fracking. It's also targeting Iran, which is set to return to the oil market now that its sanctions have been lifted as part of the newly forged nuclear agreement.

In the multiple conflicts in the region, loose ends almost always lead back to the two Gulf rivals, and therefore to an institutionalized competition presenting itself increasingly as an intra-Muslim sectarian conflict between the majority Sunni and minority Shiite communities.

At its heart, however, this is a politically driven conflict of interests between two states over hegemony in this strategically vital region. When all is said and done, the catch phrases "Sunnis against Shiites" and "Arabs against Persians" can no longer veil the fundamental conflict between the archconservative Saudi kingdom and the physically and ideologically aging revolutionary Shiite clerics in Iran.

The conflict finally broke out into the open at the beginning of 2016. "The battle of the beards" was the headline of one German mass-market newspaper on the sudden Saudi-Iranian escalation. Enraged at Saudi Arabia's execution of a dissident Shiite cleric, Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, as part of a mass execution of 47 Saudis in early January, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened the Saudis with "divine retribution" for the death of Nimr. A mob that seemed just waiting to be activated then attacked and set fire to the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

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KATHARINA EGLAU

Incensed at this gross violation of diplomatic standards and international protocol, Riyadh broke off relations with its neighbor and pressured other Arab states to follow suit. Bahrain, Kuwait, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates withdrew their diplomats from Tehran, the Arab League sent a bellicose letter of protest to Tehran over the embassy attack, and the Royal Saudi Air Force resumed its bombing campaign in Yemen, its war-torn southern neighbor, breaking a ceasefire that had been negotiated just a few weeks earlier.

Once again, the front now clearly follows the borders of the Sunni-ruled Arab states under Saudi leadership. At least for the time being, Iran can rely on its allies in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, which are all Shiite-dominated in one way or another and form part of the Shiite arc by which Tehran – much to the dismay of the Gulf's Sunni regimes, along with Egypt and Jordan – exerts its influence throughout the Arab world.

Just how much of a threat Riyadh regards its neighbor, both before and after the nuclear agreement, was made clear in a remark by Saudi King Abdullah, who died last year. In a leaked diplomatic cable, he told the US government: It's time to "cut off the snake's head."

Abdullah was overtly urging Saudi Arabia's American ally to bomb Iran's nuclear installations – something the US, as we know, did not do. Instead, President Barack Obama pushed forward with the nuclear deal with Iran, which was concluded in July 2015. It allowed the Saudis' archenemy to return to the global market and to the international stage. No longer is it a pariah state and part of the alleged "axis of evil." The Saudis felt betrayed by the Americans, who had once been their closest ally.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with its population of 30 million, has neither a constitution nor a legal codex that encompasses all areas of law. The basis for parts of its jurisprudence remains the Koran and Sharia law. Unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia – where the state religion is a rigid interpretation of Sunni Islam called Wahhabism – is not a clerical state and not a theocracy. Since the establishment of modern Saudi Arabia in 1932, the foundation of the monarchy, which regards and legitimizes itself as the custodian of all Islam's holy sites of Mecca and Medina, has been an iron pact between the Saud dynasty and Wahhabi Muslim scholars. From the beginning, this alliance has severely restricted the monarchy's capacity to reform.

For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran, with a population of almost 80 million, was created in a revolution against a secular monarch. The fall of the Shah led to the proclamation of a firmly Shiite republic that has both a president and a parliament. Strategic policy and de facto leadership, however, lie in the hands of a "spiritual leader" appointed by a council of experts, mainly clerics. The Vilayat-e Faqih devised by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini means "rule by the supreme religious scholar." In its early days the Islamic Republic also espoused a doctrine of "exporting revolution," spreading fear among the Gulf monarchs and prompting them to establish the Gulf Cooperation Council as a defensive alliance against their unpredictable neighbor.

Even if Tehran has stopped openly propagating the export of revolution, the conflict focuses more on the role of Shiites in the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia has a comparatively large Shiite minority concentrated in the oil-producing areas in the east, which for decades has felt marginalized by the royal family and its Wahhabi-Sunni doctrine. This fact has repeatedly led to protests. In 2011 during the Arab Spring, the problem was compounded by a Shiite uprising in the tiny neighboring state of Bahrain, where Shiites constitute the majority of the population but are ruled by a Sunni royal family closely allied with the Saudis. That explains why the uprising was quickly put down by forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council with the Saudis in the vanguard.

In the Saudis' view, ever since the Iran nuclear deal was finalized, their once-best friends in the West have been falling over themselves to court their Iranian enemy. Most sanctions have been lifted. The red carpet laid for Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on his European tour demonstrated clearly to the leadership in Riyadh just how much the Iranians have risen in European and American esteem since the agreement. Iran, internationally isolated since the Islamic Revolution, is returning to the world market, head unbowed. After three and a half decades of isolation, its decrepit infrastructure requires the investment of billions in nearly all economic areas.

The planned contracts for the European aviation sector alone are raising eyebrows. Iran's state-run airline is ordering 114 jets from Airbus, a huge stroke of luck for the European aircraft manufacturer. Over the longer term Iran will need up to 400 planes to modernize its fully derelict fleet, which suffered for decades from the inaccessibility of spare parts. The Iranians are even interested in US-made Boeing jets.

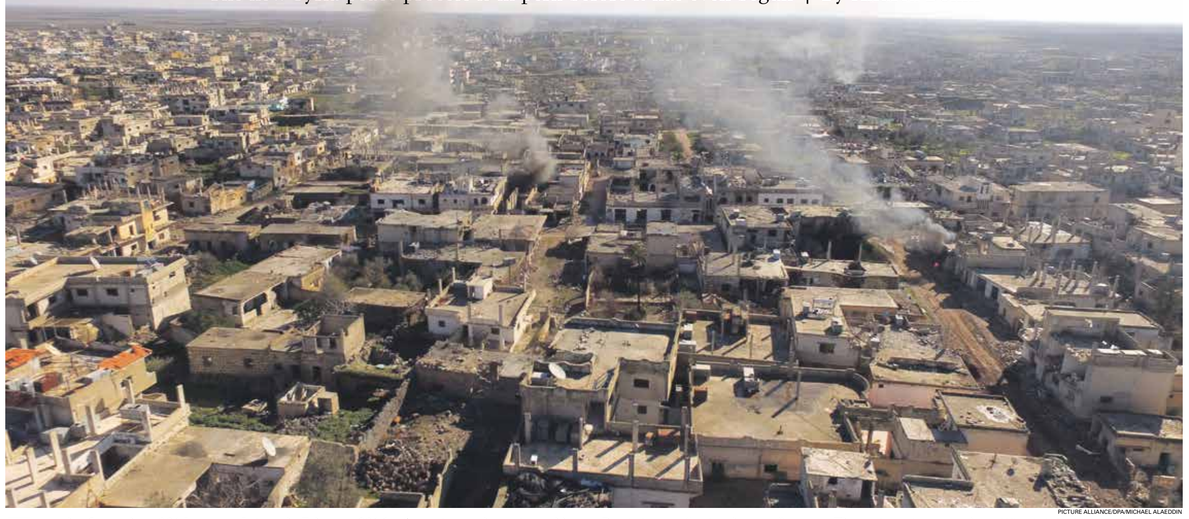
The Iranians need to catch up in numerous sectors: automobiles, rail transport, machine tools, health care, agriculture and much more. During Rouhani's visit to Rome, his Italian hosts not only showed respect for their Muslim guest by serving fruit juice instead of wine (not an uncommon gesture for Muslim state visits), they also covered up the nude sculptures at the Capitoline Museum (an exceedingly unusual gesture, even for Muslim guests). The president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a nation highly sensitive to more than just this issue, was treated to a shock-free reception for thoroughly profane reasons. Rouhani was on a shopping spree. After the lifting of international sanctions Iran has gained access again to some 100 million euros in frozen assets. In this case, respect for the sensitivities of others should pay off. ■

IMAGO/XINHUA

Wrath of the people: Iranian protests against Saudi Arabia after the execution of Baqir al-Nimr, Jan. 4.

Overly optimistic?

The new Syria peace process is in peril before it has even begun | By Andrea Böhm



PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/MICHAEL ALAEDDIN

What is left of the town Al-Shaykh Maskin in Daraq province was liberated from IS by Syrian forces in late January. In five years of war more than 250,000 people have been killed; half of the population has either been internally displaced or forced to flee the country.

In early September 2015 the picture of three-year-old Alan Kurdi shook the world. The photo of the dead boy, having drowned after a boat holding Syrian refugees capsized on the Turkish coast, caused an international outcry. Heads of state expressed their shock, French President François Hollande demanded a shared European refugee policy and other politicians called for new efforts to end the war in Syria.

Five months later Syrians continue to die in Syria and in the Mediterranean, many of them children. The images of their bodies no longer cause a stir. They barely even make it into the news. It is early February 2016 and the world wishes the war in Syria would simply go away. The new round of peace talks in Geneva is aimed at making that happen.

According to the framework agreed upon in Vienna last November, the negotiations in Geneva will lead to a ceasefire and a national transitional government by mid-2016. By the end of 2017 the Syrian people will vote on a new constitution and a new president. By then the first refugees will have returned home and plans for rebuilding the country will be on the table.

Some may call this schedule overly optimistic, but the timeframe is not the main problem. The events on the ground in Syria are threatening this new peace process before it has even begun.

The terror attacks by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) in Paris last November lent diplomatic efforts a new urgency and an initial sense of optimism. All foreign governments intervening in Syria finally seemed to realize that battling the IS is futile as long as the war between the Syrian regime and anti-Assad rebel groups continues.

In Vienna, Iran was at last allowed to the negotiating table, while the US finally granted Vladimir Putin what he had craved: America's acknowledgment that Russia is not a "regional power," as US President Barack Obama once condescendingly called it, but a geo-strategic heavyweight currently ruling the airspace over Syria. In turn, Russia signaled that it could imagine a Syria without Bashar al-Assad, possibly by 2017. Washington responded with a thumbs-up.

Saudi Arabia probably pulled off the biggest success in the run-up to Geneva. At a conference in Riyadh in December the Saudi government, with some help from Ankara, forced the notoriously divided Syrian opposition to agree on a negotiation committee and a list of basic goals, which is surprisingly free of Islamist zealotry. The main points are: the integrity of Syrian territory; preserving state institutions while reforming the military and the security apparatus; free and fair elections; a rejection of any form of terrorism and any presence of foreign fighters; and Assad's removal from power once the transitional process begins.

The fact that one of the most powerful rebel commanders, the Saudi-backed Zahran Alloush, signed on to the Riyadh agreement gave the negotiation committee some badly needed credibility among Syrians. It also provided the opportunity to draw a clearer line between Islamist forces that can be part of a political process and those that have and will have to be fought with military means, such as IS and the Nusra Front.

However, a few days after the Riyadh conference Alloush was killed by an airstrike, which apparently was carried out by Russian planes. Given his record of war crimes – though pale in comparison to that of the Syrian regime or IS – few tears were shed over his death. But the political message of that particular missile strike from then on dominated the preparation of the Geneva talks: Moscow wanted to define who represents the Syrian opposition in Geneva – not only through airstrikes, but also by introducing its own "opposition delegation."

The "Russian list" includes names deemed acceptable by the Assad regime, hence disqualifying them in the eyes of the majority of Syrians. It also apparently includes the political leadership of the Syrian Kurds, who have proven to oversee effective ground troops against IS. Because they are the Syrian outfit of the Turkish-Kurdish PKK, Ankara had blocked their inclusion in the "Riyadh list." Syrian civil society, on the other hand, has had no real voice in any negotiation process up to now. Its members, who run local councils, schools and hospitals in cities and villages outside the control of the regime or IS, and who document crimes by all armed parties, have been systematically shut out.

So it comes as no surprise that the initial sense of optimism quickly evaporated. As this article goes to print, Geneva III, which had already been rhetorically demoted to "proximity talks," has been suspended after only two days until the end of February. The UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura had successfully defused the arguments about who would participate. But the relentless onslaught of Russian airplanes and pro-Assad troops on the ground in Syria, along with the continuation of sieges and barrel bombing against civilian areas, have rendered obsolete any chances for talks. It confirmed the opposition's fears that this round of talks will play out as simply the diplomatic stage of Russia's Syria script: Help the Syrian army and its Lebanese and Iranian allies regain as much opposition territory as possible while at the same time push for a political "transition" that will keep the Alawite security apparatus in power. It is a script that Western countries appear to have accepted. While Western governments insist that IS in Iraq can only be defeated if the Sunni population is given adequate political representation, no such reasoning applies in Syria.

Even the concession of Assad at some point stepping aside seems to be off the table for now. According to a recent report in the *Financial Times*, Assad reacted with an angry "No way!" when a high-ranking envoy of Putin tried to convince him in December that his days as president should come to an end. De Mistura bravely insists that the "proximity talks" have not failed and will resume, but this seems highly unlikely.

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PRIVATE

It may be useful to remember what is at stake; in the fifth year of the war the statistics of suffering in Syria have numbed the international community: more than 250,000 people killed; half of the population either internally displaced or forced to flee the country; more than 16 million in need of humanitarian assistance; about half a million besieged, mostly by pro-regime forces, but also by rebel groups; cities barrel-bombed by Assad's airplanes on a daily basis; Raqqa currently being terrorized by IS; chemical weapons still being used by the regime as well as IS.

But not only is a whole country being destroyed. The war in Syria and the international community's inability to end or at least suspend it has shredded decades of progress in humanitarian law. The UN Security Council has regressed to its worst levels of ideological trench-digging since the Cold War. And the EU has shifted into full panic mode in the face of its refugee crisis. Above all of this hovers the threat of another Paris-style terror attack.

Against this background it was tempting to stem the tide of bad news with reports of progress in Geneva. Both Washington and Moscow have invested too much diplomatic capital to let the process falter before it has even begun. US Secretary of State John Kerry had all but dragged the opposition's delegation to the table despite its repeated precondition that the shelling and sieges of civilians stop.

But keeping up appearances will be no substitute for substance. The flow of refugees will only continue if the barrel-bomb attacks, sieges and shelling proceed and corridors for humanitarian aid are not established. Western countries, but above all Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, have the leverage to restrain all anti-Assad forces that want to be part of the negotiating process. But the Syrian regime is by far the biggest perpetrator of crimes against its own population.

Russia and Iran have the leverage to restrain Assad, which would require considerable self-restraint. According to Syrian and international human rights organizations, Russian airstrikes have targeted hospitals, schools and rescue workers in territory controlled by opposition forces. More than 1,000 civilians have been killed by Russian bombs and missiles since the beginning of Moscow's intervention.

For the time being the new round of talks in Geneva have become another "toxic icing on a half-baked diplomatic cake," as Frederic C. Hof, Barack Obama's former Syria advisor, described Geneva II. Unless Putin realizes that he needs more than just the semblance of a political process, and that his intervention might well experience mission creep, the war will go on. This may be in Moscow's short-term interest. Should the talks indeed resume by the end of February, the regime could be in a position to not have to compromise on anything. And Syrians will continue fleeing to Europe. ■

Syria talks verbatim

At their meeting in Vienna on Oct. 30, 2015, the participants agreed on the following final declaration with the goal of bringing about an end to the violence as soon as possible:

1. Syria's unity, independence, territorial integrity and secular character are fundamental.
2. State institutions will remain intact.
3. The rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religious denomination, must be protected.
4. It is imperative to accelerate all diplomatic efforts to end the war.
5. Humanitarian access will be ensured throughout the territory of Syria, and the participants will increase support for internally displaced persons, refugees and their host countries.
6. Daesh and other terrorist groups – as designated by the UN Security Council, and further, as agreed by the participants – must be defeated.
7. Pursuant to the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and UN Security Council Resolution 2118, the participants invited the UN to convene representatives of the Government of Syria and the Syrian opposition for a political process leading to credible, inclusive, non-sectarian governance, followed by a new constitution and elections. These elections must be administered under UN supervision to the satisfaction of the governance and to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability. They must also be free and fair, with all Syrians, including the diaspora, eligible to participate.
8. This political process will be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, and the Syrian people will decide the future of Syria.
9. The participants, together with the United Nations, will explore modalities for, and the implementation of, a nationwide ceasefire to be initiated on a certain date and in parallel with this renewed political process.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/SHANE FINZ

Once optimistic: US Secretary of State John Kerry and UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura at the Syria conference in Vienna on Nov. 14. As of Feb. 3, the Syria peace talks have been "temporarily paused."

IMAGO/RALPH PETERS

Turkey stumbles

Erdogan's recklessness has jeopardized his country's future | By Michael Thumann

Turkey's relations within the Middle East have often been a story of hope yet soon may end in havoc. Today, Turkey suffers from terrorist attacks by the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) and from an internal war against Kurdish guerilla groups in the southeast. The country has also become party to the region's treacherous Sunni-Shiite divide. Nobody was able to predict such devastating developments when the Arab uprisings began five years ago.

In early 2011 Turkey was a widely respected country comfortably situated between the EU, oil-rich Russia and a relatively peaceful Middle East. The Turkish economic powerhouse granted visa-free travel to many visitors while entertaining good relations with most of its neighbors. These factors contributed to Turkey's sunny image, making it a beacon of hope for many in the region.

Turkey's fall stems from some drastic miscalculations by President Tayyip Erdogan as much as from the country's changing environment. Erdogan's quest for absolute power has divided Turkey while the war in Syria has greatly destabilized regions just beyond its borders. The country is neighbor to a civil war of indefinite duration and unforeseeable consequences; some 2.3 million refugees had settled in Turkey by the beginning of this year. IS terrorists recently targeted German tourists in the heart of old Istanbul and Turkey's tourism sector is sure to suffer dire repercussions as a result.

The IS threat has proved far from easy to contain. Turkey's border with Syria cannot be sealed entirely as refugees cross into Turkey on a daily basis. As the Turkish government has tolerated the movement of IS fighters into Syria in the past, the country is still home to IS cells, particularly in towns close to the border. It will take years of meticulous work by police and secret service agencies to root out these cells operating on Turkish soil.

What has landed Turkey in this precarious situation and what conclusions has the Turkish government drawn thus far?

The current situation cannot be understood without first considering Erdogan's missteps over the past five years. When Egyptian masses began to revolt against President Hosni Mubarak in January 2011, Erdogan, then prime minister, was caught by surprise. Two months earlier he had been awarded the Muammar Gaddafi Human Rights Award by Libya's eccentric ruler; Erdogan enjoyed cordial relations with many dictators in the Middle East, including Gaddafi and Syria's Bashar al-Assad. Turkey had been pursuing a balanced foreign policy, with an emphasis on sound economic relations, while avoiding to take sides in quarrels between Syria and Iraq or Iran and Saudi Arabia. This posture of non-alignment was one reason for Turkey's economic success.

However, things began to change as Mubarak's fall caused Erdogan to rethink his position. Was he not one of the very few democratically elected leaders in the region? Was he not a pious Muslim with great popularity as a leader in the Arab world? Was a successful Turkey not in a position to lead the revolutionized Sunni Arab states through their transition?

Step by step Erdogan distanced himself from the autocratic Arab rulers, yet his fallout with Bashar al-Assad in 2011 proved to have the biggest impact – on both Turkey and the Arab world.

When Assad began waging war against his own population with hopes of saving his rule, Erdogan became his enemy. Even if Turkish forces were not directly involved in the fighting, Turkey supported rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army and various Islamist groups. Jihadist IS fighters received treatment in Turkish hospitals while enjoying freedom of movement between Turkey and Syria.

These measures were aimed at a quick downfall for Assad; they were to help create a new Syrian government that would be dependent on Turkish guardianship and support. Such was Erdogan's plan of action, which thus far at least has not been successful.

NICOLE STURZ

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Bashar al-Assad's survival derailed Erdogan's Middle East strategy. Assad has prevailed due to strong support from Iran and Russia and the absence of a concise American strategy for Syria. By 2014 Erdogan had to have realized that his battle for supremacy in the Levant had failed. He again needed the backing of a strong ally. The United States exerted pressure on Turkey to end all support and tolerance of IS terrorists. Since 2014 American bombers and Western jets have departed from İncirlik air base for their missions against IS targets inside Syria. The US is also trying to convince Erdogan to take a more accommodating stance towards the Kurds at home and thus contain Turkey's devastating internal front, the brutal fight against the Kurdish PKK.

> "Turkey's clout in Syria and the Middle East is severely constrained by its parochial campaign against the Kurds along its southern border."

This is clearly a war of choice. It was Erdogan who, as prime minister in 2005, recognized that Turkey had a Kurdish question. He began a policy of reconciliation and eventually a peace process that would hopefully end the decade-old conflict with a new constitutional agreement on more Kurdish autonomy within Turkey.

However, when Erdogan's party lost a crucial election in June 2015, he used the specter of war as an electoral strategy. He responded to local attacks by the PKK with a completely overblown military campaign. Erdogan knew the renewed war would neither eliminate the PKK nor strengthen Ankara's rule in the southeast, but he was sure it would reaffirm his party's dominance in a new election in November. He was right, yet the war rages on.

The Kurdish battleground utterly complicates matters for Turkey and its new allies in their fight against IS. Erdogan considers the PKK-allied Syrian-Kurdish militia groups his fiercest enemies next to Assad. However, the Kurdish groups in Syria are fighting primarily against IS. Thus, the US has two powerful allies in its struggle with IS, Turkey and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) in Syria, which seem to fight each other as often as they engage IS. Turkey's clout in Syria and the Middle East is severely constrained by its parochial campaign against the Kurds along its southern border.

To make matters worse, Turkey has recently made new allies that may cause it even more trouble. Erdogan has teamed up with Sunni powers in the region; during the Arab uprising Erdogan sometimes acted as if he were the undeclared leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Arab countries. Moreover, after King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud assumed power in Riyadh in early 2015, Erdogan established a close relationship with the new ruler. Turkey and Saudi Arabia cooperate in Syria, have converging views on the treacherous roles of Russia and Iran, engage in close business relations, and both have their problems with Barack Obama's cautious approach in Syria and his reluctance to commit US troops to the common fight against Bashar al-Assad.

Erdogan and the Saudis have found common ground over their sectarian agendas, but not over their particular religious affiliations. Erdogan, although very conservative, embraces Sunni Islam, a far cry from the Wahhabism practiced in Saudi Arabia. Yet their shared opposition to Shiites and Alawites has been a powerful factor in uniting the aims of Erdogan and King Salman.

While the past year has seen the emergence of a Saudi-Turkish alliance, more striking is the recent warming of Turkish-Israeli relations. Israel shares the Saudi view on Iran, the Muslim Brotherhood and other regional issues. Now, against the backdrop of the Syrian war and the Sunni-Shiite rift, even Erdogan and Netanyahu are seeming to find common ground.

