

"What's this? Am I falling? My legs are giving way," thought he, and fell on his back. He opened his eyes, hoping to see how the struggle of the Frenchmen with the gunners ended, whether the red-haired gunner had been killed or not and whether the cannon had been captured or saved. But he saw nothing. Above him there was now nothing but the sky- the lofty sky, not clear yet still immeasurably lofty, with gray clouds gliding slowly across it. "How quiet, peaceful, and solemn; not at all as I ran," thought Prince Andrew- "not as we ran, shouting and fighting, not at all as the gunner and the Frenchman with frightened and angry faces struggled for the mop: how differently do those clouds glide across that lofty infinite sky! How was it I did not see that lofty sky before? And how happy I am to have found it at last! Yes! All is vanity, all falsehood, except that infinite sky. There is nothing, nothing, but that. But even it does not exist, there is nothing but quiet and peace. Thank God!..."

— Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

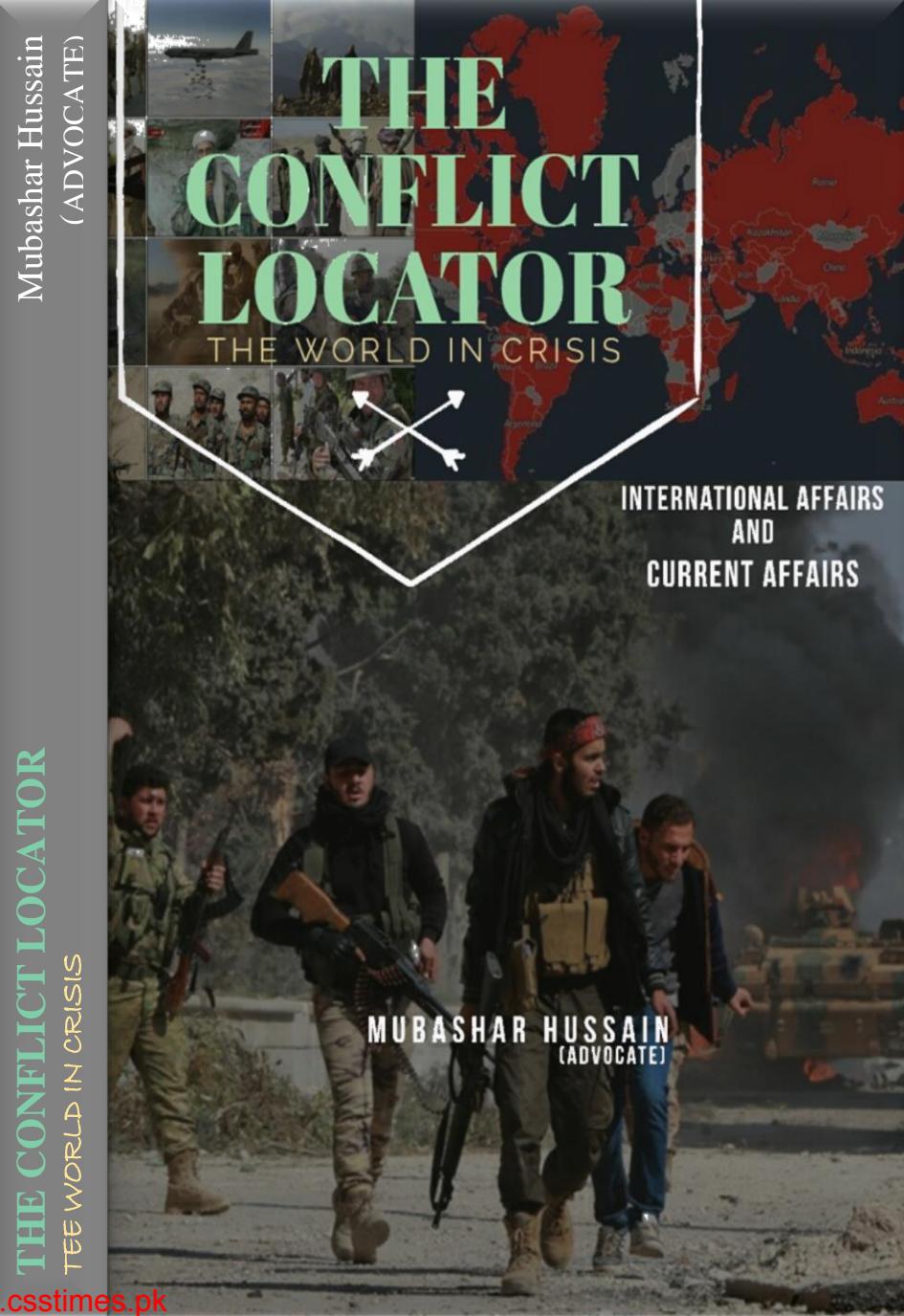
Neutral countries

Central Powers

Allies (at one point or another)

THE CONFLICT LOCATOR THE WORLD IN CRISIS

www.csstimes.pk



THE CONFLICT LOCATOR

The World Is In Crisis

MUBASHAR HUSSAIN
(Advocate)

2019

hussainmubashar93@gmail.com

CSS / Times

E-Books Library



for Download FREE CSS PDF Books / Notes visit
www.csstimes.pk

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of Creation,

The Compassionate, the Merciful,

King of Judgment day!

You alone we worship, and to You alone we pray for help,

Guide us to the straight path

The path of those who You have favored,

Not of those who have incurred Your wrath,

Nor of those who have gone astray.

Acknowledgement

Words are bound and knowledge is limited to praise **Almighty Allah**, the lord of the Universe, the Beneficent, Merciful and the Gracious. Who is the entire source of all knowledge and wisdom endowed to humanity and who presented us in a Muslim community, whose blessing are the cherish fruits of my thoughts and modest effort in the form of this manuscript. The blessings of Allah give to us the ability to contribute a drop of material to the existing ocean of scientific knowledge.

Trampling lips and wet eyes for Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W) from the deepest core of our heart, which is forever model of guidance and knowledge for humanity. The very special entity the Allah has brought into our lives, whose saying —Learn from cradle to grave] awakened the strong desire in our life to under taken this course of study and write up of this manuscript.

The world is a better place thanks to people who want to develop and lead others. What makes it even better are people who share the gift of their time to mentor future leaders. Thank you to everyone who strives to grow and help others grow.

Compiling a book is harder than I thought and more rewarding than I could have ever imagined. None of this would have been possible without my friends and loved one. They keep me motivated and supported me.

CONTENTS

1	War in Afghanistan	1
• Afghanistan Profile		
Is Afghanistan Ready for Peace?		9
<i>Barnett R. Rubin</i>		
Understanding the adversary: What the Taliban think about Afghanistan peace negotiations		17
<i>Baheer Wardak</i>		
2	Civil war in Syria	21
Syria's civil war explained from the beginning		24
<i>Jazeera News</i>		
A Desperate Exodus From ISIS' Final Village		29
<i>Rukmini Callimachi</i>		
3	Territorial disputes in The South China Sea	32
• China Profile		
The South China Sea: Explaining the Dispute		42
<i>Max Fisher</i>		
4	Tensions in The East China Sea	46
5	North Korea Crisis	49
• North Korea Profile		
North Korea's Nuclear Program Isn't Going Anywhere		55
<i>Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang</i>		
6	Political instability in Iraq	60
• Iraq Profile		
The Islamic State		66
<i>Zachary Laub</i>		

7	Islamist militancy in Pakistan	71
	Terrorism Watchdog Castigates Pakistan over Aid to Militants	73
	<i>Maria Abi-Habib</i>	
	Shaping a New Peace in Pakistan's Tribal Areas	75
8	Political instability in Lebanon	86
	• Lebanon Profile	
	Hezbollah's Crucible of War	93
	<i>Nour Samaha</i>	
9	Instability in Egypt	99
	• Egypt Profile	
	The silence in Sinai: Covering Egypt's 'war on terror'	104
	<i>Al Jazeera</i>	
	Egypt's Failed War on Terror	106
	<i>David Schenker</i>	
10	Conflict in Ukraine	109
	• Ukraine Profile	
	The war in Ukraine is more devastating than you know	114
	<i>Cynthia Buckley, Ralph Clem, Jarod Fox and Erik Herron</i>	
11	Conflict between Turkey and armed Kurdish groups	117
	• Turkey Profile	
	• Who are the Kurds?	
	How to Stop the War Between Turkey and the Syrian Kurds	129
	<i>James F. Jeffrey, David Pollock</i>	
12	Criminal violence in Mexico	132
	• Mexico Profile	
13	Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	136
	• Palestine Profile	

• Israel Profile	
Do Palestinians Still Support the Two-State Solution?	148
<i>Khalil Shikaki</i>	
14 Boko Haram in Nigeria	152
• Nigeria Profile	
Boko Haram exposes the cracks in Nigeria's military strategy	157
<i>Akinola Olojo</i>	
15 Civil war in Libya	159
• Libya Profile	
How France and Italy's Rivalry Is Hurting Libya	167
<i>Federica Saini Fasanotti and Ben Fishman</i>	
16 Conflict between India and Pakistan	171
• Pakistan Profile	
• India Profile	
• Kashmir Profile	
• Timeline: India-Pakistan relations	
Pakistan's Military Has Quietly Reached Out to India for Talks	192
<i>Maria Abi-Habib</i>	
Why the India-Pakistan War Over Water Is So Dangerous	195
<i>Michael Kugelman</i>	
The India-Pakistan relationship is facing the most serious escalation in decades. Here's how it got to this point	199
<i>Joanna Slater and Pamela Constable</i>	
17 War in Yemen	202
• Yemen Profile	
• Who are Yemen's Houthis?	206
• Timeline: The Houthis in Yemen	
Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen Has Failed	220
<i>Philip H. Gordon</i>	
18 Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict	222
• Nagorno-Karabakh profile	

A Simmering Crisis Over Nagorno-Karabakh	225
<i>Carey Cavanaugh and Paul B. Stares</i>	
19 Destabilization in Mali	230
• Mali Profile	
Shadowy U.S. Drone War in Africa Set to Expand	236
<i>Lara Seligman</i>	
Behind the secret U.S. war in Africa	239
<i>Wesley Morgan</i>	
20 Violence in The Central African Republic	245
• Central African Republic country Profile	
Violence divides CAR along Christian-Muslim lines	253
<i>Catherine Wamba-Soi</i>	
21 Violence in The Democratic Republic of Congo	256
• DR of Congo Profile	
Congo's Slide Into Chaos	261
<i>Stuart A. Reid</i>	
22 Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar	276
• Myanmar Profile	
The Rohingya Crisis and the Meaning of Genocide	285
<i>Camilla Siazon, Kate Cronin-Furman,</i>	
Next Steps in Addressing the Rohingya Crisis?	288
<i>Joshua Kurlantzick</i>	
23 Civil war in South Sudan	290
• South Sudan Profile	
South Sudan Forces Killed and Raped Hundreds in Brutal Campaign	295
<i>Nick Cumming-Bruce</i>	
Another Hollow Peace Deal Signed in South Sudan	297
<i>Guest Blogger for John Campbell</i>	

24 Al-Shabab in Somalia	299
• Somalia Profile	
Why the U.S. Military is in Somalia	307
<i>U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs</i>	
How educational programs in Africa can help counter violent extremism	312
<i>Beza Tesfaye and Beth Maclin</i>	
25 Political Crisis in Burundi	315
• Burundi Profile	
Insights from the Burundian Crisis (III): Back to Arusha and the Politics of Dialogue	320
Burundi's Dangerous Referendum	324

CHAPTER 1

War in Afghanistan

Background

After the Taliban government refused to hand over terrorist leader Osama bin Laden in the wake of al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001, attacks, the United States invaded Afghanistan. The Taliban leadership quickly lost control of the country and relocated to southern Afghanistan and across the border to Pakistan. From there, they have waged an insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul, international coalition troops, and Afghan national security forces.

In the seventeenth year of the war, and in their fourth year of being responsible for securing the country, the ANDSF continue to face significant challenges in holding territory and defending population centers, while the Taliban continues to contest districts and carry out suicide attacks in major cities. For more than two years the war has been at a stalemate, with, according to official U.S. government estimates, only 55.5 percent of Afghan districts under government control, 32.4 percent contested, and the remaining 12 percent under the control or influence of the Taliban. The ANDSF continue to suffer heavy casualties and, while actual figures have now been classified by the U.S. military, senior Afghan officials estimate that for several months in 2018 as many as thirty to forty ANDSF personnel have been killed every day. The first six months of 2018 also saw a continued record-high number of civilian casualties, with the UN documenting 1,692 civilian deaths and 3,430 civilian injuries; in 2017, there were 10,453 civilian casualties.

In addition to a stronghold in the strategically important southern province of Helmand, the Taliban controls or contests territory in nearly every province, and continues to threaten multiple provincial capitals. The Taliban briefly seized the capital of Farah Province in May 2018, and in August 2018 captured the capital of Ghazni Province, holding the city for nearly a week before U.S. and Afghan troops took back control. In addition to a U.S. troop increase late last year and continuing combat missions, the U.S. military has shifted its strategy to include the targeting of Taliban revenue sources as well as fighters, conducting air campaigns against drug labs and opium production sites.

Uncertainty surrounding the future of international donor assistance has strained the Afghan economy. While the United States and its allies have pledged to provide support to Kabul, the transition to a peacetime economy risks further destabilizing Afghan society by inflating the budget deficit and increasing unemployment rates.

Concerns

The United States has a vital interest in preserving the many political, economic, and security gains that have been achieved in Afghanistan since 2001. A resurgence of the Taliban insurgency could once again turn Afghanistan into a terrorist safe haven. Moreover, internal instability in Afghanistan could have larger regional ramifications as Pakistan, India, Iran, and Russia all compete for influence in Kabul and with subnational actors.

Recent Developments

In January 2019, after a week of talks with Taliban representatives in Qatar, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad announced that U.S. and Taliban officials had agreed in principle to a framework for peace negotiations. The framework reportedly involves the Taliban agreeing to prevent territory in Afghanistan from being used by terrorist organizations in return for a withdrawal of U.S. troops, among other concessions. However, the Taliban have yet to agree to a cease-fire and continue to refuse to negotiate directly with the government of Afghanistan. The United States has increased air strikes and raids targeting the Taliban as talks are ongoing, while the Taliban has also continued to carry out attacks on Afghan government targets.

2018 saw a further increase in violence across Afghanistan, as the Taliban continue to make territorial gains and target Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) bases and outposts. They have also carried out high-profile attacks across the country, including in Kabul. 2018 also saw a continued U.S. military campaign against the so-called Islamic State-Khorasan Province, also known as ISIS-KP, the Islamic State's local affiliate with a presence in several eastern Afghan provinces. ISIS-KP continues to carry out major attacks in Kabul and is responsible for an increase in suicide attacks on civilians.

Afghanistan profile

A chronology of key events:

1838-42 - British forces invade, install King Shah Shujah. He is assassinated in 1842. British and Indian troops are massacred during retreat from Kabul.

1878-80 - Second Anglo-Afghan War. A treaty gives Britain control of Afghan foreign affairs.

1919 - Emir Amanullah Khan declares independence from British influence.

1926-29 - Amanullah tries to introduce social reforms, which however stir civil unrest. He flees.

1933 - Zahir Shah becomes king and Afghanistan remains a monarchy for next four decades.

1953 - General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Introduces social reforms, such as abolition of purdah (practice of secluding women from public view).

1963 - Mohammed Daud forced to resign as prime minister.

1964 - Constitutional monarchy introduced - but leads to political polarisation and power struggles.

1973 - Mohammed Daud seizes power in a coup and declares a republic. Tries to play off USSR against Western powers.

1978 - General Daud is overthrown and killed in a pro-Soviet coup. The People's Democratic Party comes to power but is paralysed by violent infighting and faces opposition by US-backed mujahideen groups.

Soviet intervention

1979 December - Soviet Army invades and props up communist government.

1980 - Babrak Karmal installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. But opposition

intensifies with various mujahideen groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms to the mujahideen.

1985 - Mujahideen come together in Pakistan to form alliance against Soviet forces. Half of Afghan population now estimated to be displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighbouring Iran or Pakistan.

1986 - US begins supplying mujahideen with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah as head of Soviet-backed regime.

1988 - Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.

Red Army quits

1989 - Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahideen push to overthrow Najibullah.

1992 - Najibullah's government toppled, but a devastating civil war follows.

1996 - Taliban seize control of Kabul and introduce hard-line version of Islam, banning women from work, and introducing Islamic punishments, which include stoning to death and amputations.

1997 - Taliban recognised as legitimate rulers by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They now control about two-thirds of country.

1998 - US launches missile strikes at suspected bases of militant Osama bin Laden, accused of bombing US embassies in Africa.

1999 - UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial.

2001 September - Ahmad Shah Masood, leader of the main opposition to the Taliban - the Northern Alliance - is assassinated.

US-led invasion

2001 October - US-led bombing of Afghanistan begins following the September 11 attacks on the United States. Anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces enter Kabul shortly afterwards.

2001 December - Afghan groups agree deal in Bonn, Germany for interim government.

Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of an interim power-sharing government.

2002 January - Deployment of first contingent of foreign peacekeepers - the Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) - marking the start of a protracted fight against the Taliban.

2002 April - Former king Zahir Shah returns, but makes no claim to the throne and dies in 2007.

2002 June - Loya Jirga, or grand council, elects Hamid Karzai as interim head of state. Karzai picks members of his administration which is to serve until 2004.

2003 August - Nato takes control of security in Kabul, its first-ever operational commitment outside Europe.

Elections

2004 January - Loya Jirga adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency.

2004 October-November - Presidential elections. Hamid Karzai is declared winner.

2005 September - Afghans vote in first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years.

2005 December - Parliament opens with warlords and strongmen in most of the seats.

2006 October - Nato assumes responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan,

taking command in the east from a US-led coalition force.

2007 August - Opium production has soared to a record high, the UN reports.

2008 June - President Karzai warns that Afghanistan will send troops into Pakistan to fight militants if Islamabad fails to take action against them.

2008 July - Suicide bomb attack on Indian embassy in Kabul kills more than 50.

2008 September - US President George Bush sends an extra 4,500 US troops to Afghanistan, in a move he described as a "quiet surge".

2009 January - US Defence Secretary Robert Gates tells Congress that Afghanistan is new US administration's "greatest test".

2009 February - Nato countries pledge to increase military and other commitments in Afghanistan after US announces dispatch of 17,000 extra troops.

New US approach

2009 March - US President Barack Obama unveils new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. An extra 4,000 US personnel will train and bolster the Afghan army and police and there will be support for civilian development.

2009 August - Presidential and provincial elections are marred by widespread Taliban attacks, patchy turnout and claims of serious fraud.

2009 October - Mr Karzai declared winner of August presidential election, after second-placed opponent Abdullah Abdullah pulls out before the second round.

2009 December - US President Obama decides to boost US troop numbers in Afghanistan by 30,000, bringing total to 100,000. He says US will begin withdrawing its forces by 2011.

An Al-Qaeda double agent kills seven CIA agents in a suicide attack on a US base in Khost.

2010 February - Nato-led forces launch major offensive, Operation Moshtarak, in bid to secure government control of southern Helmand province.

2010 July - Whistleblowing website Wikileaks publishes thousands of classified US military documents relating to Afghanistan.

General David Petraeus takes command of US, ISAF forces.

2010 August - Dutch troops quit.

Karzai says private security firms - accused of operating with impunity - must cease operations. He subsequently waters down the decree.

2010 September - Parliamentary polls marred by Taliban violence, widespread fraud and a long delay in announcing results.

2010 November - Nato - at summit in Lisbon - agrees plan to hand control of security to Afghan forces by end of 2014.

2011 January - President Karzai makes first official state visit to Russia by an Afghan leader since the end of the Soviet invasion in 1989.

2011 February - Number of civilians killed since the 2001 invasion hit record levels in 2010, Afghanistan Rights Monitor reports.

2011 April - Burning of Koran by a US pastor prompts country-wide protests in which foreign UN workers and several Afghans are killed.

Some 500 mostly Taliban prisoners break out of prison in Kandahar.

2011 July - President's half-brother and Kandahar governor Ahmad Wali Karzai is killed in Taliban campaign against prominent figures.

2011 September - Ex-president Burhanuddin Rabbani - a go-between in talks with the Taliban - is assassinated.

2011 October - As relations with Pakistan worsen after a series of attacks, Afghanistan and India sign a strategic partnership to expand co-operation in security and development.

Military pact

2011 November - President Karzai wins the endorsement of tribal elders to negotiate a 10-year military partnership with the US at a loya jirga traditional assembly. The proposed pact will see US troops remain after 2014, when foreign troops are due to leave the country.

2011 December - At least 58 people are killed in twin attacks at a Shia shrine in Kabul and a Shia mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif.

Pakistan and the Taliban boycott the scheduled Bonn Conference on Afghanistan. Pakistan refuses to attend after a Nato air strike killed Pakistani soldiers on the Afghan border.

2012 January - Taliban agree to open office in Dubai as a move towards peace talks with the US and the Afghan government.

2012 February - At least 30 people are killed in protests about the burning of copies of the Koran at the US Bagram airbase. US officials believed Taliban prisoners were using the books to pass messages, and that they were extremist texts not Korans. Two soldiers are also killed in reprisal attacks.

2012 March - US Army Sgt Robert Bales is accused of killing 16 civilians in an armed rampage in the Panjwai district of Kandahar.

2012 April - Taliban announce "spring offensive" with audacious attack on the diplomatic quarter of Kabul. The government blamed the Haqqani Network. Security forces kill 38 militants.

NATO withdrawal plan

2012 May - NATO summit endorses the plan to withdraw foreign combat troops by the end of 2014.

New French President Francois Hollande says France will withdraw its combat mission by the end of 2012 - a year earlier than planned.

Arsala Rahmani of the High Peace Council is shot dead in Kabul. A former Taliban minister, he was crucial in reaching out to rebel commanders. The Taliban deny responsibility.

2012 July - Tokyo donor conference pledges \$16bn in civilian aid to Afghanistan up to 2016, with US, Japan, Germany and UK supplying bulk of funds. Afghanistan agrees to new conditions to counter corruption.

2012 August - The US military discipline six soldiers for accidentally burning copies of the Koran and other religious texts in Afghanistan. They will not face criminal prosecution. Three US Marines are also disciplined for a video in which the bodies of dead Taliban fighters were urinated on.

2012 September - US hands over Bagram high-security jail to the Afghan government, although it retains control over some foreign prisoners until March 2013.

The US also suspends training new police recruits in order to carry out checks on possible ties to Taliban following series of attacks on foreign troops by apparent police and Afghan soldiers.

2013 February - President Karzai and Pakistan's Asif Ali Zardari agree to work for an Afghan peace deal within six months after talks hosted by Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron. They back the opening of an Afghan office in Doha and urge the Taliban to do the same for talks to take place.

2013 March - Two former Kabul Bank chiefs, Sher Khan Farnood and Khalilullah Ferozi, are jailed for the multi-million dollar

fraud that almost led to its collapse and that of the entire Afghan banking system in 2010.

2013 June - Afghan army takes command of all military and security operations from Nato forces.

President Karzai suspends security talks with the US after Washington announces it plans to hold direct talks with the Taliban. Afghanistan insists on conducting the talks with the Taliban in Qatar itself.

2014 January - Taliban suicide squad hits a restaurant in Kabul's diplomatic quarter, the worst attack on foreign civilians since 2001. The 13 foreign victims include IMF country head.

2014 April - The presidential election produces an inconclusive result and goes on to a second round between Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani.

2014 June - Second round of presidential election is held, with more than 50 reported killed in various incidents during the vote.

2014 July - Election officials begin recount of all votes cast in June's presidential runoff, as part of a US-mediated deal to end dispute between candidates over widespread claims of fraud.

Election deal

2014 September - The two rivals for the Afghan presidency, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, sign a power-sharing agreement, following a two-month audit of disputed election results. Ashraf Ghani is sworn in as president.

2014 October - The US and Britain end their combat operations in Afghanistan.

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan reaches an all-time high, according to a US report

2014 December - NATO formally ends its 13-year combat mission in Afghanistan, handing over to Afghan forces. Despite the official end to Isaf's combat role, violence

persists across much of the country, with 2014 said to be the bloodiest year in Afghanistan since 2001.

2015 January - NATO-led follow-on mission "Resolute Support" gets underway, with some 12,000 personnel to provide further training and support for Afghan security forces.

Islamic State (IS) group emerges in eastern Afghanistan and within a few months captures a large swathe of Taliban-controlled areas in Nangarhar province.

2015 March - US President Barack Obama announces that his country will delay its troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, following a request from President Ashraf Ghani.

The lynching of a woman wrongly accused of burning a Koran in Kabul provokes widespread revulsion and criticism of hard-line clerics. Police face accusations of doing too little to save her. The incident leads to widespread protests against the treatment of women. Four men are later convicted of murder.

Taliban offensives

2015 May - Taliban representatives and Afghan officials hold informal peace talks in Qatar. Both sides agree to continue the talks at a later date, though the Taliban insist they will not stop fighting until all foreign troops leave the country.

2015 July - Taliban admits that reclusive founder, Mullah Omar, died a few years ago, and appoints Mullah Akhter Mansour as his replacement.

2015 September - Taliban briefly capture major northern city of Kunduz in their most significant advance since being forced from power in 2001.

2015 October - Powerful earthquake kills more than 80 people in northeast of country.

2015 October - US President Barack Obama announces that 9,800 US troops will remain

in Afghanistan until the end of 2016, backtracking on an earlier pledge to pull all but 1,000 troops from the country.

2015 November - A new Taliban splinter group, headed by Mullah Rasool, announces its presence in southern Afghanistan. However, the group is totally crushed by the mainstream Taliban by spring 2016.

2015 December - Taliban make bid to capture Sangin, a town and district in Helmand Province. US warplanes deploy in support of Afghan security forces' attempt to repel insurgents.

2015 December - NATO extends its "Resolute Support" follow-on mission by 12 months to the end of 2016.

2016 - Over one million Afghans are on the go during the year, either due to internal displacement because of the war, or are forced to repatriate by Pakistan, Iran and the European Union, according to the United Nations.

Heavy US air strikes reverse Islamic State's gains in the east, and the group is cornered in a few districts in Nangarhar.

2016 May - New Taliban leader Mullah Mansour is killed in a US drone attack in Pakistan's Baluchestan province.

2016 July - US President Barack Obama says 8,400 US troops will remain in Afghanistan into 2017 in light of the "precarious security situation". NATO also agrees to maintain troop numbers and reiterates a funding pledge for local security forces until 2020.

2016 August to October - Taliban advance to the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, and to the northern city of Kunduz. The group has brought much of the two provinces under its control since the bulk of NATO forces withdrew by end of 2014.

2016 September - The Afghan government signs a peace agreement with the militant

group Hezb-e-Islami and grants immunity to the group's leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

2017 January - A bomb attack in Kandahar kills six UAE diplomats.

2017 February - Rise in Islamic State activities reported in a number of northern and southern provinces.

2017 March - Thirty people are killed and more than 50 wounded in an attack by so-called Islamic State on a military hospital in Kabul.

2017 June - Islamic State militants capture the mountainous region of Tora Bora in Nangarhar province, which was formerly used as a base by the late al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

2017 August - US President Donald Trump says he's sending more troops to fight a resurgent Taliban.

2018 January - Bomb-laden ambulance explodes in Kabul, killing more than 100 people. It is one of ongoing attacks attributed to the Taliban.

Is Afghanistan Ready for Peace?

How great powers can end the war

By Barnett R. Rubin

We used to appreciate the hard work of the United States for development in Afghanistan,” Iqbal Khyber, a 27-year-old medical student from Helmand Province, told me in Kabul on July 2. “Unfortunately, things happened. The international forces started searching houses, thinking we had links to the Taliban. Special forces raids, misaimed bombs—these caused hatred among the people.”

Khyber and his companions sat under the blast-proof walls of the U.S. embassy. They were members of Afghanistan’s peace caravan, who over the course of 38 days had walked nearly 400 miles from Helmand Province, in the country’s southwest, to Kabul in order to tell Afghanistan’s warring parties that, in the words of a banner they had hung on the embassy wall, “We don’t want violence.”

The peace caravan arrived in Kabul on June 18, the day that the Taliban leaders in Pakistan refused to extend an unprecedented three-day cease-fire between the Afghan government, the Taliban, and the forces of the U.S.-led coalition. During the cease-fire, members of the Taliban entered government-controlled areas, including Kabul city, where they prayed alongside government officials, ate ice cream, and posed for selfies with women. In response to the Taliban refusal, the peace marchers decided to camp out in front of the embassies of the major foreign powers in Afghanistan—the United States, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran—to demand an end to the war, and they appointed a delegation to take their message to Taliban-controlled areas, as well.

At the U.S. embassy, the marchers’ first destination, I asked them questions about the possibility of peace with the Taliban. Khyber rejected the idea, popular in Washington, that intensifying military pressure on the Afghan Taliban will help bring them to the negotiating table. Rather, he said, “Pakistan has to be pressured to expel the Taliban leaders from Pakistan to Afghanistan.” Khyber also disagreed that the Taliban were extremists who would never accept democracy, and he called on the United States to “engage in direct talks with the Taliban and also support talks [between the Taliban and] the government.” “We need peace, the war has to end,” Khyber told me—but Afghans cannot end the struggle among outside powers. “The Taliban are controlled by the neighbors,” he said. “And the Afghan government is controlled by the international community.”

A history of violence

Afghanistan assumed its modern form in the late nineteenth century. After the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–80), the British forced Afghanistan to cede eastern Pashtun lands to India (now Pakistan) and took control of Afghan foreign policy. In return the British subsidized Afghanistan’s Pashtun rulers with guns and cash to subordinate both rebellious

Pashtun tribes and the country's non-Pashtun populations, such as Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. The Afghan state compensated dissident Pashtun tribes with arable land and pasture in non-Pashtun areas. And the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 affirmed that no foreign troops, British or Russian, should enter the country.

This domestic and international bargain produced an Afghan state that was, by design, dependent on foreign powers. It also birthed the twin narratives that have defined much of the country's politics over the last century: Pashtun grievance over dispossession by the British and Pakistanis and non-Pashtun grievance over dispossession by the centralized, Pashtun-dominated state. Despite its flaws and injustices, the bargain largely succeeded in holding the country together until 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded the country following a pro-Soviet coup the previous year. After the Soviets arrived, however, rival powers such as China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States began arming every Afghan party, faction, tribe, and ethnic group willing to fight them. Since then, great powers and regional actors alike have failed to arrive at a new understanding over Afghanistan, and the country has continued to suffer from both internal divisions and geopolitical rivalries beyond its control.

Both those internal divisions and the continued opposition of regional powers to a U.S.-dominated future for Kabul have frustrated efforts to realize the peace marchers' vision. The Taliban-government cease-fire that brought hope to so many also aroused fears among some of the former's staunchest adversaries. When Taliban from south of Kabul moved into the city's ethnically mixed central districts, they encountered cautiously curious crowds, although some skeptics and traumatized victims stayed indoors. Further north, defiant Tajiks flew the black, white, and green flag of the anti-Taliban resistance. Amrullah Saleh, Afghanistan's intelligence chief from 2004 to 2010 and the CIA's former liaison to Ahmad Shah Massoud, the anti-Soviet and anti-Taliban commander assassinated by al Qaeda in 2001, told me that armed men gathered in his home to ask if they should fire on Taliban convoys if they moved north into their neighborhoods. Saleh tried to calm them by relaying assurances he had received from U.S. Ambassador John Bass and General John Nicholson. Fortunately, the Taliban never moved north.

Tensions rose again on July 2, when Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, an ethnic Pashtun, ordered the arrest of Nizamuddin Qaisari, an Uzbek commander loyal to the warlord and first vice president, Abdul Rashid Dostum, for allegedly threatening to kill people during a security meeting in the northern province of Faryab. Dostum is the country's principal Uzbek leader, and his support was key to Ghani's election in 2014. Until recently, he had been living in Ankara in order to avoid prosecution on charges of rape and torture, which Afghanistan, Turkey, and the United States feared could provoke a political crisis.

Some saw the arrest of Qaisari as an admirable attempt by Ghani to curb war lordism, regardless of ethnicity. But others, especially those from non-Pashtun ethnic groups, accused him of using national forces as shock troops of Pashtun supremacy. A video circulated on social media showed soldiers abusing members of Qaisari's protection team. Ghani promised an investigation, but demonstrations soon spread across northern Afghanistan, at times

closing the road to Kabul and shuttering the offices of the election commission in five provinces. Ghani sent his close adviser Fazel Fazly to Ankara, where he negotiated the return of Dostum to Kabul on July 22. Rather than being arrested, in a concession to political reality, Dostum was given a formal welcome as first vice president.

The great game

In addition to these domestic tensions, regional states, all of which claim to support a peace process, nonetheless feel threatened by efforts to stabilize Afghanistan that would result in the long-term presence of U.S. military bases.

At the Pakistan embassy, the peace marchers addressed a letter to “the people of Pakistan and the world,” blaming the bloodshed on “Pakistan’s intelligence, army and government.” They cut their palms with a knife and signed the letter in blood. In April, Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity, which obliges both sides to act against terrorists and insurgents threatening the other. Afghanistan and the United States did their part on June 15 when, acting on Afghan intelligence, the United States killed the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Mullah Fazlullah, in a drone strike in eastern Afghanistan. Pakistan, however, still refuses to even detain Afghan Taliban leaders residing in its territory, who make war on U.S. and Afghan forces and commit acts of terrorism.

When the peace marchers reached the Russian embassy, they posted an “appeal to the Russian people” on Twitter: “Your government is conducting an undeclared war with the Americans on our land.” Both Afghanistan and the United States have accused Russia of providing aid to the Taliban, for instance by leaving behind poorly secured arms caches after war games in Tajikistan, a tactic it also used to arm rebels in eastern Ukraine. The Russians argue that the disarray of Afghan security forces leaves them no choice but to establish links with local commanders in order to protect Central Asia’s borders, which Moscow views as vital to its own security. (Moscow claims that those commanders are “warlords” rather than “real” Taliban.) Russia’s approach to the Taliban has been affected by its concern about the Islamic State (ISIS) presence in northern Afghanistan—in early July, the Taliban launched an offensive, possibly with Russian support, to drive ISIS out of Darzab district, near the border with Turkmenistan. And Moscow may view relations with the Taliban as a form of deterrence against Washington: in private discussions in Moscow in late 2016, Russian officials warned that if the United States armed Ukraine it might face antiaircraft fire in Afghanistan.

Feeling excluded from peace initiatives led by what it sees as a U.S.-dominated Afghan government, Russia invited China, India, Iran, and Pakistan to a parallel set of talks in Moscow beginning in December 2016. Afghanistan, along with the Central Asian states, accepted an invitation to a subsequent session of these “Moscow format” talks, but the United States declined to join. Russia announced on July 16 that it would invite the Taliban to join such talks in Russia “before the end of the summer,” causing consternation in both Kabul and

Washington, which insist that the “Afghan-led” process they support is the only legitimate one.

At the Iranian embassy, a peace movement banner proclaimed, “To the people of Iran! Your government is equipping militant groups in Afghanistan.” Referring to a dispute over cross-border river basins, another said, “Our water is saving your life, but your government is taking our lives.” After 9/11, Iran cooperated with the United States to oust the Taliban, but its relations with them have warmed as tensions have risen with Washington. Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour spent several weeks as a guest of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps in the spring of 2016 before being killed by an American drone that May. Subjects of discussion reportedly included Iranian support to the Taliban in opposition to their common enemies, ISIS and the United States. Since 2007, when U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney threatened Iran from an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf, Tehran’s doctrine has been to respond to a U.S. attack on Iran by striking American targets wherever it can reach them. So far, Iran has not had occasion to retaliate against the United States in Afghanistan, but recent press reports allege that since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Iranian nuclear deal in May, Tehran has upped aid to the Taliban, increasing its capacity to launch reprisals against U.S. forces.

An opportunity for peace?

In the past, similar combinations of interethnic tension and geopolitical rivalry have led to state collapse and civil war. But alternative outcomes are possible. The United States and NATO still maintain nearly 16,000 troops in the country, and Washington pays an estimated \$45 billion per year to keep things running. Regional and global powers perceive a much greater cost to continued conflict in Afghanistan than they did in 1992, when the collapse of the Soviet Union precipitated the collapse of the Soviet-backed Afghan government. Today, however, both the threat of terrorism and the economic growth and concomitant strategic shifts of China and India have made the stability and connectivity of continental Eurasia into priorities for those rising powers.

For instance, the signature program of Chinese President Xi Jinping is the Belt and Road Initiative (B&R), a network of infrastructure for communications, energy, trade, and transport ranging from western China across Eurasia to Europe, and through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to the Indian Ocean. B&R aims at both projecting influence abroad and maintaining high growth rates at home. Whether or not it succeeds, China needs stability in Afghanistan to secure its investments across the region.

India also has a growing interest in Afghan stability. Blocked by Pakistan from access to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and beyond, India has signed agreements with Afghanistan and Iran to develop the Iranian port of Chabahar, on the Gulf of Oman, and link it by road and rail to Afghanistan and then to a north-south corridor through Central Asia, sponsored by India and Russia. Japan, concerned about Chinese naval expansion in the Indian Ocean, has joined the consortium. For India, Chabahar opens the route to Eurasia; for China, which has discussed building a railroad with India across northern Afghanistan linking B&R to

Chabahar, the project provides a potential outlet to the Indian Ocean free of the threats posed by Baloch insurgents to the Chinese-built port in Gwadar, Pakistan. For Iran, the project could make the country a strategic node between Indian and Chinese mega-projects, and for land-locked Afghanistan it provides a much-needed alternative to its current dependence on the Pakistani port of Karachi for access to the high seas.

The Trump administration's push to reinstate sanctions on Iran conflicts with these efforts. U.S. officials have promised the Indians that they will apply an exception in the Iranian sanctions law "for reconstruction assistance or economic development for Afghanistan" to Chabahar. Even if implemented, however, such an exception would be unlikely to reassure companies that do business with the United States, including major European and Indian firms, that participation in the Chabahar project will not run afoul of U.S. sanctions.

Faced with Trump's erratic policies, China is redrawing the strategic map. In response to the U.S. effort to form an Indo-Pacific bloc, Xi has reached out to India. In response, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has distanced himself from U.S. depictions of the Indo-Pacific bloc as targeting China. At an informal summit in Wuhan in May 2018, the two leaders agreed to calm disputes and work on Chinese-Indian joint economic projects in Afghanistan, including the railroad connecting B&R to Chabahar. Such a project would give India and China a joint stake in the stability of Afghanistan.

These unprecedented efforts at regional cooperation have also extended to counterterrorism. On July 11 the intelligence chiefs of China, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia met in Islamabad to discuss taking "coordinated steps" against "ISIS terrorism" in Afghanistan. According to a Russian spokesperson, they also "stressed the need for a more active inclusion of regional powers in the efforts" to end the war in Afghanistan.

The reflex in Washington may be to dismiss the claim by "official sources in Islamabad" that the meeting was "not targeted against" the United States. Even if it was, diplomatic jujitsu may use it in service of U.S. interests. These states may finally have figured out that the real threat posed by Afghanistan's dependence on the United States is not that Washington will use its Afghan bases to threaten other states in the region but that the United States will inevitably tire of the effort to maintain stability in Afghanistan and withdraw, leaving the region with a challenge it is ill prepared to face.

Keeping an imagined promise

On the U.S. embassy wall, the Helmand peace marchers hung a banner saying:

People of America! You promised us Afghans comprehensive security, but to this day you have not delivered peace and security.

The United States made no such promise—it came to Afghanistan to fight the terrorists who attacked it on 9/11—and the Trump administration's recent expressions of

interest in a political settlement should not distract from the fact that counterterrorism remains the United States' top priority in the country. Counterterrorism, however, is no longer the United States' top global security concern. The administration's December 2017 National Security Strategy makes terrorism a tertiary concern after the threats posed by "the revisionist powers of China and Russia" and "the rogue states of Iran and North Korea." The deployment of 16,000 troops and expenditure of \$45 billion per year in Afghanistan may no longer accord with U.S. defense priorities.

Pentagon officials now worry that Trump may "be itching to pull the plug on the [U.S.] mission" in Afghanistan if it doesn't show results soon. The Trump strategy's most vaunted distinction from that of President Barack Obama was the absence of a timeline for withdrawal, intended to signal to the Taliban that "they cannot wait us out." Now there may be no timeline, but a specter is haunting the mission: that of the president's Twitter. The result is an unprecedented interest in a political settlement. In a June 16 statement, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made explicit the United States' willingness to place its troop deployment on the table for negotiation, addressing the Taliban's primary demand. Although the administration denies that it has reversed position by offering to talk to the Taliban directly, it did just that when Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells met the Taliban political commission in Doha, Qatar, in late July of this year.

In direct talks, the United States can offer guarantees of its willingness to negotiate its military presence, as the Soviet Union did in the Geneva Accords of 1988. The Taliban want international sanctions against them lifted and their office in Doha recognized, in return for which the United States may demand an explicit and practical repudiation of international terrorism and commitments to reduce violence. Since their first post-9/11 meeting with the United States in Munich on November 29, 2010, the Taliban have insisted that such understandings with the United States are a necessary prelude to negotiations with the government and other Afghans.

A domestic settlement in Afghanistan will require more than negotiations between the government and the Taliban. It will require Afghans of all ethnic groups and genders from across the political spectrum to renegotiate the pact codified in the 2001 Bonn Agreement, the 2004 constitution, and the 2014 Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States, which provides the legal basis for the continuing troop presence in Afghanistan.

The United States' decision to exclude the Taliban from Bonn and the constitutional process fed the insurgency by denying a voice to a political force that could stage a comeback with support from Pakistan and communities suffering from civilian casualties and abuse by those in power. A lasting settlement will need to repatriate Taliban leaders from Pakistan, as Khyber said, and integrate them into society, politics, and the security forces. That will in turn require dismantling a counterterrorism apparatus designed to treat them like al Qaeda. Integrating them into the security forces is likely to be the hardest challenge, and one in which the United States, as principal sponsor of the Afghan National Security and Defense Forces, will, ironically, have to play a leading role.

The Afghan constitution that came out of the Bonn process left in place the centralized, autocratic structures of governance that the country had inherited from the nineteenth century, in which virtually every official in the country is appointed directly or indirectly by the head of state, whether a hereditary monarch or an elected president. This was inevitable in a rushed transition forced by the U.S. response to 9/11, which left little time for reflection and for which no one was prepared. But the old structures can hardly respond to the social and political changes of the past forty years. This centralization has also served as an obstacle to a settlement with the Taliban, driving opposition to the peace process on the part of non-Pashtun ethnic groups, who fear bringing the Taliban into a government without adequate protections for diversity. The pact that formed the National Unity Government in September 2014 included an as-yet unfulfilled commitment to address issues of centralization and power sharing by convening a constitutional assembly, or loya jirga. That same mechanism could also include the Taliban.

As Iqbal Khyber said, “At first, the people liked the presence of [U.S.] forces.” It was the U.S. intervention that gave Afghanistan a chance to pause the decades of war. That pause has ended, however, and some of both the Afghan population and the country’s neighbors reject a security system based on a long-term bilateral agreement between the United States and an Afghan government it overwhelmingly finances and influences. A withdrawal of U.S. troops alone is hardly the answer, since the Afghan state will need financial and security assistance for decades. But the relative stability needed for Afghanistan to reduce its external dependence will require developing a new regional consensus to replace the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention and the U.S.-Soviet modus vivendi of the Cold War.

Such a transition will require the assistance of the UN as well as regional organizations. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation may provide symbolism, but the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is more likely to provide the UN with a lasting political partner for stabilization. The SCO has expanded beyond its original core of Russia, post-Soviet Central Asian states, and China to include India and Pakistan as members and Afghanistan and Iran as observers. A redesigned international military force, preferably with U.S. participation or leadership, could remain in the country to help to implement both a peace agreement and a counterterrorism strategy in partnership with the UN and the SCO. Such an arrangement would require the United States to decide whether basing troops in Afghanistan is a means to an end or a strategic objective in itself. Cooperation with the region depends on a clear decision that the United States does not seek permanent bases.

A multilateral framework including both China and India is more likely to restrain Pakistan than intermittent pressure from a distracted United States. Russia has opposed Afghanistan’s membership in the SCO as long as its government is so dependent on the United States, but should accept it in return for a recognized role for the SCO in the region’s security architecture. A process involving the SCO should obviate Moscow’s parallel set of talks. The common interest in economic connectivity and cooperation can provide the power of attraction to hold the arrangement together. States and organizations that bear responsibility for a process are less likely to undermine it or allow it to fail.

A U.S. administration that cannot cooperate with Canada, Mexico, NATO, and the EU, or decide whether Russia is a partner for peace or an existential threat, may lack the clarity and finesse to both negotiate a settlement with the Taliban and the Afghan government and help build a regional security order with the UN and SCO. No amount of clarity or finesse could guarantee these goals, but their pursuit can serve as a guide. As President Eisenhower said, “plans are useless, but planning is everything.” If not the Trump administration, then a successor may yet keep the promise Afghans imagine they heard.¹

¹ Barnett R. Rubin, Is Afghanistan Ready for Peace, *Foreign Affairs* (July 30, 2018)

Understanding the adversary: What the Taliban think about Afghanistan Peace negotiations

Baheer Wardak

The peace talks went on uninterrupted, a marathon session for six intense days, yet barely a moment in a war that has lasted so much longer.

Still, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad emerged from the negotiations with the Taliban in Qatar last month with a message of hope, choosing to broadcast his message via a social media platform that didn't even exist when the conflict in Afghanistan began.

Having assumed his assignment to end the longest war in American history, Khalilzad was upbeat. He went so far as to signal during a recent interview with a local television station in Kabul that "it is possible" to reach a peace deal with the Taliban before this year's presidential elections in Afghanistan -- now delayed until July.

Such optimism. But this hope for a political solution suggests U.S. officials lack a concrete understanding of the view about negotiations from the men who sit on the other side of the table. It's not that the Taliban are shy about expressing their view. A trove of information in the Pashto language is published online: edicts, orders, fatwas, and manifestos, all waiting to be examined. I have delved into and translated many of the documents in my postgraduate research. The attitudes revealed are compelling, and deeply worrying for the prospects of lasting peace.

The Taliban's Logic for Peace Negotiations

As with the justification for their "jihad" in Afghanistan based on "sharia," the Taliban also turned to "sharia" to guide their "negotiations" with the Americans. The group has published a series of fatwa-like commentaries under the title "Afghanistan's contemporary jihad based on sharia" on its Pashto website. In April last year, they declared:

In response to the US occupation, defensive jihad is mandatory based on sharia, and if the enemy is keen for peace, then peace must be also based on sharia.

Peace according to "sharia" is further explained in subsequent documents. In June, the Taliban reaffirmed that the goal of their current "jihad" is the "end of occupation" and the introduction of the "rule of sharia in Afghanistan." According to the group, the goals of any kind of potential peace should be precisely the "same as the goals of ongoing jihad" itself.

In its religious manifesto titled, "The goals of peace with the Americans should be based on sharia," the Taliban maintain:

Based on sharia, peace is a moral jihad, if the mentioned goals of jihad [end of occupation and rule of sharia] can be achieved through peace, then there should be peace. And if the goals of Muslims are not achieved in peace, then peace is prohibited, and jihad remains obligatory against occupiers.

What these files reveal is that the Taliban believe “Afghans” have two choices for the future in Afghanistan: “jihad” or “peace.” The goals of both options are the same: the “end of occupation” and “rule of sharia.” This Taliban logic for peace has been consistent, with the ideology viewed as a means to recruit fighters and, to some extent, to appeal for local support for the insurgency.

But more than this, it creates an impression that the Taliban would not accede to the presence of even a small number of American troops in Afghanistan. To do so would mean the group has abandoned its ideological appeal to free Afghanistan from “American occupation,” a means by which it can and has already developed a degree of popular legitimacy.

Rumors spread in December that the Taliban and Khalilzad agreed that the United States would be permitted to have two military bases in Afghanistan. The group immediately denied this. To sustain their narrative, the Taliban insist they will continue to fight until the very last American soldier leaves the country.

So the U.S. negotiators would be naïve to believe that a political solution with the group will allow the Americans to retain military bases. Such an outcome would require the Taliban to shift dramatically in their narrative of struggle, compromising their credibility with both prospective recruits and segments of the population that are sympathetic. There is no public evidence of such an about-face.

Talk with Americans, But Not Afghan Officials

A common theme in the Taliban view on peace is that the Taliban and the United States – not the Afghan government – are the “main parties” in the country’s peace negotiations. The Taliban’s reason for this claim? Because the Americans started the war in Afghanistan in 2001 against the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan,” by its accord, only these two sides can end it.

Accordingly, the Taliban have consistently cited two key reasons to refuse to negotiate with the Afghan government directly. In an official commentary under the title of, “Why negotiations are not possible with the Kabul administration!” the group argues, first, that the Afghan government does not have authority over key issues that concern the Taliban, including the “withdrawal of troops,” “delisting of Taliban leaders from blacklist,” “recognition of political office,” and the “release of prisoners.”

Secondly, the group believes the elites in the “Kabul regime” have no interest in the withdrawal of American forces, “because their existence is dependent on foreign troops.” The Taliban also cite disagreements within the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and differences of opinions about peace between President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. For example, in June 2017, criticizing the “Kabul Process,” the Taliban issued a daily commentary, “Is the Kabul process really for peace?” which stated:

While Ashraf Ghani described the agenda of the gathering as peace negotiations with the Taliban ... speaking to the representatives of more than 25 countries, his Chief Executive and his Foreign Minister did not attend the meeting.

The Taliban want to discredit the major achievements of the past 18 years, including the democratic state that the group does not recognize as legitimate. They don't stop there. They also want to be the boss in talks aimed at ending the "occupation," leaving the Afghan government sidelined. For the Taliban, if officials of the Afghan government are at the same negotiation table, it would mean that they are not leading the process.

The Taliban's leaders and members believe they are the authentic and legitimate representatives of the Afghan people. In the same series of commentaries on "jihad," the Taliban issued another declaration under the subtitle of "Who should lead a national peace process with the Americans in Afghanistan?" Referencing some Hanafi scholars, the Taliban write:

A national peace [process] with infidels is not the duty of any individual. This [peace process] is a social matter of Muslims, and Sharia has given this right to the Imam of the Muslims. Particularly while Afghanistan is functionally under occupation of Americans, in such situation, decisions of peace, war, and negotiations with infidels and occupiers is the responsibility and duty of the individual who practically holds the leadership of decision making in the struggle against the occupiers.

The Taliban in the New Afghanistan

The group explains its approach towards a political solution to the conflict in two stages and based on two factors – external and internal. As a Taliban representative put it in January 2016 at Pugwash conference in Qatar:

The matters, related to foreign troops will be discussed with the Americans in the first stage and the rest of the issues that relates to Afghan people, will be resolved with Afghans afterwards.

Whereas the external issue is the withdrawal of troops, internal issues include the system of government the Taliban aim to establish after the troops' withdrawal. In a Taliban commentary, "The straight way towards peace," social ills from corruption to criminality are blamed on the current constitution, grounded in a belief that peace and justice prevailed before American occupation in 2001 under the laws it enforced. As the group made clear in a 2016 comment:

The Kabul administration's current constitution, established under the shadow of occupation, is not acceptable for the Afghan people, as it does not fulfil their needs ... and cannot serve justice to the poor.

The Taliban want the dominant focus of the peace process to be negotiations over the withdrawal of American troops. On internal issues with Afghans, changes to the constitution would likely be very significant, as the Taliban still believe in strict laws, which they consider imperative for returning Afghanistan to what was, in the group's view, the stable and socially cohesive country that existed before the United States invaded.

Nonetheless, the Taliban are attempting to portray themselves as a more tolerant group, maintaining that they are "committed to civic activism, freedom of speech, women's

rights, facilitating education, and preserving and developing national projects.” The key issue, however, is how the Taliban’s understanding of these values is shaped by the core commitment to a particular interpretation of sharia. The group also presents itself as determined to offer mutual respect with neighboring states and all countries around the world.

Where does this leave the negotiations? Any progress toward ending the longest war in American history would require accepting some mind-boggling demands from the Taliban, or substantial policy and ideological shifts on their part, which seem unlikely.

Patience is the most important need. Yet it won’t help unless American diplomats understand their adversary – specifically, the Taliban’s commitment to its desire to rule a “Sharia-governed” Afghanistan unchallenged, and as a sovereign power.

In a series of tweets, Khalilzad affirmed that significant progress had been made on the two vital issues of counter-terrorism and troop withdrawal, and also vowed that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.” As he is set to meet the Taliban in the next round of negotiations scheduled for the end of this month, Khalilzad needs to be vigilant about post-withdrawal chaos that will ensue in the absence of strong institutions and inclusive democratic government. Meaningful and long-lasting political changes that ensure enduring peace do not just materialize for the sake of meeting a deadline, whether for the Afghan election, or the next American one.²

² warontherocks.com/2019/02

CHAPTER 2

Civil War in Syria

Background

What began as protests against President Assad's regime in 2011 quickly escalated into a full-scale war between the Syrian government—backed by Russia and Iran—and antigovernment rebel groups—backed by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others in the region. Three campaigns drive the conflict: coalition efforts to defeat the Islamic State, violence between the Syrian government and opposition forces, and military operations against Syrian Kurds by Turkish forces.

The Islamic State began seizing control of territory in Syria in 2013. After a series of terrorist attacks coordinated by the Islamic State across Europe in 2015, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France—with the support of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab partners—expanded their air campaign in Iraq to include Syria. Together, these nations have conducted over eleven thousand air strikes against Islamic State targets in Syria, while the U.S.-led coalition has continued its support for ground operations by the SDF. Turkish troops have been involved in ground operations against the Islamic State since 2016, and have launched attacks against armed Kurdish groups in Syria. Meanwhile, at the request of the Syrian government in September 2015, Russia began launching air strikes against what it claimed were Islamic State targets, while Syrian government forces achieved several notable victories over the Islamic State, including the reclamation of Palmyra. According to the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State, 98 percent of the territory formerly held by the group in Iraq and Syria, including Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, has been reclaimed by Iraqi security forces and the SDF.

With Russian and Iranian support, the Syrian government has steadily regained control of territory from opposition forces, including the opposition's stronghold in Aleppo in 2016. The regime has been accused of using chemical weapons numerous times over the course of the conflict, resulting in international condemnation in 2013, 2017, and 2018. Opposition forces have maintained limited control in Idlib, in northwestern Syria, and on the Iraq-Syria border.

Efforts to reach a diplomatic resolution have been unsuccessful. Geneva peace talks on Syria—a UN-backed conference for facilitating a political transition led by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura—have not been successful in reaching a political resolution, as opposition groups and Syrian regime officials struggle to find mutually acceptable terms for resolving the conflict. A new round of peace talks began in Geneva in May 2017 with an eighteen-person delegation from Syria but has since stalled. Also in 2017, Russia initiated peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, with Iran, Turkey, and members of

Syria's government and armed opposition leaders, which resulted in a cease-fire agreement and the establishment of four de-escalation zones. However, shortly after the cease-fire was announced, attacks by Syrian government forces against rebel-held areas in the de-escalation zones resumed.

Concerns

According to the World Bank, more than 400,000 people have been killed in Syria since the start of the war. The UN reports that more than 5.6 million have fled the country, and 6.5 million have been internally displaced. Many refugees have fled to Jordan and Lebanon, straining already weak infrastructure and limited resources. More than 3.4 million Syrians have fled to Turkey, and many have attempted to seek refuge in Europe.

Meanwhile, external military intervention—including the provision of arms and military equipment, training, air strikes, and even troops—in support of proxies in Syria threatens to prolong a conflict already in its eighth year. Outside actors—namely Iran, Israel, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the U.S.-led coalition—increasingly operate in proximity to one another, complicating the civil war and raising concerns over an unintended escalation. Ongoing violence and proxy conflicts could also facilitate the resurgence of terrorist groups.

Recent Developments

On April 1, after a six-week operation that killed an estimated 1,700 civilians, Russian-backed Syrian government forces declared victory in Eastern Ghouta, the last rebel-held enclave on the outskirts of Damascus, the capital city. On April 7, an alleged chemical weapons attack on Douma, a city about six miles northeast of Damascus, killed more than forty people and affected over five hundred. The United States, France, and United Kingdom alleged that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad orchestrated the attack, the Syrian government denied the claims, and Russia vetoed a UN resolution to allow investigators to access the site of the attack. In response to the attack, the United States, France, and United Kingdom carried out air strikes on three chemical weapons facilities near Damascus and Homs on April 14.

Foreign actors continue to play an important role in the Syrian conflict. In April 2018, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Russian President Vladimir Putin jointly agreed to protect Syria's territorial integrity and ensure a cease-fire. In March, Turkish soldiers and Free Syrian Army forces captured Afrin in northern Syria, nearly two months after Turkey launched a major military operation to oust Kurdish militias in the region.

Also in April, U.S. President Donald J. Trump announced that roughly two thousand U.S. troops will remain in Syria to prevent the resurgence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. The U.S.-led international coalition continues to carry out military strikes against the

Islamic State, particularly on the Iraq-Syria border, and provides training and support to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and internal security forces.

In December 2018, President Donald J. Trump announced a decision to withdraw the roughly two thousand U.S. troops remaining in Syria. On January 16, 2019, an attack in Manbij claimed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State killed at least nineteen people, including four Americans. Prior to that attack, only two Americans had been killed in action in Syria since the U.S.-led campaign began. The U.S.-led international coalition continues to carry out military strikes against the Islamic State and provides support to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and internal security forces.

The pullout of U.S. troops has increased uncertainty around the role of other external parties to the conflict—including Iran, Israel, Russia, and Turkey—as well as the future of internal actors.

Syria's civil war explained from the beginning

On March 15, 2018 the war entered its eighth year

Al Jazeera News

More than 465,000 Syrians have been killed in the fighting, over a million injured, and over 12 million - half the country's prewar population - have been displaced.

Here is how and why the conflict started:

What caused the uprising?

While lack of freedoms and economic woes drove resentment of the Syrian government, the harsh crackdown on protesters inflamed public anger.

Arab Spring:

- In 2011, successful uprisings - that became known as the Arab Spring - toppled Tunisia's and Egypt's presidents. This gave hope to Syrian pro-democracy activists.
- That March, peaceful protests erupted in Syria as well, after 15 boys were detained and tortured for writing graffiti in support of the Arab Spring. One of the boys, a 13-year-old, was killed after having been brutally tortured.
- The Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, responded to the protests by killing hundreds of demonstrators and imprisoning many more.
- In July 2011, defectors from the military announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army, a rebel group aiming to overthrow the government, and Syria began to slide into civil war.
- While the protests in 2011 were mostly non-sectarian, the armed conflict surfaced starker sectarian divisions. Most Syrians are Sunni Muslims, but Syria's security establishment has long been dominated by members of the Alawi sect, of which Assad is a member.
- In 1982, Bashar's father ordered a military crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama, killing tens of thousands of people and flattening much of the city.
- Even global warming is said to have played a role in sparking the 2011 uprising. Severe drought plagued Syria from 2007-10, causing as many as 1.5 million people to migrate from the countryside into cities, exacerbating poverty and social unrest.

International involvement

Foreign backing and open intervention have played a large role in Syria's civil war. Russia entered the conflict in 2015 and has been the Assad government's main ally since then.

- **Regional actors:** The governments of majority-Shia Iran and Iraq, and Lebanon-based Hezbollah, have supported Assad, while Sunni-majority countries, including Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia supported anti-Assad rebels.
- Since 2016, Turkish troops have launched several operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) near its borders, as well as against Kurdish groups armed by the United States.
- **Anti-ISIL coalition:** The US has armed anti-Assad rebel groups and led an international coalition bombing ISIL targets since 2014.
- Israel carried out air raids inside Syria, reportedly targeting Hezbollah and pro-government fighters and facilities.
- The first time Syrian air defences shot down an Israeli warplane was in February 2018.

US and Russia

The US has repeatedly stated its opposition to the Assad government backed by Russia but has not involved itself as deeply.

- **Chemical red line:** Former US President Barack Obama had warned that the use of chemical weapons in Syria was a "red line" that would prompt military intervention.
- In April 2017, the US carried its first direct military action against Assad's forces, launching 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian air force base from which US officials believe a chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun had been launched.
- One year later, on April 14, despite Russian warnings, the US launched an attack together with France and the UK, at "chemical weapon sites".
- **CIA training:** In 2013, the CIA began a covert programme to arm, fund and train rebel groups opposing Assad, but the programme was later shut down after it was revealed that the CIA had spent \$500m but only trained 60 fighters.
- **Russia's campaign:** In September 2015, Russia launched a bombing campaign against what it referred to as "terrorist groups" in Syria, which included ISIL as well as anti-Assad rebel groups backed by the USA. Russia has also deployed military advisers to shore up Assad's defences.

- At the UN Security Council, Russia and China have repeatedly vetoed Western-backed resolutions on Syria.

Peace talks

Peace negotiations have been ongoing between the Syrian government and the opposition in order to achieve a military ceasefire and political transition in Syria, but the main sticking point has been the fate of Assad.

- **Geneva:** The first round of UN-facilitated talks between the Syrian government and opposition delegates took place in Geneva, Switzerland in June 2012.
- The latest round of talks in December 2017 failed amid a tit-for-tat between the Syrian government and opposition delegates over statements about the future role of Assad in a transitional government.
- In 2014 Staffan de Mistura replaced Kofi Annan as the UN special envoy for Syria.
- **Astana:** In May 2017, Russia, Iran and Turkey called for the setup of four de-escalation zones in Syria, over which Syrian and Russian fighter jets were not expected to fly.
- After denouncing plans to partition Syria in March 2018, a follow-up trilateral summit was held in Turkey to discuss the way forward.
- **Sochi:** In January 2018, Russia sponsored talks over the future of Syria in the Black Sea city of Sochi, but the opposition bloc boycotted the conference, claiming it was an attempt to undercut the UN effort to broker a deal.

Rebel groups

Since the conflict began, as a Syrian rebellion against the Assad government, many new rebel groups have joined the fighting in Syria and have frequently fought one another.

- The Free Syrian Army (FSA) is a loose conglomeration of armed brigades formed in 2011 by defectors from the Syrian army and civilians backed by the United States, Turkey, and several Gulf countries.
- In December 2016, the Syrian army scored its biggest victory against the rebels when it recaptured the strategic city of Aleppo. Since then, the FSA has controlled limited areas in northwestern Syria.
- In 2018, Syrian opposition fighters evacuated from the last rebel stronghold near Damascus. However, backed by Turkey, the FSA took control Afrin, near the Turkey-Syria border, from Kurdish rebel fighters seeking self-rule.

- **ISIS** emerged in northern and eastern Syria in 2013 after overrunning large portions of Iraq. The group quickly gained international notoriety for its brutal executions and its energetic use of social media to recruit fighters from around the world.
- Other groups fighting in Syria include Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Iran-backed Hezbollah, and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

The situation today

Fighting in Syria continues on several fronts:

- **Idlib:** In February 2018, shelling by Russian and Syrian forces have intensified on Idlib, especially since fighters from the Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham group shot down a Russian warplane.
- In April, Russia brokered a deal to evacuate opposition fighters from Eastern Ghouta in the south to Idlib in the north, Idlib being one of the few strongholds controlled by opposition fighters.
- The province is strategically important for the Syrian government and Russia for its proximity to the Russian-operated Syrian Khmeimim airbase.
- **Homs:** In April, an airbase and other Syrian government facilities in Homs became again the target of Israeli and US-led air strikes in which UK and French forces also participated.
- The Syrian army recaptured the city of Homs in 2014, but fighting continues with rebels in the suburbs between Homs and Hama.
- **Afrin:** Turkey and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) began in January 2018 a military operation against US-backed fighters in northwestern Syria, and announced the capture of Afrin's city centre in March.
- US troops are stationed in nearby Manbij, prompting fears of a US-Turkey confrontation.

Syrian refugees

Now having gone on longer than World War II, the war in Syria is causing profound effects beyond the country's borders, with many Syrians having left their homes to seek safety elsewhere in Syria or beyond.

- **Registered:** As of February 2018, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) had registered over 5.5 million refugees from Syria and estimated that there are over 6.5 million internally displaced persons (IDP) within Syria's borders.

- Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan are hosting most of the Syrian refugees, many of whom attempt to journey onwards to Europe in search of better conditions.
- The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees describes a refugee as any person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country".
- **Returns:** In 2017, about 66,000 refugees returned to Syria, according to reports.
- According to a Turkish official, 140,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey returned home after Turkish military operations in 2017. More refugees may return to Afrin.³

³ Syria's civil war explained from the beginning, *Al Jazeera News*, (December 14, 2016)

A Desperate Exodus From ISIS' Final Village

A stream of families and fighters, many of them hungry or injured, are surrendering on a rocky patch of desert in southeastern Syria.

Rukmini Callimachi

The men who emerge from the Islamic State's last sliver of land are ordered to sit behind one of two orange lines spray-painted on the rocky desert floor: Syrians behind one and Iraqis behind the other. The women, wearing face-covering veils and clutching toddlers, huddle in a different spot, also separated by nationality. Several of the escapees are so badly wounded from incoming fire that they have to be carried to this open vista on mattresses to surrender to the American-backed coalition. By midmorning, United States Special Operations Forces arrive in a convoy of armored vehicles. The men suspected of being Islamic State fighters are ordered to approach in single file, their arms outstretched, as they are searched by troops and a sniffer dog. Then they are fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed.

In the last two weeks, thousands of people have been streaming out of the village of Baghuz, the last speck of land under Islamic State control in Iraq and Syria, an area where the group once ruled a dominion the size of Britain. That state is all but gone. In the last month, the group went from holding three villages to two to just one. The militants are now trapped in an area about the size of Central Park.

To the west, they are hemmed in by Syrian government forces. To the south is the Iraqi border, where Iraqi troops are holding the line. From the north and east, they are being fought by an American-backed Kurdish and Arab militia known as the Syrian Democratic Forces. As the noose has tightened, even those who joined the caliphate in its earliest days are trying to save themselves. Most of those who have made it to this spot in the desert in recent days are the families of the militants — their multiple wives and numerous children — with only a small number of locals originally from the area mixed in, Kurdish officials said. Out of food, the families say they have been reduced to boiling a weed that grows in highway medians.

American-backed Syrian Democratic Forces fighters near the village of Baghuz, the last town held by the Islamic State. Large numbers of the escapees are foreigners, especially Iraqis who lived under the Islamic State before fleeing to this corner of southeastern Syria when Iraq's cities were liberated. But among the escapees who arrived in the last week are also Germans, French, Britons, Swedes and Russians, a testament to the group's broad appeal, which lured some 40,000 recruits from 100 countries to its nascent state.

On Sunday, American troops walked between the new arrivals with a hand-held screen, asking questions. Those who had government-issued IDs were told to hand them over. Their documents were placed in plastic pouches and hung with lanyards around the necks of the detainees. They were sorted by sex and nationality, with foreign men presumed to be

Islamic State members. Some of the suspected fighters were taken to prison. The majority, including all the women and children, were told they would be bused to one of several detention camps in northern Syria.

After a lightning advance last month, the military operation to take Baghuz has stalled as commanders negotiate an end to the siege with the Islamic State, according to three American officials and two militia commanders. Journalists taken on Saturday to the front, the so-called zero line, marked by a berm about 300 yards from the first Islamic State position, found soldiers drinking tea and watching videos. Gun positions were unmanned, as if a cease-fire were in effect.

At stake in the negotiations is the fate of several dozen of the militia's troops who were captured by the Islamic State during a counteroffensive last fall. The group released a video showing one of the militiamen being beheaded. Mustafa Bali, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces, said that Islamic State representatives had asked for safe passage but that the request was rejected. "We will fight every last one," he said. But American officials said that safe passage to the Syrian province of Idlib was still on the table, and a militia commander said the group was asking for a truck of food.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details. Negotiating with the Islamic State is controversial, but it has happened at numerous points throughout the now more than four-year-old battle to dislodge them from the territory they once held in Iraq and Syria. According to local security forces, the deals, including prisoner exchanges, have saved civilians and infrastructure from a destructive bombing campaign.

While Baghuz is the last vestige of the Islamic State's caliphate in the region where it was born, the caliphate was always a global project, with 16 of its 35 "provinces" outside Iraq and Syria. Several of those overseas affiliates are flourishing, including in the Philippines and Nigeria. Three reports issued last year estimated that the group still had between 20,000 and 30,000 fighters just in Iraq and Syria, where they continue to mount attacks. One of the women who turned herself in on Sunday was surrendering for the second time. The woman, Amal Mohammed al-Soussi, 22, arrived in the desert clutching the hands of her two toddlers. She said that after her husband, an Islamic State sniper, was killed during the battle for Raqqa in 2017, she surrendered to the militia and was held in a detention camp for eight months.

Then one day, she and dozens of other Islamic State wives were loaded into trucks and driven into the desert, where they were handed back to the Islamic State. "They told us to get out and said, 'Now you are in your state,'" she said. "We understood that a prisoner exchange had occurred."

She said that she had been a committed citizen of the caliphate, but that hunger had forced her to surrender. For weeks, she said, she and her daughters subsisted on animal feed. Another woman spoke of scavenging for a plant that grows in the crevices between houses and in traffic circles, which she boiled and forced herself to eat. The increasing peril that the Islamic State's own families were subjected to was evident in the number of people who

showed up every day with injuries. One woman, her leg torn by shrapnel, was lifted from an arriving truck and held up as she hopped to the spot where other women were waiting to be screened. An older man collapsed on a mattress, suffering from a back injury. A woman in her 20s made it to the processing point, only to die soon after she arrived. Her family could do little beyond covering her with a blanket.

A schoolgirl from Turkey, the daughter of an Islamic State family, was sitting wrapped in a blanket, unable to stand because of her injuries from a mortar round. And a 6-year-old boy was rushed to a first aid station staffed by a group of recently arrived American aid workers.

“He’s not going to make it. His pulse is too low,” warned one of the paramedics, Jason Torlano of Yosemite, Calif., a member of an aid group called the Free Burma Rangers. The boy began trembling and whimpering in pain, straining from wounds to his head, arm and leg. The medics wrapped him in a heated blanket and tried to find a vein to start an IV drip, the bag of fluid taped to the hood of a Toyota Land Cruiser. “Hey, buddy,” the aid worker said, as the boy began to lose consciousness. “Stay with me.” His mother stood nearby, repeatedly lifting the black fabric covering her face to wipe her eyes with a piece of Kleenex.

She said that she was from Aleppo and that her husband had been killed in an airstrike, but she denied being part of the Islamic State. Security forces from the Kurdish militia said that they considered her and the majority of the others who have arrived to be the wives and children of Islamic State members: Why else, they said, would a woman and a child who are not natives of the area make their way into an active war zone? Using a stethoscope, the aid worker listened to the little boy’s lungs. “He’s drowning. We need to go,” Mr. Torlano said, and bundled him into a car. That afternoon, security forces dug a grave for the young woman at the edge of the rocky ground where the arrivals were being processed. There was only one person there from her family, a cousin. He helped lower her body into the grave, uncovering her face just long enough to turn it toward Mecca. The men digging her grave lifted their palms skyward in a five-second prayer. Next to the freshly dug mound were three more, one of them just three feet long, the resting place of others who did not survive the caliphate.

CHAPTER 3

Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea

Background

China's sweeping claims of sovereignty over the sea—and the sea's estimated 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas—have antagonized competing claimants Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. As early as the 1970s, countries began to claim islands and various zones in the South China Sea, such as the Spratly Islands, which possess rich natural resources and fishing areas.

China maintains that, under international law, foreign militaries are not able to conduct intelligence-gathering activities, such as reconnaissance flights, in its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). According to the United States, claimant countries, under UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), should have freedom of navigation through EEZs in the sea and are not required to notify claimants of military activities. In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague issued its ruling on a claim brought against China by the Philippines under UNCLOS, ruling in favor of the Philippines on almost every count. While China is a signatory to the treaty, which established the tribunal, it refuses to accept the court's authority.

In recent years, satellite imagery has shown China's increased efforts to reclaim land in the South China Sea by physically increasing the size of islands or creating new islands altogether. In addition to piling sand onto existing reefs, China has constructed ports, military installations, and airstrips—particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands, where it has twenty and seven outposts, respectively. China has militarized Woody Island by deploying fighter jets, cruise missiles, and a radar system.

To protect its political, security, and economic interests in the region, the United States has challenged China's assertive territorial claims and land reclamation efforts by conducting FONOPs and bolstering support for Southeast Asian partners. Also in response to China's assertive presence in the disputed territory, Japan has sold military ships and equipment to the Philippines and Vietnam in order to improve their maritime security capacity and to deter Chinese aggression.

Concerns

The United States, which maintains important interests in ensuring freedom of navigation and securing sea lines of communication (SLOCs), has expressed support for an agreement on a binding code of conduct and other confidence-building measures. China's claims threaten SLOCs, which are important maritime passages that facilitate trade and the movement of naval forces.

The United States has a role in preventing military escalation resulting from the territorial dispute. Washington's defense treaty with Manila could draw the United States into a potential China-Philippines conflict over the substantial natural gas deposits or lucrative fishing grounds in disputed territory. The failure of Chinese and Southeast Asian leaders to resolve the disputes by diplomatic means could also undermine international laws governing maritime disputes and encourage destabilizing arms buildups.

Recent Developments

Tensions between China and both the Philippines and Vietnam have recently cooled, even as China increased its military activity in the South China Sea by conducting a series of naval maneuvers and exercises in March and April 2018. Meanwhile, China continues to construct military and industrial outposts on artificial islands it has built in disputed waters.

The United States has also stepped up its military activity and naval presence in the region in recent years, including freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in January and March 2018. In a speech during his November 2017 visit to Southeast Asia, President Donald J. Trump emphasized the importance of such operations, and of ensuring free and open access to the South China Sea. Since May 2017, the United States has conducted six FONOPs in the region.

China profile

A chronology of key events:

ca 1700-1046 BC - Shang Dynasty - the first Chinese state for which clear written records remain - unites much of north central China.

1045-ca 770 BC - Zhou dynasty replaces Shang as dominant force across northern China,

ca 770 BC - Zhou state collapses into loose association of warring states, known as the Eastern Zhou.

Imperial China

221-206 BC - King Ying Zheng of Qin for the first time unites much of the Chinese heartland, becomes the first ruler to use the title "emperor" as Qin Shihuangdi ("First Qin Emperor") and builds first Great Wall of China, but his empire quickly collapses after his death. After a brief period of instability, Liu Bang founds the Han dynasty.

206 BC - 220 AD - Han Dynasty: first durable state governing the entire Chinese heartland, ushers in first Chinese cultural "golden age", growth in money economy, and the promotion of Confucianism as the state philosophy. Buddhism makes its first inroads into China.

220 - 589 - Collapse of Han state results in nearly four centuries of division between competing dynasties before China is reunited by the short-lived Sui dynasty. Start of the development of southern China.

618-907 - Tang Dynasty unites China for nearly three centuries, in what is seen as the second high point of Chinese civilisation after the Han; imperial sphere of influence reaches Central Asia for the first time.

960-1279 - Song Dynasty: While weaker than the Tang empire militarily and politically, Song rule marks a high point of

Chinese classical culture, with a flowering of literature, scientific innovation and the adoption of Neo-Confucianism as the official state ideology.

Mongol rule

1271-1368 - Mongols conquer China and establish their own Yuan Dynasty, founded by Kublai Khan. Marco Polo and other Westerners visit. Beijing becomes the capital of a united China.

1368 - Ming Dynasty overthrows Mongols and establishes sophisticated agricultural economy, underpinning strong centralised bureaucracy and military. Great Wall of China completed in the form seen today.

1644 - Manchu Qing Dynasty drives out Ming. Chinese empire reaches its zenith, with the annexation of Tibet, Mongolia and present-day Xinjiang (Turkestan).

19th Century - Qing Dynasty begins a long decline. Western powers impose "unequal treaties" that create foreign concessions in China's ports. Regional warlords rise as central government atrophies.

1899-1901 - "Boxer Rebellion" in Northern China seeks to stifle reforms in the Qing administration, drive out foreigners and re-establish traditional rule. Defeated by foreign intervention, with Western powers, Russia and Japan extracting further concessions from weakened Qing government.

The Republic

1911-12 - Military revolts by reform-minded officers lead to proclamation of Republic of China under Sun Yat-sen and abdication of last Qing emperor. Republic struggles to consolidate its rule amid regional warlordism and the rise of the Communist Party.

1925 - The death of Sun Yat-sen brings Chiang Kai-shek to the fore. He breaks with the Communists and confirms the governing Kuomintang as a nationalist party.

1931-45 - Japan invades and gradually occupies more and more of China.

1934-35 - Mao Zedong emerges as Communist leader during the party's "Long March" to its new base in Shaanxi Province.

1937 - Kuomintang and Communists nominally unite against Japanese. Civil war resumes after Japan's defeat in Second World War.

Communist victory

1949 - 1 October - Mao Zedong, having led the Communists to victory against the Nationalists after more than 20 years of civil war, proclaims the founding of the People's Republic of China. The Nationalists retreat to the island of Taiwan and set up a government there.

1950 October - China sends People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops into Tibet enforcing a longstanding claim.

1958 - Mao launches the "Great Leap Forward", a five-year economic plan. Farming is collectivised and labour-intensive industry is introduced. The drive produces economic breakdown and is abandoned after two years. Disruption to agriculture is blamed for the deaths by starvation of millions of people following poor harvests.

1959 - Chinese forces suppress large-scale revolt in Tibet.

1962 - Brief conflict with India over disputed Himalayan border.

1966-76 - "Cultural Revolution", Mao's 10-year political and ideological campaign aimed at reviving revolutionary spirit, produces massive social, economic and political upheaval.

1972 - US President Richard Nixon visits. Both countries declare a desire to normalise relations.

1976 - Mao dies. "Gang of Four", including Mao's widow, jockey for power but are arrested and convicted of crimes against the

state. From 1977 Deng Xiaoping emerges as the dominant figure among pragmatists in the leadership. Under him, China undertakes far-reaching economic reforms.

1979 - Diplomatic relations established with the US.

Government imposes one-child policy in effort to curb population growth.

1986-90 - China's "Open-door policy" opens the country to foreign investment and encourages development of a market economy and private sector.

1989 - Troops open fire on demonstrators who have camped for weeks in Tiananmen Square initially to demand the posthumous rehabilitation of former CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who was forced to resign in 1987. The official death toll is 200. International outrage leads to sanctions.

1989 - Jiang Zemin takes over as Chinese Communist Party general secretary from Zhao Ziyang, who refused to support martial law during the Tiananmen demonstrations.

Stockmarkets open in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

1992 - Russia and China sign declaration restoring friendly ties.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) ranks China's economy as third largest in the world after the US and Japan.

Three Gorges project

1993 - Jiang Zemin officially replaces Yang Shangkun as president.

Preliminary construction work on the Three Gorges dam begins. It will create a lake almost 600 kilometres (375 miles) long and submerge dozens of cultural heritage sites by the time it is completed in 2009.

1994 - China abolishes the official renminbi (RMB) currency exchange rate and fixes its first floating rate since 1949.

1995 - China tests missiles and holds military exercises in the Taiwan Strait,

apparently to intimidate Taiwan during its presidential elections.

1996 - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - dubbed the Shanghai Five - meet in Shanghai and agree to cooperate to combat ethnic and religious tensions in each other's countries.

1997 - Deng Xiaoping dies, aged 92. Rioting erupts in Yining, Xinjiang and on day of Deng's funeral Xinjiang separatists plant three bombs on buses in Urumqi, Xinjiang, killing nine and injuring 74.

Hong Kong reverts to Chinese control.

1998 - Zhu Rongji succeeds Li Peng as premier, announces reforms in the wake of the Asian financial crisis and continued deceleration of the economy. Thousands of state-owned enterprises are to be restructured through amalgamations, share flotations and bankruptcies. About four million civil service jobs to be axed.

Large-scale flooding of the Yangtse, Songhua and Nenjiang rivers.

50th anniversary

1999 - Nato bombs the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, souring Sino-US relations.

Falun Gong, a quasi-religious sect, outlawed as a threat to stability.

Fiftieth anniversary of People's Republic of China on 1st October.

Macao reverts to Chinese rule.

2000 - Crackdown on official corruption intensifies, with the execution for bribe taking of a former deputy chairman of the National People's Congress.

Bomb explosion kills up to 60 in Urumqi, Xinjiang.

2001 April - Diplomatic stand-off over the detention of an American spy plane and crew after a mid-air collision with a Chinese fighter jet.

2001 June - Leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian states launch the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and sign an agreement to fight ethnic and religious militancy while promoting trade and investment. The group emerges when the Shanghai Five - China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - are joined by Uzbekistan.

2001 June - China carries out military exercises simulating an invasion of Taiwan, at the same time as the island's armed forces test their capability to defend Taiwan against a missile attack from China.

2001 November - China joins the World Trade Organisation.

2002 February - US President George W Bush visits, on the 30th anniversary of President Nixon's visit to China - the first by a US president.

2002 July - The US says China is modernising its military to make possible a forcible reunification with Taiwan. Beijing says its policy remains defensive.

2002 November - Vice-President Hu Jintao is named head of the ruling Communist Party, replacing Jiang Zemin, the outgoing president. Jiang is re-elected head of the influential Central Military Commission, which oversees the armed forces.