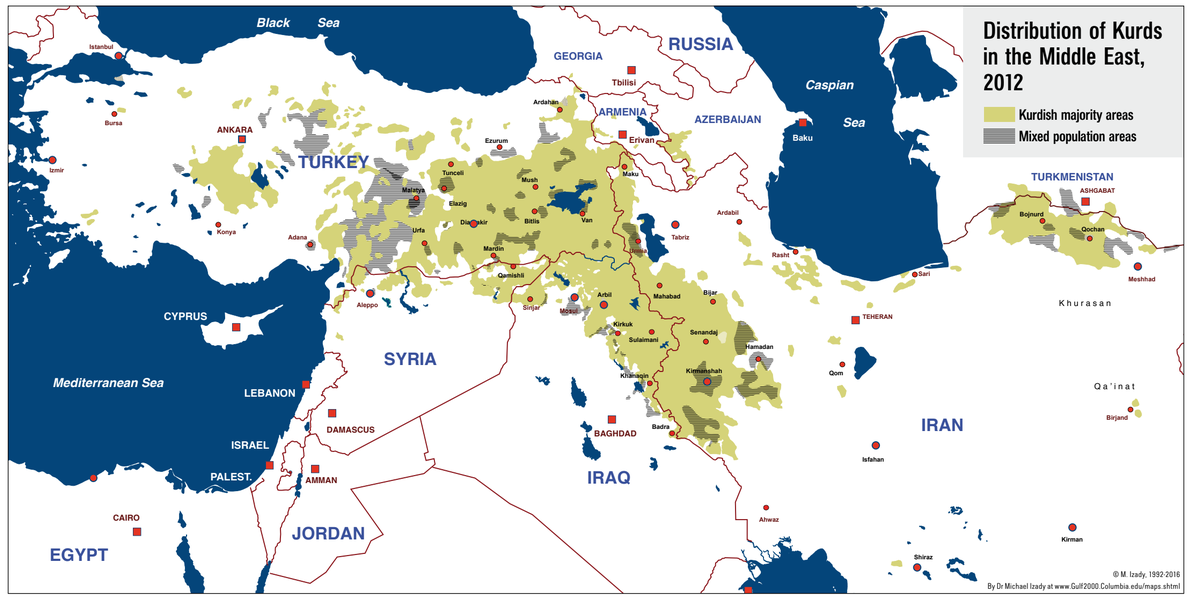
At the same time, Turkey is becoming more involved in the Gulf region. Along with Qatar, Turkey has agreed to build a military base on the peninsula, not far from the Iranian shores of the gulf and in the middle of a huge underwater gas field shared by Qatar and Iran. Erdogan's family and friends enjoy close business ties with Qatar, the site of much new infrastructure as the country prepares to host the 2022 soccer World Cup.

Erdogan had visited Saudi Arabia shortly before its execution of the Shiite cleric Nimr Baqir al-Nimr and the subsequent destruction of the Saudi embassy in Tehran in early January 2016. After the collapse of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkey's conspicuous silence can be read as tacit support for Riyadh rather than for Tehran.

In its struggle for regional supremacy with Iran, Saudi Arabia is increasingly asking its Sunni neighbors for their loyalty in the conflict. Along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Sudan have severed diplomatic ties with Iran, while the United Arab Emirates has recalled its ambassador from Tehran.

As of now, Turkey has not openly sided with Saudi Arabia on issues involving Iran. If the Sunni-Shiite divide deepens, however, Erdogan may align his country even more strongly with the Saudi-led Sunni camp against the Persian power. Turkey and Iran are already at odds over Syria and the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad.

With the lifting of international sanctions, Iran is entering regional markets as a new competitor, offering a range of industrial goods similar to those from Turkey. The economies of Turkey and Iran have been in competition for quite some time. Should this rivalry be extended to the geopolitical and military arena, Turkey's foreign policy would suffer yet another severe blow. The border between Turkey and Iran has gone almost unchanged for five centuries. The last thing Turkey needs now is more trouble at its eastern edge. ■



Kurds vs. Kurds

Rivalry between the Syrian arm of the PKK and the Kurdish autonomous government in Erbil is undermining the fight against IS | By Markus Bickel

US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter prophesied in mid-January that the self-proclaimed Islamic State's hold on the northern Iraqi city of Mosul would soon be broken and that preparations were under way for an advance on Raqqa in Syria, with US special forces on the verge of deployment to support local militias.

Troops answering to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi have controlled Raqqa for nearly three years. Re-taking the city on the Euphrates could be the beginning of the end of IS rule over large tracts of northern Syria.

The key to military success in both Syria and Iraq appears to be Kurdish forces. Without the support of the Syrian-Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) – which now control hundreds of kilometers along the southern border of Turkey – as well as help from the Iraqi-Kurdish Peshmerga, it will not be possible to drive IS out of its proto-capitals. Carter pointed out that the aim was not to form new divisions – rather, it was to strengthen America's local allies: "That means that a few key leaders and key individuals are trained to a very high, exquisite level so that they can be enablers for the entire unit."

On the Syrian-Kurdish front, as on the hard-fought border between the Iraqi part of Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi's caliphate and the autonomous Kurdish region run by President Masoud Barzani, this strategy appears to be working. His Peshmerga forces are barely more than 30 kilometers from Mosul, the capital of Nineveh Province. Peshmerga units, armed with MILAN anti-tank missiles and M-36 assault rifles provided by the German army, have advanced this far since the successful campaigns by IS in mid-2014; in November they conquered what was until recently a center of Yazidi society, the Sinjar Mountains west of Mosul.

Politicians from countries in the US-led anti-IS alliance saw the re-taking of the strategically important mountains in the Syrian-Iraqi border region as a sign that Iraq's second-biggest city would soon be liberated. But officials in Erbil continue to warn that any offensive on Mosul would have to be organized by the central government in Baghdad. The main attack would have to be conducted by government troops coming from the south, Kurdish officials say – and Pentagon boss Carter agrees. However, the areas to the south of Mosul remain under IS control.

So it could be 2017 before any attack is launched on Mosul. The Iraqi army is weak – it only just managed to free the western Iraqi provincial capital of Ramadi from IS – and then only with massive destruction. Kurdish troops marching into Mosul – whose inhabitants are mostly Sunni Arabs – would also increase the ethnic tensions already threatening to tear the Iraqi state apart.

> "The proxy war being fought between Iran and the US ever since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq is now being fought in Syria as well. Once more, the Kurdish forces don't fit with either side."

A further problem is that Turkey is also involved in training Peshmerga fighters. In late 2015 that caused an outrage in Baghdad, where it was regarded as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty; Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi called on the UN Security Council.

One victory in the war against IS does not take Iraq any closer to national unity. On the contrary – there are too many forces with diverging interests on both sides of the border, which itself is a product of the colonial era and was drawn up one hundred years ago in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The border runs right through the middle of the IS caliphate. And the proxy war being fought between Iran and the US ever since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq is now being fought in Syria as well. Once more, the Kurdish forces don't fit with either side. They are led by the YPG on the ground and are represented politically by the Democratic Union Party (PYD) led by Saleh Muslim. The party has neither positioned itself clearly on the side of the Sunni-dominated opposition, nor fully broken with the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Any solution to the conflict is additionally complicated by Russia's entry into the war last September – something Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is bitterly opposed to. The YPG is one of the groups benefiting from Russian airstrikes on Islamist positions in the provinces bordering Turkey. The advance they began in December from Kobanî westwards brings a contiguous Kurdish region within the realm of possibility. For this reason, too, US military support for the YPG is a thorn in Turkey's side.

That also explains Erdogan's strategic partnership with the president of Iraq's Kurdish region, Masoud Barzani. Unlike in northern Syria, where the Turkish president fears the PYD autonomous region of Rojava could become the core of an independent Kurdish state, Erdogan supports the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq (KRG) with all his might. Fighters from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) are holed up in the Qandil Mountains on the edge of the Iraqi Kurdish region. They have been the focus of renewed airstrikes by Turkey since the middle of last year.

PRIVATE

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Barzani gave Erdogan the green light for the military strikes, a move very much against Washington's will, as President Barack Obama sees the YPG People's Defense Units – the Syrian arm of the PKK – as the most important ground forces against IS after the Peshmerga.

With the help of US airstrikes, YPG fighters have even been able to drive IS out of some of its positions along the Euphrates and to re-take the Tishrin Dam. And with the liberation of Monbij near the Turkish border, they interdicted one of the supply lines via which the Islamist militants obtained supplies from Turkey until the end of 2015. In the middle of 2015, the YPG took back the border town of Tell Abyad, drawing sharp criticism from Ankara; the Turkish government accused YPG units of carrying out ethnic cleansing against the Arab and Turkmen populations in the region. In mid-January, Amnesty International accused Barzani's government of destroying thousands of homes of Arab former inhabitants in the areas it liberated from IS.

After being all too friendly towards the terrorist movement, Turkey is now coming down harder on IS – after IS terrorists carried out bombings with many casualties in Ankara in October and in Istanbul in January. But for Erdogan, more important than hitting IS is preventing a Kurdish-controlled territory on Turkey's southern flank, stretching from Qamishli close to the Iraqi border, almost to Aleppo in northwestern Syria. Once a key trade center in Syria, Aleppo is now regarded by Ankara as part of its sphere of influence.

Gone are the days in which Erdogan allowed Iraqi-Kurdish Peshmerga units to cross Turkish territory to help the YPG fighters encircled by IS in Kobanî. Twelve months later, each side is eyeing the other distrustfully; the brief historic alliance among Kurds is already history. Relations between Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the PKK are worse now than they have been for years. When they liberated Sinjar in November, the two sides quarreled over who had played a greater role in the battle.

Rivalry between the Kurdish groups may yet cause problems for the anti-IS alliance, as the Sinjar Mountains are of strategic importance for both Iraq and Syria. The oil-rich districts of Syria's Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor provinces can be reached from there just as easily as from the lands west of Mosul – still controlled by IS. ■

IMAGO/ZUMA PRESS

Migrants crossing the border between Croatia and Serbia at Bapska, September 2015.

The Balkans: no war in sight

But the migrant crisis can create further obstacles to the integration process | By Ivan Vejvoda

The Balkans have been making headlines again since last year's escalation of the refugee crisis. Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking recently to her fellow party members, warned that a closing of borders in Europe, specifically between Germany and Austria, could lead to conflict and war in the Balkans. This statement had multiple addressees: the German public as well as coalition partners, who were being warned what a collapse of the Schengen open-border regime could bring about internally as well as in the immediate European neighborhood. Her speech was also a warning to the leaders and states in the Balkans to cooperate rather than fall prey to mutual recriminations.

In concert with the EU, Germany is muddling through this crisis. For the moment there is a worrisome lack of a much needed, unified strategic approach to everything from asylum policies and relocation schemes to enhanced external EU border controls.

The Western Balkans constitute only one piece of this complex puzzle. The clear and immediate goal is to stem the flow of refugees and migrants and to keep them in the vicinity of the countries from where they have fled, be they in the Middle East or Africa. The eradication of the root cause in the Middle East is badly needed but nowhere in sight.

Geography and geopolitics matter. The Balkans are not the periphery, as is sometimes said; they are the inner courtyard of the European Union, surrounded by EU and NATO member-states. This Southeastern European peninsula – the Western Balkans – remains the last non-integrated part of Europe. This is unfinished business for the EU and a serious test for its credibility. If the EU is unable to help spur the enlargement process to the Western Balkans, it is hard to grasp how capable it is in dealing with other challenges.

The EU Summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003 opened the pathway to full membership for the Balkan countries. All have committed to both EU and NATO integration (except, at the moment, Serbia when it comes to NATO). Only Croatia has made it into both NATO and the EU; the others are moving toward this goal, some clearly with great difficulty – in particular Macedonia (largely due to its dispute with Greece over its name) and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Montenegro, Serbia and Albania have achieved candidate status and the first two are already negotiating their entry.

PRIVATE

Ivan Vejvoda is senior vice president of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

The challenges in the region are undoubtedly grave: very low economic growth, high unemployment rates and the stagnation or decline of living standards coupled with a continuing brain-drain and several unresolved regional issues.

However, war will not return to the Western Balkans. The conflict in the 1990s, which ended with 78 days of bombing of the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, is much too present in the minds of the political leaders and the societies that suffered and paid such a huge price. No one wants to revisit such times, no matter how domestic political rhetoric may sound.

Even the migrant crisis will not lead to war, though it can clearly exacerbate tensions and create further obstacles to the integration process. In fact, compared to other parts of the world the Balkans are an oasis of peace. And there is a reason for this: the existence of the European Union and its enlargement policy.

This leads to a second observation: Notwithstanding the current crisis, the soft power of the EU is alive and well in the Western Balkans. The Belgrade-Pristina agreement signed by the prime ministers of Serbia and Kosovo under the aegis of the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton in 2013, and now carried forward by her successor Federica Mogherini, testifies to the beneficial and soothing effects of the EU's soft power in the region.

Germany's initiative in the progression toward enlargement, the Berlin Process begun in August 2014, has been of utmost importance. At the same time the US firmly backs the Balkans' integration into the EU.

NATO is also a significant stability factor with its on-going mission in Kosovo and as guarantor for the Belgrade-Pristina agreement. Furthermore, the recent invitation to Montenegro to become a NATO member state sent a strong message to all actors in the region. The two-day visit to Serbia last November by the NATO secretary general was a notable event.

Moscow's new assertiveness was demonstrated by its actions in Ukraine. Russia's annexation of Crimea and its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty have been a serious cause of concern. Moscow has been trying to drive a wedge in the region between those who are opposed to Euro-Atlantic integration and those who see their future as lying firmly with the EU and NATO. Russia's key relationship with the region is based on its energy and gas exports.

The migration crisis has shown that, for all intents and purposes, the Western Balkans are a de facto member of the EU and more broadly of the Euro-Atlantic arena. The migrants enter an EU member state, Greece, then pass mostly through Macedonia and Serbia to enter another EU member state, Croatia. No concrete solution is possible without the full involvement of these countries.

War should never have occurred in Europe at the end of the 20th century. It did – and Yugoslavia disappeared in a self-inflicted, violent conflict that would ultimately result in its division into seven countries. The region of the Western Balkans and its citizens must find an accelerated path into the EU while respecting all its rigorous criteria for membership. ■

Better controls of arms exports!

The German government decides to introduce post-shipment controls / By Dr. Wolfgang Böttger, CEO Dynamit Nobel Defence

On the initiative of the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Sigmar Gabriel, the German government decided on the key points for new rules for checking the end-use of armaments a few months ago. In future, the export of war weapons (hand guns and the small arms), to third countries should be additionally checked on-site in the destination country („post-shipment controls").

Under the existing legal situation, the end-use of armaments is verified ex ante during the approval process, on the basis of end-user certificates. Export applications are rejected in case of doubt regarding the safe end-use at the recipient's.

Such controls are basically provided for in the OSCE and Wassenaar Arrangement *(OSCE, Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. FSC. DOC/1/00/Rev.1, 2000; Wassenaar Arrangement, "End-user Assurances Commonly Used: Consolidated Indicative List", 2005)* in the guidelines for end user certificates.

Marking and traceability of weapons

The UN-PoA program of the United Nations *(Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, UN Document A/CONF.192/15)* was adopted at the UN Assembly for small arms in 2001, with the aim of providing states with guidelines for controlling small arms. Thereafter, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons *(International Tracing Instrument ITI, A/60/88)* was adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2005; this instrument particularly deals with the marking of small arms and documentation of their whereabouts. The International Tracing Instrument defines the minimum requirements for marking small arms and tracing stolen and lost weapons.

DND bar code for small arms

Dynamit Nobel Defence (DND) labels every delivered weapon with a company serial number. Along with the batch number that is permanently imprinted on the tube, the manufacturer, date of manufacture and customer can also be reconstructed uniquely. However, the serial number and the printed batch number can also be removed through mechanical processing without compromising the functioning of the weapon.

This foil is incorporated into the fibre reinforced structure of the launching tube and can be clearly read in an X-ray image and identified. Non-manipulable marking of DND weapons is thus possible; it cannot be removed without destroying the weapon. To remove this marking, it would be necessary to damage the high-pressure tube of the weapon, which would make the weapon unfit for use.

DND goes one step ahead in the direction of "Smart Weapons" by using RFID Smart Tags. These are small memory chips, which can be written with any data and which have an antenna. The memory chips are supplied with energy from an external reading device via this antenna and the data can be read contact-free.

These tiny components can be inserted into the fibre structure of the launching tube in such a way that mechanical removal without damaging the weapon is not possible in this case, too.

This technology can also be used for any type of hand-held fire arms.

The weapons can thus be marked with all relevant data (manufacturer, country of origin, customer, place of delivery etc.) during delivery and the data can be read contact-free during a subsequent check. It is also possible to write new, updated data on the Smart Tags when the recipient records warehouse stocks. Needless to say, the data can also be saved in an encrypted form.

Next front: Libya

Efforts to install a unity government will require international military backing | By Mirco Keilberth

On Feb. 15, 2011, a handful of people took to the streets of Benghazi to demonstrate against the arrest of a civil rights lawyer. Fathi Terbil had been seeking clarity at long last regarding the fates of 1,600 Islamists whom Muammar al-Gaddafi had ordered secretly killed in 1996. The veteran dictator's regime responded to the protest with tanks that were destroyed at the gates of the city by French warplanes under a UN mandate.

Exactly five years later, former revolutionaries and Islamists are menacing the lives and societal model of the liberal citizens who stood up for the rights of others. At first people were enraged. 500 policemen and soldiers have now been killed. "Benghazi, like the rest of Libya, is fighting for its sheer survival," says the city's mayor, Tarek Awadh Belgacem al-Arfi.

PRIVATE

Mirco Keilberth, based in Tripoli, Libya, is the North Africa correspondent for several German publications.

If the fighting does not stop soon, economic collapse could ensue and 400,000 refugees could be on the run. It is clear that senior commanders of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) who have arrived from Syria intend to seize control of Africa's largest crude oil reserves. And the failure of a UN peace plan seeking a compromise between the rival governments in eastern and western Libya could end with the province of Cyrenaica declaring independence. So great are the fears of the internationally recognized parliament in the eastern Libyan town of Tobruk that the militias in Tripoli, 1,000 kilometers away, could take over the government and "state council" yet to be established.

Nigerian President Muhamadu Buhari has said the security of his own country depends largely on the fate of Libya. "The ungoverned Libyan Sahara has transformed the Sahel into a virtual arms bazaar that threatens to spread to the Central African Republic and Nigeria," he told the European Parliament.

After conquering the port city of Sirte last summer, IS has managed to fan out to the oil fields of the "oil crescent" south of Ajdabiya. Several pipelines and oil tanks were set on fire in late January when small reconnaissance groups advanced. That shocked US Secretary of State John Kerry into demanding immediate action: "The last thing in the world you want is a false caliphate with access to billions of dollars of oil revenue," Kerry told the conference in Rome.

The extremists, whose supply route runs through the Mediterranean from Turkey to the port of Misrata, have also gone on the offensive in Benghazi. Because of the arms embargo in force since 2011 and the split into eastern and western halves, Libya's army stands little chance against the multinational jihadi militia.

Army general Khalifa Haftar has repeatedly pledged to completely liberate Libya's second-largest city. But with the conquest of the strategically important "Pepsi factory" two weeks ago, the bearded and Afghan-clothed fighters of IS and Ansar al-Sharia exposed Haftar's boasts. Twenty-two soldiers were killed in Laithi district alone by the detonation of a remote-controlled bomb.

After the failed attempt by a UN-recognized government under Fayez al-Sarraj to begin work in Tripoli, the international diplomats have been facing rising pressure. The first cabinet, with 33 ministers, was rejected last week by a parliamentary majority. Now the Libyan negotiation teams are meeting alongside international military planners in the Moroccan resort of Skhirat.

If Libyan politicians and international diplomats fail to present a viable Libyan government soon, the result will very likely be a second military intervention in Libya. Indeed, it may already have begun. Since December, unidentified warplanes have been dropping precision bombs over Sirte and Ajdabiya. The Libyan media is attributing the deaths of three IS commanders in Sirte to a hidden sniper.

NATO officials are evidently seeking partners to help bring the situation under control. Alliances with militia leaders such as Abdulrauf Kara, whose prisons detain numerous critics of the National Congress (GNC), have proved controversial. The powerful Misrata militia, with whom British commandos are said to be already collaborating, have been accused by the tribes in Sirte, Tawergha and Bani Walid of committing several war crimes during the 2011 conflict. Several thousand people are being held in Misrata prisons without trial.

"In the eyes of the Libyan public, nearly all political movements and politicians have lost their reputations through nepotism and corruption," writes the journalist Taher Zaroog. Misrata's civil rights initiative has earned him a victory no one would have thought possible. Many of his more than 200 militias have pledged to no longer shield their own members if they commit crimes, but to hand them over to police and the courts instead.

Many IS commanders in Sirte and Sabrata have a history of being imprisoned. The Gaddafi regime often incarcerated devout leaders in the notorious Abu Salim prison; these men now command militias, including the Omar Mukhtar unit in Sabrata. Moreover, many former followers of Gaddafi have joined IS after having been imprisoned by revolutionaries in the aftermath of the war in 2011.

Consider, for instance, the former officer from Tawergha. After three years in solitary confinement and the destruction of his hometown of 30,000, he has nothing left to lose. He freely admits that he now fights for IS in Sirte. "The foreign IS commanders are fully aware we do not share all their ideas. They accept that we want to defend our cities against the Misratis and avenge the crimes of the revolutionaries. We hope that airstrikes will bring the people onto our side."

Should the UN special envoy for Libya, Germany's Martin Kobler, ultimately succeed in implementing the peace plan devised by Bernardino Leon, which would essentially establish a unity government, it will have to be safeguarded by foreign troops. Illegal militias are to be disarmed and disbanded. Without jobs, their members could pose a threat to the returning government. Together with Kara's militia, up to 5,000 Italian and 1,000 British military trainers could set up something akin to the Green Zone in Baghdad to protect against terrorist attacks and be stationed at strategic locations throughout the country.

Meanwhile, IS is using social media to distribute propaganda videos of the Libyan resistance fighter Omar Mukhtar, with hopes of stirring fear among Tripoli residents of possible NATO airstrikes. Mukhtar, a hero of the people, was hanged by the Italian colonial authorities in 1931.