2003 March - National People's Congress elects Hu Jintao as president. He replaces Jiang Zemin, who steps down after 10 years in the post.

Sars virus outbreak

2003 March-April - China and Hong Kong are hit by the pneumonia-like Sars virus, thought to have originated in Guangdong province in November 2002. Strict quarantine measures are enforced to stop the disease spreading.

2003 June - Sluice gates on Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower scheme, are closed to allow the reservoir to fill up.

2003 June - Hong Kong is declared free of Sars. Days later the World Health Organization lifts its Sars-related travel warning for Beijing.

2003 June - China, India reach de facto agreement over status of Tibet and Sikkim in landmark cross-border trade agreement.

2003 July-August - Some 500,000 people march in Hong Kong against Article 23, a controversial anti-subversion bill. Two key Hong Kong government officials resign. The government shelves the bill.

China in space

2003 October - Launch of China's first manned spacecraft: Astronaut Yang Liwei is sent into space by a Long March 2F rocket.

2004 September - Former president Jiang Zemin stands down as army chief, three years ahead of schedule.

2004 November - China signs a landmark trade agreement with 10 south-east Asian countries; the accord could eventually unite 25% of the world's population in a free-trade zone.

2005 January - Former reformist leader Zhao Ziyang dies. He opposed violent measures to end 1989's student protests and spent his last years under virtual house arrest.

Aircraft chartered for the Lunar New Year holiday make the first direct flights between China and Taiwan since 1949.

2005 March - Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa resigns. He is succeeded in June by Donald Tsang.

New law on Taiwan calls for use of force should Taipei declare independence from mainland China.

Tensions with Japan

2005 April - Relations with Japan deteriorate amid sometimes-violent anti-Japanese protests in Chinese cities, sparked

by a Japanese textbook which China says glosses over Japan's World War II record.

Taiwan's National Party leader Lien Chan visits China for the first meeting between Nationalist and Communist Party leaders since 1949.

2005 August - China and Russia hold their first joint military exercises.

2005 October - China conducts its second manned space flight, with two astronauts circling Earth in the Shenzhou VI capsule.

2005 November - Explosion at a chemical plant poisons the Songhua river, cutting off water supplies to millions of people.

2006 May - Work on the structure of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower project, is completed.

2006 July - New China-Tibet railway line, the world's highest train route, begins operating.

2006 August - Official news agency says 18 million people are affected by what it describes as the country's worst drought in 50 years.

2006 November - African heads of state gather for a China-Africa summit in Beijing. Business deals worth nearly \$2bn are signed and China promises billions of dollars in loans and credits.

Government says pollution has degraded China's environment to a critical level, threatening health and social stability.

Missile test

2007 January - Reports say China has carried out a missile test in space, shooting down an old weather satellite. The US, Japan and others express concern at China's military build-up.

2007 February - President Hu Jintao tours eight African countries to boost trade and investment. Western rights groups criticise China for dealing with corrupt or abusive regimes.

2007 April - During a landmark visit, Wen Jiabao becomes the first Chinese prime minister to address Japan's parliament. Both sides agree to try to iron out differences over their shared history.

2007 June - New labour law introduced after hundreds of men and boys were found working as slaves in brick factories.

2007 July - China's food and drug agency chief is executed for taking bribes. Food and drug scandals have sparked international fears about the safety of Chinese exports.

2007 September - A new Roman Catholic bishop of Beijing is consecrated - the first for over 50 years to have the tacit approval of the Pope.

2007 October - China launches its first moon orbiter.

2008 January - The worst snowstorms in decades are reported to have affected up to 100 million people.

Tibet unrest

2008 March - Anti-China protests escalate into the worst violence Tibet has seen in 20 years, five months before Beijing hosts the Olympic Games.

Pro-Tibet activists in several countries focus world attention on the region by disrupting progress of the Olympic torch relay.

2008 May - A massive earthquake hits Sichuan province, killing tens of thousands.

2008 June - China and Taiwan agree to set up offices in each other's territory at the first formal bilateral talks since 1999.

Japan and China reach a deal for the joint development of a gas field in the East China Sea, resolving a four-year-old dispute.

2008 July - China and Russia sign a treaty ending 40-year-old border dispute which led to armed clashes during the Cold War.

2008 August - Beijing hosts Olympic Games.

Hua Guofeng, who succeeded Mao Zedong for a short period in 1976, dies in Beijing aged 87

2008 September - Astronaut Zhai Zhigang completes China's first spacewalk during the country's third manned space mission, Shenzhou VII.

Nearly 53,000 Chinese children fall ill after drinking tainted milk, leading Premier Wen Jiabao to apologise for the scandal.

Global financial crisis

2008 November - The government announces a \$586bn (£370bn) stimulus package to avoid the economy slowing. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao says the effect of the global financial crisis on China is worse than expected.

2009 February - Russia and China sign \$25bn deal to supply China with oil for next 20 years in exchange for loans.

China has become the world's manufacturing hub, but discontent over working conditions is on the rise

Hillary Clinton calls for deeper US-China partnership on first overseas tour as secretary of state.

2009 July - Scores of people are killed and hundreds injured in the worst ethnic violence in decades as a protest in the restive Xinjiang region turns violent.

First sign of relaxation of strictly enforced one-child policy, as officials in Shanghai urge parents to have a second child in effort to counter effects of ageing population.

Leaders of China and Taiwan exchange direct messages for the first time in more than 60 years.

2009 October - China stages mass celebrations to mark 60 years since the Communist Party came to power.

Six men are sentenced to death for involvement in ethnic violence in Xinjiang.

2009 December - China executes Briton Akmal Shaikh for drug dealing, despite pleas for clemency from the British government.

Tensions with US, Japan

2010 January - China posts a 17.7% rise in exports in December, suggesting it has overtaken Germany as the world's biggest exporter.

The US calls on Beijing to investigate the cyber attacks, saying China has tightened censorship. China condemns US criticism of its internet controls.

2010 March - The web giant Google ends its compliance with Chinese internet censorship and starts re-directing web searches to a Hong Kong, in response to cyber attacks on e-mail accounts of human rights activists.

2010 September - Diplomatic row erupts over Japan's arrest of Chinese trawler crew in disputed waters in East China Sea. Japan later frees the crew but rejects Chinese demands for an apology.

2010 October - Jailed Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo is awarded Nobel Peace Prize, prompting official protests from Beijing.

Vice-President Xi Jinping named vice-chairman of powerful Central Military Commission, in a move widely seen as a step towards succeeding President Hu Jintao.

No.2 world economy

2011 February - China formally overtakes Japan to become the world's second-largest economy after Tokyo published figures showing a Japanese GDP rise of only four per cent in 2010.

2011 April - Arrest of Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei for "economic crimes" sparks international campaign for his release. He is freed after more than two months' detention.

2011 July-August - Police kill seven Uighurs suspected of being behind separate

attacks in the towns of Horan and Kashgar blamed on separatists.

2011 November - Authorities present outspoken artist Ai Weiwei with \$2.3m tax demand, which is paid by donations from his supporters.

2011 December - Southern fishing village of Wukan comes to international attention after violent protests by locals against land seizures by officials. Authorities respond by sacking two local officials and agreeing to villagers' key demands.

China issues new rules requiring users of microblogs to register personal details.

2012 January - Official figures suggest city dwellers outnumber China's rural population for the first time. Both imports and exports dip, raising concern that the global economic slowdown could be acting as a drag on growth.

Bo Xilai scandal

2012 March - Chongqing Communist Party chief and potential leadership hopeful Bo Xilai is dismissed on the eve of the party's 10-yearly leadership change, in the country's biggest political scandal for years. His wife, Gu Kailai, is placed under investigations over the death of British businessman Neil Heywood in the city in November.

2012 April - China ups the limit within which the yuan currency can fluctuate to 1% in trading against the US dollar, from 0.5%. The US welcomes the move, as it has been pressing China to let the yuan appreciate.

2012 May - Philippines and Chinese naval vessels confront one another off the Scarborough Shoal reef in the South China Sea. Both countries claim the reef, which may have significant reserves of oil and gas.

2012 June - China completes its first ever manual docking of a spacecraft with another space module, when Shenzhou-9 docked with the Tiangong-1 lab module without relying on an automated system. China's first female astronaut, Liu Yang, took part.

2012 August - Gu Kailai, the wife of disgraced politician Bo Xilai, is given a suspended death sentence after admitting to murdering British businessman Neil Heywood. State media for the first time link Bo himself to the scandal.

2012 September - China cancels ceremonies to mark the 40th anniversary of restored diplomatic ties with Japan because of a public flare-up over disputed islands in the East China Sea. Talks between China and Japan on security matters nonetheless go ahead.

China launches its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning - a converted former Soviet vessel.

Next generation?

2012 November - Communist Party holds congress expected to start a once-in-a-decade transfer of power to a new generation of leaders. Vice-President and heir-apparent Xi Jinping takes over as party chief and assumes the presidency in March 2013.

2013 January - A Tibetan monk receives a suspended death sentence for inciting eight people to burn themselves to death. Nearly 100 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since 2009, many fatally, in apparent protest against Chinese rule.

2013 February - China denies allegations by Japan that its navy ships twice put radar locks on Japanese military vessels, amid mounting tension over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea.

2013 March - Xi Jinping takes over as president, completing the once-in-a-decade transfer of power to a new generation of leaders. He launches an efficiency and anti-corruption drive.

2013 August - Two ethnic Uighur men are sentenced to death over clashes in Xinjiang in April that left 21 people dead, according to Beijing.

2013 September - Former senior leader Bo Xilai is sentenced to life in prison for bribery, embezzlement and abuse of power in the most politically charged trial in China in decades.

Lunar mission

2013 November - Communist Party leadership announces plans to relax one-child policy, in force since 1979. Other reforms include the abolition of "re-education through labour" camps.

China says it has established a new Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over an area of the East China Sea, covering disputed islands controlled by Japan and a disputed South Korean-controlled rock. Japan and South Korea both protest against the move, and the US voices concern.

2013 December - China successfully lands the Yutu ("Jade Rabbit") robotic rover on the surface of the moon, the first soft landing there for 37 years.

2014 January - China allows foreign companies majority ownership of some telecom and internet services in the Shanghai free trade zone.

The planned three-month mission on the moon of China's Yutu robotic rover is cut short by mechanical problems.

2014 February - China's trade surplus jumps to \$31.9bn (£19.4bn) - up 14 per cent from a year earlier - easing concerns the world's second-largest economy may be stuck in a slowdown.

2014 May - The US charges five Chinese army officers with industrial cyber-espionage, in the first case of its kind.

A row with Vietnam over disputed islands escalates, as ships from the two countries collide in the waters of the South China Sea. Chinese workers flee Vietnam after the row sparks anti-China riots.

China signs a 30-year deal worth an estimated \$400bn for gas supplies from Russia's Gazprom.

Hong Kong protests

2014 September-October - Protests against Beijing's plans to vet candidates for elections in 2017 grip Hong Kong.

2014 December - Ex-security chief Zhou Yongkang, the most senior Chinese official to be investigated for corruption, is arrested and expelled from the Communist Party.

2015 January - China's economic growth falls to its lowest level for more than 20 years - 7.4% percent in 2014. Government revises growth targets down.

2015 September - President Xi pays official visit to the United States to seek investment in China; agrees to abjure from economic cyber-espionage.

2015 October - China expresses anger at US naval ship sailing by artificial reefs Beijing is building among disputed Spratly Islands in South China Sea.

The Communist Party announces it has decided to end the decades-old one-child policy.

2015 November - China's President Xi Jinping and Taiwan's President Ma Ying-jeou hold historic talks in Singapore, the first such meeting since the Chinese Civil War finished and the nations split in 1949.

2016 January - Economic growth in 2015 falls to lowest rate in 25 years (6.9%, down from 7.3% in 2014), and International Monetary Fund predicts further deceleration over next two years.

2017 January - The country's slow economic growth continues, with the 2016 marking its slowest growth (6.7%) since 1990.

US trade tension

2017 April - President Xi urges trade cooperation with the US at his first official

meeting with US President Donald Trump in Florida.

2017 June - The government passes a new cyber security law, giving it more control over the data of foreign and domestic firms.

2017 July-August - Row with India over disputed area of Himalayas, where China says Indian troops were trespassing.

2017 October - Communist Party votes at its congress to enshrine Xi Jinping's name and ideology in its constitution, elevating him to the level as founder Mao Zedong.

2018 March - National People's Congress annual legislative meeting votes to remove a two-term limit on the presidency from the constitution, allowing Xi Jinping to remain in office for longer than the conventional decade for recent Chinese leaders.

2018 April - China announces it will impose 25% trade tariffs on a list of 106 US goods, including soybeans, cars, and orange juice, in retaliation for similar US tariffs on about 1,300 Chinese products.

The South China Sea: Explaining the Dispute

By Max Fisher

After an international tribunal in The Hague ruled emphatically against China in a territorial dispute with the Philippines, many Chinese state media outlets responded on Wednesday by publishing a map. It showed the South China Sea, with most of the waters encircled with the “nine-dash line” that has long represented China’s claims there.

This week’s ruling may have delivered a sweeping victory in court to the Philippines, which argued that its maritime territory was being illegally seized by China. But it has only escalated the larger dispute, which involves several Asian nations as well as the United States, and which is as much about China’s rise into a major world power as it is about this one sea.

What follows is an explanation of why this body of water is considered such a big deal, and why it may be a harbinger of global power politics in the decades ahead.

What is the dispute about?

At its most basic level, this a contest between China and several Southeast Asian nations over territorial control in the South China Sea, which includes some of the most strategically important maritime territory on earth.

China, for the past few years, has been asserting ever greater control over faraway waters that were previously considered international or were claimed by other countries. For example, it has seized small land formations or reefs, sometimes dredging up underwater sediment to make the islands large enough to support small military installations.

China’s naval forces have also grown more aggressive in patrolling these claims and chasing off non-Chinese ships. That is part of why its neighbors see this as an effort by China to dominate the region.

This is also about whether China will comply with international laws and norms, which Beijing sometimes views as a plot to constrain the country’s rise.

The United States has gotten involved, sending the Navy to patrol waters it insists are international and backing international mediation efforts. Washington says it wants to maintain free movement and rule by international law. The risk of outright conflict is extremely low, but the militarization of these heavily trafficked and heavily fished waters is still dangerous.

What does this week's ruling mean?

The tribunal ruled almost categorically in favor of the Philippines, which had challenged some of China's territorial claims. It also said China had broken international law by endangering Philippine ships and damaging the marine environment.

Maybe most important, the tribunal largely rejected the nine-dash line that China has used to indicate its South China Sea claims. This could open the way for other Asian states to challenge China's claims.

So the letter of international law seems to say that China could be compelled to abandon many of its South China Sea claims.

But while the ruling is considered binding, there is no enforcement mechanism. China boycotted the proceedings, saying that the tribunal had no jurisdiction and that it would ignore any decision — a position it reiterated after the ruling came out.

Still, China is facing international pressure. Whether China chooses to defy or comply with that pressure, though, could help to shape its place in the international community.

What is the 'nine-dash line'?

This little line has shown up on official Chinese maps since the 1940s (it began with 11 dashes). It demarcates a vast but vague stretch of ocean from China's southern coast through most of the South China Sea.

China has never clarified the line's exact coordinates. But it sweeps across waters — and some small islands — that are claimed by five other nations. It seems to go many miles beyond what is allowed under the United Nations treaty on maritime territorial issues, which China signed.

These are the areas where China has been building islands, installing runways and running patrols.

For China, the line represents long-lost historical claims that the country, after two centuries of weakness, is finally strong enough to recover. For the other nations, the line is a symbol of what they characterize as a naked power grab by China.

Why is the South China Sea so important?

The United States Energy Information Agency estimates there are 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in deposits under the sea — more than exists in the reserves of some of the world's biggest energy exporters.

The waters also contain lucrative fisheries that account for, according to some estimates, 10 percent of the global total. But this means that a lot of fishing boats are cruising around in waters contested by several different navies, increasing the risk of conflict.

The area's greatest value is as a trade route. According to a 2015 Department of Defense report, \$5.3 trillion worth of goods moves through the sea every year, which is about 30 percent of global maritime trade. That includes huge amounts of oil and \$1.2 trillion worth of annual trade with the United States.

Why does it matter who controls those trade routes?

This gets to a core contradiction in the South China Sea dispute: It is driven by territorial competition, yet all countries involved want open sea routes. Everyone benefits from the free flow of goods between Asia and the rest of the world, and everyone suffers if that is disrupted.

This is part of why the United States stresses freedom of movement in international waters. While it is very unlikely that China would ever want to close off trade, the United States would still rather not allow Beijing even the ability to hold the global economy hostage.

But, from China's perspective, the United States itself has that ability, because of American naval dominance; the Chinese also suspect that the global status quo is engineered to serve Western interests first. So it is hardly surprising that China is seeking greater control over waterways it relies on for economic survival.

This is a dynamic that has permeated Sino-American relations throughout China's rise over the past two decades. In theory, both nations understand they are better off cooperating. But in practice, they often treat each other as competitors or potential threats — a cycle that is difficult to break.

So this is about China's rise?

In some ways, yes.

China sees itself as a growing power that has a right to further its interests in its own backyard, just as Western powers have done for centuries. Beijing considers the South China Sea an area of traditional Chinese influence, and sees its control as a way to assert greater power over the region.

Something Americans often miss is that for China, this is in part defensive. The history of Western imperialism looms large. Chinese leaders often distrust the United States' intentions, and consider their country to be the far weaker party. Extending Chinese control is a way to stave off perceived threats.

This insecurity also contributes to Chinese skepticism of international institutions such as the South China Sea tribunal, which Chinese state media portray as a plot to weaken China.

Why is the United States so involved in this?

The United States has a treaty obligation to the Philippines, an ally. As the world's largest economy, it also has a real interest in maintaining open sea lanes — and, as the world's biggest naval power, it often assumes the role of policing them. Plus, as the world's only superpower, the United States often acts as a balancer in regional disputes.

But this is also, for Washington, about shaping what sort of major power China becomes.

American officials insist that they do not oppose China's rise. Their concern is whether China will work within what scholars call the liberal order — the postwar system of international laws and institutions — or seek to overturn it.

The South China Sea, and particularly this week's ruling, are a test case for whether China becomes the kind of power that works within that system, or against it.

While that order has helped promote peace and prosperity globally, it also undeniably serves American interests.

Everyone agrees that the status quo in Asia and eventually the world will evolve to accommodate China's emergence as a major international power. The South China Sea is very important in its own right, but it is maybe most important in helping to determine what sort of role China plays in the world.⁴

⁴ Max Fisher, The South China Sea: Explaining the Dispute, *New York times*

CHAPTER 4

Tensions in the East China Sea

Background

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands were formally claimed by Japan in 1895 and have been privately owned by a series of Japanese citizens for most of the past 120 years. Aside from a brief period after World War II when the United States controlled the territory, Japan has exercised effective control over the islands since 1895.

China began to reassert claims over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the 1970s, citing historic rights to the area. Tensions resurfaced in September 2012 when Japan purchased three of the disputed islands from the private owner. The economically significant islands, which are northeast of Taiwan, have potential oil and natural gas reserves, are near prominent shipping routes, and are surrounded by rich fishing areas.

Each country claims to have economic rights in an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of two hundred nautical miles from its coast, but that space overlaps because the sea separating China and Japan only spans three hundred and sixty nautical miles. After China discovered natural gas near the overlapping EEZ-claimed area in 1995, Japan objected to any drilling in the area due to the fact that the gas fields could extend into the disputed zone.

In April 2014, President Barack Obama became the first U.S. president to explicitly state that the disputed islands are covered by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, but the United States does not take a formal position on their ultimate sovereignty. An accidental military incident or political miscalculation by China or Japan could embroil the United States in armed hostilities with China.

Discussions between Japan and China to develop a crisis management mechanism tool began in 2012. Talks stalled when tensions peaked in 2013 after China declared the establishment of an air defense identification zone, airspace over land in which the identification, location, and control of civil aircraft is performed in the interest of national security. After Japan and China signed a four-point consensus document laying out their differences concerning the disputed islands, bilateral discussions resumed in early 2015, aiming to implement the maritime and aerial communication mechanism. After nine rounds of high-level consultations, the mechanism was launched in June 2018.

Concerns

Rising nationalist sentiments and growing political mistrust heighten the potential for conflict and hinder the capacity for peaceful resolution of the dispute. Though Chinese and Japanese leaders have refrained from forcibly establishing control over the Senkaku/Diaoyu

Islands, unauthorized action by local commanders could result in the unintended escalation of hostilities. Through treaty commitments with Japan, a military confrontation could involve the United States. To preserve relations with China and continue cooperation on various issues, the United States has an interest in de-escalating tensions.

Overview

Unresolved territorial and maritime claims continue to hinder exploration and development in the East China Sea.

The East China Sea is a semi-closed sea bordered by the Yellow Sea to the north, the South China Sea and Taiwan to the south, Japan's Ryukyu and Kyushu islands to the east, and the Chinese mainland to the west. Studies identifying potentially abundant oil and natural gas deposits have made the sea a source of contention between Japan and China, the two largest energy consumers in Asia.

The East China Sea has a total area of approximately 482,000 square miles, consisting mostly of the continental shelf and the Okinawa Trough, a back-arc basin formed about 300 miles southeast of Shanghai between China and Japan. The disputed eight Senkaku islands are to the northeast of Taiwan. The largest of the islands is two miles long and less than a mile wide.

Though barren, the islands are important for strategic and political reasons, as sovereignty over land is the basis for claims to the surrounding sea and its resources under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. China and Japan both claim sovereignty over the islands, which are under Japanese administration, preventing wide-scale exploration and development of oil and natural gas in the East China Sea.

In 2013, China was the second-largest net oil importer in the world, behind the United States, and the world's largest global energy consumer. Natural gas imports have also risen in recent years, and China became a net natural gas importer for the first time in almost two decades in 2007. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) forecasts China's oil and natural gas consumption to continue growing in the coming years, putting pressure on the Chinese government to seek new supplies to meet domestic demand (see China country analysis brief).

Japan is the third-largest net importer of crude oil behind the United States and China, as well as the world's largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), owing to the country having few domestic energy resources. Although EIA projects oil consumption in Japan to decline in the coming years, Japan will continue to rely heavily on imports to meet consumption needs (see Japan country analysis brief).

Both China and Japan are interested in extracting hydrocarbon resources from the East China Sea to help meet domestic demand. However, the unresolved territorial and maritime claims and limited evidence of hydrocarbon reserves make it unlikely that the region will become a major new source of hydrocarbon production.

Recent Developments

Tensions between China and Japan over the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu islands increase as both countries increase their military capabilities, particularly their radar and missile systems, in the region. However, China and Japan announced a new crisis communication hotline to avoid accidental clashes at air and sea in June 2018, and Japan's Ministry of Defense reported that the number of times Japan's military had to scramble jets in response to Chinese air incursions went down 41 percent in 2017.

CHAPTER 5

North Korea Crisis

Background

North Korea (officially called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) is isolated, impoverished, and a proclaimed enemy of its southern neighbor, South Korea—an important U.S. ally.

U.S. military involvement in the Korean peninsula has its roots in the Korean War of the early 1950s during the early stages of the Cold War, in which the United States supported forces in the southern part of the peninsula against communist forces in the north, who were aided militarily by China and the Soviet Union. Today, the United States is committed to defending South Korea (also known as the Republic of Korea) under the terms of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea. The United States has nearly 29,000 troops deployed in the Korean peninsula for that purpose. In addition to U.S. troops, many of South Korea's 630,000 troops and North Korea's 1.2 million troops are stationed near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), making it one of the most heavily armed borders in the world.

In violation of UN Security Council resolutions, North Korea continues overt nuclear enrichment and long-range missile development efforts. Although the scale of North Korea's uranium enrichment program remains uncertain, U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that it has enough plutonium to produce at least six nuclear weapons, and possibly up to sixty.

In September 2017, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear weapons test, its most powerful test to date. As with previous tests in 2016, it again claimed to have developed a hydrogen, or thermonuclear, bomb, which would represent further advancements in the nuclear program and the ability to build more powerful, higher-yield nuclear weapons. Since February 2017, North Korea has conducted sixteen missile tests with a total of twenty-three missiles, including a missile that it says can carry a nuclear warhead. Four of the missiles failed. In early July 2017, the country conducted its first successful test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Three weeks later, it tested another ICBM that experts believe could reach the continental United States. In August 2017, U.S. intelligence agencies determined that North Korea can miniaturize its nuclear weapons to fit inside a missile, which North Korea had already claimed it could do in March 2016. In November 2017, North Korea conducted the first test of a previously unseen missile, reportedly its largest ICBM yet, the Hwasong-15. However, North Korea has not yet demonstrated that its nuclear warheads can withstand reentry into Earth's atmosphere.

In response to the increasing frequency of missile tests, the United States has deployed an anti-missile system in South Korea. The Terminal High Altitude Area

Defense (THAAD) system is located in the Seongju region of South Korea, one hundred and fifty-five miles from the northern border.

The United States, South Korea, and Japan have each passed their own unilateral sanctions against North Korea, targeting companies involved in North Korean missile and nuclear weapons development, high-ranking individuals, and sources of income for the North Korean government. Following the second ICBM, in August 2017 the UN Security Council unanimously passed its harshest sanctions yet on North Korea, targeting some of the most important sources of revenue for the regime including North Korean exports and banning the country from sending more workers abroad. In November 2017, the United States placed North Korea back on a list of state sponsors of terrorism, a move that enables additional sanctions to be placed on the regime.

Kim Jong-un's willingness to provoke the West with aggressive behavior has exacerbated the threat from North Korea's weapons proliferation. These incitements have included firing missiles over northern Japanese islands, firing rockets across the South Korean border in August 2015, and a cyber-attack on U.S.-based Sony Pictures in December 2014.

Kim has also undertaken efforts to consolidate his power by purging high-ranking officials, including his own family members. In February 2017, Kim's half-brother was killed using a banned nerve agent in an airport in Malaysia. North Korea denies responsibility for the attack. There are reportedly between 80,000 and 120,000 political prisoners detained in North Korea. This consolidation of power may suggest that Kim, fearing fewer internal challenges to his control, is increasingly unconstrained domestically in making policy decisions.

Concerns

North Korea is a nuclear power with a complex relationship with China, and preventing both an interstate Korean war and a North Korean internal collapse are critical U.S. national security interests. Along with continued weapons and missile tests, small-scale military and cyber provocations by North Korea pose significant risks as each incident carries with it the potential for further and potentially uncontrollable escalation. Outright threats from North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un are also cause for concern, as he claims that North Korean weapons can now reach U.S. territories and even the U.S. mainland.

Recent Development

In early 2018, North and South Korea began a diplomatic rapprochement, and North Korean officials attended the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. On April 27, a week after announcing that North Korea would freeze weapons and missile testing, North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un stepped across the border into South Korea for a summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. The leaders signed a joint statement pledging to work toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and an official end to war between the two countries.

There has also been a marked change in U.S. policy toward North Korea. In June 2018, President Donald J. Trump and Kim Jong-un met in Singapore and released a joint statement about denuclearization. The leaders met again in Vietnam in late February 2019, but ended the summit early without making a deal or announcement

North Korea profile

A chronology of key events:

1945 - After World War II, Japanese occupation of Korea ends with Soviet troops occupying the north, and US troops the south.

1946 - North Korea's Communist Party, called the Korean Workers' Party, inaugurated. Soviet-backed leadership installed, including Red Army-trained Kim Il-sung.

1948 - Democratic People's Republic of Korea proclaimed, with Kim Il-sung installed as leader. Soviet troops withdraw.

1950 - South declares independence, sparking North Korean invasion and the Korean War.

1953 - Armistice ends Korean War.

1960s - Rapid industrial growth.

1968 January - North Korea captures USS Pueblo, a US naval intelligence ship.

1972 - North and South Korea issue joint statement on peaceful reunification.

1974 February - Kim Il-sung designates eldest son, Kim Jong-il as his successor.

1985 - North Korea joins the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, barring the country from producing nuclear weapons.

1986 - Research nuclear reactor in Yongbyon becomes operational.

1991 - North and South Korea join the United Nations.

1993 - International Atomic Energy Agency accuses North Korea of violating the

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and demands inspectors be given access to nuclear waste storage sites. North Korea threatens to quit Treaty.

1993 - North Korea test-fires a medium-range Rodong ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan.

1994 July - Death of Kim Il-sung. Kim Jong-il succeeds his father as leader.

1994 October - North Korea and the US sign an Agreed Framework under which Pyongyang commits to freezing its nuclear programme in return for heavy fuel oil and two light-water nuclear reactors.

Flood and famine

1996 - Severe famine follows widespread floods; 3 million North Koreans reportedly die from starvation.

1996 April - North Korea announces it will no longer abide by the armistice that ended the Korean War, and sends thousands of troops into the demilitarised zone.

1996 September - A North Korean submarine with 26 commandos and crew on board runs aground near the South Korean town of Gangneung. All but one on board is killed along with 17 South Koreans following several skirmishes.

1998 June - South Korea captures North Korean submarine in its waters. Crew found dead inside.

1998 August - North Korea fires a multistage long-range rocket which flies over Japan and lands in the Pacific Ocean,

well beyond North Korea's known capability.

Historic handshake

2000 June - Landmark inter-Korean summit takes place in Pyongyang between Kim Jong-il and South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, paving the way for the reopening of border liaison offices and family reunions. The South also grants amnesty to over 3,500 North Korean prisoners.

2002 January - US President George W Bush labels North Korea, Iraq and Iran an "axis of evil" for continuing to build "weapons of mass destruction".

2002 June - North and South Korean naval vessels wage a gun battle in the Yellow Sea. Some 30 North Korean and four South Korean sailors are killed.

2002 September - Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi makes historic visit during which North Korea admits to having abducted 13 Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s and that at least four are still alive.

Nuclear brinkmanship

2002 October - US and its key Asian allies Japan and South Korea halt oil shipments following North Korea's reported admission that it has secretly been developing a uranium-based nuclear programme.

2002 December - North Korea announces it is reactivating nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and expels UN inspectors.

2003 January - North Korea withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, marking the beginning of a series of six-party talks involving China, the Koreas, the US, Japan and Russia to try to resolve the nuclear issue.

2003 May - North Korea withdraws from 1992 agreement with South Korea to keep the Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

Six-party talks

2003 October - Pyongyang declares it has completed the reprocessing of 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods. Experts say this would give the North enough weapons-grade plutonium to develop up to six nuclear bombs within months.

2005 February - North Korea admits publicly for the first time that it has produced nuclear weapons for "self defence".

2006 July - North Korea test fires seven missiles including a long-range Taepodong-2 missile, which crashes shortly after take-off despite it reportedly having the capability to hit the US.

2006 October - North Korea conducts its first nuclear weapons test at an underground facility. The UN imposes economic and commercial sanctions on North Korea.

2007 July - North Korea shuts down its main Yongbyon reactor after receiving 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil as part of an aid package.

2007 August - South Korea announces it will send nearly 50m US dollars in aid to the North after Pyongyang makes rare appeal for flood relief.

Nuclear declaration

2007 October - Second inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang. President Roh Moo-hyun becomes the first South Korean leader to walk across the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South.

2008 March - North-South relations deteriorate sharply after new South Korean President Lee Myung-bak promises to take a harder line on North Korea.

2008 August - Kim Jong-il suffers a stroke

2008 October - North agrees to provide full access to Yongbyon nuclear site after US removes it from terrorism blacklist.

Nuclear tensions rise

2009 January - North Korea says it is scrapping all military and political deals with the South, accusing it of "hostile intent".

2009 April - North Korea launches a long-range rocket, carrying what it says is a communications satellite; its neighbours accuse it of testing long-range missile technology. Condemnation from the UN Security Council prompts North Korea to walk out of six-party talks and restart its nuclear facilities.

2009 May - North Korea carries out its second underground nuclear test. UN Security Council condemns move in June.

2009 August - North Korea frees American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee after former US President Bill Clinton facilitates their release. The pair was sentenced to 12 years hard labour for allegedly crossing the border illegally.

North makes conciliatory gestures to South, sending delegation to funeral of former President Kim Dae-jung, releasing four South Korean fishermen, and agreeing to resume family reunions.

2009 November - North Korea's state-run news agency reports the reprocessing of 8,000 spent fuel rods is complete, garnering enough weapons-grade plutonium for one to two nuclear bombs.

2010 February - Increased social unrest reportedly leads the government to relax free market restrictions after a 2009 currency revaluation wiped out many cash savings in the country.

Sinking of Cheonan

2010 March - North Korea sinks South Korean warship Cheonan near sea border.

2010 September - Kim Jong-il's youngest son Kim Jong-un is appointed to senior political and military posts, fuelling speculation of a possible succession.

2010 November - North Korea reportedly shows an eminent visiting American nuclear scientist a new secretly-built facility for enriching uranium at its Yongbyon complex. The revelation sparks alarm and anger in US, South and Japan.

Cross-border clash near disputed maritime border results in the deaths of two South Korean marines. North Korea's military insists it did not open fire first and blames the South for the incident.

Succession

2011 December - Death of Kim Jong-il. Kim Jong-un presides at funeral and takes over key posts by April.

2012 April - Rocket launch - viewed internationally as a banned test of long-range Taepodong-2 missile technology - fails. North Korea says aim was to put a satellite into orbit to mark 100th birth anniversary of Kim Il-sung.

2012 October - North Korea claims it has missiles than can hit the US mainland after South Korea and Washington announce a deal to extend the range of South Korea's ballistic missiles.

2012 December - North Korea successfully launches a "rocket-mounted satellite" into orbit following a failed attempt in April.

Third nuclear test

2013 February - UN approves fresh sanctions after North Korea stages its third nuclear test, said to be more powerful than the 2009 test.

2013 April - North Korea says it will restart all facilities at its main Yongbyon nuclear complex and briefly withdraws its 53,000-strong workforce from the South-Korean-funded Kaesong joint industrial park stalling operations at 123 South Korean factories.

2013 July - Panama impounds a North Korean ship carrying two MiG-21 jet fighters under bags of sugar. The UN later blacklists the ship's operator.

2013 September - Sole ally China bans export to North Korea of items that could be used to make missiles or nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

2013 December - Kim Jong-un's uncle, Chang Song-thaek, is found guilty of attempting to overthrow the state and is summarily executed - in a purge seen as the biggest shake-up since the death of Kim Jong-il in 2011.

2014 March - North Korea test-fires two medium-range Rodong ballistic missiles for the first time since 2009, in violation of UN resolutions and just hours after the US, South Korea and Japan met in the Netherlands for talks.

Two drones allegedly from North Korea are found in the south, sparking concerns about the north's intelligence gathering capabilities.

2014 October - Officials pay surprise visit to south, agree to resume formal talks that have been suspended since February.

2014 December - North Korea and US exchange accusations of cyber-attacks over a Sony Pictures film mocking Kim Jong-un, prompting new US sanctions the following month.

2015 August - South Korea halts loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts across the Demilitarised Zone after the North fires on them during annual US/South-Korean military exercises.

Nuclear push

2015 September - North Korea confirms it has put its Yongbyon nuclear plant - mothballed in 2007 - back into operation.

2015 December - US imposes new sanctions on North Korea over weapons proliferation, targeting the army's Strategic Rocket Force, banks and shipping companies.

2016 January - Government announcement of first hydrogen bomb test met with widespread expert scepticism.

2016 May - The ruling Workers Party holds its first congress in almost 40 years, during which Kim Jong-un is elected leader of the party.

2016 November - UN Security Council further tightens sanctions by aiming to cut one of North Korea's main exports, coal, by 60 per cent.

2017 January - Kim Jong-un says North Korea is in the final stages of developing long-range guided missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

2017 February - Kim Jong-un's estranged half-brother Kim Jong-nam is killed by a highly toxic nerve agent in Malaysia, with investigators suspecting North Korean involvement.

2017 July - Pyongyang test fires a long-range missile into the Sea of Japan, with some experts stating the missile could potentially reach Alaska.

2017 August - Tension rises in war of words with US over North Korean threat to fire ballistic missiles near US Pacific territory of Guam.

China announces it plans to implement the UN sanctions against North Korea agreed earlier in the month, banning imports of coal, minerals and sea food.

2018 January - First talks in two years between North and South Koreas begin thaw that leads to the North sending a team to the Winter Olympics in the South.

2018 April - Kim Jong-un becomes first North Korean leader to enter the South when he meets South Korean President Moon Jae-in for talks at the Panmunjom border crossing. They agree to end hostile actions and work towards reducing nuclear arms on the peninsula.

2018 June - Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump's historic meeting in Singapore seeks to end a tense decades-old nuclear stand-off.

North Korea's Nuclear Program Isn't Going Anywhere

Two Months after Singapore, Kim Clearly Has the Upper Hand.

By Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang

Two months ago, U.S. President Donald Trump held a historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore. For Trump, the key aim of the meeting was to extract a commitment from Kim to “denuclearize,” which for Trump meant Kim unilaterally surrendering his nuclear weapons. For Kim, the aim of the summit was to shake Trump’s hand as an equal and as the leader of a nuclear power. It was also an attempt to take the air out of the U.S. “maximum pressure” campaign by showing China and Russia that Kim was making a good-faith effort to negotiate with the United States. Kim had no intention of unilaterally surrendering his nuclear weapons, which he has called North Korea’s “treasured sword of justice,” and he never committed to do so.

Sixty days since that meeting, things are going well—for Kim. Although Trump is desperate to continue claiming that he “solved” the North Korean nuclear threat at Singapore, as many predicted, North Korea continues to expand its nuclear and ballistic missile arsenals and has played its diplomatic hand brilliantly. It has burned a lot of time while taking largely cosmetic steps on its nuclear weapons program, such as partially destroying its nuclear test site and engine test facility, neither of which it needs to mass-produce nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. These steps give up just enough to keep Trump at bay and allow Beijing and Moscow to provide Pyongyang with trade and energy, thereby deflating maximum pressure. How did North Korea get to this point, and where do we go from here?

The Nuclear Question

In Singapore, Kim signed his name to a declaration pledging “to work toward the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” Denuclearization, however, was the third step in the sequence of commitments, after establishing “new U.S.-DPRK relations” and building a “peace regime” with the United States. Pyongyang is now reminding Washington that sequence matters: work toward denuclearization will follow only after efforts are made toward these first two objectives, which entail a wholesale transformation in the U.S.–North Korean relationship. It should thus be unsurprising that there is little to show on the North Korean disarmament front. Whatever “complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” might mean to a lay observer, or Trump, it has a specific meaning for North Korea—a meaning that made it possible for Kim to sign on to such a statement after celebrating the so-called completion of his nuclear deterrent just months earlier.

For Kim, complete denuclearization of the peninsula would at least entail a package of concessions from the United States, including, but not limited to, removal of extended deterrence assurances from South Korea, security assurances for the North Korean regime, and even the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free zone on the Korean Peninsula. It could

also literally refer to universal disarmament—North Korea will give up its nuclear weapons when the United States does. Either way, the phrase agreed to in Singapore does not amount to unilateral disarmament and certainly not the “final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea”—U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s latest reformulation of “complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement,” which has been repeatedly rejected by North Korea since its coinage in the first decade of this century. As a good-faith gesture of its commitment to disarmament, Secretary Pompeo reportedly demanded that North Korea hand over 60 to 70 percent of its nuclear arsenal in his July follow-up trip to Pyongyang.

Unsurprisingly, the North Korean Foreign Ministry responded by publicly calling Pompeo’s demands “gangster-like” and not aligned with the spirit of Singapore. Simply put, Kim did not agree to unilaterally relinquish any of his nuclear weapons—not once.

Consider the series of leaks on the status of North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile program in the weeks since the summit. North Korean centrifuges for uranium enrichment continue to spin, as even Pompeo acknowledged during a July testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Elsewhere, one—perhaps two—Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are undergoing assembly. At a separate facility, meanwhile, North Korea continues to manufacture integrated launch vehicles for its highly responsive and flexible solid-fuel missile, the Pukguksong-2. Elsewhere still, the country’s Chemical Material Institute in Hamhung—associated with the advanced materials science necessary to develop efficient and threatening solid-fuel missiles—has expanded.

This activity does not suggest Kim is being duplicitous or is “cheating.” He never promised to stop producing nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles. In fact, quite the opposite. In his 2018 New Year’s Day address, Kim directed North Korea’s “nuclear weapons research sector and the rocket industry” to “mass-produce nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles.” It is clear now that Kim is following through on what he said he would do.

At the same time, the voluntary North Korean moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile testing and the shuttering of several test sites do not suggest an intent to denuclearize, at least not in the way that Pompeo envisions. Without proper expert verification, we will be left to guess as to how substantive these steps actually are. North Korea’s sequence of six nuclear tests, culminating in a plausibly thermonuclear design, probably makes it unnecessary to further conduct full-yield nuclear tests to expand the arsenal. In April, Kim acknowledged for the first time that North Korea was now conducting subcritical nuclear testing—tests that do not result in a nuclear yield and can therefore be performed without detection—which likely allows it to continue to improve its existing nuclear designs. Similarly, blowing several entrances to tunnels at the Punggye-ri test site is both reversible and does little to inhibit the program’s growth and improvement. Along the same lines, partially dismantling a liquid-fuel engine test stand at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station, although useful for U.S.–North Korean confidence building, is largely cosmetic. Pyongyang may already have confidence in the engine for its liquid-fuel ICBMs, and the site has no bearing on the improved solid-fuel capabilities North Korea may want to develop in the future for greater mobility and

responsiveness. (In general, liquid-fuel missiles must be fueled before use, whereas solid-fuel missiles are manufactured with their fuel built in and ready to go.)

Pyongyang's strategy

Two months out from Singapore, North Korea is pursuing a three-pronged strategy to talk with the United States.

First, Kim has focused on offering up technical concessions that have little to no bearing on his ability to build out a robust nuclear force. This is sensible for North Korea. The Trump administration has positively interpreted the Punggye-ri nuclear test site dismantlement video footage and satellite imagery showing dismantlement activity at Sohae as coming in response to Trump's Singapore initiative—even if neither concession meaningfully caps North Korea's production of new missiles and warheads.

Kim has focused on offering up technical concessions that have little to no bearing on his ability to build out a robust nuclear force.

Second, North Korea is beginning to decouple diplomacy at the leaders' level from ongoing talks at the working group level—attempting to drive a wedge between Trump and his own administration. Simply put, Kim has decided to emphasize the “spirit” at Singapore between him and Trump rather than Pompeo’s more workmanlike approach focusing on the details of North Korea’s “final, fully verified denuclearization.” North Korea seems to want to make Trump choose: continue to live in denial about disarmament and you can have your “peace win,” or succumb to your administration’s hawks and return to the high tensions of 2017.

Two recent North Korean statements support this interpretation. First, after Pompeo’s early July trip to Pyongyang, the North Korean Foreign Ministry released a statement bemoaning his “regrettable” approach in demanding unilateral disarmament. It continued that the “good personal relations forged” between Kim and Trump “would be further consolidated through the process of future dialogues.” By early August, Trump received another letter from Kim, underlining this North Korean attempt to keep momentum running at the leaders’ level. Trump referred to it as a “very nice letter” and seems to want to continue chalking Singapore up as a win. After Singapore, Kim will deal only with Trump directly. Pompeo was supposed to meet him in July when he visited Pyongyang, but Kim opted to go visit a potato farm instead.

Separately, at the ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum in Singapore in early August, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho emphasized that the Singapore statement agreed to by Trump and Kim “should not be permitted to fall prey to the American internal politics, inviting an adverse wind at odds with the intentions of the leaders.” For North Korea, the path to success is to sideline the influence of Trump’s deputies—including Pompeo and certainly National Security Adviser John Bolton—and continue granting concessions, such as the repatriation of remains, that please

Trump. But it does so under Pyongyang rules: dragging out concessions until the very last minute and then granting only partial ones, so a single concession can be milked for a long time—the steel superstructure at a test site after six weeks, the concrete stand at the site as a separate concession six months later.

Third, North Korea is successfully using its diplomatic maneuvering with the United States as further leverage to drive a wedge between the United States and South Korea in the inter-Korean peace process. As a result, much will rest on the fifth inter-Korean summit—the third between Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in—now scheduled for September.

Moon will face a dilemma. On one flank, Kim will expect a clear answer from South Korea on when the promise of Panmunjom—the economic dividends of rapprochement—will materialize, a development that cannot come about absent sanctions relief at the United Nations Security Council. Separately, Moon will be under pressure from the United States to nudge Kim toward a concrete gesture of denuclearization—one that Pompeo and Bolton can plausibly tout as progress. Since the Winter Olympics in February, it has been Moon who has conveyed North Korea’s bona fide intention to dismantle components of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. But now it’s clear that whatever Kim might have told Moon in the springtime was not destined to bloom over the summer. For North Korea’s long-standing goal of driving a wedge between Seoul and Washington, however, placing Moon in this sort of dilemma is a feature—not a bug—of the post-Singapore diplomatic process.

Can Washington recover?

As it stands, Kim clearly has the upper hand. Exploiting Trump’s desire to put Singapore in the win column and move on, North Korea is testing how long and how far it can go before Trump stops living in denial about North Korea’s expanding nuclear program. Pyongyang is unlikely to brazenly provoke Trump with a missile or nuclear test, but a test of, say, a satellite launch vehicle could reveal just how much Trump can keep the hawks in his administration quiet.

What can the United States do to recover from being on the back foot? Above all, it can focus on trying to establish a stable deterrence regime rather than pressing for immediate unilateral disarmament, ensuring that nuclear dangers on the Korean Peninsula are managed responsibly. This would be both more realistic and more effective in the long run.

What would this look like? As unlikely as it may be given Pyongyang’s ongoing opacity over its production activities, the United States could press North Korea to fully disclose its nuclear and missile arsenal and facilities and then work toward capping production, arms control, and nuclear restraint. Kim may be willing to accept this in exchange for, perhaps, modest sanctions relief and possibly a formal or informal peace regime and security guarantees backed by an adjusted military footprint. Pyongyang may not surrender any of its capabilities, but there may be a North Korean force size with which both sides are comfortable. This would mean allowing North Korea sufficient confidence in its deterrent force without allowing its unlimited growth to a point where the United States and

its allies require serious force changes of their own, which could cause the security dilemma on the peninsula to spiral out of control. The United States should further encourage North Korea to be a responsible nuclear weapons power, like India—and secure a commitment from Pyongyang to not proliferate to other countries, while focusing instead on economic growth, something North Korea has already expressed a desire and willingness to do. This, of course, requires acknowledging North Korea as a nuclear weapons power, but that is a reality no one can any longer deny.

These objectives are realistic for both sides and can reinvigorate the diplomatic effort. Although they will be difficult and time-consuming to achieve, they may also be the only way to avoid catastrophe, because the risk if the “denuclearization by denial” strategy fails is that there has been only one alternative presented by the administration: denuclearization by force.⁵

⁵ Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang, North Korea's Nuclear Program Isn't Going Anywhere, *Foreign Affairs*

CHAPTER 6

Political Instability in Iraq

Background

In 2014, the Islamic State advanced into Iraq from Syria and took over parts of Anbar province, eventually expanding control in the northern part of the country and capturing Mosul in June 2014. Former President Barack Obama authorized targeted air strikes against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria, and the United States formed an international coalition that now includes nearly eighty countries to counter the Islamic State. Regional forces—including as many as thirty thousand Iranian troops—joined the Iraqi army, local tribes, and the Kurdish Peshmerga in operations to begin retaking territory from the group, eventually recapturing Tikrit in April 2015, Ramadi in December 2015, Fallujah in June 2016, and Mosul in July 2017. The Iraqi government declared victory over the Islamic State in December 2017.

The fight to dislodge the Islamic State was exacerbated by underlying sectarian tensions in Iraq among Sunni and Shiite groups, as well as tensions between Kurdish groups in the north and the government in Baghdad, which intensified after the U.S. invasion in 2003 and the fall of Saddam Hussein. These tensions now threaten the stability of the new Iraqi government as it looks to rebuild the country and prevent a resurgence of the Islamic State.

Iraq faces significant challenges in its recovery from the war against the Islamic State. More than two million people remain internally displaced and nearly nine million remain in need of humanitarian assistance following the nearly four-year long war, and reconstruction is projected to cost at least \$88 billion. In addition to reintegrating liberated Sunni communities into the political system, the new government must also deal with the demobilization and integration of powerful Shiite militias that formed during the fight against the Islamic State into the Iraqi security forces, as well as ongoing tensions with Kurdish groups pressing for greater autonomy in the north following a failed independence referendum in October 2017.

Concerns

After leading an international coalition to regain territory taken by the Islamic State, the United States has an interest in preventing a resurgence of the militant group and supporting a stable government in Iraq. There remains a larger concern that the aftermath of the conflict and challenges of reconstruction and reintegration will lead to the breakup of Iraq and that sectarian tension will plague the region for years to come, possibly expanding into a proxy conflict among various international groups. Additionally, there are concerns that the

Islamic State, having lost control of territory in Iraq and Syria, may revert to its insurgency roots and refocus on orchestrating terrorist attacks.

Developments

In late April 2018, the U.S. military officially disbanded the command overseeing the fight against the self-proclaimed Islamic State in Iraq, declaring an end to major combat operations against the group. More than five thousand U.S. service members remain in Iraq as part of a train, advice, and assist mission bolstered by NATO troops, to help train the Iraqi military and stabilize the country.

A coalition of parties led by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr won a surprise victory in Iraq's parliamentary elections in May 2018, raising questions about Iranian influence in Baghdad and the future of U.S. troops in Iraq. In October 2018, Barham Saleh was elected president of Iraq. Saleh then named Shiite politician Adel Abdul Mahdi, a former vice president and oil minister, as prime minister and charged Mahdi with forming a government. Mahdi had emerged as the consensus candidate following months of negotiations between the two largest Shiite-led factions in parliament. In addition to overseeing the reconstruction effort, Mahdi's government faces immediate challenges in addressing protests that turned violent in the fall of 2018, particularly in the southern city of Basra.

Iraq profile

A chronology of key events:

1534 - 1918 - Region is part of the Ottoman Empire.

1534-1918 - Ottoman rule.

1917 - Britain seizes control, creates state of Iraq.

1932 - Independence, followed by coups.

1979 - Saddam Hussein becomes president.

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war.

1990 - Iraq invades Kuwait, putting it on a collision course with the international community.

1991 - Iraq subjected to sanctions, weapons inspections and no-fly zones.

2003 - US-led coalition invades, starting years of guerrilla warfare and instability.

1917 - Britain seizes Baghdad during First World War.

1920 - League of Nations approves British mandate in Iraq, prompting nationwide revolt.

1921 - Britain appoints Feisal, son of Hussein Bin Ali, the Sherif of Mecca, as king.

Independence

1932 - Mandate ends, Iraq becomes independent. Britain retains military bases.

1941 - Britain re-occupies Iraq after pro-Axis coup during Second World War.

1958 - The monarchy is overthrown in a left-wing military coup led by Abd-al-Karim Qasim. Iraq leaves the pro-British Baghdad Pact.

1963 - Prime Minister Qasim is ousted in a coup led by the pan-Arab Baath Party.

1963 - The Baathist government is overthrown, but seizes power again five years later

Baathists in power

1968 - A Baathist led-coup puts Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr in power.

1972 - Iraq nationalises the Iraq Petroleum Company.

1974 - Iraq grants limited autonomy to Kurdish region.

1979 - Saddam Hussein takes over from President Al-Bakr.

Iran-Iraq war

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war results in stalemate.

1981 June - Israeli air raid destroys Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak near Baghdad.

1988 March - Iraq attacks Kurdish town of Halabjah with poison gas, killing thousands.

First US-Iraq war

1990 - Iraq invades and annexes Kuwait, prompting what becomes known as the first Gulf War. A massive US-led military campaign forces Iraq to withdraw in February 1991.

1991 April - Iraq subjected to weapons inspection programme.

1991 Mid-March/early April - Southern Shia and northern Kurdish populations - encouraged by Iraq's defeat in Kuwait - rebel, prompting a brutal crackdown.

1991 April - UN-approved haven established in northern Iraq to protect the Kurds. Iraq ordered to end all military activity in the area.

1992 August - A no-fly zone, which Iraqi planes are not allowed to enter, is set up in southern Iraq.

1995 April - UN allows partial resumption of Iraq's oil exports to buy food and medicine in an oil-for-food programme.

1996 September - US extends northern limit of southern no-fly zone to just south of Baghdad.

1998 October - Iraq ends cooperation with UN Special Commission to oversee the Destruction of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Operation Desert Fox

1998 December - US and British Operation Desert Fox bombing campaign aims to destroy Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.

2002 September - US President George W Bush tells UN Iraq poses "grave and gathering danger".

2002 November - UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq backed by a UN resolution which threatens serious consequences if Iraq is in "material breach" of its terms.

Saddam ousted

2003 March - US-led invasion topples Saddam Hussein's government, marks start of years of violent conflict with different groups competing for power.

2003 July - US-appointed Governing Council meets for first time. Commander of US forces says his troops face low-intensity guerrilla-style war.

2003 August - Suicide truck bomb wrecks UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Car bomb in Najaf kills 125 including Shia leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim.

2003 December - Saddam Hussein captured in Tikrit.

2004 March - Suicide bombers attack Shia festival-goers in Karbala and Baghdad, killing 140 people.

2004 April-May - Photographic evidence emerges of abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US troops at Abu Ghreib prison in Baghdad.

Sovereignty and elections

2004 June - US hands sovereignty to interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

2004 August - Fighting in Najaf between US forces and Shia militia of radical cleric Moqtada Sadr.

2004 November - Major US-led offensive against insurgents in Falluja.

2005 January - Elections for a Transitional National Assembly.

2005 April - Amid escalating violence, parliament selects Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president. Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shia, is named as prime minister.

2005 May onwards - Surge in car bombings, bomb explosions and shootings: government puts civilian death toll for May at 672, up from 364 in April.

2005 June - Massoud Barzani is sworn in as regional president of Iraqi Kurdistan.

2005 October - Voters approve a new constitution, which aims to create an Islamic federal democracy.

2005 December - Iraqis vote for the first, full-term government and parliament since the US-led invasion.

Sectarian violence

2006 February onwards - A bomb attack on an important Shia shrine in Samarra unleashes a wave of sectarian violence in which hundreds of people are killed.

2006 April - Newly re-elected President Talabani asks Shia compromise candidate Nouri al-Maliki to form a new government, ending months of deadlock.

2006 June - Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, is killed in an air strike.

2006 November - Iraq and Baathist Syria restore diplomatic relations after nearly a quarter century.

Saddam executed

2006 December - Saddam Hussein is executed for crimes against humanity.

2007 January - US President Bush announces a new Iraq strategy; thousands more US troops will be dispatched to shore up security in Baghdad.

2007 August - Kurdish and Shia leaders form an alliance to support Prime Minister Maliki's government, but fail to bring in Sunni leaders.

2007 September - Controversy over private security contractors after Blackwater security guards allegedly fire at civilians in Baghdad, killing 17.

2007 December - Britain hands over security of Basra province to Iraqi forces, effectively marking the end of nearly five years of British control of southern Iraq.

2008 March - Prime Minister Maliki orders crackdown on militia in Basra, sparking pitched battles with Moqtada Sadr's Mehdi Army. Hundreds are killed.

2008 September - US forces hand over control of the western province of Anbar - once an insurgent and Al-Qaeda stronghold - to the Iraqi government. It is the first Sunni province to be returned to the Shia-led government.

Security pact approved

2008 November - Parliament approves a security pact with the United States, under which all US troops are due to leave the country by the end of 2011.

2009 June - US troops withdraw from towns and cities in Iraq, six years after the invasion, having formally handed over security duties to new Iraqi forces.

2010 March - Elections. Parliament approves new government of all major factions in December.

2010 August - Seven years after the US-led invasion, the last US combat brigade leaves Iraq.

2011 January - Radical Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr returns after four years of self-imposed exile in Iran.

US pull out

2011 December - US completes troop pull-out.

Unity government faces disarray. Arrest warrant issued for vice-president Tariq al-Hashemi, a leading Sunni politician. Sunni bloc boycotts parliament and cabinet.

2012 March - Tight security for Arab League summit in Baghdad. It is the first major summit to be held in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein. A wave of pre-summit attacks kills scores of people.

2012 November - Iraq cancels a \$4.2bn deal to buy arms from Russia because of concerns about alleged corruption within the Iraqi government.

Violence intensifies

2013 April - Sunni insurgency intensifies, with levels of violence matching those of 2008. By July the country is described as being yet again in a state of full-blown sectarian war.

2013 September - Series of bombings hits Kurdistan capital Irbil in the first such attack since 2007. The Islamic State of Iraq group says it was responding to alleged Iraqi Kurdish support for Kurds fighting jihadists in Syria.

2013 October - Government says October is deadliest month since April 2008, with 900 killed. By the year-end the UN estimates the 2013 death toll of civilians as 7,157 - a dramatic increase in the previous year's figure of 3,238.

2014 January - Islamist fighters infiltrate Falluja and Ramadi after months of mounting violence in mainly-Sunni Anbar province. Government forces recapture

Ramadi but face entrenched rebels in Falluja.

2014 April - Prime Minister Al-Maliki's coalition wins a plurality at first parliamentary election since 2011 withdrawal of US troops, but falls short of a majority.

2014 June-September - Sunni rebels led by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant surge out of Anbar Province to seize Iraq's second city of Mosul and other key towns. Tens of thousands flee amid atrocities. Kurdish forces, US and Iran assist government in repelling attacks.

Broad government

2014 September - Shia politician Haider al-Abad forms a broad-based government including Sunni Arabs and Kurds. Kurdish leadership agrees to put independence referendum on hold.

2014 December - The Iraqi government and the leadership of the Kurdish Region sign a deal on sharing Iraq's oil wealth and military resources, amid hopes that the agreement will help to reunite the country in the face of the common threat represented by Islamic State.

2015 March - Islamic State destroys Assyrian archaeological sites of Nimrud and Hatra.

Offensive against Islamic State

2015-2016 - Government and Islamic State forces fight for control of Tikrit and Anbar Province.

2016 April - Supporters of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr storm parliament building demanding new government to fight corruption and end allocation of government posts along sectarian lines.

2016 November - Parliament recognises the Shia Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) militia as part of the armed forces with full legal status.

2017 September - Kurds back independence in referendum staged by Kurdish regional government. Baghdad imposes punitive measures.

2017 November - Government forces with Shia and Kurdish allies drive Islamic State out of all but a few redoubts.

Army offensive drives back Kurdish forces in a move aimed at halting the regional government's moves towards an independent Kurdistan.

2018 May - Parliamentary elections. The political bloc of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr wins most votes.

2018 October - Parliament elects veteran Kurdish politician Barham Salih as president. He appoints Shia former minister Adel Abdul Mahdi as prime minister, with the support of the Shia majority of MPs.

The Islamic State

With Iraq weakened and a civil war raging in Syria, it's unclear whether local forces and a U.S.-led international coalition can roll back the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

By Zachary Laub

The self-proclaimed Islamic State is a militant Sunni movement that has conquered territory in western Iraq, eastern Syria, and Libya, from which it has tried to establish the caliphate, claiming exclusive political and theological authority over the world's Muslims. Its state-building project, however, has been characterized more by extreme violence than institution building. Widely publicized battlefield successes in 2014 attracted thousands of foreign recruits, while insurgent groups and terrorists acting in its name carried out attacks ranging from the United States to South Asia.

The group's momentum in Iraq and Syria withered in 2016 as local forces, backed by a U.S.-led coalition, ousted Islamic State fighters from much of the territory they controlled. But major cities, including Mosul and Raqqa, remain in ISIS hands. In both Iraq and Syria there are few signs of the political progress that, analysts say, would likely be needed to sustain military gains. Meanwhile, across the region, and as far away as Europe and the United States, followers of the Islamic State have often eluded counterterrorism agencies, raising the possibility that the group will continue to motivate attacks even if it's pushed out of Iraq and Syria.

What are the Islamic State's origins?

The group traces its lineage to the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, when the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi aligned his militant group, Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad, with al-Qaeda, making it al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

Zarqawi's organization took aim at U.S. forces, their international allies, and local collaborators. It sought to draw the United States into a sectarian civil war by attacking Shias and their holy sites to provoke them to retaliate against Sunni civilians.

Zarqawi was killed in a U.S. air strike in 2006. U.S.-backed Awakening councils, or Sons of Iraq, further weakened AQI as Sunni tribesmen reconciled with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government. Zarqawi's successors rebranded AQI as the Islamic State of Iraq, and later, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). The name refers to a territory that roughly corresponds with the Levant, or eastern Mediterranean, reflecting the group's broadened ambitions with the onset of the 2011 uprising in Syria.

The Islamic State's leader, the self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, spent time in U.S.-run prisons in Iraq. Cells organized within them, along with remnants of former

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's ousted Arab-nationalist Ba'ath party, make up some of the Islamic State's ranks. Excluded from the Iraqi state since occupying U.S. authorities instituted de-Ba'athification in 2003, they see collaboration with the Islamic State as a way back to power.

How has the Islamic State expanded?

The group has capitalized on Sunni disenfranchisement in both Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, the Sunni minority was sidelined from national politics after 2003, first by the U.S.-led occupation leadership and then by politicians from Iraq's Shia majority. Prime Minister Maliki cemented his power as U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq in 2010 by excluding Sunni political rivals and providing Shias disproportionate benefits. The Awakening councils effectively came to an end after he reneged on his pledge to integrate many of their militiamen into the national security forces and arrested some of their leaders. In 2013, the security forces put down broad-based protests calling for better governance, contributing to the Sunni community's sense of persecution.

Maliki also purged the officer corps of potential rivals, which, combined with desertion and corruption, contributed to the Iraqi military's collapse as Islamic State militants overran Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, in June 2014.

In Syria, the civil war that emerged from a broad-based uprising against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011, which pitted the ruling minority Alawis, a heterodox Shia sect, against the Sunni majority, gave the group new opportunities to expand. Its early battlefield successes attracted militant Sunnis from across the region to join a jihad against the regime. As extremists came to dominate territory in Syria's north and east, Assad claimed it validated his argument that only his government could mount an effective campaign against "terrorists"—a term he has applied to opposition figures of all stripes.

The northern Syrian city of Raqqa is often cited as the Islamic State's de facto capital. There, the group has established some new institutions (e.g., judicial, police, economic) and coopted others (e.g., education, health, and infrastructure) to provide residents a modicum of services and consolidate its control over the population.

What is the Islamic State's relationship with al-Qaeda?

The group became an al-Qaeda franchise by 2004, but has since broken with the organization founded by Osama bin Laden and become its rival. Their split reflects strategic and ideological differences. Al-Qaeda focused on attacking the United States and its Western allies, whom it held responsible for bolstering Arab regimes it considered apostate, like those in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, rather than capturing territory and establishing a state. Bin Laden, like Baghdadi, envisaged the establishment of the caliphate, but he considered it a goal to be left to future generations.

In 2005, bin Laden deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri castigated AQI's Zarqawi for indiscriminately attacking civilians, particularly Shias. Zawahiri believed that such violence

would alienate Sunnis from their project. That was indeed the case, as many Sunnis allied with the government during the Awakening movement.

A more thorough rupture came after the start of Syria's uprising. Zawahiri, who succeeded bin Laden as al-Qaeda's chief, privately ruled that the emergent Syrian al-Qaeda affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra, remain independent from Baghdadi's ISI. Baghdadi publicly rebuffed the ruling.

Nusra, which claimed to have cut its ties with al-Qaeda in August 2016, is composed mostly of Syrian members and is enmeshed among opposition forces; the Islamic State, by contrast, is primarily composed of foreigners, analysts say.

How is the Islamic State financed?

Oil extraction reportedly constituted the Islamic State's largest source of income. The group sold crude oil pumped from Iraqi and Syrian wells to local truckers and middlemen, netting an estimated \$1 million to \$3 million a day. By selling well below market price, traders were incentivized to take on the risk of such black-market deals.

The Islamic State is believed to extort taxes in territories under its control, and Christians and other religious minorities who have not fled face an additional tax. Protection rackets bring in revenue while building the allegiance of some tribesmen. Trafficking in antiquities also contributes to the Islamic State's coffers.

Ransom payments provided the Islamic State upwards of \$20 million in 2014, including large sums for kidnapped European journalists and other captives, according to the U.S. Treasury. The United States maintains a no-concessions policy, at odds with its European counterparts.

U.S.-led forces have targeted the group's revenue streams: In a rare raid on Syrian territory in May 2015, U.S. Special Operations Forces killed an Islamic State official believed to have managed the group's oil and gas operations, and U.S. air strikes targeted oil infrastructure, including middlemen's trucks. With its finances strained, the group in 2016 reportedly slashed its members' wages and cut social services, which, the U.S. government says, is a source of diminishing morale.

Does the Islamic State pose a threat beyond Iraq and Syria?

The Islamic State's claim to be a caliphate has raised concerns that its ambitions are not bound by the borders of Iraq and Syria. Insurgent groups in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen have sworn allegiance to Baghdadi. In 2015, the group seized territory in Libya that spanned more than 150 miles of Mediterranean coastline between Tripoli and Benghazi.

The conflicts in Syria and Iraq have attracted foreign fighters by the thousands. Middle Eastern and Western intelligence agencies have raised concern that their citizens who

have joined the fighting in Iraq and Syria will return to their home countries to carry out attacks. U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper estimated in February 2015 that more than thirteen thousand foreign fighters joined Sunni Arab antigovernment extremist groups, including the Islamic State, in Syria, and that more than 3,400 of more than twenty thousand foreign Sunni militants hailed from Western countries. (Estimates of the group's total forces have ranged from around thirty thousand to more than a hundred thousand; U.S. special envoy Brett McGurk said in June 2016 congressional testimony that the group comprised some eighteen to twenty-two thousand fighters, down from a high of thirty-three thousand in 2014.)

Even more worrisome to Western intelligence is the Islamic State's call on its followers worldwide to carry out attacks in Europe and the United States. Following an attack on an LGBT nightclub in Florida in June 2016, FBI Director James Comey remarked on the scale of the counterterrorism challenge: "We are looking for needles in a nationwide haystack, but we are also called up to figure out which pieces of hay might someday become needles."

Some analysts say the Islamic State hopes such attacks will draw Western countries into a protracted military conflict, perhaps to fulfill an apocalyptic prophesy. Two of the suicide bombers in the November 2015 attacks in Paris smuggled themselves into Europe through Greece, disguised among refugees. This has helped fuel the anti-migrant backlash across Europe.

Turkey shares a five-hundred-mile border with Syria, through which foreign fighters have entered and exited the conflict, and a U.S.-backed campaign to retake the last stretch of border territory occupied by the Islamic State is underway. It too has been exposed to the conflict as major attacks in Ankara and Istanbul were attributed to the Islamic State.

What is the U.S.-led coalition doing?

President Barack Obama's administration has assembled a coalition of some sixty countries to "degrade and ultimately defeat" the Islamic State. Privately, it has expressed frustration that many of these countries, particularly Sunni Arab states, have contributed little more than rhetorical support. As of late July 2016, the coalition has carried out more than 14,093 air strikes, 77 percent of them by U.S. forces, in Iraq and Syria, the Pentagon said.

The administration has cited the post-9/11 Authorization for the Use of Military Force and 2002 Iraq war resolution as the domestic legal justification for this open-ended conflict. Some legal scholars are dubious, however, particularly as U.S. military operations have expanded from Iraq to Syria and Libya.

In Iraq, the United States has deployed more than three thousand uniformed personnel, built up counterterrorism units of the Iraqi army, and armed the Kurdistan Regional Government's paramilitary, the peshmerga, in a bid to wrest the Islamic State from major cities and strategic points. Ramadi fell in December 2015 and Fallujah in June 2016,

and in August 2016 Iraqi forces were gearing up to take Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city. But with much of the Iraqi army still in disarray, Shia militias known as Popular Mobilization Forces have done much of the fighting, raising concerns that Sunni residents of cities that have been liberated from the Islamic State will find, in its place, forces at least as hostile to them. Rights groups allege that these militias have evicted, disappeared, and killed residents of Sunni and mixed neighborhoods.

In Syria, meanwhile, the Pentagon began a three-year program in early 2015 to train and equip five thousand "appropriately vetted elements of the Syrian opposition" a year to attack Islamic State forces—but not the Assad regime and its allies. But the Obama administration abandoned the \$500 million program in October 2015 after it was revealed to have yielded just "four or five" fighters in Syria. In its place, the White House said it would adopt a looser approach, screening just commanders rather than individual fighters.

What dynamics are at work in Syria?

Regional geopolitics have complicated U.S. efforts in Iraq and Syria. The YPG, a Syrian Kurdish militia, has proven to be one of the forces most effective at rolling back the Islamic State, at least within areas claimed by Kurds. But Turkey, which fears the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish entity in territory contiguous with its own Kurdish-majority regions, says the YPG is an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which the United States, EU, and Turkey all consider a terrorist organization.

The formation of a joint Arab-Kurdish force, the Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), gained President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's backing for operations to retake Manbij, the last pocket of ISIS-controlled territory on the Syria-Turkey border, which has served as a transit point for ISIS to move people and goods on to Raqqa. The United States has armed the SDF and embedded special operations forces with it.

Russia launched air strikes in Syria in late 2015. Though it claimed to be targeting extremist groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, it has largely targeted Syrian opposition forces, helping Assad recapture lost territory as international negotiations were underway. Iran remains committed to the Assad regime's survival, while the Gulf Arab states are more interested in containing Iran than fighting the Islamic State.

The U.S. objective is a negotiated transition that would see Assad gone, while maintaining the structure of the state and Syria's territorial integrity, but the diplomatic process has deadlocked, and the civil war, which has enabled the Islamic State to carve out territory, shows no sign of abating. In Iraq as well, military gains have not been matched by political progress. Maliki's successor, Haider al-Abadi, assumed office in September 2014, pledging to practice a more inclusive brand of politics, but his government has been wracked by protests over widespread corruption; and in many Sunni-majority areas, Shia militias are the most visible face of the government.⁶

⁶ Zachary Laub, The Islamic State, *Foreign Affairs*

CHAPTER 7

Islamist Militancy in Pakistan

Background

After former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's efforts to negotiate a peace agreement with the TTP unraveled and militants attacked an international airport in Karachi, the government launched an offensive in June 2014 against militant strongholds in North Waziristan.

The TTP responded to the offensive with several attacks, including a December 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar that killed nearly one hundred fifty people, mostly schoolchildren, in the deadliest terrorist attack in Pakistan's history.

In response, Pakistani political parties agreed on a comprehensive National Action Plan to combat terrorism and extremist ideology across the country, and Sharif lifted a death penalty moratorium to allow the execution of convicted terrorists. After nearly two years, in 2016 the Pakistani military declared that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) had been cleared of militants. Nearly five hundred Pakistani soldiers died in the clearing operations, which killed more than 3,500 militants overall.

Despite the government's declaration of success and a decline in attacks in recent years, the TTP and other militants continue to operate and carry out major attacks. These include a March 2016 suicide bombing in a park in Lahore that targeted families celebrating Easter, killing at least seventy people and wounding over three hundred, and an August 2016 suicide bombing of a hospital in Quetta that targeted a gathering of lawyers, killing more than seventy-five people and injuring nearly one hundred.

The military, which has historically been dominant over civilian governments, is believed to still be providing support to the Haqqani network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and other militant proxy groups that often collaborate with the TTP.

The past year has brought a shift in the security relationship between the United States and Pakistan, as the Donald J. Trump administration has moved to suspend security assistance to Pakistan over a perceived continuing unwillingness to target militants who receive sanctuary in Pakistani territory and carry out attacks in Afghanistan. More than \$800 million in security assistance has been suspended or redirected in 2018, and the United States has cut off access for Pakistani military officers to U.S. military training and education programs, in an effort to pressure the Pakistani government to change policy. The shift in policy comes as international pressure on Pakistan to tackle militancy and terrorism grows; in June 2018 the Financial Action Task Force placed Pakistan on the so-called "grey list" of countries not doing enough to stop money laundering and terrorist financing.

Attacks claimed by the Islamic State have raised concerns over its growing presence and influence in Pakistan. Many of the militants fighting under the Islamic State's banner in Afghanistan are believed to be former TTP militants who fled across the border, a phenomenon that has raised fears of an Islamic State-inspired campaign of violence inside Pakistan.

Concerns

The withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan could increase regional instability by allowing militants from Pakistan to establish a safe haven in a fragile Afghanistan. Additionally, acute instability in Pakistan has security implications for neighboring countries Afghanistan and India. The TTP is closely allied with the Afghan Taliban in its battle against Afghan troops, and India fears that anti-state and state-sponsored Pakistani militants could carry out cross-border terrorist attacks. Moreover, the vulnerability of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal to attack or theft by nonstate actors remains a major concern for U.S. and Indian policymakers.

Developments

Pakistan continues to face significant threats to its internal security from factions of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant groups, including an affiliate of the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Although attacks have slowed in recent years, the TTP and sectarian militant groups continue to target security forces and civilian targets.

In June 2018, the leader of the TTP, Mullah Fazlullah, was killed in a drone strike inside Afghanistan; Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud was named the new leader of the umbrella organization days later.

In July 2018, Pakistan held national elections where cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan became prime minister. Khan received criticism for embracing controversial blasphemy laws, an issue pushed to the forefront of the election by the participation of several banned militant groups—including one led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, a designated global terrorist—operating as political parties to contest seats. The TTP targeted campaign rallies and polling places in the lead-up to the elections, including an attack in Mastung in June 2018 that killed more than one hundred forty people and wounded nearly two hundred others.

Terrorism Watchdog Castigates Pakistan over Aid to Militants

Maria Abi-Habib

Feb. 22, 2019

Pakistan is not doing enough to curb terrorism financing and money laundering, a global financial watchdog said Friday in a stern warning that reflects renewed scrutiny of the country's links to militant groups.

The Financial Action Task Force, a watchdog based in Paris, hinted that Pakistan could face consequences — like being placed on the group's blacklist — if it had not taken specific steps by May.

Even remaining on the watchdog's gray list would have consequences, complicating Pakistan's ability to raise money on international markets at a time when its economy is sputtering and it is in dire need of loans. A blacklisting could lead to sanctions by Western countries, including the United States.

The warning comes a week after India threatened to retaliate against Pakistan for a bombing that killed at least 40 Indian soldiers in Kashmir. The militant group that claimed responsibility, Jaish-e-Muhammad, or Army of Muhammad, operates in Pakistan, where it raises money under aliases, according to American and Indian officials.

Khurram Hussain, a columnist with Dawn, Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper, said the statement by the Financial Action Task Force was its "most strident one" in 10 years.

"It seems like somebody somewhere has run out of patience with Pakistan, and FATF is channeling it," he said. "Previous governments have tried to take the same actions to list these groups as terrorist entities and limit their activity but have failed to do so."

The watchdog's statement named Jaish-e-Muhammad specifically — a rare callout for the group — as well as the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which India and the United States accuse of orchestrating the 2008 Mumbai attacks that killed over 160 people.

The statement provided a list of actions that it sought from Pakistan by May, accusing local law enforcement of failing to investigate or crack down on terrorists.

Pakistan has not shown a "proper understanding" of the risks that terrorist groups pose and needs to undertake "remedial actions and sanctions" against them, the statement added.

It went on to demand that the Pakistani authorities identify cash couriers and prevent them from moving illicit money out of the country; that effective action is taken against

groups that are prosecuted for financing terrorists; and that suspect groups are denied resources to launder or raise money for terrorist activities.

Pakistan was put on the watchdog's gray list last year for failing to act against Lashkar-e-Taiba and its suspected political front, Jamaat-ud-Dawa. This week, fearing its status on the gray list would be renewed, Pakistan renewed its bans on Jamaat-ud-Dawa and another affiliate, which had lapsed earlier. But the task force went ahead with its rebuke hours later, signaling that the move was too little, too late.

Although last year Pakistan initially seized some assets of the groups believed to be fronts for Lashkar-e-Taiba, officials' efforts waned, and the groups remain active.

Pakistan's finance minister responded Friday on Twitter to the unusually harsh statement by the Financial Action Task Force, saying that the group's board had kept Pakistan on the gray list "despite hectic efforts and lobbying to get us black listed."

But the post by the finance minister, Asad Umar, may make matters worse by failing to express any commitment to the watchdog's targets.

The United Nations and the United States Treasury Department consider Jaish-e-Muhammad a terrorist organization. Several moves by the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions on the group's leader, Masood Azhar, have failed because of vetoes by China, an ally of Pakistan.

But on Thursday night the Security Council, including China, condemned the Jaish-e-Muhammad attack on Indian soldiers in a forceful statement.

Sensing growing pressure over Jaish-e-Muhammad's activities in Pakistan, the Interior Ministry said on Friday evening that the government had taken control of the group's headquarters in Punjab Province.

But if past actions are any guide, new steps like this one are likely to be temporary and cosmetic. Pakistan's military denies accusations by the United States that it protects certain terrorist groups, using them as tools to achieve foreign and domestic policy objectives.

The United Nations is expected in coming weeks to advance a resolution to blacklist Mr. Azhar, the Jaish-e-Muhammad leader, though last week China ignored Indian demands to renew efforts to penalize him. Targeting Mr. Azhar specifically would make it harder for the group to raise funds in Pakistan.

The financial task force will make a final decision this year on whether to remove Pakistan from its gray list, place it on its blacklist or remove it altogether.

Shaping a New Peace in Pakistan's Tribal Areas

Pakistan is moving to bring its Federally Administered Tribal Areas into the constitutional order. But rights remain severely restricted in the borderlands, threatening deeper popular alienation. To stop militants from stepping in, the government should lift its draconian interim regulations and deliver needed services.

Brussels, 20 August 2018

On 24 May, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Reforms Bill, merging FATA, a mountainous belt along the Afghan border, with adjacent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Previously, the federal government had directly administered FATA through colonial-era laws that deprived locals of rights and subjected them to harsh punishment. Inept and repressive governance, together with the Pakistani military's use of FATA as a haven for jihadist proxies, have long made those areas vulnerable to militancy and conflict. By formally incorporating FATA into Pakistan's constitutional mainstream, the Reforms Bill took a major step forward. But more must be done to stabilise the tribal borderlands. In particular, the newly elected governments in Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, led by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, should establish a legal and administrative system that delivers justice and services. The military should lift arbitrary restrictions on movement within, and outside access to, FATA so that elected representatives, civil society groups and the media can monitor progress.

Under the 1901 Frontier Crimes Regulations, the political agent, the senior-most federal bureaucrat in each of FATA's seven tribal agencies, wielded unchecked executive, judicial and revenue authority. Article 247 of the constitution gave the president discretion to "make regulations" with respect to FATA's "peace and good governance", which denied the judiciary jurisdiction and circumscribed the national legislature's authority. The FATA Reforms Bill, in essence the 31st amendment to the constitution, abolished this provision, and in his final executive decision under the article, President Mamnoon Hussain repealed the 1901 regulations.

FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa followed years of military operations against Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan) militants. Those operations broke TTP's hold over most of the tribal belt but also displaced millions of residents, destroyed homes and ruined livelihoods.

Security in those areas has improved but remains fragile. Afghan insurgents, including Afghan Taliban factions and allied militants, maintain sanctuaries in FATA from which they conduct operations in Afghanistan. Human rights abuses, particularly enforced disappearances, continue, and the military still controls virtually every aspect of public life.

"The territorial merger, the abolition of Article 247 and the extension of judicial oversight create new opportunities to make FATA truly part of Pakistan."

FATA's civil society, having long chafed at Islamabad's and local elites' misrule and at the military's repression, has increasingly found its voice. The youth-led Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement flowered in early 2018, gaining strong civic support and demanding an end to militancy in FATA and to the military's abuse of power, including enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, as well as curfews and other restrictions on fundamental freedoms. These demands now shape public discourse in the tribal belt, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and among Pashtuns countrywide. They played a major role in pressuring the civil and military leadership toward reform, culminating in the passage of the 31st amendment.

The territorial merger, the abolition of Article 247 and the extension of judicial oversight create new opportunities to make FATA truly part of Pakistan, ending its status as a no-man's land. Yet the military's desire to use this strategic territory as a haven for militant proxies and the civil bureaucracy's reluctance to relinquish the power it enjoys from the status quo remain obstacles to reform. So, too, do the economic and political prerogatives of the bureaucracies' local clientele, FATA's self-serving tribal elite. Moreover, former President Hussain, when repealing the 1901 regulations, simultaneously promulgated the FATA Interim Governance Regulation 2018, which resembles the cancelled regulations in all but name, empowering unaccountable civil and military bureaucracies and denying residents civil liberties and protections.

Tehreek-i-Insaf, which under Imran Khan's leadership came to power in July 2018 elections and will form both the national and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial governments, has long been a strong advocate of FATA's mainstreaming. It can now carry out that agenda, and by doing so reduce militancy and conflict risks and win local hearts and minds. The provincial government, in its very first sitting, should repeal the interim governance framework. It and the federal parliament should set up special bipartisan committees that consult local stakeholders in prioritising rehabilitation and reconstruction needs. These committees should also hold public hearings, including on human rights violations and other abuses of power.

Both federal and provincial governments should demand – and the superior judiciary should ensure – unimpeded access to the tribal belt, including to internment centers, for parliamentarians, civil society groups, human rights defenders and media outlets. The military authorities should lift all restrictions on residents' movements in and out of FATA. The federal government should give the judiciary the finances it requires to establish the necessary infrastructure in FATA. Since Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 2017 police act applies to the tribal belt, the provincial government should ensure that it has the resources it needs to exercise its additional responsibilities, while disbanding the tribal levies, the official tribal militias under the FATA's administration's control, and incorporating their personnel into the regular police force.

Peace in FATA: Real or Imagined?

A week after an 8 June 2014 jihadist attack on Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, the Pakistan military launched an operation called Zarb-e-Azb (Quick Strike) in North Waziristan. Following earlier operations that ostensibly had cleared other parts of the tribal belt, Zarb-e-Azb's purpose was to eradicate the last vestiges of militant activity in FATA.

"The tribal areas are no longer the hub for transnational jihadists that they were some years ago."

Pakistani state itself).

In principle, it would not distinguish between "good" militants (those backed by the Pakistani military establishment, including Afghan Taliban factions and other groups fighting U.S. and Afghan government troops across the border) and "bad" (those, like the TTP, that had turned against the

Even critics of the military operations recognize that they have disrupted TTP networks in FATA. The tribal areas are no longer the hub for transnational jihadists that they were some years ago, when militants from across the world rubbed shoulders with their Pakistani counterparts in training camps. Yet the military has neither killed nor captured all major TTP leaders. Some relocated to Afghanistan. Others moved to nearby Khyber Pakhtunkhwa districts, such as Tank and Dera Ismail Khan, and revived their networks there. These areas have seen increased extortion of local businesses, killing of leaders seen as anti-TTP and other perceived opponents, and kidnapping for ransom. Other TTP factions with close ties to the Afghan Taliban, such as those led by Gul Bahadur and Sadiq Noor, appear to have moved their militias from North to South Waziristan.

Well-informed sources contend that Afghan militants, too, first relocated to other parts of the tribal belt, such as Kurram, whence they had easy access to Afghanistan's Khost province, and have now returned to sanctuaries in North Waziristan.

"The Haqqani network [an Afghan Taliban faction long based in FATA] owns property worth billions of rupees in North Waziristan", said Latif Afridi, a senior lawyer and Awami National Party leader from Khyber. "They started there and are still there. They only temporarily relocated to FATA's Kurram and Hangu [an adjoining Khyber Pakhtunkhwa district]".

To consolidate control, the military has relied on "peace committees". In reality, these are pro-state militias, comprising what many FATA activists refer to as "local thugs" that have fuelled conflict (as discussed below). While the military disbanded some of these militias due to local opposition, those that remain continue to target opponents and indulge in criminal activity, including drug and arms smuggling, with few restrictions.

That militant networks have revived is evident in the higher rates of violence and casualties in the past year. A FATA-focused NGO noted a 16 per cent rise in militant attacks and a 37 per cent rise in the number of casualties in 2017, compared to the year before. Many

such attacks have taken place in tribal agencies that the military had supposedly rid of militants, such as Mohmand and Bajaur. Kurram, with its large Shiite population, was particularly volatile, with at least 115 people killed in three attacks in the first six months of 2017 – two of them targeting Shiites.

Attacks have continued this year: in January, five civilians were killed in a bombing in Kurram; in February, a military convoy was attacked in North Waziristan; the same month in Bajaur, an anti-Taliban leader was killed. Militants have also resumed targeting girls' schools and threatening families who send their daughters to school.

This increase in militant activity is no justification for stalling reform. In fact, the opposite is true: the best means of countering militancy would be for the newly empowered judiciary to enforce the law and the newly authorised Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police to replace blunt military operations with targeted, intelligence-based counter-insurgency efforts. Until the judiciary and police can fully exercise the prerogatives the 31st amendment grants them, the military should heed the concerns of a public deeply alienated by years of heavy-handed military operations.

For FATA inhabitants, what peace there is as the result of those operations has come at considerable cost. Many in FATA are angered by curfews, fences that hinder freedom of movement and a proliferation of check posts. Attacks by TTP factions based in Afghanistan on targets in Pakistan have raised tensions with Kabul and been used by the military to justify the repeated closure of key border crossings. These closures impede the cross-border trade that accounts for most of FATA's economic activity. "An already impoverished people, ravaged by years of war, instead of getting support and relief are further trounced into extinction without any remedial measures", wrote a former North Waziristan political agent and author of a book on FATA. "Without alternate economic activity, the government is pushing an already desperate FATA into an inconsolable situation". In Operation Zarb-e-Azb's aftermath, residents were even prevented from travelling freely to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "They were blocked on both sides, north to Afghanistan and down country", said the former North Waziristan political agent.

The military should heed the concerns of a public deeply alienated by years of heavy-handed military operations.

Military operations had displaced hundreds of thousands in the tribal belt.

Most have returned, but to destroyed homes and livelihoods. Although Islamabad announced the establishment of funds for cash assistance to returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) as compensation for damaged homes, reconstruction and rehabilitation, little has been spent on the ground. Marketplaces resemble ghost towns, their infrastructure destroyed and inventories looted, allegedly by soldiers as well as militants. The lack of drinking water, shelter, electricity, education and health care has often prompted IDPs to again relocate to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and elsewhere. Soldiers continue to occupy homes and schools across the tribal belt, even in relatively safe areas such as Khyber Agency's Tirah valley.

Rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and custodial deaths continue, as does collective punishment. For example, after a December 2017 killing of two soldiers, the military imposed a curfew in North Waziristan's Hamzoni town, preventing access to hospitals and forcing women and children out of their homes during search operations. These and other heavy-handed measures sparked local protests.

A North Waziristan resident said, "They beat men, women and children and ask, 'Who does this?'"

The 2011 Actions (in Aid of Civil Power) Regulation, which remains in force in FATA, provides for internment centers to hold a suspect "in order to incapacitate him from committing any offence or further offences", or if internment is "expedient for peace in the defined area".

There are at least seventeen known internment centers in FATA and other designed tribal areas, the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The military has rebuffed parliamentary committees' efforts to gain access. The Peshawar high court maintained a list of some 2,000 missing persons on its website, but removed it in early 2018, possibly under military pressure since civil society mobilisation on the issue (discussed below) was increasing. Activists believe the number is significantly higher. According to a well-informed senior Pashtun journalist, locals say, "knowing that your son is dead at least gives you closure. When your son is missing, it's as if he is dying every day".

Mobilizing FATA's Civil Society

Given the constraints on freedoms of expression and association, lack of legal recourse, widespread insecurity and the military's intrusive monitoring, FATA's civil society has long struggled to articulate public demands.

Maliks, or tribal elders, also obstruct political and social mobilization. Appointed by the federal bureaucracy, and often enjoying only limited local support, they are a main beneficiary of FATA's status quo, including from the flourishing black economy.

But FATA's old guard – the civil and military bureaucracies and the *maliks* – now face their biggest challenge from a new generation that wants change and can mobilize society, as demonstrated by growing support for the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement.

This group has its origins in the Mehsud Tahafuz Movement, set up in 2016 by a student leader, Manzoor Ahmed, from South Waziristan.

That movement initially protested against both the persecution of Ahmed's Mehsud tribe, which had borne the brunt of collective punishment (top TTP leaders were Mehsuds), and against discrimination suffered by Pashtuns more broadly, particularly those from FATA, at the hands of state institutions and businesses. Ethnic profiling of Pashtuns extends beyond FATA. In February 2018, for example, the Punjab government issued a notification "asking

the population to keep an eye on suspicious individuals who look like Pashtuns or are from [FATA], and to report any suspicious activity by them”.

“Conflict-induced displacement has played a role in mobilizing FATA civil society.”

A turning point for FATA’s youth activism was the Karachi police’s 13 January 2018 extrajudicial killing of Naqeebulah Mehsud, a North Waziristan resident and aspiring model on social media with no links to terrorism. The killing sparked national outrage. Thousands of Pashtuns participated in an Islamabad sit-in led by the Mehsud Tahafuz Movement, demanding accountability

for Naqeebulah’s murder, and a halt to extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, curfews, locals’ humiliation at checkposts and restrictions on freedoms, as well as an end to militancy in FATA. They highlighted the destruction of civilian properties during and after military operations, the hardships faced by returning IDPs, and deaths caused by unexploded ordnance and mines. Given the fervent response among Pashtuns nationwide, the movement changed its name to the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, with Ahmed adopting the moniker “Pashteen”. Since then, it has held massive rallies, despite police raids and arrests of activists, in all four provincial capitals and in hard-hit Pashtun-majority areas such as Swat.

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement does not focus directly on FATA reform. “There are other organisations and forums for FATA reforms, but what the movement is raising no one was discussing”, said Mohsin Dawar, then a top movement leader and Peshawar high court lawyer.

“Enforced disappearances are not just a FATA issue, they are also an issue in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and people are getting picked up in Swat and Bannu”. Yet by highlighting the military’s role in the tribal belt and demanding an end to its use of jihadist proxies, the movement is pointing to the major impediments to stabilising those areas. As a common slogan at the movement’s demonstrations goes: “*Yeh kesi dehshatgardi hai, gis key pechey wardi hai* (roughly translated, “What kind of terrorism is this, that has the man in uniform behind it?”). “All this generation has seen is war”, said Pashteen. “Unlike the *maliks*, it is not afraid to confront military officials”.

The movement’s leadership comprises educated urban youth from across the country and young professionals from FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Even before it gathered steam, FATA’s youth groups, including women, were demanding the region’s merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with full political and constitutional rights, and challenging the authority and legitimacy of *maliks* perceived to be “pro-Frontier Crimes Regulation”. Conflict-induced displacement has played a role in mobilising FATA civil society. Some displaced FATA youth formed or joined community-based organisations. Women IDPs participated more in the socio-economic mainstream, obtaining national identity cards and opening bank accounts for the first time to benefit from assistance packages. Many now demand access to health care, skills training and credit so that they can earn independent livelihoods and participate in local public life.

The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement's core leadership of around twenty is all men, but Pashtun women participate in its rallies in large numbers. A Pashtun woman activist said, "When the elders said that the movement is dishonouring the [Pashtun] culture by having women at the rallies, we said, 'what about the dishonour to the culture by the [Pakistani] Taliban and the military?'" Another prominent (male) activist said, "What about women who are humiliated at checkposts and thrown out of their homes – was that not dishonourable?"

A movement rally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Swat district was well attended by women because, according to Sana Ejaz, an activist who canvassed women to participate, "so many of them have sons and husbands missing. [There are many] conflict-affected households, and that had a big impact on women". In a widely circulated speech during a March rally in Balochistan, a woman activist implored women to demand their rights and "and rise shoulder to shoulder with the men. Only then will this national movement go forward".

Technology, too, plays an important role. "In the old days, a person would write about a convention and activists would photocopy it and pass it around", said movement leader Dawar. "Now, everyone is connected. Without social media, the movement would have been nothing".

With videos of speeches circulating on social media, amid a military-imposed media blackout of movement coverage, one affiliated activist described the rallies as "alternative reporting, from the stage".

"Military leaders have accused the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement of being backed by anti-Pakistan countries and forces, an implicit reference to India."

The military has responded with a mix of coercion and attempts at compromise, including allowing use of the national identity card for travel to and within FATA, as opposed to the Watan card (identification cards for IDP compensation), as was previously required; closing some check posts, removing some unexploded ordnance and demining some areas; releasing around 300 detainees from internment centers; and engaging in dialogue with the protesters. The movement's leaders and activists believe that the military expected that the release of a few hundred detainees would placate it. But accounts of mistreatment of those released have fuelled demands for an end to enforced disappearances.

With the movement gaining strength, military leaders have accused it of being backed by anti-Pakistan countries and forces, an implicit reference to India. In April, army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa said the military would not allow "engineered protests" to reverse the gains of its counter-terrorism operations in FATA and cautioned the nation not to forget the sacrifices of "real heroes".

A Peshawar rally the same month, widely believed to be state-backed, condemned the movement and praised the armed forces for protecting the country, amid chants of “Pakistan Zindabad” (long live Pakistan).

One Pashtun political party, the Balochistan-based Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, has strongly backed Pashteen’s movement. But the movement has created a dilemma for it and other nationalist Pashtun parties, including the Awami National Party. Large numbers of grassroots party cadres are also Pashtun Tahafuz Movement activists. “Political parties have gone into the background, and [non-party] people taken the lead”, said a senior Awami National Party leader and former senator.

Yet all major political parties, Pashtun or otherwise, and even the military, have had to respond to a galvanised civil society’s demands for constitutional protections and freedoms in FATA.

Reforming FATA

FATA reform was part of the National Action Plan against terrorism formulated after the December 2014 Peshawar Army Public School attack, an implicit recognition that FATA’s tenuous governance had contributed in large part to the spread of militancy. This effort built on an existing consensus among almost all major parties on the importance of extending the state’s reach and dispelling local grievances in FATA.

In November 2015, then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif established a committee on FATA reforms, chaired by his foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz. The committee produced a report in August 2016, recommending “a gradual and phased approach”, including abolishing the Frontier Crimes Regulations and merging FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The five-year transitional period foresaw the return of IDPs, reconstruction, socio-economic development and local elections as precursors to legal and constitutional reforms, while retaining Article 247 of the constitution. As with past reforms, the military resisted even this modest proposal, refusing to cede control over this strategic territory.

Pressure from FATA’s civil society, in large part propelled by the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement’s grassroots mobilisation, produced momentum for more comprehensive reform, persuading even the military that it would have to loosen its hold on the tribal areas. According to a senior Pashtun nationalist, “without any doubt the movement’s pressure has been the most decisive factor in forcing all players to stop blocking reforms … the security establishment, which was initially hesitant about the merger of FATA in Pakhtunkhwa, reconsidered in view of the ever-deepening alienation among the Pashtun youth of FATA. It was afraid of the backlash to the flawed state policies”.

In late May 2018, the week they were ending their five-year term, the national and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies passed the 31st amendment that repealed Article 247 of the constitution and merged FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Article 247's repeal allows those assemblies to legislate for FATA and extends the jurisdiction of the higher judiciary to the tribal areas, with any new government action, law or regulation reviewable by the Peshawar high court and Supreme Court. Elections in the tribal agencies (renamed "districts") for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa legislature are to be held within a year of the 25 July general elections. Local polls are planned for October this year.

FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa appears now to be irreversible; no party is likely to propose an amendment to turn back the clock because of the broad-based support the reform enjoys. But the region's incorporation into the political, legal and constitutional mainstream has been adversely affected by the final presidential ordinance promulgated under Article 247, replacing the Frontier Crimes Regulations with an equally draconian FATA Interim Governance Regulation. The differences between the two are cosmetic. The senior-most federal bureaucrat in a tribal district (formerly tribal agency) is now called a deputy commissioner, rather than a political agent, but retains many of the same powers, including the authority to arrest men between the ages of sixteen and 65 who "are acting in a hostile, subversive or offensive manner towards the State or any person residing within the

"Delaying FATA's full political, administrative and legal integration into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will estrange many inhabitants of the tribal areas."

settled area of Pakistan".

The government has started building judicial complexes – consisting of courthouses, bar councils and other facilities – in all tribal agencies. The Peshawar high court has set a requirement for 52 judicial officers to be deployed in FATA within six months of its merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Yet, according to the interim regulation, federal bureaucrats and deputy and assistant commissioners will continue to perform judicial functions, a provision which violates the constitution. Assistant commissioners will rely on their handpicked "council of elders" to adjudicate civil cases, on the basis of *rewaj* (customary law), a patriarchal set of rules that affirms group, not individual, rights. Customary law can even justify violence against women, such as in Kurram, where the codified *rewaj* permits the sale or exchange of women to settle disputes. Assistant commissioners designated as "judges" will also try criminal cases, with the authority to detain or pardon alleged offenders.

Political parties, backed by civil society, had thwarted an earlier bid in parliament (proposed by the Aziz-led FATA Reforms Committee) to replace the Frontier Crimes Regulations with a *Rewaj Act*.

Mohammad Ali Wazir, a Pashtun Tahafuz Movement leader whose immediate family members were killed for opposing the TTP, said: "There are so many different power centers – *maliks*, political agents, militants, army, Frontier Corps, FCR, *rewaj*, each with a different set of rules – and all we get is chaos. Give us one system. Don't have us running around like

wild cats". The onus of repealing the Interim Governance Regulation is now on the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly since the president, after signing the 31st amendment, no longer has jurisdiction over FATA.

Since Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 2017 police act now applies to the tribal belt, the federal government should disband the tribal levies. Tehreek-i-Insaf's provincial government should incorporate their personnel into the provincial police force, and also provide the police with the resources it needs for its additional responsibilities in the tribal belt. FATA residents, who will now vote for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly, will hold the provincial government accountable if they do not see improvements in the security of the tribal areas. Indeed, delaying FATA's full political, administrative and legal integration into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will further estrange many inhabitants of the tribal areas, who have little patience left after decades of living as second-class citizens in Pakistan. Failing to respond to FATA's civil society demands for full citizenship rights and protections will erode the authority of the national and provincial governments and could allow militants to profit from the resultant alienation.

Moving Forward

The 31st amendment is a welcome step forward. In the words of one major daily newspaper's editorial: "History has been made. FATA is no more ... the people of the region now have formal access to the constitutional and political rights that are legally available to all citizens of Pakistan".

Yet much more needs to be done to end FATA's political and economic isolation, reverse policies that have eroded rights and livelihoods, and prevent militants from taking advantage of disaffection.

So long as the military maintains arbitrary restrictions on movement, elected representatives, journalists and civil society activists will be unable to assess the implementation of reforms.

The military and civil bureaucracies still seem unwilling to allow such access or even to let locals assemble freely, and instead appear bent on suppressing peaceful dissent. In early June, Pashtun Tahafuz Movement leader Mohsin Dawar was banned from visiting his hometown in North Waziristan for three months on the grounds that he was "acting in a manner prejudicial to public peace and tranquility". But the protesters at his rally had been peaceful, unlike the pro-state militia that attacked movement activists in South Waziristan's administrative headquarters, Wana, killing two and injuring 25. Rather than discipline the militiamen, the state temporarily banned peaceful protests.

Superior court jurisdiction will likely check FATA's unaccountable civil bureaucracy, whose actions can now be challenged before independent judges rather than executive tribunals. But the judiciary will have to prove it is capable of upholding the constitutional

rights and protections now extended to FATA's residents, including freedoms of movement, speech and association.

Moreover, the federal and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments should take urgent steps to develop the region, which has the worst socio-economic indicators in the country, and has been devastated by conflict. There is a major plan for multi-year funding of FATA's development but no guarantee that the money will arrive. The incoming National Financial Commission should quickly reach agreement on such funding.

Islamabad and Peshawar should also consult FATA stakeholders on reconstruction, rehabilitation and development, and ensure the availability of fiscal resources.

Conclusion

The previous federal and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments fulfilled a major commitment to ending FATA's constitutional limbo. Their successors cannot blame insecurity or seek other justifications for delaying FATA's integration into the mainstream. To be sure, the task will require resources, further reforms and, above all, stamina in the face of bureaucratic resistance. Though the principle of integration is now firmly established, the civil and military bureaucracies and the tribal elite will likely seek only partial reforms that retain the current governing structure. Yet, as the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement's popularity demonstrates, those bureaucracies' authority in FATA has waned. With public expectations raised by the merger and the repeal of Article 247, stalling would likely provoke significant backlash.

If the civil bureaucracy is averse to losing the benefits of the status quo, the military is averse to loosening its grip upon a territory that it still uses to promote what it perceives as Pakistan's national security interests, including through support for the Afghan Taliban and local militant proxies. But opportunities for breaking its hold are greater today than at any time before, given the 31st amendment, and civil society's demands for an end to conflict in the tribal belt, which have broad backing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and indeed countrywide.⁷

⁷ Shaping a New Peace in Pakistan's Tribal Areas, Brussels, (20 August 2018)

CHAPTER 8

Political Instability in Lebanon

Background

Lebanon has absorbed more than one million Syrian refugees since the start of the conflict in 2011. This compromises nearly one-fourth of Lebanon's population and more refugees than any other country bordering Syria. The World Bank predicts that these refugees will cost Lebanon close to \$7.5 billion, as the country struggles to adjust its economy to meet the demands of a growing population. Beyond the economic effects, the spillover from Syria has also heightened sectarian tensions in Lebanon. The country implemented restrictive visa requirements for Syrian refugees in January 2015, aimed at stemming the influx of Sunnis into the country and preventing the disruption of fragile religious balance.

Historic differences between Hezbollah—a Shia political party and militant organization backed by Iran and designated by the United States as a terrorist group—and Sunni groups in Lebanon have significantly escalated. Particularly in Tripoli, just thirty miles from the Syrian border, the predominant Sunni population—led by the March 14 alliance—combats Shia supporters of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as Hezbollah militants who conduct terrorist attacks on Sunni mosques.

The influx of Syrian refugees, coupled with Hezbollah's involvement in fighting Syrian rebels, has resulted in cross-border skirmishes and increased weapons smuggling. Militants from Syria's al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra) and the Islamic State have attacked the Sunni border town of Arsal on several occasions, highlighting Lebanon's vulnerability to violence emanating from Syria.

Concerns

These security risks have alarmed U.S. policymakers, as well as members of European and Gulf states, who are interested in mitigating the conflict in Lebanon and finding a diplomatic solution to the Syrian civil war. As the coalition's fight against the Islamic State expands, this could have greater implications for Lebanon, as it sits on the frays of the fight and is particularly prone to instability.

Recent Developments

Lebanon's political system and security infrastructure have been deeply affected by spillover from the Syrian civil war, as nearly one quarter of Lebanon's population is made up of refugees. The country also suffered a leadership gap for two and a half years, until Michel Aoun was elected as president in October 2016, replacing acting-President and Prime Minister Tammam Salam. Furthermore, political gridlock and lack of legislation and reform

have resulted in a deterioration of the country's infrastructure and public services, which are further taxed by the increasing refugee population. The government was unable to provide garbage collection services for nearly eight months, creating a significant garbage crisis before temporarily restarting services in March 2016.

On the security front, the latent sectarian divisions in the country have been exacerbated as the self-proclaimed Islamic State battles with Hezbollah and other Shia groups in Lebanon. Hezbollah is also deeply involved in the neighboring Syrian civil war, supporting the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. An estimated 1,200 Hezbollah fighters have been killed in Syria since the start of the conflict. The top Hezbollah commander in Syria, Mustafa Badreddine, was killed in a blast near Damascus airport in May 2016. Badreddine had previously been indicted by the UN-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon in the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri and was being tried in absentia.

In November 2015, the Islamic State targeted a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut, killing forty-three people and injuring over two hundred in double suicide bomb attacks—the deadliest since the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1990. Prior to this incident, Hezbollah areas in southern Beirut had been targeted in 2013 and 2014, but mostly by Sunni militants who opposed Hezbollah's decision to join the fight in neighboring Syria.

Lebanon profile - Timeline

A chronology of key events:

1516-1918 - Lebanon part of the Ottoman Empire.

1920 September - The League of Nations grants the mandate for Lebanon and Syria to France, which creates the State of Greater Lebanon out of the provinces of Mount Lebanon, north Lebanon, south Lebanon and the Bekaa.

1926 May - Lebanese Representative Council approves a constitution and the unified Lebanese Republic under the French mandate is declared.

1943 March - The foundations of the state are set out in an unwritten National Covenant which uses the 1932 census to distribute seats in parliament on a ratio of six-to-five in favour of Christians. This is

later extended to other public offices. The president is to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies a Shia Muslim.

Independence

1944 - France agrees to transfer power to the Lebanese government on 1 January.

1958 - Faced with increasing opposition which develops into a civil war, President Camille Chamoune asks the US to send troops to preserve Lebanon's independence. The US sends marines.

1967 June - Lebanon plays no active role in the Arab-Israeli war but is to be affected by

its aftermath when Palestinians use Lebanon as a base for attacks on Israel.

Civil War

1975 April - Phalangist gunmen ambush a bus in the Ayn-al-Rummanah district of Beirut, killing 27 of its mainly Palestinian passengers. The Phalangists claim that guerrillas had previously attacked a church in the same district. These clashes start the civil war.

1976 June - Syrian troops enter Lebanon to restore peace but also to curb the Palestinians, thousands of whom are killed in a siege of the Tel al-Zaatar camp by Syrian-allied Christian militias in Beirut. Arab states approve of the Syrian presence as an Arab Deterrent Force in October.

1978 - In reprisal for a Palestinian attack, Israel launches a major invasion of southern Lebanon. It withdraws from all but a narrow border strip, which it hands over not to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) but to its proxy South Lebanon Army mainly Christian militia.

Israel invades

1982 June - Following the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador to Britain by a Palestinian splinter group, Israel launches a full-scale invasion of Lebanon.

1982 September - Pro-Israeli president-elect Bachir Gemayel is assassinated. Israel occupies West Beirut, where the Phalangist militia kills thousands of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps. Bachir's elder brother Amine is elected president. Mainly US, French and Italian peacekeeping force arrives in Beirut.

1983 - Suicide attack on US embassy kills 63 people in April, and another in October on the headquarters of the peacekeepers kills 241 US and 58 French troops. US troops withdraw in 1984.

1985 - Most Israeli troops withdraw apart from the SLA "security zone" in the south.

Two governments, one country

1988 - Outgoing President Amine Gemayel appoints an interim military government under Maronite Commander-in-Chief Michel Aoun in East Beirut when presidential elections fail to produce a successor. Prime Minister Selim el-Hoss forms a mainly Muslim rival administration in West Beirut.

1989 - Parliament meets in Taif, Saudi Arabia, to endorse a Charter of National Reconciliation transferring much of the authority of the president to the cabinet and boosting the number of Muslim MPs.

Civil war ends

1990 October - The Syrian air force attacks the Presidential Palace at Baabda and Aoun flees. This formally ends the civil war.

Israeli invasions and withdrawal

- 1978: First Israeli invasion
- 1982: Second Israeli invasion
- 1985: Israel pulls back to self-declared security zone
- May 2000: Israel pulls out of south Lebanon

1991 - The National Assembly orders the dissolution of all militias, except for the powerful Shia group Hezbollah. The South Lebanon Army (SLA) refuses to disband. The Lebanese army defeats the PLO and takes over the southern port of Sidon.

1992 - After elections in August and September, the first since 1972, wealthy businessman Rafik Hariri becomes prime minister.

1996 April - "Operation Grapes of Wrath", in which the Israelis bomb Hezbollah bases in southern Lebanon, southern Beirut and the Bekaa Valley. UN base at Qana is hit, killing over 100 displaced civilians. Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group, with members from US, France, Israel, Lebanon and Syria, set up to monitor truce.

Israeli withdrawal

2000 May - After the collapse of the SLA and the rapid advance of Hezbollah forces, Israel withdraws its troops from southern Lebanon more than six weeks ahead of its July deadline.

2004 - UN Security Council resolution aimed at Syria demands that foreign troops leave Lebanon. Syria dismisses the move. Parliament extends President Emile Lahoud's term by three years. Weeks of political deadlock end with the unexpected departure of Rafik Hariri - who had at first opposed the extension - as prime minister.

Hariri assassinated

2005 February - Rafik Hariri is killed by a car bomb in Beirut. The attack sparks anti-Syrian rallies and the resignation of Prime Minister Omar Karami's cabinet. Calls for Syria to withdraw its troops intensify until

its forces leave in April. Assassinations of anti-Syrian figures become a feature of political life.

2005 June - Anti-Syrian alliance led by Saad Hariri wins control of parliament at elections. Hariri ally Fouad Siniora becomes prime minister.

2005 September - Four pro-Syrian generals are charged over the assassination of Rafik Hariri.

Hezbollah and Hariri

2006 July-August - Israel attacks after Hezbollah kidnaps two Israeli soldiers. Civilian casualties are high and the damage to civilian infrastructure wide-ranging in 34-day war. UN peacekeeping force deploys along the southern border, followed by Lebanese army troops for first time in decades.

2006 November - Ministers from Hezbollah and the Amal movement resign shortly before the cabinet approves draft UN plans for a tribunal to try suspects in the killing of the former Prime Minister Hariri.

2007 May-September - Siege of the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr al-Bared following clashes between Islamist militants and the military. More than 300 people die and 40,000 residents flee before the army gains control of the camp.

2007 May - UN Security Council votes to set up a tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of ex-premier Hariri.

Syrian detente

2008 May - Parliament elects army Chief Michel Suleiman as president, ending six-month-long political deadlock. Gen

Suleiman re-appoints Fouad Siniora as prime minister of national unity government.

2008 October - Lebanon establishes diplomatic relations with Syria for first time since both countries gained independence in 1940s.

2009 March-April - International court to try suspected killers of former Prime Minister Hariri opens in Hague. Former Syrian intelligence officer Mohammed Zuhair al-Siddiq arrested in connection with killing, and four pro-Syrian Lebanese generals held since 2005 freed after court rules there is not enough evidence to convict them.

Unity government

2009 June - The pro-Western March 14 alliance wins parliamentary elections and Saad Hariri forms unity government.

2010 October - Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah calls on Lebanon to boycott UN Hariri tribunal, saying it is "in league with Israel".

2011 January - Government collapses after Hezbollah and allied ministers resign.

2011 June - Najib Mikati forms cabinet dominated by Hezbollah. The UN's Special Tribunal for Lebanon issues four arrest warrants over the murder of Rafik Hariri. The accused are members of Hezbollah, which says it won't allow their arrest.

2012 summer - The Syrian conflict that began in March 2011 spills over into Lebanon in deadly clashes between Sunni Muslims and Alawites in Tripoli and Beirut.

2012 October - Security chief Wissam al-Hassan is killed in car bombing. Opposition blames Syria.

2012 December - Several days of deadly fighting between supporters and opponents of the Syrian president in Tripoli.

UN praises Lebanese families for having taken in more than a third of the 160,000 Syrian refugees who have streamed into the country.

Border tensions

2013 March - Syrian warplanes and helicopters fire rockets into northern Lebanon, days after Damascus warns Beirut to stop militants crossing the border to fight Syrian government forces.

Najib Mikati's government resigns amid tensions over upcoming elections.

2013 April - Sunni Muslim politician Tammam Salam is tasked with forming a new government.

2013 May - At least 10 people die in further sectarian clashes in Tripoli between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah vows victory in Syria.

Parliament votes to put off elections due in June until November 2014 because of security concerns over the conflict in Syria.

2013 June - A number of people are killed in clashes between Hezbollah gunmen and Syrian rebels within Lebanon.

At least 17 Lebanese soldiers are killed in clashes with Sunni militants in the port city of Sidon.

2013 July - European Union lists the military wing of Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. This makes it illegal for Hezbollah sympathisers in Europe to send the group money, and enables the freezing of the group's assets there.

2013 August - Dozens of people are killed in bomb attacks at two mosques in Tripoli. The twin attacks, which are linked to tensions over the Syrian conflict, are the deadliest in Lebanon since the end of the civil war in 1990.

Refugee crisis

2013 September - The United Nations refugee agency says there are at least 700,000 Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

2013 November - Double suicide bombing outside Iranian embassy in Beirut kills at least 22 people. It is one of the worst attacks in Shia southern Beirut since the conflict in Syria began.

2013 December - Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah says the Saudi intelligence services were behind the bombings outside the Iranian embassy in Beirut.

Senior Hezbollah commander Hassan Lakkis is shot dead near Beirut. Hezbollah accuses Israel of assassinating him. Israel denies any involvement.

Former Lebanese minister and opposition figure Mohamad Chatah - a Sunni Muslim who was also a staunch critic of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad - is killed by a car bomb in central Beirut.

2014 February - Sunni Muslim politician Tammam Salam finally assembles new power-sharing cabinet following 10 months of talks.

2014 April - UN announces that number of Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon has surpassed one million. The accelerating influx means that one in every four people living in Lebanon is now a refugee from the Syrian conflict.

2014 May - President Suleiman ends his term of office, leaving a power vacuum. Several attempts are made in parliament over subsequent months to choose a successor.

2014 August - Syrian rebels overrun border town of Arsal. They withdraw after being challenged by the military but take 30 soldiers and police captive.

2014 September - Prime Minister Salam appeals to world leaders at the UN to help Lebanon face a "terrorist onslaught" and the flood of refugees from Syria.

2014 October - Clashes in Tripoli between the army and Islamist gunmen, in a spill-over of violence from the Syrian conflict.

2014 November - Parliament extends own term to 2017, citing Syria-related security concerns.

2015 January - Israel launches air strikes on Syrian side of the Golan, killing Hezbollah fighters and an Iranian general. Several clashes ensue across Israeli-Lebanese border.

2015 January - New restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon come into effect, further slowing the flow of people trying to escape the war.

2016 June - Suicide bombings in Al-Qaa, allegedly by Syrian nationals, aggravate already strained relations between Lebanese and more than 1 million Syrian refugees in the country.

2017 June - New electoral law approved by Parliament after much delay.

2017 July - Hezbollah and the Syrian army launch a military operation to dislodge jihadist groups from the Arsal area, near the border with Syria.

2017 November - Prime Minister Hariri resigns in a televised address from Saudi Arabia. He withdraws his resignation a month later.

Hezbollah's Crucible of War

Joining Syria's civil war has made Hezbollah much more powerful, but much less popular, in the Middle East.

By Nour Samaha

BEIRUT — It was around 9 a.m. on July 12, 2006, and Katyusha rockets from Lebanon had crashed into northern Israel. As Israeli soldiers assessed the scene, a team of Hezbollah fighters slithered through the first wire fence, then the second wire fence, and ran up the road where two Israeli army Humvees were positioned.

The team fired an anti-tank missile at one of the Humvees, destroying it and killing three Israeli soldiers. They grabbed two other Israeli soldiers and doused the Humvee in petrol, setting it alight before dragging the two soldiers back into Lebanese territory. A second Humvee was hit by an improvised explosive device as it attempted to cross the border, killing all four Israeli soldiers on board.

This marked the beginning of a bloody 33-day war. An Israeli aerial assault targeted south Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, areas Israel has designated as Hezbollah strongholds. The Israelis then launched a land invasion into southern Lebanon with the stated aim of disarming the movement. Hezbollah, for its part, launched hundreds of rockets across the border into Israel. Around 1,300 Lebanese were killed, mostly civilians, and 165 Israelis lost their lives, 121 of whom were soldiers.

The 2006 war was a pivotal moment for Hezbollah. The Lebanese Shiite group was celebrated across the Arab world as the region's only force able to defeat Israel; it was riding high on a wave of popular support, and a reputation as a defender of the rights of the oppressed.

The Lebanese Shiite group was celebrated across the Arab world as the region's only force able to defeat Israel

But 10 years on, much has changed for Hezbollah. Once treated as a Lebanese national resistance movement, it is now widely seen as the elite arm of a regional Shiite axis composed of Iran and Syria, with a military and political presence that stretches from Damascus, to Baghdad, to Sanaa.

Yet Hezbollah's rise as a regional player has come at a cost for the movement. It has lost a considerable number of fighters and top-level commanders in its battles across Syria. Its popular support on the Arab streets has also waned as it has come to be seen ever more as a Shiite sectarian party. It also faces increasing pressure from powerful countries in the region. All of which are leading many observers to ask: As the group continues to grow, can it survive its new challenges and responsibilities?

Military growth

Sitting in a restaurant in Beirut's southern suburbs, a veteran Hezbollah fighter explained in detail the military and tactical experience the group has recently gained. This fighter is in his mid-40s and participated both in the 2006 Lebanon war and the current conflict in Syria, before an injury on the battlefield in Syria forced him out of active duty.

"The 2006 war was conducted on only two types of terrain: that of the south and that of the Bekaa," he said, referring to the rolling hills and mountains of the south and the plains of the Bekaa Valley. Syria's war, however, has exposed the group to the varied landscapes of that country, which has enabled Hezbollah to significantly expand its military capabilities. In the process, it has been transformed from a primarily defensive guerrilla group to one that more resembles a conventional army.

"For example, in Syria we have fought in mountain ranges that are higher than Lebanon, where we have had to learn completely new strategies and equipment, as our previous equipment would not work at such high altitude," he said. "We have fought on coastal fronts, on desert fronts, and on urban fronts. Even the urban fronts differ between big cities and smaller towns."

While the 2006 war was fought on Hezbollah's home turf, amid a largely supportive population, Syria has forced the movement to adapt to fighting in unfamiliar places with hostile populations. "In 2006, we were fighting defensively in areas that we know very well," the fighter said. "In Syria, we are entering areas where the local population can be hostile to us, and against fighters who know the terrain better than us. We have conducted offensive battles."

Others close to Hezbollah echoed this account. For the first time, Hezbollah has run offensive operations — and intends to transfer the skills learned in Syria to any future confrontation with Israel.

"For Israel, they started to see the experience we were gaining and are now concerned that the experience, especially inside cities and urban environments, would be used against them," said one source familiar with Hezbollah's operations in Syria.

And Israel may have reason to be concerned. Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah has made it clear that in any future confrontation, it would attempt to invade northern Israel. In order to do so, it would involve the very skills it has gained in Syria — fighting in an unfamiliar area where local residents are hostile to its presence.

Furthermore, it would involve a high level of command-and-control capabilities of precisely the type that Hezbollah has developed in Syria. Although in 2006 the movement deployed small cells of fighters who could continue fighting for days and weeks without the need to wait for instructions from their leadership, now the movement deploys larger formations of soldiers on multiple fronts, across hundreds of miles, and maintains a constant flow of information and supplies to its commanders in the field.

“Hezbollah has always been an insurgency group, and they’re now really learning very well counterinsurgency,” said Matthew Levitt, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy’s Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. “This enables them to be able to engage in a whole host of other different types of skills and maneuvers that would be useful to them in combat in Israel.”

Levitt is more doubtful of Hezbollah’s claim that it could actually hold Israeli territory in any future confrontation. “The security measures up there [in northern Israel] are actually quite sophisticated, so I don’t think Hezbollah would be able to do it, or hold it, but imagine the psychological impact for an Israeli community if that happened, even if it failed,” he said.

Hezbollah is also said to have acquired far more sophisticated weaponry than it wielded against Israel 10 years ago. Today, the group has heavy artillery, aerial drones, and a large number of jeeps with recoilless rifles in its possession — along with about 120,000 rockets, according to Israel’s estimates, which is almost a tenfold increase over its supply in 2006. The missiles in its arsenal today are far more powerful: It possesses the Iranian Fateh-110 tactical ballistic missile and its Syrian variant, the M-600. Numerous reports also claim it is in possession of the Yakhont coastal missile and has mobile air defense systems such as the Russian 9K33 Osa system.

In 2006, Hezbollah had a core of roughly 2,000 dedicated, full-time fighters in addition to about 10,000 reservists with basic training. Its involvement in Syria has provided the group with the opportunity to expand its core, and those with basic training have been hardened by years of fighting in Syria.

Numerous Hezbollah sources have stated that the group witnessed a huge influx of applicants in the aftermath of 2006, and then again in the aftermath of its involvement in Syria.

Hezbollah’s youth organization, the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts, held a recent graduation ceremony for 70,000 scouts, said multiple sources. “I couldn’t believe my eyes!” said one observer who attended the ceremony. “And as Sayyed Nasrallah said at the event, ‘We don’t have a problem getting people involved in Hezbollah, our problem is where to put them.’”

The same source confirmed that Hezbollah now operates in Lebanon up to seven training camps simultaneously to accommodate the number of new fighters and new techniques the organization has acquired.

Hezbollah, however, has also suffered high-profile losses over the last 10 years, most significantly after its foray into wider regional conflicts. Although there are no official figures for the group’s death toll in Syria, estimates range from 800 to 1,200 fighters killed over the last three years. Top commanders Fawzi Ayyoub, Jihad Mughniyah, Mohammed Ahmed Issa, Ghassan Fakih, Fadi al-Jazzar, Ali Fayad, Samir Kantar, and Mustafa Badreddine have all been killed since Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria. The assassination of Imad Mughniyah

in 2008, the main mastermind behind most of Hezbollah's operations against Israel, was also a huge blow to the party.

"It is painful to them that they have lost more people, including many more senior people, in their war against fellow Muslims than all of the wars and battles against Israel," Levitt said.

Ali Fadlallah, a professor of politics at the American University of Beirut and an expert on Hezbollah, said Hezbollah is willing to bear the losses because it sees the Syrian war as an existential issue.

"Hezbollah thinks of its role in Syria as an obligation, necessary to protect its weapons route and its political role," he said. "And, as a result, it is paying a big price, including the deaths of key figures."

Sources close to Hezbollah have played down the impact of the losses. According to the veteran fighter, the losses incurred in Syria do not "equate to even 10 percent of the death toll calculated by the party for such a war."

"No war comes without sacrifices," another source said. "Our organization after Hajj Imad Mughniyah is much bigger than it was before 2006, and so we are constantly restructuring."

"Each martyrdom offers a new opportunity, and there is always new blood [coming in]."

Politics and Identity

Hezbollah's success on the battlefield, however, has not been duplicated in politics. It has lost much of the broad-based appeal it enjoyed, both in Lebanon and the broader region, in the aftermath of the 2006 war. Its selective participation in the conflicts in the region — Iraq, Syria, Yemen — has reinforced the notion that it is a military and political force "strictly for the Shia."

"While Hezbollah defines itself as a national actor with regional impacts, today it is seen as a model for the Shia because of its political and military success in the region," said Hossam Matar, a Lebanese political analyst close to the party.

As the Syrian uprising took an increasingly sectarian character, Hezbollah's entry came to be seen as an intervention on behalf of the country's Alawite minority against its Sunni majority. That message was loudly and widely spread by the Gulf-state publications and broadcasters who dominate the Arab media landscape. As a result, many Arabs who previously supported Hezbollah began to see it through the prism of Sunni-Shiite sectarianism. This skepticism even extended to Hezbollah's rhetoric supporting the Palestinian cause and the fight against Israel.

While Hezbollah and its supporters acknowledge the issue, they seek to minimize it. The movement continually states it is fighting *takfiris*, not Sunnis in Syria, and has urged Arabs to ignore what it deems propaganda by Saudi media.

“This [shift] is largely because the campaign by the others to portray Hezbollah as a sectarian party has been successful, and because we are witnessing a sectarian struggle in the region, Hezbollah will appear to be more Shia, and this is not by choice,” Matar said.

The perception of Hezbollah as the Middle East’s leading Shiite sectarian group has also led to increased diplomatic pressure on the party. Historically, the Arab Gulf states have always had a tumultuous relationship with Hezbollah; the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005, and its aftermath, was a notable low point. But following Hezbollah’s intervention in Syria and then its vocal opposition to the Saudi-led war in Yemen, the Gulf States became outright aggressive against the group, designating it as a terrorist organization and deporting Lebanese Shiites residing in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Remittances from Lebanese working in the Gulf are a primary source of income for many residing in Lebanon and help maintain the stability of the country’s financial system.

“I don’t think the Israelis will ever be as anti-Hezbollah as the Gulfies are right now, and that has real ramifications for them,” Levitt said.

But, despite the mounting pressure against it, Hezbollah seems to feel bolstered by its newly acquired international role.

“When [Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail] Bogdanov visits Lebanon, he’s not coming to talk to the politicians, but to Hezbollah about Hezbollah’s role,” said a source close to Hezbollah. “He is dealing with Hezbollah as a regional actor.”

As Matar pointed out, Iran’s relationship with Hezbollah has also changed due to its close connection with Arab Shiites in the region. “Hezbollah can now advise Iran on Arab issues, which in turn has granted Hezbollah a larger role in the region.”

What next?

In 2006, Hezbollah was a small military organization with one theater of operations and a singular mission. Ten years later, it has expanded exponentially into multiple theaters with diverse responsibilities, demands, and challenges. It has grown into a regional political actor with influence on par with some nation states. But it has also alienated a large segment of the Arab population.

“They are gaining power across the region, especially in terms of the ‘resistance axis,’” said Fadlallah, referring to a regional alliance consisting of Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria. “If Hezbollah can win this battle, it will win the region.”

Matar said regardless of how much Hezbollah has grown, the group doesn’t make a regional commitment without considering its impact on its primary mission — its resistance to Israel.

“When it engages regionally, it always has Israel at the forefront of its calculations,” he said. “And it allocates its resources accordingly.”

Those close to Hezbollah celebrate its new reach across the region and lament the lack of broad support among Arabs and the mounting regional and international pressure on it. But they also insist the Israeli “file” remains its priority. All its other activities are described as a means to gain experience to accomplish its ultimate end.

“What we took to Syria when we entered was some developed weapons and thousands of fighters,” one source said. “But what we have in south Lebanon now is a lot of new surprises for the Israelis.”⁸

⁸ Nour Samaha, Hezbollah’s Crucible of War, *Foreign Policy*. (July 17, 2016)

CHAPTER 9

Instability in Egypt

Background

Incidents of terrorist attacks in Egypt are the highest they have been since the 1990s. Known then as Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, the group emerged as a terrorist organization in the Sinai following the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. The insurgency was then intensified by political instability and the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood following the overthrow of President Mohammed Morsi in July 2013.

Ansar Beit and other Islamist militants were primarily focused on attacking Egyptian security forces in retaliation for the government crackdown on Islamist groups, but have since expanded to attacking civilians on the metro, outside of the foreign ministry building, and near Cairo University. Militants also assassinated Egypt's Chief Prosecutor Hisham Barakat in June 2015—the first major government figure to be killed since 2013.

The intense military campaign led by President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi has targeted the insurgency in the Sinai and near the Gaza Strip. The military has bulldozed hundreds of homes in Rafah on the border with Gaza because of suspicions that Hamas is supplying the Sinai militants with weapons and other supplies. Sisi has also sought to tamp down on Muslim Brotherhood supporters, labelling the group a terrorist organization in December 2013.

Concerns

There is a general concern about how the Sinai Peninsula could become another sanctuary for the Islamic State to carry out operations throughout the Middle East. Wilayat Sinai could help facilitate other attacks in Egypt as well, adding to political instability in the country. Its existence also poses a threat to Israel, which shares a border with the Sinai region and has on several occasions intercepted rockets from the region.

Recent Developments

Egypt's military campaign against Wilayat Sinai (formerly Ansar Beit al-Maqdis) in the Sinai Peninsula has intensified since it declared allegiance to self-proclaimed Islamic State in November 2014. In October 2015, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for downing a Russian airplane in response to Russia's fight against the Islamic State in Syria. The previous year, the group carried out the largest terrorist attack in Egypt since 2005, with two attacks in the Sinai Peninsula killing thirty-one soldiers. In May 2016, an EgyptAir flight crashed in the Mediterranean flying from Paris, though the cause of the crash has not yet been determined.

The rate of terrorist attacks by Wilayat Sinai and other Islamist militants has been rapidly growing. Militants also carried out separate attacks at prime tourist destinations near the pyramids in Giza and the Karnak Temple in Luxor that same month. In July 2015, Wilayat Sinai launched an assault on the Egyptian military and government sites in northern Sinai near Egypt's border with Gaza and Israel, resulting in the deaths of at least seventeen Egyptian soldiers and one hundred militants.

Egypt profile

A chronology of key events:

circa 7000 BCE - Settlement of Nile Valley begins.

circa 3000 BCE - Kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt unite. Successive dynasties witness flourishing trade, prosperity and the development of great cultural traditions. Writing, including hieroglyphics, is used as an instrument of state. Construction of the pyramids - around 2,500 BC - is a formidable engineering achievement.

669 BCE - Assyrians from Mesopotamia conquer and rule Egypt.

525 BCE - Persian conquest.

332 BCE - Alexander the Great, of ancient Macedonia, conquers Egypt, founds Alexandria. A Macedonian dynasty rules until 31 BC.

31 BCE - Egypt comes under Roman rule; Queen Cleopatra commits suicide after Octavian's army defeats her forces.

33 CE - Christianity comes to Egypt, and by 4th century has largely displaced Egyptian religion.

642 - Arab conquest of Egypt.

1250-1517 - Mameluke (slave soldier) rule, characterised by great prosperity and well-ordered civic institutions.

1517 - Egypt absorbed into the Turkish Ottoman empire.

1798 - Napoleon Bonaparte's forces invade but are repelled by the British and the Turks in 1801.

1805 - Ottoman Albanian commander Muhammad Ali establishes dynasty that goes on to reign until 1953, although nominally part of the Ottoman Empire.

1859-69 - Suez Canal built, but it and other infrastructure projects near-bankrupt Egypt and lead to gradual British takeover.

1882 - British troops defeat Egyptian army and take control of country.

1914 - Egypt formally becomes a British protectorate.

Independence restored

1922 - Fuad I becomes king and Egypt gains independence, although British influence remains significant until 1950s.

1928 - Muslim Brotherhood founded by Hassan al-Banna, who is killed in 1949. Campaigns to reorient Egypt and whole Muslim Middle East away from Western influence.

1948 - Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria attack the new state of Israel. Egyptian army's poor performance increases unpopularity of King Farouk.

1949 - Committee of the Free Officers' Movement formed to overthrow corrupt monarchy.

1952 January - At least 20 people are killed in anti-British riots in Cairo.

1952 July - Coup by the Free Officers' Movement. Farouk abdicates in favour of his infant son Ahmed Fuad II.

Rise of Nasser

1953 June - Coup leader Muhammad Najib becomes president as Egypt is declared a republic.

1954 - Fellow coup leader Gamal Abdel Nasser becomes prime minister and in 1956 president, ruling unchallenged until his death in 1970.

1954 - Evacuation Treaty signed. British forces, who began a gradual withdrawal under 1936 treaty, finally leave Egypt.

1955 - Prime Minister Nasser reorients Egypt away from West towards neutrality, buys arms from Communist Czechoslovakia to re-equip arm.

1956 January - Egypt and Britain relinquish control over Sudan, established at end of 19th century.

1956 July - President Nasser nationalises the Suez Canal to fund the Aswan High Dam, after Britain and US withdraw financing.

1956 October-November - Invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel over nationalisation of Suez Canal fails through US opposition, greatly enhancing President Nasser's standing at home and abroad.

1958 - President Nasser steps up campaign to promote pan-Arab unity, most visible signs of which is brief United Arab Republic unitary state including Syria (1958-61). He also supports friendly elements in Lebanese and North Yemen conflicts, to little avail.

1961-66 - President Nasser adopts socialist policies, including nationalisation of industry and an ambitious welfare programme, combined with repression of Muslim Brotherhood and leftist opponents, in an unsuccessful attempt to boost the economy and the popularity of his government.

1967 May - Egypt expels UN buffer forces from Sinai and closes the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships, then sign defence pact with Jordan. Israel interprets this as preparation for war.

1967 June - Israeli pre-emptive attack defeats Egypt, Jordan and Syria, leaving it in control of Sinai up to the Suez Canal and Egyptian-occupied Gaza.

Emergency Law largely suspends civil rights. Remains in force with brief break in early 1980s until 2012.

Sadat presidency

1970 September - Nasser dies, having never recovered his leading role among Arab states after the 1967 defeat, and is succeeded by Vice-President Anwar al-Sadat.

1971 - The Aswan High Dam is completed, with Soviet funding, and has a huge impact on irrigation, agriculture and industry in Egypt.

1972 - President Sadat expels Soviet advisers and reorients Egypt towards the West, while launching an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to open the economy to market forces and foreign investment.

1973 October - Egypt and Syria go to war with Israel to reclaim land lost in 1967. Egypt begins negotiations for the return of Sinai after the war.

1975 June - The Suez Canal is re-opened for first time since 1967 war.

1977 January - "Bread riots" in major cities against end to subsidies on basic foodstuffs

under agreement with World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

1977 October - President Sadat visits Israel, beginning process that leads to 1979 peace treaty, return of occupied Sinai Peninsula, and Egypt's suspension from Arab League until 1989. Egypt becomes major beneficiary of US financial aid.

1981 October - President Sadat assassinated by Islamist extremists month after clampdown on private press and opposition groups in wake of anti-government riots. Succeeded by Vice-President Hosni Mubarak.

Mubarak presidency

1981 - President Mubarak reimposes state of emergency, restricting political activity, freedom of expression and assembly.

1986 - Army deployed in Cairo to crush mutiny by Central Security paramilitary police.

1991 - Egypt joins allied coalition to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait, and benefited from major multilateral loans and debt relief in return, allowing government to launch another attempt at liberalising economy.

1992-97 - Gama'a al-Islamiyya Islamic Group begins five-year campaign of attacks on government and tourist targets, culminating in killing of 62 people at Luxor historic site in 1997.

2005 May - Referendum backs constitutional amendment allowing multiple candidates at presidential elections, after months of opposition protests.

2005 July - Scores of people are killed in bomb attacks in the Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Sheikh as Islamists resume terror attacks.

2005 December - Parliamentary polls end with clashes between police and supporters of the opposition Muslim Brotherhood, who win record 20% of seats by standing as independents.

2006 April - Bomb attacks in the Red Sea resort of Dahab kill more than 20 people.

2006 November - Egypt is one of at least six Arab countries developing domestic nuclear programmes to diversify energy sources, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports.

Fall of Mubarak

2010 November - Parliamentary polls, followed by protests against alleged vote rigging. Muslim Brotherhood fails to win a single seat, though it held a fifth of the places in the last parliament.

2011 January - Anti-government demonstrations, apparently encouraged by Tunisian street protests which prompted sudden departure of President Ben Ali.

2011 February - President Mubarak steps down and hands power to an army council. Goes on trial in August, charged with ordering the killing of demonstrators.

2011 April-August - Protests continue in Cairo's Tahrir Square over slow pace of political change. Islamist groups come to the fore. Army finally disperses protesters in August.

2011 November - Violence in Cairo's Tahrir Square as security forces clash with protesters accusing the military of trying to keep their grip on power.

2012 January - Islamist parties emerge as victors of drawn-out parliamentary elections.

2012 May - Military leaders announce the end of the state of emergency in place since Anwar al-Sadat's assassination in 1981.

Rise and fall of President Morsi

2012 June - Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohammed Morsi narrowly wins presidential election.

2012 August - Islamist fighters attack an army outpost in Sinai, killing 16 soldiers, and mount a brief incursion into Israel, beginning new insurgency.

2012 December - Islamist-dominated constituent assembly approves draft constitution that boosts the role of Islam and restricts freedom of speech and assembly.

2013 January - More than 50 people are killed during days of violent street protests. Army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi warns that political strife is pushing the state to the brink of collapse.

2013 July - Army overthrows President Morsi amid mass demonstrations calling on him to quit. Hundreds are killed as security forces storm pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo the following month.

2013 December - Government declares Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group after a bomb blast in Mansoura kills 12.

2014 January - New constitution bans parties based on religion.

2014 May - Former army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi wins presidential election.

Islamic State attacks

2014 November - Sinai-based armed group Ansar Beit al-Maqdis pledges allegiance to extreme Islamic State movement, which controls parts of Syria and Iraq. Renames itself Sinai Province.

2015 May - Ousted President Morsi sentenced to death over 2011 mass breakout of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners, along with more than 100 others.

2015 June - Prosecutor-General Hisham Barakat and three members of the public killed in suspected Islamist car bombing in Cairo.

2015 July - Islamic State launches wave of attacks in North Sinai and on Coptic churches nationwide.

2015 October - Islamic State claims responsibility for destruction of Russian airliner in Sinai, in which all crew and 224 tourist passengers were killed.

2016 January - Islamic State carries out attack at Giza tourist site and is suspected of attack on tourists in Hurghada.

2016 November - IMF approves a three-year \$12bn loan to Egypt designed to help the country out of its deep economic crisis.

2017 April - State of emergency declared after suicide bombers kill dozens at two churches where worshippers celebrated Palm Sunday.

2017 June - Egypt joins Saudi-led campaign to isolate Qatar, accusing it of promoting terrorism.

2017 November - Jihadists attack mosque in Bir al-Abed village in North Sinai, killing 305.

2018 March - President Sisi wins a second term in elections against a sole minor opposition candidate. More serious challengers either withdrew or were arrested.

2018 October - Seventeen people are sentenced to death over the 2016-17 wave of Islamic State group attacks on churches, and a further 19 receive life sentences.

The silence in Sinai: Covering Egypt's 'war on terror'

We examine the challenges facing journalists trying to report the country's growing ISIL-affiliated insurgency.

Al Jazeera

For the past three years, Egyptian forces have been fighting ISIL offshoot Wilayat Sinai in the Sinai Peninsula, but the government of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has managed to keep a tight lid on the story.

Journalism that deviates from official accounts has been criminalised under an anti-terror law. And a narrative is being pushed out across all forms of pro-government media that the army's operations in Sinai are successful, just, and even heroic.

The government in Cairo wants Egyptians and the international community to believe it has the insurgency in Sinai completely under control. It is a carefully crafted narrative that - without independent scrutiny - is near impossible to verify.

"Whenever you have a war going on like this you tend to have restrictions on the media," explains Joe Stork, deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch.

"Media access is closely controlled. But it's not just journalists. There's no independent or potentially critical perspective allowed into Sinai. Or in the case of people who already live there, you know, their views, their testimonies, their accounts are not allowed out of Sinai," he says.

In April this year, a video surfaced that shattered the government-managed media narrative and renewed allegations of torture, forced disappearances and killings at the hands of the Egyptian Army.

It appeared to show a group of government-backed militiamen executing two captives.

Researchers and activists recognised at least two of the civilians in the video. Back in November 2016, images and videos of their deaths were circulated online by government and pro-government groups. The men were the same, but there was a very different narrative about how they'd been killed.

"The military spokesperson described the men as 'terrorists that were killed during an anti-terror operation in northern Sinai'. But the leaked video clearly shows that at least two of the men are unarmed at the time and our analysis indicates that the arms were later planted next to their bodies to make it look like there was an exchange of fire," says Sherine Tadros, head of Amnesty International's United Nations office in New York.

The government has chosen to remain silent about the video, but many Egyptian media outlets did not.

The Egyptian government has an interest in maintaining its narrative of successfully fighting terror. Between 2011 and 2015, Cairo received \$6.5bn in US military aid.

The Egyptian military has reported more than 6,000 deaths in northern Sinai since mid-2013. That figure greatly exceeds the number of militants in the area: estimated at no more than 1,000, according to the DC-based think-tank, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy.

The inability to verify what is really happening has created a void for the ISIS-affiliated Wilayat Sinai to fill with its own propaganda. Its latest release portrays its fighters as disciplined and methodical, patiently aiming and then firing at Egyptian soldiers, who are made to look panicked and vulnerable.

"When you are prohibiting and stopping access for journalists, reporters and researchers to investigate and report on what's happening there, you are creating a knowledge gap. And when you are doing that this gap is also being filled with the terror groups' propaganda," explains Nancy Okail, executive director, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy.

The Egyptian government did eventually allow Egyptian journalists in April to survey the Sinai. However, it silenced critical voices like that of Ismail al-Iskandarani, a prominent Sinai researcher and journalist who was arrested in December 2015 on charges of spreading false news and being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. He has been in jail without trial for a year and a half now.

"Ismail al-Iskandarani is the perfect example of how the regime is not tolerating any independent views. The reason that he caught the government's attention is that he was critical of the military's way of handling the insurgency," says Egyptian writer and researcher Maged Mandour.⁹

⁹ The silence in Sinai: Covering Egypt's 'war on terror', *Al Jazeera*, 21 May 201

Egypt's Failed War on Terror

Why Cairo Is Dragging Its Feet on ISIS

By David Schenker

Earlier this month, U.S. President Donald Trump hosted his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, at the White House. At their meeting, Trump assured Sisi that “together... we will fight terrorism.” That is good news for the Egyptian president. After years of strained bilateral relations, the Trump administration is embracing Egypt as a counterterrorism partner. But it is unclear that Egypt is actually an asset in the most pressing battle against terrorism, the fight against the Islamic State (also known as ISIS).

A video that surfaced two weeks ago highlights the problem. It aired on a Muslim Brotherhood network and showed Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula summarily executing a handful of alleged Islamist insurgent prisoners. Beyond what appear to be significant human rights abuses, to date Cairo has demonstrated a stunning lack of will and competence to eradicate ISIS from Egyptian territory. If the Trump administration wants a partner, it should use its burgeoning relationship with the Sisi government to help Cairo improve its counterterrorism practices.

Since 2011, Egypt has been losing ground against a virulent but numerically small insurgency in the Sinai. Notwithstanding its 440,000-strong standing army and \$1.3 billion in annual U.S. military assistance, over the past five years, Egypt has been unable to contain—much less roll back—an estimated 600–1,000 insurgents. Indeed, the Sinai-based insurgents have an impressive and growing list of accomplishments. Since 2014—when the local insurgent group, Ansar Beit al-Maqdas, pledged allegiance to ISIS—the group has downed an Egyptian military helicopter, destroyed an M-60 battle tank, sunk an Egyptian patrol boat, and bombed a Russian passenger jet, killing 224 civilians.

During the same time period, ISIS has killed an estimated 2,000 Egyptian military officers and policemen in the Sinai. But they’re not the only victims. ISIS has been targeting Christians too, triggering a mass exodus of that minority from the peninsula. Just weeks ago, ISIS attacked Saint Catherine’s, one of the oldest monasteries in the world.

The same Egyptian military incapable of protecting Sinai’s Christians has also been unable to safeguard the nearly 1,700 Multinational Force Observers (MFO) stationed in the area to monitor the provisions of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Accordingly, the force—which includes about 700 U.S. troops—has relocated from its base in the north to the relatively more secure south Sinai. ISIS is also threatening Israeli security, periodically lobbing rockets across the border toward the city of Eilat. In turn, last month Israel prohibited its citizens from entering the Sinai. Meanwhile, terrorism is spreading from the peninsula to the previously peaceful Nile Valley and Delta, where attacks against policemen and bombings of Coptic Churches have become routine.

ISIS's strategy, tactics, and leadership are evolving. Once a locally-led expression of an aggrieved Bedouin population, the insurgents today are increasingly oriented toward Raqqa. As a result, they have received additional funding and developed a more professional media campaign, and their focus has shifted to unabashedly killing Christians. ISIS in Egypt is also adapting more lethal technologies—such as explosively formed penetrators or EFPs—to great effect against government forces and, taking a page from the ISIS mothership, fanning sectarianism.

As the so-called ISIS Sinai Province is evolving, Egypt's military approach has stagnated. Focused on economic pursuits and force preservation, Egyptian ground forces do not routinely and proactively engage with the enemy. Instead, they are slowly attrited by ambushes and roadside bombs. Further, Egypt is increasingly subcontracting out its security to the Israeli Air Force, which now has carte blanche to target terrorists via manned and unmanned aircraft operating in Egyptian airspace. Israel is "mowing the grass" in the Sinai, but it is not reversing ISIS's territorial gains, an objective that would require (non-Israeli) boots on the ground.

For many in Washington, ISIS's relative strength is concerning. The Trump administration may be able to deprioritize or ignore the thorny topic of human rights with Cairo, but it cannot do the same with the rise of ISIS in the most populous Arab state. Yet after the nearly 40 years and \$50 billion in U.S. military assistance since Camp David, it's becoming clear that American assistance to Egypt's armed forces has not succeeded in making that army even minimally capable, nor has it bolstered the determination of the leadership in Cairo to deploy forces on difficult combat missions.

To be sure, the aid may be helping to prevent some worst-case scenarios. U.S. military assistance, for example, likely dissuades Cairo from moving closer to Moscow. It may also be helping to forestall the collapse of the state and with it, potentially, the migration of millions of Egyptians to Europe. But Washington needs to find creative ways to encourage the political leadership in Cairo to prod the military into doing its job more effectively, especially counterinsurgency operations. Recently, Egypt requested and received U.S. training for detecting and disposing of IEDs. Based on its performance, the Egyptian military also desperately needs training in counterinsurgency tactics, and perhaps on-the-ground assistance and coaching from U.S. personnel. Such U.S. technical support would extend beyond kinetic operations to include other aspects of modern counterinsurgency, or COIN, campaigns, such as economic development and public diplomacy messaging.

The United States should also urge Egypt to make changes to its procurements of American military equipment, which it purchases with U.S. financial assistance. Given the threats Egypt faces, which almost exclusively relate to terrorism and by extension border security, there is little rationale for the kind of big ticket items Cairo has long prioritized, including tanks, fighter jets, amphibious assault/helicopter carrier ships, and upgrades to long-range missiles. It would be far more productive for Cairo to purchase more Blackhawk helicopters to improve the military's rapid reaction capabilities, and to spend money to help it

improve surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance through ISTAR systems that might enhance counterinsurgency operations.

To be sure, the Egyptian military will be loath to accept U.S. suggestions in this regard. Since putting conditions on U.S. assistance has not been successful in the past, the Trump administration should focus on incentives, including leveraging “cash flow financing,” a perquisite that until 2015 allowed Egypt to use future U.S. financial assistance as credit to purchase expensive weapons systems. Washington could reinstitute cash flow financing, which was scrapped in 2015 after the military coup, but only for equipment that the U.S. Department of Defense deems related to counterterrorism and border security operations.

Washington should also consider increasing funding for Egypt’s rather modest military education and training program, known as IMET. In 2016, the U.S. Department of State allocated just \$1.8 million to this endeavor. By comparison, in the same year Jordan—whose army is 15 percent the size of Egypt’s—was given \$3.8 million for military training. The administration should consider reprogramming or earmarking some of Egypt’s \$1.3 billion in U.S. Foreign Military Financing, or FMF, to enhance these programs, with a special focus on exposing more Egyptian officers to modern COIN techniques.

Finally, despite Egypt’s attachment to large-scale military training exercises designed to prepare for fighting a nation state, Washington should scrap or radically redesign the annual “Bright Star” operation. In the past, the United States has held this weeks-long training exercise with Egypt, involving at various times amphibious landing drills, airborne jumps, and large-scale tank maneuvers. The problem, of course, is that Egypt has no state enemies, making these drills largely irrelevant. Given vested interests in Cairo and Washington, it may be difficult to end Bright Star altogether, but a significant portion of the exercise should be repurposed to focus on counterterrorism operations, something Egypt really needs.

Egypt will not be easily changed, even in ways that are, to most observers, obviously in Egypt’s self-interest. Nevertheless, Washington should continue to press Cairo to do so, because its success against ISIS in the Sinai and throughout the entirety of the state is in U.S. national security interest interests.

At his White House meeting earlier this month, Sisi told Trump, “You will find me and Egypt next to you [as you] implement the strategy to confront and eradicate terrorism.” Sisi is no doubt sincere in his support for the United States in the war against ISIS. For that matter, he is also supportive of Israel’s military efforts. The real question, though, is how committed Egypt is to its own fight against terrorism.¹⁰

¹⁰ David Schenker, Egypt’s Failed War on Terror, *Foreign Affairs*, May 10, 2017

CHAPTER 10

Conflict in Ukraine

Background

The crisis in Ukraine began with protests in the capital city of Kiev in November 2013 against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's decision to reject a deal for greater economic integration with the European Union. After a violent crackdown by state security forces unintentionally drew an even greater number of protesters and escalated the conflict, President Yanukovych fled the country in February 2014.

In March 2014, Russian troops took control of Ukraine's Crimean region, before formally annexing the peninsula after Crimeans voted to join the Russian Federation in a disputed local referendum. Russian President Vladimir Putin cited the need to protect the rights of Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Crimea and southeast Ukraine. The crisis heightened ethnic divisions, and two months later pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine.

Violence in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatist forces and the Ukrainian military has by conservative estimates killed more than 10,300 people and injured nearly 24,000 since April 2014. Although Moscow has denied its involvement, Ukraine and NATO have reported the buildup of Russian troops and military equipment near Donetsk and Russian cross-border shelling.

In July 2014, the situation in Ukraine escalated into an international crisis and put the United States and the European Union (EU) at odds with Russia when a Malaysian Airlines flight was shot down over Ukrainian airspace, killing all 298 onboard. Dutch air accident investigators concluded in October 2015 that the plane had been downed by a Russian-built surface-to-air missile. In September 2016, investigators said that the missile system was provided by Russia, determining it was moved into eastern Ukraine and then back to Russian territory following the downing of the airplane.

Since February 2015, France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine have attempted to broker a cessation in violence through the Minsk Accords. The agreement includes provisions for a cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weaponry, and full Ukrainian government control throughout the conflict zone. However, efforts to reach a diplomatic settlement and satisfactory resolution have been unsuccessful.

In April 2016, NATO announced that the alliance would deploy four battalions to Eastern Europe, rotating troops through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to deter possible future Russian aggression elsewhere in Europe, particularly in the Baltics. These

battalions were joined by two U.S. Army tank brigades, deployed to Poland in September 2017 to further bolster the alliance's deterrence presence.

Ukraine has been the target of a number of cyberattacks since the conflict started in 2014. In December 2015, more than 225,000 people lost power across Ukraine in an attack, and in December 2016 parts of Kiev experienced another power blackout following a similar attack targeting a Ukrainian utility company. In June 2017, government and business computer systems in Ukraine were hit by the NotPetya cyber-attack; the crippling attack, attributed to Russia, spread to computer systems worldwide and caused billions of dollars in damages.

Concerns

The conflict in Ukraine risks further deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations and greater escalation if Russia expands its presence in Ukraine or into NATO countries. Russia's actions have raised wider concerns about its intentions elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and a Russian incursion into a NATO country would solicit a response from the United States as a NATO ally. The conflict has heightened tensions in Russia's relations with both the United States and Europe, complicating the prospects for cooperation elsewhere including on issues of terrorism, arms control, and a political solution in Syria.

Recent Developments

The conflict in eastern Ukraine has transitioned to a stalemate after it first erupted in early 2014, but shelling and skirmishes still occur regularly, including an escalation in violence in the spring of 2018.

Since taking office, the Donald J. Trump administration has continued to pressure Russia over its involvement in eastern Ukraine. In January 2018, the United States imposed new sanctions on twenty-one individuals and nine companies linked to the conflict. In March 2018, the State Department approved the sale of anti-tank weapons to Ukraine, the first sale of lethal weaponry since the conflict began, and in July 2018 the Department of Defense announced an additional \$200 million in defensive aid to Ukraine, bringing the total amount of aid provided since 2014 to \$1 billion.

In October 2018, Ukraine joined the United States and seven other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries in a series of large-scale air exercises in western Ukraine. The exercises came after Russia held its annual military exercises in September 2018, the largest since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine profile

A chronology of key events

9th century - Founding of Kievan Rus, the first major Eastern Slavonic state. The traditional account, a matter of debate among historians, attributes its founding to the semi-legendary Viking (or Varangian) leader Oleg, ruler of Novgorod, who went on to seize Kiev which, owing to its strategic location on the Dnieper River, became the capital of Kievan Rus.

10th century - Rurik dynasty established, and the rule of Prince Vladimir the Great (Prince Volodymyr in Ukrainian) heralds start of a golden age. In 988 he accepts Orthodox Christianity and begins conversion of Kievan Rus, thus setting the course for Christianity in the east.

11th century - Kievan Rus reaches its peak under Yaroslav the Wise (grand prince 1019-1054), with Kiev becoming eastern Europe's chief political and cultural centre.

Foreign domination

1237-40 - Mongols invade the Rus principalities, destroying many cities and ending Kiev's power. The Tatars, as the Mongol invaders became known, establish the empire of the Golden Horde.

1349-1430 - Poland and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth gradually annex most of what is now western and northern Ukraine.

1441 - Crimean Khanate breaks free of the Golden Horde and conquers most of modern southern Ukraine.

19th century - National cultural reawakening sees the development of Ukrainian literature, education, and historical research. Habsburg-run Galicia, acquired during the partitions of Poland, becomes a centre for Ukrainian political and cultural activity, as Russia bans the use of the Ukrainian language on its own territory.

1596 - Poland establishes Greek-Catholic or Uniate Church, in union with Rome, which comes to predominate in western Ukraine. The rest of Ukraine remains overwhelmingly Orthodox.

1648-1657- Cossack uprising against Polish rule establishes Hetmanate, regarded in Ukraine as the forerunner of the modern independent state.

1654 - Treaty of Pereyaslavl begins process of transforming Hetmanate into a vassal of Russia.

1686 - Treaty of Eternal Peace between Russia and Poland ends 37 years of war with the Ottoman Empire in what is now Ukraine, and partitions the Hetmanate.

1708-09 - Mazepa uprising attempts to free the eastern Hetmanate from Russian rule, during the prolonged Great Northern War that ranged Russia against Poland and Sweden at the time.

1764 - Russia abolishes the eastern Hetmanate and establishes the Little Russia governorate as a transitional entity until the full annexation of the territory in 1781.

Russian rule

1772-1795 - Most of western Ukraine is absorbed into the Russian Empire through the partitions of Poland.

1783 - Russia takes over southern Ukraine through the annexation of the Crimean Khanate.

Rise of Soviet power

1917 - Central Rada council set up in Kiev following collapse of Russian Empire.

1918 - Ukraine declares independence. Numerous rival governments vie for control for some or all of Ukraine during ensuing civil war.

1921 - Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic established when Russian Red Army conquers two-thirds of Ukraine. Western third becomes part of Poland.

1920s - The Soviet government encourages Ukrainian language and culture within strict political bounds, although this process is reversed in the 1930s.

1932 - Millions die in a man-made famine during Stalin's collectivisation campaign, known in Ukraine as the Holodomor.

1939 - Western Ukraine is annexed by the Soviet Union under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

1941 - Ukraine suffers terrible wartime devastation as Nazis occupy the country until 1944.

More than five million Ukrainians die fighting Nazi Germany. Most of Ukraine's 1.5 million Jews are killed by the Nazis.

occupation, in which millions lost their lives

1944 - Stalin deports 200,000 Crimean Tatars to Siberia and Central Asia following false accusations of collaboration with Nazi Germany.

1954 - In a surprise move, Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev transfers the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine.

Armed resistance to Soviet rule ends with capture of last commander of Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

1960s - Increase in covert opposition to Soviet rule, leading to repression of dissidents in 1972.

1986 - A reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power station explodes, sending a radioactive plume across Europe. Desperate efforts are made to contain the damaged reactor within a huge concrete cover.

Independence

1991 - Ukraine declares independence following attempted coup in Moscow.

1990s - About 250,000 Crimean Tatars and their descendants return to Crimea following collapse of Soviet Union.

1994 - Presidential elections: Leonid Kuchma succeeds Leonid Kravchuk, conducts policy of balancing overtures to the West and alliance with Russia.

1996 - New, democratic constitution adopted, and hryvnya currency introduced.

2000 - Chernobyl nuclear power plant is shut down, 14 years after the accident. Well over ten thousand people died as a direct result of the explosion, the health of millions more was affected.

2002 March - General election results in hung parliament. Parties opposed to President Kuchma allege widespread electoral fraud.

2002 May - Government announces decision to launch formal bid to join Nato.

Orange Revolution

2004 November - Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko launches mass protest campaign over rigged elections that gave victory to pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych. Supreme Court later annuls poll result.

Orange-clad opposition supporters took to Kiev's streets and forced a change of government

2005 December - Viktor Yushchenko becomes president after winning December election re-run. Relations with Russia sour, leading to frequent disputes over gas supplies and pipeline transit fees.

2006 July - Socialist Party abandons Orange Revolution allies to form coalition with Viktor Yanukovych's Party of Regions and the Communists.

2007 December - Yulia Tymoshenko is appointed prime minister again, in coalition with President Yushchenko's party.

2008 October - Global financial crisis leads to decline in demand for steel, causing price of one of the country's main exports to collapse. Value of Ukrainian currency falls sharply and investors pull out.

Yanukovych comeback

2010 February - Viktor Yanukovych is declared winner of second round of presidential election.

2010 June - Parliament votes to abandon Nato membership aspirations.

2011 October - A court jails former Yulia Tymoshenko for abuse of power over a gas deal with Russia in 2009.

Maidan revolution

2013 November - Tens of thousands of protesters take to the streets to protest at the government's sudden decision to abandon plans to sign an association agreement with the EU, blaming Russian pressure.

2014 February - Security forces kill at least 77 protesters in Kiev. President Yanukovych flees to Russia, opposition takes over.

2014 March - Russian forces annex Crimea, prompting biggest East-West showdown since Cold War. US and European Union impose ever-harsher sanctions on Russia.

2014 April - Pro-Russian armed groups seize parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions on Russian border. Government launches military operation in response.

2014 May - Leading businessman Petro Poroshenko wins presidential election on pro-Western platform.

2014 July - Pro-Russian forces shoot down Malaysian airliner over eastern Ukraine conflict zone, killing all 298 people on board.

2014 September - Nato confirms Russian troops and heavy military equipment entering eastern Ukraine.

2014 October - Parliamentary elections produce convincing majority for pro-Western parties.

European Union association

2015 February - Germany and France broker a new Donbass deal at talks in Belarus, resulting in a tenuous ceasefire.

2016 - Economy returns to fragile growth after two years of turmoil.

2017 July - Ukraine's association agreement with the European Union is ratified by all signatories, and comes into force on 1 September.

2018 May - Russian President Putin officially opens a bridge linking southern Russia to Crimea, an action Ukraine calls illegal.

2018 October - The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople agrees to allow Ukraine to set up its own Orthodox Church independent of Russian Orthodox supervision.

2018 November - President Poroshenko declares martial law in ten regions and bans the entry of most Russian adult males, fearing invasion after Moscow seizes the crew of three Ukrainian boats off Crimea.

The war in Ukraine is more devastating than you know

By Cynthia Buckley, Ralph Clem, Jarod Fox and Erik Herron

The fighting in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region is entering its fifth year. More than 10,000 people have been killed in this persistent conflict; 2,800 were civilians. Nearly two million people have been internally displaced or put at risk if they remain in their homes.

Today, the Donbas war is among the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with frequent attacks occurring from both sides across the oblasts (provinces) of Donetsk and Luhansk. Before the war, this compact, heavily urbanized and industrialized region held nearly 15 percent of Ukraine's population (6.6 million) and generated 16 percent of its gross domestic product.

Now it's a war zone. And our research has documented that, as its hospitals and medical facilities are destroyed — perhaps even targeted — its citizens are being deprived of basic health-care services, echoing Syria's similar if larger crisis.

So what happened in Ukraine?

In 2014, Ukraine was divided between those who wanted to affiliate with Russia and those who leaned toward Europe and NATO. In Kiev, in what was called the Maidan Revolution, the pro-Europe faction overthrew the kleptocratic and Russian-leaning Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych.

Reactions in the Donbas, a region bordering Russia and composed of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, varied. Separatist forces, abetted by Russia, began fighting the Ukrainian military, soon fortified by backup from Russian army units. That fighting has damaged the Donbas's basic infrastructure, particularly hospitals and clinics — making it hard for the government to deliver core services such as health care.

How we did our research

Combatants often attack hospitals. In Syria, human rights organizations and the U.N. Security Council have denounced these attacks as violations of international law. Fewer observers have noticed the attacks on Ukraine's hospitals, even though the World Health Organization (WHO) documented 33 such attacks from 2014 through 2016.

As part of a larger study, we compiled an inventory of the 247 registered hospitals and clinics in the Donbas. We then examined U.N. reports, investigations by nongovernmental organizations, central news reports in Ukraine and Russia, and Donetsk and Luhansk newspapers for evidence of health-care infrastructure damage from 2014 through 2017. We geo-located all specific reports of damage, eliminating duplicates.

We found that one-third of all Donbas medical facilities had been damaged

Our resulting geospatial database reveals patterns of "bricks and mortar" damage to the health-care system, as you can see below.

Adjusting for multiple hits, we found that 82 medical facilities — one-third of all those in the Donbas — had reported damage. That's far more than those reported by WHO.

However, the bricks-and-mortar damage doesn't show casualties among medical personnel or the loss of vehicles. Nor does it show how local civilians suffered severe damage to their housing and access to heat, electricity and clean water. Many of the residents who've stayed must now risk a great deal to reach even basic health care.

There are no safe places in a major war

The Donbas conflict is often described as "hybrid warfare," something akin to Russia's seizure of Crimea with "little green men." This is a serious mischaracterization. Yes, at first it was a skirmish between Ukrainian security forces and local separatist militias, bolstered by Russian mercenaries. But by late 2014, the fighting involved large numbers of troops including Russian army regulars, outfitted with armor and artillery. Most of the health-care damage happened during the heaviest fighting, before February 2015. Since then, damage has been limited to breaks in the cease-fire agreements. Health infrastructure is damaged when it's located near the heaviest fighting. Away from the front, we found little harm to medical facilities.

Mapping our data illustrates that attacks on health-care facilities are concentrated in the city of Donetsk and its environs; along the cease-fire line, where the front stabilized after February 2015; and around the city of Sloviansk, which was occupied by separatist forces but later retaken by Ukrainian troops. Along the coast of the Sea of Azov, advances by Russian troops and separatists resulted in a cluster of attacks near Mariupol. Northern Luhansk Oblast and western Donetsk Oblast saw little heavy fighting, and therefore little damage.

Were hospitals targets?

Many health-care facilities in the Donbas were destroyed. Was this deliberate — or was it collateral damage? We looked at what types of weapons were used, for some clues. In the Syrian civil war, heavy aerial bombardment destroyed a vast amount of infrastructure. By contrast, the Donbas fighting has used conventional artillery, heavy mortars and rockets such as the notorious Grad ("Hail") system. Such indirect-fire weapons are not accurate enough to target specific buildings. Those using them often can't see the target — so to destroy a particular target building, such weapons would succeed only when used in sufficient numbers, and would leave behind a great deal of collateral damage.

Some medical locations might have been attacked by shorter-range, direct-fire weapons such as tanks, antitank missiles or rocket-propelled grenades. Examining both witness accounts and the blast patterns in photos of derelict health-care facilities, we find that the damage appears to be what we would expect from artillery rounds or rockets.

It looks more like hospitals and clinics have been collateral damage than targets

When military targets are attacked and are fighting back, it's hard to conclude which side damaged the surrounding civilian infrastructure. Reliable reports document that both sides have quartered troops in or fired from hospitals, blurring the line between combatant and noncombatant.