The majority of Libyans simply want to see an end to the fighting and to the flow of refugees. Many will join the conflict party that achieves this goal, the Sarraj government, Haftar's army in Benghazi, local militias or IS. The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, is therefore looking for a fast and decisive military strike in conjunction with the political process – in the form of an official request for assistance in the fight against the jihadists. For now, there is little reason for optimism. Using the most common American acronym for the jihadists, Dunford warned: "Unchecked, I am concerned about the spread of ISIL in Libya." ■

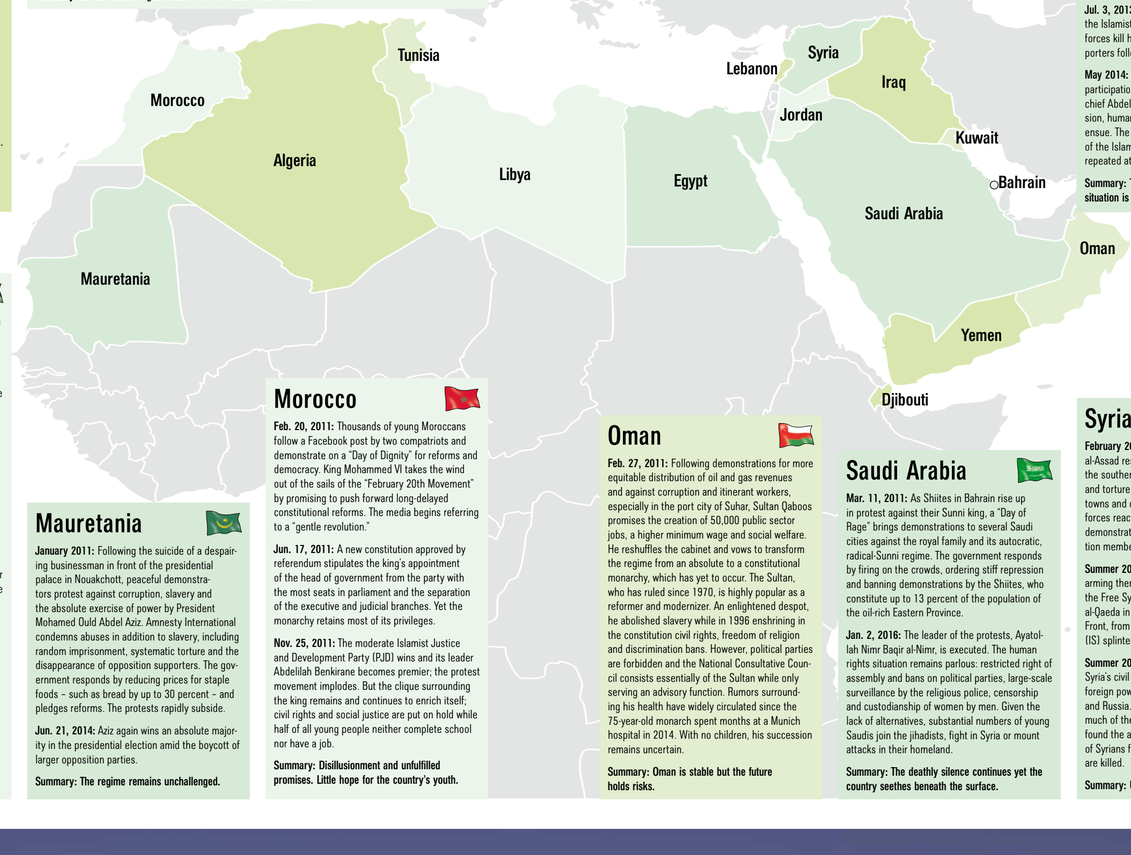
Current military situation in Libya

as of Jan. 6, 2016

- Controlled by the Council of Deputies and Libyan National Army
- Controlled by the New General National Congress and Libya Shield Force
- Controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
- Controlled by the Benghazi, Derna and Ajdabiya Shura Councils
- Controlled by local Misrata district forces
- Controlled by the Tuareg forces

Democracy's short spring

Five years ago it was not only the opponents of dictatorships and despots, of corruption and mismanagement, who were cheering on demonstrations in the Arab world. Democrats in the West likewise imagined an approaching summer of democracy. They could scarcely have been more wrong. As our status report shows, the results were sobering, and their effects still ripple across Germany and all of Europe in the ongoing refugee crisis.



Algeria

Jan. 2011: The spark of rebellion leaps from Tunisia to Algeria. The government swiftly defeats the uprising through violence and social concessions. Poverty, unemployment and dissatisfaction are rampant. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who led the country out of a brutal civil war against the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and has pursued a policy of national reconciliation, lifts Algeria's state of emergency only in February 2011. A hoped-for democratization fails to take place. Political and economic power in the commodity-rich country remains firmly in the hands of army clans and the former unity party, the FLN.

May 10, 2012: The FLN wins parliamentary elections in the wake of the Arab Spring and continues governing with a coalition partner.

Apr. 17, 2014: Bouteflika, 77 years old and seriously ill, is elected to a fourth term as head of state. Thanks to revenues from oil and gas exports, the population is placated through state largesse. Yet the falling price of oil forces the government to impose cuts to the generous welfare system and, possibly, to enact political reforms.

Summary: Algeria is a powder keg.

Bahrain

Feb. 14, 2011: Tens of thousands of Shiites, who constitute 70 percent of the island kingdom's population, demonstrate in the capital, Manama, against the Sunni royal family. They demand a constitutional monarchy and a more representative government.

Mar. 14, 2011: King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa calls on the help of neighboring Saudi Arabia, whose army suppresses the protests with 2,000 troops. Amnesty International reports "torture and excessive violence against protesters." Hundreds of opposition members are arrested.

Jun. 2015: Shiite opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman is sentenced to four years in prison for "inciting disobedience and hatred." The sentence is protested by Iran and even the US, which homeports its Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

Summary: An anti-Shiite regime under the firm hand of the Saudis.

Djibouti

Feb. 18, 2011: Thousands of young people demonstrate against President Ismail Omar Guelleh, demand reforms and measures against corruption, unemployment and electoral fraud. Hundreds are arrested and the opposition is stripped of its right to assemble.

February 2013: Parliamentary elections produce a clear victory for Guelleh's party alliance, Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle (UMP). Protests against irregularities lead to police violence and many fatalities.

Small, arid Djibouti hosts US and French military bases; German forces based here also take part in the fight against piracy and terrorist groups.

Summary: One of the world's poorest countries remains under authoritarian rule.

Egypt

Jan. 25, 2011: The uprising against the corrupt and oppressive regime of Hosni Mubarak begins. Millions gather at Cairo's Tahrir Square demanding the end of the regime.

Feb. 11, 2011: Mubarak resigns.

Late 2011 / Early 2012: The first free elections in Egypt catapult the Muslim Brotherhood to power. President Mohamed Morsi, a weak head of state, fails to overcome economic stagnation and secure democratic standards.

Jul. 3, 2013: Following mass protests against the Islamists, the army deposes Morsi. Security forces kill hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood supporters following the coup. Morsi is arrested.

May 2014: Elections are held without the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi takes power. Repression, human rights violations and a police state ensue. The economy fails to recover. An offshoot of the Islamic State (IS) jihadist militia launches repeated attacks in Sinai.

Summary: The ancien régime returns and the situation is worse than before 2011.

Iraq

February 2011: Baghdad is the scene of protests against corruption, mismanagement and inadequate electricity supplies under the government of Shiite President Nuri al-Maliki. Following the withdrawal of US troops in December 2011, the Sunni-Shiite conflict begins to overshadow all other problems. Maliki accuses Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi of organizing attacks against Shiites. Hashimi flees to Turkey and calls for resistance to Maliki.

July 2014: The ethnic Kurd Fuad Masum becomes Iraqi president and appoints the Shiite Haider al-Abadi to form a government. Maliki resigns. Yet the new, more moderate regime fails to defuse the entrenched enmity between Sunnis and Shiites.

From January 2014: IS overruns parts of Iraq, massacres Yazidis and Shiites and advances toward Baghdad. On Jun. 29, 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaims the "Caliphate of the Islamic State." In the summer of 2015 Iraqi forces, together with the Kurdish Peshmerga and the international, US-led anti-IS coalition, succeed in pushing the jihadists back.

Summary: Oil-rich Iraq remains a torn land while facing collapse.

Jordan

Jan. 7, 2011: The first demonstration against corruption, inflation and social injustice occurs in a village south of Amman. More street protests follow, which also include demands for electoral reform leading to a true constitutional monarchy. King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein responds promptly, pledges reforms, dismisses Prime Minister Samir Rifai and launches a national dialogue that brings to the table representatives of political parties, professional associations, business leaders and civil society. Stabilization is achieved.

Jan. 23, 2013: After renewed, violent protests against cuts in fuel subsidies, King Abdullah holds early parliamentary elections and grants parliament modestly expanded powers. The Muslim Brotherhood boycotts the election. A series of reform bills are passed; others are postponed. Many Jordanians are dissatisfied with the royal family's authoritarian rule but fears of instability outweigh all else, given the chaos in neighboring countries and the 1.2 million Syrian refugees already in the country.

Summary: Security takes priority.

Libya

Feb. 17, 2011: On a "Day of Rage," protests begin against the regime of Muammar al-Qaddafi and quickly escalate into civil strife following brutal attempts at suppression by the authorities. A National Transitional Council gains control of the eastern city of Benghazi. Qaddafi's forces advance with air support on the rebel capital.

Mar. 17, 2011: The UN Security Council passes a resolution mandating military action to protect civilian lives and establishing a no-fly zone. Ensuing NATO air strikes turn the tide and enable the rebels to begin advancing.

Aug. 23, 2011: The rebels conquer Tripoli and Qaddafi's Bab al-Azizia fortress.

Oct. 20, 2011: Rebels capture Qaddafi in Sirte, where he dies amid yet-unexplained circumstances. Multiple armed groups then vie for power and influence. IS establishes a territorial presence in Libya, its first outside of Syria and Iraq.

2014: Two rival governments are established. Islamist militias supported by Turkey and Qatar dominate Tripoli and the west, while the internationally recognized, Egyptian-backed government is located in Tobruk in the east. IS, based in Sirte, holds the center.

December 2015: The rival governments in Tripoli and Tobruk approve a UN peace plan to form a unity government, but its implementation is initially blocked.

Summary: If the unity government fails, IS wins.

Morocco

Feb. 20, 2011: Thousands of young Moroccans follow a Facebook post by two compatriots and demonstrate on a "Day of Dignity" for reforms and democracy. King Mohammed VI takes the wind out of the sails of the "February 20th Movement" by promising to push forward long-delayed constitutional reforms. The media begins referring to a "gentle revolution."

Jun. 17, 2011: A new constitution approved by referendum stipulates the king's appointment of the head of government from the party with the most seats in parliament and the separation of the executive and judicial branches. Yet the monarchy retains most of its privileges.

Nov. 25, 2011: The moderate Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) wins and its leader Abdelilah Benkirane becomes premier; the protest movement implodes. But the clique surrounding the king remains and continues to enrich itself; civil rights and social justice are put on hold while half of all young people neither complete school nor have a job.

Summary: Disillusionment and unfulfilled promises. Little hope for the country's youth.

Mauretania

January 2011: Following the suicide of a despairing businessman in front of the presidential palace in Nouakchott, peaceful demonstrators protest against corruption, slavery and the absolute exercise of power by President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. Amnesty International condemns abuses in addition to slavery, including random imprisonment, systematic torture and the disappearance of opposition supporters. The government responds by reducing prices for staple foods – such as bread by up to 30 percent – and pledges reforms. The protests rapidly subside.

Jun. 21, 2014: Aziz again wins an absolute majority in the presidential election amid the boycott of larger opposition parties.

Summary: The regime remains unchallenged.

Oman

Feb. 27, 2011: Following demonstrations for more equitable distribution of oil and gas revenues and against corruption and itinerant workers, especially in the port city of Suhar, Sultan Qaboos promises the creation of 50,000 public sector jobs, a higher minimum wage and social welfare. He reshuffles the cabinet and vows to transform the regime from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy, which has yet to occur. The Sultan, who has ruled since 1970, is highly popular as a reformer and modernizer. An enlightened despot, he abolished slavery while in 1996 enshrining in the constitution civil rights, freedom of religion and discrimination bans. However, political parties are forbidden and the National Consultative Council consists essentially of the Sultan while only serving an advisory function. Rumors surrounding his health have widely circulated since the 75-year-old monarch spent months at a Munich hospital in 2014. With no children, his succession remains uncertain.

Summary: Oman is stable but the future holds risks.

Saudi Arabia

Mar. 11, 2011: As Shiites in Bahrain rise up in protest against their Sunni king, a "Day of Rage" brings demonstrations to several Saudi cities against the royal family and its autocratic, radical-Sunni regime. The government responds by firing on the crowds, ordering stiff repression and banning demonstrations by the Shiites, who constitute up to 13 percent of the population of the oil-rich Eastern Province.

Jan. 2, 2016: The leader of the protests, Ayatollah Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, is executed. The human rights situation remains parlous: restricted right of assembly and bans on political parties, large-scale surveillance by the religious police, censorship and custodianship of women by men. Given the lack of alternatives, substantial numbers of young Saudis join the jihadists, fight in Syria or mount attacks in their homeland.

Summary: The deathly silence continues yet the country seethes beneath the surface.

Syria

February 2011: The regime of President Bashar al-Assad responds to the first demonstrations in the southern town of Daraa with arrests, beatings and torture. Protests then spread to multiple towns and cities across the country. Security forces react with extreme brutality against the demonstrators, shooting and kidnapping opposition members.

Summer 2011: Anti-government activists begin arming themselves, forming militias that include the Free Syrian Army. The terrorist network, al-Qaeda in Iraq, intervenes under the name Nusra Front, from which the jihadist militia Islamic State (IS) splinters off.

Summer 2014: IS proclaims itself a "caliphate." Syria's civil war mutates into a proxy conflict of foreign powers including Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Russia. The Assad regime loses control over much of the country. The long-suppressed Kurds found the autonomous region of Rojava. Millions of Syrians flee from the war; more than 250,000 are killed.

Summary: Unending civil war.

Tunisia

Jan. 4, 2011: The self-immolation and death of 26-year-old vegetable dealer Mohamed Bouazizi sparks the Jasmine Revolution, with its slogan "Work, Freedom and Dignity."

Jan. 14, 2011: Protests against corruption, expensive food and despotism bring down the regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who flees the country.

Oct. 23, 2011: Election of the Constitutional Assembly; human rights activist Moncef Marzouki becomes interim president. A democratic multi-party system emerges with a relatively free press and strong trade unions. The National Dialogue Quartet repeatedly rescues the democratization process and is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015.

Jan. 26, 2014: A new constitution is approved.

Oct-Nov 2014: First parliamentary and presidential elections. The first head of state following the revolution is the secular politician Béji Caid Essebsi, age 88. Yet Islamists threaten the young democracy while youths suffer from poverty and joblessness. Since January the country has witnessed its biggest wave of protests since 2011.

Summary: The sole success story of the Arab Spring – and very fragile at that.

Yemen

Jan. 27, 2011: The first major demonstration for democratic change and against the regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Multiple mass protests ensue. The Shiite Houthi rebels in the country's north join the movement. The capital, Sana'a, sees clashes between tribal militia and government troops in which more than 120 people are killed.

November 2011: After 30 years in power Saleh is forced to step down. He hands power to Vice President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

2014: The transitional government under Hadi fails to bring peace to the country. The Houthis take over large areas of Yemen and Sana'a.

March 2015: The Houthis advance on the port city of Aden and storm the presidential palace. President Hadi flees to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition launches a military intervention, consisting primarily of air strikes against Houthis. Thousands are killed, millions flee and famine ensues.

Summary: Civil war becomes a proxy war.

Kuwait

Feb. 18, 2011: Several hundred participants demonstrate against corruption. The most ardent demonstrators are non-Kuwaitis, who demand citizenship. The protests in the wealthy Gulf state lead in November to the resignation of the government under Nasser Mohammed al-Sabah. His successor is Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah, also a member of the family of Emir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, in power since 2006.

2012: Two elections in which the opposition wins are declared invalid by the constitutional court. In the following election in July 2013, which the opposition again narrowly wins, 26 new deputies enter the 50-member chamber, including four women, a first. As ministers are also allowed to vote on legislation, the government retains its majority. As the Austrian newspaper "Der Standard" put it, "An obedient parliament for the Emir of Kuwait."

Summary: (Nearly) everything stays the same.

Lebanon

Feb. 27, 2011: With its extreme religious and political fragmentation, Lebanon, too, experiences its first demonstrations demanding reforms – and against the country's special system of proportional religious representation in the government. Bad weather reduces the number of participants to a few hundred. Lebanon already saw mass protests for democracy in 2005 in the Cedar Revolution that followed the assassination of the Sunni former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. It led to the end of Syria's military presence in Lebanon but could not overcome the country's religious polarization and ultimately failed.

Late 2011: The Shiite Hezbollah militia begins preparations to intervene in Syria's civil war, openly siding with the Assad regime from the spring of 2013. The conflict in neighboring Syria increasingly overshadows the domestic political situation, occasionally spilling over into violence. One million refugees flee to Lebanon.

Summary: Destabilization in the shadow of the Syrian conflict.

PRC: Precarious Republic of China?

Beijing confronts an increasingly complex international risk map while enduring the most challenging period of its domestic economic transformation in decades | By Sebastian Heilmann and Mikko Huotari

There has never been a period in which China's diplomats were more active on the global diplomatic stage than they were over the last two years. In 2014-2015 President Xi Jinping traveled the globe more than almost any of his international peers. Since Xi came to power, Chinese leadership has substantially stepped up its foreign policy ambitions, heavily expanding the scope of its activities in the region and its reach on the global stage. By altering long-standing traditions of relative restraint and key priorities of its foreign policy, Beijing is engineering a new course in global affairs.

The list of recent policy successes is long and the sheer weight of China's growing economic, diplomatic and military capabilities will continue to deepen its global footprint. Yet in addition to the strong counterforces of international competition and rising security tensions, China's expanding role faces fundamental challenges that are deeply rooted in its domestic development path. China is transforming into a precarious global power as it confronts an increasingly complex international risk map while enduring the most challenging period of its domestic economic transformation in decades. Crucially, the way in which the PRC leadership translates and exports domestic policy approaches to the international realm will prove the ultimate test of its aspirations to global leadership.

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All active on the global diplomatic stage: President Xi Jinping with US President Barack Obama (top), Russian President Vladimir Putin on the Tiananmen Rostrum in Beijing (left), Turkish President Erdogan (lower left) and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

The scale and potential impact of China's foreign policy re-orientation became visible to most observers when China unveiled its new geo-economic masterplan over the course of 2013 and 2014. The Silk Road initiative is Xi's pet project intended to redirect China's diplomatic and commercial energy to new economic, trade and transport corridors in Southeast Asia and Eurasia, stretching out to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. The initiative promises USD hundreds of billions of investment for Beijing's infrastructure foreign policy and already impacts strongly on the region's political and security landscape.

In the last two years, Beijing has become a key hub for global and regional diplomacy, using its home advantage to set the agenda for major international summits including Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a refurbished regional security forum, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA), and the G20 in 2016. At the same time, China-sponsored forums with Southeast Asian, Eastern European, African and Latin American leaders have become major annual gatherings, usually providing the grounds for new Chinese investment projects.

China's diplomats have also initiated a debate about reinvigorating the UN system, still a core element of Beijing's vision of future global order. It is, of course, no coincidence that Chinese officials have recently taken leadership positions at key international institutions that Beijing considers important for the PRC's global expansion, including the World Bank, International Aviation Organisation (IAO), Standardisation Organisation (ISO) and Telecommunications Union (ITU). New initiatives such as the World Internet Conference – held for the first time in 2015 in Wuzhen, China – are evidence of the PRC's aim to become a leading power in global cyberpolitics.

At the same time, China's financial and monetary advances are challenging key building blocks of the Western-centered international order and are already leading to an overhaul of international financial institutions and global business practices. With skillful diplomatic maneuvering, China's diplomats have won the support of 57 countries for Beijing's development finance push to finally establish the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in early 2016 in Beijing. Two months prior to this, the IMF accepted the Chinese currency into the elite group of reserve currencies that make up the basket of Special Drawing Rights, signaling a crucial turning point in a long march towards the restructuring of the global monetary order.

As a result of expanding commercial interests and strategic considerations, Chinese foreign policy is also more frequently adopting interventionist approaches. It is increasingly mobilizing forces to protect its citizens and interests abroad while trying to position itself as a mediator in international crises ranging from Ukraine to Afghanistan, Syria and the Middle East more broadly. A series of changes in defense policy, together with new anti-terror and security laws, have prepared the policy framework and legal grounds for a more pronounced security posture beyond China's borders. The modernization of the Chinese military is progressing rapidly, while forces are undergoing extensive restructuring to embrace an increasingly global mission.

Underpinning all of these trends are pronounced shifts in the regional sphere and the global balance-of-power matrix. At the core of the leaders' new foreign policy outlook is a regional policy with China firmly set to become the dominant economic and military power in Asia. Intimately linked to this priority, Beijing is increasingly able to play the "big boy's game" with the US, obtaining significant and favorable agreements in areas such as cyber and climate cooperation.

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Simultaneously, China is continuing to push through its vision of a regional economic and security order that runs counter to core US interests. Indeed, despite US countermeasures and international concerns, it is striking how rapidly and unabashedly Beijing has been moving forward in the South China Sea, including the pursuit of land reclamation activities on an unprecedented scale.

In relations with Russia, despite lingering distrust China has consolidated an increasingly asymmetric partnership bolstered by energy and investment relations, arms sales and cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS frameworks. Meanwhile, the tone and content of China-EU relations is increasingly set by Beijing's initiatives. Beyond the growing lure of Chinese investment in EU member states and financing promises for key EU projects, Chinese diplomacy has been dividing up the continent in ways that fit its own diplomatic preferences, such as the 16+1 framework.

The pace and rhetoric of the new foreign policy activism under Xi Jinping are impressive. Yet China's newly emerging international reach is precarious for several reasons:

First, the domestic capacity for sustainable crisis-resistant regional or even global leadership is only just in the making, a fact well recognized by China's leadership. The current overcentralization of power in the Chinese system will prove a double-edged sword, facilitating necessary reforms but in itself a substantial risk to resilient policy-making.

Second, Beijing's renewed strategic focus on its neighboring areas has met with significant opposition, with competitive dynamics in Asia spreading from the considerable military and cyber build-ups to infrastructure development. Questions of strategic positioning vis-à-vis the PRC have become major domestic conflict lines in virtually all Asian countries. Xi's new grand-scheme regional policy increasingly clashes with the economic presence of other major regional players such as Japan, Russia and India, whose tolerance, if not support, China needs to realize its vision of an integrated Asia on Chinese terms.

Third, despite superficial calm and Beijing's symbolic summitry, the skepticism of regional leaders regarding the prospects of stability is increasing. A region characterized by all-out hedging does not provide fertile ground for Chinese leadership. Meanwhile, recent steps by the US to achieve its long-anticipated "pivot to Asia," realigning allies and shaping new economic partnerships with the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), have been relatively successful. In contrast, Chinese attempts to enmesh the US in a "new type of great power relations" are being rebuffed by the US administration.