In other conflicts, forensic examination of fragments or unexploded ordnance helps identify the type of munitions used to attack hospitals — making it easier to conclude which

side attacked which target. But in the Donbas war, both sides mostly use the same weaponry, making it difficult to deduce which side attacked the health-care facilities.

Were attacks on health-care facilities deliberate? Our preliminary examination suggests that they haven't been targeted. They appear to have suffered collateral damage, and have been hit by both sides. To draw conclusions about responsibility, one would need to employ the sophisticated open-source data and methods used to analyze the Syrian war damage.

No matter who is responsible, the fighting has damaged not just health-care services, but other civilian infrastructure such as housing, schools and election facilities — while killing, terrifying and displacing civilians. If Ukraine can't deliver essential services, the war has undermined the legitimacy of the state and made it harder to reach a reconciliation if and when the conflict ends.¹¹

¹¹ Cynthia Buckley, Ralph Clem, Jarod Fox and Erik Herron, The war in Ukraine is more devastating than you know, *The Washington Post*, (April 9, 2018)

CHAPTER 11

Conflict Between Turkey and Armed Kurdish Groups

Background

Since 1984, the PKK has waged an insurgency against Turkish authorities for greater cultural and political rights that has resulted in nearly forty thousand deaths. Designated by the Turkish government as a “terrorist group,” PKK members have refused to withdraw from Turkey to Kurdish Iraq; their primary objective has been to establish an independent Kurdish state.

There are approximately thirty million Kurds living in the Middle East. The Kurds constitute nearly one-fifth of Turkey’s seventy-nine million population and have neighboring Kurdish populations in Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Consequently, the fight for independence has had many fronts. The conflict between Kurdish groups and the Turkish government has been inflamed by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

In July 2015, a two-year cease-fire between Turkey’s government and the PKK collapsed following a suicide bombing by suspected Islamic State militants killed nearly thirty Kurds near the Syrian border. The PKK has accused Turkish forces of not doing enough to prevent the attack against Kurdish civilians.

Turkey’s deadliest attack occurred at a peace rally in Ankara in October 2015. It was claimed by TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks)—an offshoot of the PKK—and killed more than one hundred people.

The growing role of Kurdish representatives in Turkey’s parliament has alarmed the Erdogan government, especially as it continues to tamp down internal dissent. Nearly a year before the July coup in June 2015, the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) won more than 12 percent of the vote, forcing President Erdogan’s more conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP) to form a coalition government. In November 2015, however, the AKP regained control of parliament, winning nearly 50 percent of the vote in a parliamentary election. Political divisions in Turkey were further exacerbated by the July 2016 coup attempt.

Beyond Turkey, Syrian Kurds have been combating the Islamic State and have formed a semi-autonomous region in Northern Syria. In September 2014, the Kurdish-controlled town of Kobani was besieged and eventually captured by the Islamic State; the violence resulted in more than 1,200 deaths. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—an alliance of Arab and Kurdish fighters backed by the United States—liberated the strategic Syrian city of Manbij from the Islamic State in late August 2016. Later in August, YPG

forces (part of the SDF coalition) clashed with Turkish-backed rebels attempting to gain control of Manbij.

The alliance of Kurdish fighters has also converged in Iraq, where the Islamic State has advanced toward the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The Peshmerga—armed fighters who protect Iraqi Kurdistan—have joined with Iraqi security forces and received arms and financial assistance from the United States.

PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan has called for mass mobilization among Kurds to start an “all-out resistance” in the fight against the Islamic State. Despite this common enemy, many of Turkey’s air strikes have targeted Kurdish fighters rather than militants of the Islamic State.

Concerns

If the Kurds succeed in establishing an independent state in Syria amid the chaos gripping the region, this could accelerate secessionist movements in other Kurdish areas of the Middle East. Heightened terrorist activity by Kurdish separatists is also a growing concern for the United States, which has designated the PKK a foreign terrorist organization.

U.S.-Turkey relations have faltered since President Erdogan renewed calls for the extradition of Fethullah Gülen—a Turkish political and religious leader in self-imposed exile in the United States—whom Erdogan believes to be an organizer of the coup. Relations have also suffered because of the United States’ close relationship with Kurdish groups; the United States continues to supply arms to Peshmerga troops fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and is also considering arming Syrian Kurds.

Recent Developments

Attacks in Turkey and clashes with Kurdish groups significantly increased in 2016. A coup attempt in July 2016 against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has also raised the country’s political instability. While there has been growing discontent under Erdogan’s tenure, especially since the Gezi park protests in June 2013, tensions have also risen between Turkish authorities and Kurdish groups—in particular, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) (a leftwing pro-Kurdish party), and the People’s Protection Unit (YPG) (the armed wing of the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) with ties to the PKK).

Following the July 2016 coup attempt, President Erdogan has cracked down on suspected coup conspirators and arrested an estimated thirty-two thousand people. He has also increased air strikes on PKK militants in Turkey and extended operations into Syria to battle the YPG and the self-declared Islamic State with air strikes and ground troops.

Peace talks between the Turkish government and the PKK broke down in July 2015. Since then, over two thousand people have been killed in clashes between security forces and the PKK. In his first public statement since April 2015, the PKK’s jailed leader, Abdullah

Ocalan, called for the resumption of peace talks with the Turkish government in September 2016.

Turkey profile

A chronology of key events:

Ottoman Empire

1453 - Sultan Mehmed II captures Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire and consolidating Ottoman Empire in Asia Minor and Balkans.

15th-16th centuries - Expansion into Asia and Africa.

1683 - Ottoman advance into Europe halted at Battle of Vienna. Long decline begins.

19th century - Efforts at political and economic modernisation of Empire largely founder.

1908 - Young Turk Revolution establishes constitutional rule, but degenerates into military dictatorship during First World War, where Ottoman Empire fights in alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

1918-22 - Partition of defeated Ottoman Empire leads to eventual triumph of Turkish National Movement in war of independence against foreign occupation and rule of Sultan.

Modern Turkey

1923 - Grand National Assembly declares Turkey a republic and Kemal Ataturk president.

1928 - Turkey becomes secular: clause retaining Islam as state religion removed from constitution.

1938 - President Ataturk dies, succeeded by Ismet Inonu.

1945 - Neutral for most of World War II, Turkey declares war on Germany and Japan,

but does not take part in combat. Joins United Nations.

1950 - First free elections won by opposition Democratic Party.

Military coups

1952 - Turkey abandons Ataturk's neutralist policy and joins Nato.

1960 - Army coup against ruling Democratic Party.

1963 - Association agreement signed with European Economic Community (EEC).

1965 - Suleyman Demirel becomes prime minister - a position he is to hold seven times.

1971 - Army forces Demirel's resignation after spiral of political violence.

1974 - Turkish troops invade northern Cyprus.

1978 - US trade embargo resulting from invasion lifted.

1980 - Military coup follows political deadlock and civil unrest. Imposition of martial law.

1982 - New constitution creates seven-year presidency, and reduces parliament to single chamber.

1983 - General election won by Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party.

Kurdish war

1984 - Turkey recognises "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus."

Kurdistan Workers' Party launches separatist guerrilla war in southeast.

1987 - Turkey applies for full EEC membership.

1990 - Turkey allows US-led coalition against Iraq to launch air strikes from Turkish bases.

1992 - 20,000 Turkish troops enter Kurdish safe havens in Iraq in anti-PKK operation.

1993 - Tansu Ciller becomes Turkey's first woman prime minister, and Demirel elected president.

1995 - Major military offensive launched against the Kurds in northern Iraq, involving some 35,000 Turkish troops.

Pro-Islamist Welfare Party wins elections but lacks support to form government - two major centre-right parties form anti-Islamist coalition.

Turkey enters EU customs union.

Rise of political Islam

1996 - Centre-right coalition falls. Welfare Party leader Necmettin Erbakan heads first pro-Islamic government since 1922.

1997 - Coalition resigns after campaign led by the military, replaced by a new coalition led by the centre-right Motherland Party of Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz.

1998 January - Welfare Party - the largest in parliament - banned. Yilmaz resigns amid corruption allegations, replaced by Bulent Ecevit.

1999 February - PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan captured in Kenya.

2001 June - Constitutional Court bans opposition pro-Islamic Virtue Party, saying it had become focus of anti-secular activities.

2002 January - Turkish men are no longer regarded in law as head of the family. The

move gives women full legal equality with men, 66 years after women's rights were put on the statute books.

2002 August - Parliament approves reforms aimed at securing EU membership. Death sentence to be abolished except in times of war and bans on Kurdish education, broadcasting to be lifted.

Islamist party victorious

2002 November - Islamist-based Justice and Development Party (AK) wins landslide election victory. Party promises to stick to secular principles of constitution. Deputy leader Abdullah Gul appointed premier.

2002 December - Constitutional changes allow head of ruling AK Party, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to run for parliament, and so to become prime minister. He had been barred from public office because of previous criminal conviction.

Kurdish rebels

The PKK - Kurdistan Workers Party - is a rebel group fighting for an independent Kurdish state within Turkey

- Founded in 1974. Took up arms against Turkey in 1984
- More than 40,000 people have been killed in conflict
- Listed as a terrorist organisation by Ankara, US and EU
- Since his capture, founder Abdullah Ocalan has encouraged quest for Kurdish rights via political rather than military means
- Government has lifted some restrictions on Kurdish cultural and political rights to try to end conflict
- Kurds say restrictions and mass arrests of Kurdish politicians have continued

2003 March - AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan wins seat in parliament.

Within days Abdullah Gul resigns as prime minister and Erdogan takes over.

Parliament decides not to allow deployment of US forces ahead of war in Iraq but allows US use of Turkish air space. It authorises dispatch of Turkish forces into Kurdish areas of northern Iraq.

2003 June-July - Eyeing future EU membership, parliament passes laws easing restrictions on freedom of speech, Kurdish language rights, and on reducing political role of military.

Istanbul attacks

2003 November - 25 people are killed and more than 200 injured when two car bombs explode near Istanbul's main synagogue. Days later two co-ordinated suicide bombings at the British consulate and a British bank in the city kill 28 people.

2004 January - Turkey signs protocol banning death penalty in all circumstances, a move welcomed in EU circles.

2004 May - PKK says it plans to end a ceasefire because of what it calls annihilation operations against its forces.

2004 June - State TV broadcasts first Kurdish-language programme.

2004 September - Parliament approves penal reforms introducing tougher measures to prevent torture and violence against women. Controversial proposal on criminalising adultery dropped.

EU talks

2004 December - EU leaders agree to open talks in 2005 on Turkey's EU accession. The decision, made at a summit in Brussels, follows a deal over an EU demand that Turkey recognise Cyprus as an EU member.

2005 January - New lira currency introduced as six zeroes are stripped from old lira, ending an era in which banknotes were denominated in millions.

2005 May - Parliament approves amendments to new penal code after complaints that the previous version restricted media freedom. The EU welcomes the move but says the code still fails to meet all its concerns on human rights.

2005 June - Parliament overturns veto by secularist President Sezer on government-backed amendment easing restrictions on teaching of Koran.

2005 October - EU membership negotiations officially launched after intense bargaining.

2005 November - Multi-billion-dollar Blue Stream pipeline carrying Russian gas under the Black Sea to Turkey opens in the port of Samsun.

2006 May - Gunman opens fire in Turkey's highest court, killing a prominent judge and wounding four others. Thousands protest against what they perceive as an Islamic fundamentalist attack.

2006 June - Parliament passes new anti-terror law which worries the EU and which rights groups criticise as an invitation to torture.

2006 July - Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline opened at ceremony in Turkey.

2006 30 September - Kurdish separatist group, the PKK, declares a unilateral ceasefire in operations against the military.

2006 December - EU partially freezes Turkey's membership talks because of Ankara's failure to open its ports and airports to Cypriot traffic.

2007 January - Journalist and Armenian community leader Hrant Dink is assassinated. The murder provokes outrage in Turkey and Armenia. Prime Minister Erdogan says a bullet has been fired at democracy and freedom of expression.

Secularist protests

2007 April - Tens of thousands of supporters of secularism rally in Ankara, aiming to pressure Prime Minister Erdogan not to run in presidential elections because of his Islamist background.

Ruling AK Party puts forward Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul as its candidate after Mr Erdogan decides not to stand. He narrowly fails to win in the first round.

2007 May - Parliament gives initial approval to a constitutional change allowing the president to be elected by a popular vote, but the amendment is vetoed by President Sezer.

2007 July - AK Party wins parliamentary elections. Abdullah Gul elected president the following month.

2007 October - Voters in a referendum back plans to have future presidents elected by the people instead of by parliament.

2007 December - Turkey launches a series of air strikes on fighters from the Kurdish PKK movement inside Iraq.

Headscarf dispute

2008 February - Thousands protest at plans to allow women to wear the Islamic headscarf to university.

2008 July - Petition to the constitutional court to have the governing AK Party banned for allegedly undermining the secular constitution fails by a narrow margin.

2008 October - Trial starts of 86 suspected members of shadowy ultra-nationalist Ergenekon group, which is accused of plotting a series of attacks and provoking a military coup against the government.

2009 July - President Abdullah Gul approves legislation proposed by the ruling AK Party giving civilian courts the power to try military personnel for threatening national security or involvement in organised crime.

2009 October - The governments of Turkey and Armenia agree to normalise relations at a meeting in Switzerland. Both parliaments will need to ratify the accord. Turkey says opening the border will depend on progress on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

2009 December - The government introduces measures in parliament to increase Kurdish language rights and reduce the military presence in the mainly-Kurdish southeast as part of its "Kurdish initiative".

Constitutional reform

2010 April - Parliament begins debating constitutional changes proposed by the government with the stated aim of making Turkey more democratic. The opposition Republican People's Party says the Islamist-leaning ruling AK Party is seeking more control over the secular judiciary.

2010 May - Relations with Israel come under severe strain after nine Turkish activists are killed in an Israeli commando raid on an aid flotilla attempting to reach Gaza.

2010 September - Referendum on constitutional reform backs amendments to increase parliamentary control over the army and judiciary.

2010 November - The whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks publishes confidential cables revealing that France and Austria have been deliberately blocking Turkey's EU membership negotiations.

2011 June - Ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party wins resounding victory in general election. PM Erdogan embarks on third term in office.

Thousands of refugees fleeing unrest in Syria stream into Turkey. Ankara demands reform in Syria.

2011 August - President Gul appoints top military leaders after their predecessors resign en masse. This is the first time a

civilian government has decided who commands the powerful armed forces.

2011 October - PKK rebels kill 24 Turkish troops near the Iraqi border, the deadliest attack against the military since the 1990s.

2012 June - Turkey permits schools to offer the Kurdish language as an optional course.

2012 October - Tension rises with Damascus. After Syrian mortar fire on a Turkish border town kills five civilians, parliament authorises military action inside Syria, and the armed forces respond with artillery fire into Syria.

2013 March - Following protracted talks between Turkish government and jailed PKK leader, Mr Ocalan announces end of armed struggle and ceasefire.

Protests

2013 May-June - Mass anti-government protests spread to several cities, sparked by plans to develop one of Istanbul's few green spaces. The police respond with violence, and two protestors die. Prime Minister Erdogan responds with defiance.

2013 December - Government sacks numerous police chiefs over arrests of pro-government public figures on corruption charges. Observers see this as part of power struggle with former AK Party ally and influential US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen.

Erdogan presidency

2014 August - Prime Minister Erdogan wins the first direct popular election for president.

2015 March - The "Sledgehammer" coup plot trial collapses when a court clears 236 military officers accused of involvement in an alleged conspiracy to remove former Prime Minister Erdogan from power in 2003.

2015 June - The pro-Kurdish leftwing People's Democratic Party (HDP) enters

parliament at elections, depriving the governing AK party of its majority and scuppering plans for a referendum on executive powers for President Erdogan.

2015 July - Turkey announces air strikes against Islamic State militant group after suspected IS suicide bomber kills 32 young activists at rally in Suruc, on the Syrian border.

Ceasefire with the Kurdish rebel PKK - declared by jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in 2013 - finally crumbles under the weight of tensions aggravated by the Syrian civil war and the role of both Turkey and the Kurds in the war. Kurdish insurgency erupts once more.

2015 October - Turkey accuses Islamic State of twin suicide bomb attacks on Ankara peace rally by Kurds that kills 100 people.

Spillover of Syria conflict

2015 November - Governing AKP party regains parliamentary majority in snap elections, but falls short of numbers needed for referendum to boost President Erdogan's powers.

Turkey shoots down a Russian military jet on Syria bombing mission. Russia, Turkey's second-largest trading partner, imposes economic sanctions.

European Union strikes a deal whereby Turkey restricts flow of migrants into Europe, in return for €3bn (\$3.17bn) and concessions on stalled EU accession talks.

2016 February - Bomb attack on military convoy in the capital Ankara kills at least 38 people. A hard-line breakaway PKK faction - the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) - claims responsibility.

Media crackdown

2016 March - Authorities put Turkey's biggest newspaper, Zaman - closely linked to Erdogan rival Fethullah Gulen - under state control.

Suicide car-bomb attack in Ankara kills 37 people. TAK again claims responsibility.

2016 May - Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu resigns as prime minister after falling out with President Erdogan.

President Erdogan says that deal on restriction of flow of migrants into Europe - largely negotiated by Mr Davutoglu - could collapse if Turks are not granted visa-free access to the EU.

2016 June - Turkey recalls its ambassador to Berlin after German parliament adopts resolution declaring as genocide the killing of Armenians by Ottoman Turkish forces during WW1.

A gun and suicide attack on Istanbul's Ataturk airport kills 42 people, including 13 foreign nationals. Turkish authorities believe the attack bears the hallmarks of so-called Islamic State.

Coup attempt

2016 July - The authorities detain thousands of soldiers and judges on suspicion of involvement in a coup attempt that President Erdogan says was inspired by his exiled opponent Fethullah Gulen.

The government also shuts down dozens of media outlets - including 16 TV channels - during a continuing crackdown in the wake of the failed coup attempt.

2016 August - President Erdogan visits St Petersburg for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The two men pledge to restore the close economic ties that were

badly affected after Turkey shot down a Russian bomber on the Syrian border in November 2015.

2016 December - Off-duty policeman kills Russian ambassador in apparent revenge for Russian air campaign in Syria. Russia and Turkey pledge to cooperate with Iran in fight against Islamic State in Syria.

2017 January - Uzbek gunman kills 39 people celebrating New Year at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul. The Islamic State group says it was behind the attack.

2017 April - President Erdogan narrowly wins referendum to extend his powers. Opposition launches appeal against result.

Turkey launches air strikes on US Kurdish allies in Syria and Iraq, a few weeks after formally ending its seven-month Euphrates Shield operation against Kurdish groups and Islamic State in northern Syria.

2018 January - The Turkish military launches its "Olive Branch" land and air operation in north-western Syria, seizing large areas from Kurdish control, including the town of Afrin.

2018 June - President Erdogan wins another term in snap elections.

2018 August - Turkish lira plunges to record lows, having shed more than 40% of its value against the dollar in the past year. US-imposed sanctions, linked to Ankara's refusal to release a jailed US pastor, exacerbate the situation and prompt fears of an economic crisis.

Who are the Kurds?

Where do they come from?

The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Mesopotamian plains and the highlands in what are now south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Syria, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and south-western Armenia.

Today, they form a distinctive community, united through race, culture and language, even though they have no standard dialect. They also adhere to a number of different religions and creeds, although the majority are Sunni Muslims.

Why don't they have a state?

In the early 20th Century, many Kurds began to consider the creation of a homeland - generally referred to as "Kurdistan". After World War One and the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious Western allies made provision for a Kurdish state in the 1920 Treaty of Sevres.

Such hopes were dashed three years later, however, when the Treaty of Lausanne, which set the boundaries of modern Turkey, made no provision for a Kurdish state and left Kurds with minority status in their respective countries. Over the next 80 years, any move by Kurds to set up an independent state was brutally quashed.

Why are Kurds at the forefront of the fight against IS?

In mid-2013, the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) turned its sights on three Kurdish enclaves that bordered territory under its control in northern Syria. It launched repeated attacks that until mid-2014 were repelled by the People's Protection Units (YPG) - the armed wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

An IS advance in northern Iraq in June 2014 also drew that country's Kurds into the conflict. The government of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region sent its Peshmerga forces to areas abandoned by the Iraqi army.

In August 2014, the jihadists launched a surprise offensive and the Peshmerga withdrew from several areas. A number of towns inhabited by religious minorities fell, notably Sinjar, where IS militants killed or captured thousands of Yazidis.

In response, a US-led multinational coalition launched air strikes in northern Iraq and sent military advisers to help the Peshmerga. The YPG and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has fought for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey for three decades and has bases in Iraq, also came to their aid.

In September 2014, IS launched an assault on the enclave around the northern Syrian Kurdish town of Kobane, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee across the nearby

Turkish border. Despite the proximity of the fighting, Turkey refused to attack IS positions or allow Turkish Kurds to cross to defend it.

In January 2015, after a battle that left at least 1,600 people dead and more than 3,200 buildings destroyed or damaged, Kurdish forces regained control of Kobane.

Since then, the Kurds - fighting under the banner of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alongside several local Arab militias, and helped by US-led coalition airpower - have driven IS out thousands of square kilometres of territory in Syria and established control over hundreds of kilometres along the border with Turkey.

In October 2017, SDF fighters captured the de facto IS capital of Raqqa and were advancing south-eastwards into the neighbouring province of Deir al-Zour - the jihadists' last major foothold in Syria.

The gains have, however, brought the Kurds and their allies into direct contact with Russian-supported Syrian government forces and Turkish-backed rebels, triggering clashes that have raised tensions between competing world powers.

Why is Turkey reluctant to help the Kurds battle IS?

There is deep-seated hostility between the Turkish state and the country's Kurds, who constitute 15% to 20% of the population.

Kurds received harsh treatment at the hands of the Turkish authorities for generations. In response to uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s, many Kurds were resettled, Kurdish names and costumes were banned, the use of the Kurdish language was restricted, and even the existence of a Kurdish ethnic identity was denied, with people designated "Mountain Turks".

In 1978, Abdullah Ocalan established the PKK, which called for an independent state within Turkey. Six years later, the group began an armed struggle. Since then, more than 40,000 people have been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.

In the 1990s the PKK rolled back on its demand for independence, calling instead for greater cultural and political autonomy, but continued to fight. In 2013, a ceasefire was agreed after secret talks were held.

The ceasefire collapsed in July 2015, after a suicide bombing blamed on IS killed 33 young activists in the mainly Kurdish town of Suruc, near the Syrian border. The PKK accused the authorities of complicity and attacked Turkish soldiers and police. The Turkish government subsequently launched what it called a "synchronised war on terror" against the PKK and IS.

Since then, several thousand people - including hundreds of civilians - have been killed in clashes in south-eastern Turkey.

In August 2016, Turkey sent troops and tanks into northern Syria to support a Syrian rebel offensive against IS. Those forces captured the key border town of Jarablus and the IS stronghold of al-Bab, preventing the YPG-led SDF from seizing the territory itself and linking up with the Kurdish enclave of Afrin to the west.

Turkey's government says the YPG and the PYD are extensions of the PKK, share its goal of secession through armed struggle, and are all terrorist organisations.

What do Syria's Kurds want?

Kurds make up between 7% and 10% of Syria's population. Before the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in 2011 most lived in the cities of Damascus and Aleppo, and in three, non-contiguous areas around Kobane, Afrin, and the north-eastern city of Qamishli.

Syria's Kurds have long been suppressed and denied basic rights. Some 300,000 have been denied citizenship since the 1960s, and Kurdish land has been confiscated and redistributed to Arabs in an attempt to "Arabize" Kurdish regions.

When the uprising evolved into a civil war, the main Kurdish parties publicly avoided taking sides. In mid-2012, government forces withdrew to concentrate on fighting the rebels elsewhere, and Kurdish groups took control in their wake.

In January 2014, Kurdish parties - including the dominant Democratic Union Party (PYD) - declared the creation of "autonomous administrations" in the three "cantons" of Afrin, Kobane and Jazira.

In March 2016, they announced the establishment of a "federal system" that included mainly Arab and Turkmen areas captured from IS.

The declaration was rejected by the Syrian government, the Syrian opposition, Turkey and the US.

The PYD says it is not seeking independence, but insists that any political settlement to end the conflict in Syria must include legal guarantees for Kurdish rights and recognition of Kurdish autonomy.

President Assad has vowed to take back control of all of Syria, but his foreign minister said in September 2017 that he was open to negotiations with Kurds over their demand for autonomy.

Will Iraq's Kurds gain independence?

Kurds make up an estimated 15% to 20% of Iraq's population. They have historically enjoyed more national rights than Kurds living in neighbouring states, but also faced brutal repression.

In 1946, Mustafa Barzani formed the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to fight for autonomy in Iraq. But it was not until 1961 that he launched a full armed struggle.

In the late 1970s, the government began settling Arabs in areas with Kurdish majorities, particularly around the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and forcibly relocating Kurds.

The policy was accelerated in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq War, in which the Kurds backed the Islamic republic. In 1988, Saddam Hussein unleashed a campaign of vengeance on the Kurds that included the chemical attack on Halabja.

When Iraq was defeated in the 1991 Gulf War, Barzani's son Massoud and Jalal Talabani of the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led a Kurdish rebellion. Its violent suppression prompted the US and its allies to impose a no-fly zone in the north that allowed Kurds to enjoy self-rule. The KDP and PUK agreed to share power, but tensions rose and a four-year war erupted between them in 1994.

The parties co-operated with the US-led invasion in 2003 that toppled Saddam and governed in coalition in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), created two years later to administer Dohuk, Irbil and Sulaimaniya provinces.

Massoud Barzani was appointed the region's president, while Jalal Talabani became Iraq's first non-Arab head of state.

In September 2017, a referendum on independence was held in both the Kurdistan Region and the disputed areas seized by the Peshmerga in 2014, including Kirkuk. The vote was opposed by the Iraqi central government, which insisted it was illegal.

More than 90% of the 3.3 million people who voted supported secession. KRG officials said the result gave them a mandate to start negotiations with Baghdad, but Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi demanded that it be annulled.

The following month Iraqi pro-government forces retook the disputed territory held by the Kurds. The loss of Kirkuk and its oil revenue was a major blow to Kurdish aspirations for their own state.

How to Stop the War Between Turkey and the Syrian Kurds

Fighting between two vital U.S. allies will only strengthen Assad and Iran.

By James F. Jeffrey, David Pollock

As the U.S. government shut down last weekend, two key American allies started fighting against each other: Turkey and the Kurds in Syria. Earlier this week, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson attempted an exquisite balancing act around this dilemma, nodding to “Turkey’s legitimate security concerns” but also to the “multiethnic group of fighters who are defending their home territory” inside Syria. What is the real U.S. policy here, and what should it be?

Just as the Turks have long urged, the United States now has a coherent policy in Syria. Furthermore, those goals are shared by Turkey. First, the underlying conflict between the Syrian people and the Bashar al-Assad regime should be resolved through a United Nations-led political process leading to a unitary post-Assad state. And second, Iranian influence in Syria should be diminished, and Syria’s neighbors should be kept secure from all threats emanating from Syria. The first goal satisfies Turkey’s two key objectives since 2011: getting rid of Assad, and a unified Syria, with no independent Syrian Kurdistan under the possible rule of the erstwhile allies of Turkey’s enemy, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) movement. The second goal, reducing Iran’s influence in Syria and ensuring that threats do not emanate from there, meets Turkey’s longstanding diplomatic interest (dating back to the Ottoman-Persian Empire conflicts) in containing, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has recently said publicly, “Persian expansionism.”

Despite Erdogan’s strident anti-Western rhetoric and domestic authoritarianism, Turkey shares a basic orientation with the United States and Europe. Like those of the Arab states and Israel, Turkey’s interests are threatened by an expansionist Iran enabled by Russia, the two traditional foes of both the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey.

But this convergence of interests does not mean that all is well between Washington and Ankara. Erdogan and most of the Turkish population have major problems with the United States supporting the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People’s Protection Units (YPG), as well as the joint Kurd-Arab military force it dominates, the Syrian Democratic Forces. Turkey has been stuck in a stalemated battle with the PKK, a listed terrorist group, and cannot afford the presence of the PYD, a PKK “offshoot,” as Erdogan’s spokesman recently termed it, all along its southern border.

Turkey’s interests are threatened by an expansionist Iran enabled by Russia, the two traditional foes of both the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey.

The United States has had difficulties convincing Turkey that its support for the PYD and SDF was, in U.S. officials’ words, transactional and solely based on its utility against the Islamic State, in part because of the strong personal links forged between U.S. forces on the

ground and the Kurdish fighters, who have been highly effective against Islamic State forces. A series of U.S. blunders at every level has made things worse, including former Vice President Joe Biden promising the Turks publicly that the PYD would retreat back across the Euphrates, President Donald Trump's promise to Erdogan to immediately cease weapons shipments to the Kurds, and a clumsy Pentagon announcement this month that it would train SDF elements as a border force — on the Turkish border. Washington thus has a very big hole to dig itself out of.

It has started doing so by announcing that it has no ties to another PYD force in the isolated enclave of Afrin, in northwestern Syria along the Turkish border. Turkish forces have now attacked that enclave, and the United States has urged restraint but has not stopped them. Tillerson was also at pains to praise Turkey's role in Syria, commit to cooperation with Ankara, and implicitly criticize the SDF and thus the PYD for not allowing enough local self-rule and democracy and for "threatening" neighboring states (i.e., Turkey).

The larger question is, how will long-term American interests in Turkey fit with Washington's highly successful three-year battlefield partnership with the PYD against the Islamic State? The United States will have to triangulate its vital alliance with Ankara and its new public promise to maintain the PYD partnership (including around 2,000 U.S. military advisors) for at least the coming two years. There is a way forward, tricky but essential, to reconcile American interests with both their Turkish and Syrian Kurdish allies.

The first step is to encourage the PYD to further distance itself from the PKK, while reminding Turkey privately that the PYD has largely kept its 2012 commitment not to provide material support to the PKK inside Turkey. It is useful to recall that as recently as 2015, Turkey and the PYD worked well together in facilitating the successful military operations against the Islamic State in Kobane, right on the Turkish border, and then-PYD leader Salih Muslim was an honored official guest of the Turkish government. This fragile entente fell victim to the collapse of the PKK-Turkish ceasefire and peace talks later that year — which made U.S. military support for the PYD a constant irritant in ties with Turkey.

The second step should be to set up direct channels for resumed discussions between the PYD and Turkey, and between the PYD and what remains of the mainstream, moderate Syrian Arab opposition that Turkey still supports. Through our unofficial, quiet contacts over the past several months with all sides, it appears that they may all be grudgingly open to this option. After Tillerson's remarks, the PYD's former European spokesman, Nawaf Khalil, went to so far as to publicly welcome this statement of a "balanced" U.S. commitment to all its allies in and around Syria. All these parties share a strong interest in opposing Assad and Iran, avoiding major armed conflict with each other, and maintaining their bilateral security and diplomatic ties with Washington.

All these parties share a strong interest in opposing Assad and Iran, avoiding major armed conflict with each other, and maintaining their bilateral security and diplomatic ties with Washington.

The third step is tougher, yet urgently necessary. That is to reassure Turkey, even more explicitly than Tillerson just did, that the United States will actively oppose any Kurdish secessionism

or territorial expansion in Syria, and any future attempts by the PYD to collaborate with the PKK inside Turkey. In return, the United States must credibly reassure its Syrian Kurdish friends that Washington will work with Turkey to forestall Turkish incursions or other military operations into the existing PYD-controlled enclaves in eastern Syria. The continued small U.S. military presence in those enclaves will make that commitment more credible. In the longer term, it may even be possible to forge a positive, informal coalition among these currently hostile regional parties, one that would consolidate pro-American and anti-Iranian, anti-Assad influence beyond Syria's northeast corner. Without such cooperation, including the PYD's, the U.S. presence in northeastern Syria and thus Washington's entire Syria policy will be difficult to sustain. That would not be in Turkey's interest, especially as it would result in either Turkey occupying all of northeast Syria in the face of fierce resistance, or allowing that region (and the pro-Kurdish military forces there) to fall under the sway of the Assad regime and Iran.

This may seem utopian right now, but it is worth recalling that Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds were enemies less than a decade ago — and today they are friends, with oil from Iraqi Kurdistan flowing daily through Turkey.

The “ancient ethnic conflict” between Turks and Kurds is not an insurmountable barrier to common strategic and economic interests — especially in the face of common enemies.

The “ancient ethnic conflict” between Turks and Kurds is not an insurmountable barrier to common strategic and economic interests — especially in the face of common enemies.

The key is for the Kurds to renounce pan-Kurdish dreams the lure of the PKK and its leader, Abdullah Ocalan. And the Turks must accept some degree of local Kurdish autonomy in neighboring states in exchange for the larger prize of containing Iran, Assad, and Russia — all of which pose a greater threat to Turkey than the PYD. Such a compromise would serve Turkish, Kurdish, and American interests.¹²

The “ancient ethnic conflict” between Turks and Kurds is not an insurmountable barrier to common strategic and economic interests — especially in the face of common enemies.

¹² James F. Jeffrey, David Pollock, How to Stop the War between Turkey and the Syrian Kurds, *Foreign Policy*, (January 25, 2018)

CHAPTER 12

Criminal Violence in Mexico

Background

Mexico is home to one of the world's largest and most sophisticated drug networks, as well as weak and corrupt law enforcement institutions. Mexico's drug-related organized crime groups began their expansion of operations in the late 1980s after the dismantling of Colombia's drug cartels. In the absence of Colombian drug suppliers, Mexican cartels branched outside of their original roles as couriers for Colombian gangs to wholesalers.

In order to increase their profits and influence, groups battle one another for territorial control. In some cases they possess greater coercive force and governance capabilities than the often weak or corrupt local governments. In 2006, in partnership with the United States, former Mexican President Felipe Calderon launched an initiative to combat the cartels with military force. This significantly escalated violence and claimed thousands of lives, including civilians.

The Mexican government revisited its counter-drug trafficking organizations strategy in 2012 under newly elected President Peña Nieto, choosing to focus on improving law enforcement and public safety rather than combating the cartels with military force. This approach initially caused a decrease in homicides, but was accompanied by an increase in kidnappings and extortion. However, the government has continued to rely heavily on the military and federal police to combat cartels, and 2016 saw an increase in homicides across Mexico.

Concerns

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, Mexican cartels are the largest foreign suppliers of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines to the United States, in addition to trafficking large amounts of marijuana into the country. Production of all three drugs has increased since 2005, as has the quantity of the drugs confiscated at the U.S. southwest border, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. In the United States, approximately two million Americans are dependent on opioids, and in 2016, drug overdose was the cause of death for over 59,000 Americans. Drug trafficking organizations threaten to undermine the strength and legitimacy of the Mexican government, an important U.S. regional partner, as well as harm civilian populations in both countries.

Recent Developments

Since the escalation of violence between criminal organizations and government forces in 2006, drug-related violence has killed an estimated eighty thousand Mexican soldiers, police officers, politicians, and civilians.

Mexican law enforcement efforts have struggled to curb violence as the death toll continues to rise. In January 2017, one of Mexico's most powerful drug-lords—known as “El Chapo”—was extradited to the United States after being re-captured after his prison escape in July 2015. His arrest created a power vacuum within one of the most powerful cartels in Mexico and has led to increased violence as rival factions vie for power and control of territory. 2016 saw a 22 percent increase in drug-related homicides, with more than 20,000 people killed, and experts estimate that 2017 will be Mexico's deadliest year since the start of the drug war. The opioid epidemic and rising demand for heroin in the United States is believed to be a factor as cartels increasingly traffic in harder drugs, and violent homicide has increased nationwide across Mexico.

Drug-related violence in Mexico and other Central American countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador has caused an unprecedented number of people—an estimated 500,000 people each year according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees—to flee into Mexico in an attempt to reach the United States.

Mexico profile - Timeline

A chronology of key events:

c. AD 250-900 Classical Maya city states flourish in the far south of modern-day Mexico, as well as in neighbouring Guatemala and Belize, before suffering a mysterious collapse.

c. AD 0-500 - Major cultural and religious centre of Teotihuacán flourishes. Thought to have been one of the world's largest cities at the time, but little is known about its ethnic and political nature.

6th-7th century - Influx of new peoples into central Mexico from the north, including speakers of Nahuatl.

800-1000 - High point of the Toltec culture, centred on the city of Tula, in modern-day Hidalgo province.

10th-16th centuries - Revitalised Maya civilisation blossoms in the northern Yucatan peninsula, creating major cities such as Chichen Itza and Uxmal.

1428-1521 - The latest of a long line of indigenous civilisations, the Aztec Empire - an alliance of Nahuatl-speaking city states led by Tenochtitlan - establishes hegemony over much of central Mexico.

Spanish conquest

1519 - Small Spanish army led by Hernan Cortes lands at Veracruz, marking the start of Spain's conquest of Mexico.

1521 - Allied with local anti-Aztec forces, Cortes' men capture the capital Tenochtitlan (modern-day Mexico City).

1521-1820 - Mexico forms part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Independence

1810-21 - War of Independence ends with the creation of the short-living Mexican Empire, which includes Central America to

the southern border of modern-day Costa Rica, as well as what is now the southwestern US.

1824 - Mexico becomes a federal republic. Central American provinces secede, becoming Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

The new Mexican state is marked by tension between the conservative Spanish-origin landowning elite and the largely indigenous landless minority, resulting in instability and frequent armed conflict.

1836 - Former province of Texas, by now increasingly populated by English-speaking Americans, secedes after a war, going on to join the United States nine years later.

1846-8 - Mexican-American War ends with Mexico being forced to sell its northern provinces (including modern-day California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah) to the US.

1855-72 - "La Reforma" period, characterised by liberal reforms limiting the power and landholdings of the Catholic Church.

1864-7 - Archduke Maximilian of Austria is installed as emperor by France and conservative landowners, but is toppled and executed by Republican rebels.

1876-1911 - Porfirio Diaz's 35-year-long dictatorship brings stability, modernisation and economic growth, but at the price of political repression.

Revolution

1910-1920 - Mexican Revolution ends the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship and establishes constitutional government.

1913-14 - The liberal Francisco Madero introduces land reform and labour legislation before being assassinated. Victoriano Huerta seizes power. Political unrest continues with Emiliano Zapata leading a peasant revolt in the south.

1916-17 - Inconclusive US incursion against guerrilla leader Francisco "Pancho" Villa.

1920 - President Venustiano Carranza is murdered, followed by a decade of instability.

Institutional Revolutionary Party rule

1929 - Former president Plutarco Elias Calles forms what later becomes the Institutional Revolutionary Party(PRI), which dominates government for 71 years.

1934 - President Lazaro Cardenas begins programme of oil nationalisation, land reform and industrial expansion.

Image captionUp to 30,000 people were killed in the quake which struck Mexico City in 1985

1960s - Unrest amongst peasants and labourers over unequal wealth distribution is suppressed.

1968 - Student demonstration in Mexico City during the Olympic Games is fired on by security forces. Hundreds of protesters are killed or wounded. The extent of the violence shocks the country.

Oil discovery

1976 - Huge offshore oil reserves discovered; the Cantarell field becomes the mainstay of Mexico's oil production.

1985 - Earthquake in Mexico City kills thousands and makes many more homeless.

1993 - Parliament ratifies the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) with the US and Canada.

Chiapas rebellion

1994 - A guerrilla rebellion in Chiapas by the Zapatista National Liberation Army is brutally suppressed by government troops. The government and Zapatistas agree on greater autonomy for the indigenous Mayans of Chiapas the following year.

1996 - The insurgency in the south escalates as the leftist Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) attacks government troops.

1997 - The PRI suffers heavy losses in elections and loses its overall majority in the lower house of parliament for the first time since 1929.

Fox election victory

2000 July - Vicente Fox of the conservative Alliance for Change wins presidential elections, the first opposition candidate ever to do so. Parliamentary elections see the Alliance emerge as the strongest party, narrowly beating the PRI

Image caption Vincente Fox broke the ruling party's 71-year dominance with his election victory in 2000

2002 June - Millions of secret security files are released, shedding light on the repression of hundreds of political activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

2006 July - Conservative candidate Felipe Calderon is declared the winner of presidential elections with a razor-thin majority over his leftist rival, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

War on drugs

2006 December - A new federal police force is created to tackle drugs cartels; thousands of troops are deployed in the western state of Michoacan as part of a major anti-drug trafficking drive.

2007 October - Heavy rains flood nearly the entire southern state of Tabasco. Some 500,000 are made homeless in one of the country's worst natural disasters.

2009 March - Army troops enter Ciudad Juarez, on the border with the US, as open warfare erupts between rival drug gangs.

2012 July - The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) candidate Enrique Pena Nieto wins presidential election.

2013 July - Miguel Angel Trevino Morales, head of the brutal Zetas drugs cartel, is arrested in the highest-profile arrest since President Pena Nieto adopted a policy of targeting local bosses rather than big names.

2014 August - Mexico's Congress approves sweeping reforms to the country's energy sector that will open the market to foreign oil firms and strip state-owned energy group Pemex of the monopoly it has held since nationalisation in 1938.

2018 October - The US, Canada and Mexico reach a new trade deal - the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) - to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta).

2018 - Left-wing former mayor of Mexico City, Andres Manuel López Obrador, is inaugurated president after winning an overwhelming victory in the July presidential election.

CHAPTER 13

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Background

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, primarily as a conflict over territory. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Holy Land was divided into three parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip. Successive wars resulted in minor shifts of territory until the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, when Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel because of Israel's occupation of the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. The conflict was calmed by the Camp David Accords in 1979, which bound Egypt and Israel in a peace treaty.

Yet once the wars over territory were over, a surge in violence and uprisings among the Palestinians began. The first intifada, in 1987, was an uprising comprising hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The 1993 Oslo Accords mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves and establishing relations between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 2000, inspired by continuing Palestinian grievances, the second intifada began and was much bloodier than the first. After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the Oslo Accords.

In 2013, the United States attempted to revive the peace process between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. However, peace talks were disrupted when the Fatah—the Palestinian Authority's ruling party—formed a unity government with its rival faction, Hamas, in 2014. The rivals' reconciliation process has proceeded haltingly since, with the two signing an additional agreement in October 2017.

Since taking office, the Donald J. Trump administration has made achieving an Israeli-Palestinian deal a priority, but has yet to release its long-awaited proposal for a peace process. Trump's decision to relocate the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, reversing longstanding U.S. policy, was met with applause among the Israeli leadership but condemned by Palestinian leaders and others in the Middle East and Europe. Israel considers the "complete and united Jerusalem" its capital, but Palestinians claim East Jerusalem for the capital of their future state.

Prior to the most recent wave of clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, there had been many outbreaks of violence and instability. In the summer of 2014, clashes in the Palestinian territories precipitated a military confrontation between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel and Israel retaliated with

a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a cease-fire deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were killed.

Concerns

There is concern that a third intifada could break out and that renewed tensions will escalate into large-scale violence. The United States has an interest in protecting the security of its long-term ally Israel and achieving a lasting deal between Israel and the Palestinian territories, which would improve regional security.

Recent Developments

Between March 30 and May 15, 2018, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip conducted weekly demonstrations at the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. The final protest coincided with the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the Palestinian exodus that accompanied Israeli independence, as well as the relocation of the U.S. embassy to the contested city of Jerusalem. While most of the protesters were peaceful, some stormed the perimeter fence and threw rocks and other objects. Israeli security forces killed 86 demonstrators and wounded about 3,700.

Also in May, fighting broke out between Hamas and the Israeli military in what became the worst period of violence since 2014. Before both sides reached a cease-fire, militants in Gaza fired over one hundred rockets into Israel and Israel responded with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during the twenty-four-hour flare-up.

Palestinian Profile

A chronology of key events:

1917 - Britain conquers Palestine from Ottomans. Gives support to "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration, along with an insistence that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities".

1918 - First significant Palestinian Arab nationalist organisations emerge - the mainly cultural Muntada al-Adabi and the Damascus-based Nadi al-Arabi.

1920 - San Remo Allied Powers conference grants Palestine to Britain as a mandate, to prepare it for self-rule. Jerusalem riots against Balfour Declaration assert distinct Palestinian Arab identity.

1921 - Britain appoints Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, a member of a leading Palestinian Arab family, as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and leader of the Muslim community. He rallies the Arabs and Muslims against any further concessions to the Jews.

1922 - Palestinian Arab delegation rejects British proposal for Legislative Council, saying inclusion of terms of the Balfour Declaration in draft constitution not acceptable.

1929 - Arab rioters kill about 200 Jews in Jerusalem's Old City and Hebron. British troops kill 116 Arabs in suppression of riots in Jerusalem.

1930 - British White Paper and Royal Commission recommend limiting Jewish immigration.

1930-35 - The Black Hand Islamist group led by Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam launches campaign of violence against Jewish community and British rule.

1935 - Palestinian Arab leadership accepts British High Commissioner's proposal for Legislative Assembly, but the British House of Commons rejects it the following year.

1936-39 - Arab revolt begins with a general strike in Jaffa. Britain declares martial law and dissolves Grand Mufti Al-Husseini's Arab Higher Committee. More than 5,000 Arabs killed and 15,000 injured in suppression of revolt, Al-Husseini flees to French-run Syria to avoid arrest.

1947 - United Nations recommends partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states after Britain signals end to Mandate, with international control over Jerusalem and its environs. Arab High Committee rejects partition.

Birth of Israel

1948 - Israel declares independence as British mandate ends.

Arab armies fail to defeat new Jewish state of Israel after Britain withdraws. Jordan occupies West Bank and East Jerusalem, Egypt occupies Gaza, and Israel holds the rest of Mandate Palestine including West Jerusalem.

At least 750,000 Palestinian Arabs either flee or are expelled. Disputes over the nature of their departure endure to this day.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) set up to cater to the educational and health needs of Palestinian refugees and their descendants throughout the Middle East.

1949-1950s - Fedayeen Palestinian guerrillas based in Egypt and Gaza carry out raids into Israel with Egyptian encouragement. This increases after pan-Arab officers seize power in Cairo in 1952.

1956-1957 - Israel colludes with Britain and France to invade Egypt during the Suez Crisis, partly to end Fedayeen incursions. UN buffer force in Sinai and Gaza drastically reduces raids.

1959 - Yasser Arafat forms Fatah fighting group in Egypt to carry out raids into Israel.

1964 - Arab League sets up Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Palestine Liberation Army under Ahmad Shukeiri.

1967 June - Six-Day War leaves Israel occupying East Jerusalem, all of West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights and Sinai. Jewish settlements are set up in all of these areas in coming years, with government approval.

1969 - Yasser Arafat takes over PLO leadership after debut as military leader in clashes with Israeli forces in Jordan in 1968, and asserts the group's independence from Egyptian control.

1970 - Increasing tension over the strength of the PLO in Jordan leads to the Black September clashes with Jordanian forces, driving the PLO into exile in southern Lebanon.

1970s-1980s - PLO and other armed Palestinian groups turn to airline hijackings and attacks on Israeli soldiers, officials and civilians within Israel and abroad to highlight their cause.

1972 - Palestinian "Black September" gunmen take the Israeli team hostage at the Munich Olympics. Two of the athletes are murdered at the site and nine more killed during a failed rescue attempt by the German authorities. Israel launches a series of reprisal assassinations.

1973 - Israel raids PLO bases in Beirut and southern Lebanon before and during the October Yom Kippur/Ramadan War.

1974 April-May - Two hardline factions, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, carry out raids into northern Israel and kill 43 civilians, including many children, in a block of flats in Kiryat Shmona and a school in Maalot.

1974 June - After 1973 Yom Kippur/Ramada war, PLO adopts Ten-Point Programme allowing compromise with Israel on the way to establishing complete Palestinian control over historic Palestine, including the territory of Israel.

Some hardline factions split away to form the Rejectionist Front and step up attacks on Israeli soldiers and civilians.

PLO recognised

1974 October - Arab League recognises PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" and it admits it to full membership of the League.

1974 November - Yasser Arafat becomes first non-state leader to address the United Nations General Assembly, delivers "olive branch... and freedom fighter's gun" speech.

1975 - Rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and German far-left armed group hijack Air France plane en route from Israel to France, divert it to Entebbe in Uganda. Israel commandos rescue most of passengers and crew, kill hijackers.

1977 May - The right-wing Likud party wins surprise election victory in Israel and encourages settlements policy on West Bank and Gaza.

1978 March - PLO attack kills 38 civilians on Israel's coastal road. Israel carries out first major incursion into southern Lebanon,

driving PLO and other Palestinian groups out of the area.

1978 September - Israel pledges to expand Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the Camp David Accords establishing diplomatic relations with Egypt.

1982 June - Israel invades Lebanon again to expel PLO leadership from Beirut after assassination attempt by Palestinian faction on Israeli ambassador to London.

PLO leaders quit Lebanon

1982 September - Massacre of Palestinians in the Beirut Sabra and Shatila camps by Israel's Christian Phalangist allies.

PLO leadership moves to Tunisia, where it remains until it moves to Gaza in 1994.

1985 October - Israeli air force strikes PLO headquarters in Tunis after PLO group kills three Israeli tourists on a yacht. Palestine Liberation Front PLO faction hijacks Achille Lauro cruise ship, demanding release of 50 Palestinians from Israeli prisons. Hijackers kill elderly American wheelchair user Leon Klinghoffer.

1987 December - First Palestinian Intifada uprising begins in Palestinian Territories. Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza forms the Hamas movement, which rapidly turns to violence against Israel.

1988 Jordan abandons claim to West Bank, ceding it to PLO. Palestinian National Council meeting in Algiers proclaims State of Palestine.

1990 - PLO backs Iraq over its annexation of Kuwait, which severs ties with the PLO and subsequently expels about 400,000 Palestinians.

1991 October - US-Soviet sponsored conference in Madrid brings Israeli and Palestinian representatives together for the first time since 1949.

1992 - Israeli Labour government of Yitzhak Rabin pledges to halt settlement expansion programme and begins secret talks with PLO.

1993 September - Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat sign Oslo Declaration to plot Palestinian self-government and formally end the First Intifada, which had been running out of steam since the Madrid Conference. Violence by various Palestinian groups that reject the Oslo Declaration continues.

1994 February - Baruch Goldstein of the extremist Jewish Kach movement kills 29 Palestinians at prayer at the Cave of the Patriarchs shrine in Hebron on the West Bank.

Progress towards self-rule

1992 May-July - Israel withdraws from most of Gaza and the West Bank city of Jericho, allowing Yasser Arafat to move his PLO administration from Tunis and set up the Palestinian National Authority.

1992 December - Yasser Arafat, along with Yitzhak Rabin and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, are jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1995 - Interim Agreement sets out path for transfer of further power and territory to Palestinian National Authority. Forms basis of 1997 Hebron Protocol, Wye River Memorandum of 1998 and internationally-sponsored "Road Map for Peace" of 2003.

2000-2001 - Talks between Israeli Labour Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat break down over the timing and extent of a proposed further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Palestinian protests escalate into new Intifada.

2001 December - Israel sends troops to encircle Ramallah after series of deadly Palestinian attacks inside Israel. Yasser Arafat is unable to leave his government compound.

Barrier goes up

2002 March - Israeli army launches Operation Defensive Shield on the West Bank and begins building barrier there to stop armed Palestinian entering Israel. The route of the barrier is controversial as it frequently deviates from the pre-1967 ceasefire line into the West Bank.

2002 March - Arab League meeting in Beirut offers to recognise Israel in return for its full withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967, agreement to a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital and "fair solution" to refugee question - the "Arab League Peace Plan".

2003 March - Yasser Arafat establishes post of prime minister and appoints Fatah veteran Mahmoud Abbas to lead contacts with US and Israel, both of which refuse to deal with Arafat.

2003 May - Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon says the occupation of Palestinian territories cannot continue indefinitely.

2003 June - Arab League meeting in Egypt expresses support for "road map" proposed by US, European Union, Russia and UN and accepted by Palestinian National Authority and Israel, positing an independent Palestinian state and a freeze on West Bank Jewish settlements.

2003 September - Mahmoud Abbas resigns as prime minister, citing US and Israeli intransigence as well as internal Palestinian opposition to his government. Succeeded by Fatah veteran Ahmed Qurei.

2004 March - Israeli forces kill Sheikh Yassin, the founder and leader of Hamas, and his successor Abd al-Aziz al-Rantissi, the following month.

2004 July - International Court of Justice issues advisory opinion that the Israeli separation barrier violates international law and must be removed.

2004 November - Yasser Arafat dies in hospital in France, where he went for urgent medical treatment in October.

2005 January - Mahmoud Abbas elected Mr Arafat's successor as head of the Palestinian National Authority.

2005 September - Israel withdraws all Jewish settlements and military personnel from Gaza, while retaining control over airspace, ports and border crossings.

Hamas wins elections

2006 March - Hamas Islamist group's Ismail Haniyeh forms government after winning parliamentary elections in January. Struggle for primacy with Fatah begins. United States and European Union suspend aid, and Israel ends tax transfers, because of Hamas's refusal to recognise Israel, renounce violence and accept previous peace accords.

2006 June - Hamas militants from Gaza seize Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit near border crossing and hold him hostage for five years, demanding release of Palestinian prisoners. Major clashes between Israel and Hamas forces in Gaza follow. Israel imposes restrictions on Gaza.

2006 September - Clashes break out between Fatah and Hamas supporters in Gaza. Various Arab states and Palestinian groups seek to mediate between them in coming months in order to avert civil war.

2007 March - Fatah and Hamas form national unity government to end months of intermittent clashes in Gaza.

2007 June - Unity government founders. Hamas ousts Fatah from Gaza and reinforces its control of the territory. Israel tightens blockade after increase in rocket attacks from Gaza; Egypt closes border with Gaza.

Mahmoud Abbas appoints Salam Fayyad as prime minister, but Hamas refuses to recognise him. Two rival governments in West Bank and Gaza emerge. US and

European Union resume aid to the Fayyad government.

2007 November - US-hosted Annapolis Conference for the first time establishes the "two-state solution" as the basis for future talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

2008 March - Efforts at reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas begin in Yemen, but next round in Cairo in November stalls when Hamas objects to Fatah arrest of its West Bank activists.

2008 November - Israel launches incursion into Gaza, seen by Hamas as a ceasefire violation. Hamas responds by launching rockets.

2008 December - Israel launches Operation Cast Lead month-long invasion of Gaza to stop Hamas and other militant groups firing rockets into Israel.

2010 February - Fatah and Hamas resume talks on national reconciliation.

Direct talks resume between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, only to falter over the question of settlements.

2010 May - Nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists killed in Israeli capture of ships attempting to break maritime blockade of Gaza.

2011 April-May - Fatah and Hamas agree at talks in Cairo to reform a unity government and hold fresh elections, but no practical implementation follows.

Bid for UN membership

2011 - Palestinian National Authority launches campaign for UN membership of "State of Palestine", as means of highlighting stalled talks with Israel. Bid fails, but UNESCO cultural agency accepts Palestine as member in October.

2012 May - After preliminary talks in Qatar, Fatah and Hamas sign Cairo Agreement pledging to maintain non-violent resistance to Israeli occupation in pursuit of an independent state within the 1967 ceasefire lines.

2012 October - Local elections on West Bank undermine Fatah's position, as it wins only two-fifths of the seats contested on a turnout of 55%. Lists led by Fatah rebels win four of the 11 major towns and cities, and independents and leftists take control of a fifth. Hamas boycotts the poll and allows no elections in Gaza.

2012 November - UN upgrades Palestinian representation to that of "non-member observer state", allowing it to take part in General Assembly debates and improving chances of joining UN agencies.

2012 December - Fatah allows Hamas celebration rally on West Bank over UN status upgrade, a gesture reciprocated by Hamas in Gaza the following month.

2013 April - Prime Minister Fayyad resigns after long-standing dispute with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. He is succeeded by academic Rami Hamdallah in May.

2013 Newly appointed US Secretary of State launches a series of Israeli-Palestinian talks aimed at reaching a framework peace deal by April 2014. Palestinian officials say continuing Israeli approval of Jewish housing in occupied East Jerusalem undermines progress. Israel accuses the Palestinians of incitement.

2013 July - Fall of Morsi government in Egypt dashes Palestinian hopes for lifting of Egyptian blockade of border with Gaza, and suspends Egyptian mediation in the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation process.

2013 December - Israel, Jordan and Palestinian Authority sign water-sharing pact to halt and eventually reverse the drying-out of the Dead Sea by laying pipeline to carry brine from Red Sea desalination plant while providing drinking water to region.

2014 March - Egypt bans Hamas activities and seizes its assets because of links to Egypt's illegal Muslim Brotherhood.

Reconciliation government

2014 April - Fatah and Hamas agree to form unity government, which takes office in June. Fatah complains that separate Hamas cabinet continues to rule Gaza.

2014 July-August - Israel responds to attacks from armed groups in Gaza with a military campaign by air and land to knock out missile launching sites and attack tunnels. Clashes end in uneasy Egyptian-brokered ceasefire in August.

2014 December - Minister Without Portfolio Ziad Abu Ein dies at clash with Israeli troops at West Bank protest.

2017 October - Hamas lets the Ramallah-based unity government take over public institutions in Gaza as part of a reconciliation process between the two rival administrations.

2017 December - US President Donald Trump recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, upsetting the Arab world and some Western allies.

2018 March - Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah visits Gaza, where his convoy survives a roadside bomb attack.

2018 July-August - UN and Egypt attempt to broker a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas amid an upsurge in violence on the Gaza border from March.

Israel Profile

A chronology of key events:

1917 - Britain seizes Palestine from Ottomans. Gives support to "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine through the Balfour Declaration, along with an insistence that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities".

1920 - San Remo Allied Powers conference grants Palestine to Britain as a mandate, to prepare it for self-rule. European Jewish migration, which increased in the 19th century, continues.

1922 - Britain separates Transjordan from Mandate Palestine, forbids Jewish settlement in former.

1939 - British government White Paper seeks to limit Jewish migration to Palestine to 10,000 per year, excepting emergencies.

1940s - Nazi Holocaust of the Jews in Europe prompts efforts at mass migration to Palestine. Jewish armed groups in pursuit of independent Jewish state fight British authorities.

1947 - United Nations recommends partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with international control over Jerusalem and its environs.

Independence

1948 - Israel declares independence as British mandate ends. Admitted to United Nations.

1948-1949 - First Arab-Israeli war. Armistice agreements leave Israel with more territory than envisaged under the Partition Plan, including western Jerusalem. Jordan annexes West Bank and eastern Jerusalem, Egypt occupies Gaza.

Around 750,000 Palestinian Arabs either flee or are expelled out of their total population of about 1,200,000.

1949-1960s - Up to a million Jewish refugees and immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, plus 250,000 Holocaust survivors, settle in Israel.

1948-1977 - Centre-left dominates coalition governments, initially under Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (1948-54; 1955-63). Promotes a self-sufficient, agrarian and secular Jewish democracy with a non-aligned foreign policy.

Suez Crisis

1956-1957 - Israel colludes with Britain and France to invade Egypt during the Suez Crisis, in order to re-open canal to Israeli shipping and end armed incursions by Palestinians from Sinai. UN buffer force set up in Sinai and Gaza, Israeli shipping allowed through Suez Canal.

1957 - Israel begins to build a large nuclear reactor at Dimona in the Negev desert, with French assistance. This becomes the basis for the country's officially unconfirmed nuclear weapons programme ten years later.

1961 - Trial and execution of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, whom Israeli agents kidnapped from Argentina.

1962 - Improving relations and concerns about the Middle Eastern balance of power prompt the United States to sell Israel missiles. When France halts arms supplies to Israel in 1966, the United States increases sales.

1964 - National Water Carrier completed, to bring water from the River Jordan to the Negev. Tensions rise with Arab neighbours over Jordan water allocations.

1966 - S.Y. Agnon is joint winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Six Day War

1967 June - After months of tension, including border skirmishes, Egypt's expulsion of the UN buffer force from Sinai and its closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, Israel launches a pre-emptive attack on Egypt, and Jordan and Syria join the war. The war lasts six days and leaves Israel in control of east Jerusalem, all of West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights and Sinai. Jewish settlements are set up in all of these areas in coming years, with government approval.

1972 - Palestinian "Black September" gunmen take the Israeli team hostage at the Munich Olympics. Two of the athletes are murdered at the site and nine more killed during a failed rescue attempt by the German authorities.

1973 October - Egypt and Syria launch co-ordinated attack against Israeli forces in the occupied Sinai and Golan Heights in the Yom Kippur or October War. Israel prevails, but only after suffering significant losses. Public mood turns against dominant Labour Party.

1974 - Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful) movement formed to promote Jewish religious settlements on the West Bank.

1975 - UN General Assembly adopts a resolution describing Zionism as a form of racism. Rescinded in 1991.

1976 March - Mass protests by Israeli Arabs at government attempts to expropriate land in the Galilee area of northern Israel. Six Arab citizens were killed in clashes with security forces. The events are commemorated annually as Land Day.

1976 July - Israeli commandos carry out a raid on Entebbe Airport in Uganda to free more than 100 mostly Israeli and Jewish hostages being held hostage by German and Palestinian gunmen.

Camp David Accord

1977 May - Menachem Begin's right-wing Likud party wins surprise election victory, partly by harnessing non-European Jews' resentment at political hegemony of European-origin Jews. Launches economic liberalisation, brings religious Jewish parties into mainstream, and encourages settlements.

1977 November - Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visits Jerusalem and begins the process that leads to Israel's withdrawal from Sinai and Egypt's recognition of Israel in the Camp David Accords of 1978. Accords also pledge Israel to expand Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza.

1981 June - Israeli Air Force raid destroys nuclear reactor at Osirak in Iraq.

Invasion of Lebanon

1982 June - Israel invades Lebanon in order to expel Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership after assassination attempt by small Palestinian militant group on Israeli ambassador to London.

1982 September - Massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut by Israel's Christian Phalangist allies. Government commission finds Defence Minister Ariel Sharon indirectly responsible and recommends his removal from office. Mass protests against massacre in Israel galvanise anti-war movement.

1984 July - Elections lead to a hung parliament and uneasy coalition between Likud and Labour, whose leader Shimon Peres alternates as prime minister with Likud's Yitzhak Shamir.

1984 November - Covert mass airlift of Ethiopia's Jews begins. Operation repeated in 1991.

1985 - Austerity programme tackles hyper-inflation and stabilises currency, introducing New Israeli Shekel.

1985 June - Israel withdraws from most of Lebanon but continues to occupy narrow "security zone" along border.

1986 - Former nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu reveals detail of Israel's nuclear weapons programme to British press.

Uprising

1987 December - First Intifada uprising begins in Occupied Territories. Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza forms Hamas movement, which rapidly turns to violence against Israel.

1988 September - Israel becomes one of only eight countries at the time to have capability independently to launch satellites with Ofek reconnaissance probe.

1990 - Soviet Union allows Jews to emigrate, leading to about a million ex-Soviet citizens moving to Israel.

1991 January - Gulf War. Iraq fires 39 Scud missiles at Israel in failed attempt to regionalise conflict. Israel refrains from responding at US request.

1991 October - US-Soviet sponsored Madrid conference brings Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestinian representatives together for first time since 1949. Sets in motion talks to normalise relations. Yitzhak Shamir's reluctant participation, under US pressure, brings down his minority government.

1992 - Labour returns to power under Yitzhak Rabin. Pledges to halt Jewish settlement expansion programme, opens secret talks with PLO.

Oslo Declaration

1993 - Prime Minister Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat sign Oslo Declaration to plot Palestinian self-government and formally end First Intifada. Violence by

Palestinian groups that reject Oslo Declaration continues.

1994 May-July - Israel withdraws from most of Gaza and the West Bank city of Jericho, allowing Yasser Arafat to move PLO administration from Tunis and set up Palestinian National Authority.

1994 October - Jordan and Israel sign peace treaty.

1994 December - Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres jointly awarded Nobel Peace Prize.

1995 September - Mr Rabin and Yasser Arafat sign Interim Agreement for transfer of further power and territory to Palestinian National Authority. Forms basis for 1997 Hebron Protocol, 1998 Wye River Memorandum and internationally-sponsored "Road Map for Peace" of 2003.

1995 November - Jewish extremist shoots Yitzhak Rabin dead in Tel Aviv. Shimon Peres takes over as prime minister.

1996 May - Likud returns to power under Benjamin Netanyahu, pledges to halt further concessions to Palestinians. Nonetheless signs Hebron Protocol and Wye River Memorandum. Settlement expansion resumes.

1999 May - Labour-led coalition elected under Ehud Barak, pledges to move ahead with talks with Palestinians and Syria.

Pullout from Lebanon

2000 May - Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon, although Lebanon disputes status of Shebaa Farms area.

2000 July - Talks between Prime Minister Barak and Yasser Arafat break down over timing and extent of proposed further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

2000 September - Likud leader Ariel Sharon visits Jerusalem site known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Al-Haram

al-Sharif. Palestinian protests escalate into new wave of violence.

2001 January - Failure of last-ditch efforts at restarting Israeli-Palestinian talks in Taba, Egypt, Ehud Barak loses elections to Ariel Sharon, who declines to continue talks.

2002 March-May - Israeli army launches Operation Defensive Shield on West Bank after spate of Palestinian suicide bombings. Largest military operation on West Bank since 1967.

2002 June - Israel begins building barrier in and around West Bank. Israel says barrier aimed at stopping Palestinian attacks; Palestinians see it as a tool to grab land. Route is controversial as frequently deviates from pre-1967 ceasefire line into West Bank.

2003 June - Quartet of United States, European Union, Russia and United Nations propose road map to resolve Israeli-Palestinian conflict, proposing independent Palestinian state. Israel and Palestinian National Authority both accept plan, which requires freeze on West Bank Jewish settlements and an end to attacks on Israelis.

2004 July - International Court of Justice issues advisory opinion that West Bank barrier is illegal.

Withdrawal from Gaza

2005 September - Israel withdraws all Jewish settlers and military personnel from Gaza, while retaining control over airspace, coastal waters and border crossings.

2006 January - Ariel Sharon incapacitated by stroke. He dies in 2014, never having emerged from a coma. Succeeded as prime minister by Ehud Olmert.

Hamas Islamist group wins Palestinian parliamentary elections. Rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza escalate. Met with frequent Israeli raids and incursions over following years.

2006 June - Hamas gunmen from Gaza take Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit hostage, demanding release of Palestinian prisoners. Major clashes between Israel and Hamas in Gaza follow.

2006 July-August - Israeli incursion into Lebanon, in response to deadly Hezbollah attack and abduction of two soldiers, escalates into Second Lebanon War. Government faces criticism over conduct of war, which left Hezbollah forces largely intact.

2007 September - Israeli Air Force destroys nuclear reactor in Deir ez-Zor, Syria, which Israel formally acknowledges in 2018.

2007 November - Annapolis Conference for first time establishes "two-state solution" as basis for future talks between Israel and Palestinian Authority.

Gaza invasion

2008 December - Israel launches month-long full-scale invasion of Gaza to prevent Hamas and other groups from launching rockets.

2009 January - Discovery of major offshore natural gas deposits.

2009 February - Right-wing parties prevail in elections, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu forms government.

2010 May - Nine Turkish pro-Palestinian activists killed in clashes during Israeli boarding of ships attempting to break blockade of Gaza. Relations with Turkey approach breaking point. Israel apologises for deaths in 2013.

2010 September - Direct talks resume between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, only to falter over the question of settlements.

2011 Summer-Autumn - Rising prices prompt major protests. Government improves competition in food market and makes cheaper housing more available.

2011 October - Hamas release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for 1,027 prisoners in deal brokered by Germany and Egypt.

2012 November - Israel launches week-long military campaign against Gaza-based armed groups following months of escalating rocket attacks on Israeli towns.

2013 March - Mr Netanyahu replaces most religious Jewish groups with centrist and secular parties in government after the latter's strong showing in January elections.

2013 July - Talks resume with Palestinian Authority under US auspices, but reach no conclusions. **2013** December - Israel, Jordan and Palestinian Authority sign agreement to save the Dead Sea from drying up by pumping water from the Red Sea.

2014 January - Energy and Water Minister Silvan Shalom attends renewable energy conference in Abu Dhabi, leading a business delegation in first visit to United Arab Emirates since 2010.

2014 July-August - Israel responds to attacks by armed groups in Gaza with a military campaign by air and land to knock out missile launching sites and attack tunnels. Clashes end in uneasy Egyptian-brokered ceasefire in August.

Netanyahu's fourth government

2015 May - Prime Minister Netanyahu forms a new coalition government after March elections with right-wing Bayit Yehudi (Jewish Home) party. Another right-wing party, Yisrael Beiteinu, joins the following year.

2015 October - Israeli couple shot dead in their car in occupied West Bank. It is one of the first incidents in what would become a wave of shootings, stabbings and car-rammings by Palestinians or Israeli Arabs.

2015 November - Israel suspends contact with European Union officials in talks with Palestinians over EU decision to label goods

from Jewish settlements in the West Bank as coming not from Israel but from settlements.

2016 June - Israel and Turkey reach agreement over 2010 Gaza flotilla raid and normalise relations.

2016 September - US agrees military aid package worth \$38bn (£28bn) over next 10 years for Israel, largest such deal in US history. Previous pact, set to expire in 2018, saw Israel get \$3.1bn annually.

2016 December - Israel suspends working ties with 12 countries that voted for a Security Council resolution condemning settlement building, after the US for the first time abstained from the vote rather than using its veto.

2017 February - Parliament passes a law which retroactively legalises dozens of Jewish settlements built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank.

2017 June - Work begins on the first new Jewish settlement in the West Bank for 25 years.

UNESCO votes to declare the Old City of Hebron a Palestinian World Heritage site, a move that Israel complains ignores the city's Jewish heritage.

2017 December - US President Donald Trump recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, upsetting the Arab world and some Western allies.

2018 July-November - UN and Egypt attempt to broker a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas amid an upsurge in violence on the Gaza border from March.

2018 November - Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigns in protest at ceasefire with Hamas, withdraws his Yisrael Beiteinu party from the coalition government.

Do Palestinians Still Support the Two-State Solution?

Why Israeli Settlements Are the Greatest Obstacle to Peace

By Khalil Shikaki

It has been 25 years since the Oslo Accords envisioned a two-state solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, but the fundamental challenges for Palestinians remain the same. Oslo required not only that Palestinians reconcile themselves to enormous sacrifice but that they trust Israelis to do the same. Moreover, the demands for sacrifice were far from equal. Palestinians were to permanently abandon claims to 78 percent of their homeland, while much less was asked of Israeli Jews, who would need to abandon the demand for just 22 percent of theirs.

Where the Oslo Accords were successful, it was mostly due to the bold leadership of Yasir Arafat, chair of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister of Israel. These leaders were willing to sign letters of mutual recognition in the final moments before signing the accords, which opened a large majority of Palestinians to the idea of relinquishing land claims in pursuit of peace.

Since that time, Israel's unrelenting construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories—the heart of a future Palestinian state—has demonstrated to Palestinians that the other side is unwilling to hold up its end of the deal. One of Oslo's greatest failures has been its inability to stop Israel's settlement construction, causing Palestinians to doubt whether they have a viable partner for peace.

The Trust Deficit

Soon after the Oslo Accords were signed, on September 13, 1993, and for many years after that, Palestinian support for a two-state solution was very high, peaking at 80 percent. The agreement, and the peace process it set in motion, changed the psychological environment in Palestine. Along with confidence in diplomacy, it generated public optimism and reduced the appeal of violence and militancy, all the while providing legitimacy and public support to the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA), its leader, Arafat, and the leading party, Fatah.

Israel's unrelenting construction of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories has demonstrated to Palestinians that the other side is unwilling to hold up its end of the deal.

Twenty-five years later, all that has come undone. Support for the two-state solution is at its lowest level since Oslo, with only 43 percent of Palestinians saying they would accept it. More than half of the public views the PA as a burden on the Palestinian people, and a large majority, ranging from 60 to 70 percent in 2018, demands the resignation of the PA president, Mahmoud Abbas. Public support for Hamas, the largest Islamist faction in Palestine, stands at about one-third, compared to about 40 percent for Fatah, the mainstream

nationalist faction. Confidence in diplomacy has plummeted: only 25 percent of Palestinians believe that a Palestinian state will emerge in the next five years. Violence is increasingly popular, particularly among the youth, and on several occasions during the past three years a majority of the public has supported it.

Not coincidentally, during this same period Israeli settlement construction in occupied Palestine has continued unabated. The size of the settlement enterprise today is four times what it was when Oslo was signed: it has grown from around 100,000 settlements in 1993 to more than 400,000 (not including East Jerusalem or the Gaza Strip) today. In the past few years, 55 to 65 percent of Palestinians have said that they believe that settlement construction has expanded so much that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible. On average, three-quarters of those who reach this conclusion shift to opposing the two-state solution, while a similar percentage of those who think the two-state solution remains feasible remain in favor of it. In other words, support for the two-state solution is strongly linked to perceptions of feasibility, and settlements are making it seem unfeasible.

The decline in support for the two-state solution among Israeli Jews parallels that among Palestinians, and the level of public support for it—43 percent—is identical to that among Palestinians. On the Israeli Jewish side, too, support is linked to perceptions of feasibility. Today, almost half of Israeli Jews believe that settlement expansion is making the two-state solution impractical. However, this does not equate to a consensus among Israeli Jews that settlements are destructive to peace-making, because unlike most Palestinians, they don't necessarily see the two-state solution as the only path to peace. Many Israeli Jews view Palestinian self-rule, a slightly modified version of the status quo, as an acceptable solution.

No other development in Israeli-Palestinian relations—not the more than 10,000 Palestinian deaths at the hands of the Israeli army since Oslo; not the failures of Palestinian leadership, state building, and governance; not the rise of Hamas and the Israeli right wing, nor the ineptitude of the international community, nor the Israeli reoccupation of the West Bank during the second intifada, nor the repeated election of Netanyahu and the election of U.S. President Donald Trump—has done as much damage to that fundamental concept of partition and mutual recognition as continued settlement construction. While many of these other developments could eventually be reversed or overcome, the settlements are hard to undo, which is why they might permanently doom the prospect of Palestinian-Israeli peace.

Palestinian public opinion is not an impediment to peace in the form of a two-state solution. Neither is Israeli public opinion. Jointly conducted Palestinian-Israeli survey research provides evidence that there is ample support for the two-state solution when the public sees it as feasible and when each side has reason to trust the other. On the Palestinian side, strong and credible leadership, democracy, and good governance are also effective means of building support. Assurances that their future state will be democratic can go a long way in convincing skeptical Palestinian youth to abandon demands for a one-state solution and support a two-state outcome instead. Gestures that demonstrate mutual respect, such as an Israeli acknowledgment of the Palestinian *Nakba* (Catastrophe) of 1948, or an apology for

the suffering of Palestinian refugees since that time, could go a long way toward generating the motivation that peace requires.

***Most Palestinians do not believe
that they have an Israeli partner
for peace.***

But facts on the ground, including Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes, and building of Jewish settlements, reinforce Palestinian distrust. These practices cause an overwhelming majority of Palestinians—80 percent or more—to believe that Israel's long-term aspiration is not to make peace but to annex Palestinian land, eventually expelling the Palestinians, or at the very least denying them their civil and political rights. Most Palestinians do not believe that they have an Israeli partner for peace, which makes them understandably reluctant to support a peace process that would require them to make enormous sacrifices.

The Leadership Deficit

These obstacles to the two-state solution are serious, and to overcome them requires strong, credible leadership in Israel, Palestine, and the United States. Unfortunately, all three leaders are failing miserably. By publicly impugning Israel's national character and core narrative, Abbas is complicating the task for leadership on the other side. By refusing to reconcile with Hamas, he is deepening the divisions in his own camp, and by consolidating authoritarianism in his regime, he is diminishing his own domestic legitimacy. Netanyahu is worse. By expanding settlements, favoring extreme right-wing political positions and coalition partners over more moderate ones, and promoting legislation that destroys the delicate balance between Israel's Jewish and democratic characters, he feeds Palestinians' worst fears. On top of all of this, through his incendiary handling of the two most sensitive issues under negotiation—Jerusalem and refugees—Trump has done more damage to the prospects of peace in the 20 months of his administration than any U.S. president has done in the past 70 years.

Regional politics are not helping, either. Abbas sees himself as increasingly isolated, having lost the unconditional support of his traditional Sunni Arab partners, who are embroiled in a struggle for regional dominance and need the support of Netanyahu and Trump. Non-Arab regional powers, such as Iran and Turkey, are stepping into the opening, but Abbas is not entirely ready to trust them yet. These powers may not be able to provide the necessary financial and political support to keep the PA alive, and are more closely aligned with Abbas' rival party, Hamas, than with Fatah.

Seen through the prism of public opinion, the two-state solution is clearly not dead. If Palestinians had reason to trust the feasibility of such a solution and the intentions of the other side, public opinion in favor of it could increase and be harnessed by a strong, capable leader. But other dynamics are interfering. In the short run, poor domestic leadership on both sides is to blame. In the long run, Israeli confiscation of Palestinian land, demolition of Palestinian homes, and settlement building in Palestinian territories remain the most

dangerous threats to a two-state solution. Under these conditions, it is naive for Palestinians to hope for salvation in the form of shifting regional dynamics or international support. If anything, these factors are likely to have the opposite effect—to make peace in the form of a two-state solution an even more distant possibility than it already is.

Without support from regional partners or the international community, Palestinians should focus on domestic national reconciliation and the reunification of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, followed soon after by national elections, which could help provide strong and legitimate leadership, a more accountable political system, and, importantly, reasons for hope—all of which are crucial ingredients in the struggle to create an independent Palestinian state. In Israel, only a government coalition that is free of dependence on the support of settlers and extreme national-religious groups will be able to protect the future prospects of a two-state solution.¹³

¹³ Khalil Shikaki, Do Palestinians Still Support the Two-State Solution, *Foreign Affairs* (September 12, 2018)

CHAPTER 14

Boko Haram in Nigeria

Background

Nigeria's ongoing battle with insurgent groups and continued government corruption threaten the stability and political integrity of Africa's most populous state. Since 2011, Boko Haram—one of the largest Islamist militant groups in Africa—has conducted terrorist attacks on religious and political groups, local police, and the military, as well as indiscriminately attacking civilians in busy markets and villages. The kidnapping of over two hundred girls from their school in April 2014 drew international attention to the ongoing threat from Boko Haram and the government's inability to contain it. Following negotiations between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government, brokered by the International Committee for the Red Cross, 103 girls have since been released.

President Muhammadu Buhari, the former military dictator who defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, was elected in 2015 on a counterterrorism platform, but economic and political challenges in Nigeria have complicated the fight against Boko Haram. In addition to the military conflict, continuing uneven distribution of oil revenue, high levels of corruption, and high levels of violence in the Middle Belt region pose significant challenges to Nigerian security.

Concerns

Links between Boko Haram and other Islamist groups, including the self-proclaimed Islamic State, could further intensify regional security concerns. After the group pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in March 2015, the United States boosted its military assistance and deployed three hundred troops to Nigeria in an effort to help in the fight against Boko Haram. The largest African oil producer, Nigeria is economically dependent on its oil revenue, and its stability is important to regional security and U.S. economic interests.

Recent Developments

After Boko Haram-related violence peaked in 2014 and 2015, the number of casualties fell dramatically. The Nigerian military—with assistance from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—has pushed Boko Haram out of a number of provinces in northeastern Nigeria, but the group retains control over some territory and continues to launch deadly suicide attacks and abduct civilians, mostly women and children. In March 2018, more than one hundred students were kidnapped by a faction of Boko Haram known as Islamic State West Africa. They were released days later.

The conflict has been primarily contained in the Muslim north, particularly in Borno state, but has displaced millions of people in the region. In June 2018, the Nigerian Army announced that two thousand internally displaced people were to return home. Security forces combatting the militants have also been accused of severe human rights abuses

Nigeria Profile

A chronology of key events:

circa 800 BC - Jos plateau settled by Nok - a neolithic and iron age civilisation.

circa 11th century onwards - Formation of city states, kingdoms and empires, including Hausa kingdoms and Borno dynasty in north, Oyo and Benin kingdoms in south.

1472 - Portuguese navigators reach Nigerian coast.

16-18th centuries - Slave trade: Millions of Nigerians are forcibly sent to the Americas.

1809 - Islamic Sokoto caliphate is founded in north.

1830s-1886 - Civil wars plague Yorubaland in the south.

1850s - British establish presence around Lagos.

1861-1914 - Britain consolidates its hold over what it calls the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria, governs through local leaders.

1922 - Part of former German colony Kamerun is added to Nigeria under League of Nations mandate.

1960 - Independence, with Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa leading a coalition government.

1962-63 - Controversial census fuels regional and ethnic tensions.

1966 January - Mr Balewa killed in coup. Maj-Gen Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi forms military government.

1966 July - General Ironsi killed in counter-coup, replaced by Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon.

1967 - Three eastern states secede as the Republic of Biafra, sparking bloody civil war.

1970 - Biafran leaders surrender.

1975 - General Gowon overthrown by Brigadier Murtala Ramat Mohammed, who begins process of moving federal capital to Abuja.

Obasanjo - first time round

1976 - General Mohammed assassinated in failed coup attempt. Replaced by his deputy, Lt-Gene Olusegun Obasanjo, who helps introduce US-style presidential constitution.

1979 - Elections bring Alhaji Shehu Shagari to power.