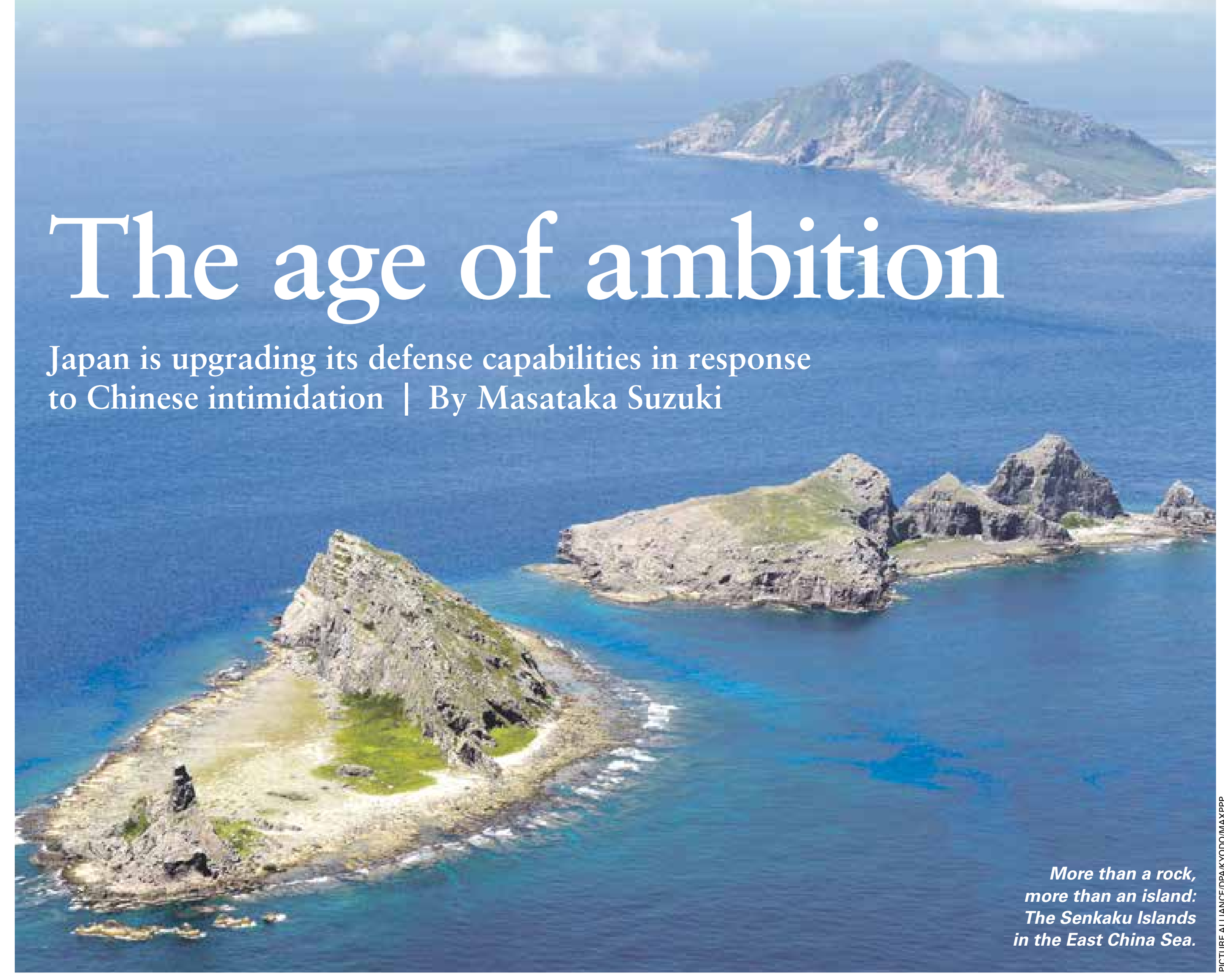
Fourth, fractures in its domestic economic engine challenge China's foreign policy outlook and tie the resources of its leaders to Beijing. In the long run, the painful economic transformation might well reinforce China's gravitational pull, but it calls into question the sustainability of China's ambitious outreach. A foreign policy built on financing and investment promises will prove extremely vulnerable to likely turbulence in China's debt-ridden financial system.

China's economic transition has already become a disruptive international factor. A looming trade war and depression trends in global energy and commodity markets are the result of a precipitous industrial slow-down and overcapacities in China. Global uncertainties due to non-transparent and questionable policy decisions only magnify the negative effects of China's broad slowdown. By deepening financial integration and relaxing exchange-rate politics, China is emerging as a source of dizzying volatility. In contrast to its stabilizing effect during the Asian and global financial crises over the last 15 years, today's Chinese domestic decision-making is a potential hazard to regional and global financial stability.

Finally, an often-overlooked key factor determining China's future role is how successful it will be in translating its policy approaches to the world. Key to this translation is communication. However, broadcasting to the outside world in the same propagandistic way as the leadership communicates to its domestic audience will not be successful. Its current "grand narrative" approach and public diplomacy overdrive is simply hard to swallow for most pragmatic policy makers in other countries.

In terms of potentially successful policy export, the best example is China's focus on infrastructure financing for development. Yet the danger here is obvious: striking the wrong balance between policy- and profit-orientation, China might repeat mistakes that have contributed to its current economic worries at home. The environmental, social and financial sustainability of core foreign policy projects are highly questionable. Even less promising is China's new high-profile campaign embedded in the Belt and Road Initiative for "international capacity cooperation," which aims to reduce China's overcapacities through joint projects with developing economies across the globe.

From a European perspective China currently still has the benefit of the doubt while it experiments with different frameworks and approaches to implementing its new foreign policy. Beijing's leaders are in the process of learning geo-economics on a global scale with self-reinforcing effects. In addition to its existing weaknesses, new vulnerabilities incurred alongside its global expansion will be key determinants of China's growing ambitions. ■



The age of ambition

Japan is upgrading its defense capabilities in response to Chinese intimidation | By Masataka Suzuki

More than a rock, more than an island: The Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

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It is an amusing contrast to see a large group of Chinese tourists strolling along Ginza Street in Tokyo on a shopping spree while 2,000 kilometers to the southwest hundreds of disguised Chinese government and fishing boats cross into Japan's territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands on a daily basis.

In 1895 Japan used the principle of ownerless territory to incorporate the archipelago into the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa Prefecture. The government had followed all the proper procedures to ascertain that there had been neither evidence of valid control of the islands by any other state nor any objections raised against Japan's sovereignty. The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed 56 years later in 1951 between Japan and 47 allied powers placed Okinawa under the administration of the US while recognizing Japan's sovereignty. History documents that the islands have remained under the effective control of Japan since 1895.

In 1972 China drastically shifted its security policy to restore diplomatic ties with the US and affirmed the US-Japan Security Treaty. At the time, China entered into a rapprochement agreement with Japan, followed by the "Japan-China Treaty of Peace and Friendship" signed in 1978. It is believed that Beijing feared that a serious Sino-Soviet confrontation could escalate to nuclear war. It was a matter of life or death for China to realign itself in the diplomatic arena; as a result, Japan was targeted as a pseudo-ally. Senkaku was not discussed.

The islands had been owned by a Japanese individual before the government purchased the archipelago in September 2012, instigating extensive anti-Japan riots throughout China. The Japanese embassy was assaulted and Japanese companies in China were stormed, looted or set on fire by frenzied mobs. Since the nationalization of Senkaku Beijing has begun using government vessels to trespass into Japan's territorial waters surrounding the islands.

Tokyo is determined not to ignore Beijing's arrogant attempt to change the status quo through force or coercion in the area. I have recently had an opportunity to inspect Japan's Coast Guard Headquarters in Ishigaki and was encouraged to see how professionally they perform their difficult tasks calmly and serenely amid escalating dangers. The chief of the headquarters explained that his troops represent Japan and the Japanese people, who respect law and justice and cannot afford to bend it.

China, on the other hand, has unilaterally imposed an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that includes Senkaku, stating that it would not preclude using military force against Japan's "invasion," depending on the circumstances.

Over three decades I was involved in formulating Japan's Medium-Term Defense Programs for ground, maritime and air forces, establishing national defense budgets and organizing training and career development for members of the Japan Defense Agency (now called the Ministry of Defense). During the Cold War Japan had the difficult task of establishing and maintaining highly effective defense capabilities under tight budgetary constraints to guarantee peace, security and independence. The US-Japan Security Treaty was the smartest option for the country. The key consideration has been, and still is, to maintain

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the most advanced air defense capabilities, focus on anti-submarine operational capabilities and strengthen preventive capabilities in blocking vessels and submarines from passing through the three straits around the Sea of Japan.

Based on my experience at both strategic and ground levels, I remain convinced that Japan's military capabilities in the East China Sea and its vicinity are sufficient to cope with most possible contingencies, and that Beijing would face great difficulties were it to extend its operations from the East China Sea into the Pacific.

"One Belt, One Road" is a slogan coined by Xi Jinping, in reference to the ancient Silk Road, to promote his ambition for China to control politically, economically, financially and martially a mass of land encompassing the whole of Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern and Central Europe. The slogan also underscores his cherished desire to rule the China Seas and the Indian Ocean. The South China Sea is a vital part of President Xi's strategic and geopolitical scheme – a gateway to ruling half the seven seas.

China's top priority has been to reclaim or build artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago and to construct ports and airfields for military use. China has also announced its formation of missile troops while building a second aircraft carrier. The next goal is to set an ADIZ over the South China Sea and permanently deploy military aircraft in the zone. Washington immediately countered with a Freedom of Navigation Operation using war vessels and a fleet of aircraft.

China's recent movements have dramatically changed the security environment in Asia. I would propose that Japan respond with the following measures: add one more escort flotilla; expand its fleet of advanced patrol planes; and upgrade its island defense capabilities, supplementing the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier the US currently deploys in Japan with another forward carrier with a home port somewhere between Australia and West Japan.

In 2015 Japan revamped its security legislation. For the first time since the war it will now be able to "use force" when a foreign country with close ties to Japan suffers an armed attack, which in turn threatens Japan's survival. This is more-or-less equivalent to the internationally recognized principle of collective self-defense. This legislative reform will also enable Japan to contribute more meaningfully to UN Peacekeeping operations under its newly defined rules of engagement. It will undoubtedly lead to an enhanced role for Japan in securing peace and deterring conflicts within the Asia-Pacific.

Japan is entering an era in which it will work harder for world peace and respond accordingly to its upcoming challenges. ■

Mission not accomplished

The Taliban's temporary conquest of Kunduz made plain the Afghan army's continuing need for training and outside expertise

By Johannes Leithäuser

By now the international military deployment in Afghanistan was supposed to have pretty much wrapped up. For 2016, according to the original planning, the NATO-led mission "Resolute Support" would still have a troop presence only in Kabul. The regional deployment centers, or "spokes," in Afghanistan's north (Mazar-I-Sharif), east (Bagram), south (Kandahar) and west (Herat) would no longer exist.

Instead, NATO and its partner states have postponed – indefinitely – their complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. Germany's parliament actually voted in December to modestly expand the contingent of German troops there by 130 soldiers to 980.

The NATO governments, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition parties and part of the opposition Greens, view this as a strategic correction made just in time. The defense ministry in Berlin argues that the original withdrawal plan depended not only – and not even primarily – on the country's security situation, but on other data as well. This foggy justification chiefly conceals a schedule dictated by the US presidential election. It was a requirement from the White House that the international successor mission to the ISAF deployment be wound up in late 2016, so that the "Mission accomplished!" announcement could be made by Election Day in November.

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Yet these plans were upended in northern Afghanistan, in the city of Kunduz, under the Bundeswehr's regional command based in Mazar-I-Sharif, and where Germany's operational commitment in the form of the Kunduz "Regional Reconstruction Team" began more than a decade ago. The Bundeswehr evacuated Kunduz in 2013 and pulled back to its base in Mazar-I-Sharif. Soon, reports started coming in that the Afghan forces – the armed forces, the quasi-military National Police and local police units – had lost control over parts of the province, although Afghanistan had assumed "full security responsibility." Last October, in a brazen operation, several hundred Taliban fighters stormed the city. This surprised an Afghan army that had neither been monitoring for signs of an imminent attack nor was able to mount any effective, immediate resistance because of a holiday weekend.

The shock waves from Kunduz changed minds rapidly. Within days, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen signaled willingness to extend her country's presence in Afghanistan. Following a similar process in Washington, NATO ministers adjusted their policy in December. The departure from the "spoke" bases was made contingent on the situation's development and the Afghan army's abilities. The ministers ruled out a return to direct combat support for the Afghans by international troops, excepting special bilateral agreements that the Americans had made with the Afghans. These have to do with the provision of air support using warplanes and special forces.

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Joining up: Will he help make NATO troops expendable in the near future? An Afghan army soldier holds his certificate during a graduation ceremony in Kabul on Jan. 17, 2016. The Afghan national army welcomed 1,400 new soldiers that day after their four-month training course.

That NATO decided, without disputes or long debates, to extend "Resolute Support" with an unchanged mandate, i.e. as a pure training and advisory mission, probably also had to do with what Bundeswehr advisors witnessed during the re-conquest of Kunduz. It took place over the course of November and without large-scale casualties for the Afghan security forces, bearing witness to their valor, but also to the tactical advice from NATO offices.

The Bundeswehr drew several conclusions from the Kunduz episode. It illustrated continuing deficits in the Afghan forces' equipment and conduct, highlighted where strategic and tactical advice was still needed, but also provided evidence of what the Afghan security forces were capable of.

The fundamental problems the Bundeswehr observed among the Afghan forces in the country's north include many deficits a recent NATO report identified in the Afghan army as a whole. It states that, of the approximately 100 battalions ("Kandaks") nearly half were only partially or not at all operational. One main reason, it found, was a high rate of turnover within the ranks – something German advisors have confirmed. They observed that the army loses about a third of its 200,000 personnel every year, a gap that must be constantly filled by new recruits who must also be trained anew.

In 2013, the first year the Afghan forces conducted the fight against the Taliban largely without Western help on the ground, they reported more than 4,000 soldiers killed. Since then, annual losses have risen substantially. And the desertion rate is even higher. Many of the soldiers released by their units before winter do not return to their bases come spring. One reason is the relatively low pay for the junior ranks. The Taliban, and even more so the IS militia, pay their fighters much higher wages.

The Bundeswehr, which holds the regional command in Mazar-I-Sharif and operates the Camp Marmal base there with 20 partner nations (which include many NATO states as well as countries like Georgia and Mongolia), sends more than 50 advisors every day to the neighboring Afghan military installation, the base of the 209th ANA Corps. The German commander, Brigadier General Andreas Hannemann, who led the base from February to December of 2015, compiled a list of the Afghan Army's deficiencies at the end of the year. He found capabilities still lacking in terms of the recognition and detection of explosive traps, joint weapons operations, i.e. combining infantry, armored vehicles and artillery, as well as reconnaissance and airborne fire support. Airborne capabilities will improve during 2016, say sources in the German regional command. That would complete a first step in the building up of the Afghan Air Force.

In describing the military situation in Afghanistan, a senior German general recently used the term "bloody stalemate." The current assessment is that, following the end of the ISAF combat mission, Taliban radical Islamists tried everything they could last year to demonstrate their own military power. In the battle for Kunduz, attacks in Kabul and an assault on the airport in Kandahar, they succeeded in doing so. However, the analysis shows they have not achieved any lasting victories. During its counter-attack to liberate Kunduz, the Afghan army even retook areas that had been under Taliban control for years.

The German presence in Mazar-I-Sharif is no longer bound to a timetable. The originally planned rapid withdrawal of NATO from the various regions of Afghanistan is now regarded as a mistake. In place of rigid schedules, milestones have become the alliance's new reference points for how long its training and advisory mission remains necessary in Afghanistan. Camp Marmal, which once accommodated up to 7,000 ISAF troops, will remain the stationing area for 1,500 soldiers for at least the current year, with the Germans supplying, in addition to military advisors and part of the staff, most of the logistics as well as medical evacuation capacity with helicopters.

The advisors insist that the NATO-led mission will succeed in helping make Afghanistan's security forces more effective this year. But Berlin's defense ministry also points out that military means can only gain time for reaching a political resolution for Afghanistan's future and a settlement with the Taliban.

The Afghan government under President Ashraf Ghani and "Chief Executive Officer" Abdullah Abdullah lost a great deal of time last year. However, when asked whether the military engagement of the Western world has been an overall success or failure, the German Defense Ministry tends to include statistics in its responses: Between 2001 and 2015 the total length of paved roads in Afghanistan rose from 60 to 12,300 kilometers, the number of teachers from 20,000 to 186,000, the literacy rate from 12 to 39 percent and annual per capita gross national product from $186 to $688. ■

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Giving up: Taliban fighters attend a surrender ceremony in Mazar-I-Sharif on Jan. 18, 2016.

Global arms sales

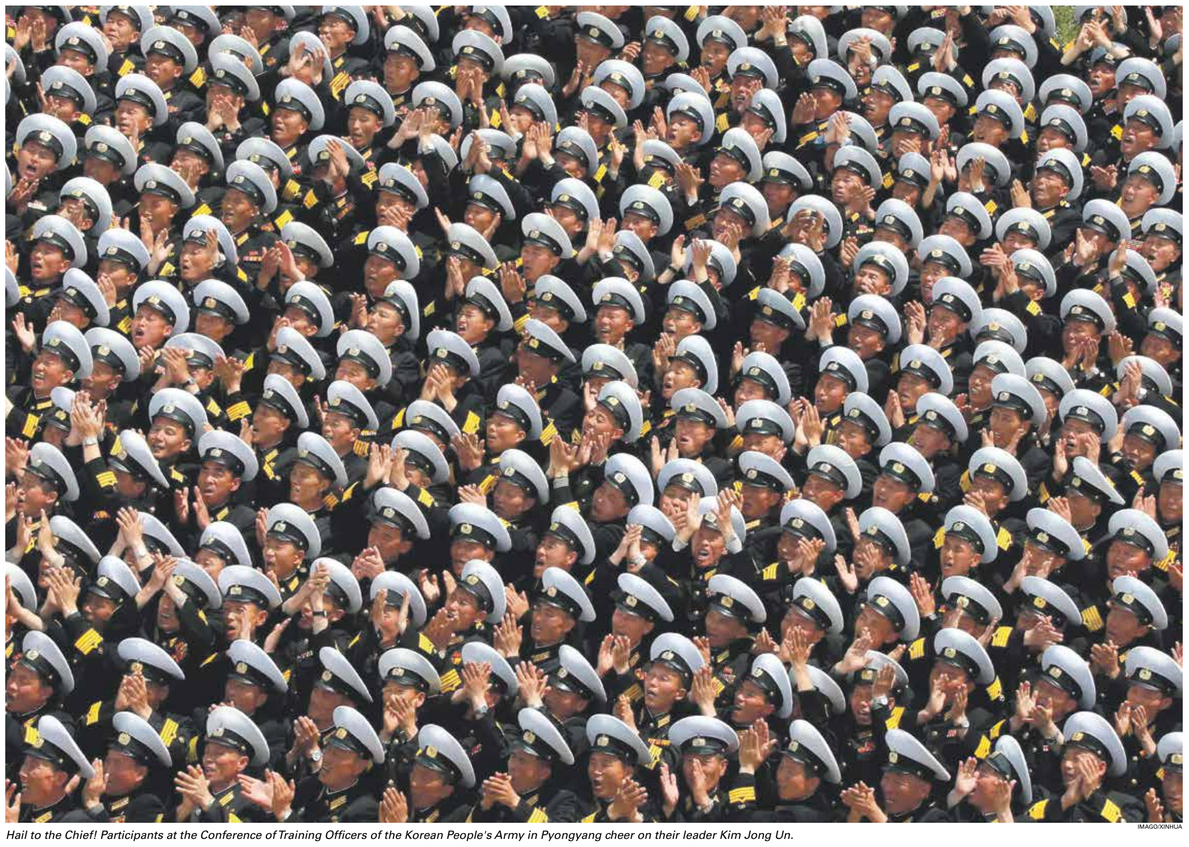
Sales of arms and military services worldwide have decreased for the fourth consecutive year. According to international arms industry data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), total arms sales have decreased by 1.5 percent in real terms between 2013 and 2014. Companies based in the US and Europe have seen lower sales, while companies located in other regions of the world have grown. US companies still make up 54.4 percent of the Top 100. Western European companies' arms sales decreased by 7.4 percent in 2014 to 26 percent.

Despite difficult national economic conditions, sales in Russia's arms industry continued to rise and now constitute 10.2 percent of the world's total.

Top 20 arms-producing and military services companies in the world excluding China, 2014

		Arms sales (US$ m.)
1	Lockheed Martin	37 470
2	Boeing	28 300
3	BAE Systems	25 730
4	Raytheon	21 370
5	Northrop Grumman	19 660
6	General Dynamics	18 600
7	Airbus Group	14 490
8	United Technologies Corp.	13 020
9	Finmeccanica	10 540
10	L-3 Communications	9 810
11	Almaz-Antey	8 840
12	Thales	8 600
S	BAE Systems Inc.	8 360
13	Huntington Ingalls Ind.	6 680
14	United Aircraft Corp.	6 110
15	United Shipbuilding Corp.	5 980
16	Rolls-Royce	5 430
17	SAFRAN	5 130
18	Honeywell International	4 750
19	Textron	4 700
S	Pratt & Whitney (UTC)	3 920
20	DCNS	3 920

Source: SIPRI



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Hail to the Chief! Participants at the Conference of Training Officers of the Korean People's Army in Pyongyang cheer on their leader Kim Jong Un.

No end to the MADness

A North Korea with nuclear weapons capabilities is a global security threat | By Chung Min Lee

As the world was welcoming in the New Year, North Korea's Kim Jong-un extended his greetings with a fourth nuclear test on Jan. 6, 2016. Although Pyongyang claimed it had successfully detonated a hydrogen bomb, a 5.1 magnitude test led outside experts to believe it was only a boosted fission weapon. The more important point, however, is that despite a succession of sanctions imposed on North Korea since it conducted its first nuclear test in 2006 (followed by its second and third tests in 2009 and 2013), Pyongyang is well on its way of becoming a de facto nuclear weapon state.

Notwithstanding diplomatic and military steps taken by South Korea and the US in the immediate aftermath of the test – such as a rapid flyover by a B-52 bomber – the undeniable truth is that the critical stakeholders in ensuring a denuclearized North Korea – South Korea, the US, China and Japan – have all failed to stop Kim Jong-un through a combination of contending political interests, lack of leadership and political will, deep ideological divisions and inconsistent policy priorities.

In sharp contrast to the July 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) resulting in Iran's decision to desist from pursuing a nuclear weapons program in return for the lifting of critical sanctions, North Korea in all probability already has the ability to miniaturize nuclear warheads. Moreover, it is accelerating its efforts to acquire submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) capabilities on top of its robust missile arsenal.

The North Korean nuclear crisis erupted in earnest in early 1993 when Pyongyang announced that it was withdrawing from the NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty). Ever since, a cottage industry scrutinizing the purposes, programs, policies and pathways of North Korea's nuclear policy has taken shape. But even several hundred academic articles, thousands of newspaper reports and dozens of books have failed to elucidate the facts. Very little is actually known about the inner workings of the North Korean nuclear program. However, after four nuclear tests and two dynastic successions – from Kim Il-sung to Kim Jong-il in 1994 and Kim Jong-il to Kim Jong-un in 2011 – three major strategic lessons can be gleaned from the course of events, with ramifications not only for South Korean security and the alliance between the US and the Republic of Korea (ROK), but also for strategic stability in Northeast Asia, with repercussions for the People's Republic of China and with respect to NATO's strategic calculus.

First, North Korea's nuclear weapons have helped to perpetuate a totalitarian regime, the world's only communist dynasty. Brutal dictatorships have been around throughout human history, but North Korea is the only totalitarian state to have wreaked unimaginable fear and misery on its people since its inception, in 1948. As noted in the landmark 2014 UN Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "crimes against humanity have been committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State." And further, "these crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation." In short, the world's most dangerous weapon is in the hands of the world's worst and most dangerous regime. North Korea, with its vast arsenal that includes weapons of mass destruction, must be perceived a critical global security threat in 2016.

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Second, although all members of the Six Party Talks bear responsibility for failing to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons, China's ongoing support for Pyongyang has profoundly weakened international sanctions. Despite Beijing's disapproval of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, it continues to coddle and protect the regime. While the net value of North Korea as a buffer state against South Korea, Japan and the US has waned over the years given China's astounding economic growth and its increasing integration into the international community, North Korea continues to serve a useful function. It enables China to constrain South Korean, Japanese and American strategic moves in Northeast Asia. A belligerent and unpredictable North Korea coincides with China's increasingly nationalistic and aggressive foreign and defence policies. As long as North Korea continues to remain within China's strategic orbit, there is little need for Beijing to cut its umbilical cord with North Korea.

Third, deterrence of North Korea remains in place with South Korea's highly capable armed forces – comprising 670,000 soldiers – and the critical presence of 28,000 US forces. However, the threat scenario on the Korean Peninsula has been irrevocably changed by North Korea's nuclear arms. The US has stressed repeatedly that if North Korea threatens to use nuclear weapons, or actually uses them, it will retaliate with all possible means, including nuclear weapons. While debate on the efficacy of extended US deterrence continues in the face of a nuclearized North Korea, America's nuclear umbrella remains firmly in place.

The more relevant and more urgent question is which steps South Korea, the US and Japan can take to counter North Korea's growing nuclear arsenal. According to the Arms Control Association and other credible non-governmental sources, North Korea may have enough fissile material for 10 to 16 weapons. The US-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced Studies predicts that North Korea's nuclear arsenal is likely to grow from its current level of 10 weapons to 20 weapons by 2020, while other projections envisage an increase from 16 weapons to 50, or a worst-case scenario of 100 weapons by 2020. While North Korea has not yet acquired SLBM capabilities, it most likely has miniaturized nuclear warheads in its arsenal. Combined with its array of ballistic missiles, tracking, targeting and destroying such systems in real time poses enormous difficulties for the US and South Korea. Although the 1.2 million strong Korean People's Army has been degraded over the years due to a lack of oil and supplies as well as very out-dated weapons systems, North Korea has opted to accelerate the procurement of asymmetrical capabilities such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons as well as resources for cyberwarfare.

In summary, a North Korea with increasing nuclear weapons capabilities must be seen as a critical regional as well as global security threat. Developments on the Korean Peninsula have strategic consequences for NATO. Any major disruptions would not only have economic and commercial repercussions throughout East Asia, but could also embolden Russia to exploit whatever windows a Korean crisis may open. Given that the peninsula lies at the eastern tip of the vast Eurasian landmass while NATO is situated at its western tip, there is reason enough to triangulate strategic policies in order to enhance security and deterrence at the two ends of Eurasia, both of which continue to be safeguarded by critical alliances with the US. ■

IMAGO/KYODO NEWS

Show of force: A large missile, believed to be an intercontinental ballistic missile, on display during a military parade in Pyongyang in October 2015.

Iran: Dealt a strong hand?

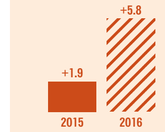
Ending a 12-year standoff over Iran's nuclear program, the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA) was widely seen as a critical diplomatic breakthrough. It established the most rigorous nuclear verification mechanism ever negotiated and rolled back the most extensive sanctions regime ever imposed. "From our point of view, the agreed-upon deal is not the final objective but a development which can and should be the basis of further achievements to come," Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said in September 2015. Other critical actors in Tehran, however, have stressed that the deal on Iran's nuclear program should not be misunderstood as the beginning of an overall shift in Iran's engagement with the world.

Some Western leaders have attempted to tread a line between touting the historic nature of the deal while downplaying what it might mean for relations with Iran. "We're not measuring this deal by whether we are solving every problem that can be traced back to Iran," US President Obama argued.

But the deal could facilitate Iran's rise without moderating the country's foreign policy. It may well help Iran further step up its destabilizing activities, including in Syria and Yemen, as a result of the windfall it can expect when sanctions end and international companies move back in. And the Gulf countries, in particular, are worried that a strengthened Iran, often in concert with Russia, could significantly alter the regional balance of power in its favor. As German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it at the MSC's Core Group Meeting in Tehran last fall: "In the best of all cases, Iran can become a responsible partner in solving the region's crises. Some guests in this room will doubt this, and many more outside of Iran doubt it, too. It is up to the Iranians to prove them wrong." ■

Excerpted from the Munich Security Report 2016

+5.8%
Projected real GDP growth in 2016, compared to 1.9% GDP growth in 2015[6]
WORLD BANK, SEPTEMBER 2015

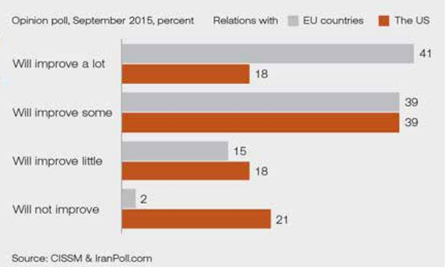


KEY FEATURES AND PROVISIONS OF THE JCPOA (JULY 2015)

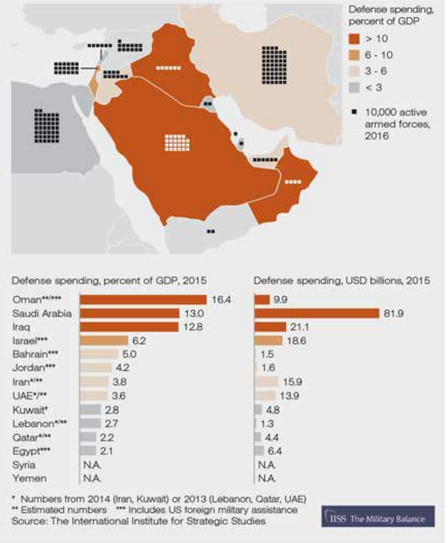
- Reduces Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium from 10,000 to 300 kg for 15 years and caps enrichment level to 3.67 percent for 15 years.
- Reduces Iran's centrifuges by two-thirds for ten years.
- Reconfigures the Arak reactor, ships all spent fuel from the reactor out of the country, and bans reprocessing of spent fuel for 15 years.
- Requires the implementation of the NPT Additional Protocol, allowing increased access by UN inspectors, including to military installations.
- Requires Iran to provide notification and details on future plans to build nuclear facilities.
- Monitors Iran's uranium supply chain for 25 and the centrifuge production chain for 20 years and restricts the purchase of nuclear material and equipment through a monitored procurement channel.
- Requires a UNSC resolution to continue the lifting of sanctions.

Source: International Crisis Group

WHAT IRANIANS THINK: WILL RELATIONS WITH THE EU/US IMPROVE AFTER THE VIENNA AGREEMENT?



NATIONAL DEFENSE SPENDING AND ARMED FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Defending the Open Internet

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GOOGLE

Vinton G. Cerf is Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist, Google, Mountain View, CA.

The Internet is many things, but fundamental to its design is openness to new technology and new applications. If its existing protocols are insufficient, developers are free to create new ones. For example, the World Wide Web and its technical protocols arrived 20 years after the Internet's initial design and ten years after the Internet's operational birth. Over the course of its 33-year operation, the Internet has grown dramatically, connecting billions of devices and people around the world and creating millions of jobs. As we have grown more dependent on the Internet, mechanisms for ensuring operational security, information integrity, safety and privacy have risen in importance. As one of the Internet's creators, I believe that fundamental human rights must be defended equally in the Internet's online virtual world and the offline "real" world.

Just as any invention can be abused, some people use the Internet in harmful ways. We see terrorists trying to spread their hateful messages on the Internet. We see cyber criminals attacking individuals, companies and governments. It is understandable that governments seek to protect citizens from harm and we see governments struggling to find an effective approach to deal with these new challenges.

In Summer 2013, when the public debate about mass government surveillance began in earnest, stronger encryption and limited access to data by governments seemed the right path forward. But the emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) has led some governments to question encryption and call for increased data retention about our uses of the Internet. Some proposals threaten fragmentation of the Internet through creation of new artificial digital borders.

Where to go from here? We should seek a practical approach that preserves the Internet's benefits and respects the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We should restrict indiscriminate surveillance and protect people's security and privacy but support legitimate law enforcement efforts.

Overreaction and misguided "corrective" efforts can harm the Internet's essential characteristics and thus its abundant promise. Our system architects and engineers should be encouraged to use strong security and cryptographic methods to protect privacy and assure integrity. Engineered vulnerabilities, such as backdoors, cannot be safely introduced into a supposedly secure system. Limits on encryption trade everyone's security for illusory protection against adversaries who have access to their own high quality technology.

We should encourage governments to cooperate internationally. We need diplomatic arrangements between nations that can facilitate the protection of citizens, while respecting the rule of law. We should seek robust, principled, and transparent procedures for making lawful requests for data and investigative support across jurisdictions, such as improved, speedy and more efficient mutual legal assistance treaties.

Some argue that we need to impose regional or national boundaries on the Internet, ignoring the fact that fragmenting the Internet loses its most important value.

How to deal with terrorist organizations' use of Internet services and the effects of extremist content online? In addition to applying usage policies of individual platforms to reject non-compliant uses, we need to harness the Internet as a vehicle to establish truth and understanding and to encourage critical thinking and the promotion of broader ideals. We need to foster and build communities that can provide strong and credible counter-narratives. We must show people that they have better options. These are steps we can undertake together – government, civil society and the private sector – to expose the calls to extremism for what they are. Broad bans to restrict freedom of speech and dragnets to conduct vast surveillance expeditions are incompatible with democratic society nor have they proven effective in the past.

"The Internet has grown dramatically, connecting billions of devices and people around the world and creating millions of jobs."

Our best tools for combating harm conducted through the Internet are education and technology to protect information integrity and security. Citizens must be provided with the tools for detecting and avoiding malicious practices. They should be able to exercise strong authentication when needed. They must be given the skills and freedom to apply critical thinking in their own defense. We must not allow our societies and the Internet's demonstrated and future benefits to be undermined by those who would even destroy themselves to achieve that end.

Google

Managing the responsibility to reform

An appeal for a comprehensive government transformation to fight corruption

By Stefan Heissner and Felix Benecke, Ernst & Young

Fraud and corruption are hardly modern phenomena. Abusing political power for personal gain is a practice that reaches far back into history. In ancient Rome, corrupt senators traded votes and influence for bribes and favors. In medieval times, monks rigged the quotas of brewed beer to preserve more for themselves. Such examples of misconduct and unethical behavior can be found in any time and any culture.

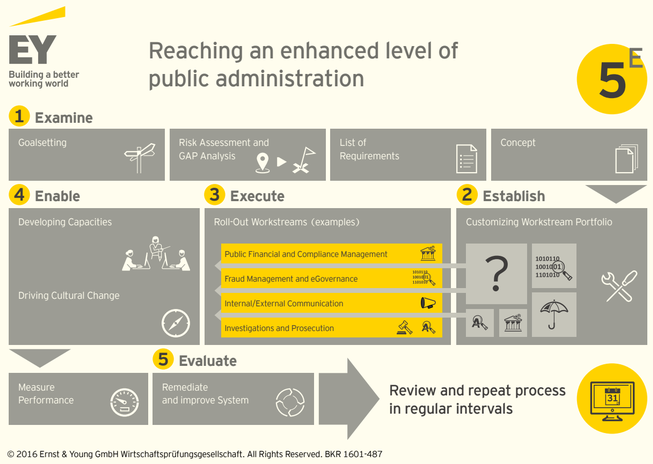
Today, global fraud and corruption pose a major threat to international security, prosperity and diversity. Political corruption in particular has evolved into one of the most complex, most damaging and most urgent challenges the world currently faces.

Severe harm to global society by fraud and corruption

Reviewing currently available data on financial figures alone provides an impression of the extent to which fraud and corruption harm our global society. The World Bank estimates that over $1 trillion is paid in bribes every year. The United Nations Development Program states that corruption can cost a country up to 17 percent of its GDP. In its 2014 annual report, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) says that 5 percent of global annual revenue was lost through fraud, which – when compared to the gross world product – amounts to a total loss of $3.7 trillion.

According to a current Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) report, up to $1.5 trillion, the equivalent of around 2 percent of global GDP, were lost as a result of corruption in 2015 alone. This number excludes the value destroyed due to the loss of innovation, productivity, trust and integrity.

Although fraud and corruption tend to be economic issues, the harm caused extends much further, by not only destroying economic value, but also spoiling the political and legal legitimacy of governments and state administrations and ultimately damaging culture and values far beyond what can be measured by economic means. In addition, fraud and corruption are still harming development aid and therefore a crucial matter of public interest.



Public officials feel the responsibility to reform

Current calls to expose, publicly charge and prosecute misconduct related to fraud and corruption have gained momentum all over the world. In 2015 there was a striking number of scandals involving misconduct or corruption, with the complicity of individuals, companies, parties and even entire countries.

However, while public officials feel the responsibility to reform, many public prosecutors and administrations often still lack the skills and capabilities to fully investigate fraud and corruption. Even with effective prosecution, many public executives and state leaders lack the experience and methodology needed to shape cultures and systems that could succeed in preventing and detecting fraud and corruption.

Developing comprehensive approaches

Despite much significant investment in an anti-corruption work over recent decades, many systematically corrupt countries have made little observable progress. Numerous executives and public officials have already criticized the lack of hands-on, practical approaches to sustainably promote trust and integrity inside and outside a country's administration.

Effective approaches must accurately address prevailing governmental challenges in the context of fraud and corruption. These challenges include the difficulty to assess risks, properly conduct investigations, establish state-of-the-art detection routines or develop capabilities needed to instigate a cultural change toward trust and integrity.

The process of moving from patchwork designs to comprehensive approaches requires the selection and prioritization of established methodologies, as well as building upon scalable processes to create unique solutions developed for each individual country's challenges, situation, region's risk profile, history and future vision.

Integrated framework, tailor-made designs

There is no single correct solution for comprehensive approaches for fighting fraud and corruption. There is, however, a smart way to connect and leverage the relevant spheres of activity. Making an impact is therefore a question of designing tailor-made solutions that recognize and reduce a state's deficits in governance and administration.

EY's integrated framework on smart government transformation consists of five basic steps of conceptual management:

The 5E-model stands for Examine – Establish – Execute – Enable – Evaluate.

The Examine phase aims at translating a vision into goals and operations while facilitating research processes and risk assessments to identify the gap between vision and reality. This results in a structured action plan to be fulfilled in order to close the gap effectively.

Closing the gap

The Establish phase aims at reviewing and specifying the concept, creating structures, acquiring human resources and preparing processes for rollout. This conclusive preparation phase customizes a precise portfolio of work streams and defines their content, their specific goals and strategies to be executed.

A success factor crucial to executing the developed concepts and work streams effectively is the creation of synergies through a high level of interconnectivity. All defined and designed work streams need touchpoints in order to coordinate with one another, to reduce redundant tasks, to leverage results and to maximize resource efficiency.

Building on existing structures

Generally, building on already existing structures is preferable to reinventing a whole project platform from scratch. Experience shows that completely new processes and institutions bear the danger of being rejected by the living organism that is a state administration. Starting to execute the designed work streams then creates an important foundation for a systematic development of capacities. This process aims to train personnel and sustainably generate sensitivity for transparency, integrity and efficiency within the administration and thus accompanies the intended change of culture.

In the end, any transformation process can only be as good as the quality of its evaluation process, especially when public funds or donations are spent on the programs. That is why measuring program performance is a crucial part of a comprehensive approach to promoting trust and integrity.

Measuring program performance

Based on past experiences, there are two ways of measuring performance: A quantitative basis mostly focused on key performance indicators and parameters such as improved FDI net inflow, increased state income, enhanced refinancing options, the number of investigations conducted and convictions enforced and a decrease in corruption cases.

However, a more qualitative form of evaluation cannot be forgone. More specifically, evaluating public awareness of corruption issues, trust in government authorities, public support of the administration and the level of cultural understanding for integrity and transparency within the administration must be part of a comprehensive picture of the program's success and a cost-benefit analysis.

Building a better (working) world

Making trust and integrity a vital part of governance is neither easy nor quick. Changing a system and culture takes time and effort. Operational procedures need to complement the mindset and capacity driving the change. The concept of a comprehensive approach aims at unifying as many stakeholders and governmental departments as possible to work on realizable solutions to complex problems in an integrated way.

We believe that when governments establish intelligent connections and fully link the values of accountability, ownership, integrity and transparency to administrative operations, they perform better, create international recognition, build stakeholder trust and significantly lower the impact of fraud and corruption.

In essence, every state that is committed to good governance faces the obligation to manage its individual responsibility to reform. Without a doubt, fighting fraud and corruption is a major element of this commitment. However, a more comprehensive point of view shows that promoting and managing integrity can be more than just an obligation.

Managing integrity can become a leading principle that creates benefits for country administrations and the people they serve. In this context, we believe that what applies to private business also applies to public administrations. Promoting and driving transparency, integrity and efficiency are crucial investments in a secure and successful future, ultimately contributing to our mutual goal of building a better (working) world. ●

EY Building a better working world

Both Dr. Stefan Heissner and Felix Benecke are partners at EY. Dr. Stefan Heissner, an internationally renowned expert in criminalistics and compliance, leads the highly specialized division for Business Integrity & Corporate Compliance. Felix Benecke, Markets Leader in this division, is currently working in and developing the fields "Future of Compliance" and "Government Transformation".

We need selfless leaders

Africa's economy is growing. And with political will the continent can overcome its old problems

By Kofi Annan

Over the years, popular impressions of Africa have been clouded by three visual realities. One is the arrival in Europe of African migrants and refugees fleeing poverty or violence. The second is the news reports of the horrific violence occurring in the Horn of Africa, Central Africa and the Sahel region. The third reality portrays an Africa afflicted by chronic famine and hunger.

This visual narrative contrasts sharply with a far more positive and unseen reality, one that is not so widely known. The latter narrative speaks of a continent experiencing more than 5 percent annual growth over the past 15 years, which has reduced poverty and created a growing middle class.

The continent's growth can no longer be explained simply by high global demand for its bountiful commodities, although the recent slowdown in major emerging markets, particularly China's, is of course worrisome. This will be especially challenging for the many African countries that did not plan for a rainy day.

Nevertheless, what is really noteworthy is that two-thirds of Africa's growth over the last decade actually came from increased domestic demand in thriving sectors such as telecommunications, financial services, manufacturing and construction. As a result, the inflow of private investment – encouraged by the efforts of governments across Africa to improve their macroeconomic environments – now dwarfs international aid.

We have seen progress towards the emancipation of women. The spread of HIV/AIDS is in decline while the number of deaths from tuberculosis and malaria is falling. Overall, our continent is moving in the right direction, yet progress remains uneven and we cannot ignore the many serious challenges still facing Africa.

I see six key challenges that will determine Africa's future place in the world order: demography, inequality, infrastructure, agriculture, integration and leadership.

First, a few words about demography. Based on current rates of fertility and mortality, Africa's population, currently estimated at more than 1.1 billion people, will more than double by 2050, and may even triple by the end of the century.

This demographic growth should be a plus, helping Africa's economies to be among the most dynamic in the world for decades to come and creating countless opportunities for entrepreneurship. Yet, this population explosion is sure to place huge strains on the continent's limited capacity to feed, educate and employ its people.

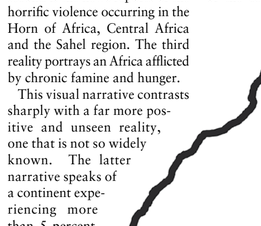
This is an elemental challenge that can only be met if Africa makes health, education and training its top priorities while implementing economic policies that attract productive investment, from home and abroad, that in turn creates jobs. If young people can enjoy meaningful work in their native countries, they would have no incentive to look – often at great risk – for greener pastures elsewhere.

The second – and closely related – challenge for Africa is poverty, which is exacerbated by inequality. According to the World Bank, six of the world's ten most unequal countries are in Africa. Very little wealth is effectively taxed. The continent's concentration of private wealth may to some extent explain why Africa's health and education, the building blocks of development, are in such poor shape. In other words, taxation and wealth redistribution are not just issues of social justice, they are a necessity for development.

The third challenge Africa faces is infrastructure deficit, which poses a fundamental impediment to development. In addition to woefully inadequate road and rail networks, energy production – the focus of my Africa Progress Panel's 2015 report – is a particularly large obstacle to economic growth and social progress: Over 600,000,000 Africans have no access to electricity.

For the most part, energy is produced by wasteful generators, even in the continent's biggest oil exporter, Nigeria. This drives up costs for businesses – particularly in manufacturing – making many uncompetitive by global standards. But as the continent develops, it must not contribute to the atmosphere's excess of CO_2. Boosting the use of Africa's vast renewable energy resources must therefore be at the heart of its energy transformation. Scaling up the region's supply of clean energy offers a triple dividend – reducing poverty and inequality, promoting economic prosperity and safeguarding the sustainability of our planet.

The fourth challenge, and a key to Africa's development, is agriculture. Africa imports $34 billion of food, most of which it could produce itself. Despite these imports, 240,000,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa suffer chronic food shortages.



Kofi Annan was Secretary-General of the United Nations between 1997 and 2006. He is is a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and founding chair of the Kofi Annan Foundation.

KOFI ANNAN FOUNDATION

Without action, these numbers will only worsen due to climate change and population growth. However, Africa's farmers, most of whom are smallholders, have great potential for higher productivity. Grain yields are between one-half and one-third of the world average.

Through the African Food and Nutrition Security Initiative sponsored by my foundation, we are promoting a partnership between small farmers, governments, the private sector, international organizations, foundations and research institutions aimed at improving productivity and nutrition. At the same time, we are urging developed countries to remove unfair trade barriers and eliminate harmful agricultural export subsidies. If the right policies are implemented, feeding Africa can become very profitable and employ millions of young Africans – not only on farms but in food processing and distribution as well.

Another key challenge for the continent's future is economic integration. Africa has many small countries with even smaller economies, some of which are landlocked, making it difficult for them to thrive on their own. We must therefore create economies of scale through regional trade and infrastructure agreements and projects. According to the UN's Economic Commission for Africa, the implementation of a Continental Free Trade Area could earn Africa over $300 billion within a decade. And regional integration is not only an economic issue; if Africa is to exercise influence in international affairs commensurate with its size and population, it will need more regional coherence.