1983 January - The government expels more than one million foreigners, mostly Ghanaians, saying they had overstayed their visas and were taking jobs from Nigerians.

1983 August-September - President Shagari re-elected amid accusations of irregularities.

1983 December - Maj-Gen Muhammad Buhari seizes power in bloodless coup.

1985 - Ibrahim Babangida seizes power in bloodless coup, curtails political activity.

1993 June - Military annuls elections when preliminary results show victory by Chief Moshood Abiola.

1993 August - Power transferred to Interim National Government.

Abacha years

1993 November - Gen Sani Abacha seizes power, suppresses opposition.

1994 - Moshood Abiola arrested after proclaiming himself president.

1995 - Ken Saro-Wiwa, writer and campaigner against oil industry damage to his Ogoni homeland, is executed following a hasty trial. In protest, European Union imposes sanctions until 1998, Commonwealth suspends Nigeria's membership until 1998.

1998 - Gen Sani Abacha dies and is succeeded by Maj-Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar. Moshood Abiola dies in custody a month later.

1999 - Parliamentary and presidential elections. Olusegun Obasanjo sworn in as president.

2000 - Adoption of Islamic Sharia law by several northern states in the face of opposition from Christians. Tension over the issue results in hundreds of deaths in clashes between Christians and Muslims.

2001 - Tribal war in Benue State, in eastern-central Nigeria, displaces thousands of people. Troops sent to quash the fighting kill more than 200 unarmed civilians, apparently in retaliation for the abduction and murder of 19 soldiers.

Ethnic violence

2002 February - Some 100 people are killed in Lagos in clashes between Hausas from mainly-Islamic north and Yorubas from predominantly-Christian southwest.

2002 November - More than 200 people die in four days of rioting stoked by Muslim fury over the planned Miss World beauty pageant in Kaduna in December. The event is relocated to Britain.

2003 12 April - First legislative elections since end of military rule in 1999. Polling marked by delays, allegations of ballot-rigging. President Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party wins parliamentary majority.

Obasanjo re-elected

2003 19 April - First civilian-run presidential elections since end of military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo elected for second term with more than 60% of vote. Opposition parties reject result. EU poll observers cite "serious irregularities".

2003 September - Nigeria's first satellite, NigeriaSat-1, launched by Russian rocket.

2004 May - State of emergency is declared in the central Plateau State after more than 200 Muslims are killed in Yelwa in attacks by Christian militia; revenge attacks are launched by Muslim youths in Kano.

Trouble in the south

2004 August-September - Deadly clashes between gangs in oil city of Port Harcourt prompts strong crackdown by troops. Rights group Amnesty International cites death toll of 500, authorities say about 20 died.

2006 January onwards - Militants in the Niger Delta attack pipelines and other oil facilities and kidnap foreign oil workers. The rebels demand more control over the region's oil wealth.

2006 February - More than 100 people are killed when religious violence flares in mainly-Muslim towns in the north and in the southern city of Onitsha.

2006 April - Helped by record oil prices, Nigeria becomes the first African nation to pay off its debt to the Paris Club of rich

lenders, which had written off two-thirds of the \$30bn debt the previous year.

Bakassi deal

2006 August - Nigeria agrees to cede sovereignty over the disputed Bakassi peninsula to neighbouring Cameroon under the terms of a 2002 International Court of Justice ruling. Transfer takes place in 2008.

2007 April - Umaru Yar'Adua of the ruling People's Democratic Party wins the presidential election.

2008 September - Militants in the Niger Delta step up their attacks on oil installations, in response to what they describe as unprovoked attacks by the military on their bases.

Boko Haram uprising

2009 July - Hundreds die in northeastern Nigeria after the Boko Haram Islamist movement launches a campaign of violence in a bid to have Sharia law imposed on the entire country. Security forces storm Boko Haram's stronghold and kill the movement's leader.

Government frees the leader of the Niger Delta militant group Mend, Henry Okah, after he accepts an amnesty offer.

2010 May - President Umaru Yar'Adua dies after a long illness. Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, already acting in Yar'Adua's stead, succeeds him.

2010 December - Christmas Eve bomb attacks near central city of Jos kill at least 80 people. Attacks claimed by Islamist sect Boko Haram spark clashes between Christians and Muslims. Some 200 killed in reprisal attacks.

2011 March - Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan wins presidential elections.

2011 August - Suicide bomb attack on UN headquarters in Abuja kills 23 people. Boko Haram claims responsibility.

2011 December - Christmas Day bomb attacks by Boko Haram on churches kill about 40 people. President Jonathan declares state of emergency to contain violence by Boko Haram.

2012 January - More than 100 killed in single day of co-ordinated bombings and shootings in Kano, shortly after Boko Haram tells Christians to quit the north.

2013 May - Government declares state of emergency in three northern states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa and sends in troops to combat Boko Haram.

2013 September - Boko Haram murder more than 150 people in roadside attacks in the northeast. Separately, security forces fight Boko Haram insurgents in the capital Abuja.

2014 April - Boko Haram kidnaps more than 200 girls from a boarding school in northern town of Chibok, in an incident that draws major national and international outrage.

2014 November - Boko Haram launches a series of attacks in northeastern Nigeria, capturing several towns near Lake Chad and running raids into neighbouring Chad and Cameroon in early 2015. It switches allegiance from al-Qaeda to the Islamic State group.

2015 February-March - Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger form military coalition and push Boko Haram out of all towns back into Sambisa Forest.

President Buhari elected

2015 March - Muhammadu Buhari wins the presidential election, becoming the first opposition candidate to do so in Nigeria's history.

2016 June - Naira currency floated in attempt to stave off financial crisis caused by low oil prices.

2016 November - Niger Delta Avengers rebels bomb three oil pipelines in attempt to renew southern insurgency.

2017 January - Scores die as Nigerian air force accidentally bombs refugee camp rather than Boko Haram redoubt in Rann on Cameroon border.

Nigerian navy sends ships as part of regional force to oblige The Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh to step down after he loses election.

2017 May - More than 80 of the schoolgirls who were kidnapped in Chibok are freed in a prisoner swap with the Islamist group Boko Haram.

2017 January - Big stay-at-home protest in favour of independence for the south-east marks 50 years since the independent republic of Biafra was declared, sparking a devastating civil war.

2017 September - Human Rights Watch alleges that Cameroon has forcibly returned 100,000 Nigerian refugees, charges it denies.

2017 December - Clashes between herders in Benue and Taraba states prompt thousands to flee.

2018 - Escalating attacks by Boko Haram from August onwards, targeting army bases.

Boko Haram exposes the cracks in Nigeria's military strategy

A spate of daring attacks on the army calls for solutions that go beyond replacing its commanders.

By Akinola Olojo

For nearly three years the Nigerian government has stuck to its claim that it has ‘technically defeated’ Boko Haram. Recently though, the terror group demonstrated its renewed audacity with strikes at hard (military) targets. The government’s response was to reorganize its key military leadership in the troubled north-east of the country – a strategy that appears largely cosmetic. The game changer is more likely to come from dealing with several blind spots in the military’s approach to Boko Haram.

Altering military commanders each time there’s a problem has been tried before, with little impact on the counter-terrorism effort. Over the last two years, leadership has changed on four occasions. This time the most significant reshuffle was of the Theatre Commander overseeing the campaign against Boko Haram. The new head of Operation Lafiya Dole, Major General Abba Dikko, replaced Major General Rogers Nicholas who occupied the position for less than a year.

With the emergence of a Boko Haram faction that targets the military, creative solutions are needed

Beyond leadership, three top concerns undermine the army’s current position. First, the military must investigate why a number of its bases have suffered attacks in close succession. Second, the use of intelligence must be deepened to include closer collaboration with local community actors who are familiar with the terrain in which Boko Haram operates. Third, the grievances of soldiers must be addressed to improve morale.

With regard to attacks, on 13 July Boko Haram insurgents ambushed a military convoy in Borno state, Nigeria. Then on 19 July soldiers were attacked as they escorted traders close to Nigeria’s border with Cameroon. And on 21 July troops again fell victim to insurgents. Over a six-week period, four military bases were attacked, one of which was staffed by over 700 soldiers.

In addition to military targets, Boko Haram has launched deadly assaults on civilians. The extremist group’s offensives have been relatively sophisticated – probably executed by the faction of Boko Haram led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi who has a penchant for targeting the military. Nigeria’s army needs to investigate whether these attacks are the result of weak security at its bases, or because of Boko Haram’s growing strength and tactical advantage.

The new military commander faces longstanding challenges when it comes to intelligence. While the rights of ordinary citizens must be safeguarded, the problem posed by

Boko Haram's spies within communities should be recognised. More than ever, this issue merits attention in light of recent revelations by apprehended members of Boko Haram.

Altering Nigeria's military commanders each time there's a problem has been tried before

Some of these individuals infiltrate townships under the guise of various professions, like taxi drivers. Countering this is not easy, as the challenge of dealing with al-Shabaab and its 'Mata Hari' spy network involving sex workers in Kenya showed. A closer working relationship is needed between the military and civilian groups who can provide critical information about Boko Haram's tactics. The Nigerian army realised this back in 2013 when it started working with the Civilian Joint Task Force, a network of vigilante groups supporting the security forces against Boko Haram. More of such alliances are needed, with a wider range of local actors, including Islamic clerics.

The army has made some progress in regard to the recovery of territory from Boko Haram. However, much more is needed to thwart the group. To consolidate military gains, grievances among troops on the ground must be attended to. Part of the solution lies in dialogue to understand concerns of those on the battlefield. For instance, some units lament the delays in getting weapons and supplies when their detachments are under attack. Regrettably, these have been met with warnings by the authorities against soldiers accused of abandoning their posts when faced with insurgents.

To consolidate military gains against Boko Haram, grievances among troops must be attended to

Threatening battle-worn troops is counter-productive and echoes past mistakes. At the height of the Boko Haram insurgency in mid-2014, troops staged a mutiny and fired at the vehicle of an army major general. In August this year, soldiers protested at the Maiduguri airport in Borno state. The latest demonstration was over unjust redeployment and overextended periods of battle on the frontlines.

The boldness of Boko Haram to strike military targets will gain traction as the group discerns cracks in the Nigerian army's approach. With the emergence of a Boko Haram faction that targets the military, creative solutions will be needed that go beyond replacing army commanders. The extremist group is less concerned about who leads the Nigerian army's efforts than about exploiting the army's vulnerabilities.

As long as they persist, Boko Haram will exploit weaknesses in the military's situation. With recognition that shifting leaders won't address the problems, and more attention to intelligence and troop morale, the army will suffer fewer setbacks. Until then, declaring that Boko Haram has been 'technically' defeated is not justifiable.¹⁴

¹⁴ Akinola Olojo, Boko Haram exposes the cracks in Nigeria's military strategy, *Issafrica* (02 OCT 2018)

CHAPTER 15

Civil War in Libya

Background

Libya has struggled to rebuild state institutions amid rising violence since the ouster and subsequent death of Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi in October 2011. The strength of rebel militias has increased—approximately 1,700 armed groups, including fighters loyal to the Islamic State—especially since the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi on September 11, 2012.

After the fall of Qaddafi, Libya's secular-leaning HoR has tried to consolidate legitimacy as the main authoritative power in the country. The GNC—initially tasked with the transition process after Qaddafi's ouster for writing constitution—was voted out in August 2014. Yet the GNC reconstituted itself as a rival government in Tripoli, pulling together former GNC members and Islamist militias.

In September 2014, former Qaddafi loyalist and HoR appointee General Haftar began Operation Dignity with an initial focus on attacking Islamist militant groups in Benghazi, calling for dissolution of the GNC. To counter this movement, an alliance of Islamists and militias formed Libya Dawn. The conflict pits the Libya Dawn coalition, which controls Tripoli and much of western Libya, against the Dignity coalition, controlling parts of Cyrenaica and Benghazi in eastern Libya. Each coalition had its own self-declared parliament and government, as well as nominal military chiefs, and faces internal fragmentation and divisions among different groups.

There is a continued presence of jihadists, including Ansar al-Sharia—the Libyan terrorist group allegedly responsible for the U.S. consulate attack—and the Islamic State, which has gained significant territory in Libya. Taking advantage of the widespread political instability, jihadists are using the country as a hub to coordinate broader regional violence and launch attacks.

As a result of the continued fighting, more than 434,869 people have been internally displaced as of June 2015—double the number of displaced persons from the previous year. Given its proximity to Europe, Libya has also been used as a passageway for Libyan refugees and refugees from other North African and sub-Saharan African countries. In 2015, half a million people had sailed by boat from Libya as of September. In 2015, an estimated 76,000 refugees and migrants made the journey to Europe from Libya.

Concerns

There is general concern about the permanent fracturing of Libya, as the various rebel and militia groups have tried to divide the country among political and tribal lines. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the new unity government will be able to bring together the warring factions and reestablish stability in Libya.

Recent Developments

On March 30, 2016, the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) arrived in the Libyan capital of Tripoli. The group of Libyan lawmakers, led by Fayez al-Sarraj, had previously been based in Tunisia. On April 7, the rival Tripoli-based National Salvation government, or former the General National Congress (GNC), rejected the GNA's transition, contradicting its earlier acceptance of the new government taking over.

The formation of the GNA was the result of UN efforts to find a resolution between the warring factions and to create a unity government. UN Envoy Martin Kobler facilitated a series of talks in Morocco and Tunisia with the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) and its rival, the Tripoli-based General National Congress (GNC). The principle obstacles to the success of a unity government continue to include the HoR's concerns about GNC politicians' links to Salafist militias and demands by GNC allies to exclude Libyan Army General Khalifa Haftar, a Tobruk-backed former Qaddafi loyalist, from the new government.

Further complicating the struggle between various vying factions is the presence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which established a foothold in the country in February 2015 and quickly gained control of the coastal city of Sirte. In May, Libya's UN-backed government, with support of allied militias, launched a coordinated offensive on the Mediterranean port city, the group's most significant stronghold outside of Syria and Iraq.

The United States began an air campaign in August 2016 against the Islamic State, at the request of Libya's UN-backed government in Tripoli. Under the cover of U.S. airstrikes, the militias successfully captured the group's headquarters in Sirte on August 11, 2016. Sirte's mayor, Mokhtar Khalifa, estimates that about 70 percent of the city has been rid of Islamic State elements. The UN had previously estimated the number of Islamic State fighters in Libya to be between two and three thousand (including administrators and financiers), eight hundred of whom fought with the group in Syria, but in June 2016 CIA Director John Brennan said there were between five thousand and eight thousand.

The head of the Islamic State in Libya, Abu Nabil, was killed in a U.S. air strike in November 2015—the first U.S. airstrike against the Islamic State outside of Iraq and Syria. But the group's presence continues to grow in Libya; the Islamic State has urged foreign fighters to travel to Libya instead of trying to enter Syria. In January 2016, over sixty policemen were killed and two hundred were wounded in a bomb attack in western Libya—one of the deadliest attacks since the fall of Qaddafi—potentially carried out by the Islamic State.

Libya Profile

A chronology of key events:

7th century BC - Phoenicians settle in Tripolitania in western Libya, which was hitherto populated by Berbers.

6th century BC - Carthage conquers Tripolitania.

4th century BC - Greeks colonise Cyrenaica in the east of the country, which they call Libya.

74 BC - Romans conquer Libya.

AD 643 - Arabs under Amr Ibn al-As conquer Libya and spread Islam.

16th century - Libya becomes part of the Ottoman Empire, which joins the three provinces of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan into one regency in Tripoli.

Italian rule

1911-12 - Italy seizes Libya from the Ottomans. Omar al-Mukhtar begins 20-year insurgency against Italian rule.

1920s - Libyan resistance grows as Senussi dynasty joins in alongside the Mukhtar campaign.

1931 - Italy breaks resistance through combination of major armed operations and concentration camps for rebel population. Al-Mukhtar is captured and executed.

1934 - Italy unites the provinces as the colony of Libya and steps up Italian migration as part of an eventual plan for the incorporation of Libya into a Greater Italy.

1942 - Allies oust Italians from Libya, which is then divided between the French,

who administer Fezzan, and the British, who control Cyrenaica and Tripolitania.

1951 - Libya becomes independent under King Idris al-Sanusi.

1956 - Libya grants two American oil companies a concession of some 14 million acres.

1961 - King Idris opens a 104-mile pipeline, which links important oil fields in the interior to the Mediterranean Sea and makes it possible to export Libyan oil for the first time.

The Gaddafi era

1969 - King Idris deposed in military coup led by Col Muammar Gaddafi, who pursues a pan-Arab agenda by attempting to form mergers with several Arab countries, and introduces state socialism by nationalising most economic activity, including the oil industry.

1970 - Libya orders the closure of a British airbase in Tobruk and the giant US Wheelus air force base in Tripoli; property belonging to Italian settlers nationalised.

1971 - National referendum approves proposed Federation of Arab Republics (FAR) comprising Libya, Egypt and Syria. However, the FAR never takes off.

1973 - Col Gaddafi declares a "cultural revolution", which includes the formation of "people's committees" in schools, hospitals, universities, workplaces and administrative districts; Libyan forces occupy Aozou Strip in northern Chad.

1977 - Col Gaddafi declares a "people's revolution", changing the country's official name from the Libyan Arab Republic to the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and setting up "revolutionary committees" - heralding the start of institutionalised chaos, economic decline and general arbitrariness.

1980 - Libyan troops intervene in civil war in northern Chad.

Confrontation with the US

1981 - US shoots down two Libyan aircraft which challenged its warplanes over the Gulf of Sirte, claimed by Libya as its territorial water.

1984 - UK breaks off diplomatic relations with Libya after a British policewoman is shot dead outside the Libyan embassy in London while anti-Gaddafi protests were taking place.

1986 - US bombs Libyan military facilities, residential areas of Tripoli and Benghazi, killing 101 people, and Gaddafi's house, killing his adopted daughter. US says raids were in response to alleged Libyan involvement in bombing of Berlin disco frequented by US military personnel.

Lockerbie plane bombing

1988 December - Lockerbie bombing - an airliner is blown up over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, allegedly by Libyan agents.

1989 - Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia form the Arab Maghreb Union.

1992 - UN imposes sanctions on Libya in an effort to force it to hand over for trial two of its citizens suspected of involvement in the Lockerbie bombing.

1994 - Libya returns the Aozou Strip to Chad.

1995 - Gaddafi expels some 30,000 Palestinians in protest at the Oslo accords between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel.

1999 - Lockerbie suspects handed over for trial in the Netherlands under Scottish law; UN sanctions suspended; diplomatic relations with UK restored.

2000 September - Dozens of African immigrants are killed by Libyan mobs in the west of Libya who were said to be angry at the large number of African labourers coming into the country.

Lockerbie sentence

2001 31 January- Special Scottish court in the Netherlands finds one of the two Libyans accused of the Lockerbie bombing, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, guilty and sentences him to life imprisonment. Megrahi's co-accused, Al-Amin Khalifa Fahimah, is found not guilty and freed.

2001 May - Libyan troops help to quell a coup attempt against President Ange-Felix Patasse of the Central African Republic.

2002 January - Libya and the US say they have held talks to mend relations after years of hostility over what the Americans termed Libya's sponsorship of terrorism.

2002 14 March - The Libyan man found guilty of the Lockerbie bombing, Abdelbaset Ali Mohamed al-Megrahi, loses his appeal against the conviction and begins a life sentence of at least 20 years.

Compensation

2003 January - Libya is elected chairman of the UN Human Rights Commission despite opposition from the US and human rights groups.

2003 August - Libya signs a deal worth \$2.7bn to compensate families of the Lockerbie bombing victims. Libya takes responsibility for the bombing in a letter to the UN Security Council.

2003 September - UN Security Council votes to lift sanctions.

2003 December - Libya says will abandon programmes to develop weapons of mass destruction.

2004 January - Libya agrees to compensate families of victims of 1989 bombing of French passenger aircraft over Sahara.

2004 March - British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits, the first such visit since 1943.

Return to respectability

2004 May - Five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor are sentenced to death having been accused of deliberately infecting some 400 children with HIV. They are eventually freed under a deal with the EU.

2004 August - Libya agrees to pay \$35m to compensate victims of the bombing of a Berlin nightclub in 1986.

2005 January - Libya's first auction of oil and gas exploration licences heralds the return of US energy companies for the first time in more than 20 years.

2006 February - At least 10 people are killed in clashes with police in Benghazi, part of a wave of international protests by Muslims

who are angered by a Danish newspaper's cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad.

2006 May - The US says it is restoring full diplomatic ties with Libya.

2008 January - Libya takes over one-month rotating presidency of the UN Security Council in a step back to respectability after decades as a pariah of the West.

2008 August - Libya and US sign agreement committing each side to compensate all victims of bombing attacks on the other's citizens.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi apologises to Libya for damage inflicted by Italy during the colonial era and signs a five billion dollar investment deal by way of compensation.

2008 September - US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice makes historic visit - the highest-level US visit to Libya since 1953. Ms Rice says relations between the US and Libya have entered a "new phase".

2009 February - Gaddafi elected chairman of the African Union by leaders meeting in Ethiopia. Sets out ambition of "United States of Africa" even embracing the Caribbean.

2009 June - Gaddafi pays first state visit to Italy, Libya's former colonial ruler and now its main trading partner.

Al-Megrahi released

2009 August - Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi is freed from gaol in Scotland on compassionate grounds and returned to Libya. His release and return to a hero's welcome causes a storm of controversy.

2010 January - Russia agrees to sell Libya weapons in a deal worth \$1.8bn. The deal is thought to include fighter jets, tanks and air defence systems.

2010 June - UN refugee agency UNHCR expelled.

BP confirms it is about to begin drilling off Libyan coast.

2010 October - European Union and Libya sign agreement designed to slow illegal migration.

Anti-Gaddafi uprising

2011 February - Inspired by revolts in other Arab countries, especially neighbouring Egypt and Tunisia, violent protests break out in Benghazi, spread to other cities, leading to escalating clashes between security forces and anti-Gaddafi rebels.

2011 March - UN Security Council authorises a no-fly zone over Libya and air strikes to protect civilians, over which NATO assumes command.

Libyan rebels initially capture territory but are then forced back by better-armed pro-Gaddafi forces.

2011 July - The international Contact Group on Libya formally recognises the main opposition group, the National Transitional Council (NTC), as the legitimate government of Libya.

2011 August - Col Gaddafi goes into hiding after rebels swarm into his fortress compound in Tripoli.

2011 August-September - African Union joins 60 countries which have recognised the NTC as the new Libyan authority.

2011 20 October - Col Gaddafi is captured and killed as rebel fighters take his hometown Sirte. Three days later, the NTC declares Libya to be officially "liberated" and announces plans to hold elections within eight months.

2011 November - Saif al-Islam, the fugitive son of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, is captured, becoming the last key Gaddafi family member to be seized or killed.

2012 January-March - Clashes erupt between former rebel forces in Benghazi in sign of discontent with the NTC. Benghazi-based NTC officials campaign to re-establish autonomy for the region, further increasing tension with the NTC in Tripoli.

2012 August - Transitional government hands power to the General National Congress, which was elected in July.

Benghazi attack

2012 September - US ambassador and three other Americans are killed when Islamist militants, including Ansar al-Sharia, storm the consulate in Benghazi.

2013 August - Petroleum Facilities Guard militia begins blockade of oil export terminals.

Civil war

2014 February - Protests erupt in response to the General National Congress refusal to disband after mandate expires.

2014 April - Petroleum Facilities Guard militia lifts closure of two oil terminals.

2014 May - "Libyan National Army" renegade general Khalifa Haftar launches

military assault including airstrikes against militant Islamist groups in Benghazi; tries to seize parliament building, accusing Prime Minister Ahmed Maiteg of being in thrall to Islamist groups.

2014 June - Prime Minister Maiteg resigns after supreme court rules his appointment illegal.

New parliament chosen in elections marred by a low turn-out attributed to security fears and boycotts; Islamists suffer heavy defeat. Fighting breaks out between forces loyal to outgoing GNC and new parliament.

2014 July - UN staff pull out, embassies shut, foreigners evacuated as security situation deteriorates. Tripoli international airport is largely destroyed by fighting.

Ansar al-Sharia seizes control of most of Benghazi.

Islamic State intervenes

2014 October - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visits to continue UN-brokered talks between the new parliament and government based in Tobruk and Islamist Libya Dawn militias holding Tripoli. UN says 100,000s displaced by clashes.

Islamic State extremist militia seizes control of port of Derna in eastern Libya.

2015 January - Libyan army and Tripoli-based militia alliance declare partial ceasefire after UN-sponsored talks in Geneva.

2015 February - Egyptian jets bomb Islamic State targets in Derna, a day after the group there released a video showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians.

Libyan Army offensive to retake Derna in March fails to dislodge the group. IS establishes control over port-city of Sirte, halfway along coast between Tripoli and Benghazi.

2015 July - A Tripoli court sentences Gaddafi's sons Saif al-Islam and eight other former officials to death for crimes committed during the 2011 uprising against his father. He is later freed by an armed group.

2016 January - UN announces new, Tunisia-based interim government, but neither Tobruk nor Tripoli parliaments agree to recognise its authority.

Rise of General Haftar

2016 March - New "unity" government arrives in Tripoli by boat after opposing forces block airspace.

2016 April - UN staff return to Tripoli after absence of nearly two years.

2016 September - Libyan National Army of General Khalifa Haftar seizes key oil export terminals in the east.

2016 December - Pro-government forces oust Islamic State militants from coastal town of Sirte, which they had seized 18 months previously.

2017 July - Islamic State group ejected from Benghazi after three years of fighting.

2018 July - General Haftar claims that his forces are fully in control of Derna, the last Islamist stronghold in the east and the only city in the region hitherto outside his control.

2018 September - Libya's UN-backed government declares a state of emergency in Tripoli, after dozens of people are killed in clashes between rival militia groups in the city's southern suburbs.

Amid the fighting, 400 prisoners escape from a facility reportedly used to house supporters of former leader Muammar Gaddafi.

How France and Italy's Rivalry Is Hurting Libya

And How the Palermo Conference Can Help

By Federica Saini Fasanotti and Ben Fishman

Since the 2011 revolution against Muammar al-Qaddafi, Libyans have often blamed outside actors for their continuing woes. Too frequently, this grievance has been overstated and used as an excuse to minimize the hard compromises that Libyans themselves need to undertake to achieve a durable peace. Over the last year, however, both France and Italy have played a more intrusive role in Libyan politics, undermining rather than supporting the UN-led peace initiative. Italy's new populist government has introduced anti-immigration measures that threaten to keep hundreds of thousands of migrants stranded in Libya, with potentially disastrous results. At the same time, the French-Italian rivalry over migration, the future of Europe, and the question of whether Paris or Rome should be the leading international voice on Libyan affairs is compounding Libya's already serious problems.

Italy is now organizing an international conference on Libya set for November 12–13. Rome has an opportunity to help the UN advance several crucial elements of its peace efforts, including organizing Libyan national elections and reaching a lasting security arrangement. Conversely, if the Italian government uses its conference to sideline UN Libya envoy Ghassan Salamé, fight publicly with the French, and trumpet its policies on migration, it will further confuse Libya's chaotic politics.

Italy and migration

Libya has long been important to Italy. A former Italian colony, it is now both a major transit country for African migration to Europe and a major supplier of Italy's oil and natural gas. Rome's interest in the country has only grown since 2014–15, when hundreds of thousands of migrants, most of them from other parts of Africa, began arriving in Libya to attempt the crossing into Europe.

Italy's current government is a populist coalition between the left-wing Five Star Movement (M5S) and the right-wing League. Since taking office in June, the government, led by the anti-immigrant Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, has made reducing migration its top priority. Although arrivals were already falling, Salvini introduced a new policy—rejecting all migrant boats, including humanitarian vessels run by nongovernmental organizations, until other European states agree to take in more arrivals. As a result of these restrictions, drownings have become more frequent, with one study estimating eight deaths at sea per day since the beginning of the new Italian policy, compared to only three per day last year.

Italy's new migration policy could have disastrous knock-on effects in Libya. Libya is already home to over 650,000 migrants, and Rome's migration crackdown will condemn them to stay there, worsening the horrific conditions in its migrant camps and leaving migrants vulnerable to other types of exploitation. The other steps that Italy has taken or

proposed—including funding the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept migrants at sea and deploying Italian troops to guard smuggling routes in the country’s south—will polarize Libya even further.

In order to secure its interests in the country, Rome has also sought to seize the diplomatic initiative—at least publicly. On July 31, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte—a political novice elevated by Salvini and M5S leader Luigi Di Maio—visited the White House, where he announced a plan to hold his own conference on Libya, now scheduled for November 12–13 in Palermo. Trump praised the Italian government and acknowledged “Italy’s leadership role in the stabilization of Libya and North Africa.”

This was a critical endorsement for Conte, who is seeking to displace French President Emmanuel Macron as Europe’s most important leader in Libya. Macron, since entering office, has viewed Libya as an arena to demonstrate his foreign policy bona fides. In July 2017, he hosted a meeting in Paris with Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj—whose internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) controls Tripoli with limited actual authority—and the strongman leader of Libya’s east, General Khalifa Haftar, in an effort to coordinate a cease-fire and plan for national elections. Yet the initiative was poorly coordinated with the international community, which threw its weight behind the more comprehensive UN Action Plan announced by Salamé in September 2017. This action plan called for an update to a stalled 2015 cease-fire, an inclusive national conference, and an agreement among Libya’s rival factions to approve a new constitution and electoral law, and prepare for elections by the end of 2018.

Salamé has worked tirelessly over the last year to bring Libya together through the official UN process. Although the French claim to be helping Salamé, their loosely coordinated diplomatic efforts allow Libya’s factions to play France off the UN and its key backers in the West. In May 2018, Macron invited four Libyan leaders, including Serraj and Haftar, to Paris to sign off on a plan to hold elections by December 10—a date widely regarded as impractical. Macron sought to jump-start the UN’s plan, but he only gave further reason for Libyan obstructionists (including those not invited to Paris) to delay good faith negotiating with the UN. Further, in a slight to the incoming Italian government, Macron scheduled the summit a week before the new coalition was formed so they could not attend at a political level.

Politics, not Interests

Many have argued, including French and Italian officials, that their dispute over Libya is a product of France and Italy’s divergent interests in the country. Italy’s economic interests lie in Tripoli and the country’s west, controlled by the GNA, while France is concerned with bringing a semblance of order to Libya’s lawless south; a combination of smugglers, criminal networks, and terrorists threaten Paris’ traditional sphere of influence in the Sahel region, where it has 4,500 troops currently deployed. This has supposedly led France to favor Haftar out of the belief that he is better positioned to restore security and root out Libya’s jihadists.

However, French-Italian differences are motivated more by politics than by divergent interests in Libya. Macron considers himself—and France—to be the standard bearer for the EU, defending liberal values and international cooperation in a time of rising populist nationalism. Naturally, he sees the new Italian government as a threat to his political vision. In a June 21 speech, Macron compared the spread of populism to “leprosy” and warned Europeans against those who “hate Europe”—a thinly veiled reference to the Italian government. Italy’s Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio, the leader of the M5S, fired back, “The real leprosy is the hypocrisy” of Macron, who in June had criticized Italy’s stance on migration but refused to allow a rescue ship with 600 migrants to dock in France. Macron doubled down on his views in his September speech to the UN General Assembly, proclaiming, “France will be there to ensure the world does not forget that the din of nationalism always leads to the abyss.” With France’s Libya policy run out of the Élysée and Salvini serving as the most powerful figure in Italy’s coalition, this rivalry is sure to persist—at the expense of Libyans.

How to make Palermo work

The November 12–13 Conference in Palermo provides an opportunity for Italy to make a contribution to Libya’s peace process, but only if Conte and Salvini will elevate the role of the UN and minimize their competition with Macron. Despite its flaws, the UN process remains the best chance for stabilizing Libya. Salamé has closed some important gaps between Libya’s rival governments and identified remaining roadblocks. Starting from scratch with a new process (and a new envoy) would almost certainly lead to renewed violence absent negotiations. The Italians should recognize that reinforcing Salamé’s leadership role will be the only means of advancing Rome’s primary interests in migration and energy.

There are a few specific areas in which the Palermo conference could make a contribution to peace. After years of largely ignoring the country’s militias in favor of the political factions, in September the UN Support Mission in Libya negotiated a cease-fire among the Tripoli militias. Italy should help the international community to build on this cease-fire and advance a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration plan for these armed groups. The conference could be used to develop a mechanism for sustaining a wider dialogue among the groups in Tripoli and beyond, and consolidating international support for the effort.

For its part, the Trump administration should support Libya’s political stabilization without playing favorites among France, Italy, and other outside actors such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. The United States does not need to take ownership of the Libyan crisis, but it must play some role in its resolution. In July, for instance, when Haftar’s forces seized some of Libya’s oil reserves and threatened to sell the oil outside the GNA-aligned National Oil Corporation, the United States stated that such sales would violate a UN Resolution and expose buyers to U.S. and UN sanctions. This strengthened the legitimacy of the UN process and forced Haftar to back down. Neither Rome nor Paris could have achieved that result without diplomatic and economic warning from the United States. Washington

should be similarly prepared to help the UN maintain its central role in Libya's stabilization, rather than allowing Paris or Rome to hijack the process. In this way, Trump can avoid deeper involvement in Libya's dysfunctional politics while making a positive contribution nonetheless.¹⁵

¹⁵ Federica Saini Fasanotti and Ben Fishman, How France and Italy's Rivalry Is Hurting Libya, *Foreign Affairs* (October 31, 2018)

CHAPTER 16

Conflict Between India and Pakistan

Background

Territorial disputes over the Kashmir region sparked two of the three major Indo-Pakistani wars in 1947 and 1965, and a limited war in 1999. Although both countries have maintained a fragile cease-fire since 2003, they regularly exchange fire across the contested border. Both sides accuse each other of violating the cease-fire and claim to be shooting in response to attacks. An uptick in border skirmishes that began in late 2016 and continued into 2018 killed dozens and displaced thousands of civilians on both sides of the Line of Control.

In 2014, after India's then newly-elected Prime Minister Modi invited then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to attend his inauguration, there were hopes that his government would pursue meaningful peace negotiations with Pakistan. However, after a brief period of optimism, relations turned sour once more when India canceled talks with Pakistan's foreign minister in August 2014 after the Pakistani high commissioner in India met with Kashmiri separatist leaders. A series of openings continued throughout 2015, including an unscheduled meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. This led to a meeting between national security advisors in Bangkok a few days later, where the Kashmir dispute was discussed. Later in December, Prime Minister Modi made a surprise visit to Lahore to meet with Prime Minister Sharif, the first visit of an Indian leader to Pakistan in more than a decade.

Momentum toward meaningful talks came to an end in September 2016, when armed militants attacked a remote Indian Army base in Uri, near the Line of Control, killing eighteen Indian soldiers in the deadliest attack on the Indian armed forces in decades. Indian officials accused Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, a group with alleged ties to the Inter-Services Intelligence—Pakistan's main intelligence agency—of being behind the attack. Later in September 2016, the Indian military announced it had carried out “surgical strikes” on terrorist camps inside Pakistani-controlled territory across the Line of Control, while the Pakistani military denied that any such operation had taken place.

The diversion of jihadi fighters and proxy groups from Afghanistan to Kashmir threatens to further increase violence along the border. If another Mumbai 2008-style attack, where Lashkar-e-Taiba fighters rampaged through the city for four days, killing 164 people, were carried out by Pakistan's militant proxies, it could trigger a severe military confrontation between the two nuclear-armed states.

Concerns

The United States has identified South Asia as an epicenter of terrorism and religious extremism and so has an interest in ensuring regional stability, preventing nuclear weapons proliferation, and minimizing the potential of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan.

Recent Developments

With continued violence in Kashmir and a heightened threat of terrorist activity by Pakistan-based militant groups, tensions and concerns over a serious military confrontation between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan remain high. In October 2017, militants attacked an Indian paramilitary camp near Srinagar, and then in February 2018 attacked an Indian army base in the Jammu region, killing five soldiers and a civilian.

The attacks came amidst a period of increased cross-border shelling along the Line of Control, with more than three thousand reported violations in 2017 and nearly one thousand in the first half of 2018. Violent demonstrations and anti-India protests calling for an independent Kashmir continued with hundreds of civilians, Indian security forces, and militants killed in attacks and clashes. After months of heavy-handed Indian military operations targeting both Kashmiri militants and demonstrations, India announced in May 2018 that it would observe a cease-fire during the month of Ramadan for the first time in nearly two decades; operations resumed in June 2018. In May 2018, India and Pakistan agreed to a cease-fire that would restore the terms of their 2003 agreement.

Since taking office in August 2018, newly-elected Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has signaled a willingness to hold talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to improve relations and resolve core issues including Kashmir. In September 2018, Khan sent a letter to Modi proposing talks between the countries' respective foreign ministers at the UN General Assembly; after initially agreeing to talks, India canceled the meeting.

Pakistan Profile

A chronology of key events:

1906 - Muslim League founded as forum for Indian Muslim separatism.

1940 - Muslim League endorses idea of separate state for India's Muslims.

1947 - Muslim state of East and West Pakistan created out of partition of India at the end of British rule. Hundreds of thousands die in widespread communal violence, and millions are made homeless.

1948 - Muhammed Ali Jinnah, founding leader of Pakistan, dies. First war with India over disputed territory of Kashmir.

Military rule

1951 - Jinnah's successor Liaquat Ali Khan is assassinated.

1956 - Constitution proclaims Pakistan an Islamic republic.

1958 - Martial law declared and General Ayyub Khan takes over.

War and secession

- 1965** - Second war with India over Kashmir.
- 1969** - General Ayyub Khan resigns and General Yahya Khan takes over.
- 1970** - Victory in East Pakistan election for breakaway Awami League, leading to rising tension with West Pakistan.
- 1971** - East Pakistan attempts to secede, leading to civil war. India intervenes in support of East Pakistan, which eventually breaks away to become Bangladesh.
- 1972** - Simla peace agreement with India sets new frontline in Kashmir.
- 1973** - Populist Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto becomes prime minister.

Zia takes charge

- 1977** - Riots erupt over allegations of vote-rigging by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). General Zia ul-Haq launches military coup.
- 1978** - General Zia becomes president, ushers in Islamic legal system.
- 1979** - Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto hanged amid international protests.
- 1980** - US pledges military assistance to Pakistan following Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.
- 1985** - Martial law and political parties ban lifted.
- 1986** - Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's daughter Benazir returns from exile to lead PPP in campaign for fresh elections.
- 1988** August - General Zia, US ambassador, and top army brass die in air crash.

Bhutto comeback

1988 November - Benazir Bhutto's PPP wins general election.

1990 - Benazir Bhutto dismissed as prime minister on charges of incompetence and corruption.

1991 - Conservative Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif begins economic liberalisation programme. Islamic Sharia law formally incorporated into legal code.

1992 - Government launches campaign to stamp out violence by Urdu-speaking supporters of the Mohajir Quami Movement.

1993 - Prime Minister Sharif resigns under pressure from military. General election brings Benazir Bhutto back to power.

Nuclear tests

- 1996** - President Leghari dismisses Bhutto government amid corruption allegations.
- 1997** - Nawaz Sharif returns as prime minister after Muslim League wins elections.

1998 - Pakistan conducts its own nuclear tests after India explodes several nuclear devices.

1999 April - Benazir Bhutto and husband convicted of corruption and given jail sentences. Ms Bhutto stays out of the country.

1999 May - Kargil conflict: Pakistan-backed forces clash with the Indian military in the icy heights around Kargil in Indian-held Kashmir. More than 1,000 people are killed on both sides.

Musharraf coup

1999 October - General Pervez Musharraf seizes power in coup.

2000 April - Nawaz Sharif sentenced to life imprisonment on hijacking and terrorism charges over his actions to prevent the 1999 coup. Goes into exile in Saudi Arabia later in the year after being pardoned by military authorities.

2001 June - Gen Musharraf names himself president while remaining head of the army.

2001 September - President Musharraf backs the US in its fight against terrorism and supports attacks on the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. US lifts some sanctions imposed after Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998.

2002 January - President Musharraf bans two militant groups - Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad - and takes steps to curb religious extremism.

2002 April - President Musharraf wins another five years in office in a controversial referendum.

Thaw with India

2003 November - Pakistan declares a Kashmir ceasefire; India follows suit.

2003 December - Pakistan and India agree to resume direct air links and to allow overflights of each other's planes from beginning of 2004, after a two-year ban.

2004 February - Nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan admits to having leaked nuclear weapons secrets, reportedly to Libya, North Korea and Iran.

2004 June - Pakistan mounts first military offensive against suspected al-Qaeda militants and their supporters in tribal areas near Afghan border. US begins using drone strikes to target al-Qaeda leaders in the area.

2004 April - Parliament approves creation of military-led National Security Council,

institutionalising role of armed forces in civilian affairs.

2005 April - Bus services, the first in 60 years, operate between Muzaffarabad in Pakistani-administered Kashmir and Srinagar in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

2005 August - Pakistan tests its first nuclear-capable cruise missile.

Kashmir quake

2005 October - Earthquake kills tens of thousands of people in Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

2007 February - Pakistan and India sign an agreement aimed at reducing the risk of accidental nuclear war.

Musharraf targets judiciary

2007 March - President Musharraf suspends Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, triggering a wave of protests across the country.

2007 July - Security forces storm the jihadist-occupied Red Mosque complex in Islamabad following a week-long siege.

Supreme Court reinstates Chief Justice Chaudhry.

2007 October - Ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto returns from exile. Dozens of people die in a suicide bomb targeting her homecoming parade in Karachi.

2007 October-November - Musharraf wins presidential election but is challenged by Supreme Court. He declares emergency rule, dismisses Chief Justice Chaudhry and appoints new Supreme Court, which confirms his re-election.

2007 November - Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif returns from exile.

Bhutto killed, Musharraf resigns

2007 December - Benazir Bhutto assassinated at political rally at election campaign rally in Rawalpindi.

2008 February-March - Pakistan People's Party (PPP) nominee Yusuf Raza Gilani becomes PM at head of coalition with Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League party following parliamentary elections in February.

2008 August - President Musharraf resigns after the two main governing parties agree to launch impeachment proceedings against him.

Nawaz Sharif pulls his PML-N out of the coalition, accusing the PPP of breaking its promise to reinstate all judges sacked by President Musharraf.

2008 September - MPs elect Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari - the widower of assassinated former PM Benazir Bhutto - president.

Suicide bombing on Marriott Hotel in Islamabad kills 53 people. Soon after, government launches major offensive in Bajaur tribal area, killing more than 1,000 militants.

2008 November - The government borrows billions of dollars from the International Monetary Fund to overcome its spiralling debt crisis.

Tribal areas turmoil

2008 December - India blames Mumbai attacks in November on Pakistani-based militants, and demands Pakistan take action. Islamabad denies involvement but promises to co-operate with the Indian investigation.

2009 March - After days of protests, government yields to demands for

reinstatement of judges dismissed by former President Musharraf.

2009 August - The leader of Pakistan's Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, is killed in US drone attack in South Waziristan. He is succeeded by Hakimullah Mehsud.

Suicide bombing in northwestern city of Peshawar kills 120 people.

Reform efforts

2010 April - Parliament approves package of wide-ranging constitutional reforms. Measures include transferring key powers from president to prime minister.

2010 August - Worst floods in 80 years kill at least 1,600 people and affect more than 20 million. Government response widely criticised.

2011 January - A campaign to reform Pakistan's blasphemy law leads to the killing of two prominent supporters, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer in January, and Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti in March.

2011 April - The founder of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, is killed by American special forces in Abbottabad.

"Memogate"

2011 December - Government comes under pressure over a leaked memo alleging senior officials sought US aid against a military coup after the killing of Osama bin Laden in April.

2012 January - Amid growing tension between government and military over "memogate" scandal, army chief Gen Pervez Kayani warns of "unpredictable consequences" after PM Yousuf Raza Gilani

criticises army leaders and sacks top defence official.

2012 May - A US Senate panel cuts \$33m in aid to Pakistan over the jailing of Pakistani doctor Shakil Afridi who helped the CIA find Osama Bin Laden.

2012 June - Supreme Court disqualifies Prime Minister Gilani from holding office after he declines to appeal against a token sentence in President Zardari corruption row. Parliament approves Water and Power Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf as his successor.

2012 July - Pakistan agrees to reopen Nato supply routes to Afghanistan after the US apologises for killing Pakistani soldiers in November.

Sunni extremist violence increases

2012 September - Muslim cleric Khalid Chishti is arrested on suspicion of planting burnt pages of the Koran on a Christian girl briefly detained for blasphemy. Amid widespread condemnation of the case against the girl at home and abroad, a court dropped it November.

2012 October - Taliban gunmen seriously injure 14-year-old campaigner for girls' rights Malala Yousafzai, whom they accused of "promoting secularism". The shooting sparked a brief upsurge of anger in Pakistan against the militants.

2012 November - Taliban suicide bomber kills at least 23 people at a Shia Muslim procession in the Rawalpindi.

2013 June - Parliament approves Nawaz Sharif as prime minister after his Muslim League-N wins parliamentary elections in May.

2014 June - A deadly assault on Karachi's international airport leaves dozens dead. Uzbek militants fighting with the Pakistani Taliban say they carried out the attack. Peace talks with the Taliban collapse and the army launches a major offensive on Islamist hideouts in north-west Pakistan.

2014 October - Teenager Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by the Taliban but survived to become a campaigner for girls' education, becomes the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Peshawar school attack

2014 December - Taliban kills nearly 150 people - mostly children - in an attack on a school in Peshawar.

Government responds to the massacre by lifting a moratorium on the death penalty and launching round-up of terror suspects, although critics complain major terror organisers are left alone.

2015 April - India protests over Pakistan court release on bail of suspected mastermind of 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. Human rights activist Sabeen Mehmud shot dead in Karachi.

2015 April - China and Pakistan sign agreements worth billions of dollars to boost infrastructure. They are designed to end Pakistan's chronic energy crisis and transform the country into a regional economic hub.

2015 June - Pakistan acknowledges that eight out of ten Taliban members allegedly jailed for the gun attack on teenage education activist and Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai were secretly acquitted at their trial in April.

2016 November - Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa is named as new army chief. The position is arguably the most powerful in the country.

2017 February - The Islamic State group takes responsibility for a suicide bombing at a major Sufi shrine in Sindh which killed nearly 90 people. Pakistan closes border with Afghanistan.

2017 March - Parliament passes a law allowing the country's Hindu minority to register their marriages for the first time since partition from India in 1947.

Rise of Imran Khan

2017 August - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is forced to resign after being disqualified by the Supreme Court over corruption charges. He is convicted and given a jail sentence.

2018 August - Former international cricket star Imran Khan becomes prime minister on a pledge to end corruption and dynastic politics, after his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) becomes the largest party in the July general election.

2018 November - Asia Bibi, a Christian woman acquitted of blasphemy after eight years on death row, is freed from prison, prompting violent protests by Islamists.

India Profile

A chronology of key events:

India has been home to several ancient civilisations and empires, some dating back to more than 2,000 BC. Culture and religions have flourished over the millennia, and foreign influence has ebbed and flowed.

1858 - India comes under direct rule of the British crown after failed Indian mutiny.

1885 - Indian National Congress founded as forum for emerging nationalist feeling.

1920-22 - Nationalist figurehead Mahatma Gandhi launches anti-British civil disobedience campaign.

1942-43 - Congress launches "Quit India" movement.

1947 - End of British rule and partition of sub-continent into mainly Hindu India and Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

Newly independent

1947-48 - Hundreds of thousands die in widespread communal bloodshed after partition.

1948 - Mahatma Gandhi assassinated by Hindu extremist.

1948 - War with Pakistan over disputed territory of Kashmir.

1951-52 - Congress Party wins first general elections under leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Regional tensions

1962 - India loses brief border war with China.

1964 - Death of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

1965 - Second war with Pakistan over Kashmir.

1966 - Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister.

1971 - Third war with Pakistan over creation of Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan.

1971 - Twenty-year treaty of friendship signed with Soviet Union.

1974 - India explodes first nuclear device in underground test.

Democratic strains

1975 - Indira Gandhi declares state of emergency after being found guilty of electoral malpractice.

1975-1977 - Nearly 1,000 political opponents imprisoned and programme of compulsory birth control introduced.

1977 - Indira Gandhi's Congress Party loses general elections.

1980 - Indira Gandhi returns to power heading Congress party splinter group, Congress (Indira).

1984 - Troops storm Golden Temple - Sikhs' most holy shrine - to flush out Sikh militants pressing for self-rule.

1984 - Indira Gandhi assassinated by Sikh bodyguards, following which her son, Rajiv, takes over.

1984 December - Gas leak at Union Carbide pesticides plant in Bhopal. Thousands are killed immediately, many more subsequently die or are left disabled.

1987 - India deploys troops for peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

1989 - Falling public support leads to Congress defeat in general election.

1990 - Indian troops withdrawn from Sri Lanka.

1990 - Muslim separatist groups begin campaign of violence in Kashmir.

1991 - Rajiv Gandhi assassinated by suicide bomber sympathetic to Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers.

1991 - Economic reform programme begun by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao.

1992 - Hindu extremists demolish mosque in Ayodhya, triggering widespread Hindu-Muslim violence.

BJP to the fore

1996 - Congress suffers worst ever electoral defeat as Hindu nationalist BJP emerges as largest single party.

1998 - BJP forms coalition government under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

1998 - India carries out nuclear tests, leading to widespread international condemnation.

1999 February - Vajpayee makes historic bus trip to Pakistan to meet Premier Nawaz Sharif and to sign bilateral Lahore peace declaration.

1999 May - Tension in Kashmir leads to brief war with Pakistan-backed forces in the icy heights around Kargil in Indian-held Kashmir.

1999 October - Cyclone devastates eastern state of Orissa, leaving at least 10,000 dead.

Population: 1 billion

2000 May - India marks the birth of its billionth citizen.

2000 - US President Bill Clinton makes a groundbreaking visit to improve ties.

2001 January - Massive earthquakes hit the western state of Gujarat, leaving at least 30,000 dead.

2001 April - 16 Indian and three Bangladeshi soldiers are killed in border clashes.

A high-powered rocket is launched, propelling India into the club of countries able to fire big satellites deep into space.

2001 July - Vajpayee meets Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in the first summit between the two neighbours in more than two years. It ends without a breakthrough because of differences over Kashmir.

2001 September - US lifts sanctions which it imposed against India and Pakistan after they staged nuclear tests in 1998. The move is seen as a reward for their support for the US-led anti-terror campaign.

Kashmir tensions rise

2001 October - India fires on Pakistani military posts in the heaviest firing along the dividing line of control in Kashmir for almost a year.

2001 December - Suicide squad attacks parliament in New Delhi, killing several police. The five gunmen die in the assault.

2001 December - India imposes sanctions against Pakistan, to force it to take action against two Kashmir militant groups blamed for the suicide attack on parliament. Pakistan retaliates with similar sanctions, and bans the groups in January.

2001 December - India, Pakistan mass troops on common border amid mounting fears of a looming war.

2002 January - India successfully test-fires a nuclear-capable ballistic missile - the Agni - off its eastern coast.

2002 February - Inter-religious bloodshed breaks out after 59 Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya are killed in a train fire in Godhra, Gujarat. More than 1,000 people, mainly Muslims, die in subsequent violence. Police and officials blamed the fire on a Muslim mob, but a 2005 government investigation said it was an accident. In 2012 a court convicts 32 people over the Naroda Patiya riots in Ahmedabad.

2002 May - Pakistan test-fires three medium-range surface-to-surface Ghauri missiles, which are capable of carrying nuclear warheads. War of words between Indian and Pakistani leaders intensifies. Actual war seems imminent.

2002 June - UK, US urge their citizens to leave India and Pakistan, while maintaining diplomatic offensive to avert war.

2002 July - Retired scientist and architect of India's missile programme APJ Abdul Kalam is elected president.

2003 August - At least 50 people are killed in two simultaneous bomb blasts in Bombay.

Kashmir ceasefire, Congress in power

2003 November - India matches Pakistan's declaration of a Kashmir ceasefire.

2003 December - India, Pakistan agree to resume direct air links and to allow overflights.

2004 January - Groundbreaking meeting held between government and moderate Kashmir separatists.

2004 May - Surprise victory for Congress Party in general elections. Manmohan Singh is sworn in as prime minister.

2004 September - India, along with Brazil, Germany and Japan, launches an application for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

2004 November - India begins to withdraw some of its troops from Kashmir.

Asian tsunami

2004 December - Thousands are killed when waves of the Asian Tsunami devastates coastal communities in the south and in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

2005 7 April - Bus services, the first in 60 years, operate between Srinagar in Indian-administered Kashmir and Muzaffarabad in Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

2005 July - More than 1,000 people are killed in floods and landslides caused by monsoon rains in Mumbai (Bombay) and Maharashtra region.

2005 October - Bombs kill 62 people in Delhi. A little-known Kashmiri group says it is behind the attacks.

2006 February - India's largest-ever rural jobs scheme is launched, aimed at lifting around 60 million families out of poverty.

Nuclear deal

2006 March - US and India sign a nuclear agreement during a visit by US President George W Bush. The US gives India access to civilian nuclear technology while India agrees to greater scrutiny for its nuclear programme.

2006 11 July - More than 180 people are killed in bomb attacks on rush-hour trains in Mumbai. Investigators blame Islamic militants based in Pakistan.

2006 8 September - Explosions outside a mosque in the western town of Malegaon kill at least 31 people.

2006 November - Hu Jintao makes the first visit to India by a Chinese president in a decade.

2006 December - US President George W Bush approves a controversial law allowing India to buy US nuclear reactors and fuel for the first time in 30 years.

Train attack

2007 18 February - 68 passengers, most of them Pakistanis, are killed by bomb blasts and a blaze on a train travelling from New Delhi to the Pakistani city of Lahore.

2007 February - India and Pakistan sign an agreement aimed at reducing the risk of accidental nuclear war.

2007 March - Maoist rebels in Chhattisgarh state kill more than 50 policemen in a dawn attack.

2007 April - India's first commercial space rocket is launched, carrying an Italian satellite.

2007 May - At least nine people are killed in a bomb explosion at the main mosque in Hyderabad. Several others are killed in subsequent rioting.

2007 May - Government announces its strongest economic growth figures for 20 years - 9.4% in the year to March.

First woman president

2007 July - Pratibha Patil becomes first woman to be elected president of India.

2008 July - Congress-led coalition survives vote of confidence brought after left-wing parties withdraw their support over controversial nuclear cooperation deal with US.

2008 July - Series of explosions kills 49 in Ahmedabad, in Gujarat state. The little-known militant Islamist group Indian Mujahideen claims responsibility.

2008 October - Following approval by the US Congress, President George W Bush signs into law a nuclear deal with India, which ends a three-decade ban on US nuclear trade with Delhi.

India successfully launches its first mission to the moon, the unmanned lunar probe Chandrayaan-1.

Mumbai attacks

2008 November - Nearly 200 people are killed and hundreds injured in a series of co-ordinated attacks by gunmen on the main

tourist and business area of India's financial capital Mumbai. India blames militants from Pakistan for the attacks and demands that Islamabad act against those responsible.

2008 December - India announces "pause" in peace process with Pakistan. Indian cricket team cancels planned tour of Pakistan.

2009 February - India and Russia sign deals worth \$700m, according to which Moscow will supply uranium to Delhi.

2009 May - Resounding general election victory gives governing Congress-led alliance of PM Manmohan Singh an enhanced position in parliament, only 11 seats short of an absolute majority.

2009 July - Pakistani, Indian premiers pledge to work together to fight terror irrespective of progress on improving broader ties.

A Dehli court rules that homosexual intercourse between consenting adults is not criminal, overturning a 148-year-old colonial law.

2009 December - The government says it will allow a new state, Telangana, to be carved out of part of the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. Violent protests for and against break out.

2010 February - Bomb explosion in a restaurant popular with tourists in Pune, in the western state of Maharashtra, kills 16 people.

2010 May - The sole surviving gunman of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, Ajmal Amir Qasab, is convicted of murder, waging war on India and possessing explosives.

2010 June - A court in Bhopal sentences eight Indians to two years each in jail for "death by negligence" over the 1984 Union Carbide gas plant leak. Thousands died in this, the world's worst industrial accident.

Ayodhya ruling

2010 September - Allahabad High Court rules that the disputed holy site of Ayodhya should be divided between Hindus and Muslims; the destruction of a mosque on the site by Hindu extremists in 1992 led to rioting in which about 2,000 people died.

2011 March - Results of 2011 census put India's population at 1.21 billion, an increase of 181 million over ten years.

2011 August - Prominent social activist Anna Hazare stages 12-day hunger strike in Delhi in protest at state corruption.

2011 November - Fourteen people, including a government minister, go on trial on charges for under-selling mobile phone licenses in return for bribes, in one of India's biggest ever corruption scandals.

2012 January - British author Sir Salman Rushdie cancels an appearance at a literary festival in India in response to threats from Islamic extremists who object to his book The Satanic Verses.

2012 June - Police in Delhi arrest Abu Hamza, also known as Syed Zabiuddin - allegedly a key figure in planning the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

2012 July - Pranab Mukherjee from the ruling Congress party is elected president, comfortably beating his rival P.A. Sangma.

2012 August - Court convicts 32 people over the 2002 religious riots in Gujarat, including former state minister Maya Kodnani.

2012 November - Mohammad Ajmal Amir Qasab, the sole surviving gunman of the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, is executed in Pune prison. The Supreme Court upheld his death sentence in August.

2013 February - Two explosions in crowded Dilsukhnagar area of central Hyderabad kill

16 people. Police suspect the Indian Mujahideen Islamist armed group.

2013 September - A court sentences four men to death for the gang rape and murder of a student in Delhi the previous December - a case that led to violent protests across India and new laws against rape.

2013 December - The Supreme Court reverses a 2009 Delhi High Court order decriminalising homosexual acts, saying parliament, not the courts, must resolve the issue.

BJP back in power

2014 May - The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and its candidate for prime minister, Narendra Modi, win parliamentary elections by a landslide.

2014 September - Visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi unveil landmark economic deals. China says it plans to build two industrial parks in India, as part of overall investment of twenty billion dollars in the next five years.

2014 December - India's governing BJP emerges for the first time as a major political player in the disputed Kashmir region after local elections, doubling its seats in the state assembly.

2015 February - The anti-corruption Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), headed by Arvind Kejriwal, wins a stunning victory in Delhi state elections, marking the BJP's first big setback since it triumphed in the 2014 general election.

2015 June - India arrests Naga separatist leader Khumlo Abi Anal over killing of 20 soldiers in ambush on Burmese border.

2015 June - India and Bangladesh sign a historic deal allowing more than 50,000

people living in border enclaves to choose which of the countries they live in.

2015 September - India launches its first space laboratory Astrosat in its biggest project since its Mars orbiter mission in 2014.

2016 September - Tens of millions of workers take part in a 24-hour strike to demand higher wages and to protest against the government's economic reforms.

2016 September - India signs a billion-dollar defence deal with France to buy 36 Rafale fighter jets.

2016 November - In a surprise announcement, the government withdraws high denomination notes from circulation causing chaotic scenes at banks across the country as customers try to exchange old notes.

2017 January - The government reaches a wide-ranging cooperation agreement with the United Arab Emirates, with a series of deals on energy, defence, trade and maritime affairs.

2017 May - Launches its so-called "South Asia satellite" from the country's space Centre in Andhra Pradesh state. The satellite is designed to improve disaster relief and telecommunication links in the region.

2017 June - Along with Pakistan, India becomes a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, an inter-governmental security grouping. India's membership sees the grouping's membership expand into South Asia.

2017 July-August - Row with China over disputed area of Himalayas, where China says Indian troops have been trespassing.

Kashmir Profile

A chronology of key events

1947 - End of British rule and partition of sub-continent into mainly Hindu India and Muslim-majority state of Pakistan.

1947 - The Maharaja of Kashmir signs a treaty of accession with India after a Pakistani tribal army attacks. War breaks out between India and Pakistan over the region.

1948 - India raises Kashmir in the UN Security Council, which in Resolution 47 calls for a referendum on the status of the territory. The resolution also calls on Pakistan to withdraw its troops and India to cut its military presence to a minimum. A ceasefire comes into force, but Pakistan refuses to evacuate its troops. Kashmir is for practical purposes partitioned.

1951 - Elections in the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir back accession to India. India says this makes a referendum unnecessary. The UN and Pakistan say a referendum needs to take into account the views of voters throughout the former princely state.

1953 - The pro-Indian authorities dismiss and arrest Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah, leader of the governing National Conference, after he takes a pro-referendum stance and delays formal accession to India. A new Jammu and Kashmir government ratifies accession to India.

1957 - The constitution of Indian-administrated Jammu and Kashmir defines it as part of India.

1950s - China gradually occupies eastern Kashmir (Aksai Chin).

Indian war with China

1962 - China defeats India in a short war for control of Aksai Chin.

1963 - Pakistan cedes the Trans-Karakoram Tract of Kashmir to China.

1965 - A brief war between Indian and Pakistan over Kashmir ends in a ceasefire and a return to the previous positions.

1971-72 - Another Indo-Pakistani war ends in defeat for Pakistan and leads to the 1972 Simla Agreement. This turns the Kashmir ceasefire line into the Line of Control, pledges both sides to settle their differences through negotiations, and calls for a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The Agreement forms the basis of Pakistani-Indian relations thereafter.

1974 - The Opposition Plebiscite Front in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir drops demand for a referendum in return for extensive autonomy in an agreement with the Indian government. Sheikh Abdullah becomes chief minister, and his political dynasty continues to dominate the National Conference and state after his death in 1982.

1984 - The Indian Army seizes control of the Siachen Glacier, an area not demarcated by the Line of Control. Pakistan makes frequent attempts to capture the area in the following decades.

Start of insurgency

1987 - Disputed state elections in Indian-administrated Jammu and Kashmir give impetus to a pro-independence insurgency centred around the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). India accuses Pakistan of fomenting the insurgency by despatching fighters across the Line of Control, which Pakistan denies.

1990 - The insurgency escalates after the Indian Army kills about 100 demonstrators at Gawakadal Bridge. Attacks and threats lead to the flight of almost all Hindus from the Kashmir Valley area of the state. India imposes Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in Jammu and Kashmir.

1990s - The insurgency continues, with Kashmiri militants training in Pakistan and

India deploying hundreds of thousands of troops in Jammu and Kashmir. Violence against civilians by both sides is widespread.

1999 - India and Pakistan go to war again after militants cross from Pakistani-administered Kashmir into the Indian-administered Kargil district. India repulses the attack, accuses Pakistan of being behind it, and breaks off relations.

2001-2004 - Moves to boost relations between the two countries are punctuated by continuing violence, notably an attack on the parliament of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar in 2001.

2010 - Major protests erupt in the Kashmir Valley of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir over the summer after a demonstrator is killed by the Indian army. The protests abate in September after the government announces measures to ease tension.

2011 August - Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announces an amnesty for the 1,200 young men who threw stones at security forces during the anti-government protests in the Kashmir Valley the previous year.

Indian State Human Rights Commission confirms presence of more than 2,000 unidentified bodies in unmarked graves near the Line of Control. Activists say many may be people who disappeared after being arrested by security forces.

2011 September - Indian forces kill three Pakistani soldiers in firing across the Line of Control. India accuses Pakistan of opening fire first.

2013 February - Kashmiri Jaish-e-Mohammed member Mohammad Afzal Guru hanged over role in 2001 Indian parliament terror attack, prompting protests in which two young men are killed.

2013 September - Prime ministers of India and Pakistan meet and agree to try reduce

the number of violent incidents at their disputed border in Kashmir.

2014 August - India cancels talks with Pakistan after accusing it of interfering in India's internal affairs. The decision comes after Pakistan's High Commissioner in Delhi consulted Kashmiri separatist leaders in advance of the talks.

During a visit to the disputed border state of Jammu and Kashmir, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi accuses Pakistan of waging a proxy war against India in Kashmir.

2014 October - Pakistan and India exchange strongly-worded warnings, after a flare-up of violence across their common border leaves at least 18 people dead.

BJP joins government

2015 March - India's ruling BJP party is sworn into government in Indian-administered Kashmir for first time in coalition with local People's Democratic Party, with the latter's Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as chief minister.

2015 September - Muslim separatist leaders in Indian-administered Kashmir close shops, businesses and government departments in protest at the enforcement of a colonial-era ban on eating beef.

2015 November - One person dies in violent protests following a visit to Indian-administered Kashmir by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

2016 April - Mehbooba Mufti, the leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), becomes the first female chief minister of Indian-administered Kashmir following the death of her father and party founder Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Curfew

2016 July - Authorities impose an indefinite curfew in most parts of Indian-administered Kashmir after the killing of popular militant by security forces of Burhan Wani, a popular militant and top commander of the

Hizbul Mujahideen group, sparks violent protests.

2016 August - A curfew in most parts of Indian-administered Kashmir is lifted but schools, shops and most banks remain shut and mobile and internet services remain suspended. At least 68 civilians and two security officials have died and more than 9,000 people injured in over 50 days of violence according to official tallies.

2016 September - India and Pakistan exchange a war of words after 18 Indian soldiers are killed in a raid by gunmen on an army base in Indian-administered Kashmir.

2016 September - India says it has carried out "surgical strikes" against suspected militants along the de-facto border with Pakistan in Kashmir but Pakistan rejects the claims.

2016 October - The Indian army shoots dead three suspected militants as they try to enter an army camp in northern Kashmir.

2016 November - Human Rights Watch appeals for an end to the burning of schools in Indian-administered Kashmir after the total set alight since a wave of pro-separatist unrest began in July reaches 25.

2016 November - Thousands of villagers in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir are evacuated after violence escalates following the killing of seven Pakistani soldiers in an exchange of fire between India and Pakistan along the Line of Control.

2017 May - Thousands defy a curfew across Indian-administered Kashmir to attend the funeral of top rebel commander Sabzar Ahmad Bhat.

2017 July - Violent clashes take place in Indian-administered Kashmir on the anniversary of the death of militant commander Burhan Wani.

2017 July - Militants attack Hindu pilgrims, killing at least seven and injuring 16, in the worst such attack since 2000.

Timeline: India-Pakistan relations

A timeline of the rocky relationship between the two nuclear-armed South Asian neighbours.

By Asad Hashim

1947 - Britain, as part of its pullout from the Indian subcontinent, divides it into secular (but mainly Hindu) India and Muslim Pakistan on August 15 and 14 respectively. The partition causes one of the largest human migrations ever seen, and sparks riots and violence across the region.

1947/48 - The first Indo-Pak war over Kashmir is fought, after armed tribesmen (lashkars) from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (now called Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa) invade the disputed territory in October 1947. The Maharaja, faced with an internal revolt as well an external invasion, requests the assistance of the Indian armed forces, in return for acceding to India. He hands over control of his defence, communications and foreign affairs to the Indian government.

Both sides agree that the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh be ratified by a referendum, to be held after hostilities have ceased. Historians on either side of the dispute remain undecided as to whether the Maharaja signed the document after Indian

troops had entered Kashmir (i.e. under duress) or if he did so under no direct military pressure.

Fighting continues through the second half of 1948, with the regular Pakistani army called upon to protect Pakistan's borders.

The war officially ends on January 1, 1949, when the United Nations arranges a ceasefire, with an established ceasefire line, a UN peacekeeping force and a recommendation that the referendum on the accession of Kashmir to India be held as agreed earlier. That referendum has yet to be held.

Pakistan controls roughly one-third of the state, referring to it as Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir. It is semi-autonomous. A larger area, including the former kingdoms of Hunza and Nagar, is controlled directly by the central Pakistani government. The Indian (eastern) side of the ceasefire line is referred to as Jammu and Kashmir. Both countries refer to the other side of the ceasefire line as "occupied" territory.

1954 - The accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India is ratified by the state's constituent assembly.

1957 - The Jammu and Kashmir constituent assembly approves a constitution. India, from the point of the 1954 ratification and 1957 constitution, begins to refer to Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of the Indian union.

1963 - Following the 1962 Sino-Indian war, the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan - Swaran Singh and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto - hold talks under the auspices of the British and Americans regarding the Kashmir dispute. The specific contents of those talks have not yet been declassified, but no agreement was reached. In the talks, "Pakistan signified willingness to consider approaches other than a plebiscite and India recognised that the status of Kashmir was in dispute and territorial adjustments might be necessary," according to a declassified US state department memo (dated January 27, 1964).

1964 - Following the failure of the 1963 talks, Pakistan refers the Kashmir case to the UN Security Council.

1965 - India and Pakistan fight their second war. The conflict begins after a clash between border patrols in April in the Rann of Kutch (in the Indian state of Gujarat), but escalates on August 5, when between 26,000 and 33,000 Pakistani soldiers cross the ceasefire line dressed as Kashmiri locals, crossing into Indian-administered Kashmir.

Infantry, armour and air force units are involved in the conflict while it remains localised to the Kashmir theatre, but as the war expands, Indian troops cross the international border at Lahore on September 6. The largest engagement of the war takes place in the Sialkot sector, where between 400 and 600 tanks square off in an inconclusive battle.

By September 22, both sides agree to a UN mandated ceasefire, ending the war that had by that point reached a stalemate, with both sides holding some of the other's territory.

1966 - On January 10, 1966, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan sign an agreement at Tashkent (now in Uzbekistan), agreeing to withdraw to pre-August lines and that economic and diplomatic relations would be restored.

1971 - India and Pakistan go to war a third time, this time over East Pakistan. The conflict begins when the central Pakistani government in West Pakistan, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, refuses to allow Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a Bengali whose party won the majority of seats in the 1970 parliamentary elections, to assume the premiership.

A Pakistani military crackdown on Dhaka begins in March, but India becomes involved in the conflict in December, after the Pakistani air force launches a pre-emptive strike on airfields in India's northwest.

India then launches a coordinated land, air and sea assault on East Pakistan. The Pakistani army surrenders at Dhaka, and its army of more than 90,000 become prisoners of war. Hostilities lasted 13 days, making this one of the shortest wars in modern history. East Pakistan becomes the independent country of Bangladesh on December 6, 1971.

1972 - Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sign an agreement in the Indian town of Simla, in which both countries agree to "put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred their relations and work for the promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of a durable peace in the subcontinent". Both sides agree to settle any disputes "by peaceful means".

The Simla Agreement designates the ceasefire line of December 17, 1971, as being the new "Line-of-Control (LoC)" between the two countries, which neither side is to seek to alter unilaterally, nor which "shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognised position of either side".

1974 - The Kashmiri state government affirms that the state "is a constituent unit of the Union of India". Pakistan rejects the accord with the Indian government.

On May 18, India detonates a nuclear device at Pokhran, in an operation codenamed "Smiling Buddha". India refers to the device as a "peaceful nuclear explosive".

1988 - The two countries sign an agreement that neither side will attack the other's nuclear installations or facilities. These include "nuclear power and research reactors, fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment, isotopes separation and reprocessing facilities as well as any other installations with fresh or irradiated nuclear fuel and materials in any form and establishments storing significant quantities of radio-active materials".

Both sides agree to share information on the latitudes and longitudes of all nuclear installations. This agreement is later ratified, and the two countries share information on January 1 each year since then.

1989 - Armed resistance to Indian rule in the Kashmir valley begins. Muslim political parties, after accusing the state government of rigging the 1987 state legislative elections, form militant wings.

Pakistan says that it gives its "moral and diplomatic" support to the movement, reiterating its call for the earlier UN-sponsored referendum.

India says that Pakistan is supporting the insurgency by providing weapons and training to fighters, terming attacks against it in Kashmir "cross-border terrorism". Pakistan denies this. Militant groups taking part in the fight in Kashmir continue to emerge through the 1990s, in part fuelled by a large influx of "mujahideen" who took part in the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s.

1991 - The two countries sign agreements on providing advance notification of military exercises, manoeuvres and troop movements, as well as on preventing airspace violations and establishing overflight rules.

1992 - A joint declaration prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is signed in New Delhi.

1996 - Following a series of clashes, military officers from both countries meet at the LoC in order to ease tensions.

1998 - India detonates five nuclear devices at Pokhran. Pakistan responds by detonating six nuclear devices of its own in the Chaghai Hills. The tests result in international sanctions being placed on both countries. In the same year, both countries carry out tests of long-range missiles.

1999 - Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee meets with Nawaz Sharif, his Pakistani counterpart, in Lahore. The two sign the Lahore Declaration, the first major agreement between the two countries since the 1972 Simla Accord. Both countries reaffirm their commitment to the Simla Accord, and agree to undertake a number of 'Confidence Building Measures' (CBMs).

Some of the diplomatic gains are eroded, however, after the Kargil conflict breaks out in May. Pakistani forces and Kashmiri fighters occupy strategic positions on the Indian side of the LoC, prompting an Indian counter offensive in which they are pushed back to the other side of the original LoC.

Kargil is the first armed conflict between the two neighbours since they officially conducted nuclear weapons tests.

In October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani chief of army staff, leads a military coup, deposing Nawaz Sharif, the then prime minister, and installing himself as the head of the government.

2001 - Tensions along the Line of Control remain high, with 38 people killed in an attack on the Kashmiri assembly in Srinagar. Following that attack, Farooq Abdullah, the chief minister of Indian-administered Kashmir, calls on the Indian government to launch a full-scale military operation against alleged training camps in Pakistan.

In July, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee meet for a two-day summit in the Indian city of Agra. That summit collapses after two days, with both sides unable to reach agreement on the core issue of Kashmir. On December 13, an armed attack on the Indian parliament in New Delhi leaves 14 people dead. India blames Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad for the attacks. The attacks lead to a

massing of India's and Pakistan's militaries along the LoC. The standoff only ends in October 2002, after international mediation.

2002 - President Musharraf pledges that Pakistan will combat extremism on its own soil, but affirms that the country has a right to Kashmir.

2003 - After Musharraf calls for a ceasefire along the LoC during a UN General Assembly meeting in September, the two countries reach an agreement to cool tensions and cease hostilities across the defacto border.

2004 - Vajpayee and Musharraf hold direct talks at the 12th SAARC summit in Islamabad in January, and the two countries' foreign secretaries meet later in the year. This year marks the beginning of the Composite Dialogue Process, in which bilateral meetings are held between officials at various levels of government (including foreign ministers, foreign secretaries, military officers, border security officials, anti-narcotics officials and nuclear experts). In November, on the eve of a visit to Jammu and Kashmir, the new Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, announces that India will be reducing its deployment of troops there.

2006 - India redeloys 5,000 troops from Jammu and Kashmir, citing an "improvement" in the situation there, but the two countries are unable to reach an agreement on withdrawing forces from the Siachen glacier. In September, President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh agree to put into place an Indo-Pak institutional anti-terrorism mechanism.

2007 - On February 18, the train service between India and Pakistan (the Samjhauta Express) is bombed near Panipat, north of New Delhi. Sixty-eight people are killed, and dozens injured.

The fifth round of talks regarding the review of nuclear and ballistic missile-related CBMs is held as part of the Composite Dialogue Process. The second round of the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism (JATM) is also held.

2008 - India joins a framework agreement between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan on a \$7.6bn gas pipeline project. A series of Kashmir-specific CBMs are also agreed to (including the approval of a triple-entry permit facility).

In July, India blames Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate for a bomb attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul, which kills 58 and injures another 141.

In September, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Indian Prime Minister Singh formally announce the opening of several trade routes between the two countries.

In October, cross-LoC trade commences, though it is limited to 21 items and can take place on only two days a week.

On November 26, armed gunmen open fire on civilians at several sites in Mumbai, India. The attacks on the Taj Mahal Palace & Tower, the Oberoi Trident Hotel, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Leopold Cafe, Cama Hospital, Nariman House Jewish community centre, Metro Cinema, St Xavier's College and in a lane near the Times of India office, prompt an almost three-day siege of the Taj, where gunmen remain holed up until all

but one of them are killed in an Indian security forces operation. More than 160 people are killed in the attacks.

Ajmal Kasab, the only attacker captured alive, says the attackers were members of Lashkar-e-Taiba.

In the wake of the attacks, India breaks off talks with Pakistan.

2009 - The Pakistani government admits that the Mumbai attacks may have been partly planned on Pakistani soil, while vigorously denying allegations that the plotters were sanctioned or aided by Pakistan's intelligence agencies.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Indian Prime Minister Singh meet on the sidelines of a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, issuing a joint statement charting future talks. Singh rules out, however, the resumption of the Composite Dialogue Process at the present time.

The Indian government continues to take a stern line with Pakistan, however, with its coalition government saying that it is up to Pakistan to take the first step towards the resumption of substantive talks by cracking down on militant groups on its soil.

In August, India gives Pakistan a new dossier of evidence regarding the Mumbai attacks, asking it to prosecute Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the head of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, an Islamic charity with ties to Lashkar-e-Taiba.

2010 - In January, Pakistani and Indian forces exchange fire across the LoC in Kashmir, the latest in a string of such incidents that have led to rising tension in the area.

In February, India and Pakistan's foreign secretaries meet in New Delhi for talks. This meeting is followed by the two countries' foreign ministers meeting in Islamabad in July.

In May, Ajmal Kasab is found guilty of murder, conspiracy and of waging war against India in the Mumbai attacks case. He is sentenced to death.

2011 - In January, Indian Home Secretary GK Pillai says India will share information with Pakistan regarding the 2001 Samjhauta Express bombing. The two countries' foreign secretaries meet in Thimpu, Nepal, in February, and agree to resume peace talks "on all issues".

2012 - In November, India execute Pakistani national Mohammad Ajmal Kasab, the lone survivor of a fighter squad that killed 166 people in a rampage through the financial capital Mumbai in 2008, hanging him just days before the fourth anniversary of the attack.

2013 - In January, India and Pakistan trade accusations of violating the cease-fire in Kashmir, with Islamabad accusing Indian troops of a cross-border raid that killed a soldier and India charging that Pakistani shelling destroyed a home on its side.

2013 - In September, the prime ministers of India and Pakistan meet in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Both the leaders agree to end tension between armies of both sides in the disputed Kashmir.

2014 - On February 12, India and Pakistan agree to release trucks detained in their respective territories, ending a three week impasse triggered by seizure of a truck in India-administered Kashmir coming from across the de facto Line of Control for allegedly carrying brown sugar.

2014 - On May 1, Pakistan's Army chief General Raheel Sharif calls Kashmir the "jugular vein" of Pakistan, and that the dispute should be resolved in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of Kashmiris and in line with UNSC resolutions for lasting peace in the region.

2014 - On May 25, Pakistan releases 151 Indian fishermen from its jails in a goodwill gesture ahead of swearing-in ceremony of Narendra Modi as prime minister.

2014 - On May 27, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in New Delhi. Both sides express willingness to begin new era of bilateral relations.¹⁶

¹⁶ Asad Hashim, Timeline: India-Pakistan relations, *Al Jazeera* (27 May 2014)

Pakistan's Military Has Quietly Reached Out to India for Talks

By Maria Abi-Habib

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Concerned about Pakistan's international isolation and faltering economy, the country's powerful military has quietly reached out to its archrival India about resuming peace talks, but the response was tepid, according to Western diplomats and a senior Pakistani official.

The outreach, initiated by the army's top commander, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, began months before Pakistan's national elections. Pakistan offered to resume on-and-off talks with India over their border dispute in the Kashmir region, which stalled in 2015 as violence flared up there.

A key objective for Pakistan in reaching out to India is to open barriers to trade between the countries, which would give Pakistan more access to regional markets. Any eventual peace talks over Kashmir are likely to involve an increase in bilateral trade as a confidence-building measure.

Increasingly, Pakistan's military sees the country's battered economy as a security threat, because it aggravates the insurgencies that plague the country. Pakistan is expected to ask the International Monetary Fund for \$9 billion in the coming weeks, after receiving several billions of dollars in loans from China this year to pay its bills.

"We want to move forward and we are trying our best to have good ties with all our neighbors, including India," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said. "As General Bajwa says, regions prosper, countries don't. India cannot prosper by weakening Pakistan."

General Bajwa linked Pakistan's economy to the region's security in a hallmark speech last October, and the idea that the two are inseparable has since become known as the Bajwa doctrine. The army chief is also seen as more moderate than his predecessors were on India, which has been Pakistan's bitter rival since the bloody partition that came with independence in 1947.

The Pakistani general and his Indian counterpart, Gen. Bipin Rawat, served together in a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Congo about a decade ago and get along well, diplomats say. This year, General Bajwa said the only way to solve the two countries' conflict was through dialogue, a rare statement from the military.

Diplomats say General Bajwa has tried to reach out to General Rawat to initiate talks. But the effort has been stymied by what one diplomat called a "system mismatch."

The army is Pakistan's most powerful institution, but India's military is much weaker and could not agree to a peace deal without the civilian government's approval. Diplomats in New Delhi say Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is preoccupied with elections

expected early next year and does not want talks before then, fearing that if talks collapse — as they have many times before — it could cost them at the polls.

“Till the Indian elections, there cannot be an immediate betterment in bilateral relations,” Mr. Chaudhry said. India’s military and its foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

The new Pakistani government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan has been sending strong signals in favor of talks, though it is the military that ultimately controls foreign and defense policy. “If you take one step forward, we will take two steps forward,” Mr. Khan said in his victory speech, addressing India. “We need to move ahead.”

With Mr. Khan in office, talks may have a better chance because he is seen as the army’s man, diplomats in both Islamabad and New Delhi say. India sees Mr. Khan’s outreach as sanctioned by the military and believes he will clearly present General Bajwa’s demands and red lines.

That the military would initiate such a major foreign policy decision unilaterally, and before the elections, suggests it was confident that its preferred candidate, Mr. Khan, would win. Mr. Khan was sworn in as prime minister last month, in the wake of accusations that the army had intervened to back his candidacy.