While all the factors I have mentioned are critical, the single most important factor that will continue to determine Africa's trajectory is the quality of its leadership and governance. I fear that Nelson Mandela's example of selfless, principled leadership has not been widely emulated. The continent has had too many leaders who have clung to power for too long. They have used identity politics to divide rather than unite their countries – with tragic results.

Part of the problem is that leaders have been able to insulate themselves from the judgment of their people. Elections, which have become almost universal in Africa, have not always met the test of legitimacy, and have thus created tension and violence instead of preventing it. Electoral integrity is a major focus of my foundation, and not only in Africa.

Today, some elections are merely a tribute that authoritarianism pays to democracy. Democracy is not just about the one day every four or five years when elections are held, but a system of government that respects the separation of powers, fundamental freedoms like thought, religion, expression, association and assembly, and the rule of law. Any regime that rides roughshod over these principles loses its democratic legitimacy, regardless of whether it initially won an election.

In sum, the continent's challenges are enormous. But so too are its opportunities. There is optimism in Africa. Africa is making progress and gradually overcoming the burdensome legacies of slavery, colonialism and its own post-colonial mistakes. Many countries in Africa and elsewhere have tackled them successfully. What we lack is not understanding, but political will. Like much of the world today, Africa is not experiencing a crisis of knowledge but a crisis of leadership. ■

Commitment to Africa

Germany expands its presence in Mali | By Niels Annen

Germany is set to widen its support for the UN's MINUSMA mission in Mali. As of early February as many as 650 soldiers, up from the previously allotted 150, can take part in the deployment. The German Bundestag approved the move by a wide margin on Jan. 28.

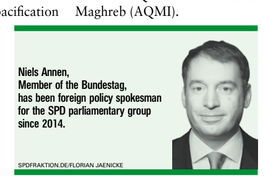
The core tasks of the MINUSMA mission include supporting the agreements of the ceasefire and the confidence-building measures between the conflict parties. It should also promote the national political dialogue and reconciliation. One key task will be to help build up the Malian security forces so that the country can be in a sustainable position to protect its citizens on its own.

In January 2013, as part of Operation Serval, French forces halted an Islamist advance toward Bamako, Mali's capital, and expelled the rebels from the northern Malian cities they had previously occupied. The few months under the rebel regime sufficed to spread fear and terror among the population. Tens of thousands fled the depredations of the Islamists, either to the south or to neighboring states. Still today, many people in the region remain far from their homes and familiar surroundings.

Stabilizing Mali remains a focus of the German commitment in the Sahel region. The country's far-reaching development aid policy and political accompaniment of the peace process are essential elements of this commitment. Germany is committing resources to conflict prevention while making extensive amounts of humanitarian aid available, especially to people in the country's north, which is an important transit region for refugees in the African continent.

The Malian conflict parties signed a domestic peace agreement on May 15 and Jun. 20, 2015 – an important step towards the country's stabilization. The agreement's implementation will be decisive for the sustainable pacification of northern Mali in particular. The greatest threat to the peace process lies in the lack of political resolve in Bamako. The pressure of the international community on the Malian government to expedite its implementation of the agreement must therefore remain a key priority.

The importance of the commitment in the entire region was illustrated vividly by the hotel attacks in Bamako on Nov. 21, 2015, and in the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, on Jan. 15, 2016. Both events are further evidence of a continuing expansion of Islamist terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI).



Niels Annen, Member of the Bundestag, has been foreign policy spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group since 2014.

SPDFRAKTION.DE/FLORIAN JAENICKE

Since August 2014, France has been conducting an anti-terrorism campaign – Operation Barkhane – in the entire Sahel and Sahara region in close cooperation with the most important countries in the region (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso). These states, which since February 2014 have also called themselves the "G5 Sahel," have reached an agreement on fighting armed terrorist groups with French support. There is a lively exchange of information between MINUSMA and Barkhane.

The expanded German contribution partially replaces capabilities previously provided by Dutch troops. These are concerned primarily with surveillance and the protection of MINUSMA units. One new addition is a reinforced, mixed reconnaissance company, which provides a capability urgently needed by the United Nations to thwart possible attacks by terrorist groupings at an early stage.

In addition to its military components, the mission also has a civilian aspect. Up to 20 German police are tasked with training local police forces to fight organized crime, limit illegal cross-border activity and prevent terrorism.

Deployment in the north is fraught with obvious risks, yet comparisons with Germany's involvement in Afghanistan would be premature. The terrorist groups operating in Mali control significantly less firepower than does the Taliban in Afghanistan, for example.

Germany's engagement in Africa has risen substantially in recent years and is not restricted to Mali – a sign of a mature sense of responsibility towards developments on the African continent.

As stubbornly high refugee numbers demonstrate on a daily basis, civil war and state decay have an immediate effect on Germany and Europe. The economic and political stabilization of our neighborhood is also an element of our own core interests. ■

PICTURE ALLIANCE/EPA/IGOR KUPLJENIK

Refugees in Slovenia.

The refugees are not the problem

There has been little evidence that large numbers of IS supporters have come to Europe as refugees, but the group is taking advantage of the situation

By Peter R. Neumann

Are some of Europe's new refugees terrorists? This fear seemed to be borne out when police found a Syrian passport at the site of one of the attacks in Paris in November 2015. Although it was quickly learned that the document was fake and the attacker European, the document had been used to register as a refugee and enter Europe via the so-called Balkans route. Many commentators – and some politicians – have since argued that Europe has opened its doors for supporters of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS).

Yet many of the fears are unfounded. There has been no mass exodus of IS sympathizers from Syria and Iraq, nor are most of the recently arrived refugees at risk of becoming radicalized. Terrorist attacks in Europe are still more likely to be carried out by Europeans, especially foreign fighters who have been trained and instructed in Syria and Iraq and are now returning to their (European) home countries as operators of IS. It is not the refugees that pose a security threat, but the chaotic and uncontrolled way in which their influx has unfolded.

There has been little evidence that large numbers of IS supporters have come to Europe as refugees. Of the 600,000 Iraqis and Syrians who arrived in Germany in 2015, only 17 have been investigated for terrorist links. This doesn't mean the police and intelligence services shouldn't monitor the situation and improve systems of vetting. Of course they should. But the relatively small number shows that Europe isn't going to be "swamped" by IS supporters. Indeed, it is consistent with the group's announcements, policy and philosophy. Rather than promoting migration to Europe, IS has repeatedly told its Syrian and Iraqi supporters to stay home.

From the IS point of view, the whole reason for creating a caliphate was to provide a place in which Muslims can live without sin and temptation. Promoting the idea of hijra – emigration to the Caliphate – has been one of the most prominent themes in IS propaganda. According to the group's online magazine, *Dabiq*: "Voluntarily leaving (the Caliphate) is a dangerous major sin, as it is a passage towards kufr (unbelief) and a gate towards one's children and grandchildren abandoning Islam for Christianity, atheism, or liberalism. If one's children or grandchildren don't fall into kufr, they are under the constant threat of fornication, sodomy, drugs, and alcohol. If they don't fall into sin, they will forget the language of the Quran – Arabic – … making the return to the religion and its teachings more difficult."

There is no sign that the IS position will change. On the contrary, with recent losses and increased pressure on its core territory in Syria and Iraq, the group has more reason than ever to stop its Syrian and Iraqi supporters from leaving.

PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA/ROBERT ZOMBERG

Demonstration against refugees in Austria.

Another argument I believe has been exaggerated is the risk of radicalization. People who have just escaped civil war, oppression or poverty are unlikely to be interested in attacking the very society that has given them safety and the opportunity for a fresh start. I know of no empirical evidence that would demonstrate that first generation immigrants are particularly rebellious or receptive to extremist messages. Instead, the historical record suggests that they tend to be busy building a new existence for themselves and their children and have little time for politics or religious extremism. Even if radical Salafists like the German preacher Pierre Vogel have started targeting refugees, their message is likely to fall on deaf ears.

In Europe it has traditionally been the descendants of immigrants – the second and third generations – that have proved vulnerable to radicalization. Unlike new arrivals, they were born and bred in Western societies but failed to develop a coherent sense of identity. They no longer thought of themselves as Turkish, Algerian or Pakistani, but felt uncomfortable being German, French or British. Combined with experiences of rejection and exclusion, this provided fertile ground for the jihadist message of strength, power, and hatred.

DAVID TETT

Peter R. Neumann is Professor of Security Studies at King's College London, and serves as director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR).

For IS, the principal interest in the current migration is short-term. Since the summer of 2014, the group has pursued attacks against Western targets as an integral part of its strategy. It has repeatedly called on its Western-based supporters to act as "lone wolves" – that is, to carry out small-scale attacks against random targets without explicit authorization from the group's leadership. Since early 2015, it has also begun organizing more complex, coordinated operations such as the one last November in Paris. In practice, this has meant putting together small teams of operatives who would plan, prepare and train for attacks in Syria before being sent to Europe to carry them out.

The people who joined these teams were not Syrian or Iraqi, but mostly European residents or citizens who had become radicalized in their new home countries and then gone to Syria to become members of the group. From the IS perspective this was perfectly logical. Not only are there plenty of Europeans who have become foreign fighters in Syria – more than 3,000 have joined IS – they also tend to be more ideological and more supportive of both terrorist acts and the group's international agenda.

In practical terms, they speak European languages, are familiar with Western culture and customs, know their way around European cities and are less likely to attract suspicion or negative attention. It is no surprise, therefore, that none of the Paris attackers were Syrian or Iraqi. They were Belgian and French – foreign fighters deployed to attack the places they came from.

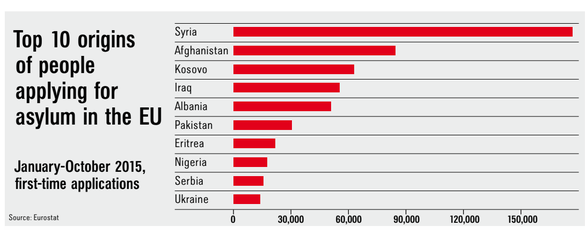
Even before the current refugee flow began, members of IS seemed to be able to travel to Europe and move around freely upon arrival. The mastermind of the Paris attacks, 28-year-old Abdelhamid Abaaoud, entered Europe during the summer of 2015. He is reported to have spent time in his home country of Belgium as well as in France, Germany, Austria and even Britain, where he had meetings with extremists in London and Birmingham.

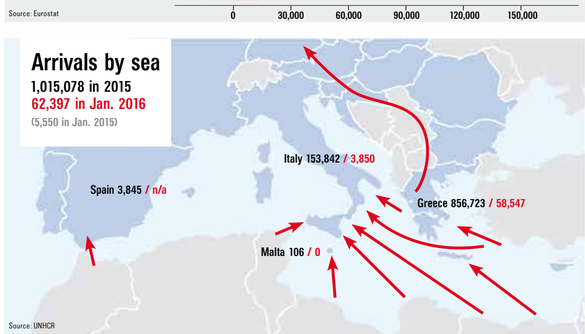
The story of his travels is so remarkable for the fact that his picture has been prominently featured in an issue of *Dabiq* and his name was known to European security agencies. Yet not only was he able to enter the European Union and the Schengen area, he felt confident enough to leave the Schengen area for a trip to Britain. At the time of the Paris attacks, the Belgian and French intelligence agencies assumed he was in Syria.

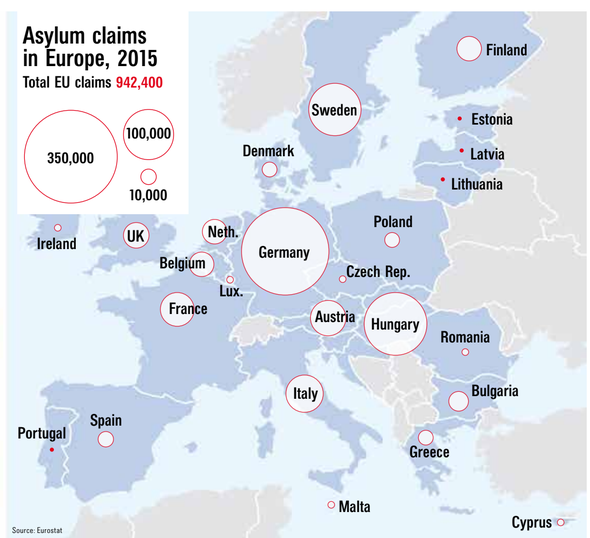
It would be mistaken, therefore, to underestimate the sophistication of IS and its ability to smuggle people into Europe. IS didn't need the refugee flow, but the group is more than happy to take advantage of the opportunities it presents. From the IS perspective, the largely uncontrolled movement of people into Greece and then – via the Balkans – into Austria, Germany and the rest of the Schengen area is another, very convenient way of moving its operatives back into Europe. As long as this situation persists, the two Paris attackers who arrived in Europe via a refugee camp in Greece are unlikely to remain the only ones.

IS is determined to attack Europe, and the next attacks could be similar, if not greater, in scale than those in Paris. But again, the terrorists carrying them out are likely to be European, not Syrian or Iraqi. Some may have re-entered Europe with the help of smugglers and organized criminals, while others will have taken advantage of the current refugee flow – a vulnerability IS will continue to exploit.

It is not the refugees per se that are the problem, but the uncontrolled way in which their migration into Europe has taken place. It is essential for the refugee flow to become less chaotic, and for European security agencies to dramatically improve their cooperation and exchange of data. But most importantly, the long-term emphasis must be on integration, to prevent the children and grandchildren of refugees from experiencing the same sense of displacement and isolation that has radicalized those likely to carry out the next attack. ■







PICTURE ALLIANCE/ABACA/MARECHAL AURORE

Street art expressing disagreement with the terrorist attacks in Paris.

Terrorists of our own creation

Why we need a new strategy to destroy IS | By Elmar Thevessen

How about a dose of new realism in our fight against terrorism? Until we acknowledge our continuing naivety in dealing with this threat, we will fail to successfully contain and destroy the Islamist movement, which attracts thousands of young people from across Europe and has repeatedly struck fear into the hearts of societies across our continent. Nonetheless, we are still struggling to find the right measures to stop it.

We must admit that our approach since the devastating Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington has failed, largely due to our disregard of the plans and principles laid out so openly in propaganda disseminated by terrorist leaders. Among many examples is an audio message by Osama bin Laden from October 2002, calling on young Muslims the world over to become the "knights of the fight" and "heroes of the battle" to restore the dignity and power of Islam. The leader of al-Qaeda urged them to follow in his footsteps: "We men of mature age have laid down guideposts for the young people of the ummah on the way of jihad and have mapped out the path for them. Young people, you need not but follow this path."

Bin Laden has been dead for nearly five years, but his words resonate louder than ever among young men and women longing to be "knights" and "heroes" in a fight the Islamists claim is a just war against the injustices of our world. This weak argument is bolstered by our failure to recognize that the unprecedented challenge posed by the Sept. 11 attacks called for the development of entirely new rules and structures.

Addressing the root causes of global terrorism could have eliminated the fertile ground that nourished the terrorist generation we now face. Instead, we orchestrated a war on terrorism executed solely by military forces, intelligence services and police. We failed almost entirely to battle for the hearts and minds of those who were watching our actions from within our societies. We sowed the seeds of radicalism by neglecting to spend money and effort towards prevention and de-radicalization in neighborhoods that produce crime and extremism, the byproducts of a dearth of both individual perspectives on and convincing explanations for our actions abroad.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not excusing those who became terrorists. And I'm not suggesting we should have served our troubled youth a silver platter of bright, worriless futures and great jobs. But we could have shown them we care by creating more opportunities to succeed, promoting their engagement and strongly discouraging any display of disrespect for the rule of law. No support, no obligation, no penalty – a strong signal of indifference that made it very easy for jihad recruiters to promise the lost and disenfranchised a way to make a difference in a world of injustice.

It should come as no surprise that young adherents to the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) tend to be the underprivileged in our societies, coming from criminal backgrounds, dysfunctional families and unsafe neighborhoods, mostly in big cities. There are also intellectuals, doctors and lawyers that have joined the jihad being waged in Syria and Iraq.

But they, too, are striving to become vanguards of a perceived justice. They are driven by the endless stream of videos showing war-zone atrocities that instill a feeling of powerlessness in both the intellectuals and the underprivileged, for whom IS provides a sense of power, belonging and self-esteem that they are unable to experience in Western societies.

This must be addressed – urgently; IS is not only using emotional appeal to draw fighters into the war in Syria and Iraq, but also to open new fronts in different parts of the world, especially Europe. The continuous rise of lone-wolf or single-cell attacks over the past two years is an indication of what to expect next. A blueprint for subversive action has been widely published on the Internet and, according to German investigators, enthusiastically read and disseminated by young Muslims in European countries.

"Muslim Gangs. The Future of Muslims in the West" – the first ebook in the Black Flag series – calls for the creation of armed gangs to confront police and establish no-go zones in bigger cities. According to the authors, the increasing tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims will fuel the far-right movement: "The neo-Nazis are already trying to win over politicians, and influential people in society to their anti-Islamic cause. This division will become more clear in the coming years when more and more far-right political groupings (with neo-Nazi thugs as their militias) are elected and become rulers of cities and countries." This polarization of society is then supposed to alienate and insulate Muslim communities, thereby providing fertile ground for the recruitment of new followers of the Islamist cause.

This strategy is still far from succeeding, but it has begun to show its impact. The perpetrators of the November Paris attacks are thought to have been led by Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who had formed an Islamist gang controlling part of the Molenbeek neighborhood in Brussels. In light of the exaggerated threat of imported terrorism via the great number of refugees arriving in Europe, the far-right anti-Islam movement is on the rise, and was recently fueled by the sexual attacks against women in several German cities this New Year's Eve. Although they seem to have been committed by gang-like groups of migrants from North Africa, there is no indication of any connection between them and the young Islamists addressed by IS with its ebook series.

PRIVATE

Elmar Thevessen is deputy editor-in-chief and head of news at the German public television channel ZDF. He has authored several books on international terrorism.

"Muslim Gangs" not only provides organizational guidance and bomb-making manuals, but also spells out the ultimate goal of uniting all Muslim communities in Europe for the final chapter of the IS strategy: "With European Muslims surrounding Italy from its West and North, the Balkan Muslims from its East, the Islamic State will enter into Italy from its South with its missiles and ships. And 'you will attack Rome, and Allah will enable you to conquer it.'" The last sentence is a quote from the Prophet Muhammad's teachings about the end of time, which arguably form the most important reason for young Muslims in the West to join IS.

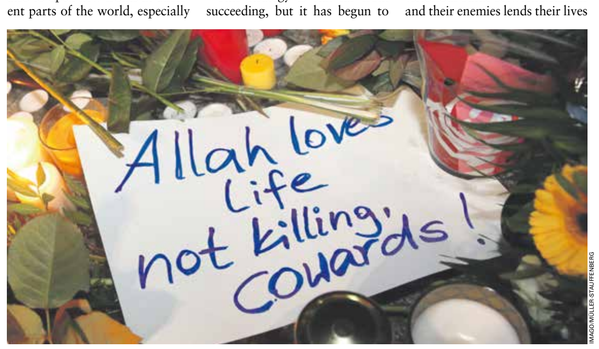
The expectation of the final and victorious battle between Muslims and their enemies lends their lives the purpose they desperately seek. The IS propaganda machine has made its core argument – from frequent references in its daily reports from the front, to the countless articles emphasizing it on the terrorist organization's Internet magazine. The magazine is titled *Dabiq*, after the small Syrian town where the apocalyptic battle is supposed to take place.

The self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is pursuing the same goals as Osama bin Laden a decade ago. In November 2001 the al-Qaeda leader said: "The day will come when the symbols of Islam will rise up and it will be similar to the early days of Al-Mujahedeen and Al-Ansar. And victory to those who follow Allah." Bin Laden was calling for the "the greatest jihad in the history of Islam," but al-Baghdadi and his hordes have something to show for that he never accomplished: The mere existence of a Caliphate, one with its own territory, gives credence to the original claim and acts as a huge recruitment tool for the Islamist movement.

So, how do we counter all that? Let's put up a real fight, finally. Let's show IS and its followers the strength of our system – militarily, by fighting this war with whatever it takes in Syria and Iraq; politically, by using all diplomatic, economic and political means to end the conflict quickly; cooperatively, by sharing and using the information police and intelligence services have already gathered to discover, stop and punish extremists in our midst.

But these measures will fail unless we act socially as well, focusing on those whom the terrorists consider their prey: the young people who feel disenfranchised and betrayed by society. We must create opportunities, promote engagement and condemn any disrespect for the rule of law. The fact of hundreds of thousands of refugees arriving in Europe is the best testimony that the "just war" of IS – and Assad, perhaps – is nothing less than genocide.

But if we treat them with indifference as well, they, too, could fall victim to Islamist recruitment. We must set up guideposts, giving them perspectives, opportunities and hope. This sounds idealistic? I agree. But if we don't try, some of the young refugees will become the next generation of terrorists – of our own creation. ■



MARCEL KUSCH/PICTURE ALLIANCE/DPA

A memorial site in Berlin after the Paris attacks in November.

In his opening speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, German President Joachim Gauck criticized national attempts to isolate itself against refugees. "I find it difficult to understand when countries whose citizens once experienced solidarity as the victims of political persecution now deny solidarity to those fleeing persecution. I also find it difficult to understand why a retreat into nationalist thinking is seen as a solution at a time when globalization is leading to ever stronger international links, not only in the flow of goods and capital but also through the mobility of people."

Wanted: Ideas for Europe

Gauck also warned against democrats yielding the floor to populists and xenophobes, which is what brought about the conversation about limits.

"We will not be able to take in everyone." Limiting numbers is "not in itself unethical; it helps to maintain the support of society. Without acceptance, a society is not open and not willing to take in refugees."

Gauck demanded from European countries not just "solidarity with Germany, which is bearing such a heavy burden. I would also like to see a discussion in which the citizens of Europe do not put all their strength and imagination into shaping a retreat into national solutions but, rather, into ideas for a Europe in which everyone feels included and everyone's once again represented."

Europe has offered "us all better political and economic prospects than any individual nation-state could," Gauck said. "Do we really want to risk seeing the great historical success, which has brought Europe peace and prosperity, collapse as a result of the refugee question? No one, absolutely no one, can want that." ■

Cyber Armageddon

The next war may be fought online – and the world is ill-prepared for it | By Lorenz Hemicker

On Feb. 12, 2026, the lights go out in western Germany. Electricity is cut to the entire Ruhr Valley. Within minutes, the phones, tablets and wearables of five million people go offline. Commuters find themselves shut inside trains and subways. Vehicles on the roads are subsumed into one enormous traffic jam.

At this point the people in Germany's biggest urban center do not know they have been hit by a cyberattack of unprecedented dimensions. It is targeted at the smart grid, the intelligent electricity network connected to the Internet – on which for some years now everything in this longstanding industrial region has depended, from power stations to the last washing machine.