Diplomats in Islamabad say Pakistan’s outreach may also be driven in part by the country’s Chinese allies. Beijing has prodded Pakistan to stabilize its border with India, hoping for greater stability as it pursues its regional economic ambitions. China is investing some \$62 billion in Pakistan, mostly in large infrastructure projects through what is being called the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of China’s global Belt and Road initiative.

The plan would give Beijing more direct access to important Western markets by building a series of highways through Pakistan, connecting China’s western border to Pakistan’s Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea. If Pakistani troops are freed up along the border with India, the thinking goes, they could be diverted to secure the country’s western flank, where China’s trade routes would be.

Chinese Muslim insurgents who oppose Beijing’s rule have been active in Afghanistan and western Pakistan, and other Pakistani insurgents, including Baloch separatists, have opposed the Chinese infrastructure projects. Last month, a Baloch separatist group attacked a bus carrying Chinese workers, wounding five.

Pakistan may also be realizing that it can no longer withstand its growing international isolation and its worsening ties with the United States, which was once its closest Western ally. The United States cut more than \$1 billion of aid to Pakistan in January for not doing enough to curb terror groups, which it accuses the army of supporting.

Tensions with Washington were further aggravated this week when the American military said it would withhold \$300 million in aid to Pakistan, just days before the Trump

administration's first meeting with Mr. Khan's new government. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is scheduled to meet Mr. Khan on Wednesday in Islamabad, and Pakistani lawmakers enraged over the aid cut have been calling for Mr. Khan to scrap the meeting.

In the past, military and government officials in Pakistan have said they could withstand American aid cuts, pointing to their growing ties with China. But Pakistan was stunned this year when China went along with putting Islamabad on a terror-financing watch list, which will make it harder and more expensive for Pakistan to raise badly needed funding on international debt markets.¹⁷

¹⁷ Maria Abi-Habib, Pakistan's Military Has Quietly Reached Out to India for Talks, *New York times* (Sept. 4, 2018)

Why the India-Pakistan War Over Water Is So Dangerous

As New Delhi and Islamabad trade nuclear threats and deadly attacks, a brewing war over shared water resources threatens to turn up the violence.

By Michael Kugelman

SEPTEMBER 30, 2016

Early on the morning of Sept. 29, according to India's Defense Ministry and military, Indian forces staged a "surgical strike" in Pakistan-administered Kashmir that targeted seven terrorist camps and killed multiple militants. Pakistan angrily denied that the daring raid took place, though it did state that two of its soldiers were killed in clashes with Indian troops along their disputed border. New Delhi's announcement of its strike plunged already tense India-Pakistan relations into deep crisis. It came 11 days after militants identified by India as members of the Pakistani terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed killed 18 soldiers on a military base in the town of Uri, in India-administered Kashmir.

Amid all the shrill rhetoric and saber rattling emanating from India and Pakistan in recent days — including India's home minister branding Pakistan a "terrorist state" and Pakistan's defense minister threatening to wage nuclear war on India — one subtle threat issued by India may have sounded relatively innocuous to the casual listener.

In reality, it likely filled Pakistan with fear.

On Sept. 22, India's Foreign Ministry spokesman suggested, cryptically, that New Delhi could revoke the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). "For any such treaty to work," warned Vikas Swarup, when asked if India would cancel the agreement, "it is important for mutual trust and cooperation. It cannot be a one-sided affair."

The IWT is a 56-year-old accord that governs how India and Pakistan manage the vast Indus River Basin's rivers and tributaries. After David Lilienthal, a former chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, visited the region in 1951, he was prompted to write an article in Collier's magazine, in which he argued that a transboundary water accord between India and Pakistan would help ease some of the hostility from the partition — particularly because the rivers of the Indus Basin flow through Kashmir. His idea gained traction and also the support of the World Bank. The bank mediated several years of difficult bilateral negotiations before the parties concluded a deal in 1960. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower described it as a "bright spot" in a "very depressing world picture." The IWT has survived, with few challenges, to the present day.

And yet, it has now come under severe strain.

On Sept. 26, India's government met to review the treaty but reportedly decided that it would not revoke the agreement — for now. New Delhi left open the possibility of revisiting

the issue at a later date. Ominously, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told top officials present at the treaty review meeting that “blood and water cannot flow together.”

Additionally, the government suspended, with immediate effect, meetings between the Indus commissioners of both countries — high-level sessions that ordinarily take place twice a year to manage the IWT and to address any disagreements that may arise from it.

These developments have spooked Pakistan severely. Sartaj Aziz, the foreign affairs advisor to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, said revoking the IWT could be perceived as an “act of war,” and he hinted that Pakistan might seek assistance from the United Nations or International Court of Justice.

If India were to annul the IWT, the consequences might well be humanitarian devastation in what is already one of the world’s most water-starved countries — an outcome far more harmful and far-reaching than the effects of limited war. Unlike other punitive steps that India could consider taking against its neighbor — including the strikes against Pakistani militants that India claimed to have carried out on Sept. 29 — canceling the IWT could have direct, dramatic, and deleterious effects on ordinary Pakistanis.

The IWT is a very good deal for Pakistan. Although its provisions allocate three rivers each to Pakistan and India, Pakistan is given control of the Indus Basin’s three large western rivers — the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab — which account for 80 percent of the water in the entire basin. Since water from the Indus Basin flows downstream from India to Pakistan, revoking the IWT would allow India to take control of and — if it created enough storage space through the construction of large dams — stop altogether the flow of those three rivers into Pakistan. To be sure, India would need several years to build the requisite dams, reservoirs, and other infrastructure to generate enough storage to prevent water from flowing downstream to Pakistan. But pulling out of the IWT is the first step in giving India carte blanche to start pursuing that objective.

Pakistan is deeply dependent on those three western rivers and particularly the Indus. In some areas of the country, including all of Sindh province, the Indus is the sole source of water for irrigation and human consumption. If Pakistan’s access to water from the Indus Basin were cut off or merely reduced, the implications for the country’s water security could be catastrophic. For this reason, using water as a weapon could inflict more damage on Pakistan than some forms of warfare.

To understand why, consider the extent of Pakistan’s water woes. According to recent figures from the International Monetary Fund, Pakistan is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world, with a per capita annual water availability of roughly 35,300 cubic feet — the scarcity threshold. This is all the more alarming given that Pakistan’s water intensity rate — a measure of cubic meters used per unit of GDP — is the world’s highest. (Pakistan’s largest economic sector, agriculture, consumes a whopping 90 percent of the country’s rapidly dwindling water resources.) In other words, Pakistan’s economy is the most water-intensive in the world, and yet it has dangerously low levels of water to work with.

As if that's not troubling enough, consider as well that Pakistan's groundwater tables are plummeting precipitously. NASA satellite data released in 2015 revealed that the underwater aquifer in the Indus Basin is the second-most stressed in the world. Groundwater is what nations turn to when surface supplies are exhausted; it is the water source of last resort. And yet in Pakistan, it is increasingly imperiled.

There are other compelling reasons for India not to cancel the IWT, all of which go beyond the hardships the decision could bring to a country where at least 40 million people (of about 200 million) already lack access to safe drinking water.

First, revoking the treaty — an international accord mediated by the World Bank and widely regarded as a success story of transboundary water management — would generate intense international opposition. As water expert Ashok Swain has argued, revoking the IWT “will bring global condemnation, and the moral high ground, which India enjoys vis-à-vis Pakistan in the post-Uri period will be lost.” Also, the World Bank would likely throw its support behind any international legal action taken by Pakistan against India.

Second, if India decided to maximize pressure on Pakistan by cutting off or reducing river flows to its downstream neighbor, this would bottle up large volumes of water in northern India, a dangerous move that according to water experts could cause significant flooding in major cities in Kashmir and in Punjab state (for geographical reasons, India would not have the option of diverting water elsewhere). Given this risk, some analysts have proposed that New Delhi instead do something less drastic, and perfectly legal, to pressure Islamabad: build dams on the western rivers of the Indus Basin. The IWT permits this, even though these water bodies are allocated to Pakistan, so long as storage is kept to a minimum to allow water to keep flowing downstream. In fact, according to Indian media reports, this is an action Modi’s government is now actively considering taking.

Such moves, however, would not be cost-free for Pakistan. According to an estimate by the late John Briscoe, one of the foremost experts on South Asia water issues, if India were to erect several large hydroelectric dams on the western rivers, then Pakistan’s agriculture could conceivably lose up to a month’s worth of river flows — which could ruin an entire planting season. Still, it would not be nearly as serious as the catastrophes that could ensue if India pulls the plug on the IWT.

Third, if India ditches the IWT to punish its downstream neighbor, then it could set a dangerous precedent and give some ideas to Pakistan’s ally, China. Beijing has never signed on to any transboundary water management accord, and New Delhi constantly worries about its upstream rival building dozens of dams that cut off river flows into India. The Chinese, perhaps using as a pretext recent Indian defensive upgrades in the state of Arunachal Pradesh — which borders China and is claimed by Beijing — could well decide to take a page out of India’s book and slow the flow of the mighty Brahmaputra River. It’s a move that could have disastrous consequences for the impoverished yet agriculturally productive northeastern Indian state of Assam. The Brahmaputra flows southwest across large areas of Assam. Additionally, Beijing could retaliate by cutting off the flow of the Indus — which originates

in Tibet — down to India, depriving New Delhi of the ability to limit the river's flows to Pakistan.

Fourth, India's exit from the IWT could provoke Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the vicious Pakistani terrorist group that carried out the 2008 Mumbai attacks. LeT has long used India's alleged water theft as a chief talking point in its anti-India propaganda, even with little evidence that New Delhi has intentionally prevented water from flowing downstream to Pakistan. If India backed out of the treaty and took steps to stop the flow of the Indus Basin's western rivers, LeT would score a major propaganda victory and would have a ready-made pretext to carry out retaliatory attacks in India. An angry Pakistani security establishment, which has close links to LeT, would not go out of its way to dissuade the group from staging such attacks. Indeed, given the damaging effects India's move could have on ordinary Pakistanis in such a water-insecure country, Pakistan would be keen to find ways to strike back at India.

What this all means is that India's cancellation of the IWT would not produce New Delhi's hoped-for result: Pakistani crackdowns on anti-India terrorists. On the contrary, Pakistan might tighten its embrace of such groups. The mere act of canceling the IWT — even if India declines to take steps to reduce water flows to Pakistan — would be treated in Islamabad as a major provocation, with fears that water cutoffs could follow, and thereby spawn retaliations.

To be sure, India has good reason to be unhappy about the IWT. The treaty allocates to India only 20 percent of the entire Indus River Basin's water flows, and New Delhi knows it's gotten the short end of the stick. Additionally, the IWT's provisions limit India's ability to build hydro-projects in Kashmir. These are significant matters in a nation with its own severe water stress. According to an estimate by the *New Yorker*, India boasts 20 percent of the world's population but only 4 percent of its water. Not surprisingly, more than 300 million people in India face water shortages. Severe droughts have contributed to an alarming farmer suicide campaign that has claimed a staggering 300,000 lives over the last 20 years. And in an ominous indication of what the future may hold, India is consuming more groundwater than any other country in the world. All this is to say that India has a strong case for requesting a renegotiation of the treaty. That would be a more prudent strategy than unilaterally revoking it.

India should preserve its decision to keep the IWT in place. Rescinding it could have disastrous consequences for Pakistan — and especially for ordinary Pakistanis — and also damaging results for India. With India-Pakistan relations nearly on a war footing, threatening a course of action that risks humanitarian devastation could bring the sub-continental powder keg one dangerous step closer to exploding.¹⁸

¹⁸ Michael Kugelman, Why the India-Pakistan War Over Water Is So Dangerous, *foreignpolicy*, September 30, 2016

The India-Pakistan relationship is facing the most serious escalation in decades. Here's how it got to this point.

By Joanna Slater and Pamela Constable

February 26, 2019

India launched an airstrike on a target in Pakistan on Tuesday, the most serious escalation in hostilities between the two countries in decades.

According to Indian officials, the strike's target was the training camp of a Pakistan-based militant group that had claimed responsibility for a massive suicide bombing in Indian-controlled Kashmir on Feb. 14.

The nuclear-armed neighbors have a long history of animosity. The main, ongoing source of conflict is Kashmir, a Himalayan border region whose status has been contested ever since India gained independence and Pakistan was created in the partition of British India.

Since then, the two countries have fought three brief wars — in 1947, 1965 and 1971 — as well as a smaller conflict in 1999. Over the past two decades, there also have been numerous attempts at rapprochement: At one point, secret talks reportedly neared a final resolution on Kashmir.

Modi vows perpetrators of Kashmir attack will 'pay a huge price'

Now, with the Feb. 14 attack and India's retaliatory strike, tensions are once again on the rise. For India, the Kashmir attack is part of a longer pattern in which Pakistan's intelligence services have fostered and guided militant groups that carry out deadly attacks throughout India. Pakistan, meanwhile, views its far larger neighbor as an occupying power in Kashmir that also seeks to undermine Pakistan's stability. Pakistan denies supporting terrorism but says it gives political and moral support to Kashmiri "freedom fighters."

Here is a selection of recent highs and lows — although mostly lows — in their tense relationship.

1989: The insurgency in Kashmir begins

The dispute over Kashmir is as old as India and Pakistan. India controls the larger and more developed chunk of the Himalayan region, which forms its only Muslim-majority state. In 1987, legislative elections were held in Indian-controlled Kashmir, but Kashmiri Muslims protested that the polls were rigged. Two years later, an armed insurgency erupted in the region, along with mass protests. The militancy against Indian rule has continued, with ebbs and flows, ever since. More than 70,000 people have been killed, according to human rights groups.

1999: A bus trip raises hopes for reconciliation

In 1998, India and Pakistan both tested nuclear devices, marking a fundamental shift in the strategic balance in South Asia. The next year, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee traveled by bus to Pakistan across the only official border opening in a gesture of friendship. He and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pledged to resolve their differences through dialogue.

Soldiers from the Indian army fire their 105mm guns from their outpost near Kargil toward the India-Pakistan border in Kashmir on May 31, 1999. (Arko Datta/AFP/Getty Images)

1999: The Kargil conflict breaks out

Before the year was out, hopes for reconciliation were dashed. After months of cross-border firing in the mountainous Kargil region of Kashmir, the fighting escalated dangerously, with infiltrators from the Pakistani side crossing into high-altitude security posts in India. This time, the specter of nuclear war hung over the dispute. A meeting between Sharif and President Bill Clinton in Washington helped end the fighting, and Pakistan withdrew back to the Line of Control, but mutual hostility remained intense.

2001: Gunmen storm India's Parliament

In December, five militants attacked India's Parliament in the heart of New Delhi, killing nine people before the attackers were shot dead. The brazenness of the attack — in the most secure area of the capital, on a target symbolizing Indian democracy — left India shaken and enraged. India blamed the attack on two Pakistan-based militant groups, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad, and accused the Pakistani intelligence service of being behind the operation. India massed hundreds of thousands of troops at the border with Pakistan and kept them there for the better part of a year.

2004: Leaders begin a peace initiative

After the attack on India's Parliament, the relationship between India and Pakistan entered a deep freeze. But by late 2003, the atmosphere began to thaw: Top diplomats returned to Islamabad and New Delhi, and transportation links between the two countries were reinstated. Most promising of all: an agreement by Vajpayee and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to open talks on all issues, including Kashmir. The talks continued for three years.

2008: Terrorists strike Mumbai

In November, 10 attackers approached India's financial capital by sea and targeted a railway station, two luxury hotels, a renowned cafe and a Jewish community center. By the time their three-day massacre was over, more than 160 people were dead. India presented Pakistan with a dossier showing that the attacks were planned and carried out by Lashkar-e-

Taiba. India also said Pakistan's spy agency helped orchestrate the attacks. Last year, devotees of Lashkar's former leader ran for parliament in Pakistan's elections.

2016: India launches “surgical strikes” across the line dividing Kashmir

After militants belonging to a Pakistan-based militant group stormed an Indian army base in Kashmir, killing 19 soldiers, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to respond. India announced that it had launched “surgical strikes” in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir — commando raids that crossed the Line of Control. Indian experts said similar raids had been conducted before but never made public. Pakistan said no such incursions took place.

On Feb. 14, a suicide attacker rammed an explosives-laden sport-utility vehicle into a convoy of Indian paramilitary police, killing 40. The attacker was a local Kashmiri teenager who had joined Jaish-e-Muhammad, a Pakistan-based militant group that the United States designated as a terrorist organization in 2001. Modi vowed to “avenge every tear” that was shed in the wake of the bombing. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said the country would take action against anyone involved in the attack “if evidence is found.” He also vowed to retaliate if India responded to the attack with military action against Pakistani targets.

But India did not heed Khan’s warning. In the most serious escalation between the two countries in two decades, Indian fighter jets crossed the Line of Control, and hit a target that, according to India, was a training camp used by Jaish-e-Muhammad. India called its strike a “nonmilitary strike,” as it was not aimed at Pakistani military targets, and said it was taking “preemptive” action against Jaish-e-Muhammad. But Pakistan refused that there was no such training camp used by any organization.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said that the strike was based on “credible intelligence” that the group was planning another attack and that it “eliminated” a “large number” of militants. Asif Ghafoor, the spokesman for Pakistani armed forces, said that the strike caused no casualties or damage and that the fighter jets released their “payload in haste while escaping” from Pakistani aircraft. India had not sent fighter jets across the Line of Control since 1971.

CHAPTER 17

War in Yemen

Background

Yemen's civil war began in 2014 when Houthi insurgents—Shiite rebels with links to Iran and a history of rising up against the Sunni government—took control of Yemen's capital and largest city, Sana'a, demanding lower fuel prices and a new government. Following failed negotiations, the rebels seized the presidential palace in January 2015, leading President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi and his government to resign. Beginning in March 2015, a coalition of Gulf States led by Saudi Arabia launched a campaign of economic isolation and air strikes against the Houthi insurgents, with U.S. logistical and intelligence support.

Hadi rescinded his resignation and returned to Aden in September 2015, and fighting has continued since. A UN effort to broker peace talks between allied Houthi rebels and the internationally recognized Yemeni government stalled in the summer of 2016. As of December 2017, Hadi has reportedly been residing in exile in Saudi Arabia.

In July 2016, the Houthis and the government of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, ousted in 2011 after nearly thirty years in power, announced the formation of a “political council” to govern Sana'a and much of northern Yemen. However, in December 2017, Saleh broke with the Houthis and called for his followers to take up arms against them. Saleh was killed and his forces defeated within two days.

The intervention of regional powers in Yemen's conflict, including Iran and Gulf states led by Saudi Arabia, threatens to draw the country into the broader Sunni-Shia divide. Numerous Iranian weapons shipments to Houthi rebels have been intercepted in the Gulf of Aden by a Saudi naval blockade in place since April 2015. In response, Iran has dispatched its own naval convoy, which further risks military escalation between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the conflict continues to take a heavy toll on Yemeni civilians, making Yemen the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The UN estimates that the civilian casualty toll has exceeded 15,000 killed or injured. Twenty-two million Yemenis remain in need of assistance, eight million are at risk of famine, and a cholera outbreak has affected over one million people. All sides of the conflict are reported to have violated human rights and international humanitarian law.

Separate from the ongoing civil war, the United States continues counterterrorism operations in Yemen, relying mainly on airstrikes to target al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and militants associated with the self-proclaimed Islamic State. In 2016, the United States conducted an estimated 35 strikes in Yemen; in 2017, it conducted about 130. In April

2016, the United States deployed a small team of forces to advise and assist Saudi-led troops to retake territory from AQAP. In January 2017, a U.S. Special Operations Forces raid in central Yemen killed one U.S. service member; several suspected AQAP-affiliated fighters, and an unknown number of Yemeni civilians.

Concerns

The United States is deeply invested in combating terrorism and violent extremism in Yemen, having collaborated with the Yemeni government on counterterrorism since the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000. Since 2002, the United States has carried out over two hundred strikes in Yemen. While Houthi rebels do not pose a direct threat to the United States, their attacks on Saudi Arabian infrastructure and territory threaten an important U.S. partner.

Recent Developments

The Saudi-led coalition has continued to escalate its campaign against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, resulting in heavy civilian casualties. In June 2018, the coalition launched a major offensive to retake the coastal region of Hodeida, further worsening the humanitarian crisis. The United Nations, which appointed a new special envoy for Yemen earlier this year, attempted to broker a cease-fire, but that effort stalled in July and the assault resumed.

The Houthis have responded to Saudi airstrikes with missile attacks on Saudi Arabian infrastructure and territory, including oil tankers and facilities and international airports. Further complicating the civil war, secessionist groups in Yemen's south, supported by the United Arab Emirates, have increasingly clashed with the UN-recognized government forces based in Aden.

Yemen Profile

Chronology of key events:

1500s - Ottomans absorb part of Yemen into their empire, but are expelled in the 1600s.

1839 - Aden comes under British rule, and when the Suez Canal opens in 1869 serves as a major refuelling port.

1849 - Ottomans return to north, but later face revolt.

1918 - Ottoman Empire dissolves, North Yemen gains independence and is ruled by Imam Yahya.

1948 - Yahya assassinated, but his son Ahmad beats off opponents of feudal rule and succeeds his father.

1962 - Imam Ahmad dies and is succeeded by his son, but army officers seize power and set up the Yemen Arab Republic, sparking civil war between royalists supported by Saudi Arabia and republicans backed by Egypt.

South Yemen formed

1967 - Britain withdraws from the south after years of a pro-independence insurgency, and its former territories unite as the People's Republic of Yemen.

1969 - A communist coup renames the south as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and reorients it towards the Soviet bloc.

1970 - Republican forces triumph in the North Yemen civil war.

1972 - Border clashes between two Yemens; ceasefire brokered by Arab League.

1978 - Ali Abdallah Saleh becomes president of North Yemen.

1979 - Fresh fighting between the two Yemens. Renewed efforts to unite the two states.

1982 - Earthquake kills about 3,000 people in Dhamar, south of Sanaa.

1986 - Thousands die in power struggle in south, which effectively drives the first generation of leaders from office.

Haidar Abu Bakr al-Attas takes over, and begins to work towards unification of the two states.

Uneasy unity

1990 May - The two Yemens unite as the Republic of Yemen with Ali Abdallah Saleh as president, as the Soviet bloc implodes. Tension between former states endures.

1994 May-July - President Saleh declares a state of emergency and dismisses Vice-President Ali Salem al-Beid and other southern officials, who declare the secession of the south before being defeated by the national army.

1995 - Yemen and Eritrea clash over the disputed Hanish Islands in the Red Sea. International arbitration awarded the bulk of the archipelago to Yemen in 1998.

Al-Qaeda attacks

2000 October - US naval vessel USS Cole damaged in al-Qaeda suicide attack in Aden. Seventeen US personnel killed.

2001 February - Violence in run-up to disputed municipal polls and referendum, which backs extension to presidential term and powers.

2002 February - Yemen expels more than 100 foreign Islamic clerics in crackdown on al-Qaeda.

2002 October - Al-Qaeda attacks and badly damages oil supertanker MV Limburg in Gulf of Aden, killing one and injuring 12 crew members, and costing Yemen dear in lost port revenues.

Houthi insurgency

2004 June-August - Hundreds die as troops battle Shia insurgency led by Hussein al-Houthi in the north.

2005 March-April - More than 200 people are killed in a resurgence of fighting between government forces and supporters of the slain rebel cleric Hussein al-Houthi.

2007 January-March - Scores are killed or wounded in clashes between security forces and al-Houthi rebels in the north. Rebel leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi accepts a ceasefire in the summer.

2008 January - Renewed clashes with Houthi rebels.

Demands for reform

2008 November - Police fire warning shots at opposition rally in Sanaa. Demonstrators demand electoral reform and fresh polls.

2009 August - The Yemeni army launches a fresh offensive against Houthi rebels in the northern Saada province. Tens of thousands of people are displaced by the fighting.

2009 December - Yemen-based branch of al-Qaeda claims it was behind failed attack on US airliner.

2010 September - Thousands flee government offensive against separatists in southern Shabwa province.

2010 October - Global terror alert after packages containing explosives originating in Yemen are intercepted on cargo planes bound for the US.

2011 September - US-born al-Qaeda leader in Yemen, Anwar al-Awlaki, is killed by US forces.

Unity government, growing violence

2011 November - President Saleh agrees to hand over power to his deputy, Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, after months of protests. A unity government including prime minister from opposition formed.

2012 February - Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi inaugurated as president after uncontested elections, but is unable to counter al-Qaeda attacks in the capital as the year goes on.

2014 February - Presidential panel gives approval for Yemen to become a federation of six regions, as part of a deal to accommodate Houthi and southern grievances.

2014 August - President Hadi sacks his cabinet and overturns a controversial fuel price rise following two weeks of anti-government protests in which Houthi rebels are heavily involved.

Houthi uprising

2014 September - Houthi rebels seize control of the most of Sanaa and reject draft constitution proposed by government.

2015 February - Houthis appoint presidential council to replace President Hadi, who flees to his southern stronghold of Aden.

2015 March - Islamic State carries out its first major attacks in Yemen - two suicide bombings targeting Shia mosques in Sanaa, in which 137 people are killed.

Civil war breaks out in earnest as Saudi-led coalition of mainly Gulf Arab states launches air strikes against Houthi targets and imposes naval blockade, in order to halt their advance on Aden.

2015 June - Latest leader of al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, is killed in a US drone strike in Yemen.

2016 May-June - Islamic State group claims responsibility for a number of attacks, including a suicide car bombing that killed at least 40 army recruits in Aden.

2017 June-November - Outbreak of cholera kills 2,100 and affects almost 900,000 others, medical agencies say.

2017 December - Former president Ali Abdullah Saleh is killed after fierce fighting in the capital Sanaa.

2018 January - Southern Yemeni separatists - backed by the United Arab Emirates - seize control of Aden.

2018 November - US calls for cease-fire, after months of fighting around the key Houthi-held port of Hudaydah and a mounting humanitarian crisis.

Who are Yemen's Houthis?

By Cameron Glenn

Iran is widely accused of backing the Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite movement that has been fighting Yemen's Sunni-majority government since 2004. The Houthis took control of the Yemeni capital Sanaa (left) in September 2014 and continued on towards Aden, Yemen's largest city. In response to Houthi advances, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states launched a military campaign in March 2015. Yemeni officials and Sunni states, most notably Saudi Arabia, have repeatedly alleged that Iran and its proxy Hezbollah have provided arms, training, and financial support to the Houthis. But Iranian and Hezbollah officials have denied or downplayed the claims. In November 2017, Revolutionary Guards commander Maj. Gen. Ali Jafari said that "Iran's assistance is at the level of advisory and spiritual support."

Tensions between Sunni states and Iran, specifically Saudi Arabia, escalated on November 4, 2017, when Yemen's Houthi rebels fired a ballistic missile at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh. The Houthis claimed responsibility for the attack, the first time a Houthi missile had come so close to the capital. The Saudi Defense Ministry said it intercepted the missile. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir called the attack an act of war by Iran. "It was an Iranian missile, launched by Hezbollah, from territory occupied by the Houthis in Yemen," he said. U.S. President Donald Trump also accused the Islamic Republic. "A shot was just taken by Iran, in my opinion, at Saudi Arabia...and our system knocked the missile out of the air," he said. Tehran rebuffed the claims as "false, irresponsible, destructive and provocative." In Lebanon, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah refuted allegations of the group's involvement as "silly" and "completely baseless." In response, Saudi Arabia imposed a near-total blockade on Yemen.

The situation further deteriorated when the Houthis killed ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh on December 4, 2017. Saleh had officially aligned with the Houthis in May 2015, helping the Houthis gain control over much of northern Yemen. But the alliance was shaky at best. In August, one of Saleh's top advisers was shot and killed following a confrontation with the Houthis. On December 2, Saleh publicly split from the Houthis, seeking a "new page" with the Saudi-led coalition. "I call upon the brothers in neighboring states and the alliance to stop their aggression, lift the siege, open the airports and allow food aid and the saving of the wounded and we will turn a new page by virtue of our neighborliness," he said. Two days later he was killed by Houthi rebels in a roadside ambush.

Iranian officials celebrated Saleh's death. Ali Akbar Salehi, a senior aide to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei said Saleh got what he deserved, according to the Middle East Institute. Senior advisor Ali Akbar Velayti commented on the Yemeni people's control over their own future. "Ali Abdullah Saleh was killed and United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia conspiracy was foiled by the people of Yemen. The people will determine their own fate and they will win like the people of Syria, Iraq and Lebanon," he said.

Where are the Houthis from? What role have they played in Yemen's history?

The Houthis are a large clan originating from Yemen's northwestern Saada province. They practice the Zaydi form of Shiism. Zaydis make up around 35 percent of Yemen's population.

A Zaydi imamate ruled Yemen for 1,000 years, before being overthrown in 1962. Since then, the Zaydis – stripped of their political power – have struggled to restore their authority and influence in Yemen. In the 1980s, the Houthi clan began a movement to revive Zaydi traditions, feeling threatened by state-funded Salafist preachers who established a base in Houthi areas. Not all Zaydis, however, align with the Houthi movement.

Houthi insurgents have clashed with Yemen's government for more than a decade. Since 2011, the Houthi movement has expanded beyond its Zaydi roots and become a wider movement opposed to President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi. The insurgents have also begun referring to themselves as Ansarullah, or "Party of God."

How does Zaydism compare to the type of Shiism practiced in Iran?

Like other Shiites, Zaydis believe that only descendants of the Prophet Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, have the right to lead the Muslim community as imams - divinely-appointed successors of the Prophet. Most adherents of Zaydism reside in Yemen, and Zaydis make up around eight percent of the world's 70 million Shiites.

But the Zaydis are distinct from the "Twelver" form of Shiism practiced by the majority of the world's Shiites, including most Shiites in Iran. Twelver Shiites believe the twelfth imam, whom they consider infallible, disappeared in 874AD and will one day return to usher in an age of justice as the Mahdi, or promised one. In the Mahdi's absence, Twelver Shiites believe clerics can substitute for his authority on certain issues. The faithful are obliged to obey the clerics' religious rulings, a power transferred to Iran's theocracy after the 1979 revolution.

Zaydis, also known as "Fivers," believe that Zayd, the great-grandson of Ali, was the rightful fifth imam. But Twelver Shiites consider Zayd's brother, Mohammad al Baqir, the fifth imam. The Zaydis do not recognize the later Twelver imams, and instead believe anyone related to Ali is eligible to lead the Muslim community. They also reject the Twelver doctrine that the imam is infallible.

Who is supporting the Houthis? How?

Iranian officials have supported the Houthis' cause and compared the group to Hezbollah. "Iran supports the rightful struggles of Ansarullah in Yemen and considers this movement as part of the successful Islamic Awakening movements," Ali Akbar Velayati, senior advisor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said in October 2014. But Tehran has repeatedly denied providing arms, funds or training to the Houthis.

Saudi Arabia has long accused Iran of arming the Houthis to fight a proxy war. "We are worried about...the tendencies of Iran in the region, which is one of the leading elements implanting instability in the region," the late Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal, said in 2015.

In October 2016, a U.S. admiral said that U.S. Navy and allied nations' warships had intercepted five weapons shipments from Iran to the Arabian Peninsula since April 2015. The shipments reportedly included anti-tank missiles, sniper rifles and thousands of AK-47 automatic rifles. "These accusations are totally false," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi (left) said in response.

In April 2017, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that Iran supports the Houthis' "attempted overthrow of the government by providing military equipment, funding, and training, thus threatening Saudi Arabia's southern border." In November 2017, however, Revolutionary Guards commander Maj. Gen. Ali Jafari claimed that "Iran's assistance is at the level of advisory and spiritual support."

Tensions over Iranian support of the Houthis escalated in late 2017. In November, Saudi Arabia charged Iran with an act of war for a missile fired at the Saudi capital by the Houthis in Yemen. Iran denied any links to the attack. But remnants of four ballistic missiles fired into Saudi Arabia by the Houthis on May 19, July 22, July 26 and November 4, 2017 appear to have been designed and manufactured by Iran, according to a confidential U.N. report from November 2017.

"The United States welcomes this report, as should every nation concerned about Iranian expansion," U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said on December 14, in front of the remains of a missile allegedly fired by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia. "It was made in Iran, then sent to Houthi militants in Yemen. From there it was fired at a civilian airport, with the potential to kill hundreds of innocent civilians in Saudi Arabia."

Iranian officials and Houthi leaders denied U.S. claims. "After three years of war, America suddenly finds evidence that Iran supports the Houthis," a Yemeni spokesman said, according to Reuters. "America did not find any evidence in all the missiles fired from Yemen until now. The story is clear. They want to give Arabs a story to divert their attention from Jerusalem. Instead being angry at Israel, they wave the Iranian boy," he added.

On December 21, the U.S. State Department echoed Haley's allegations. "There is a very key relationship between the Iranians and the Houthis," Tim Lenderking, deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, said. "I don't want to overstate it. I don't want to suggest that the Houthis operate entirely at the behest of the Iranians. But it's an important relationship and one that the Iranians are able to exploit." Lenderking encouraged reporters to visit the display of missile remains and other military equipment that Haley highlighted the previous week.

Less than two weeks later, however, Houthi spokesman Mohammad Abdul Salam met with Zarif in Tehran. Abdul Salam updated Zarif on the current conditions in Yemen. Zarif outlined Iran's four-point peace plan for Yemen and stressed the need for an immediate end to the war. He also called for the immediate shipment of humanitarian aid to Yemeni civilians.

The Houthis stepped up their attacks on Saudi Arabia in the following months. In late March, the rebels fired seven missiles at Saudi Arabia in one night. A few weeks later, they struck a Saudi oil tanker in international waters west of Yemen's Hodeidah port.

A mid-April missile targeting the Saudi capital Riyadh prompted a U.S. response. The State Department condemned the attack and blamed Iran for its alleged Houthi support. "We support the right of our Saudi partners to defend their borders against these threats, which are fueled by the Iranian regime's dangerous proliferation of weapons and destabilizing activities in the region," said State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert.

On a late April visit to New York, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif accused the United States of fabricating evidence related to the displayed missile parts recovered from Saudi Arabia. One featured logo was from the Standard Institute of Iran, which regulates consumer goods, not weapons, Zarif told the Associated Press. "It's a sign of quality," Zarif said. "When people want to buy it, they look at whether it's been tested by the Standard Institute of Iran that your cheese puffs are good, your cheese puffs will not give you a stomach ache. I mean, nobody will put the logo of the Standard Institute of Iran on a piece of missile."

The Houthis have other sources of support, however. They have reportedly received funding from local supporters and sympathetic charities as well as from illegal trade.

What are the Houthis' political views?

The Houthis do not promote a coherent ideology, and their political platform is vague and contradictory. The original Houthi insurgents desired to imitate Hezbollah, to have power without actually ruling. "The Houthis have always been on the outside. They've been a militia group that's now starting to dabble in politics," Yemen expert Gregory Johnsen, who studied and lived in the country for years, told NPR's "Fresh Air" in April 2015. "And they don't really know how to rule."

The Houthi emblem (left) only offers a broad view of the group's views. It is made of up entirely of the following phrases, "God is great, Death to America, death to Israel, damnation to the Jews, victory to Islam." But the Houthis' Hezbollah-like denunciation of the United States and Israel often seems "largely for show," according to Les Campbell at the National Democratic Institute. Their ties to former president Saleh threaten to expose the group as "just another group sharing in the spoils of corruption."

The Houthis' Zaydi roots do not necessarily dictate their approach to politics. Their leaders have claimed they are not attempting to revive the Zaydi imamate, but rather to seek greater political inclusion. Since 2011, they have used nationalist and populist language in

their messaging rather than framing themselves as a strictly Zaydi movement. And they have cultivated a range of Sunni political allies.

The Houthis participated in the U.N.-sponsored National Dialogue Conference from 2013 to 2014. While they did not reject the reform agenda in principle, the Houthis opposed proposals to convert Yemen into a six-region federalist state. The proposal would link Saada with Sanaa, but the Houthis want Saada to be its own autonomous region.

What are the roots of the Houthis' conflict with the central government?

Hussein Abdreddin al Houthi, a prominent Zaydi cleric and Member of Parliament from 1993 to 1997, became a strong critic of President Ali Abudllah Saleh in the 1990s. He accused the government of aligning too closely with the United States and Israel. Tensions mounted further after President Saleh reportedly cut funding to Hussein al Houthi in 2000. Frustrated by Zaydis' poor political and economic status, he began rallying supporters for anti-government demonstrations in the early 2000s.

The government issued a warrant for al Houthi's arrest, and his followers began clashing violently with security forces. Al Houthi was killed by security forces in 2004. Since then, his relatives and supporters have waged six uprisings against the government, known as the Houthi wars. President Saleh accused Iran of supporting the rebellions. The Houthis signed a ceasefire agreement with the government in 2010, but joined the Arab Spring protests against Saleh one year later.

How did the Houthis rise to power?

After months of protests, President Saleh ceded power to his deputy, Abd Rabbuh Mansour al Hadi in November 2011. But Hadi enjoyed little popular support in Yemen, and the Houthis took advantage of the power vacuum in the north. From 2012-2013, they gained followers and allies. They consolidated their territorial control, pushing south towards Sanaa.

In September 2014, the Houthis took over the capital. They initially agreed to a U.N.-brokered peace deal that required them to withdraw from Sanaa following the formation of a unity government.

But in January, the Houthis rejected the government's newly drafted constitution and took over the presidential palace. President Hadi and his government resigned on January 22. The next month, the Houthis announced that a five-member presidential council would replace Hadi.

Hadi fled south to Aden and revoked his resignation, declaring himself the legitimate president of Yemen. In response, Houthi insurgents began bombing Hadi's Aden headquarters.

At Hadi's request, Saudi Arabia – along with a coalition of nine other Sunni nations – began launching airstrikes against Houthi positions on March 26. The Houthis remained

defiant. “Our fighters will not evacuate from the main cities or the government institutions,” Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al Houthi said on April 19. “Anyone who thinks we will surrender is dreaming.”

On April 21, Saudi officials announced the end of the campaign, known as operation “Decisive Storm,” claiming they had successfully degraded the Houthis’ military infrastructure. The Houthis also agreed to meet several U.N. demands, including releasing the Yemeni Defense Minister, whom they were holding captive. But Saudi Arabia resumed airstrikes two days later, and the first month of the campaign had neither driven the Houthis from Sanaa nor restored Hadi to power.

Multiple attempts at peace talks organized by the United Nations have all failed. The first two attempts were in Switzerland in June and December 2015. The United Nations tried again in Kuwait in April 2016, but discussions broke down in August and fighting between the Houthis and pro-government forces resumed.

As of March 2017, seven ceasefire agreements had been broken in the conflict. In December 2017, after 30 months of the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen, the Houthi’s were largely in control of northern Yemen.

What is the relationship between Houthis and other Islamists in Yemen?

The Houthis have a tense relationship with Islah, a Sunni Islamist party with links to the Muslim Brotherhood. Islah claims the Houthis are an Iranian proxy, and blames them for sparking unrest in Yemen. The Houthis, on the other hand, have accused Islah of cooperating with al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

After the Houthis took over Sanaa in September 2014, Islah initially took a few steps towards reconciliation. In November, top Islah and Houthi leaders met to discuss a political partnership. Islah called on the Houthis to cease attacks on Islah members and to release Islah prisoners. In December, the United Nations and Gulf Cooperation Council brokered a deal between the two groups to cease hostilities.

But clashes between the Houthis and Islah continued. In the first four months of 2015, the Houthis kidnapped dozens of Islah party leaders and raided their offices. By April, more than 100 Islah leaders were detained by the Houthis. Tensions increased after Islah declared support for the Saudi-led airstrikes.

The Houthis are also at odds with Sunni extremist groups. On March 20, 2015, an ISIS affiliate calling itself the Sanaa Province claimed responsibility for suicide bomb attacks on two Zaydi mosques that killed at least 135 people and injured more than 300 others. The group issued a statement that said “infidel Houthis should know that the soldiers of the Islamic State will not rest until they eradicate them.”

AQAP denied involvement in the mosque attacks, but has frequently targeted the Houthis. In April 2015, the group claimed responsibility for three suicide attacks that killed

dozens of Houthis in Abyan, al Bayda', and Lahij. AQAP has reportedly partnered with southern tribes to fight the Houthis.

Who are their leaders?

Abdul Malik al Houthi, brother of Hussein al Houthi, has been the group's spiritual, military, and political leader since 2007. Little is known of his personal life, and he makes few public appearances. His brother-in-law, Youssef al Midani, is the deputy leader. Abdul Malik's two brothers, Yahia and Abdul-Karim, are also senior leaders of the movement.

On April 14, 2015 the U.S. Treasury imposed sanctions on Abdul Malik al Houthi for engaging in acts that "threaten the peace, security, or stability of Yemen." The same month, the U.N. Security Council imposed an arms embargo against the Houthis and blacklisted Abdul Malik al Houthi.

Timeline: The Houthis in Yemen

2014

Sept. 21-22: Houthi rebels storm Sanaa and seize government buildings. The UN brokers a deal requiring Hadi to form a new government.

Nov. 1: Houthi rebels attack the al Islah party headquarters in the southwestern city of Ibb.

Nov. 7-8: Hadi announces a new cabinet, but the Houthis reject it.

Nov. 28: Houthi rebels and al Islah reach a deal agreeing to cease hostilities, but clashes between the groups continue.

Dec. 14: Houthi rebels blow up a building belonging to al Islah in Sanaa.

Dec. 20: Dozens of protesters gather in Sanaa to demand that Houthi rebels leave the capital. Houthis respond by abducting activist Shadi Khasrouf, who participated in the protests.

2015

Jan. 22: Hadi resigns under pressure from Houthi rebels.

March 20: Suicide attacks targeting two Houthi mosques in Sanaa kill more than 130 people and injured more than 300 others.

March 26: Saudi Arabia begins launching airstrikes in Yemen, coordinating with a 10-nation coalition.

Sept. 22: Hadi returns to Aden after the Houthis are driven out.

Dec. 15: U.N.-sponsored peace talks begin in Geneva, Switzerland and a ceasefire goes into effect in Yemen.

2016

Jan. 7: Iran claims Saudi warplanes attacked Iran's embassy in Sanaa. The Saudi-led coalition and Yemen's government deny that the embassy building was targeted.

April 21: U.N.-backed talks begin in Kuwait between the Houthis and President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government.

Aug. 7: U.N.-backed talks in Kuwait conclude without an agreement between the Houthis and Hadi's government.

Oct. 19-21: War parties agree to a 72-hour ceasefire, allowing for civilian access to humanitarian aid. The ceasefire holds for 3 days, and Saudi-led coalition airstrikes recommence shortly after the truce expires.

Oct. 27: U.N. Yemen envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed proposes a new peace plan aimed at ending the conflict. It calls for members of the internationally-recognized Hadi government to step down or accept diminished roles in exchange for a Houthi withdrawal from major cities.

Oct. 31: U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, calls for an end to indiscriminate Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen.

Nov. 29: The Houthis and members of the ousted President Ali Abdullah Saleh's General People's Congress form a new 35-minister government based in Sanaa.

2017

Jan. 18: A Houthi strike kills six civilians in the central city of Taiz, just one day after the killing of six other civilians outside of the city.

Jan. 23: Yemeni government forces seize control of the Red Sea port of Mokha after launching an assault against and pushing out Houthi rebels.

Jan. 30: Three Houthi suicide boats attack a Saudi frigate off the Hodeidah port in

the Red Sea, killing two crew members and wounding three others.

Jan. 31: The Houthis' official news agency says they launched a ballistic missile at a Saudi-led coalition military base on the Red Sea island of Zujar on Monday, countering the Saudi claim of a suicide attack.

Feb. 22: A senior Yemeni army general is killed in a missile attack by the Houthis.

March 25: A court in Houthi-controlled territory sentences President Hadi and six other government officials to death for "high treason."

May 19: Yemen's Houthi movement says it fired a ballistic missile towards Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh. The Saudi-led coalition says it intercepted the missile 200 km west of the city.

May 30: Oman mediates between the Saudi-backed Hadi government and the Houthi rebels over a U.N. plan for peace talks.

June 5: The Houthis ban U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed for abandoning his neutrality and not respecting U.N. resolutions, according to Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Salam.

June 15: Houthi rebels fire a missile at a United Arab Emirates ship carrying medical supplies in the Red Sea. One person is injured in the attack.

The U.N. urges warring parties in Yemen to agree to a U.N.-negotiated deal over the management of port city Hodeidah and resuming government salary payments.

June 17: The Saudi-backed Yemen government agrees to the U.N. two-point solution regarding the Hodeidah port.

July 22: The Houthis fire a Burkan-2 ballistic missile at an oil refinery in Saudi Arabia.

July 26: Houthi rebels launch a Scud missile, targeting at an oil facility near the port city of Yanbu in Saudi Arabia.

July 29: The Houthis claim an attack on a United Arab Emirates ship off the western coast of Yemen. No casualties or damage are reported.

Aug. 23: Houthi fighters call their main ally, ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh, “evil” and condemn his description of them as a “militia.” The statements highlight a growing rift between Saleh and the Houthis.

Aug. 24: Ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh holds a mass rally in Sanaa to celebrate 35 years since the founding of the General People’s Congress (GPC) party.

Aug. 27: Yemeni colonel and close adviser to Saleh is killed in clashes with Houthi rebels at a check-point in the southern neighborhood of Hadda.

Aug. 31: Former president Saleh demands the arrest of the Houthi gunmen who killed his close adviser.

Early Sept.: Leaders from Saleh’s GPC party and the Houthis meet to fix the rift between both groups.

Sept. 24: President Hadi says that a military solution is more likely to solve Yemen’s crisis. “The military solution is the more likely one for the Yemen crisis in light of the intransigence of the Houthi and Saleh

coup militias which continue to take orders from Iran,” Hadi says in an interview on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

Sept. 25: Yemen’s Houthi forces detain a U.S. citizen in Sanaa.

Oct. 1: The Houthis say they shot down a U.S. surveillance drone in the capital of Sanaa.

Oct. 29: Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir says Iran is blocking peace efforts in Yemen and is still smuggling weapons to the Houthis.

Nov. 4: Saudi Arabia says it intercepted a ballistic missile that was fired from Yemen near King Khaled Airport in Riyadh.

Nov. 6: Saudi Arabia blames Iran for the Houthi missile attack on Riyadh airport.

Nov. 7: Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir charges Iran with an act of war following the Houthi missile attack on Riyadh.

The Saudi-led coalition closes all air, land and sea ports to the Arabian Peninsula in order to stem the flow of supplies and arms to the Houthis from Iran.

Nov. 8: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says the Houthi missile attack on Saudi Arabia was a reaction to Saudi aggression. “How should the Yemeni people react to bombardment of their country? So they are not allowed to use their own weapons? You stop the bombardment first and see if the Yemenis would not do the same,” Rouhani says.

The White House condemns the Houthi missile attack on Saudi Arabia that occurred on November 4.

Nov. 12: The Houthis threaten to attack warships and oil tankers in retaliation for Saudi Arabia closing Yemen's ports.

Nov. 22: The Saudi-led coalition says it going to reopen Yemen's Hodeida port to allow humanitarian aid through to the capital of Sanaa.

Nov. 24: Remannts of four ballistic missiles fired into Saudi Arabia by the Houthis appear to have been designed and manufactured in Iran, a confidential U.N. report says.

Dec. 2: Ali Abdullah Saleh publicly splits from his alliance with the Houthis. He calls for a "new page" in his relationship with the Saudi-led coalition.

Dec. 4: Ex-president Saleh is killed by the Houthis in a roadside ambush near Sanaa.

Dec. 19: Saudi Arabia intercepts a ballistic missile over southern Riyadh. The Houthis claim responsibility for the attack, which was targeting the royal Yamama Palace in the capital. No damage is reported.

2018

Jan. 9: Houthi rebels threatened to block the Red Sea shipping lane if the Saudi-led coalition keeps moving towards the Hodeidah port. "If the aggressors keep pushing toward Hodeidah and if the political solution hits wall, there are some strategic choices that will be taken as a no return point, including blocking the international navigation in the Red Sea," Houthi's Ansarullah political council chief, Saleh al-Samad, said.

Jan. 10: The Saudi-led coalition said it foiled an attack on a Saudi oil tanker by Houthi fighters near the Hodeidah port. The

coalition destroyed a boat carrying explosives headed towards the tanker, coalition spokesman Colonel Turki al-Maliki said.

Jan. 11: The Houthis fired a ballistic missile at a special forces camp and a facility for helicopter gunships in the Saudi border province of Najran. Saudi air defence forces shot down the missile mid-air without any casualties, Colonel Turki al-Malki, spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, said.

Jan. 12: A UN panel concluded that Iran violated an arms embargo imposed on Yemen by failing to prevent the Houthi rebels from obtaining Iranian missiles. The report did not say Iran had supplied missiles to the Houthi rebels, but said the Islamic Republic was in "noncompliance" with Resolution 2216, for failing to keep such weapons out of Yemen.

Jan. 16: Houthi rebels said they fired a short-range ballistic missile toward a regional airport in the Saudi border province of Jazan. Saudi defense forces said they shot down the missile over Jazan. "This hostile action by the Houthi group, which is backed by Iran, proves the Iranian regimes continuous support for the armed Houthi group by providing them with capabilities, which is in violation of UN resolutions," said spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, Colonel Turki al-Malki.

Jan. 18: The Houthis fired a missile into the border province of Najran in Saudi Arabia. The missile targeted an air defense operations center and inflicted heavy damage to an air defense base in the Khadhra crossing point in Najran.

Jan. 25: Danny Lavon Burch, a U.S. citizen held captive by Houthi rebels since

September 2017, was released and taken to Oman. He was accompanied to Oman by Mohammed Abdel-Salam, a senior Houthi leader.

Jan. 30: Houthi rebels said they fired a long-range ballistic missile at King Khaled International Airport in Riyadh. This is the second time the Houthis targeted the Saudi airport.

Feb. 10: Houthi spokesman Mohammad Abdul Salam met with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif in Tehran. Zarif outlined Iran's four-point peace plan for Yemen and stressed the need for an immediate stop to the war. He also called for the immediate shipment of humanitarian aid to Yemeni civilians.

The Arab coalition's Patriot air defense systems intercepted a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis from the Ras Kutayb area in the Hodeidah province. The missile was destroyed before reaching its intended target, suspected to be al-Mukha city in the western Yemeni province of Taiz.

Feb. 12: Major General Gameel al-Mamari, a high-ranking Houthi official, defected to the Yemeni army. Al-Mamari was a spokesman for the Houthis' air defence forces and a deputy director of the military forum, a group of high-ranking army officers in Sanaa.

Feb. 13: The Houthis agreed to join a new round of peace talks with the General People's Congress party in Oman. The peace talks will take place as soon as a new UN Peace Envoy to Yemen is announced.

Senior Houthi field commander Abu Taha al-Ghalisi was killed in shelling on Houthi positions in the southwestern city of Taiz.

Al-Ghalisi was responsible for leading Houthi fronts north of Taiz.

Feb. 14: The Saudi military repelled a cross border attack by Houthi rebels in the southern border town of Nathran. Around 25 Houthi militants were killed and other wounded. Saudi helicopters also destroyed three Houthi military vehicles. This was the second cross border attack by the Houthis in less than a week.

Feb. 16-26: The United States, Britain and France drafted a UN Security Council resolution that condemned Iran for failing to stop its ballistic missiles from falling into the hands of the Houthis. The draft also called for renewed UN sanctions on Yemen and would allow the UN Security Council to impose targeted sanctions for "any activity related to the use of ballistic missiles in Yemen." Russia vetoed the resolution. The UN Security Council subsequently passed a Russian-drafted resolution that renewed the embargo and panel's mandate but left out the Iran-Houthi issue.

Feb. 21: Mohammed Ali al Houthi submitted a letter to the United Nations to end the three-and-a-half-year war. The document titled "An Initiative to End the Tragedies Caused by the Aggression on Yemen" criticized the U.N. Security Council for failing "to prevent the interference and aggression against Yemen as well as the massacres committed daily against the Yemeni citizens." The letter also included points for ending the conflict, such as forming a reconciliation committee, presidential and parliamentary elections, international guarantees to begin reconstruction and compensation for damages, and preventing any aggression from foreign countries against Yemen.

Feb. 27: The Houthis refused to sign a peace agreement that was built on discussions between the internationally recognized government and themselves, according to outgoing UN envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. The Houthis rejected security arrangements that required them to pull out of cities and hand over weapons to a neutral military committee. "It became clear that the Al Houthis were not prepared to make concessions on the proposed security arrangements. This has been a major stumbling block towards reaching a negotiated solution," Ahmed said in his last briefing to the U.N. Security Council.

March 1: Coalition airstrikes killed more than 100 Houthi rebels and injured dozens of fighters in the western Hodeidah district.

March 21: Houthi rebel's violently disbanded a protest by dozens of supporters of ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh in the Yemeni capital. A number of protestors were detained and some injuries were reported.

March 25: The Houthis fired seven missiles at four Saudi cities - three at the capital Riyadh, one at the southwest city of Khamis Mushait, one at southern Najran and two at Jizan. The Houthi Ministry of Defense claimed the missiles hit seven different targets inside Saudi Arabia, including four airports. But the Saudi coalition denied the claims, saying all missiles were intercepted and destroyed. Fragments from the intercepted missiles killed an Egyptian resident. It is the first death on Saudi soil since the military intervention began.

March 29: Houthi rebels fired a ballistic missile from the northern Yemeni province of Saada at the Saudi city of Jazan. Saudi air

defences intercepted the missile before it could strike its target.

March 30: The Yemeni army destroyed a Houthi weapons stockpile in Saada province. The strike coincided with a coalition raid on Houthi militias in the Northern Province. Houthi militants launched a ballistic missile at Saudi Arabia from the province the night before.

March 31: Saudi air defense forces intercepted a missile fired by the Yemeni Houthis. The missile targeted a Saudi National Guard base in the southern city Najran, a rebel-run news agency reported. An Indian resident was injured by falling debris in the attack.

April 2: Saleh al Samad, the head of the Houthi Political Council in Sanaa, said the rebels were "ready to buy weapons from any country that wants to sell to us, be it Russia or Iran." But he demanded the weapons be delivered to Sanaa to bypass the coalition blockade. Samad made the comments during a graduation ceremony speech for Houthi military cadets in Sanaa.

April 3: Houthi rebels struck a Saudi Arabian oil tanker with a missile west of Hodeidah in international waters. A coalition warship intervened and escorted the tanker, which sustained minimal damage, northwards. The Houthis said the attack was in response to a coalition airstrike on the rebel-held Hodeidah port that killed 14 people, including women and children, the day before.

April 4: Saudi Arabia intercepted a Houthi missile that was intended for southern Jizan.

April 6: The Houthis fired a missile at the southern city Najran, Saudi Arabia. Saudi defense forces intercepted the missile. No damage or casualties were reported.

April 11: The Houthis launched a Burkan 2-H ballistic missile at the Saudi capital Riyadh and also targeted oil facilities in southern Najran and Jizan, according to the rebel's Al Masirah television network. The missile traveled more than around 500 miles into Saudi Arabia before it was intercepted by Saudi air defenses. The Saudi-led coalition said it had also shot down two drones in southern Saudi Arabia. The Houthis claimed they targeted some areas with Qasif-1 drones.

April 12: Saudi air defense forces intercepted a Houthi missile targeting southern Jizan.

April 13: "As long as the aggression continues, our military capabilities will grow and develop," said Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the leader of the rebel group. The Houthis also fired a missile at Saudi Arabia for a third day in a row. The missile targeted southern Jizan but was intercepted by Saudi defense systems.

April 15: Iran supplied the Houthis with drones used to attack Saudi Arabia, the Yemeni government alleged. The drones were "made in Iran" and it was "impossible to manufacture them locally," said Yemen's internationally recognized government.

April 19: The Houthis shot down a U.S.-drone over Hodeidah, according to Middle East Monitor.

Saleh al Sammad, the head of the Houthis' Supreme Political Council, was killed in Saudi airstrikes on Hodeidah province, Al

Masirah TV reported. Mahdi al Mashat was elected as Sammad's successor. "This crime will not break the will of our people and state ... [and] will not pass without accountability," Abdul Malik al Houthi said. "The forces of this aggression led by Washington and the Saudi regime are legally responsible for such a crime and all its implications."

April 22: The Houthis fired a ballistic missile at southern Najran. Saudi air defences intercepted the missile, "but the shrapnel scattered over residential areas and cause a fire at a farm belonging to a citizen, without causing any injuries," the Saudi Press Agency said.

April 23: Saudi Arabia intercepted two ballistic missiles at Saudi Aramco oil production facility in southern Jizan. The Houthis claimed responsibility on its Al Masirah TV.

April 24: Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif accused the U.S. of fabricating evidence that Houthi missiles launched against Saudi Arabia were manufactured in Iran.

April 26: Saudi Arabia intercepted four ballistic missiles from Houthi rebels over southwestern Jizan. Falling debris from the interception killed one person.

April 29: The Houthis vowed to intensify rocket attacks on Saudi Arabia and said they are manufacturing their own ballistic missiles.

Three Saudi soldiers died in clashes with the Houthis along the Yemen-Saudi Arabia border, the Saudi Press Agency said.

May 3: The UN's Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths arrived in Omani to meet with Houthi officials to try and revive peace talks.

May 6: Houthi rebels launched two ballistic missiles at the southern city of Najran. Saudi air defence forces intercepted the missiles. Debris from the missiles fell on residential neighborhoods but no injuries or damage were reported. "This hostile action by the Houthi militias proves the continued involvement of the Iranian regime," said Saudi coalition spokesman Col. Turki al Maliki.

May 9: The Houthis fired missiles at economic targets in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia intercepted one missile and another landed in an uninhabited area in the desert south of the capital. Col. Turki al Maliki said the Houthis also "failed to launch a short-range Badr-type rocket" toward Najran but it also landed in an desert area.

May 11: Some 40 Houthis were killed during clashes with Yemeni forces outside the city of Hodeidah.

May 14: Houhi rebels launched a ballistic missile at Saudi Aramco in southern Jizan province. The missile landed in the open desert and no damage was inflicted, the Saudi-led coalition said.

May 19: Saudi Arabia intercepted ballistic missiles from the Houthis, which were targeting the city of Khamis Mushait.

May 22: The U.S. sanctioned five Iranians it said provided Yemen's Houthis with technical expertise and waepony to launch attacks against Saudi Arabia.

May 29: Yemeni forces advanced within 20 kilometers of the Houthi-held Hodeidah port.¹⁹

¹⁹ Cameron Glenn, Who are Yemen's Houthis, Timeline: The Houthis in Yemen, *Wilson Center (The Islamists)* (May 29, 2018)

Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen Has Failed

Saudi Arabia is no closer to achieving its objectives in Yemen, and international pressure to end the war is growing. The kingdom can cease its bombing campaign and still defend its national interests.

By Philip H. Gordon

The murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi, along with sharply deteriorating humanitarian conditions and growing media attention paid to the war in Yemen, has led to increased pressure on Saudi Arabia to end the war there.

Top U.S. officials are now calling on Riyadh to agree to a ceasefire and participate in U.N.-sponsored talks, and the Pentagon announced last Friday it would no longer provide in-air refueling for Saudi bombing runs. Meanwhile, Congress, led by the new Democratic majority in the House, is credibly threatening to suspend arms sales to Saudi Arabia, which countries such as Germany have already done. The growing pressure, a marked departure from the almost-unconditional support the Trump administration has been providing to the Saudis, has led to renewed hopes that the war might finally be brought to a negotiated end.

We should all hope that U.N. talks, led by the able British mediator Martin Griffiths, succeed — but we should also be realistic. Even if the Saudis and their Emirati partners show up ready for compromise, the Iran-backed Houthis, who control much of Yemen today, are sadly unlikely to reciprocate. Having survived years of economic isolation and relentless Saudi bombing, the Houthis know all the pressure is now on the other side. Their Iranian backers, in turn, likely assume they have nothing to gain from compromise either given the Trump administration's hostility to the Tehran regime. Houthi rejectionism would give the Saudis and Emiratis a pretext to resume the war, possibly including a bloody assault on the port of Hodeidah, which U.N. officials assess could considerably worsen the humanitarian situation even while failing to force the Houthis to give in.

The Saudis claim they will have no choice but to escalate the war if they cannot reach an agreement at the talks, but here's a better alternative: Declare victory and go home. Given all they have invested after three and a half years of war, and their legitimate concerns about Iranian influence and Houthi threats, that might seem irrational, and it would certainly be a bitter pill to swallow. But it would be far better than continuing with a war that has had incalculable humanitarian, financial, strategic and reputational costs for the Saudis but has not remotely advanced their own declared objectives.

In fact, on almost every measure, Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen has failed. Three and a half years after the launch of what was meant to be a quick military operation, the Houthis are stronger than ever; Iran's influence has only grown; al-Qaeda terrorists remain a major threat; Yemenis are suffering in what may be the worst humanitarian situation on the planet;

refugees have poured into Saudi Arabia and neighboring Oman; and Saudi Arabia's reputation — critical to its ambitions to become a modern, industrial economy and tourist destination — is suffering badly in the United States and around the world. If the Saudis applied the “benchmarking” approach associated with their economic reform plan — reassessing policies regularly and changing them if objectives are not being achieved — they would have certainly altered their policies in Yemen several years ago.

Bearing these high costs would be more justifiable if there were any realistic hope that staying the course would achieve their goal of restoring the pre-Houthi regime to power, but that is unlikely even in the long run. On periodic visits to Riyadh over the past three and a half years, Saudi officials have regularly acknowledged to me in private that the war was not going well, but equally consistently insisted that progress was just around the corner. The optimistic official assurances were eerily reminiscent of those regularly issued by American political and military leaders for years in Vietnam, or by Soviet leaders in Afghanistan, before they finally and belatedly accepted the reality that their military interventions were counterproductive.

For the Saudis, “going home” in Yemen would not mean abandoning the legitimate objectives of limiting Iranian influence or containing threats from Houthis. On the contrary, even if they end the current bombing campaign, there are a number of steps the Saudis could take to defend their national interests and increase their security. These could include enhanced maritime patrols, with U.S. support, to better prevent Iranian arms deliveries to the Houthis; increased diplomatic and economic pressure on Oman — bolstered by major financial incentives — to reinforce its land border with Yemen; a readiness to undertake airstrikes against advanced ballistic missile sites and air bases in Yemen that are used to attack Saudi Arabia, much like Israel currently does in Syria; the deployment of enhanced missile defenses around Riyadh and other Saudi cities, to include U.S.-made Theater High Altitude Area Defense Systems; financial and humanitarian assistance to Saudi allies in Yemen; and even economic and monetary incentives to Houthis, including funds for reconstruction, if they end their attacks on Saudi interests. All of these measures put together would cost far less than Riyadh is currently spending on the war, and they would likely save many lives and bring greater security as well.

The United States should continue to urge the Saudis to come to peace talks and pursue a negotiated settlement. It should also insist, however, that the Houthis and Iran not be given a veto over peace. Saudi Arabia should be pressed to end the current war with others if it can, but alone if it must.²⁰

²⁰ Philip H. Gordon, Saudi Arabia’s War in Yemen Has Failed, *Washington Post* (November 12, 2018)

CHAPTER 18

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Background

In the 1920's, the Soviet government established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region—where 95 percent of the population is ethnically Armenian—within Azerbaijan. Under Bolshevik rule, fighting between the two countries was kept in check, but as the Soviet Union began to collapse, so did its grip on Armenia and Azerbaijan. In 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh legislature passed a resolution to join Armenia despite the fact that the region was legally within Azerbaijan's borders. As the Soviet Union was dissolving in 1991, the autonomous region officially declared independence. War erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region, leaving roughly 30,000 casualties and hundreds of thousands of refugees. By 1993, Armenia controlled Nagorno-Karabakh and occupied 20 percent of the surrounding Azerbaijani territory. In 1994, Russia brokered a cease-fire which has remained in place since.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been a frozen conflict for more than a decade, but tensions have remained high since a breakdown in talks that followed the April 2016 violence, with repeated ceasefire violations. Negotiation and mediation efforts, primarily led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, have failed to produce a permanent solution to the conflict. The Minsk Group was created in 1994 to address the dispute and is co-chaired by the United States, Russia, and France. The co-chairs organize summits between the leaders of the two countries and hold individual meetings. The group has successfully negotiated cease-fires, but the territorial issues remain as intractable as ever.

Because Azerbaijani and ethnic Armenian military forces are positioned close to each other and have little to no communication, there is a high risk that inadvertent military action could lead to an escalation of the conflict. The two sides also have domestic political interests that could cause their respective leaders to launch an attack.

Concerns

Without successful mediation efforts, cease-fire violations and renewed tensions threaten to reignite a military conflict between the countries and destabilize the South Caucasus region. This could also disrupt oil and gas exports from the region, since Azerbaijan, which produces more than 850,000 barrels of oil per day, is a significant oil and gas exporter to Europe and Central Asia. Russia has promised to defend Armenia, Turkey has pledged to support Azerbaijan, and Iran has a large Azeri minority, which could escalate a crisis and entangle actors involved.

Recent Developments

Nagorno-Karabakh—the border region claimed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan—is at risk of renewed hostilities due to the failure of mediation efforts, increased militarization, and frequent cease-fire violations. In October 2017, under the auspices of the Minsk Group, an organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-led mediation group, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Geneva, beginning a series of talks on a possible settlement of the conflict.

Over the past several years, artillery shelling and minor skirmishes between Azerbaijani and Armenian troops have caused hundreds of deaths. Early April 2016 witnessed the most intense fighting since 1994, killing dozens and producing more than three hundred casualties. After four days the two sides announced that they had agreed on another cease-fire. Following that outbreak of violence, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have claimed that soldiers were killed in clashes throughout 2017.

Nagorno-Karabakh profile

The landlocked mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh is the subject of an unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan, in which it lies, and its ethnic Armenian majority, backed by neighbouring Armenia.

In 1988, towards the end of Soviet rule, Azerbaijani troops and Armenian secessionists began a bloody war which left the de facto independent state in the hands of ethnic Armenians when a truce was signed in 1994.

Negotiations have so far failed to produce a permanent peace agreement, and the dispute remains one of post-Soviet Europe's "frozen conflicts."

The conflict has roots dating back well over a century into competition between Christian Armenian and Muslim Turkic and Persian influences.

Populated for centuries by Christian Armenian and Turkic Azeris, Karabakh became part of the Russian empire in the 19th century.

The two groups lived in relative peace, although acts of brutality on both sides in the early 20th century live on in the popular memory.

After the end of World War I and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the new Soviet rulers, as part of their divide-and-rule policy in the region, established the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, with an ethnic Armenian majority, within the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan in the early 1920s.

As Soviet control loosened towards the end of the 1980s, smouldering Armenian-Azeri frictions exploded into violence when the region's parliament voted to join Armenia.

During the fighting, in which between 20,000 and 30,000 people are estimated to have lost their lives, the ethnic Armenians gained control of the region. They also pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside Karabakh, creating a buffer zone linking Karabakh and Armenia.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union, in late 1991, Karabakh declared itself an independent republic, further escalating the conflict into a full-scale war. That de facto status has not been recognised elsewhere.

While Armenia itself has never officially recognised the region's independence, it has become its main financial and military backer.

Ceasefire

A Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in 1994, leaving Karabakh as well as swathes of Azeri territory around the enclave in Armenian hands.

During the fighting, in which more than one million fled their homes, the ethnic Azeri population - about 25% of the total before the war - fled Karabakh and Armenia while ethnic Armenians fled the rest of Azerbaijan. Neither population group has been able to return home since the end of the war.

Karabakh is the Russian rendering of an Azeri word meaning 'black garden', while Nagorno is a Russian word meaning "mountainous". The ethnic Armenians prefer to call the region Artsakh, an ancient Armenian name for the area.

Both sides have had soldiers killed in sporadic breaches of the ceasefire. The closure of borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan has caused landlocked Armenia severe economic problems.

Since the truce, a simmering stalemate has prevailed. Azeris resent the loss of land they regard as rightfully theirs, while the Armenians show no sign of willingness to give it back.

Russia, France and the US co-chair the OSCE's Minsk Group, which has been attempting to broker an end to the dispute.

Signs of thaw

In a December 2006 referendum, declared illegitimate by Azerbaijan, the region approved a new constitution. Nonetheless, there have since been signs of life in the peace process, with occasional meetings between the Armenian and Azeri presidents.

Significant progress was reported at talks between the leaders in May and November 2009, but progress stalled, and since then there have been a number of serious ceasefire violations.

The most serious so far occurred in April 2016, when dozens of soldiers on both sides died in a fresh flare-up of hostilities.

A Simmering Crisis Over Nagorno-Karabakh

Talks later this year between President Serzh Sargsyan and President Ilham Aliyev can reduce the likelihood of renewed armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

By Carey Cavanaugh and Paul B. Stares

The likelihood of renewed armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh may be diminished if progress can be achieved at an expected meeting between their foreign ministers on the margins of this year's United Nations General Assembly. The principal task before these two officials is to organize talks later this year between Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. Their efforts are backed by the United States, Russia, and France (the three OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries charged with advancing peaceful settlement of this dispute). Such a summit could signal a step away from potential fighting and a return to the negotiating table.

Basic Background

The political challenge here pits Armenian demands for ethnic self-determination against Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union gave Armenia and Azerbaijan independence in 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh—an autonomous region in Muslim-majority Azerbaijan populated mostly by Christian Armenians—broke away from central government control. Hostilities here triggered intense warfare from 1992 to 1994, during which Nagorno-Karabakh forces, with support from Armenia, gained control over most of the autonomous region plus seven adjacent provinces, totaling roughly 20 percent of Azerbaijan's geographic area. Some twenty to thirty thousand people were killed and more than a million displaced before Russia successfully brokered a cease-fire in 1994. For the past twenty-five years, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been the principal international entity charged with advancing a peace settlement, primarily via the three Minsk Group co-chairs. While this group has largely managed the conflict and identified the central elements required for a settlement, little headway has been made on achieving a definitive peace agreement.

This long-standing dispute in the South Caucasus—the region comprising Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—is complicated by an intricate web of actors and alliances. Russia is bound by treaty to defend Armenia and maintains a military base there, but sells substantial arms to both sides. Russia also serves, as noted above, as one of the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. In addition, Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) under which an act of aggression against one member requires all other members to render support and military assistance. Turkey, a NATO member, has pledged to defend its ethnic brethren in Azerbaijan. Georgia, nominally neutral, receives substantial U.S. military financing and training assistance and engages in trilateral military exercises with Azerbaijan and Turkey (most recently in June near its capital, Tbilisi).

Delicate Situation

Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the contested region of Nagorno-Karabakh have remained alarmingly high following large-scale fighting in April 2016. Although the cease-fire established after that violence remains in place, mortar and small arms fire along the heavily fortified line of contact is a near-daily occurrence. Both sides have reported thousands of cease-fire violations in the past few months, keeping the potential for more widespread fighting high—whether deliberate or inadvertent. Leaders in Armenia and Azerbaijan claim they will not shy away from military action if provoked.

In an unwelcome development, Azerbaijan announced on September 17 that significant military exercises would coincide with the opening of the UN General Assembly. These would include fifteen thousand military personnel, combat aircraft, and more than 150 tanks and armored personnel carriers. Turkish Air Force F-16 fighters and C-130 transport aircraft will also participate in these maneuvers. Referencing Armenian provocations, Aliyev stressed in his September 20 UNGA statement that the country would “if necessary, punish the aggressor once again, as it had done in April 2016.”

The armaments now amassed in this region are formidable, with Azerbaijan’s military expenditures in recent years approaching \$2 to \$3 billion annually. Arms imports by Azerbaijan were twenty times higher than those of Armenia from 2012 to 2016, as Azerbaijan has acquired Israeli drones and air defense systems, Russian surface-to-air missiles, and other advanced weaponry. Armenia cannot begin to match its rival’s spending power, but has recently acquired additional heavy weapons and sophisticated missile systems from Russia, which it believes help maintain a rough military balance between the two.

The ramifications of a significant clash over Nagorno-Karabakh would not be confined to the combatants or to the South Caucasus. Outflows of refugees may be generated that could seriously impact nearby Georgia, which counts substantial Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities among its populace. Georgia has also become highly dependent upon natural gas from Azerbaijan. Intense fighting could disrupt the region’s energy transportation network, which carries Azerbaijan’s resources across Georgia to Turkey and beyond. This network is now in the midst of a large expansion to help build European Union energy independence from Russia.

For Washington, greater instability in the South Caucasus would further complicate already strained relations with Russia, Turkey, and Iran. An introduction of Russian troops to the conflict would also reverse long-standing U.S. efforts to deter Russian revanchist.

Diplomatic State of Play

Peace efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute remain deadlocked. Since the violent April 2016 flare-up along the line of contact, political attitudes on both sides have hardened, offering scant potential for a compromise settlement. In response to the fighting, the Minsk Group co-chairs met with the conflicting parties and advocated confidence- and

security-building measures intended to reduce the likelihood of violence. Two such measures—expanding the OSCE field mission by a few monitors and establishing an investigation mechanism for violent incidents—were accepted by the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. These measures remain a top priority for negotiators, but more than a year after Russian President Vladimir Putin reconfirmed their acceptance, neither has been implemented.

The Minsk Group co-chairs' diplomatic focus in 2017 has centered on getting Sargsyan and Aliyev back to the bargaining table. Both France and Russia have expressed their preparedness to organize and host this session. On July 11, the three mediators huddled with the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Brussels to encourage both presidents to meet later this year. Sargsyan remarked to the press on July 17 that he was prepared to participate in such a meeting, but that “expectations were not high.” He insisted that there would be no new approach from Armenia. Azerbaijan has made clear its view that further discussions must be substantive, with some genuine prospect of moving forward. Putin met in Sochi with Aliyev on July 21 and with Sargsyan on August 23, discussing bilateral relations as well as concerns about Nagorno-Karabakh. Still there was no public announcement confirming a possible Armenia-Azerbaijan presidential summit.

Although such an encounter alone would not indicate progress toward resolving this long-standing conflict, it could augur high-level willingness to dampen the risk of renewed violence. The Minsk Group mediators are expected to rendezvous again should the foreign ministers meet in New York this month.

There are some concerns about how high of a priority this conflict is for the Donald J. Trump administration. The interim U.S. Minsk Group co-chair, Ambassador Richard Hoagland, stepped down on August 28 and was immediately replaced by Andrew Schofer, most recently the chargé d'affaires at the U.S. mission to the UN offices in Vienna, Austria. Nevertheless, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's August letter to Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker has led to speculation that this special envoy position may be cut [PDF] as part of his pending reorganization of the State Department. Even if the position remains, Schofer may not be put forward for ambassadorial rank. This would place the U.S. mediator in a visibly inferior position to his Russian and French counterparts and could be interpreted as signaling waning U.S. interest in or support for the OSCE settlement process.

OSCE and EU officials involved with the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute have voiced broad support for recent Minsk Group co-chair activities and the diplomatic measures—reestablishing a direct dialogue between the two presidents and advancing the already agreed confidence- and security-building measures—that are now in play. Civil society organizations and experts on the region, in contrast, have been more critical, underscoring the urgent need for greater action in light of an increasingly fragile peace.

Additional Activities and Options

Recent meetings with experts on the South Caucasus in the United States and Europe, as well as with UN and EU officials, have identified additional steps that nongovernmental organizations, UN agencies, and others can take independently to mitigate the severity and impact of hostilities and to build a broader foundation for a peaceful settlement. These include the following initiatives:

Humanitarian contingency planning. There is a need for UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations to carry out contingency planning to prepare for likely flows of refugees and internally displaced persons and humanitarian needs should large-scale conflict erupt. These issues have already been broached in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Such steps represent not only due diligence on the part of international actors, but serve to highlight to the conflicting parties growing international concern about bellicose action, as well as their potentially substantial human cost. Given the proximity of fighting in April 2016 along the Iranian border, it might be useful to consider similar discussions with Tehran.

Military-to-military contacts. Outside states that may be drawn into a conflict in this region should be encouraged to develop specific military-to-military communications to mitigate prospects for unwarranted escalation. Such links have already proven valuable for Russia and Turkey in Syria. This could include periodic face-to-face encounters, as well as the establishment of communication hotlines. Restoring consistent communications links between the general staffs of Armenia and Azerbaijan would also be beneficial.

Confidence- and security-building measures. The Minsk Group co-chairs should coordinate more broadly to pressure the parties to weigh additional measures that might reduce the risk of violence along the line of contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. This could include each side meeting their commitments on notifying the other of planned military exercises made under the 1999 OSCE Vienna Document on the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures

UN secretary-general envoy. To keep UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres fully apprised of developments in this vital region and to underscore his personal concern regarding renewed warfare, thought should be given to the appointment of a UN special advisor focused specifically on Nagorno-Karabakh or the South Caucasus. UN specialized agencies will be called upon to perform essential tasks here if there is greater fighting (or, optimistically, should peace efforts advance).

Elders group. There could be merit in exploring the contribution that might be made by a so-called elders group of well-respected public figures who could offer valuable counsel and perhaps provide technical mediation assistance. A more formal link between the official OSCE negotiating process and the NGO community could also help with coordination activities.

Technical dialogues. Bilateral dialogue should be facilitated between Armenian and Azerbaijani experts (and, where relevant, trilateral with Georgian experts) on broad technical

issues ranging from water management and development of transportation infrastructure to ecosystem research and regional natural disaster response.

Civil society. Finally, nongovernmental organizations should further expand efforts to foster contact between civil society groups that include youth, educators, businessmen, and journalists. There has been a steady ongoing effort in this direction, funded by the European Union, via the European Partnership for Nagorno-Karabakh. The September 8 Moscow dialogue, arranged by Patriarch Kirill with the religious leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, represents a step in this direction.

Conclusion

It remains open whether the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents will come together in 2017. Both men were present this week in New York, but did not meet. Instead, they spoke before the General Assembly and used their presentations to underscore their principal irreconcilable demands (self-determination vis-à-vis territorial integrity), to recount massacres and war crimes committed against their people, and to blame the opposite side for instigating the April 2016 clash. While each leader spoke briefly of a commitment to peaceful resolution of the conflict, their messages illuminated how distant that goal remains.

In any case, this month's gathering at Turtle Bay will have provided an excellent occasion for other diplomatic delegations—namely the Minsk Group and its co-chairs, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as Turkey and Iran—to meet on the margins and further explore how best to address the challenges posed by Nagorno-Karabakh. The General Assembly also presents an opportune moment for the new U.S. administration to reconfirm its commitment to performing a vital role in this peace process.

If there is no near-term progress on the diplomatic front, many of the initiatives detailed above can and should be taken to highlight international concern, better prepare for renewed fighting, and to expand the space for progress on peace. Fortunately, some of these activities have already begun.²¹

²¹ Carey Cavanaugh and Paul B. Stares, A Simmering Crisis Over Nagorno-Karabakh, *Center for Preventive Action* (September 22, 2017)

CHAPTER 19

Destabilization of Mali

Background

After gaining independence from France in 1960, Mali endured thirty years of sporadic fighting and political coups. While the majority of the population resides in the southern region, numerous militant groups including the Tuareg, AQIM, and Ansar Dine—a militant Islamist group—continue to assert territorial claims in the northern part of the country, undermining the government and threatening to destabilize neighboring countries. The Tuareg, a primarily Berber ethnic group, have rebelled against the government and clashed with other groups several times in an attempt to gain autonomy for the region they call Azawad.

The first Tuareg rebellion began in 1963, lasting less than a year before it was brutally suppressed by government forces. Divisions between Tuareg clans hindered their ability to fight together against the government. In the decades that followed the first rebellion, government policies tended to neglect northern Mali, which was already fragile due to a series of droughts. Many Tuareg moved into aid camps in the south or crossed into neighboring countries to find work. Hundreds of Tuareg moved to Libya, where they fought abroad on behalf of Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi's Islamic Legion.

After Qaddafi's Islamic Legion was disbanded in the late 1980's many Tuareg began to return to northern Mali. The different Tuareg clans decided to consolidate their efforts in the fight against the government and in June 1990 launched a second rebellion. In 1992, Mali country held its first democratic and multiparty election. Despite apparent political progress, the fight in the north between the Tuareg and the military dragged on. Several peace accords were signed in an effort to stabilize relations between the Tuareg and Arab groups, but none were implemented successfully.

In 2012, a military coup carried out by the Malian army created a power vacuum that allowed militant groups such as Ansar Dine, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, and AQIM to gain territory in northern Mali. A pro-autonomy Tuareg group—the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)—initially allied with radical Islamist organizations in order to establish control in the north, but violence soon erupted within this short-lived alliance as each group competed for territory. In August 2013, sixteen months after the military coup and a month after yet another peace deal was brokered with the Tuareg, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita was voted into the presidency in an election that was ultimately praised for its transparency by the EU and African Union.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and military missions led by G5 Sahel countries—Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger—

were deployed to combat extremism in the region in April 2013. France has taken the lead in this fight in Mali through Operation Barkhane, which deployed roughly sixteen hundred French soldiers to protect civilians and aid local military efforts. Over thirteen thousand peacekeepers are working in Mali on what has been called the United Nation's most dangerous mission due to the high number of attacks on peacekeepers.

Despite increased foreign involvement, some militant groups still maintain control of areas in northern Mali. Other militant groups have been driven across borders to territory outside of the G5 Sahel mission's mandate.