Cyber emergency teams try to regain control of the smart grid, while disaster control teams, police and the military do all they can to ameliorate the effects of the attack. But despite their effort, public order collapses within a week. Heating systems freeze up. There is no more fuel; none of the gas stations are working. At the edges of the Ruhr industrial region, huge tent cities spring up for the fleeing inhabitants. Those who remain and are still healthy search through the canyons of buildings between endless lines of abandoned cars just for something to eat.

This scenario from the Ruhr is not science fiction. It is based on a study commissioned for the German parliament six years ago; it describes in painstaking detail the effects of a long-lasting power outage.

Yet today's highly tech-dependent society shows scant concern; security is still neglected in the process of digitalization. That is because so far there has been no digital 9/11, and the linking-up of entire regions via intelligent power grids – whose vulnerability would make an attack of the dimension described even possible – is still in its early stages.

Lorenz Hemicker is senior duty editor of FAZ.NET.

FAZ-FOTO WOLFGANG EILMES

To date, there are only a few recorded cyberattacks that have caused physical damage. In 2010 the computer worm Stuxnet destroyed thousands of centrifuges in the Iranian nuclear program. In 2012 another attack wiped out around 70 percent of the IT infrastructure belonging to the Saudi Arabian oil company Saudi-Aramco. With a single careless click on a link in an email, an employee appears to have downloaded malware onto an office computer. From there, the hackers worked their way through the company's entire system. Ultimately, 35,000 computers were erased or otherwise rendered useless.

The 2014 attack on a German steelworks went according to a similar pattern, causing significant damage to a furnace. The authority tasked with combatting such attacks in Germany, the Federal Office for Information Security, refuses to divulge further details.

It is suspected that a power outage several weeks ago in Ukraine was caused by hackers. On Dec. 23, 2015, power was cut to 700,000 households – but for hours, not days or even weeks.

The damage caused by cyberattacks is barely on the radar of those outside of business or the security community. Spying and data theft set off a short-lived public outcry on social media. Even cyberattacks on banks – in which hackers steal millions of euros – draw little attention in Europe.

Even cyber operations carried out in the name of the self-proclaimed Islamic State – which conducts its jihad on the virtual as well as the geographical battlefield – are more or less forgotten within days. Who remembers the takeover of French websites by hackers in the name of the "Cybercaliphate" at the same time as the mass shooting at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*? Who recalls the brief takeover of US Central Command's Twitter and YouTube services, or the biggest scoop to date: the interruption of programming at the French television station TV5? Compared with physical terrorist attacks, vast migration and the wars in the Middle East, they seem no more dangerous than graffiti.

That is set to change. The world has entered a global cyber arms race. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, as of late last year no less than 29 countries had offensive cyber units in their military and secret services. Even the German army plans to be able to attack opponents online, damage their infrastructure and infiltrate enemy weapons systems. It was a decision over which the German Defense Ministry struggled far longer than Germany's allies did.

It is plain to see how attractive cyberwarfare can be. Attacks are nearly impossible to trace. There is only a small material outlay. And commanders need not put personnel in harm's way. Hacker mercenaries can be recruited from the depths of the Internet even for major, far-reaching offensives.

continued right

IMAGO/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

NATO, too, is well aware of the risks. Since their 2014 summit in Wales, the alliance members have agreed that cyberattacks can have devastating consequences on par with conventional attacks. Every year since 2010 in the Estonian capital of Tallinn, NATO members have been rehearsing possible defenses against significant attacks on the infrastructure of alliance members. The exercises are carried out in real time and are the biggest of their kind anywhere in the world.

Many IT security experts believe the digital arms race is only the first phase of what is to come. States and organizations are sponsoring hackers to infiltrate their opponents' systems. They have already siphoned vast amounts of email data from German parliamentarians; and they stole files on millions of US government employees, including files on holders of classified information.

National governments are getting better at protecting their critical infrastructure. Yet many IT specialists say this is happening far too slowly. "We were seduced by the promises of technology," says Melissa Hathaway, a former cybersecurity adviser to US President Barack Obama. Hathaway now assesses the Internet security of countries all around the world. She says that new technologies continue to be integrated into everyday life without any discussion of their safety. She adds that no country on earth is prepared for a cyberattack.

In the next few years the Internet will permeate our daily lives to an extent that we cannot even imagine today. The Internet of Things will revolutionize digitalization. From self-driving cars to life-support systems in hospitals to clothing – objects will communicate with one another via the Internet. This is meant to help power stations be used more efficiently and help people become less sick and live more easily.

But with more and more overlap between systems running complex software, the potential for attack becomes far greater. The IT infrastructure of entire societies may become as full of holes as Swiss cheese; no one knows where hackers may next inflict their damage, through "backdoors" in pre-fabricated hardware components, software gaps or through physical human infiltration.

On top of this comes an entirely new dimension of cyberthreat, which is already a source of tremendous concern – a group headed by the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, US General James E. Cartwright, warned last year that cyberattacks could lead to an unauthorized use of nuclear weapons.

The group found that during a crisis between Russia and the US, hackers could conceivably penetrate the two nuclear powers' early warning systems and signal the firing of intercontinental missiles by the other side. Or cyberterrorists could send manipulated launch orders to crews in missile silos. The group reported that the actual firing of missiles was considered a highly unlikely scenario. The group recommended an end to the highest level of alert for the Russian and US strategic arsenals, and to extend the pre-firing period from 3-5 minutes to 24-72 hours.

Ultimately, whether on not states decide to fully redesign their IT infrastructure may be a matter of life and death. If they fail to do so, only two options remain: to live with enormous risks, or to separate all critical infrastructure, without exception, from the Internet. Forever. ■

Find, Fix, Finish

German hackers snoop on IS, warn of attacks and seek contact with intelligence services | By Jochen Bittner

The civilian resistance in Germany against the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) knows it is living dangerously. "Practically all of us receive death threats on a near-daily basis," writes one campaigner, who's accessible only online and calls himself Ghostmaster. He, like other international activists in the Ghost Security Group (GSG), has joined the fight against IS online. The Ghosts are the latest irregular combatants in an asymmetrical war: bands of insurgent hackers versus the jihadist columns. If they cannot liberate countries, these fighters want to at least free the Internet from the plague of religious extremism.

Partners of the GSG reportedly include the French-based intelligence group Katiba Des Narvalos and the Peshmerga Cyber Terrorism Unit. Besides recruiting websites for jihadists, they seek out Twitter and Facebook users who, as Ghostmaster writes, "clearly participate in terrorist activities, approve of them or actively support them." The accounts are then erased or infiltrated to gain more exact information: friends lists, communication, networks and residences of IS supporters.

Jochen Bittner is an editor at the German weekly Die Zeit.

DIE ZEIT

But the group doesn't stop there. Unlike previous hacker coalitions like Anonymous or Wikileaks, they do not seek to penetrate the networks of authorities, armed forces or intelligence services. They see themselves instead as private comrades of state security organs, as armchair agents in lock step with official intelligence services, and they pass the results of their surveillance work on to the authorities.

By their own account, these volunteer online auxiliaries have contact only with US intelligence services, and especially through the mediation of Michael Smith, founder of Kronos Advisory, a consulting firm thoroughly networked with the CIA and FBI.

Members of GSG keep their identities secret from one another as well. Therefore they do not know who exactly participates in the group.

On Twitter, Ghostmaster (@intel_ghost) makes no secret of his contempt for multicultural romanticism. He seems at least partly driven by a fear of excessive immigration. Each and every one of us has chosen this path. It works," writes Ghostmaster. Incidentally, he advises all untrained leisure-time hackers against trying to emulate him, pointing out that IS has enough IT specialists to find its enemies online who fail to sufficiently obscure their tracks.

But how can the Ghosts ensure that no innocent parties are reported and possibly attacked? We always check twice, Ghostmaster says. "We also do not go after anyone publicly. Our information and reports are examined by official authorities. 'Find, Fix, Finish' is implemented only when the authorities consider it necessary. We're not the police, not judges and definitely not executioners."

Germany, because of its "more active participation in the fight against IS (through reconnaissance flights and naval support) is squarely in the focus of the Islamists," the hacktivist adds. "One can say that the likelihood of an Islamist attack has risen greatly. The tendency was already clearly recognizable in the most recent video messages. After Paris, above all Sweden, the UK, Germany and Italy have repeatedly been named as the next targets in the networks." He and his partners spend several hours each day following up on and analyzing such messages, he says. ■

The connectivity wars

Fashioning a new G7 of global dependence | By Mark Leonard

When Turkey shot down a Russian fighter jet in November 2015, the image of the falling plane went viral. Calls for revenge exploded across Russian print and Internet media. The high-profile host of Russia's main political TV talk show compared the downing of the jet to the 1914 assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that triggered World War I. So how did Russia's hawkish leader, Vladimir Putin, respond to the battle cries of his people?

He signed a decree halting fruit and vegetable imports from Turkey, banning charter flights and the sale of package holidays, and scrapping Russia's visa-free regime with the country. His proxies warned of possible escalation involving energy imports, while the media speculated on cyberattacks. He signaled that the most important battlegrounds of future conflicts will not be trenches, the oceans or the skies, but rather the interconnected infrastructure of the global economy: disrupting trade and investment, the Internet, transport links and the movement of people. Welcome to the connectivity wars.

The Russians are right to draw parallels with a century ago – but the dynamics are reversed. While in 1914 globalization went into reverse as a result of a destructive global conflict, today it is the reluctance of competing great powers to act militarily that threatens to tear the global economy apart.

Countries want neither to lose access to the global economy nor to fight each other. Interdependence, once heralded as a barrier to conflict, has become a currency of power. The ease with which countries weaponize this interdependence raises dark omens for the current world order.

There is nothing new about economic sanctions; what has changed are the myriad links that bind states and peoples together, which makes them vulnerable to disruptions.

During the Cold War, the global economy mirrored the global order – only limited links existed across the Iron Curtain. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a divided world living in the shadow of nuclear war gave way to a world of interconnection and interdependence. The world was largely united in pursuing the benefits of globalization and trade; investment and communication between states mushroomed.

So who are the main players in this world? We can see the emergence of a new G7 – with different archetypes of power for the era of connectivity wars. While the United States remains the most powerful player and a genuine innovator of geo-economics, there are a number of niche players that have emerged alongside it.

Russia is a pioneer of disruption. In the last few years it has employed every single geo-economic tool to shape the behavior of its neighbors and other powers, including gas cut-offs, sanctions, expelling workers, cyberattacks, disinformation and propaganda campaigns, and attempts to gridlock Western-led international organizations from the UN to the OSCE. It has worked to establish new organizations to extend its power, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Mark Leonard is director of the European Council on Foreign Relations and editor of the newly published book, "The Connectivity Wars." PRIVATE

Russia has not done enough to strengthen and diversify its economy, which relies overwhelmingly on hydrocarbon exports. As a result its share of the global economy has been on a downward trajectory. This will limit its ability to act as a spoiler over time.

A recent entrant to this new G7 is Turkey. It has turned the use of people flows into a source of foreign policy power. Using refugees as leverage, it has changed the balance between Turkey and the EU by demanding the lifting of visa restrictions, financial aid and the reinvigoration of the country's EU membership bid.

China's most innovative geo-economic tool is infrastructure – both physical and institutional. Stretching from Hungary to Indonesia, Beijing's "One Belt, One Road" project finances roads, railways, pipelines and other infrastructure across Eurasia, smoothing China's westward projection.

China's ambitions also extend beyond the physical to the virtual world, where it is pushing a cyber-sovereignty agenda.

Saudi Arabia's disruptive power rests on the 10 million barrels of oil it extracts every day. Responsible for a fifth of the global oil trade. Its billions of petrodollars allow it to invest in support of its foreign policy goals – backing up counter-revolutionary regimes during the Arab uprisings as well as waging a regional proxy war against Iran.

The US is still the world's sole superpower, and it has leveraged its control of the dollar to develop near-hegemonic control of the financial system. Financial warfare has become central to America's national security doctrine. The US dominance of the global financial market makes it the fifth member of this G7 of connectivity.

What about the EU? It has imbued the world's largest single market with the ambition to become the world's regulatory superpower. As most multinational companies depend on access to the region, they must comply with EU standards. Equally, if a country wants to become a member of the EU, it has to integrate over 80,000 pages of law into domestic legislation.

But states aren't the only players in the era of connectivity wars. The final member of the G7 of connectivity wars is the people. The hyper-connected economy and society is much more vulnerable to disruptions from below.

A new popular nationalism is forcing governments to compete with each other rather than working together. In Europe, popular campaigns are hindering the TTIP negotiations; in the US, disinvestment campaigns are impacting gains by global energy companies. Moreover, the ability of people to cluster on the web – in imagined majorities – makes both democratic and autocratic politics more volatile and prone to campaigns against particular courses of action.

These trends – as problematic as they may already be – have begun to instill fear in the system. The gnawing doubts about the risks of interdependence may eventually become more damaging than any of the aggression described above. Improving economic efficiency is no longer simply an economic strategy, but also a geopolitical one, making a country less dependent on its partners.

This global trend is of course having a negative impact on economic efficiency. But more importantly, it could, step by step, lead to an unraveling of the global economic system. ■

In it together

Developing cybersecurity norms is a shared responsibility between governments and the private sector | By Scott Charney

The development of cybersecurity norms is an increasingly important international security imperative. In the past year, governments – through the work done by either the G20 or the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Information Security – have elevated their commitment to cybersecurity by proposing norms to address security challenges caused by the exploitation of information and communications technology (ICT) systems.

These proposals vary in their prescriptions, from protecting human rights on the Internet, preventing the use of cyber weapons on critical infrastructures, to putting an end to state-sponsored cyber economic espionage. That governments have come this far is not a trivial matter given the rapid changes in technology and the fact that governments have reason both to protect and exploit modern ICT systems. Yet despite the sustained discourse and forward progress, the hard work of developing and implementing cybersecurity norms remains a major international challenge spanning the public and the private sectors.

Each set of norms comprises a different group of stakeholders with different objectives. Separating these norms into distinct categories will ensure that the right stakeholders align the right norm to the right objective. When examining each of the many individual norms proposals, it becomes clear there are three categories of cybersecurity norms: offensive, defensive and a set of norms uniquely focused on the ICT industry.

Governments have many objectives, some of which are best achieved through offensive action and others that are best achieved through self-restraint. In adopting offensive norms (i.e., norms that involve self-restraint), governments agree not to take certain actions and thus prevent the occurrence of unacceptable impacts. For example, by refusing to attack critical infrastructures, governments help ensure that civilian activities are not disrupted by the military use of cyber weapons. Similarly, governments must adhere to the positions laid out by the G20 in November 2015 and refrain from using ICT networks to steal private sector information for commercial advantage.

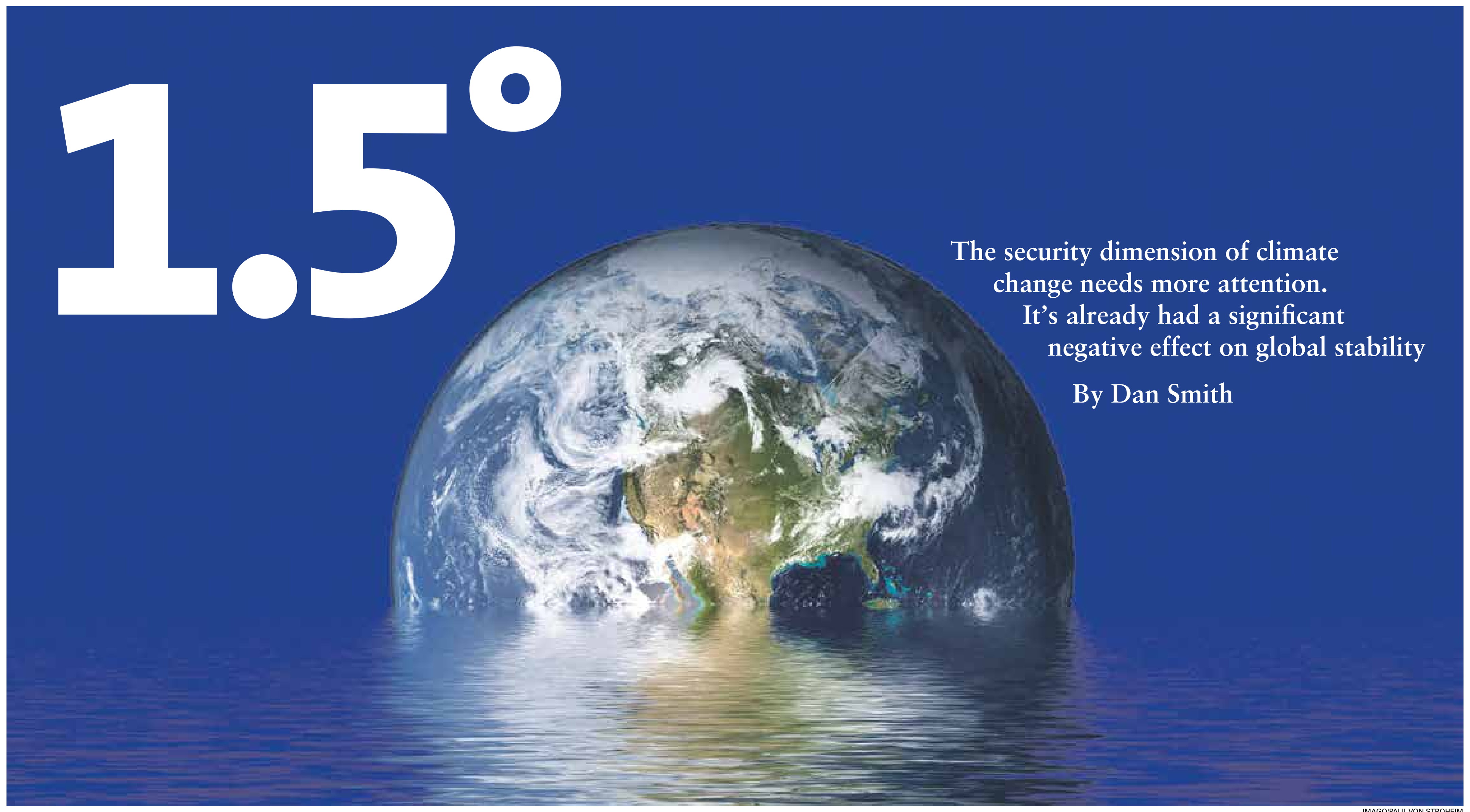
There is also a growing convergence around defensive norms, or norms that enable cybersecurity risk management through enhanced defenses and incident response. These norms stem from governments' acknowledgement that cyber defense is a collaborative exercise requiring cross-border partnerships and joint action against cybersecurity threats. Because these norms are about cooperation more than self-restraint, a different set of civilian agencies – specifically law enforcement agencies and those tasked with the protection of IT networks e.g. Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) – needs to focus on their development and implementation. Cooperation also requires sharing information about risks to the ICT supply chain, such as details of vulnerabilities to ICT product and service manufacturers.

Scott Charney is corporate vice president for Microsoft's Trustworthy Computing Group. MICROSOFT

The development and implementation of offensive and defensive norms should be led by governments. We live in an age where everyone is becoming more and more dependent on ICT systems and governments are increasingly engaging in offensive cyber activity. The global ICT industry must therefore come together as a community and work with governments to develop effective norms and provide the technical expertise necessary to assist in their implementation.

Norms are not just for governments. The global ICT industry must also develop and implement norms. While the industry has no offensive objectives, it must explicitly show how it protects customers. The global ICT industry norms must assure customers that they can trust global ICT platforms. For example, it must be clear that it will not tolerate backdoors, will not withhold patches and that it will address attacks – from whatever source – to protect customers. These norms must be implemented in a manner that increases customer confidence in the global ICT supply chain and sends a clear message to governments that our industry will not help exploit, but only protect ICT users.

The development and implementation of cybersecurity norms are complicated endeavors requiring both government and private sector cooperation. We call on our colleagues from the ICT industry, as well as forward-thinking governments interested in preserving a safe and secure cyberspace, to work together in developing and implementing comprehensive cybersecurity norms that, as appropriate, apply to governments and industry. The norms we define together today will shape the security of cyberspace for decades to come. ■



1.5°

The security dimension of climate change needs more attention. It's already had a significant negative effect on global stability

By Dan Smith

IMAGO/PAUL VON STROHEIM

The security dimension of the challenge from climate change is unavoidable yet seems to be easily ignored. Failure to address this problem will render the security agenda unmanageable within 30 to 40 years.

2015 was the year of climate change. With the Paris Agreement, world politics crossed a threshold thanks to high levels of clarity and commitment. But the problem cannot be resolved in one go and, among other challenges, the security dimension needs close attention.

In April 2015 the foreign ministers of the G7 welcomed the findings of an independent report commissioned by the group's members. Titled "A New Climate for Peace," the report addresses how climate change combines with other challenges to jeopardize security, especially in fragile states. But this high-level awareness remains largely abstract and diffuse; there has been little practical action.

The Paris Agreement signed in December by COP 21 (21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) goes further than previous treaties: it enjoys the agreement of more states; its goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C (compared to pre-industrial figures) is more ambitious than the previous goal of 2°; the text creates a firm link between reducing emissions, building resilience and supporting technological innovation; although much of it is non-binding, the agreement does bind each party to make plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to below current levels; and finally, it has an inbuilt self-improvement mechanism, committing the parties to making and implementing successive plans for reducing emissions, each more ambitious than the last.

This is a major achievement, yet the future of the security agenda is also shaped by the negative milestones of 2015. It was the warmest year ever – again. July was the warmest month in recorded history. The average global concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere exceeded 400 parts per million for the first time ever. The average global temperature is now 1°C warmer than in the pre-industrial age.

And it gets worse: a widely accepted estimate is that greenhouse gases, in addition to already having raised average world temperatures by 1°C, have amassed to such an extent that that an additional temperature increase of 0.6°C is unavoidable over the next four decades. Thus, even if there were to be no more greenhouse gas emissions as of today, global warming is certain to exceed the 1.5° threshold set in the Paris Agreement.

This is where potential chaos in the international security agenda may lie three or four decades from now.

The significance of the 1.5° level is that it is the estimated safe maximum for low-lying small island states and coastal areas. These regions face challenges to their essential viability – will it still be possible for people to live in these locations by mid-century? If not, where will they go? As conditions deteriorate, what will people demand of their states and how will states react? We know enough about the impact of climate variability to be able to discern some dark prospects.

The 2011 uprising in Egypt was driven in part by the rise in global food prices, which increased largely because of drought in China and forest fires in Russia the previous year. For a country like Egypt, where food prices are stabilized by government subsidies, it became impossible to prevent price increases, which large segments of the population could not afford. Anger over food prices intersected with and was compounded by anger over arbitrary and unaccountable authority with world-shaking results.

In Syria, before protests and the war began in 2011, there was a four-to-five year drought that drove at least a million people out of agricultural employment. They then migrated to the cities where many could barely survive. The government was unable and unwilling to address their deprivation. When protests started over lack of free speech and redoubled as authorities responded violently, there was a deep well of anger, resentment and despair. The protests fed off this widespread discontent and militias had no problems finding willing recruits. The tragic results are the destruction of Syria and the exacerbation of political stability and social well-being in the region and beyond.