Concerns

The United States has long supported economic and social programs in Mali, but funding to the central government was cut off after the 2012 coup. In support of the French-led mission to combat extremism, the United States established a drone base in neighboring Niger in March 2013 to provide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to France and other partners in the region.

The strengthening of militant groups in Mali or their spread to neighboring countries could allow AQIM to establish a safe haven and destabilize the region through militancy and terrorism. Northern Mali has become a central transit point for young migrants from all over western Africa looking to travel to Algeria or Libya with the ultimate goal of reaching Europe. The weak economy and lack of job prospects in northern Mali has led many to turn to the trafficking and smuggling of migrants and drugs as a primary source of income. This crisis is both a humanitarian and security concern as militant groups in the Sahel region often tax the trafficking and smuggling routes to fund their violent campaigns.

Recent Developments

Concerns are growing that terrorist groups in Mali are increasing in numbers and strength. Since the November 2015 kidnapping and mass shooting at a luxury hotel in Mali's capital, Bamako, attacks have expanded to neighboring countries. In March 2016, a shooting at a beach resort in Ivory Coast killed nineteen civilians. In June 2017, there was yet another attack on a tourist resort outside of Bamako. Jihadist groups such as al-Mourabitoun, a branch of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that primarily comprises northern Malians and ethnic Tuaregs, have tried to derail the June 2015 peace agreement between the Coordination of Azawad Movements, the Malian government, and a coalition of Tuareg rebel groups. As a result of the deteriorating security situation, the U.S. Department of State first warned its citizens in December 2015 against traveling to Mali and authorized the departure of nonemergency personnel from the U.S. embassy.

In September 2016, Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita warned the United Nations that terrorism and crime was spreading from the northern part of the country to the center, and due to the slow implementation of the peace deal, groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State were at risk of expanding.

Mali Profile

A chronology of key events:

11th century - Empire of Mali becomes dominant force in the upper Niger basin, its period of greatness beginning under King Sundiata in 1235 and peaking under Mansa Musa who ruled between 1312 and 1337 and extended empire to the Atlantic.

14th-15th centuries - Decline of the Empire of Mali, which loses dominance of the gold trade to the Songhai Empire, which makes its base in Timbuktu - historically important as a focal point of Islamic culture and a trading post on the trans-Saharan caravan route.

Late 16th century - Moroccans defeat the Songhai, make Timbuktu their capital and rule until their decline in the 18th century.

19th century - French colonial advance, and Islamic religious wars which lead to creation of theocratic states.

1898 - France completes conquest of Mali, then called French Sudan.

1959 - Mali and Senegal form the Mali Federation, which splits a year later.

Independence

1960 - Mali becomes independent with Modibo Keita as president. It becomes a one-party, socialist state and withdraws from the Franc zone.

1968 - Keita ousted in coup led by Lieutenant Moussa Traore.

1977 - Protests erupt following Keita's death in prison.

1979 - New constitution provides for elections; Traore re-elected president.

1985 - Mali and Burkina Faso engage in border fighting.

1991 - Traore deposed in coup and replaced by transitional committee.

Democracy

1992 - Alpha Konare wins multiparty elections to become Mali's first democratically-elected president.

1995 - Peace agreement with Tuareg tribes leads to return of thousands of refugees.

1999 - Former President Moussa Traore sentenced to death on corruption charges, but has his sentence commuted to life imprisonment by President Konare.

1999 October - Several people killed in fighting in the north between members of the Kunta tribe and an Arab community over local disputes.

2000 February - Konare appoints former International Monetary Fund official Mande Sidibe prime minister.

2001 December - Manantali dam in southwest produces its first megawatt of hydro-electricity, 13 years after it was completed.

Amadou Toure

2002 April - Amadou Toumani Toure elected president by landslide. Poll is marred by allegations of fraud.

2002 September - France says it will cancel 40% of debts owed to it by Mali, amounting to some 80m euros (\$79m, £51m).

2002 October - Government resigns, without public explanation. New "government of national unity" is unveiled.

2003 August - Clashes between rival Muslim groups in west kill at least 10 people.

2004 April - Prime Minister Mohamed Ag Amani resigns and is replaced by Ousmane Issoufi Maiga.

2004 September - Agriculture minister says severe locust plague has cut cereal harvest by up to 45%.

2005 June - World Food Programme warns of severe food shortages, the result of drought and locust infestations in 2004.

2006 June - The government signs an Algerian-brokered peace deal with Tuareg rebels seeking greater autonomy for their northern desert region. The rebels looted weapons in the town of Kidal in May, raising fears of a new rebellion.

2007 April - President Toure wins a second five-year term in elections.

2007 July - The ruling coalition, Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ADP), strengthens its hold on parliament in elections.

Rebel activity

2007 August - Suspected Tuareg rebels abduct government soldiers in separate incidents near the Niger and Algerian borders.

2008 May - Tuareg rebels kill 17 soldiers in attack on an army post in the northeast, despite a ceasefire agreed a month earlier.

2008 December - At least 20 people are killed and several taken hostage in an attack by Tuareg rebels on a military base in northern Mali.

2009 February - Government says the army has taken control of all the bases of the most

active Tuareg rebel group. A week later, 700 rebels surrender their weapons in ceremony marking their return to the peace process.

2009 May - Algeria begins sending military equipment to Mali in preparation for a joint operation against Islamic militants linked to al-Qaeda.

2009 August - New law boosts women's rights, prompts some protests.

2010 January - Annual music event - Festival in the Desert - is moved from a desert oasis to Timbuktu because of security fears.

Terror challenge

2010 April - Mali, Algeria, Mauritania and Niger set up joint command to tackle threat of terrorism.

2012 January - Fears of new Tuareg rebellion following attacks on northern towns which prompt civilians to flee into Mauritania.

2012 March - Military officers depose President Toure ahead of the April presidential elections, accusing him of failing to deal effectively with the Tuareg rebellion. African Union suspends Mali.

2012 April - Tuareg rebels seize control of northern Mali, declare independence.

Military hands over to a civilian interim government, led by President Dioncounda Traore.

2012 May - Junta reasserts control after an alleged coup attempt by supporters of ousted President Toure in Bamako.

Pro-junta protesters storm presidential compound and beat Mr Traore unconscious.

The Tuareg MNLA and Islamist Ansar Dine rebel groups merge and declare northern Mali to be an Islamic state. Ansar Dine

begins to impose Islamic law in Timbuktu. Al-Qaeda in North Africa endorses the deal.

2012 June-July - Ansar Dine and its Al-Qaeda ally turn on the MNLA and capture the main northern cities of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao. They begin to destroy many Muslim shrines that offend their puritan views.

2012 August - Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra forms a new government of national unity in order to satisfy regional demands for a transition from military-dominated rule. The cabinet of 31 ministers includes five seen as close to coup leader Capt Amadou Sanogo.

2012 Autumn-Winter - Northern Islamist rebels consolidate their hold on the north. They seize strategically important town of Douentza in September, crossing into the central part of Mali and closer to the government-held south-west.

2012 November - The West African regional grouping Ecowas agrees a coordinated military expedition to recapture the north, with UN and African Union backing. Preparations are expected to take several months.

2012 December - Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra resigns, allegedly under pressure from army leaders who oppose plans for Ecowas military intervention. President Traore appoints a presidential official, Django Sissoko, to succeed him. The UN and US threaten sanctions.

French intervention

2013 January - Islamist fighters capture the central town of Konna and plan to march on the capital. President Traore asks France for help. French troops rapidly capture Gao and Timbuktu and at the end of the month enter Kidal, the last major rebel-held town. European countries pledge to help retrain the Malian army.

2013 April - France begins withdrawal of troops. A regional African force helps the Malian army provide security.

2013 May - An international conference pledges \$4bn to help rebuild Mali.

2013 June - Government signs peace deal with Tuareg nationalist rebels to pave way for elections. Rebels agree to hand over northern town of Kidal that they captured after French troops forced out Islamists in January.

2013 July-August - Ibrahim Boubacar Keita wins presidential elections, defeating Moussa Mara.

France formally hands over responsibility for security in the north to the Minusma UN force.

2013 September - President Keita appoint banking specialist Oumar Tatam Ly prime minister.

2013 September-November - Government relations with Tuareg separatists in the north steadily worsen, with occasional clashes.

2013 December - Parliamentary elections give President Keita's RPM 115 out of 147 seats.

France announces 60% reduction in troops deployed in Mali to 1,000 by March 2014.

2014 April - President Keita appoints former rival Moussa Mara prime minister in a bid to curb instability in the north.

2014 May - Fragile truce with Tuareg MNLA separatists breaks down in north. Separatists seize control of Kidal city and the town of Menaka, Agelhok, Anefis and Tessalit.

2014 September - Government, separatists begin new round of talks in Algeria to try end conflict over northern Mali, or Azawad as the secessionists call it.

Separatist MNLA opens an "Azawad embassy" in the Netherlands.

2014 October - Nine UN peacekeepers killed in the north-east - the deadliest attack so far on its mission in Mali.

2015 January - Mali's health minister says the country is free of the Ebola virus, after 42 days without a new case of the disease since October.

2015 April - Upsurge in fighting as Coordination of Azawad Movements northern rebels clash with UN peacekeepers in Timbuktu and seize town of Lere, try to recapture Menaka from pro-government militia.

2015 May - French troops kill leading al-Qaeda commanders Amada Ag Hama and Ibrahim Ag Inawalen in northern raid. Both were suspected of kidnapping and killing French citizens.

A peace accord to end the conflict in the north of Mali is signed by the government and several militia and rebel factions.

2015 June - Government and ethnic Tuareg rebels sign peace deal aimed at ending decades of conflict. The government gives the Tuareg more regional autonomy and drops arrest warrants for their leaders.

2015 July - Craftsmen in Mali working for the United Nations rebuild the world-renowned mausoleums in Timbuktu which were destroyed by Islamists in 2012.

2015 August - Seventeen people killed in attack by suspected Islamist militants on a hotel in the central Malian town of Sevare

2015 November - Islamist gunmen attack the luxury Radisson Blu hotel in the capital Bamako, killing 22.

2016 August - Several attacks on foreign forces. More than 100 peacekeepers have died since the UN mission's deployment in Mali in 2013, making it one of the deadliest places to serve for the UN.

A Malian jihadist is found guilty of ransacking the fabled desert city of Timbuktu. He expressed regret in the unprecedented trial before the International Criminal Court.

2017 January - At least 37 people are killed by a car bomb at a military camp in Gao housing government troops and former rebels brought together as part of a peace agreement.

2017 February - Malian soldiers and rival militia groups including Tuareg separatists take part in a joint patrol, a key part of a peace agreement reached in 2015.

2017 April - President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita announces a new government, appointing close ally Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga as prime minister.

2017 June - Al-Qaeda-aligned group Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen claims responsibility for an attack on an hotel popular with Westerners east of Bamako, killing two civilians.

2018 January - Some 14 soldiers are killed in a suspected Islamist attack on a military base at Soumpi. Elsewhere, 26 civilians die after their vehicle hits a landmine.

2018 June - Mali prepares for a presidential election amid Islamist violence and demonstrations pressing for the vote to be free and fair.

Shadowy U.S. Drone War in Africa Set to Expand

Deployment of armed drones in Niger coincides with a new U.S. plan to withdraw some troops.

By Lara Seligman

The U.S. military will begin flying armed drones out of a remote base in Niger in the coming months, marking a significant escalation of the Defense Department's little-noticed war against violent extremists in Africa.

The MQ-9 Reapers will operate from new facilities the U.S. Air Force is building at an existing Nigerien base in Agadez for nearly \$100 million. Until recently, the drones have been based in Niger's capital and used solely to collect intelligence on militant groups operating in the region.

But last November, following an attack that killed five Nigerien and four American troops near the village of Tongo Tongo, the government of Niger requested that the United States begin deploying armed drones against jihadi groups.

The Tongo Tongo ambush spotlighted a policy issue that draws little public attention in the United States—the ongoing war in Africa's Sahel region against militant groups emboldened by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. It also brought new scrutiny to the Agadez project, offering a window into the U.S. military's quiet buildup on the continent.

"I suspect it is part of this concern around the terrorist organizations in the Sahel region that give no sign of being defeated anytime soon," said Joshua Meservey, a senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, citing groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram, and others. "They have carried out a number of attacks that have been high profile and very concerning," he said.

Much of the violence is centered in Niger's volatile southwest region. One of the poorest nations in Africa, Niger has all the ingredients for instability and violence: economic woes, an illicit drug and weapons trade, human trafficking, and borders with volatile nations, particularly Libya and Mali. The French military is also heavily involved there, deploying thousands of troops across West Africa to fight Islamist militants.

The Pentagon insists that U.S. troops do not have a direct combat mission in Niger. Its 800 personnel there include special operations troops who train Nigerien forces to conduct counterterrorism raids and defend themselves against ambushes.

But the deaths of four U.S. soldiers in Tongo Tongo have raised concerns about mission creep. Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, the head of U.S. Africa Command, said this year that the soldiers were playing a backup role for Nigerien forces on a mission against jihadis and did not intend to get involved in direct combat.

“The direct cause of the enemy attack in Tongo Tongo is that the enemy achieved tactical surprise there, and our forces were outnumbered approximately 3 to 1,” said Maj. Gen. Roger L. Cloutier Jr., who was then Africom’s chief of staff and now commands U.S. Army Africa. “There was some processes at all levels of the chain of command that need to be improved.”

Agadez will be only the second place the United States deploys armed drones in Africa. Drones stationed in Djibouti are used for airstrikes in Yemen and Somalia, while drones used against targets in Libya are flown from Sicily. (The United States reportedly began flying armed drones out of Air Base 101 in Niamey in January, but these reports are unconfirmed.) The United States also flies unarmed surveillance drones from bases in Tunisia and Cameroon. Meservey said the deployment of armed drones in Agadez would “give a little bit more teeth to the ongoing operations.”

The relocation of the MQ-9 Reapers from Air Base 101 to the new facilities at Agadez has been planned since 2014. Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. The buildup coincides with calls within the Pentagon to draw down troops in the region. Following the Tongo Tongo ambush, Waldhauser proposed reassigning hundreds of U.S. troops on the continent and winding down special operations missions there. More recently, the *New York Times* reported that the Defense Department plans to accelerate that drawdown. “That has caused the Pentagon to rethink … the special operators’ posture in that region,” Meservey said. “Drones have a smaller footprint, they are easier to run and deploy, and they don’t [attract as much] attention.”

Maj. Karl Wiest, a spokesman for Africom, told Foreign Policy that the Pentagon is reviewing operations around the globe in accordance with the new National Defense Strategy’s pivot away from counterterrorism operations and toward coping with broad threats posed by Russia and China. But he said the Pentagon has not yet directed any combatant command to adjust forces.

The key question will be whether the armed drones help the United States sustain gains made against militants as it draws down its troop presence—without upsetting the delicate political balance in the region, said Alice Hunt Friend, a senior fellow in the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“I think the government-to-government relationship with Niger for the moment will hold steady, but from a community relations perspective and from a public relations perspective … African communities are extremely sensitive to U.S. presence,” Friend said. “Drones could certainly upset that latent anxiety.”²²

²² Lara Seligman, Shadowy U.S. Drone War in Africa Set to Expand, *foreign policy* (September 4, 2018)

Behind the secret U.S. war in Africa

Despite Pentagon assertions, secret programs allow American troops to direct combat raids in Somalia, Kenya, Niger and other African nations.

By Wesley Morgan

American special operations teams are playing a more direct role in military actions against suspected terrorists in Africa than the Pentagon has publicly acknowledged, planning and participating in combat raids by African troops in multiple countries including Somalia, Kenya, Tunisia and Niger, under a set of classified programs.

In repeated public statements, military spokespeople have said the American role in Africa is limited to “advising and assisting” other militaries. But for at least five years, Green Berets, Navy SEALs and other commandos operating under a little-understood authority have planned and controlled certain missions, putting them in charge of their African partner forces.

Under both the Obama and Trump administrations, the military has relied on partners in other countries to carry out crucial missions against suspected terrorists, to avoid American casualties after years of massive direct involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. But having Americans plan and retain operational control of the missions gives them greater ability to strike quickly against threats, according to supporters of the programs, even as it shields the true nature of the missions from critics in the United States and abroad.

“It’s less, ‘We’re helping you,’ and more, ‘You’re doing our bidding,’” said one active-duty Green Beret officer with recent experience in West Africa as he described the programs carried out under a legal authority known as Section 127e. Like several other sources interviewed for this story, he spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss classified programs.

“Our special operators not only advise and assist and accompany their partner force, but also direct it under these programs,” acknowledged retired Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc, who until June 2017 commanded most U.S. special operations forces in Africa, in a POLITICO interview.

The budgetary authority behind the secret programs is not itself classified, and military leaders have referred to it obliquely in congressional hearings — without describing the unusual arrangements with African militaries that it allows. In 2014, Adm. William McRaven, then the military’s top special operations commander, testified that 127e — then known as Section 1208 — was “probably the single most important authority we have in our fight against terrorism.” And earlier this year his successor, Gen. Tony Thomas, told Congress that the authorities “unique access and capabilities achieve results,” without elaborating on what those capabilities are.

The role played by American commandos under the authority helps explain the complex events that led to the deaths of four special operations soldiers last October during an ambush in the village of Tongo in Niger by local militants affiliated with the Islamic State. The team that was ambushed was not operating under the authority, but it had been diverted from its normal mission to support a second team that was.

That second team had been flying across the country to help its Nigerien partner force raid a militant hideout when the first team was redirected to back it up — only to have weather force the helicopters back, leaving the original team in the area on its own, according to an investigation into the incident by the military's four-star Africa Command.

The authority funds classified programs under which African governments essentially loan out units of their militaries for American commando teams to use as surrogates to hunt militants identified as potential threats to American citizens or embassies. That's instead of having the American commandos help the African troops accomplish their own objectives, as other U.S. special operations teams do in Africa.

The programs focus on both reconnaissance and "direct action" raids by joint forces of American and African commandos on militant targets, Bolduc and other sources said — a type of mission the Pentagon has previously denied participating in on the continent.

A spokesman for Africa Command declined to say which African states host teams under the authority, but former special operations officers have identified eight countries as current or recent sites of the surrogate programs. They include well-known combat zones like Somalia and Libya as well as more surprising sites for American-directed commando raids like Kenya, Tunisia, Cameroon, Mali and Mauritania — and Niger, where the October mission that ended in tragedy involved one of two units that Green Berets run in the country under the authority.

As the Pentagon scrambled last fall to explain what its fallen commandos had been doing in combat in an African country many Americans had never heard of, it initially withheld some key facts — including that a second team of special operations troops had been involved in the mission too.

More than eight months later, the Africa Command investigation has revealed more details about the role of that second unit, known as Team Arlit after the Nigerien town where it was based. But the Pentagon still refuses to acknowledge the full nature of the mission it was conducting or that it was working under the authority. (Bolduc, a former White House official, and another former special operations officer with experience in northwest Africa all confirmed that in interviews.) Both Africa Command and Special Operations Command declined to comment on any programs run under the authority, saying information about them is classified.

One aspect of the programs that the Pentagon considers sensitive is how close they come to putting the U.S. special operators who plan the missions in harm's way. Two weeks

after the Tongo Tongo ambush, the director of the Pentagon's Joint Staff, Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, was asked at a news conference whether any American special operators participated in "direct action" missions alongside African troops — military parlance for raids against suspected terrorist targets. McKenzie had just said that American advisers on the continent were "not directly involved in combat operations," a statement that reporters in the room were eager to clarify.

"No, we're not involved in direct-action missions with partner forces," McKenzie answered bluntly.

That statement was incorrect. In fact, as Africa Command said in its subsequent investigation, the mission for which Team Arlit and its Nigerien partners were flying in when weather forced them back was a "multi-team raid" — essentially a synonym for "direct action."

McKenzie's characterization was "obviously false," the former White House official, who has detailed knowledge of special operations programs in Africa, said in an interview. "We are advising those forces on direct action missions, and to say otherwise is lying by omission," the former official added.

Joint Staff spokesman Col. Patrick Ryder responded that when McKenzie said "direct action," he meant "U.S. direct combat operations." Ryder said that Americans troops "operate in Niger to train, advise, and assist Nigerien forces in a non-combat role" but did not dispute that missions in the country include direct-action raids.

"There is more of a direct-action flavor" to the missions run by teams operating under the authority, said Bolduc, the former commander of special operations forces in Africa. "That's specifically what it's supposed to do."

The chance to go on raids makes supporting one of the secret programs a coveted assignment among commandos deploying to Africa. "Yeah, a 127 echo is a better mission," the current Green Beret officer said, using the military phonetic jargon for programs run under Section 127e.

In northwest Africa, teams working under the authority try to track down militants associated with Al Qaeda or the Islamic State who travel on desert smuggling routes between Mali, Libya and Niger, said Bolduc, the former White House official and the second former special operations officer with experience in the region, who also spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss classified programs.

During the second former special operations officer's tour in Africa, teams on such missions were involved in few actual gunfights, he said — but suicide bombers once attacked the base where one team lived with its Nigerien partner force.

"There is a very deliberate process when we leave the gate. It's not cowboy shit. We're trying hard not to be in direct combat unless something really bad happens to our

partner force,” he said. Like other special operations teams on more standard advisory missions, teams working under the authority are forbidden from participating in the most dangerous phase of a raid — when the African force actually enters the target compound.

After planning the mission based on U.S. intelligence and getting approval from higher headquarters, the Americans drive or fly with their local partners to the vicinity of the target, where they are required to hang back at “the last position of cover and concealment.” That is the military term for the last place where they can stay out of sight and are protected from gunfire by some sort of natural obstacle. But the former special operations officer pointed out that in the deserts and scrubland of northwestern Africa, “a lot of the time there really isn’t any cover or concealment to be had.”

There, the team “remotely commands and controls” the raid while monitoring feeds from drones and aircraft that eavesdrop on enemy phone calls. Afterward, the Americans move forward to check the raid site for intelligence — or, if something goes wrong during the raid and the African troops need help, they might move forward and join the shooting. That happens rarely.

“Everybody operates under the same guidelines as far as risk and self-defense and rules of engagement,” whether on a surrogate program mission or a more standard advisory mission, said Bolduc. “I’ve got guys in Kenya, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Tunisia who are doing the same kind of things as the guys in Somalia, exposing themselves to the same kind of danger, and not just on 127 echoes. We’ve had guys wounded in all the types of missions that we do.”

Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.), who represents the area around Fort Bragg where many Green Berets who work in Africa are based, recently introduced legislation seeking a combat zone tax exclusion for all troops deployed on missions under the authority. Hudson said that he supports U.S. military activities in Africa and does not believe the secrecy surrounding them is inappropriate.

“If you’re deployed under this combating terrorism authority, 127e, that’s probably combat,” he said in an interview, explaining that his constituents had described those missions to him as among the most perilous they undertake in Africa, despite the rules mitigating the risk.

But Bolduc said that on raids, where special operators take the enemy by surprise and are supported by drones and spy planes, American troops and their partners have advantages that they lack on more routine missions.

“It’s a different kind of danger,” he said. “In some ways these missions are less dangerous than what the team was doing in Tongo Tongo,” a more standard patrol where militants were able to catch the Green Berets off guard, “because you have way more assets dedicated to these missions and control the environment more.”

Even though commanders try to keep American troops out of combat if possible, the missions illustrate the murky nature of who is assisting whom in Africa, said Alice Friend, a former Obama administration Pentagon official who oversaw counterterrorism policy in northwest Africa.

“You have these gray lines between what are African operations with U.S. assistance, and what are U.S. operations with African assistance, and what risk profile we’re comfortable with,” she said. “At what point is it actually a U.S. operation? It’s ambiguous.”

The annual funding for the programs has quadrupled since their inception in Afghanistan, to \$100 million — in part thanks to the glowing testimony generals and admirals have given to Congress. Congress has reauthorized the temporary authority every year until last year, when lawmakers made it permanent.

“Congress has seen it as being useful enough to make it a permanent authority,” said Linda Robinson, a Rand Corp. expert on special operations, who noted that even the quadrupled annual funding is still a small sum compared with what the United States spends combating terrorism in full-scale war theaters like Iraq and Afghanistan.

That point has featured heavily in top commanders’ pitches to lawmakers about the programs. Gen. Joseph Votel, who commands U.S. forces in the Middle East — where the programs are also active — and previously oversaw the programs at Special Operations Command, described the programs to Congress as “low-cost, small-footprint, [and] discreet.” He noted that they had led to “hundreds of successful tactical operations … at a fraction of the cost of other programs.”

“Most of these individual programs are \$7 [million] to \$10 million a year or less. They’re not very expensive,” said the former White House official.

The number of African countries hosting the programs has fluctuated over the years. In 2013, in a development reported at the time by Fox News, a Green Beret team had to end its mission in Libya after militants attacked the partner unit’s camp and stole many of the weapons that the U.S. special operators had supplied under the program.

That program was never reestablished, so in Libya, the U.S. military has since relied on airstrikes and raids by a more secret category of American commandos from Delta Force and SEAL Team 6 — without local partners. Such sensitive, risky missions that put Americans directly in harm’s way are what the programs are supposed to provide an alternative to, as Gen. Thomas Waldhauser, who heads Africa Command, suggested when he testified that the programs provide “high payoff with low risk to U.S. forces.”

Other programs have ended when host countries grew uncomfortable with the arrangement. “The partners who host these programs are concerned about any optics that would make their citizens think the U.S. is using them as puppets in their own countries,” Bolduc said. One such country was Mauritania, which pulled the plug on a longstanding program.

“The host country has to understand what they signed up for, and Mauritania was never comfortable with what they signed up for,” said Bolduc. “It just didn’t fit how the Mauritanians saw themselves, giving up authority over one of their units.”

Friend, the former Pentagon official who oversaw counterterrorism policy in northwest Africa, said such disputes are sometimes unavoidable. “The idea is that they and we both have an interest in the same set of counterterrorism missions, but partner states facing the same threats may define their national security priorities differently than we do,” she said.

But other African governments have embraced the programs. Already home to one surrogate unit, the government of Niger permitted another Green Beret team to stand up a second one, and asked only to be kept “apprised” of the units’ operations, the former special operations source said.

“It works differently in each country,” said Michael Hoza, the former ambassador to Cameroon, where “a handful of SEALs” are helping local commandos hunt the organizers of a Boko Haram suicide bombing campaign. Cameroon’s president reserved the right to approve every mission the SEALs proposed, Hoza told POLITICO, “Because he did not want any American casualties in his country.”

Somalia is another willing host, welcoming the ability the units bring to conduct short-notice raids against the Al Qaeda-linked al-Shabab insurgency aboard U.S. helicopters. “All U.S. military activities in Somalia were done with the full support of the Somali government during my tenure,” said Steven Schwartz, the ambassador in Mogadishu until last fall, in an interview.

At the time, according to Bolduc, SEALs ran two separate units under the authority in Somalia. Waldhauser, the general who heads Africa Command, testified to Congress in 2016 that one of those units was “instrumental in recent operations to remove senior al-Shabab leadership.”

Besides the tactical benefits, hosting one of the surrogate programs can be a way for a government to court American support more generally. African governments may agree to host the programs “because it makes their units more effective and allows them to take advantage of U.S. resources and intelligence,” said Andrew Lebovich, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations who studies security in northwest Africa. “But it’s also an easy way to cultivate closer security ties to the U.S. and gain more U.S. support in some cases.”

Special operations forces run 21 programs worldwide under the authority, Thomas, the military’s top special operations officer, testified earlier this year. A few weeks earlier, the deputy assistant secretary of defense who oversees commando missions, Owen West, told Congress that he expected “that the need for these programs will continue, if not grow.”

But people familiar with the programs say it is hard to know how effective they really are — and that some may need to be evaluated more harshly and cut back.

Militant groups in Africa “have expanded a little, changed shape a lot, gotten much bolder in their operations” during recent years as U.S. special operations activity against them has become more intense, Friend said. In response, “we simply seem to have thrown more special operations forces at it, but without a wider strategic review.”

Bolduc, whose overall view is that the programs are “pretty darn effective,” nonetheless acknowledged that during his time overseeing commandos in Africa, some of the programs he inherited seemed to have outlived their usefulness, and others were “developing capabilities that couldn’t be sustained.” He cited Somali commandos who became reliant on U.S. helicopter support, which they would not be able to count on once their unit was transitioned back to normal Somali control.

“These programs are not meant to be indefinite, and we have to do them in such a way that the capability can eventually be handed over to our partners once we’ve accomplished the original goal,” Bolduc said.

Robinson, the Rand Corp. expert on special operations, said that while “there is broad agreement that this authority fills a gap” to quickly create African forces that can raid terrorist targets at U.S. behest, “there has to come a time where you judge if a partner isn’t committed or effective and off-ramp them. Some have been off-ramped and perhaps more will be.”

“Once you start these things, they’re hard to turn off. Some of them pan out, and some of them don’t,” said the former White House official. “I don’t think Congress or SOCOM [Special Operations Command] really hold them to account. Nobody’s put the boot on people’s necks to make sure these programs truly are effective.”²³

²³ Wesley Morgan, Behind the secret U.S. war in Africa, *Politico* (February 7, 2018)

CHAPTER 20

Violence in the Central African Republic

Background

Following decades of violence and instability since gaining independence, an insurgency in CAR led by the Seleka (or “alliance” in Sango)—a coalition of armed, primarily Muslim groups—has resulted in the severe deterioration of the country’s security infrastructure and heightened ethnic tensions. Seleka fighters launched an offensive against the CAR government in December 2012, and seized the capital city of Bangui and staged a coup in March 2013. In response to brutality by Seleka forces, “anti-balaka” (meaning invincible in Sango) coalitions of Christian fighters formed to carry out reprisal violence against Seleka fighters, adding a religious element to the violence that had previously been absent.

In September 2013, anti-balaka forces began committing widespread revenge attacks against mostly Muslims civilians, displacing tens of thousands of people to Seleka-controlled areas in the north. Seleka forces were disbanded by the government shortly after revenge attacks began, but many ex-Seleka members started committing counterattacks, plunging CAR into a chaotic state of violence and ensuing a humanitarian crisis.

Reports by human rights groups and UN agencies suggest that crimes committed by both ex-Seleka forces and anti-balaka groups amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Additionally, anti-balaka groups have deliberately and systematically targeted Muslims. Intra-Seleka fighting and involvement by foreign fighters from Chad and Sudan have also escalated the fighting.

Due to the scale of the crisis, the UN Security Council in April 2014 established a peacekeeping force that incorporated African Union and French forces that had been deployed to CAR previously. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic was established with a strength of ten thousand troops and a mandate to protect civilians.

Concerns

The United States has long supported economic growth, strengthening the rule of law, and political stability in CAR, and it remains concerned about the high levels of violence and worsening humanitarian crisis. Further deterioration of the security environment will increase sectarian violence and continue to destabilize the region, posing challenges to ending the conflicts in neighboring South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Recent Developments

Despite optimism after the election of President Faustin Archange Touadera in the spring of 2016, the crisis in Central African Republic (CAR) has intensified and violence has increased. While the government maintains control of the capital, Bangui, lawlessness in the rest of the country has allowed armed groups to thrive. Fighting has also increased in the central and eastern provinces of the country.

Since the outbreak of conflict in 2013 in CAR, three thousand to six thousand people have been killed through increased executions and mutilations, and more than four hundred and fifty thousand refugees have been displaced, the majority of which fled to neighboring Cameroon. In October 2016, French forces, who were embroiled in accusations of sexual violence and abuse against civilians in CAR, officially ended their military operation. Violence that originally began as a result of fighting between the predominantly Muslim Seleka in the north and the predominantly Christian anti-Balaka militias in the south has shifted after a de facto territorial partition. Despite a letup in Muslim-Christian fighting, fighting between and within factions of the Seleka—who were dissolved and forced out of Bangui in 2014—has emerged.

Currently, the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) of the Fulani ethnic group and the Popular Front for the Renaissance (FPRC) of the Gula and Runga ethnic communities are battling for control in the Ouaka and Hautte-Koto region. They are close to Bambari, attacking civilians caught in the crossfire to claim territory. The conflict has wreaked havoc on the economy, crippling the private sector, and leaving 60 percent of the country's population in poverty.

Numerous attacks have also been carried out against UN peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, further undermining the security environment. Mostly recently, in December 2017 one peacekeeper was killed and three others were injured in an attack by insurgents, bringing the total number of UN peacekeepers killed in 2017 to fourteen. Most armed groups, like the anti-Balaka and the FPRC forces have boycotted President Touadera's disarmament attempts to calm the region, leaving the government powerless.

Central African Republic country profile-Timeline

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been unstable since its independence from France in 1960.

A chronology of key events:

1880s - France annexes the area.

Image copyright Getty Images Image
caption Jean-Bedel Bokassa had the

reputation of one of Africa's most brutal post-independence leaders

1894 - France sets up a dependency in the area called Ubangi-Chari and partitions it among commercial concessionaires.

1910 - Ubangi-Chari becomes part of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa.

1920-30 - Indigenous Africans stage violent protests against abuses by concessionaires.

1946 - The territory is given its own assembly and representation in the French parliament; Barthélémy Boganda, founder of the pro-independence Social Evolution Movement of Black Africa (MESAN), becomes the first Central African to be elected to the French parliament.

1957 - MESAN wins control of the territorial assembly; Boganda becomes president of the Grand Council of French Equatorial Africa.

Independence

1958 - The territory achieves self-government within French Equatorial Africa with Boganda as prime minister.

1959 - Boganda dies.

1960 - The Central African Republic becomes independent with David Dacko, nephew of Boganda, as president.

1962 - Dacko turns the Central African Republic into a one-party state with MESAN as the sole party.

1964 - Dacko confirmed as president in elections in which he is the sole candidate.

The Bokassa era

1965 - Dacko ousted by the army commander, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, as the country faces bankruptcy and a threatened nationwide strike.

1972 - Bokassa declares himself president for life.

1976 - Bokassa proclaims himself emperor and renames the country the "Central African Empire".

1979 - Bokassa ousted in a coup led by David Dacko and backed by French troops after widespread protests in which many school children were arrested and massacred while in detention.

1981 - Dacko deposed in a coup led by the army commander, André Kolingba.

1984 - Amnesty for all political party leaders declared.

1986 - Bokassa returns to the CAR from exile in France.

1988 - Bokassa sentenced to death for murder and embezzlement, but has his sentence commuted to life imprisonment.

Ban on parties lifted

1991 - Political parties permitted to form.

1992 October - Multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections held in which Kolingba came in last place, but are annulled by the Supreme Court on the ground of widespread irregularities.

1993 - Ange-Félix Patasse beats Kolingba and Dacko in elections to become president, ending 12 years of military rule. Kolingba releases several thousand political prisoners,

including Bokassa, before standing down as president.

1996 May - Soldiers stage a mutiny in the capital, Bangui, over unpaid wages.

1997 November - Soldiers stage more mutinies.

1997 - France begins withdrawing its forces from the republic; African peacekeepers replace French troops.

1999 - Patasse re-elected; his nearest rival, former President Kolingba, wins 19% of the vote.

2000 December - Civil servants stage general strike over back-pay; rally organised by opposition groups who accuse President Patasse of mismanagement and corruption deteriorates into riots.

Coup bid

2001 May - At least 59 killed in an abortive coup attempt by former president Andre Kolingba. President Patasse suppresses the attempt with help of Libyan and Chadian troops and Congolese rebels.

2001 November - Clashes as troops try to arrest sacked army chief of staff General Francois Bozize, accused of involvement in May's coup attempt. Thousands flee fighting between government troops and Bozize's forces.

2002 February - Former Defence Minister Jean-Jacques Demafouth appears in a Bangui court to answer charges related to the coup attempt of May 2001.

2002 October - Libyan-backed forces help to subdue an attempt by forces loyal to

dismissed army Chief General Bozize to overthrow President Patasse.

Patasse ousted

2003 March - Rebel leader Francois Bozize seizes Bangui, declares himself president and dissolves parliament. President Ange-Felix Patasse is out of the country at the time. Within weeks a transitional government is set up.

2004 December - New constitution approved in referendum.

2005 May - Francois Bozize is named the winner of presidential elections after a run-off vote.

2005 August - Flooding in the capital, Bangui, leaves up to 20,000 people homeless.

2005 June onwards - Thousands flee lawlessness in north-west CAR for southern Chad. Aid bodies appeal for help to deal with the "forgotten emergency".

2006 June - UN says 33 people have been killed in a rebel attack on an army camp in the north.

2006 August - Exiled Former President Ange-Felix Patasse is found guilty, in absentia, of fraud and sentenced to 20 years' hard labour.

2006 October - Rebels seize Birao, a town in the north-east. President Bozize cuts short an overseas visit.

2006 December - French fighter jets fire on rebel positions as part of support for government troops trying to regain control of areas in the northeast.

2007 February - The rebel People's Democratic Front, led by Abdoulaye Miskine, signs a peace accord with President Bozize in Libya and urges fighters to lay down their arms.

2007 May - The International Criminal Court says it is to probe war crimes allegedly committed in 2002 and 2003 following the failed coup against the Ange-Felix Patasse.

2007 September - UN Security Council authorises a peacekeeping force to protect civilians from violence spilling over from Darfur in neighbouring Sudan.

2008 January - Civil servants and teachers strike in protest over non-payment of salaries for several months.

Prime Minister Elie Dote and his cabinet resign a day before parliament was to debate a censure motion against him.

President Bozize appoints Faustin-Archange Touadera, an academic with no previous background in politics, to replace Mr Dote.

2008 February - Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebels raid CAR.

Peace process

2008 June - Two of three main rebel groups - the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) - sign peace agreement with government providing for disarmament and demobilisation of rebel fighters.

2008 September - Parliament adopts amnesty law seen as last remaining obstacle

to successful conclusion of peace talks between rebels and the government.

2008 December - Government-rebel peace deal envisages formation of consensus government and elections in March 2010.

2009 January - National unity government unveiled; includes leaders of the two main rebel groups. Main opposition UVNF criticises the changes to the cabinet as insufficient.

2009 February - Ugandan LRA rebels cross into CAR.

2009 March - French troops reportedly deploy in Bangui after rebels infiltrate the capital.

2009 April - Clashes between government and rebels continue. UN Security Council agrees to creation of new UN peacebuilding office for CAR to address ongoing insecurity.

2009 July - New electoral commission established after parliament approves new election law.

2009 September - Ugandan army confirms that it is pursuing LRA rebels in CAR.

2009 August - UN report says more than a million people have been affected by civil unrest in CAR.

2009 October/November - Former President Ange-Felix Patasse returns from exile, hints that he may stand for the presidency in 2010.

2010 February - Rights groups, opposition and France call for probe into claims - denied by the authorities - that rebel leader

Charles Massi was tortured to death in government custody.

President Bozize says elections to be held on 25 April; opposition rejects date, fearing vote will be rigged.

2010 April - Elections postponed. Parliament extends President Bozize's term until polls can be held.

2010 May - UN Security Council votes to withdraw a UN force from Chad and the Central African Republic, deployed to protect displaced Chadians and refugees from Sudan's Darfur.

2010 July - Rebels attack northern town of Birao.

2010 September - Voter registration begins for presidential, parliamentary elections due in January 2011.

2010 October - Four countries affected by LRA violence agree to form joint military force to pursue the rebels.

2010 November - Ex-DR Congo vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba goes on trial at International Criminal Court accused of letting his troops rape and kill in Central African Republic between 2002 and 2003.

2010 December - 50th independence anniversary. Former self-styled Emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa is officially rehabilitated.

2011 January - Presidential and parliamentary elections. Mr Bozize wins another term.

2011 April - Former President Ange-Felix Patasse dies aged 74.

2011 December - The charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) warns that the Central country is in a state of chronic medical emergency because of epidemic diseases, conflict, an economic downturn and a poor health system.

2012 March - African Union deploys a military force to hunt down Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, believed to be in the Central African Republic.

2012 August - Last historic armed group - Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) - signs peace deal.

Bozize ousted

2012 November - New Seleka rebel coalition rapidly overruns north and centre of country.

2013 March - Seleka rebels overrun the capital and seize power. President Bozize flees. Rebel leader Michel Djotodia suspends constitution and dissolves parliament in a coup condemned internationally.

2013 August - Coup leader Michel Djotodia is sworn in as president.

UN Security Council warns CAR poses a risk to regional stability. UN chief Ban Ki-moon says CAR has suffered a "total breakdown of law and order".

2013 September - Djotodia dissolves Seleka coalition. He is criticised for failing to control the fighters.

2013 October - UN Security Council approves the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force. It would support

African Union troops already on the ground and French troops controlling the airport.

2013 November - US casts doubt on Central African Republic official reports that Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebel leader Joseph Kony is among LRA figures negotiating their surrender with the CAR authorities.

2013 December - With turmoil continuing in the country and rival Muslim and Christian fighters accused of killing hundreds of people, France steps up its deployment of troops to 1,600 in a bid to disarm the militias.

2014 January - Interim president Michel Djotodia resigns over criticism that he failed to stop sectarian violence. Catherine Samba-Panza takes over as interim leader.

2014 April - UN Security Council authorises a peacekeeping force of 12,000 troops.

2014 May - French and Estonian troops take charge of security at the airport in Bangui under a European Union mandate from previous French force.

2014 July - Muslim Seleka rebels and Christian "anti-balaka" vigilante forces agree to a tentative ceasefire at talks in Brazzaville.

2014 August - Muslim politician Mahamat Kamoun tasked with leading a transitional government.

2014 September - UN formally takes over and augments African Union peacekeeping mission, renamed Minusca. European Union's French mission remains in place.

2015 January - The CAR government rejects a ceasefire deal made in Kenya between two militia groups aimed at ending more than a year of clashes, saying it was not involved in the talks.

UN accuses Christian militia of ethnic cleansing.

EU-commissioned research reveals how Seleka fighters were illegally supplied with guns made in China and Iran.

2015 February - The UN says that surging violence in the Central African Republic has forced tens of thousands to flee their homes since the beginning of the year to escape killings, rape and pillaging by militias.

2015 May - Prosecutors in France open a judicial investigation into alleged child abuse by French soldiers.

2015 September - Communal clashes break out in Bangui after Muslim taxi-driver attacked.

2015 November - Pope visits, calls for peace between Muslims, Christians.

2015 December - New constitution approved in referendum. Parliamentary and presidential elections pass off peacefully, but constitutional court annuls results of parliamentary poll, citing irregularities.

2016 February - Faustin-Archange Touadera wins presidential election in the run-off.

2016 June - International Criminal Court sentences Congolese ex-rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba to eighteen years in prison for his militia's abuses in CAR between 2002 and 2003.

2016 July - Kidnappings by Lord's Resistance Army reportedly on increase in CAR.

2017 April - Uganda withdraws its forces from the Central African Republic where it has been fighting the Lord's Resistance Army for five years.

2017 May - Upsurge in violence, blamed in part on the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Several UN peacekeepers are killed in a number of attacks, including on a base and a convoy.

2017 July - Several aid agencies withdraw because of the violence, saying they are leaving tens of thousands without support.

2017 September - The UN refugee agency says continuing violence has caused the highest level of displacement since the start

of the crisis in 2013. More than 1 million people have left their homes.

2017 November - UN Security Council extends mandate of the peacekeeping mission MINUSCA for another year and increases its size to some 13,000 troops and police.

2018 January - The International Committee of the Red Cross warns that the situation in the country is getting worse, with half of the population in need of humanitarian aid.

2018 June - International Criminal Court overturns conviction of Congolese ex-rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba for war crimes committed in CAR.

2018 July - Three Russian journalists killed, reportedly while working on a documentary about Wagner, a Kremlin-linked mercenary company believed to be active in CAR.

Violence divides CAR along Christian-Muslim lines

Conflict spreading to areas once considered peaceful, with more than half the population in need of humanitarian aid.

By Catherine Wambua-Soi

Bria, Central African Republic - Ibrahim Alawad, a "general" in an armed group, is a portly man. He walks with a limp and carries a pistol tucked in the back of his trousers.

He has an easy smile and charisma that can easily draw you in. His limp, Alawad tells us, is from a bullet wound during fighting with a rival armed group.

Alawad sits here in Bria, a strategic territory in the eastern Central African Republic (CAR) that has the biggest diamond mines in the country.

The "general" is part of the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central African Republic (FPRC), the largest of four armed groups that broke away from the defunct, Muslim-led Seleka rebel movement, a coalition of fighters who marched to the capital Bangui in 2013 and deposed Francois Bozize as president.

A hurriedly formed, largely Christian group called Anti-balaka countered ex-Seleka and overthrew Michel Djotodia, the man who was put in power after Bozize.

Since then, fighting has never really stopped. More than a million people have been displaced and half the population needs humanitarian aid.

Lawyer by profession

Alawad plays down his role in Bria but all his actions suggest that he is very much the man in charge. He was educated at Cambridge University in the UK and is a lawyer by profession. So what is a Cambridge-educated lawyer doing in this corner of CAR as a rebel?

Alawad puts it this way: He wants to save his fellow citizens from bad governance. "CAR is rich in natural resources. You won't believe that before all this, monthly taxes from diamonds in Bria were about \$12m," he told Al Jazeera.

"But look now, we have nothing. No proper schools, electricity clean water - nothing. Before marching to Bangui we had tried to talk to the government on how to help the people.

"We proposed sharing resources in a fair way. The government refused. Our problem is not to rule the country. We want to uplift Central Africans. We have a bad governance system that needs to be fixed."

Though the conflict has an element of religion, it's increasingly turning into a turf war, with armed groups splintering and fighting over mineral resources, trade, cattle and supply routes.

The groups form uneasy alliances across the ethnic and religious divides, but when they break up, civilians bear the consequences.

The worst of fighting

Bria has seen the worst of fighting in recent times. FPRC and the Anti-balaka group briefly united against a Fulani-dominated faction called Union for Peace for Central African Republic (UPC).

The UPC is another group that was once part of Seleka.

When it was defeated, members of the winning coalition turned on each other.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says at least 70,000 people have been displaced in Bria since fighting began at the end of 2016.

Most of the displaced Christians are now in a crowded camp for displaced people at the edge of town and right on the doorstep of a UN peacekeepers' base.

UN officials told us the camp is infiltrated by armed Anti-balaka men.

Alexi Zinga is among the young men in the camp suspected to be part of the group. He denied the claim and told us that, at the height of the conflict, if was not for the Anti-balaka's protection, the people in the camp would be dead.

"They protected us, but they are not here anymore."

Scared or unwilling

Other displaced people we tried to speak with were either too scared or unwilling to say anything about the allegations. Displaced Muslims took shelter in the town centre, where the FPRC rebels have their main base.

Hundreds are still camped in the compound of the main hospital. The Fulani community also has its own enclave. These are people who, before last year, lived side by side. Now the situation in Bria, as in so many other towns in CAR, has forced them to create their own ethnic and religious boundaries.

There was hope two years ago that the election of President Faustin-Archange Touadera would bring real change. But Touadera has been unable to extend his authority beyond the capital, Bangui, and his government heavily relies on the UN Mission and other international partners. The conflict is escalating and spreading to areas once considered relatively peaceful.

'Christian neighbourhood'

Since January, Bria has not seen the kind of violence witnessed last year, and some people are attempting to return to their homes.

Alawad explained to us that his fighters do not want to harm anyone, adding that those displaced should not be afraid. Benoit Yanny took up that offer and is living in what is now a "Christian neighbourhood", very close to the camp for internally displaced people.

He told us that he is able to go to the Muslim-dominated market during the day but he must leave before nightfall. Yanny also said he does not trust the FPRC.

This is a drama that plays out in many other parts of the country: armed groups mostly fighting for control of "rich" territories; the UN peacekeeping mission and CAR national army overwhelmed; and people such as Yanny caught between the different forces.²⁴

²⁴ Catherine Wamba-Soi, Violence divides CAR along Christian-Muslim lines, *Al Jazeera* (1 Mar 2018)

CHAPTER 21

Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Background

The current violence in the DRC has its origins in the massive refugee crisis and spillover from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. After Hutu génocidaires fled to eastern DRC and formed armed groups, opposing Tutsi and other opportunistic rebel groups arose. The Congolese government was unable to control and defeat the various armed groups, some of which directly threatened populations in neighboring countries. From 1998 to 2003, government forces supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe fought rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda, in what is now known as the Second Congo War. The death toll may have reached more than five million people (estimates vary greatly). Despite the signing of a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, weak governance and institutions, along with corruption and an absence of the rule of law, have contributed to ongoing violence perpetrated by armed groups against civilians in the eastern region.

One of the most prominent rebel groups to emerge in the aftermath was known as the March 23 Movement (M23), made up primarily of ethnic Tutsis allegedly supported by the Rwandan government. M23 rebelled against the Congolese government for supposedly reneging on a prior peace deal signed in 2009. It was defeated by the Congolese army and UN peacekeepers in 2013 after it gained control of Goma, a resource-rich provincial capital in eastern DRC on the border with Rwanda and home to more than one million people. The UN Security Council authorized an offensive brigade under the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC to support the DRC state army in its fight against M23. Since M23's defeat, other armed groups have emerged due to general lawlessness, chaos, and weak governance in eastern DRC.

The country's massive resource wealth—estimated to contain \$24 trillion of untapped mineral resources—also fuels violence. The mineral trade provides financial means for groups to operate and buy arms. In an effort to prevent funding armed militias, the United States passed legislation in 2010 to reduce the purchase of “conflict minerals,” but due to the complex supply chains in the DRC mineral sale business, obtaining certification has proven difficult for companies that purchase resources from secondhand buyers. As a result, multinational companies stopped buying minerals from DRC, putting many miners out of work and even driving some to join armed groups to gain a source of livelihood.

Concerns

Weak governance and the prevalence of many armed groups have subjected Congolese civilians to widespread rape and sexual violence, massive human rights violations, and extreme poverty. The United Nations, African Union, and neighboring countries have

struggled to address threats posed by remaining rebel groups and promote sustainable development. The DRC's continued violence has the potential to spill over into Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi—countries with longstanding ties with the United States.

Recent Developments

At least seventy armed groups are believed to be currently operating in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite the stabilizing presence of nineteen thousand UN peacekeepers, the stronger militant groups in the region, like the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), continue to terrorize communities and control weakly governed areas of the country, financing their activities by exploiting the country's rich natural resources. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee the fighting: the United Nations estimates that currently there are at least 2.7 million internally displaced persons in the DRC, and approximately 450,000 DRC refugees in other nations.

In addition to the violence caused by armed groups, President Joseph Kabila caused further political instability by postponing the scheduled 2016 election to stay in power after his term ended. In December 2015, Kabila called for "political dialogue" with opposition parties, but the police have violently cracked down on internal dissent. This includes the November 2015 use of tear gas against student protesters and the breakup of a January 2015 protest, in which police fired shots and killed over forty people. In September 2016, forty-four people total were killed during protests and government security forces burned down the headquarters of the main opposition party.

Moise Katumbi, a popular opposition leader who was governor of the mineral-rich Katanga province, declared his candidacy for the presidential election in early May 2015. Since his announcement, mass protests and clashes between the police and civilians have become increasingly tense and common.

Democratic Republic of Congo Profile

A chronology of key events:

1200s - Rise of Kongo empire, centred in modern northern Angola and including extreme western Congo and territories round lakes Kisale and Upemba in central Katanga (now Shaba).

1482 - Portuguese navigator Diogo Cao becomes the first European to visit the Congo; Portuguese set up ties with the king of Kongo.

16th-17th centuries - British, Dutch, Portuguese and French merchants engage in slave trade through Kongo intermediaries.

1870s - Belgian King Leopold II sets up a private venture to colonise Kongo.

1874-77 - British explorer Henry Stanley navigates Congo river to the Atlantic Ocean.

Belgian colonisation

1879-87 - Leopold commissions Stanley to establish the king's authority in the Congo basin.

1884-85 - European powers at the Conference of Berlin recognise Leopold's claim to the Congo basin.

1885 - Leopold announces the establishment of the Congo Free State, headed by himself.

1891-92 - Belgians conquer Katanga.

1892-94 - Eastern Congo wrested from the control of East African Arab and Swahili-speaking traders.

1908 - Belgian state annexes Congo amid protests over killings and atrocities carried out on a mass scale by Leopold's agents.

Millions of Congolese are said to have been killed or worked to death during Leopold's control of the territory.

1955 - Belgian Professor Antoin van Bilsen publishes a "30-Year Plan" for granting the Congo increased self-government.

1959 - Belgium begins to lose control over events in the Congo following serious nationalist riots in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa).

Post-independence turmoil

1960 June - Congo becomes independent with Patrice Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president.

1960 July - Congolese army mutinies; Moise Tshombe declares Katanga independent; Belgian troops sent in ostensibly to protect Belgian citizens and mining interests; UN Security Council votes to send in troops to help establish order, but the troops are not allowed to intervene in internal affairs.

1960 September - President Kasavubu dismisses Mr Lumumba.

1961 February - Patrice Lumumba murdered, reportedly with US and Belgian complicity.

1961 August - UN troops begin disarming Katangese soldiers.

1963 - Moise Tshombe agrees to end Katanga's secession.

1964 - President Kasavubu appoints Mr Tshombe prime minister.

Mobutu years

1965 - Army chief Joseph Mobutu seizes power.

1971 - Joseph Mobutu renames the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko; Katanga becomes Shaba and the river Congo becomes the river Zaire.

1973-74 - President Mobutu nationalises many foreign-owned firms and forces European investors out of the country.

1977 - President Mobutu invites foreign investors back, without much success; French, Belgian and Moroccan troops help repulse attack on Katanga by Angolan-based rebels.

1989 - Zaire defaults on loans from Belgium, resulting in a cancellation of development programmes and increased deterioration of the economy.

1990 - President Mobutu agrees to end the ban on multiparty politics and appoints a transitional government, but retains substantial powers.

1991 - Following riots in Kinshasa by unpaid soldiers, President Mobutu agrees to a coalition government with opposition leaders, but retains control of the security apparatus and important ministries.

1994 - President Mobutu agrees to the appointment of Kengo Wa Dondo, an

advocate of free-market reforms, as prime minister.

1996-97 - Tutsi rebels capture much of eastern Zaire while President Mobutu is abroad for medical treatment.

Rule of the Kabilas

1997 May - Tutsi and other anti-Mobutu rebels, aided principally by Rwanda, capture the capital, Kinshasa; Zaire is renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo; Laurent-Desire Kabila installed as president.

1998 August - Rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda rise up against Mr Kabila and advance on Kinshasa. Zimbabwe, Namibia send troops to repel them. Angolan troops also side with Mr Kabila. The rebels take control of much of the east of DR Congo.

1999 July - The six African countries involved in the war sign a ceasefire accord in Lusaka. The following month the Congolese Liberation Movement (MLC) rebels supported by Uganda and Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) rebels backed by Rwanda also sign.

2000 - UN Security Council authorises a 5,500-strong UN force to monitor the ceasefire but fighting continues between rebels and government forces, and between Rwandan and Ugandan forces.

2001 January - President Laurent Kabila is shot dead by a bodyguard. Joseph Kabila succeeds his father.

2001 May - US refugee agency says the war has killed 2.5 million people, directly or indirectly, since August 1998.

Later, a UN panel says the warring parties are deliberately prolonging the conflict to plunder gold, diamonds, timber and coltan, used in the making of mobile phones.

2002 January - Eruption of Mount Nyiragongo devastates much of the city of Goma.

Search for peace

2002 July - Presidents of DR Congo and Rwanda sign a peace deal under which Rwanda will withdraw troops from the east and DR Congo will disarm and arrest Rwandan Hutu gunmen blamed for the killing of the Tutsi minority in Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

2002 September - Presidents of DR Congo and Uganda sign peace accord under which Ugandan troops will leave DR Congo.

2002 December - Peace deal signed in South Africa between Kinshasa government and main rebel groups. Under the deal rebels and opposition members are to be given portfolios in an interim government.

2003 June - French soldiers arrive in Bunia, spearheading a UN-mandated rapid-reaction force.

Interim government

2003 June - President Kabila names a transitional government to lead until elections in two years time. Leaders of main former rebel groups are sworn in as vice-presidents in July.

2006 February - New constitution comes into force; new national flag is adopted.

2006 March - Warlord Thomas Lubanga becomes first war crimes suspect to face charges at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. He is accused of forcing children into active combat.

2006 May - Thousands are displaced in the north-east as the army and UN peacekeepers step up their drive to disarm irregular forces ahead of the elections.

Free elections

2006 July - Presidential and parliamentary polls are held - the first free elections in four decades.

2006 November - Joseph Kabila is declared winner of October's run-off presidential election. The poll has the general approval of international monitors.

2007 April - DRCongo, Rwanda and Burundi relaunch the regional Great Lakes Countries Economic Community (CEPGL).

2007 September - Major outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus.

2008 October - Rebel forces capture major army base of Rumangabo; the Congolese government accuses Rwanda of backing Tutsi rebel leader Laurent Nkunda, a claim Rwanda denies.

2008 November - UN Security Council approves temporary increase of troops to bolster the strained UN peacekeeping effort in the east.

2010 July - \$8 billion debt relief deal approved by World Bank and IMF.

2010 November - Paris Club of creditor countries scrap half of DRCongo's debt.

Kabila re-elected

2011 November - Presidential and parliamentary elections. Mr Kabila gains another term. The vote is criticised abroad and the opposition disputes the result.

2013 February - Representatives of 11 African countries sign an accord in Ethiopia pledging to help end the conflict in DR Congo. The M23 rebel group declared a ceasefire ahead of the talks, and its leader Bosco Ntaganda surrenders the following month.

2013 July - 3,000-member UN Intervention Brigade deployed to fight and disarm rebels in the east.

2015 January - Dozens killed in protests against proposed electoral law changes which the opposition said were designed to allow President Kabila to remain in power.

2016 November - A political deal signed between President Kabila's ruling coalition and the opposition to delay the presidential election until 2018 sees Prime Minister Augustin Matata Ponyo and his cabinet resign, paving the way for a new cabinet to include opposition figures.

2017 December - DR Congo is experiencing a "mega-crisis", with conflict having forced 1.7 million people to flee their homes during the year, aid agencies say. DR Congo is worst-affected by conflict displacement in the world, they say.

Controversial elections

2018 March - Main opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress chooses Felix Tshisekedi as its candidate for the December presidential election.

2018 June - Government asks commissions to look at declassifying parts of Virunga and Salonga national parks, both Unesco World Heritage Sites, for oil exploration. Environmentalists claim drilling would endanger wildlife and contribute to global warming.

2018 August - Governing People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy chooses former interior minister Ramazani Shadary as its presidential candidate, as President Kabila cannot run for another term.

2019 January - Officials declare opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi the winner of December's presidential election, prompting protests from rival opposition candidate Martin Fayulu of a deal with the government, whose candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary came third.

Congo's Slide Into Chaos

How a State Fails

By Stuart A. Reid

On January 16, 2001, the Democratic Republic of the Congo tumbled into uncertainty. The country's president, Laurent Kabilal, had been sitting in his office at his marble palace in Kinshasa, the capital, when one of his teenage bodyguards entered, drew his pistol, aimed it at Kabilal, and fired several times.

Kabilal had installed himself as president in 1997, after overthrowing Mobutu Sese Seko, the cancer-stricken dictator of what was then known as Zaire. He had begun fighting Mobutu back in the 1960s, leading a Marxist rebellion in the eastern half of the country before, in the 1980s, fleeing to nearby Uganda and Tanzania, where he raised his children under false names. After years of dodging Mobutu's intelligence agents, Kabilal finally got the chance to remove his nemesis, riding in on an invasion backed by eight nations to take the presidency, if not control, of the country he rechristened the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kabilal's Rwandan backers quickly tired of him, however. They launched a rebellion in the east that kicked off the Great War of Africa, a five-year conflict so deadly and confused that estimates of its death toll range from two million to five million. Now, less than four years into a presidency he had spent his life pursuing, Kabilal was slumped over, bleeding into his chair.

Kabilal's advisers scrambled to react. Keeping news of the attack from the public, they arranged for his dead body to be flown to Zimbabwe, ostensibly for treatment. Congo's borders were sealed, its airports shut down, and a curfew announced. Late at night, Kabilal's inner circle gathered to decide on a successor, as Mwenze Kongolo, the justice minister at the time, recently recounted to me. "It was at that moment," he said, "when we decided we had to put in Joseph."

Joseph, Laurent Kabilal's son, was just 29 years old, a commander in the new Congolese military. Having grown up in Uganda and Tanzania, he spoke Swahili and English, but little French, Congo's official language, and no Lingala, its most prominent African one. Shy and inscrutable, he was not a man made for politics. His only civilian work experience lay in doing odd jobs for his father and driving a taxi. Joseph was a mystery, unknown to foreign diplomats and the Congolese public alike; even his age was an open question at the time. Yet having marched across the country as part of the invasion, he enjoyed legitimacy among the military and the confidence of his father. "He was not a stranger," Kongolo said. "And with his father having died, it had to be someone close."

Convincing the country's security forces and government ministers of this succession plan turned out to be easy; convincing Joseph himself, less so. Around four in the morning, a plane sent to retrieve him from a military base landed back in Kinshasa. As a diplomatic

cable from the U.S. embassy reported, when his father's advisers asked him to become president, "Joseph was initially 'very resistant' to the idea," most likely because he feared for his life. Yet he assented, and was sworn in as president three days after his father's funeral. Photos at the time show a man who looks stunned by his sudden ascension.

The moment marked yet another bloody transfer of power in Congo's troubled history. The Congolese were ruled for 75 years by the Belgians—particularly nasty, as colonizers went—until 1960, when the country became independent. It's new, democratically elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, and held office for just two and a half months before he was ousted in a coup by Mobutu, who then orchestrated Lumumba's murder with the blessing of the CIA. After decades of Western support during the Cold War, Mobutu, in turn, would be chased from power by Kabila.

Today, Congo faces another transition crisis that threatens to throw the country into chaos. This time, however, the cause is not a transfer of power but the lack of one. During his 17 years in office, Joseph Kabila has presided over a profoundly decrepit state. Every institution to speak of has been perverted to serve itself rather than the people, 77 percent of whom live on less than \$1.90 per day, which the World Bank classifies as "extreme poverty." Vast parts of the country go ungoverned, with armed militias vying for territory and resources in at least a third of its provinces. In the past two years, the number of displaced people in the country has doubled, to nearly four million.

Pointing to the very disorder he has let fester, the once reluctant president has repeatedly delayed elections originally scheduled for 2016 through a series of administrative maneuvers that the Congolese have termed *glissement* (slippage). With the economy weakening and armed violence on the rise, the pressure on Kabila to step down has never been greater, yet he shows no interest in doing so. The new reality recalls Voltaire's quip about the Holy Roman Empire: in this case, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is neither democratic, nor a republic, nor in control of the Congo.

For decades, the West has been obsessed with finding a cure for failed states, believing that the best way to prevent international problems is to solve domestic ones. Since the 1960s, Western governments have plowed nearly \$1 trillion in aid into Africa alone, partly to ease immediate pain and partly to promote long-term stability. The UN has set up an elaborate system of peacekeeping operations, health initiatives, refugee camps, and food-distribution networks aimed at doing the same. And yet today, a country the size of Western Europe and home to 80 million already suffering people is collapsing in slow motion in the middle of Africa.

On the make

Things weren't supposed to turn out this way. As part of the peace process that ended the war in 2003, Congo created a new political system. Rebel leaders rebranded their militias as political parties and exchanged their fatigues for suits. A new constitution was drafted. Kabila legitimized his rule by winning a 2006 presidential election organized by the UN and

generally regarded as free and fair. After a nearly 50-year absence, democracy appeared to have returned to Congo.

But Kabila quickly set about co-opting the newly created institutions. He replaced judges with unqualified loyalists. His allies in Parliament weakened electoral laws and granted him the power to dismiss provincial governors. In 2011, Kabila won another five-year term, but this time, the vote, organized without the UN's help, was marred by fraud. Monitors from the Carter Center reported that some districts had "impossibly high" turnout rates of more than 99 percent and that hundreds of thousands of ballots had disappeared. Content to limit their ambitions for Congo to the absence of major war, the Western governments supplying much of the country's budget turned a blind eye.

The military, meanwhile, remained the predatory force it had been under Mobutu, only with the added complication of having to incorporate disparate rebel groups. Soldiers are poorly paid—as of 2015, colonels were earning less than \$100 a month—and often go months without any wages at all. To make up for the shortfall, they extort civilians. (As Mobutu once told the army, "You have guns; you don't need a salary.") Higher up the chain of command, generals use their power to control local trade, whether it be in timber, ivory, minerals, or their own weapons.

Government ministries function as ATMs for the politically deserving. Ministers enjoy access not only to official budgets but also to off-the-books revenue streams generated through semiofficial fees and outright bribes. In 2012, the chief of staff to the minister of hydrocarbons even published, on ministry letterhead, a list of prices to secure meetings with various officials. Oil companies had to pay \$5,000 to meet with lower-level advisers and \$6,000 to meet with the chief of staff himself at the ministry (and an extra \$3,000 to see him off-site). At the University of Kinshasa, one professor said that of his roughly 1,000 colleagues, only around 200 actually work; the rest, many of whom hold political office, collect their university salaries without setting foot on campus. At kindergarten, children bring their teachers beignets in return for good treatment.

Every day, the orange-vested police who monitor Kinshasa's traffic circles practice an intricately choreographed form of corruption. An unpublished study conducted by researchers from Harvard University, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Antwerp broke down this dance, invisible to the casual passenger, in detail. Each morning, the officers who man the intersections receive a quota from their commanders indicating how many cars they must flag for violations—say, a broken door handle—and redirect to the police station. There, drivers can go through the cumbersome process of receiving a ticket, having their car impounded, and paying the official fine to free it—but nearly all choose to simply pay a bribe and go on their way.

Back at the intersections, once the traffic police have met their daily quota of cars for their bosses, they go to work for themselves, extracting three types of payments. The first is the harassment bribe, one I witnessed when an officer claiming some violation forced himself into the passenger seat of my taxi to shake the driver down for \$8 (a sum that would have

been much higher had I not been a potentially well-connected foreigner). The second is a quick handoff of around 50 cents, a preemptive bribe given out of necessity and with a closed hand. The third is a tip, given openly and varying in amount. The study found that these police officers received approximately 92 percent of their incomes through illicit payments. Their bosses made some 99 percent of their incomes that way.

Grand theft

In many poor places, corruption would end with the petty variety. But underneath Congo's soil lies trillions of dollars' worth of copper, cobalt (used in batteries), coltan (used in electronics), tin, diamonds, and gold. Above, some of the planet's poorest people scrape by. The World Bank puts Congo's per capita GDP at \$445 per year, the third-lowest in the world when adjusted for purchasing power. Nearly half of children younger than five are stunted due to malnutrition. In the slums that crowd Kinshasa, the poor live cheek by jowl in cardboard huts near streams clogged with garbage that cut through mountains made of the stuff. It is a far cry from the tony neighborhood of Gombe, a downtown district popular among the political elite where pool nets poke out over walls topped with razor wire.

For about a decade under Kabila, Congo rode the commodities boom. Its minerals—particularly copper and cobalt, which account for 79 percent of the country's exports—fed fast-rising demand in China and other emerging markets. But the price of cobalt crashed in 2008, and between 2011 and 2016, the price of copper fell by 50 percent. Now, inflation has hit 50 percent. Restaurants print special price sheets for patrons to consult separately from the menu. The Central Bank has said that it has only enough foreign exchange reserves to cover three weeks of imports.

The most egregious forms of corruption involve the president and his family. The Kabilas did not grow up rich. During a trip to the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, Laurent Kabila was stranded in Moscow, unable to afford the airfare home. His wife, Joseph's mother, sold vegetables in Tanzania. But two decades in power have made the family fabulously wealthy.

This past July, the Congo Research Group at New York University published a report in collaboration with Bloomberg News that exposed the elaborate web of businesses that the president and his relatives have constructed in Congo. The Kabilas have their fingers in everything from farming and mining to aviation and construction. Kabila's twin sister, Jaynet, holds an indirect stake in Vodacom Congo, the country's biggest cell phone service provider; another sister, Gloria, owns 40 percent of a large bank; his brother Zoé's possessions include a boxing gym in Kinshasa and a luxury hotel on Congo's Atlantic coast. Many Kabila-linked businesses receive special treatment—as with the mines that are protected by presidential guards or the company that gets \$60 of the \$185 fee for each new Congolese passport.

Such legitimate businesses probably account for a minority of the Kabilas' income. The rest comes from murkier enterprises. In these, blame extends beyond Congolese elites to

include the international mining companies and financiers who have acted as accessories to national theft. As the anticorruption group Global Witness has documented, in deals that took place between 2010 and 2012, the Congolese government sold mining rights at rock-bottom prices to anonymous offshore companies, some of them linked to Kabilia's longtime friend Dan Gertler, an Israeli billionaire. The Congolese state missed out on \$1.36 billion in revenues as a result. Around the same time, the American hedge fund Och-Ziff Capital Management was funneling tens of millions of dollars to a businessman who then bribed two Congolese officials to secure favorable mining deals, a scheme the company admitted to in a 2016 deal with U.S. prosecutors. That agreement did not include names, but the descriptions made clear that the officials were Kabilia and his top adviser at the time and that the businessman was Gertler. (Gertler has denied wrongdoing.) Global Witness also counted \$750 million that went into state mining companies and tax agencies from 2013 to 2015 but never made it into the treasury.

Many are quick to call the Congolese state dysfunctional. But it is dysfunctional only if one considers its purpose to be serving the Congolese people. As a mechanism for distributing resources to loyalists in the political elite, it functions beautifully.

Democracy deferred

What is notable about the Kabilia family's many income streams is that to maintain them requires being in Congo—and, ideally, being in power. If Kabilia gets chased into exile, he and his relatives stand to lose hundreds of millions of dollars.

Thus, one motive behind Kabilia's electoral delay may be financial. Kabilia himself does not appear to be an extravagant man. Whereas Mobutu had a taste for pink champagne, Chanel cologne, and European villas, Kabilia rarely drinks alcohol and shuns chauffeurs. Aside from watches and suits, his chief luxury is a collection of motorcycles, whose engines residents of Gombe can hear him revving late into the night. But given the involvement of his family, the decision to step down is not his alone to make.

Fear may be another motive. The experience of Kabilia's predecessors suggests that staying in office is the surest way to stay alive. And if Kabilia did survive a transfer of power, he could easily end up in prison. A future regime could find more than enough evidence to prosecute him for corruption. It might even investigate his conduct in 1997, when, as a commander during his father's invasion of Zaire, he allegedly participated in the slaughter of tens of thousands of Hutu refugees near a town called Tingi Tingi.

Russ Feingold interacted with Kabilia dozens of times as U.S. special envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa during the Obama administration. Feingold held five or six direct meetings with the president and pressed him on his succession plans. "I think it's not as simple as a raw desire to keep power," Feingold said, pointing to the psychological factors weighing on a man who missed his youth to serve in a job he never asked for. Now, at 46 years old, Kabilia is struggling to come up with a second act. Feingold put the dilemma this way: "What else am I going to do with my life, after I've been president of the Congo?"

And so Kabila plays for time. According to the constitution, a presidential election was supposed to have been held in November 2016, and Kabila, limited to two terms, would not have been allowed to compete. Three years before the scheduled vote, he pushed for an amendment to the constitution that would do away with the two-term limit, taking a cue from neighboring heads of state. But the effort failed, and it triggered defections from Kabila's ruling coalition. Then, his allies proposed a time-consuming national census that would push back the date of the vote, but that failed as well, and Kabila turned to more creative means. In 2015, for example, the government announced that Congo's 11 provinces would be split into 26, which had the effect of weakening rival politicians and diverting resources from elections.

Kabila's principal obstacle is his own unpopularity. Mobutu enjoyed a cult of personality and knew how to whip up a crowd. Holding a cane and wearing a leopard-skin hat, he presented himself as a village chief on a national level (never mind that the hat was made by a Parisian couturier). He was said to possess magical powers, such as the ability to hear one's thoughts. Kabila, by contrast, gives off an air of detachment, reinforced by his foreign upbringing, his lack of fluency in Lingala, and persistent rumors of Rwandan ancestry. He rarely speaks in public, and when he does, he sounds like a schoolboy reading a prepared text. At soccer games, tens of thousands of fans have debuted a chant that causes state television to cut the live feed: "Kabila, watch out, your mandate is over."

In September 2016, as the end of Kabila's term approached, protesters swelled the streets. Clashes with security forces left more than 50 dead, and the U.S. Treasury responded by imposing financial sanctions on two top security officials. Kabila's government entered into a dialogue with the opposition hosted by the Catholic Church, one of the few credible institutions left in Congo. The result was a deal, announced on New Year's Eve, in which a member of the opposition would be appointed prime minister, elections would be held by the end of 2017, and Kabila would at last step down. But that has all but fallen apart. The electoral commission, whose head is effectively appointed by Kabila, has invoked the technical difficulties of organizing a vote, marrying legitimate complaints to absurd timelines for resolving them.

Rather than merely updating the voter rolls from the last election, the electoral commission decided to create new ones from scratch. The resulting registration process, which involves collecting biometric data from every voter, has been held up in certain provinces experiencing armed conflict. Once registration is complete, the rolls will still have to be "cleaned," a months-long process that involves analyzing ten fingerprints each for an estimated 45 million voters. But first, the computer system that does this must be ordered. After the nomination and vetting of candidates would come the gargantuan undertaking of printing the newspaper-like ballots required for an election day that could see voters choose among some 60,000 candidates from 600-plus political parties at more than 100,000 polling stations. Therefore, the commission has argued, it might make more sense to use electronic voting machines—a recipe for failure in a country with such irregular electricity supply and

limited technical capacity. By pretending to fetishize democracy, the commission has deferred it.

It has also handed the government a convenient line for deflecting blame. I visited Lambert Mende, Congo's jowly minister of communication and media, at the ministry's dusty headquarters in Kinshasa. Mende kept me waiting for four full hours in a sweaty room full of chairs with torn upholstery. When word came that he was ready to see me, a handler led me upstairs to a glass partition, roused the soldier napping behind it, and brought me into the minister's office. Dressed in a sharp suit and an orange tie, Mende sat leisurely behind his desk, slowly flipping through a stack of newspapers. He shoved them to the side, grunted, and gestured for me to take a seat.

Mende is Congo's Kellyanne Conway, a spokesperson whose fervent displays of loyalty make one wonder if even his bosses think he is overdoing it. With me, he ridiculed the opposition ("lobbyists for foreign interests"), decried U.S. sanctions ("totally unfounded, irrelevant"), and dismissed criticism of Kabila as a Belgo-American conspiracy ("they are calling him a human rights abuser, as they were calling Lumumba a communist"). He smiled impishly throughout the interview, as if to acknowledge that this was all just a performance, and quite an entertaining one at that.

"We have no responsibility, constitutionally, to organize elections," Mende answered when I asked when a vote would be held. That, he insisted, was the job of the electoral commission, on whose behalf he could not speak. "We cannot set up an independent body and act as if this body was not independent," he said. In Mende's telling, the government was merely waiting on guidance from the commission, while doing its best to ready a vote. "Not because Brussels or Washington is pushing us to do so," he was quick to add.

And when would elections take place? "The time is coming," he said. "Very soon."

A more precise answer would arrive the very next day, when the electoral commission announced that it would take 504 days once registration was finalized to hold a vote. This scientific-sounding estimate meant that elections could be held no earlier than April 2019.

Divide and conquer

Opposition politicians balked. But in Congo today, the opposition has its own credibility problem. Kabila has skillfully co-opted many of its leaders—appointing one as prime minister and others to ministerial posts—giving them an opportunity to trade resistance for the privileges of power. Twice in Kinshasa, I saw the prime minister striding proudly through the lobby of the fanciest hotel, entourage in tow. "Kabila knows that the Congolese political class is corruptible, and he gives them money to divide them," the journalist Patient Ligodi said. "He knows that the opposition is an opposition of the belly: that his opponents need money."

The most threatening opposition figures have been sidelined. Jean-Pierre Bemba, who challenged Kabila in the 2006 election, now sits in a prison cell in The Hague, having been

handed over to the International Criminal Court, which convicted him of war crimes. Étienne Tshisekedi, a longtime rival of Mobutu and both Kabillas, died last February at the age of 84. (For months, his corpse languished in a Belgian morgue as the Congolese government sought to delay his funeral and the protests that it feared would accompany it.) And Moïse Katumbi, a former provincial governor, has been forced into exile.

Katumbi was once a Kabilia ally, handpicked to govern Katanga, a mineral-rich province the size of Spain, in 2007. He had earned an estimated fortune of \$100 million from food processing, trucking, and mining, and in office, he styled himself a tropical Michael Bloomberg, raising tax revenues nearly 40-fold, overseeing an infrastructure spending spree, and cracking down on corruption (at least when it didn't involve himself). But as it became clear that Kabilia might seek to overstay his mandate, Katumbi resigned from the ruling party and announced his intention to replace him as president.

Then, Katumbi told me, the harassment began. His private jet was grounded. His car was rammed by a minibus. Security forces tried to kidnap his son. In May 2016, he was charged with hiring former U.S. soldiers as "mercenaries"; Katumbi characterized them as merely unarmed security advisers contracted through General Jim Jones, the former U.S. national security adviser. Katumbi fled the country during the trial and was later sentenced in absentia to three years in prison for real estate fraud. The judge who oversaw that case has also left Congo, claiming she was pressured by the intelligence services to convict him.

A May 2017 poll found that Katumbi would easily win a presidential election, with 38 percent of respondents naming him as their first choice. Only ten percent said they would vote for Kabilia. Even with Katumbi in exile, authorities have worked hard to seal his fate: they evidently fear that he may try to return. After the real estate case against Katumbi was appealed, one of the judges set to rule on it received an anonymous phone call instructing him to confirm the sentence, according to Hubert Tshiswaka, a lawyer I met in Lubumbashi who has tracked local judicial decay closely. Having responded to the call by saying he would follow the law, the judge was visited by eight armed men one night this past July. Tshiswaka told me that the men tied up the judge's security guard, raped his wife and teenage daughter, and shot him in the stomach—he survived only because the men fled when a car approached.

The young and the restless

A different type of threat to Kabilia has emerged in Goma. Hemmed in by volcanic mountains, Lake Kivu, and the Rwandan border, the city is the home base of an activist group that is sending the government into conniptions. Called Lutte pour le Changement (Struggle for Change), or LUCHA, the group was founded in 2012 by students frustrated with their country's persistent violence, human rights violations, and poor social conditions. But over time, it has become more overtly anti-Kabilia.

I met one of LUCHA's members, Rebecca Kabugho, who is 23, in the city one evening. She wore a pink leather jacket and sported short dreadlocks. "Most of the population had decided to cross its arms, say nothing, and accept the situation in which we live—and yet

it's not normal," she said. "That's why I stopped being silent and started saying what I thought out loud."

As we sat on the otherwise empty lawn of a hotel near Lake Kivu, out of earshot of staff, Kabugho recalled the night of February 15, 2016. She and fellow LUCHA members were working late at an office making banners for a march the next day. Congo's national soccer team had just defeated Mali's to win the African Nations Championship, and so they painted two lines on a cloth: "2016: We won the cup" followed by "2016: We will win elections." Around four in the morning, Kabugho heard some noise outside. It was the police, who barged into the building and arrested her and five others. They were all charged with attempting to incite revolt and served five and a half months in prison. Crowded into cells with no privacy, they ate meager rations, got sick, and spent time cleaning the septic system.

LUCHA remains small, with 1,500 members nationwide, and has yet to prove that it can turn out the broader population en masse. Even so, the government has rushed to brand it a criminal enterprise. In part, Kinshasa may fear that such groups represent early signs of youth discontent in a country with a median age of just 18. But it may also simply be groping in the dark. Kabila's regime has never met a threat it couldn't co-opt or kill. LUCHA and other similar groups are stubbornly immune to the first strategy, having chosen to remain outside the political system. (LUCHA makes a point of taking no external money whatsoever, and none of its members has run for political office.) And adopting the second strategy would only provoke more furor, because of these groups' strict refusal to take up arms. At LUCHA's initiation ceremonies, new members stand before existing ones, Congolese flag in hand, and swear an oath committing themselves to nonviolence.

Not all of Kabila's opponents are so inclined. As peaceful methods of forcing a transition have failed to produce results, the violent variety has flared. The country has suffered a rash of recent jailbreaks. One of them, which took place at Kinshasa's central prison in May, was orchestrated by a separatist cult and resulted in the escape of some 4,000 prisoners, including the group's leader. In the southeastern province of Tanganyika, violence between the Bantu and Twa ethnic groups has grown, leaving hundreds of villages destroyed, women raped, and civilians killed.

The most disturbing conflict is the one that engulfed the Kasai, a region in the middle of Congo that had last seen full-scale war in 1961. After Congo's Ministry of the Interior and Security started trying to replace the region's village leaders, largely unmolested since independence, with Kabila loyalists, security forces searched the home of a chief who resisted. He and his followers retaliated by attacking a nearby city in August 2016, burning police stations and the local office of the electoral commission and assassinating various officials. In a sign of the hybrid nature of Congo's state, they enjoyed the encouragement of Kabila's minister of development at the time, according to an excerpt of a call that took place during the attack published by *The New York Times*. ("The colonel is in his house, and we're burning down the house so he burnt to death," a subordinate informed the minister. "Did you kill the colonel's bodyguards?" the minister replied.)