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CAROL ALLEN-STOREY/WWW.CASTOREY.COM

These are but the two most visible cases. There are many other regions where the changing climate has had a significant negative effect on security and stability, including Mali, Thailand, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Darfur and, with more localized and less spectacular consequences, in pastoral areas of the Horn of Africa, in Nepal, Bangladesh, the Nile Basin, India and Mozambique. All are cited in last year's report to the G7.

In 2015 Europe underwent the largest flow of forced migration in decades and, in November, the terror attacks in Paris. It is helpful to consider that climate change played a role in each case. On the one hand, such consideration is certain to stimulate motivation to implement the Paris Agreement and to make the most of its self-improvement mechanism. On the other hand, we need to improve our handling of the consequences, regardless of how successful our actions are in addressing the causes.

It is perhaps an irony that, whereas in most cases one criticizes the focus on symptoms of insecurity and conflict at the expense of treating their causes, in this case it is the other way round: the focus on causes is fine, but if we fail to treat the symptoms, we are lost.

Addressing the symptoms – i.e. the consequences of climate change – will require newfound resilience. There appear to be five main routes to this end, none of which has a military component. The military dimension is a last resort that should be explored only if resilience cannot be established and communities or even whole societies become victim to the effects of climate change. This is a core area of security, but not in the first instance of defense policy or military strategy.

First, we must improve risk management. The initial step is to deepen risk assessment. The risks of today and tomorrow are complex products of the interaction of climate change, poor governance, conflict legacy, inequality and underdevelopment – in varying combinations with varying consequences. For example, communities relying on rain-fed agriculture or on irrigation face risks of diminished water supply, which leads to food insecurity.

However, evidence shows that while water scarcity in rain-fed agriculture (as in much of Africa) tends to lead to conflicts over land, water scarcity in irrigation-based agriculture (as in Central Asia) is more likely to lead to disputes over water sources. Understanding the different types of conflict risk allows for the development of variously calibrated short- and medium-term responses.

Three further priorities are enhancing food security, improving disaster risk readiness and ensuring that current agreements on managing trans-boundary water resources – the shared use of lakes and rivers – are strong enough to withstand fluctuations in water volumes. Finally, building resilience must be prioritized throughout development aid policy and projects. Resilience is not only or even primarily a matter of dams and seawalls. It is also a matter of how individuals and communities build their homes, where they build them, what they farm and how the rivers are used and protected. For the security of all, a priority development goal must henceforth be the resilience of all.

These approaches take security policy well beyond its traditional confines. Such is the nature of the challenge we face today if tomorrow's security agenda is to be at all manageable. ■

Fragility hotspots:

Ranking of countries with high levels of instability, disaster risk, poverty and climate change vulnerability

ADAPTED FROM HARRIS, KATIE; DAVID KEEN AND TOM MITCHELL 2013: WHEN DISASTERS AND CONFLICT COLLIDE: IMPROVING LINKS BETWEEN DISASTER RESILIENCE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION. LONDON: OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (ODI).

It's time for real progress on ICT supply chain security

By Andy Purdy Jr.

Information and communications technology (ICT), digitization and connecting people and companies have all changed lives for the better. However, the increasing number, sophistication and seriousness of successful cyber attacks, and a supply chain that is hard to see and even harder to protect, demonstrate that networks and systems are far too vulnerable to attack by a range of malicious actors.

The major elements of society – government, critical infrastructure, major private companies and the citizenry – are increasingly dependent on ICT for the running of their daily lives and business operations, national security, economic well-being, public safety and law enforcement, as well as for the safety, integrity and privacy of corporate and individual data. The combination of threats, vulnerabilities and significant potential consequences leads to only one conclusion – supply chain risk must be addressed. Admittedly there are intensified efforts to address cyber security threats generally, and there are pockets of activity in the world where progress is being made, but organizations globally are paying insufficient attention to risks from suppliers.

ICT supply chain risk is particularly daunting as the global supply chain for a product can involve scores or even hundreds of components from a like number of companies operating in multiple countries. An overarching concern with supply chain risk is that malicious actors will insert unauthorized code in authentic or counterfeit products or components that can initiate a wide range of potential attacks to disrupt or degrade services of government, critical infrastructure and private organizations, steal or corrupt private or otherwise critical data, or inflict physical damage. Given the nature and magnitude of the challenge, supply chain risk management is not just about ensuring that products and services will be there when needed, it is also about the criticality of taking a product lifecycle approach to risk – from concept to end-of-life – in order to ensure that products do only what they are supposed to do and nothing more.

Fortunately, key cyber stakeholders in government and the private sector are becoming increasing aware of supply chain risk and of their responsibility to move beyond sometimes impassioned debate about cyber security threats to make real progress toward addressing supply chain risk in a collaborative, cooperative manner. Stakeholders must drive toward collective agreement on laws, norms of conduct, standards and best practices for suppliers and vendors, as well as toward independent verification mechanisms, with an effort to educate and organize ICT buyers to leverage their purchasing power with the goal of encouraging the availability of more secure products.

Organizations cannot effectively address supply chain risk in isolation. However well intentioned, such an approach is likely to suffer the same fate as those who try to fasten security to a product late in the production schedule, rather than building it in at the concept phase and integrating it throughout production. To be truly serious and effective in addressing supply chain or any other risk, it must be part of an organization-wide approach to risk. The successful management of risk requires an organization to do the following:

- Articulate an organizational commitment to address security and privacy risk as part of a risk management or quality program;
- Establish and enforce an internal governance mechanism led by the organization's top leadership;
- Identify and incentivize specific security requirements and baselines (the mandatory minimum set-off rules, policies and standards) across all areas of the organization;
- Implement robust and auditable verification and compliance mechanisms;
- Incorporate security into the goals and metrics of departments and business groups, as well as into the performance metrics of business units and individuals, in order to provide incentives and facilitate accountability.

> "For Huawei, supply chain risk falls under the purview of the Global Cyber Security and User Privacy Protection Committee (GSPC), which is Huawei's top-level cyber security and privacy management body."

To address supply chain risk, an organization must have an understanding of its overall cyber security risk and implement a plan to address it. An example is the Cyber Security Framework developed by the US standards body, NIST. This framework is a tool that can help organizations understand their risk and chart a path to a more appropriate and sustainable risk posture.

Once aware of supply chain risk, many organizations struggle with what to do about it. Fortunately there are encouraging initiatives that can be considered to inform action, such as the SAFECode framework to assess the development processes of providers; the Underwriters Laboratory Cybersecurity Assurance Program; Europe's ENISA report on supply chain integrity; the EastWest Institute cyber initiative to promote the availability and use of more secure products and services; in the UK, the government's initiative to facilitate the evaluation of suppliers and the Trustworthy Software Initiative to promote trustworthy software using a compendium of standards and best practices; Japan's efforts to implement a strategy on supply chain risk; and, in the US, the government's procurement requirements and private sector initiatives in the energy, defense, and financial sectors to address supply chain risk.

Huawei has taken an approach to addressing supply chain risk that is part of its end-to-end, global assurance program and has shared details publicly to invite feedback while encouraging and facilitating a broader dialogue among customers and stakeholders. For Huawei, supply chain risk falls under the purview of the Global Cyber Security and User Privacy Protection Committee (GSPC), which is Huawei's top-level cyber security and privacy management body and is led by a Deputy Chairman. The supply chain is one of the business processes incorporated into security assurance, which also include R&D, sales and marketing, delivery, technical services and all areas that require security consideration – from laws to HR.

As part of the effort to address supply chain risk, Huawei has established a comprehensive supplier management system through which Huawei qualifies suppliers based on the supplier's systems, processes and products, selects suppliers that can contribute to the quality and security of the products and services procured by Huawei, and continuously monitors and regularly evaluates the delivery performance of qualified suppliers.

One significant tool that allows organizations to address supply chain risk – whether as a provider or buyer of ICT – is the Open Trusted Technology Provider Standard (O-TTPS), recently recognized by the International Standards Organization (ISO). Developed by the Open Trusted Technology Forum, the standard identifies and categorizes technology industry best practices for secure engineering and supply chain integrity, the systematic use of which can make a vendor's products more secure and trustworthy in the eyes of commercial or governmental enterprise customers. Accreditation to the standard is only granted after an independent third-party evaluator confirms it is warranted. The O-TTPS can help meet the need of ICT suppliers and buyers for greater clarity than they get from multiple standards, while affecting what they develop and how, as well as what they purchase and why.

Finally, more attention must be given to how to motivate organizations, which understand supply chain risk and have an idea of what they should do about it, to take necessary action and to be held accountable if they fall short. It is apparent that too few organizations do what is necessary to markedly reduce risk in the absence of business drivers to do so, and to hold them accountable should they fail.

It is incumbent upon governments and private organizations to collaborate more actively in driving agreement on standards, best practices, and norms of conduct, and to develop and implement motivators and incentives – such as the use of security requirements in purchasing – for driving substantial progress to reduce global supply chain risk. It is heartening to see encouraging initiatives and some new tools for understanding and addressing supply chain risk, but the problem is too important for the world to be satisfied with such slow progress.

About Huawei

Andy Purdy Jr.
CSO Huawei Technologies USA

PICTURES: FOTOLIA/MACIEK905, FOTOLIA/EDELWEISS, IMAGO/CHROMORANGE, FOTOLIA/SECTOR_2010, HUAWEI

Africa: Keeping P(e)ace?

In Africa, promising progress and substantial achievements continue to side with frustrating reversals and worrying trends. Many of the continent's 54 countries have seen solid rates of growth and meaningful economic reforms. Middle classes continue to grow and more and more countries meet development goals in areas such as education, health, and agricultural output. Extreme poverty, while still high, has been cut by 40 percent since 1990 in Sub-Saharan Africa. The increasing willingness and capacity of African institutions such as the African Union and regional economic communities like ECOWAS to tackle the continent's problems as well as recent landmark agreements, including those of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit and the COP 21 Conference on Climate Change in Paris, also bode well for Africa.

> "The growth in Africa's working-age population will be relentless and inevitable. Will that growth produce a demographic dividend or a demographic disaster? The answer is up to Africa's policy makers – today."[6]
> **WORLD BANK/AGENCE FRANÇAISE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT, 22 OCTOBER 2015**

At the same time, there remain large obstacles to building and keeping peace – and to keeping pace with stunning demographic trends. In most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the median age is below 20, and governance institutions and infrastructures are hardly prepared to keep up with this youth bulge. With the continent's population expected to double in the next 30 years, hundreds of millions of jobs will have to be created to avoid discontent, radicalization, and, ultimately, insecurity. As US President Barack Obama pointed out during his 2015 visit to Ethiopia, "we need only to look at the Middle East and North Africa to see that large numbers of young people with no jobs and stifled voices can fuel instability and disorder. I suggest to you that the most urgent task facing Africa today and for decades ahead is to create opportunity for this next generation."

Pervasive poverty, growing inequality, climate-driven migration, and rapid urbanization complicate this task – as does the prevalence of conflict throughout the continent. Africa

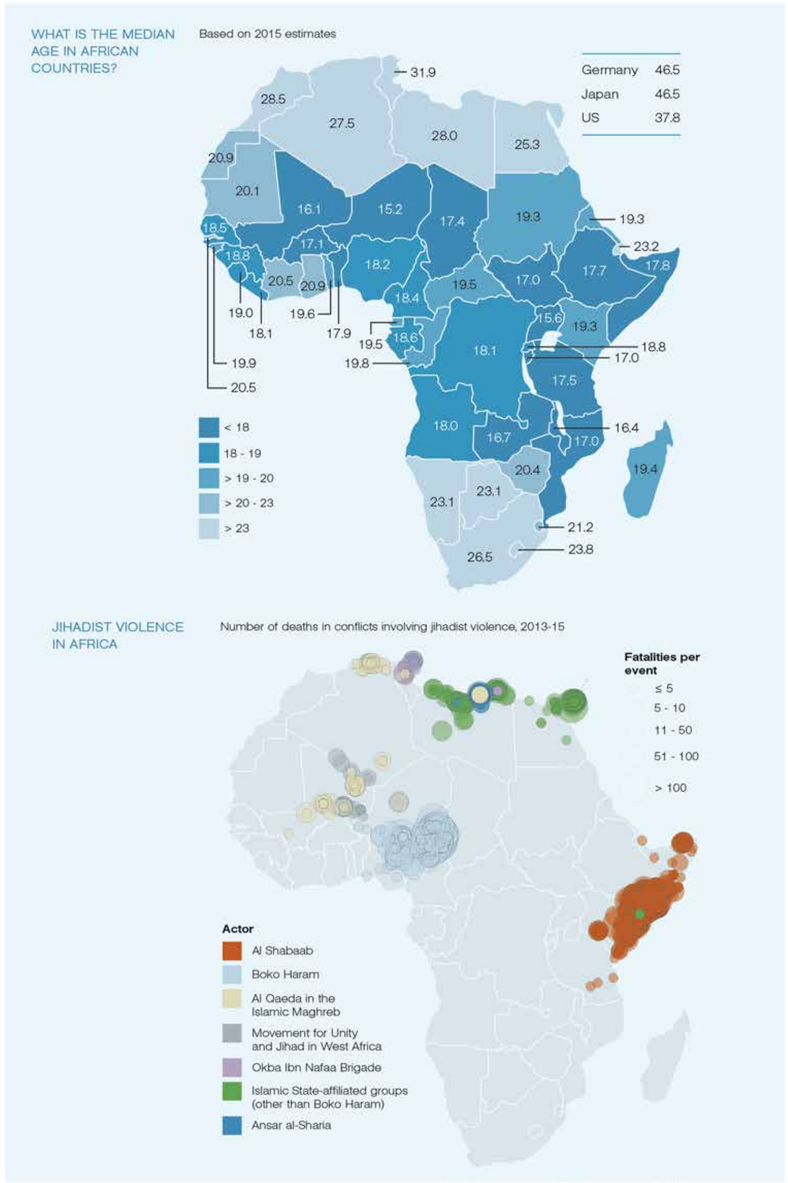
> "African societies are changing. We see that young people especially are calling for more participation in business and politics. The youngest population in the world – in some countries the average age is under 18 – is often looking at the oldest presidents."[5]
> **FRANK-WALTER STEINMEIER, 7 SEPTEMBER 2015**

continues to host eight out of the ten largest ongoing peace operations. Electoral violence and unconstitutional changes of government remain common, and numerous protracted conflicts unresolved. Northern Africa has not yet recovered from its failed or incomplete popular uprisings. Furthermore, across parts of the continent, home-grown jihadist terrorism is taking an increasing death toll, with Islamic State-affiliated Boko Haram responsible for more deaths than any other terrorist group in 2015, including the Islamic State proper. Moreover, in critical regions, there has been rapid growth of illicit activities such as human, arms, and drugs trafficking. For the Sahel, a report by the International Crisis Group observed in June 2015: "Borders are porous, government reach limited. Popu-

> "No region has done less to contribute to the climate crisis, but no region will pay a higher price for failure to tackle it."[7]
> **KOFI ANNAN, JUNE 2015**

lations and unemployment are soaring" – a "perfect storm of actual and potential instability."

Amid continuing signs of economic and political progress, the dual challenges of keeping peace and keeping pace are thus not bound to get any easier in 2016. ■



Human Security: Refuge Refused?

Never since World War II have more people in the world been forced to flee their homes. In 2015, the UNHCR has found, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has crossed the sad record mark of 60 million, up from 42.5 million in 2011 and 51.2 million in 2013. In Europe alone, more than 1 million refugees and migrants arrived in 2015, according to the International Organization for Migration. "For an age of unprecedented mass displacement, we need an unprecedented humanitarian response and a renewed global commitment to tolerance and protection for people fleeing conflict and persecution," then UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres pleaded in June 2015.

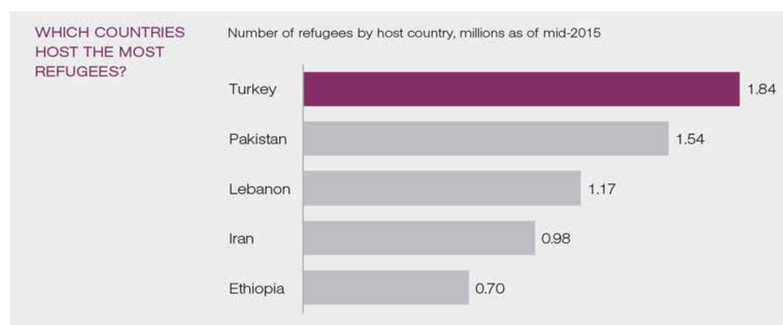
> "In many regions war and terror prevail. States disintegrate. For many years we have read about this. We have heard about it. We have seen it on TV. But we had not yet sufficiently understood that what happens in Aleppo and Mosul can affect Essen or Stuttgart. We have to deal with that now."[11]
> **ANGELA MERKEL, 25 NOVEMBER 2015**

In early September, when harrowing images of a deceased Syrian toddler on a Turkish beach were widely featured in the international press, the plight of refugees finally moved to the top of the global political agenda and broke what Pope Francis had called "the globalization of indifference."

But beyond the outpouring show of support by countless volunteers in many European countries, the refugee crisis soon turned into a broader political crisis, particularly in Europe. The failure to respond collectively to the large influx of refugees raised fundamental questions about the EU's functioning and its very identity. "If Europe fails on the question of refugees, […] then it won't be the Europe we imagine," Angela Merkel warned her European partners. But while the German chancellor continued to hold on to her credo "Wir schaffen das" ("We can do this"), more and more EU countries started closing their borders, putting at risk the free movement within the Schengen area, one of the EU's most fundamental achievements. In many EU member states, the debate on the fair distribution of refugees and their integration fuelled nationalist, populist, and anti-European Union sentiments. Some countries still object to accept even a tiny share of those fleeing war and terror and blame the German chancellor and her supporters for unilaterally opening the gates without having a clear strategy how to handle the influx.

The refugee flows across the Mediterranean have dominated the headlines, but they only make up a small share of all those forcibly displaced worldwide. Overall, developing countries continue to carry the heaviest burden, with nearly 9 out of 10 refugees fleeing into states of the developing world. And almost two thirds of all those forced to flee stay within the borders of their own country.

Forced displacement is thus a critical and global challenge. Beyond the necessary management of its short-term consequences, the refugee catastrophe requires a comprehensive response that takes on the root causes of forced migration. As UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson stressed at a conference in Turkey, "our ability to respond to migration and refugee movements is being tested as never before." So far, the world is collectively failing this test. ■



Health Security: The Plot Sickens

Because of their threat to human health, to economies, and to the stability of states as a whole, lapses in health security can become issues of international security. The 2014 Ebola outbreak, which threatened to destabilize large parts of West Africa but was eventually contained after more than 11,000 deaths, was the latest major example of this.

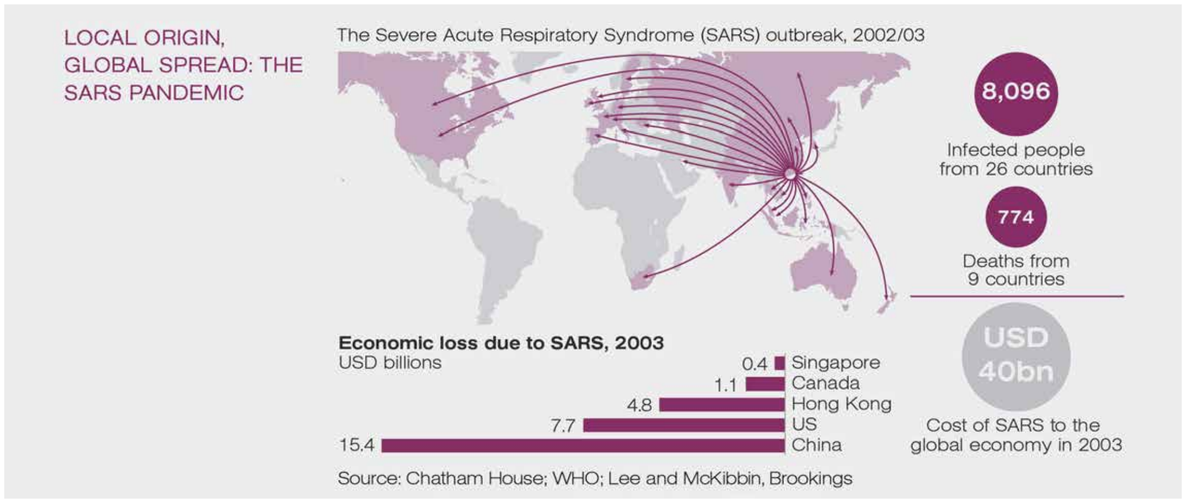
Ever since the "Black Death" reduced Europe's population by one third in the 14th century, states have recognized the catastrophic threat diseases can pose and have sought to protect their inhabitants from deadly outbreaks. Even so, the 1918 to 1920 Spanish influenza killed at least 50 million people, the 1957 Asian flu some two million, and the 1968 pandemic about one million. In 2009, pandemic influenza (the H1N1 "swine flu") infected up to 200 million people but was luckily of low lethality, with between 151,700 and 575,400 deaths. In addition to the human toll, major outbreaks can also have significant impacts on economies and pose a political risk to governments, particularly those in fragile states that fail to control the disease.

Today, risks to our collective health security include pandemics

> "The emergence and spread of microbes with the potential to cause pandemics and the rise of drug resistance, including Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), are significant concerns. […] No single nation can act alone on such transnational threats."[10]
> **UK NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC DEFENCE AND SECURITY REVIEW 2015**

such as influenza; the increasing failure of antibiotics to treat infections; bioterrorism; and polio, which is almost eradicated from nature but remains in two fragile states and continues to threaten polio-free countries (as happened in 2003/4 when it spread from Northern Nigeria to 19 other countries). These risks are exacerbated by an increase in refugee and conflict-affected populations, which have restricted access to health services; climate change, which is associated with a spread of severe dengue fever outbreaks from seven to 100 countries by increasing the mosquito habitat; and demographic change that leads to closer human-animal interaction and the development of new influenza strains. These risks are further magnified by increased air travel and an increasing global shortage of healthcare workers.

Moreover, many states lack the necessary systems, required by the International Health Regulations, that would enable them to identify and manage infectious disease within their borders so as not to pose a risk beyond them. This applies, in particular, to states affected by or recently emerged from conflict, as was the case with Ebola in West Africa. The international spread of Ebola was relatively easily contained because the disease is transmitted only by contact with patient body fluids. But this is not the case with airborne diseases such as flu. These diseases require strong health systems that provide access to health services and that can rapidly detect and respond to an outbreak, thus limiting the risk of international spread. As German Chancellor Angela Merkel said last year, "increasingly the health of one person is also the health of others." Because they cannot be predicted with certainty, outbreaks are like other critical security risks – they occur when unexpected, and the best defense is being prepared. ■



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