The military, in turn, killed the chief, and a loose alliance of cultish militias formed to carry on his resistance. It enlisted children, who brandished toy wooden guns they were told magic could make real. It may also have been behind the murder of two UN experts—an American and a Swede—sent to investigate human rights abuses, although some observers suspect government involvement.

Desperate to reassert authority in the Kasai region, the Congolese military sent in some of its most thuggish commanders. Soldiers went door to door, killing suspected militia members and sympathizers and looting their homes. Over time, the rebellion took on an ethnic dimension and spawned yet another militia, this one armed by local authorities. The conflict spread to include five provinces, kill more than 3,000 people, and displace an additional 1.4 million. “It’s not like anything I’ve ever seen in 20 years in Africa,” one Western diplomat in Kinshasa told me.

The dead were buried in mass graves—87 of them, by the UN’s count—many guarded by soldiers, suggesting that the government had something to hide. In June, Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein, the UN high commissioner for human rights, summarized the findings of UN investigators who had interviewed refugees who had fled the violence: “My team saw children as young as two whose limbs had been chopped off; many babies had machete wounds and severe burns. . . . At least two pregnant women were sliced open and their foetuses mutilated.”

By the fall of 2017, the conflict had died down, and Kabila flew in for a peace conference to publicly mark its end. The humanitarian crisis continued. Refugees returned to find destroyed homes and schools and, with two planting seasons missed, a looming famine. The Ministry of Communication and Media denied my request to visit the Kasai, but Claudel Lubaya, an opposition politician from the region, described it for me. “You’ve seen Mosul and Aleppo?” he said. “That’s sort of what the Kasai looks like.”

Eastern promises

Congo’s east, especially the provinces of North and South Kivu, has long resisted pacification, the result of ethnic tensions, competition over land and resources, foreign meddling, and loose ends from the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the ensuing regional war. But even against this backdrop, the conflict there is going from bad to worse.

In Goma, the capital of North Kivu, a local researcher named Jean-Claude Buuma explained to me that there were 18 militias alone vying for control of Masisi, one territory in the province. In rural areas, the state is largely absent. Congolese forces’ power is confined to major highways, he said: “One meter off, they have no control.”

Often, that is by design. For example, in another territory in North Kivu, Walikale, a powerful rebel group has built a symbiotic relationship with the military it is ostensibly battling. The Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové, or NDC-R, earned its legitimacy by beating back the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, a group of Hutus from Rwanda

whom locals viewed as foreign occupiers. But the NDC-R's activities go beyond the realm of security. Its leader, a man known as Guidon, is the area's gold monopsonist, the only buyer artisanal miners can turn to, and also holds a monopoly on the alcohol and cigarettes sold to them near the mines. A Human Rights Watch report estimated his monthly income at more than \$20,000—some of which, according to Buuma, ends up in the pockets of Congolese military commanders, who in turn sell Guidon weapons. It's the traffic bribe, on a grander scale: a wrongdoer paying off the government to avoid punishment.

Kabila's attempts to stay in power have started to upset such arrangements. Capitalizing on growing frustration with the stalled presidential transition, militias are promising not only to secure the population but also to rid it of Kabila. In September 2017, for example, a warlord named William Yakutumba, who had previously confined himself to low-level racketeering, launched a dramatic attack against the military in Uvira, a city of several hundred thousand on Lake Tanganyika, near the Burundian border. Invoking the constitution, Yakutumba announced that he had "chosen the military option as the way to chase the dictator Joseph Kabila from power."

UN peacekeepers were brought in to Congo to enforce a cease-fire during the war in 1999, and they were supposed to disarm the militias and secure a lasting peace. They are still there. Now known as MONUSCO, the peacekeeping mission is the world's largest, with 18,000 uniformed personnel and a \$1.14 billion annual budget, a quarter of it paid by the United States.

Three weeks after the Uvira attack, I climbed into the back seat of a white pickup truck filled with five Uruguayan soldiers to accompany them on a UN patrol. Our two-car convoy drove due north from Goma, until the houses thinned out to make way for the lush countryside. Every five kilometers, the trucks stopped and the peacekeepers got out, gripped their guns, and scanned the horizon without saying a word. Mount Nyiragongo, a large volcano, puffed in the distance.

When I asked what the mission was that day, I got a quizzical look, as if I should have known. "To drive you 20 kilometers north and 20 kilometers back," I was told. Only when I pressed did someone mutter something about making a show of force and collecting intelligence. The unwieldy blue helmet and heavy armored vest I had been issued began to feel not just silly but unnecessary, too.

MONUSCO's reputation among the population is mixed. On the one hand, it has succeeded in protecting countless civilians, and some grateful locals have staged pro-MONUSCO demonstrations. On the other hand, many view it as too passive or, because it is an occasional partner with the unpopular Congolese military, as a party to the conflict. (It does pick and choose which commanders to work with, consulting a database of soldiers' behavior that goes back over a decade.) MONUSCO troops, moreover, have sometimes raped civilians, and a 2016 poll found that 57 percent of people in North Kivu thought they should simply leave. When we stopped in one village, I asked a 28-year-old cauliflower vendor

named Janvier what he thought of the peacekeepers. “They’re trouble,” he said. “When they pass through, they ask questions about security, but they don’t buy anything.”

After 18 years in Congo, MONUSCO has grown into an entrenched institution, replete with its own visitor lanyards, regular video press conferences, and glossy newsletter. At its headquarters in Goma, I lunched on a sumptuous buffet—\$6 for a vegetarian version, \$10 if you wanted meat. A poster advertised weekly tai chi classes.

A common knock against the mission is that with large parts of the population still living in a state of constant warfare and regular massacres, it has little to show for the \$18 billion it has consumed since its inception—and displays no signs of working itself out of a job anytime soon. The organization also has little leverage over the Congolese government, at whose pleasure it serves. “MONUSCO behaves according to four verbs here,” Lubaya, the politician from the Kasai, said. “MONUSCO condemns; MONUSCO regrets; MONUSCO disapproves; MONUSCO calls.”

All of that may be true, but more frightening than a never-ending peacekeeping mission is one that ended too early. Indeed, it was MONUSCO forces who saved the day in Uvira, doing the job that should have been done by government soldiers, who, long unpaid, melted away. For all its flaws, MONUSCO is helping provide Congo’s most badly needed service: security.

Before the surge in violence, 94 percent of the peacekeepers had been concentrated in the east, but with the recent flare-ups—protests and prison breaks in Kinshasa and other big cities, rebellions in the Kasai and elsewhere—they have had to spread themselves more thinly. At the same time, MONUSCO has lost eight percent of its budget, after the Trump administration put pressure on the UN to cut peacekeeping costs. So beginning in September, MONUSCO withdrew 1,700 troops from Congo. “Not only do we have a larger area to cover; we also have fewer troops to do so,” complained David Gressly, an American who serves as the UN secretary-general’s deputy special representative for Congo.

Having to do more with less, MONUSCO has switched strategies, replacing fixed positions with more mobile patrols—or, in its terms, moving from an approach of “protection through presence” to one of “protection through projection.” It has closed five bases in North Kivu alone. In the run-up to possible elections, Gressly said, his job “is only going to get more difficult.”

Now what?

The paradox of Congo’s current regime is that it looks utterly unsustainable, and yet somehow, it is sustained. Congo is a place where one can spend hours wandering from office to office trying to get the right piece of paper, or slice easily through red tape with a well-placed phone call. Nothing works, and everything works. Competing power centers vie for access and dominance. Publicly stated motivations mask a darker private reality. Alliances flip overnight. But at some fundamental political level, nothing ever changes. Armed

rebellions that look certain to gain momentum unexpectedly fizzle out. Promised protests fail to materialize.

Perhaps that is why so many obituaries of Kabila's regime have been published prematurely: because events in Congo proceed according to the competing logics of stasis and change. The most likely outcome is that Kabila will remain in office tomorrow, just as he did yesterday. That pattern could easily go on for years. But it is safe to say that ever since Kabila consolidated his power in the years immediately after his father's death, never before has he seemed so likely to go.

If Kabila does leave soon, he will exit in one of three ways. The first is the smoothest: he voluntarily steps down. It's possible he could do this in the context of somehow running for a third term and losing. Or he could bow to pressure and allow an ally to succeed him. Kabila's political coalition is not monolithic, and aspirants may seek to clear their own path to the presidency, promising to protect him and his family.

Kabila's opponents have little faith that he will experience a spontaneous change of heart, and so they have sought to apply pressure. Some of that has come from Angola, Congo's oil-rich southwestern neighbor, which has grown frustrated with the refugees streaming in. Once a crucial ally, it has withdrawn its military advisers from Congo. And Sindika Dokolo, a Congolese businessman who is a son-in-law of Angola's still powerful former president, has started a pro-democracy citizens' movement targeted against Kabila.

Most international pressure, however, has taken the form of sanctions. In May, the EU imposed an asset freeze and a travel ban on nine Congolese officials, including Mende, the minister of communication and media. Shortly thereafter, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed financial sanctions on Kabila's top military adviser and on a beach resort he owns, adding him to the list of five other officials it had sanctioned in 2016. Activists have welcomed these measures, and called for more. "The sanctions so far have just scratched the surface," said Sasha Lezhnev of the Enough Project, an Africa-focused advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. "What's needed is measures against some of the banks that Kabila and his business partners use to move the proceeds of corruption, as well as sanctions against the senior financial advisers, the family members, and the companies they control."

Katumbi, the exiled presidential aspirant, has pushed for sanctions, too, and hired a D.C. law firm, Akin Gump, to lead the lobbying effort. An American friend of his, a former mining company executive and one-time partner at the firm, has started a curious nonprofit named United for Africa's Democratic Future: it ostensibly promotes democracy across the continent but appears designed principally to place pro-Katumbi op-eds and anti-Kabila think-tank reports.

In an apparent countermove, Bill Meierling, the chief marketing officer of the American Legislative Exchange Council, a nonprofit that has been described as "a stealth business lobbyist," published a piece of sponsored content in *The Washington Times*. In it, he accused Katumbi—who is the son of a Sephardic Jewish father who fled to Belgian Congo

from Rhodes just before World War II—of being in the pockets of “wealthy foreign financiers,” a “tightly-knit and highly interconnected group headed by George Soros.” (A representative from *The Washington Times* said that whoever paid the newspaper to publish Meierling’s article preferred to remain anonymous.)

Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, has emerged as the Trump administration’s point person on Africa, and she has continued the Obama administration’s policy of urging Kabila to hold elections and step down. She even stated flatly, “The government is corrupt and preys on its citizens.” In October, Haley visited Congo, where she was moved to tears at a refugee camp in North Kivu and, in an hour-plus-long meeting with Kabila at the presidential palace, warned him not to postpone the elections to 2019.

“President Kabila made a commitment to his country’s constitution,” Haley told me over e-mail. “He knows we expect him to honor that commitment to his constitution, as it is written—meaning he cannot be on the 2018 ballot. He also understands, the United States will not accept elections any later than 2018.” A week after her visit, the electoral commission released a long-awaited calendar, with election day scheduled for December 23, 2018—not as early as the opposition wanted, but an improvement over the 504-day timeline.

The asset freezes and travel bans are rankling the officials affected, especially those who live part time in Europe. Inflicting pain is not the same thing as changing behavior, however, and there is no evidence so far that the government is mending its ways in response to the sanctions. The logic of regime survival will always supersede the logic of sanctions avoidance. If a crowd needs to be dispersed violently today, it will be dispersed violently today, whatever consequences the U.S. Treasury Department might impose tomorrow. In lobbying for sanctions, then, the opposition may only be enhancing its reputation for spending too much time in Brussels and Washington and not enough back home organizing. Congo’s political elite suffers from a misguided sense that power must come from elsewhere—no doubt a holdover from a time when it really did.

All of this pressure is aimed at getting Kabila to “leave through the front door,” as Congolese are fond of saying. But Kabila could resist, leading to the second type of exit: a popular revolt that forced him to flee through the back door. The model is Burkina Faso, where in 2014 an uprising forced an abrupt end to Blaise Compaoré’s 27-year presidency.

With economic conditions worsening and Kabila’s popularity so low, it’s conceivable that fed-up Congolese will take to the streets en masse and march toward the presidential palace. In that environment, opposition leaders could seize the moment. Katumbi, for example, might return home on his private jet, surround himself with supporters, and declare himself transitional president. Kabila appears to be preparing for the possibility of mass riots. In the last two years, he has transferred some of his most trusted (and brutal) generals to Kinshasa, and his forces have stocked up on tear gas and water cannons.

One big obstacle to a mass uprising is Kabila’s talent for repression. Nothing scatters a crowd like live fire. What’s more, as bad as the economy is today, it was worse during the

early 1990s, when the Mobutu regime began its death spiral. Back then, a running gag had it that Congo's constitution included a mythical Article 15: *Débrouillez-vous* (Deal with it). People may invoke it again.

Equally destabilizing as a popular revolt would be the third method through which Kabila could leave power: a coup or an assassination. Kabila once publicly complained that he didn't even have 15 people he could count on. He is thought to enjoy the loyalty of his presidential guards, who, like him, are well-compensated Swahili speakers. But regular soldiers are poorly paid, and they have guns, too. Manya Riche, an analyst and former adviser to Kabila on peace building, told me that people vastly underestimate the internal threats to the regime. She had been predicting a possible coup back in 2015, and she believes one is even more likely now. "It's a house of cards," she said. "Which card is the one that will cause everything to fall down?"

Kabila himself seems to be preoccupied with the idea that he could meet a violent end. Like his father, his grandfather, a former colonial administrator, was assassinated; Joseph has openly worried that he will meet the same fate. "Any time the assassination of his father would come up, his face would noticeably change," said one U.S. diplomat who has met with Kabila many times.

In a country with so much dry tinder—poorly fortified borders with nine different countries, scores of militias, and more than 250 ethnic groups—it is all too easy to imagine the chaos that might result from any variety of the last two scenarios. The Great African War, the world's deadliest conflict since World War II, ended only in 2003. And many of that war's underlying causes—above all, a weak state—persist. "Evacuation is on everyone's mind," one member of Kinshasa's Western diplomatic corps told me. Most Congolese, of course, have no such choice.²⁵

²⁵ Stuart A. Reid, Congo's Slide Into Chaos, *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2018)

CHAPTER 22

Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar

Background

The Rohingya, a highly persecuted Muslim group numbering over one million, face discrimination both from their neighbors and their nation, and are not considered citizens by Myanmar's government. Buddhist nationalist groups, including the MaBaTha and the anti-Muslim 969 movement, regularly call for boycotts of Muslim shops, the expulsion of Muslims from Myanmar, and attacks on Muslim communities. After two waves of violence, reprisals, and riots in June and October of 2012 intensified the century-old conflict in the predominantly Buddhist country, more than one hundred thousand Muslim Rohingyas were internally displaced and hundreds killed.

There is little indication that addressing the Rohingya issue will become a priority any time soon for Myanmar's government, which has focused instead on establishing a new relationship with the military and addressing multiple ongoing insurgencies. The military signed a cease-fire with several armed ethnic groups in October 2015, but some major groups—including two of the largest militias, the United Wa State Army and Kachin Independence Army—continue to fight the government. While the cease-fire agreement was a potential step towards peace in Myanmar, it failed to finalize a framework for a new balance of power between the central government and local authorities in the restive borderlands or require ethnic groups to disarm.

Concerns

As the U.S.-Myanmar relationship warms, disagreements over human rights issues will remain a divisive factor. However, Myanmar's stability is increasingly important to U.S. interests given Myanmar's strategic importance in Southeast Asia, vast natural resources, and emerging democratic government.

Recent Developments

Tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities in Myanmar's Rakhine State have escalated dramatically since late August 2017. A series of attacks by a group of Rohingya militants calling itself the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on military and police outposts killed more than seventy people, including twelve Burmese security personnel forces. In response, the military launched a brutal crackdown on Rohingya villages, causing as estimated seven hundred thousand people to flee since August 2017 across the border to Bangladesh. Widespread reports indicate indiscriminate killings and burning of Rohingya villages, escalating to the point that the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner called the situation in Rakhine State "ethnic cleaning." The crisis has led to a

growing humanitarian crisis in neighboring Bangladesh, where nearly one million Rohingya now reside in refugee camps along the border.

This outburst of violence by the military comes after a similar attack on a security post along the Bangladeshi border in October 2016 killed nine police officers. The army responded to that attack with a month-long crackdown on unarmed Muslim civilians, causing more than one thousand civilian deaths and driving tens of thousands more to flee their homes in search of safety.

After winning Myanmar's first competitive national election in more than twenty-five years and taking office in March 2016, the National League for Democracy party (unofficially headed by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi) has continually failed to address the status of the Rohingya people, who were not allowed to vote in the election. A national peace conference was held in August 2016, aimed at ending decades of fighting between the military and a number of armed ethnic groups, but Rohingya representatives were not invited to attend. That same month, Aung San Suu Kyi announced the creation of a nine-person commission, headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, to review and offer recommendations to address the tensions in Rakhine. The commission delivered its final report in late August 2017, just days before the latest outbreak of violence. Aung San Suu Kyi has continued to face criticism over a failure to address or acknowledge the Rohingya issue.

Myanmar Profile

A chronology of key events:

1057 - King Anawrahta founds the first unified Myanmar state at Pagan and adopts Theravada Buddhism.

1287 - Mongols under Kublai Khan conquer Pagan.

1531 - Toungoo dynasty, with Portuguese help, reunites country as Burma.

1755 - Alaungpaya founds the Konbaung dynasty.

1824-26 - First Anglo-Burmese war ends with the Treaty of Yandabo, according to which Burma ceded the Arakan coastal strip, between Chittagong and Cape Negrais, to British India.

1852 - Britain annexes lower Burma, including Rangoon, following the second Anglo-Burmese war.

1885-86 - Britain captures Mandalay after a brief battle; Burma becomes a province of British India.

1937 - Britain separates Burma from India and makes it a crown colony.

Japanese occupation

1942 - Japan invades and occupies Burma with some help from the Japanese-trained Burma Independence Army, which later transforms itself into the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and resists Japanese rule.

1945 - Britain liberates Burma from Japanese occupation with help from the AFPFL, led by Aung San.

1947 - Aung San and six members of his interim government assassinated by political opponents led by U Saw, a nationalist rival of Aung San's. U Nu, foreign minister in Ba Maw's government, which ruled Burma during the Japanese occupation, asked to head the AFPFL and the government.

Independence

1948 - Burma becomes independent with U Nu as prime minister.

Mid-1950s - U Nu, together with Indian Prime Minister Nehru, Indonesian President Sukarno, Yugoslav President Tito and Egyptian President Nasser co-found the Movement of Non-Aligned States.

1958-60 - Caretaker government, led by army Chief of Staff General Ne Win, formed following a split in the ruling AFPFL party.

1960 - U Nu's party faction wins decisive victory in elections, but his promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance of separatism angers the military.

One-party, military-led state

1962 - U Nu's faction ousted in military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who abolishes the federal system and inaugurates "the Burmese Way to Socialism" - nationalising the economy, forming a single-party state with the Socialist Programme Party as the sole political party, and banning independent newspapers.

1974 - New constitution comes into effect, transferring power from the armed forces to a People's Assembly headed by Ne Win and other former military leaders; body of

former United Nations secretary-general U Thant returned to Burma for burial.

1975 - Opposition National Democratic Front formed by regionally-based minority groups, who mounted guerrilla insurgencies.

1981 - Ne Win relinquishes the presidency to San Yu, a retired general, but continues as chairman of the ruling Socialist Programme Party.

1982 - Law designating people of non-indigenous background as "associate citizens" in effect bars such people from public office.

Riots and repression

1987 - Currency devaluation wipes out many people's savings and triggers anti-government riots.

1988 - Thousands of people are killed in anti-government riots. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) is formed.

1989 - Slorc declares martial law, arrests thousands of people, including advocates of democracy and human rights, renames Burma 'Myanmar', with the capital, Rangoon, becoming Yangon. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, is put under house arrest.

Thwarted elections

1990 - Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) wins landslide victory in general election, but the result is ignored by the military.

1991 - Aung San Suu Kyi awarded Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to peaceful change.

1992 - Than Shwe replaces Saw Maung as Slorc chairman, prime minister and defence minister. Several political prisoners freed in

bid to improve Myanmar's international image.

1995 - Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest after six years.

1996 - Aung San Suu Kyi attends first NLD congress since her release; Slorc arrests more than 200 delegates on their way to party congress.

1997 - Burma admitted to Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean); Slorc renamed State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Release of pro-democracy supporters

1998 - 300 NLD members released from prison; ruling council refuses to comply with NLD deadline for convening of parliament; student demonstrations broken up.

1999 - Aung San Suu Kyi rejects ruling council conditions to visit her British husband, Michael Aris, who dies of cancer in UK.

2000 September - Ruling council lifts restrictions on movements of Aung San Suu Kyi and senior NLD members.

2000 October - Aung San Suu Kyi begins secret talks with ruling council.

2001 Ruling council releases some 200 pro-democracy activists. Government says releases reflect progress in talks with opposition NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi who remains under house arrest.

2001 February - Burmese army, Shan rebels clash on Thai border.

2001 June - Thai Prime Minister Shinawatra visits, says relations are back on track.

2001 November - Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits, issues statement supporting government, reportedly urges economic reform.

Conflicting signals

2002 May - Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi released after nearly 20 months of house arrest.

Aung San Suu Kyi taken into "protective custody" after clashes between her supporters and those of government.

2003 August - Khin Nyunt becomes prime minister. He proposes to hold convention in 2004 on drafting new constitution as part of "road map" to democracy.

2003 November - Five senior NLD leaders released from house arrest after visit of UN human rights envoy.

2004 January - Government and Karen National Union - most significant ethnic group fighting government - agree to end hostilities.

2004 May - Constitutional convention begins, despite boycott by National League for Democracy (NLD) whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. The convention adjourns in July.

New capital

2004 October - Khin Nyunt is replaced as prime minister amid reports of a power struggle. He is placed under house arrest.

2004 November - Leading dissidents are freed as part of a release of thousands of prisoners, including Min Ko Naing, who led the 1988 pro-democracy student demonstrations.

2005 July - ASEAN announces that Myanmar has turned down the 2006 chairmanship of the regional grouping.

2005 November - Myanmar says its seat of government is moving to a new site near the central town of Pyinmana; it is later given the name Nay Pyi Taw.

2007 January - China and Russia veto a draft US resolution at the UN Security Council urging Myanmar to stop persecuting minority and opposition groups.

2007 April - Myanmar and North Korea restore diplomatic ties, 24 years after Rangoon broke them off, accusing North Korean agents of staging a deadly bomb attack against the visiting South Korean president.

2007 May - Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest is extended for another year.

2007 June - In a rare departure from its normally neutral stance, the International Committee of the Red Cross accuses the government of abusing the Myanmar people's rights.

Public unrest

2007 August - Wave of public dissent sparked by fuel price hikes. Dozens of activists are arrested.

2007 September - Military government declares 14 years of constitutional talks complete and closes the National Convention.

Buddhist monks hold a series of anti-government protests. Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed to leave her house to greet monks demonstrating in Rangoon. It is her first public appearance since 2003.

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari meets opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

2007 October - Normality returns to Rangoon amid heavy military presence. Monks are absent, after thousands are reportedly rounded up.

After some delay, UN Security Council deplores military crackdown on peaceful protesters.

2008 January - A series of bomb blasts hits the country. State media blame "insurgent destructionists", including ethnic Karen rebels.

2008 April - Government publishes proposed new constitution, which allocates a quarter of seats in parliament to the military and bans opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office.

Cyclone

2008 May - Cyclone Nargis hits the low-lying Irrawaddy delta. Some estimates put the death toll as high as 134,000.

Referendum on new constitution proceeds amid humanitarian crisis following cyclone. Government says 92% voted in favour of draft constitution and insists it can cope with cyclone aftermath without foreign help.

Junta renews Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest.

2008 November - Dozens of political activists given sentences of up to 65 years in series of secretive trials.

2008 December - Government signs deal with consortium of four foreign firms to pipe natural gas into neighbouring China, despite protests from human rights groups.

2009 January - Thailand expels hundreds of members of Muslim Rohingya minority who

appeared off its coast. Myanmar denies the minority's existence. Several hundred Rohingyas are subsequently rescued from boats off the coast of Indonesia.

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari meets opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for the first time in a year.

2009 March- Senior US State Department official Stephen Blake visits for talks with Foreign Minister Nyan Win in what the US calls a routine visit. Myanmar says it was notable given his seniority.

2009 April - The National League for Democracy (NLD) main opposition group offers to take part in planned elections if the government frees all political prisoners, changes the constitution and admits international observers.

2009 May - The EU extends the 2006 sanctions for another year, but adds that they can be reviewed in the event of moves towards democracy.

UN and aid agencies say hundreds of thousands in the Irrawaddy Delta still need assistance a year after Cyclone Nargis. The UN says Myanmar now allows it to bring in all the staff it needs.

Aung San Suu Kyi trial

2009 August - Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is convicted of breaching conditions of her house arrest, following visit by an uninvited US national in May. The initial sentence of three years' imprisonment is commuted to 18 months' house arrest.

2009 September - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announces plans for engagement with military rulers.

2009 October - Aung San Suu Kyi begins talks with Myanmar's military leaders and is allowed to meet Western diplomats.

2010 February - The authorities free NLD vice-chairman Tin Oo. Aung San Suu Kyi's deputy had spent more than a decade in prison or under house arrest.

2010 March - Government announces that long-awaited election laws have been passed, with provisions for an electoral commission hand-picked by the junta.

NLD votes to boycott polls. A splinter party - National Democratic Front (NDF) - later gains legal status and plans to compete in polls.

2010 October - Government changes country's flag, national anthem and official name.

2010 November - Main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claims resounding victory in first election for 20 years. Opposition groups allege widespread fraud and the election is widely condemned as a sham. The junta says the election marks the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy.

A week after the election, Aung San Suu Kyi - who had been prevented from taking part - is released from house arrest.

2011 January - Government authorises internet connection for Aung San Suu Kyi.

Junta retires to wings

2011 March - Thein Sein is sworn in as president of a new, nominally civilian government.

2011 August - President Thein Sein meets Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw.

2011 September - President Thein Sein suspends construction of controversial Chinese-funded Myitsone hydroelectric dam, in move seen as showing greater openness to public opinion.

2011 October - Some political prisoners are freed as part of a general amnesty. New labour laws allowing unions are passed.

2011 November- Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi says she will stand for election to parliament, as her party rejoins the political process.

2011 December - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits, meets Aung San Suu Kyi and holds talks with President Thein Sein. US offers to improve relations if democratic reforms continue.

President Thein Sein signs law allowing peaceful demonstrations for the first time; NLD re-registers as a political party in advance of by-elections for parliament due to be held early in 2012.

Burmese authorities agree truce deal with rebels of Shan ethnic group and orders military to stop operations against ethnic Kachin rebels.

2012 January - Government signs ceasefire with rebels of Karen ethnic group.

Partly-free elections held

2012 April - NLD candidates sweep the board in parliamentary by-elections, with Aung San Suu Kyi elected. The European Union suspends all non-military sanctions against Burma for a year.

2012 May - Manmohan Singh pays first official visit by an Indian prime minister since 1987.

2012 August - President Thein Sein sets up commission to investigate violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in the west, in which dozens have died.

Myanmar abolishes pre-publication media censorship.

In a major cabinet reshuffle, President Thein Sein replaces hard-line Information Minister Kyaw Hsan with moderate Aung Kyi, the military's negotiator with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

2012 September - Moe Thee Zun, the leader of student protests in 1988, returns from exile after Burma removed 2,082 people from its blacklist.

President Thein Sein tells the BBC he would accept opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as president if she were elected.

Foreign ties

2012 November - Visiting European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso offers Myanmar more than \$100m in development aid.

Around 90 people are killed in a renewed bout of communal violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.

US President Barack Obama visits to offer "the hand of friendship" in return for more reforms. He urges reconciliation with the Rohingya minority.

2013 January-February - The army surrounds Laiza, the biggest town controlled by Kachin rebels. The government and rebels agree to disengage and start a political dialogue after Chinese-sponsored talks.

2013 March - Rioting between Muslims and Buddhists in Meiktila, south of Mandalay, leaves at least 10 people dead.

2013 April - Four private daily newspapers appear for the first time in almost 50 years as the state monopoly ends.

2013 May - President Thein Sein visits Washington. President Obama praises Myanmar's political and economic progress, but criticises violence against Rohingya Muslims.

Six Muslims are jailed over the Meiktila clashes in March. No Buddhists are convicted.

2014 April - At least 22 people are killed in fighting between government troops and ethnic Kachin rebels in the north.

2014 May - US extends some sanctions for another year, saying that despite the recent reforms, rights abuses and army influence on politics and the economy persist.

2014 October - Parliamentary elections set for October/November 2015.

Government announces release of 3,000 prisoners. Burma watchers say most are petty criminals, but include ex-military intelligence officers imprisoned along with former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, who was freed in 2012.

2015 February - Flare-up in fighting with Kokang separatists in Shan State near the border with China leaves nearly 50 soldiers dead. Government puts Kokang region under temporary martial law.

Government withdraws temporary voting rights from Muslim Rohingyas ahead of proposed constitutional referendum, following street protests by Buddhists.

Peace hopes

2015 March - A draft ceasefire agreement is signed between the government and 16 rebel groups.

2015 May - Hundreds of Muslim Rohingyas migrants leave by sea in flimsy boats, along with migrants from Bangladesh. UN criticizes failure of south-east Asian states to rescue them.

2015 July-August - Floods affect much of low-lying parts of country, killing 100 people and displacing a million others.

2015 November - Opposition National League for Democracy - led by Aung San Suu Kyi - wins enough seats in parliamentary elections to form a government.

2016 March - Htin Kyaw sworn in as president, ushering in a new era as Aung San Suu Kyi's democracy movement takes power after 50 years of military domination.

Rohingya crisis

2017 March - The United Nations human rights council decides to set up an investigation into alleged human rights abuses by the army against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

2017 August - Rohingya militants attack police posts in Rakhine. The response by security forces prompts an exodus of Rohingya and allegations that their actions amount to ethnic cleansing.

2017 October - The number of Rohingya Muslims who have fled military action in Rakhine state and sought refuge in Bangladesh is estimated at one million.

2017 November - Pope Francis visits, disappoints Rohingya by failing to mention their plight.

2018 March - President Htin Kyaw resigns on health grounds and is replaced by Win Myint, a fellow Suu Kyi loyalist.

2018 August - A UN report accuses Myanmar's military leaders of carrying out genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against Rohingya Muslims, calling for six generals to face trial at the International Criminal Court. It also accuses

Aung San Suu Kyi of failing to prevent the violence. Myanmar rejects the findings.

2018 September - Two Reuters journalists are sentenced to seven years in prison for violating state secrecy laws. They allege that they were framed by police, and link the case to their reporting on the military's violence against the Rohingya.

The Rohingya Crisis and the Meaning of Genocide

Despite evidence of systematic violence against the Rohingya, countries remain reluctant to classify the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine State as genocide.

Interview by Camilla Siazon
Kate Cronin-Furman, Interviewee

May 8, 2018

Human rights groups and UN leaders have condemned the violence against Myanmar's Rohingya ethnic minority as bearing the "hallmarks of genocide." Nearly 680,000 Rohingya await their fate in neighboring Bangladesh's refugee settlements, overextending the country's already strained resources. Countries have so far done little to alleviate the crisis, and they are reluctant to classify the atrocities as genocide, says Kate Cronin-Furman, a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. While no intervention is imminent, she says, there are immediate steps countries can take to help Bangladesh bear the refugee burden.

Does the situation in Myanmar fit the legal parameters of genocide?

The crime of genocide requires the intent on the perpetrator's part to wipe out a group, either in whole or in part. That can be a national group, an ethnic group, or a religious group. What we're seeing in terms of the Burmese military's so-called counterinsurgency campaign is behavior that looks like evidence of such intent. There is a bit of a controversy about whether this is ethnic cleansing—whether they are just trying to get them out or they are actually trying to eradicate them. For my money, particularly the especially brutal forms of sexual violence and the targeted attacks on very young children and babies, these are the hallmarks of a genocidal campaign.

When we look at past genocides, such as Rwanda, we see this similar, very brutal, and very destructive sexual violence, which potentially looks targeted at destroying the reproductive capacity of a nation. It looks systematic and it looks particularly destructive. Same again with young children and babies—this all goes to establishing whether this conduct meets the definition of genocide under the [1948] UN convention.

How have the Rohingya been treated historically?

The Rohingya are frequently referred to as the world's most persecuted minority. They are a group that is essentially denied citizenship rights in the country that they live in. They are restricted in their ability to do everyday things like go to school, decide who to marry, and decide how many children to have.

The Rohingya are frequently referred to as the world's most persecuted minority.

In 2012 there was widespread interethnic rioting between the Rohingya and state-facilitated local Buddhist populations in Rakhine State, where Burmese security officials were actually arming the Rakhine Buddhists, transporting them on buses to burn villages, and so on. This is a very high level of consistent state persecution of a vulnerable minority over a very long time.

Why has there been a reluctance to classify this as genocide?

There are a couple of things going on. One is that there is this perception, which is not actually legally correct, that genocide is the most serious crime—that if something is genocide, then there is this strong, moral obligation on members of the international community to act. If we look back to Rwanda in 1994, we saw members of the Clinton administration in the United States trying really hard to avoid using the term genocide, because they thought if they called it genocide then they would have to do something. It is something that we have seen again and again: this idea that if it is genocide then we have to act, so let's not name it as such.

There is also the fact that Myanmar has the support of China, so any intervention against the Burmese government's will would be very difficult to accomplish. The [UN] Security Council is not going to get China's support to intervene if Myanmar doesn't want them there, so that is a major hurdle.

It's a little bit of an open question how much the absence of U.S. leadership hurts here. The United States under the Obama administration wasn't particularly keen to intervene militarily to stop mass atrocities. We saw the debate over Syria play out over years, and it's not as though now, under a different president, we are out there doing something. But I do think that the fact that we have a U.S. government that is explicitly disinterested in promoting human rights has a little bit of an emboldening effect, where repressive regimes know that they can get away with a little more than they used to be able to.

If the U.S. State Department determines that a genocide is unfolding, would that increase the chance of some kind of intervention?

I'm not sure that it would. The kind of structural impediments to action, particularly the presence of China in the Security Council and the fact that the Syria crisis is still ongoing, makes this a very tricky case to get intervention.

No one looking at the Rohingya crisis is going to be able to fool themselves that some kind of surgical strike would do anything here. Anyone who gets involved is signing on for the long haul. More than several hundred thousand people have been displaced. It is just a huge crisis.

How can the United States effectively aid the Rohingya?

The most useful thing anyone can do is to pour money into Bangladesh. It is a poor country hosting a massive refugee population. It is a struggle to feed these people, to give them health care, to make sure they have housing. So far there hasn't really been conflict between refugees and the host population. We've seen incredible generosity on the part of Bangladeshis local to the area. But it is often a problem that develops, when international [organizations] come in and give necessities to the refugees and locals feel like they are getting the short end of the stick. So really, both populations need aid right now and a very clear avenue through which assistance can be delivered. The question of whether sanctions can do anything at this point is a bit murky, but we know that food and medicine for refugees and assistance to the host population will help.

Is anyone seeking to classify the violence as genocide?

We've seen a tremendous push on the part of advocacy groups in the West to classify this as genocide, because they feel it is really valuable. Looking at how things played out in Rwanda, they feel the word genocide carries additional moral weight and that if they are able to get their governments to say this is genocide they will be more likely to get further action. So that is definitely a key ask of every advocacy group working on this issue right now.

There is also the separate question of evidence gathering. There is a UN Human Rights Council investigation; there are also a number of human rights organizations working on the ground, getting testimonies and trying to fit the pieces together. Both are happening, and they have been happening for the last several months. But it's not just the law that matters; it's the politics too.

How have Myanmar's neighbors responded?

It's interesting because this is a Muslim population that is being persecuted. The countries speaking out are a little different than usual. We've seen officials from Turkey and Pakistan, for instance, refer to this as genocide, and that's not who you usually expect to be the first voices calling out mass atrocities. Obviously, Bangladesh has been doing the most here, allowing this population to cross their border. At the same time, there have been restrictions on that, and there has been pressure on the Bangladeshi government to do more.

India's initial response to the crisis was to consider expelling the Rohingya refugee population within its borders, which was not a particularly humanitarian-minded reaction, and we are still not seeing leadership within India on this issue. There was a small population of Rohingya refugees in Sri Lanka being targeted by militant Buddhist monks there. We are not seeing significant action from anyone other than Bangladesh on this issue. But then we're not seeing a ton of action from the West either.

Next Steps in Addressing the Rohingya Crisis?

By Joshua Kurlantzick

Last month, the State Department released a report investigating violence against Rohingya in Rakhine State in western Myanmar. Although the report concluded that the violence was “extreme, large-scale, widespread, and seemingly geared toward both terrorizing the population and driving out the Rohingya residents,” as CNN noted, the report did not contain a finding that the violence rose to the level of genocide. The report also notably was released with little fanfare, despite the fact that administration officials had widely publicized that the State Department was conducting this investigation, and that a United Nations report had already found that senior Myanmar military leaders should face justice for genocide. In addition, administration officials, especially UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and her office, had been vocal about Myanmar’s brutal treatment and the need for justice for Myanmar leaders involved in the Rakhine State massacres.

The report, as *Politico* noted, had been anticipated by the rights community and many on Capitol Hill as possibly a pivotal moment in how Washington approaches the Rakhine crisis. If the report had contained a finding of genocide or crimes against humanity, it would have provided the intellectual framework for tougher action, both in Congress and in the executive branch, against senior Myanmar military leaders, including possibly armed forces commander Min Aung Hlaing. Without that finding, the next steps for addressing the Rohingya crisis, from a U.S. policy perspective, remain unclear.

The State Department has noted that “the U.S. government has previously characterized the events described in the report as ‘ethnic cleansing,’” according to *Politico*, and vowed to address the sources and results of the conflict in Rakhine State. Still, the finding seemed a departure from the actual evidence presented in the report. Perhaps the White House does not want to issue a finding of genocide or crimes against humanity because it does not want to empower the International Criminal Court on any issues, including those related to Myanmar. Perhaps the report’s ultimate message, despite the evidence that pointed to genocide and/or crimes against humanity, reflected a realist view of what could actually be accomplished in pressuring Myanmar. Or it might have reflected concerns about triggering a process in which targeted sanctions would be applied to Min Aung Hlaing, and he eventually ran for president in the next Myanmar election and he wound up being the elected leader of a country. The United States then would have sanctions on Myanmar’s leader.

Still, advocacy from Congress—and from Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, who has focused on the Rohingya issue—could possibly prod the White House to take tougher steps. In a hearing last week, Congressman Ed Royce and other leaders of the House Foreign Affairs Committee pressed the White House to reverse course and label the killing in Rakhine State a genocide. Senate Majority Leader

Mitch McConnell, a longtime advocate for human rights in Myanmar, and ally of Aung San Suu Kyi, has so far deferred to the Myanmar civilian leader, claiming that she has no power to stop the military's abuses. Yet he and other old allies of Myanmar's civilian leader face mountains of evidence—mountains that are still growing—that Suu Kyi now has little interest in rights advocacy at all, and has not taken even most steps to constrain the armed forces—rather, she increasingly seems like their advocate. Besides ignoring or essentially defending the military's actions in Myanmar, Suu Kyi has overseen a clampdown on press freedom, and appears publicly nonplussed at how her government treats reporters. At a certain point, it becomes impossible to deny that Suu Kyi has not used even the (somewhat) limited powers of her office to advocate for progress on rights and freedoms, and to no longer let old deference to her constrain policy toward Myanmar.

On Myanmar, there is more the White House could do. In addition to a formal genocide finding, which would be a bright line echoing the UN finding, the White House could impose targeted sanctions against a wider array of senior military leaders, including the Myanmar commander in chief, who has not been named in the targeted U.S. sanctions that have been imposed so far.²⁶

²⁶ Joshua Kurlantzick, Next Steps in Addressing the Rohingya Crisis, *Asia Unbound* (October 3, 2018)

CHAPTER 23

Civil War in South Sudan

Background

Ignited by a political struggle between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar that led to the Machar's removal from as vice president, violence erupted between presidential guard soldiers in December 2013 and immediately took on an ethnic character. Soldiers from the Dinka ethnic group, one of the two largest ethnic groups in South Sudan, aligned with President Kiir and those from the Nuer ethnic group, the other largest ethnic group, supported Riek Machar. In the midst of chaos, President Kiir announced that Machar had attempted a coup and violence spread quickly to Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity states. Since the outbreak of conflict, armed groups have targeted civilians along ethnic lines, committed rape and sexual violence, destroyed property and looted villages, and recruited children into their ranks.

Violence has prevented farmers from planting or harvesting crops, causing food shortages nationwide. In July 2014, the UN Security Council declared South Sudan's food crisis the worst in the world. It warned that some four million people—a third of South Sudan's population—could be affected and up to fifty thousand children could die of hunger. The conflict in South Sudan is categorized by the UN as a "Level 3" humanitarian emergency, based on the scale, urgency, and complexity of needs.

In late December 2013, the UN Security Council authorized a rapid deployment of about 6,000 security forces, in addition to 7,600 peacekeepers already in the country, to aid in nation building efforts. In May 2014, the Security Council voted in a rare move to shift the mission's mandate from nation building to civilian protection, authorizing UN troops to use force. Since reprioritizing protection, the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan has faced extreme challenges due to the deterioration of the security situation and its complex relationship with the government of the Republic of South Sudan, which is a belligerent to the conflict.

Concerns

The United States was a lead facilitator of South Sudanese independence, which was voted for in a 2011 referendum that was held in the southern part of Sudan, excluding the contested area of Abyei, providing diplomatic support and humanitarian aid. Prior to the outbreak of the civil war in 2013, the United States strongly supported and advocated for Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which became the new country's government. However, the United States has taken a back seat in peace talks as IGAD mediates between Kiir and Machar. The United States and Europe have imposed sanctions on commanders from both

sides, but diplomats say real pressure for a deal to be implemented must come from neighboring states.

Recent Developments

Well over 50,000 people have been killed and more than 1.6 million have been internally displaced since civil war broke out in South Sudan in December 2013. Under the threat of international sanctions and following several rounds of negotiations supported by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), President Salva Kiir signed a peace agreement with rebel leader and former Vice President Riek Machar on August 26, 2015. As the first step toward ending the civil war, Machar returned to Juba on April 26, 2016 and was sworn in as vice president, after spending more than two years outside of the country. Soon after his return, violence broke out again between government forces and opposition factions in July 2016, displacing tens of thousands of people yet again. After Machar fled the country, Kiir replaced him as vice president with General Taban Deng Gai. After intense fighting in July 2016, the UN Security Council authorized a 4,000 strong regional protection force, which after being blocked by the South Sudanese government, will deploy in summer 2017.

The August 2015 peace deal has collapsed and the future of the transitional government remains to be seen. After signing the agreement in August 2015, violence continued and both sides to the conflict blamed the other for violating the cease-fire. The peace talks, which began in January 2014, resulted in several agreements, but both parties to the conflict and other splintering factions repeatedly violated the cease-fires.

Armed groups, including the government's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), have committed widespread violence against civilians, especially women and children, humanitarian workers, and peacekeepers. As of August 2016, around 200,000 people are seeking protection on UN bases, which have become displacement-like settlements known as protection of civilian sites, in areas such as Bentiu, Juba, and Malakal.

South Sudan Profile

A chronology of key events

1899-1955 - South Sudan is part of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, under joint British-Egyptian rule.

1956 - Sudan gains independence.

First civil war

1962 - Civil war led by the southern separatist Anya Nya movement begins with north.

1969 - Group of socialist and communist Sudanese military officers led by Col Jaafar Muhammad Numeiri seizes power; Col Numeiri outlines policy of autonomy for south.

1972 - Government concedes a measure of autonomy for southern Sudan in a peace agreement signed in Addis Ababa.

1978 - Oil discovered in Unity State in southern Sudan.

Second civil war

1983 - Fighting breaks out again between north and south Sudan, under leadership of John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), after Sudanese President Jaafar Numeiri abolishes South Sudan's autonomy.

1988 - Democratic Unionist Party - part of Sudan's ruling coalition government - drafts cease-fire agreement with the SPLM, but it is not implemented.

1989 - Military seizes power in Sudan.

2001 - Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan Al-Turabi's party, the Popular National Congress, signs memorandum of understanding with the southern rebel SPLM's armed wing, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Mr Al-Turabi is arrested the next day.

2002 - Talks in Kenya lead to a breakthrough agreement between southern rebels and Sudanese government on ending the civil war. The Machakos Protocol provides for the south to seek self-determination after six years.

North-south peace deal

2005 January - North/South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ends civil war; deal provides for a permanent ceasefire, autonomy for the south, a power-sharing government involving rebels in Khartoum and a south Sudanese referendum on independence in six years' time.

2005 July - Former southern rebel leader John Garang is sworn in as first vice-president. A new Sudanese constitution

which gives the south a large degree of autonomy is signed.

2005 August - South Sudanese leader John Garang is killed in a plane crash. He is succeeded by Salva Kiir Mayardit.

2005 October - Autonomous government is formed in South Sudan, in line with the January 2005 peace deal. The administration is dominated by former rebels.

Fragile peace

2006 November - Hundreds die in fighting centred on the southern town of Malakal - the heaviest between northern Sudanese forces and former rebels since the 2005 peace deal.

2008 March - Tensions rise over clashes between an Arab militia and SPLM in the disputed oil-rich Abyei area on the north-south divide - a key sticking point in the 2005 peace accord.

2009 July - North and south Sudan say they accept ruling by arbitration court in The Hague shrinking disputed Abyei region and placing the major Heglig oil field in the north.

Independence referendum

2009 December - Leaders of North and South reach deal on terms of referendum on independence due in South by 2011.

2011 January - The people of South Sudan vote in favour of full independence from Sudan.

2011 February - Clashes between the security forces and rebels in southern Sudan's Jonglei state leave more than 100 dead.

2011 May - North occupies disputed border region of Abyei.

2011 June - Governments of north and south sign accord to demilitarize the disputed Abyei region and let in an Ethiopian peacekeeping force.

New state born

2011 9 July - Independence day.

2011 August - UN says at least 600 people are killed in ethnic clashes in Jonglei state.

2012 January - South Sudan declares a disaster in Jonglei State after some 100,000 flee clashes between rival ethnic groups.

2012 April - After weeks of border fighting, South Sudan troops temporarily occupy the oil field and border town of Heglig before being repulsed. Sudanese warplanes raid the Bentiu area in South Sudan.

2012 August - Some 200,000 refugees flee into South Sudan to escape fighting between Sudanese army and rebels in Sudan's southern border states.

2012 September - The presidents of Sudan and South Sudan agree trade, oil and security deals after days of talks in Ethiopia.

2013 March - Sudan and South Sudan agree to resume pumping oil after a bitter dispute over fees that saw production shut down more than a year earlier. They also agreed to withdraw troops from their border area to create a demilitarised zone.

2013 June - President Kiir dismisses Finance Minister Kosti Manibe and Cabinet Affairs Minister Deng Alor over a multi-million dollar financial scandal, and lifts their immunity from prosecution.

2013 July - President Kiir dismisses entire cabinet and Vice-President Riek Machar in a power struggle within the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

Civil war

2013 December - Civil war erupts as President Salva Kiir accuses his former vice-president, Riek Machar, of plotting to overthrow him.

Rebel factions seize control of several regional towns, thousands are killed and many more flee. Uganda troops intervene on the government's side.

2014 January - A ceasefire is signed but broken several times over subsequent weeks, and further talks in February fail to end the violence that displaces more than a million people by April.

2014 April - UN says pro-Machar forces sack the oil town of Bentiu, killing hundreds of civilians.

2014 August - Peace talks begin in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa and drag on for months as fighting continues.

2016 April - Riek Machar finally returns to Juba and is sworn in as first vice-president in a new unity government - but is sacked in July after further conflict and goes back into exile.

2016 November - UN sacks Kenyan commander of its peacekeeping mission over the failure to protect civilians in Juba during July violence. Kenya withdraws its troops from the peacekeeping mission.

Japanese peacekeepers arrive South Sudan, the first time in nearly 70 years that Japan has deployed its soldiers overseas with a broad mandate to use force if necessary.

2016 December - A UN commission on human rights says a process of ethnic cleansing is underway in several parts of the country, a claim that President Salva Kiir denies.

2017 February - A famine is declared in parts of South Sudan in what the UN describes as a man-made catastrophe caused by civil war and economic collapse.

2017 May - President Kiir declares unilateral ceasefire, launches national dialogue.

2017 August - The number of refugees fleeing violence in South Sudan to Uganda passes the one million mark, according to the UN.

2018 August - President Kiir signs power-sharing agreement with Riek Machar and other opposition groups in a bid to end the civil war. The deal will see Machar return to government as one of five vice-presidents.

South Sudan Forces Killed and Raped Hundreds in Brutal Campaign

By Nick Cumming-Bruce

GENEVA — One day after the South Sudanese opposition rejected a peace deal in the country's yearslong civil war, United Nations officials on Tuesday outlined a campaign of brutal killings and rapes carried out by government forces and their allies this spring.

In the offensive, which targeted opposition-controlled villages in the north of the country in April and May, government troops and allied militias gunned down fleeing civilians, strung up villagers from trees and gang-raped women and girls — some of them fatally — investigators said in a 17-page report.

At least 232 civilians were killed, and the forces gang-raped at least 120 women and girls, including children as young as 4, according to the report, which was produced by the United Nations mission in South Sudan and the human rights office in Geneva. At least 132 women and girls were abducted, forced to carry loot to the soldiers' base and kept as sex slaves or porters, according to the report.

The attacks underscored the horrific toll on civilians in the civil war that erupted in 2013 between South Sudan's Dinka ethnic majority, led by President Salva Kiir, and the ethnic Nuer aligned with his former vice president, Riek Machar, just two years after the country gained independence from Sudan.

Tens of thousands have died in the nearly five-year conflict, around two and a half million have fled to neighboring countries, and millions more have been left fending off starvation in South Sudan's devastated economy.

After a series of talks hosted by the leaders of neighboring countries in recent weeks, President Kiir unveiled an agreement on Sunday that would have reinstated Mr. Machar as vice president. But on Monday the opposition said the deal was unacceptable. Previous peace deals and cease-fires had also fallen apart.

As the latest agreement crumbled, the United Nations human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, insisted that "the perpetrators of these revolting acts" in the springtime offensive — including those issuing the orders — "must not be allowed to get away with it."

Investigators described how groups of 100 or 200 soldiers and youth militia fighters attacked villages before dawn in operations between April 16 and May 24. Witnesses said that many who were unable to flee — including sick, older and disabled people, and children — were burned alive in their homes or had their throats slit, according to the investigators. Women who resisted rape were shot, and villagers who did not comply with demands to hand over money were dragged away and hanged from trees, the United Nations said.

The death toll was probably higher than the number reported, investigators said. It was not known how many people were killed in shelling of the swamps and river islands where villagers sought refuge, but at least 10 children drowned as they fled into the swamps.

Previous peace deals and cease-fires had also fallen apart.

As the latest agreement crumbled, the United Nations human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, insisted that “the perpetrators of these revolting acts” in the springtime offensive — including those issuing the orders — “must not be allowed to get away with it.”

Investigators described how groups of 100 or 200 soldiers and youth militia fighters attacked villages before dawn in operations between April 16 and May 24. Witnesses said that many who were unable to flee — including sick, older and disabled people, and children — were burned alive in their homes or had their throats slit, according to the investigators. Women who resisted rape were shot, and villagers who did not comply with demands to hand over money were dragged away and hanged from trees, the United Nations said.

The death toll was probably higher than the number reported, investigators said. It was not known how many people were killed in shelling of the swamps and river islands where villagers sought refuge, but at least 10 children drowned as they fled into the swamps.²⁷

²⁷ Nick Cumming-Bruce, South Sudan Forces Killed and Raped Hundreds in Brutal Campaign, *The New York Times* (July 10, 2018)

Another Hollow Peace Deal Signed in South Sudan

By Guest Blogger for John Campbell

On September 12 in Ethiopia, President Salva Kiir and former vice president and opposition leader Riek Machar signed what was meant to be the final peace deal in South Sudan's civil war, bringing an end to nearly five years of fighting. The new deal would return Machar to power, where he would serve as the "first" of five vice presidents, and maintain Kiir as president. Despite this latest development, the promise of lasting peace in South Sudan remains a distant hope.

Fighting between rebels, ostensibly under Machar's command, and government forces, ostensibly under Kiir's, resumed less than one week after the signing. But it is not clear if these skirmishes are related to the content of the recent deal; soldiers on both sides have reportedly engaged in violence at the behest of local leaders, rather than of Kiir or Machar, signaling a broken chain of command. Nevertheless, this violation comes three months after the collapse of a previous ceasefire, the Khartoum Declaration, which was signed in late June.

The United States, United Kingdom, and Norway, commonly referred to as the Troika and who supported South Sudan's push for independence in 2011, expressed concerns over this most recent peace deal. Their skepticism is at least partly the result of years of consistently broken ceasefires.

But even if these skirmishes ended and Kiir and Machar successfully reined in their forces, it is hard to believe that the current peace deal would prevent the country from sliding back into civil war in the months and years to follow. At its core, the deal fails to address the root causes of the civil war: unequal access to government resources and near-authoritarian powers of the president. Instead, it reaffirms the presidency's enormous powers, which are codified in the 2011 transitional constitution.

Specifically, the transitional constitution grants unchecked powers to the office of the presidency, such as the power to appoint and dismiss elected representatives at the federal and state levels. Before the outbreak of violence in 2013, Kiir and Machar butted heads over the unequal distribution of power in government; Machar reportedly felt that he was effectively shut out from power in his role as vice president. Meanwhile, Kiir began consolidating his rule and undermining the country's nascent democracy. In this context, Machar understood that any attempt to unseat Kiir in the future via democratic elections was fruitless. With his sacking in 2013, it became clear to Machar that his only remaining avenue to the presidency was to take up arms, which he did later that year.

If the country is to see lasting peace, any future deals must radically reform the transitional constitution to promote inclusivity and diffuse power away from the office of the president. By instituting a parliamentary executive, federalism, and proportional representation, South Sudan will begin to ensure stable democratic rule in the country. In

light of the political splintering that has occurred in the last few years, a diverse array of parties, particularly rebel groups, must be included in all future peace talks. By excluding them, any government that results from these talks risks lacking the requisite support to prevent war.²⁸

²⁸ Guest Blogger for John Campbell, Another Hollow Peace Deal Signed in South Sudan, *Africa in Transition* and *Africa Program* (September 26, 2018)

CHAPTER 24

Al-Shabab in Somalia

Background

Since its inception in 2006, al-Shabab has capitalized on the feebleness of Somalia's central government, despite the government's strengthening in recent years, to control large swaths of ungoverned territory. The terrorist group reached its peak in 2011 when it controlled parts of the capital city of Mogadishu and the vital port of Kismayo. Kenyan troops, operating as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), entered Somalia later that year and successfully pushed al-Shabab out of most of its strongholds. In response to the 2011 intervention, al-Shabab has committed more than 150 attacks in Kenya, a long-time U.S. ally. The most brutal were a January 2016 attack on a Kenyan army camp in El Adde killing 200 soldiers, an April 2015 attack on a Kenyan college campus that killed 148 people, and a 2013 attack on a mall in Nairobi that killed at least 67.

The United States has pursued a two-pronged approach in Somalia by providing financial and logistical support to AMISOM and conducting counterterrorism operations, including drone strikes and special operations forces raids, against suspected al-Shabab militants. Since 2007, the United States has provided more than half a billion dollars to train and equip African Union forces battling al-Shabab. In September 2014, the United States launched a strike through use of drones and manned aircraft that reportedly killed 150 al-Shabab soldiers including al-Shabab's leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, after which the group immediately named Ahmed Umar as his successor.

Concerns

Continued al-Shabab attacks and influence threaten to undermine the United States' primary interest in Somalia, which has been preventing the country from becoming a refuge for terrorist groups to radicalize members, plot attacks on the United States, and potentially destabilize the strategically significant Horn of Africa.

Recent Developments

Al-Qaeda affiliate al-Shabab is weaker than it has been in recent years, but with seven to nine thousand troops still remaining, the group continues to dominate many rural southern and central areas of Somalia. In conjunction with acts of violence like the attacks on African Union Mission in Somalia forces that killed hundreds of soldiers in January 2016, as well in June and September of 2015, al-Shabab appears to have pursued a hearts-and-minds campaign. Beginning in May 2015, al-Shabab soldiers occasionally occupied Kenyan villages for hours in order to deliver sermons to their captive audiences and then left peacefully.

These ventures are seemingly intended to bolster public support in areas outside the reaches of Kenyan security forces and that have long been hampered by corruption.

In April 2016, the self-proclaimed Islamic State marked its official presence in Somalia by staging its first attack against African Union military peacekeepers. Al-Shabab remains an affiliate of al-Qaeda, but the Islamic State continues to compete for al-Shabab's loyalty. One of the Islamic States' tactics for growing its membership has been to recruit dissatisfied al-Shabab fighters.

Somalia Profile

A chronology of key events:

The Horn of Africa has been home to Somalis since ancient times.

13th-17th centuries - Ajuran Sultanate dominates much of the Horn of Africa before collapsing into rival regional sultanates.

1875 - Egypt occupies towns on Somali coast and parts of the interior.

1860s - France acquires foothold on the Somali coast, later to become Djibouti.

1887 - Britain proclaims protectorate over Somaliland.

1888 - Anglo-French agreement defines boundary between Somali possessions of the two countries.

1889 - Italy sets up a protectorate in central Somalia, later consolidated with territory in the south ceded by the sultan of Zanzibar.

1925 - Territory east of the Jubba river detached from Kenya to become the westernmost part of the Italian protectorate.

1936 - Italian Somaliland combined with Somali-speaking parts of Ethiopia to form a province of Italian East Africa.

1940 - Italians occupy British Somaliland.

1941 - British occupy Italian Somalia.

Independence

1950 - Italian Somaliland becomes a UN trust territory under Italian control.

1956 - Italian Somaliland renamed Somalia and granted internal autonomy.

1960 - British and Italian parts of Somalia become independent, merge and form the United Republic of Somalia; Aden Abdullah Osman Daar elected president.

1963 - Border dispute with Kenya; diplomatic relations with Britain broken until 1968.

1964 - Border dispute with Ethiopia erupts into hostilities.

1967 - Abdi Rashid Ali Shermarke beats Aden Abdullah Osman Daar in elections for president.

Drought and war

1969 - Muhammad Siad Barre assumes power in coup after Shermarke is assassinated.

1970 - Barre declares Somalia a socialist state and nationalises most of the economy.

1974 - Somalia joins the Arab League.

1974-75 - Severe drought causes widespread starvation.

1977 - Somalia invades the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

1978 - Somali forces pushed out of Ogaden with the help of Soviet advisers and Cuban troops. Barre expels Soviet advisers and gains support of United States.

1981 - Opposition to Barre's regime begins to emerge after he excludes members of the Mijertyn and Isaq clans from government positions, which are filled with people from his own Marehan clan.

1988 - Peace accord with Ethiopia.

1991 - Mohamed Siad Barre is ousted. Power struggle between clan warlords kills or wounds thousands of civilians.

Somaliland breaks away

1991 - Former British protectorate of Somaliland declares unilateral independence.

1992 - US Marines land near Mogadishu ahead of a UN peacekeeping force sent to restore order and safeguard relief supplies.

1993 - US Army Rangers are killed when Somali militias shoot down two US helicopters in Mogadishu and a battle ensues. Hundreds of Somalis die. US mission formally ends in March 1994.

1995 - UN peacekeepers leave, having failed to achieve their mission.

1996 August - Warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed dies of wounds and is succeeded by his son, Hussein.

Puntland autonomy

1998 - Puntland region declares autonomy.

2000 August - Clan leaders and senior figures meeting in Djibouti elect

Abdulkassim Salat Hassan president of Somalia.

2000 October - Hassan and his newly-appointed prime minister, Ali Khalif Gelayadh, arrive in Mogadishu to heroes' welcomes. Gelayadh announces his government, the first in the country since 1991.

2001 April - Somali warlords, backed by Ethiopia, decline to support transitional administration.

2004 August - In 14th attempt since 1991 to restore central government, a new transitional parliament inaugurated at ceremony in Kenya. In October the body elects Abdullahi Yusuf as president.

2004 December - Tsunami off Indonesia displaces 10,000s on Somali coast.

2005 February-June - Somali government begins returning home from exile in Kenya, but there are bitter divisions over where in Somalia the new parliament should sit.

2005 November - Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi survives an assassination attempt in Mogadishu.

Islamist advance

2006 February - Transitional parliament meets in central town of Baidoa for the first time since it was formed in 2004.

2006 March-May - Scores of people are killed and hundreds are injured during fierce fighting between rival militias in Mogadishu. Worst violence in almost decade.

2006 June-July - Militias loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts take Mogadishu and other parts of south after defeating clan warlords.

Ethiopian troops enter Somalia.

2006 July-August - Mogadishu's air and seaports are re-opened for the first time since 1995.

2006 September - Transitional government and Islamic Courts begin peace talks in Khartoum.

Somalia's first known suicide bombing targets President Yusuf outside parliament in Baidoa.

Islamists retreat

2006 December - Ethiopian and transitional government put Islamists to flight, capturing Mogadishu.

2007 January - Islamists abandon their last stronghold, the southern port of Kismayo.

President Abdullahi Yusuf enters Mogadishu for the first time since taking office in 2004.

Air strikes in south against al-Qaeda figures are first direct US military intervention in Somalia since 1993.

2007 March - African Union troops land in Mogadishu amid pitched battles between Islamist insurgents and government forces backed by Ethiopian troops, after UN Security Council authorised six-month peacekeeping mission.

Piracy concerns

2008 May - The UN Security Council allows countries to send warships to Somalia's territorial waters to tackle pirates.

2009 January - Ethiopia completes withdrawal of troops, announced the previous year, and Al-Shabab capture Baidoa, formerly a key government stronghold.

Meeting in Djibouti, parliament elects moderate Islamist Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed president, extends transitional

government's mandate for another two years.

Al-Shabab highpoint

2009 May - Islamist insurgents launch onslaught on Mogadishu and advance in the south.

2009 October - Al-Shabab recaptures the southern port of Kismayo after defeating the rival Hizbul-Islam militia.

2010-12 - Famine kills almost 260,000, the UN says.

2010 January - UN World Food Programme withdraws from Al-Shabab areas of southern Somalia after threats to lives of its staff.

2010 February - Al-Shabab formally declares alliance with al-Qaeda, begins to concentrate troops for a major offensive to capture the capital.

2011 January - Pirate attacks on ships worldwide hit seven-year high in 2010, with Somali pirates accounting for 49 of 52 ships seized.

2011 July - UN formally declares famine in three regions of Somalia. Al-Shabab partially lifts ban on foreign aid agencies in south, and UN airlifts its first aid consignment in five years to Mogadishu.

Al-Shabab pulls out of Mogadishu in what it calls "tactical move".

Kenyan intervention

2011 October - Kenyan troops enter Somalia to attack rebels they accuse of being behind several kidnappings of foreigners on Kenyan soil.

American military begins flying drone aircraft from a base in Ethiopia, Ethiopian troops return to central town of Guriel.

2012 February-May - Al-Shabab loses key towns of Baidoa and Afgoye to Kenyan,

African Union and Somali government forces.

New parliament, president

2012 August - Somalia's first formal parliament in more than 20 years is sworn in at Mogadishu airport, ending eight-year transitional period. Pro-government forces capture the port of Merca south of Mogadishu from Al-Shabab.

2012 September - MPs in Mogadishu elect academic and civic activist Hassan Sheikh Mohamud president over the incumbent Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. First presidential election in Somalia since 1967.

2012 October - African Union and government forces recapture Kismayo, the last major city held by Al-Shabab and the country's second-largest port, and the town of Wanla Weyn northwest of Mogadishu.

2013 January - US recognises Somalia's government for the first time since 1991.

2013 June - Veteran Al-Shabab leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys is taken into custody by government troops after he is ousted by more extreme Al-Shabab figure Ahmed Abdi Godane.

Spike in violence with various attacks by Al-Shabab, including on presidential palace and UN compound in Mogadishu.

2013 September - International donors promise 2.4 billion dollars in reconstruction aid in three-year "New Deal".

Shabab attacks Kenya

2013 September - Al-Shabab seize shopping centre and kill 60 people in Kenyan capital Nairobi, saying it is retaliation for Kenya's military involvement in Somalia.

2014 May - Al-Shabab says it carried out a bomb attack on a restaurant in Djibouti,

saying the country is used as a launch pad to strike Muslims.

2014 June - Al-Shabab claims two attacks on the Kenyan coast which kill more than 60, saying operations against Kenya would continue.

2014 September - Al-Shabab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane killed in US drone strike. Government offers 2 million dollar bounty for his successor, Ahmad Omar.

2014 November - Government launches country's first postal service in more than two decades. Mogadishu's first ever cash withdrawal machine installed in a hotel.

2014 November-December - Al Shabab carry out mass killings in north-east Kenya, including on a bus and a camp of quarry workers.

2015 April - Al-Shabab claim responsibility for killing 148 people, mainly Christian students, at Garissa University College in northern Kenya. Kenya carries out air raids on Al-Shabab bases in Somalia in retaliation.

2015 May - US Secretary of State John Kerry pays brief visit to Mogadishu, the first officeholder to do so, a few weeks after Al-Shabab raid government quarter of the city and kill 17 people.

2016 February - African Union leaders agree on need for more funding and support for their military presence in Somalia after weeks of increased Al-Shabab attacks on public spaces and pro-government troops. Government and African Union troops recapture southern port of Merca that Al-Shabab briefly seized.

2016 November - Leaders of two Somali regions, Puntland and Galmudug, agree to respect a ceasefire in the disputed city of Galkayo. Fighting in the city reportedly displaced 90,000.

2017 February - Parliament elects former prime minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, known as Farmajo, as president. Al-Shabab threatens to target anyone collaborating with him.

2017 March - Pirates seize tanker off coast of Puntland in the first hijacking of a large vessel in the region since 2012.

2017 May - President Mohamed at London conference calls for lifting of arms embargo to help defeat al-Shabab. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres says conditions are now in place in Somalia for it to become a success story.

2017 October - Double truck bombing kills 350 people in Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab is prime suspect.

Al-Shabab

2004 – 2017

2004

June, 2004

Islamic Courts Union Emerges

A coalition of eleven sharia courts forms the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), naming Sharif Sheikh Ahmed its leader.

October, 2004

Transitional Federal Government Formed

Somalia's internationally backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG), comprising representatives of the country's largest clans, is formed in exile in Nairobi. Abdullahi Yusuf is elected president of the interim body.

2006

June, 2006

Mogadishu Falls

Backed by al-Shabab militants, the ICU wrests control of Mogadishu after clashing with a coalition of warlords.

December 6, 2006

Ethiopia Invades

Ethiopia, a Majority-Christian nation, invades and takes Mogadishu with little ICU opposition.

2007

A Turning Point for al-Shabab

Galvanized by the invasion, al-Shabab transforms into the most powerful Somali guerrilla group, well-funded and thousands strong.

January 7, 2007

Transitional Government Enters Mogadishu

The TFG moves into the capital from its interim headquarters in the western city of Baidoa.

February, 2007

Regional Peacekeepers Arrive

The United Nations approves a regional peacekeeping force known as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to support the TFG in its battle against al-Shabab.

2008

February, 2008

U.S. Designates al-Shabab Terrorists

The U.S. State Department designates al-Shabab a foreign terrorist organization, blocking anyone in the United States from providing financial support to the group

2009

January 13, 2009

Ethiopia Pulls Out

Ethiopian troops withdraw from Somalia after a series of setbacks and are replaced by AMISOM forces. The country does not redeploy troops to Somalia until 2014, when it becomes a contributor to the regional force.

2010

July 11, 2010

A Transnational Terrorist Threat

Al-Shabab, in its first foreign terrorist attack, carries out multiple suicide bombings in Kampala, Uganda, killing seventy-four.

2011

August, 2011

AMISOM Turns the Corner

AMISOM and TFG forces push al-Shabab out of Mogadishu and other major urban centers after a year-long offensive.

October 16, 2011

Kenya Marches In

Kenya invades southern Somalia in Operation Linda Nchi following kidnappings claimed by the militant group. The country's forces are integrated into AMISOM in February 2012.

2012

February, 2012

Tying the Knot with al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri announces al-Shabab's affiliation with the jihadi network.

October, 2012

The Fall of Kismayo

Backed by local Somali forces, Kenyan troops sweep into Kismayo, ousting al-Shabab from its last major stronghold and cutting off a major source of the militant group's funding.

2013

January 17, 2013

A New Beginning

The United States recognizes the government of Somalia after a hiatus of more than twenty years. "There is still a long way to go and many challenges to confront, but we have seen a new foundation for that better future being laid," says Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Terror in Nairobi

In a multiday raid on a Nairobi mall, al-Shabab militants kill sixty-seven people. It is the deadliest terrorist attack in Kenya in fifteen years.

December, 2013

U.S. Deploys Ground Troops

The U.S. military sends a small team of advisors to Mogadishu to assist AMISOM forces. It is the first U.S. deployment since eighteen soldiers were killed in the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu.

2014

September 1, 2014

Al-Shabab Leader Killed

Ahmed Umar, also known as Abu Ubaidah, becomes al-Shabab's leader after Ahmed Abdi Godane, one of the group's founders, is killed in a U.S. air strike.

October 5, 2014

Port City Liberated

Somali and AMISOM troops retake the southern coastal city of Barawe nearly six years after al-Shabab gained control of the area.

2015

April 2, 2015

Kenya Again Under Attack

Al-Shabab militants in central Kenya kill 148 people at Garissa University College. The fifteen-hour siege, in which gunmen hold more than seven hundred student's hostage, exceeds the 2013 mall raid as the group's deadliest attack in the country.

2017

February 8, 2017

A Contentious Election

Former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed wins the presidency. The government hails the election as the final step in its decades-long path toward effective central governance, but international observers criticize the election as corrupt.

October 15, 2017

Mogadishu Bombings

In Somalia's deadliest terrorist attack, truck bombings in the capital city kill more than five hundred people and injure another three hundred. Al-Shabab is widely believed to be behind the attack, though it does not claim responsibility. Two weeks later, Shabab militants kill at least twenty-nine during a siege on a hotel in Mogadishu; the dead

include senior government and police officials.

November 21, 2017

U.S. Escalates Strikes

More than one hundred militants affiliated with al-Shabab are killed in a single U.S. air strike northwest of Mogadishu, according to the Pentagon. The strike is one of more than two dozen in Somalia authorized by the Trump administration in its first year.

September 30, 2017

AMISOM Begins Drawdown

The UN Security Council approves the withdrawal of a thousand AMISOM troops by the end of 2017, the first time it has cut peacekeeper numbers in Somalia, as part of a transition of security responsibilities to the Somali government. Another reduction of a thousand troops is set to take place in 2018.

Why the U.S. Military is in Somalia

The U.S. response to the challenges in Somalia has been to work with the Federal Government and the Federal Member state administrations, in coordination with the African Union, the United Nations, and other partners working toward a common goal: to support Somali-led efforts to stabilize and rebuild their country along democratic and federal lines.

By U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs

Somalia collapsed as a state, beginning in the late 1980s, and the Somali people have suffered some 30 years of war, displacement, and famine ever since.

The Somali conflict has crossed borders, primarily into Kenya, where large-scale and high profile terrorist attacks have killed hundreds of innocent civilians, including college students in their dormitories and shoppers in a Nairobi mall. There were also attacks against civilians in Kampala, Uganda.

The election of the current government, led by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who is widely known by his nickname, “Farmaajo,” has given Somalia its best chance for a just and lasting peace in over a generation. The U.S. Africa Command and U.S. military, in close collaboration with the U.S. Mission to Somalia and U.S. Agency for International Development, are working with his administration across the “3 Ds”: development, diplomacy and defense.

The U.S. response to the challenges in Somalia has been to work with the Federal Government and the Federal Member state administrations, in coordination with the African Union, the United Nations, and other partners working toward a common goal: to support Somali-led efforts to stabilize and rebuild their country along democratic and federal lines.

For our part, U.S. Africa Command and the U.S. military are committed to serving as the security component of the broader political-diplomatic efforts of the U.S. Mission to Somalia, whether it is in protecting U.S. personnel and facilities, or in supporting Somali forces through train and equip, as well as advise and assist missions.

AFRICOM efforts are in conjunction with Somali National Security Forces, and are providing direct support to the five primary troop contributing countries in the African Union Mission in Somalia, also known as AMISOM: Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia. We work with the United Nations, the European Union, and a range of traditional and non-traditional partners including the United Kingdom, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Our military actions, to include strikes against the Al-Qaeda-aligned Al-Shabaab terrorist group and – more recently – against a new Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-aligned group, are done in support and with the concurrence of the Federal Government of Somalia. Our policy is to support Somalia-led efforts to encourage members of the Al-Shabaab and ISIS to defect and pledge support to the Somali Government. When that is not

possible, our military policy to target these groups is in accordance with the laws of armed conflict and in support of our broader stabilization goals.

Background

Our work in Africa reflects the reality that those who are at greatest risk there from violent extremist organizations are the Africans themselves. Groups such as Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have killed tens of thousands of their fellow Africans, indeed tens of thousands of their fellow Muslims. Our work also reflects the local, regional and global threats posed by Al-Shabaab and ISIS-Somalia, threats that can be best addressed over the long term by inclusive and effective Somali governance, including security forces able to exert control over territory.

A safe, stable, secure and prosperous Africa is an enduring United States interest and a key component of our U.S. foreign policy. In support of this policy, AFRICOM, in concert with other U.S. Government agencies and partners, conducts sustained security engagement through military-to-military programs, military sponsored activities and training, and other military operations to promote stability and security in Africa.

AMISOM troop contributors have been indispensable partners, working together to deter and defeat terrorist threats in Somalia, establishing and expanding security in the country to allow for the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member State administrations to bring unity and representative governance to the whole nation.

The people of Somalia have considerable work ahead to complete their transition to a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous nation. Nevertheless, we should take notice of the progress the Somali people have made toward emerging from decades of conflict. Somalis are resilient and determined to defeat the terrorists and forces of instability. The men and women of AFRICOM stand committed to help foster the conditions for prosperity and security and help the FGS deliver the future that the people of Somalia deserve.

Support to AMISOM

In Somalia, just as it does across the continent, the U.S. military works with African partners to deter and defeat extremist organizations. AFRICOM works by, with and through African and other partners to address these threats. “By, with and through” refers to a strategic approach designed to achieve U.S. strategic objectives in Africa by enabling the security forces of partnered nations who have compatible strategic objectives. This approach places an emphasis on U.S. military capabilities employed in a supporting role, not as principle participants in any armed conflict.

Security operations are executed almost exclusively by the partnered security forces. AFRICOM works with partner forces and based on their needs, conducts training, advising, assisting, equipping, developing security force institutions, and improving the professionalism of the partner military.

As such, the U.S. has been supporting AMISOM since its inception in 2007. AMISOM, as a multidimensional peace support operation, is mandated to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups, provide security in order to enable the political process at all levels, and facilitate the gradual handing over of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF).

The U.S. Government has provided AMISOM with equipment, logistical support, and peacekeeping training. U.S. equipment support has included armored personnel carriers, trucks, communications equipment, water purification devices, generators, tents, night vision equipment, and helicopters. The U.S. Government has provided peacekeeping training to AMISOM through the Department of State's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program.

Support to the SNSF

AFRICOM provides training and security force assistance to the SNSF, including support for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance to facilitate their efforts to target violent extremist organizations in their country. Training includes advising and assisting the Somali Forces to increase their capability and effectiveness in order to bring stability and security to their country.

There are more than 500 U.S. military personnel in Somalia, a number that fluctuates from time to time depending on training missions, operations and other security force assistance activities that are being carried out in any given month. This number includes personnel supporting the Mogadishu Coordination Center (MCC) which is a forward element of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa which coordinates training and security force assistance activities for SNSF and AMISOM. For perspective, Somalia is a nation with a coastline the same length as the Eastern coast of the United States.

“The key concept to understand is that everything we do in Somalia is at the request of the Federal Government of Somalia and part of our military support to public diplomacy efforts of the State Department,” said AFRICOM Commander, U.S. Marine Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser. “Africa Command and the Department of State are working as part of a substantial international security assistance effort coordinated by the U.N. Special Representative to the Secretary General.”

Waldhauser said that the international effort includes the United Nations, European Union, U.S., United Kingdom, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The aim of these international partners is to demonstrate sufficient progress in building the SNSF in 2017 and 2018 to justify an extension of AMISOM beyond 2019.

“All the work we do by, with and through AMISOM and our Somali partners, whether dealing with the threats they face or training them to improve their capabilities is geared toward one goal,” Waldhauser said. “And that is establishing a secure enough

environment for the broader diplomacy efforts related to national reconciliation and the building of a viable, capable and representative government in Somalia.”

Whole-of-Government Approach

The U.S. takes a whole-of-government approach to addressing security issues and broader challenges alongside Somalis, because the solutions in Somalia require efforts beyond just the military.

U.S. foreign policy objectives in Somalia are to promote political and economic stability, prevent the use of Somalia as a safe haven for international terrorism, and alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by years of conflict, drought, flooding, and poor governance. The U.S. is committed to helping Somalia's government strengthen democratic institutions, improve stability and security, and deliver services for the Somali people.

The U.S. has provided \$1.5 billion in humanitarian assistance in Somalia since 2006 to address the problems of drought, famine, and refugees. Since 2011, we have provided an additional \$240 million in development assistance to support economic, political, and social sectors to achieve greater stability, establish a formal economy, obtain access to basic services, and attain representation through legitimate, credible governance. (Dept. of State Fact Sheet, April 12, 2017)

The U.S. works closely with other donor partners and international organizations to support social services and the development of an effective and representative security sector, including military, police, and justice sector, while supporting ongoing African Union peacekeeping efforts.

USAID is working to increase stability and reduce the appeal of extremism in Somalia through programming that fosters good governance, promotes economic recovery and growth, offers youth skills training, provides support to famine relief efforts, and works to increase social cohesion through improved community with government relationships.

Security Cooperation

Security cooperation is one of our core missions at AFRICOM because we know that partnering with African states and regional bodies to improve their capabilities and knowledge is important in addressing shared security challenges.

Continued support to AMISOM is one of the important multinational efforts in place today. AMISOM has achieved significant territorial gains against Al-Shabaab and has partnered with SNSF to improve their operational capabilities. The resulting improvement in the security situation has led to greater opportunities for progress in good governance and improved economic conditions for all Somalis.

“We have made some measureable progress in Somalia, but there is certainly more work to be done,” said Waldhauser. “And with the strong relationship we have established

with President ‘Farmaajo’ and his government, and working closely with our allies and partners; the goal of a safe, stable and prosperous Somalia is something we will all continue to work toward together.”²⁹

²⁹ By U.S. Africa Command Public Affairs

How educational programs in Africa can help counter violent extremism

By Beza Tesfaye and Beth Maclin

Somalia's capital has been rocked by multiple bomb attacks in the past few months, and a May 6 blast in a border town killed seven Kenyan soldiers. In recent months, a series of bombings left dozens dead or injured.

Most analysts believe that al-Shabab, the al-Qaeda-backed extremist group that has waged an insurgency against the federal government for more than 10 years, is responsible for these attacks.

The recent violence comes in the wake of devastating twin truck bombs that killed hundreds in Mogadishu in October 2017. Despite making gains in security and governance during the past year, Somalia continues to struggle to escape the trap of conflict and instability.

With the United States currently escalating its military presence in Somalia, a major question for the Somali government, U.S. forces and others actors on the ground is how to counter the appeal of violent groups among young people — their common recruits.

This is also a vital question for governments engaged in conflict zones around the world. Some, including Somalia's leaders, see increasing access to education as a way to address disaffected youth's frustrations with the status quo and steer them away from armed groups like al-Shabab.

Does this approach work? And if so, does it work everywhere? We set out to explore the common assumption that educational programs will help counter violent extremism.

How we did our research on political violence

Working with the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, Mercy Corps — the global organization for which we work — designed a study to help us understand how secondary education affects young people's support for political violence. We focused on the Somali Youth Learners Initiative (SYLI), a USAID-funded program implemented by Mercy Corps and other partners.

Across Somalia, the program improved access to secondary education, reaching almost 25,000 young people. SYLI also worked with youth in and outside of school to develop leadership skills and facilitate opportunities to improve their communities through civic engagement activities.

In a new report, we describe how the program — both by itself and in combination with civic engagement activities — changed young people's attitudes toward opposition

groups like al-Shabab. We focused on areas of Somalia previously under the control of armed groups and al-Shabab.

We employed quantitative and qualitative data, surveying 1,220 Somali youth and conducting in-depth interviews with another 40 young people in 2017. We compared students in SYLI-supported schools to out-of-school youth to understand how the program influenced their willingness to support or aid armed opposition groups.

Yes, secondary education did make an impact

We found that the provision of secondary education through SYLI significantly *reduced* support for violence. In-school youth were half as likely (48.2 percent) to support armed groups as out-of-school youth. Further, the combination of SYLI-supported secondary education and civic engagement activities like advocacy campaigns and community service projects had an even greater effect on reducing support for violence. Our results show students offered civic engagement opportunities were 64.8 percent less likely to support political violence than non-engaged youth.

This study reinforces some of what we learned when we tested the same program in the self-declared independent region of Somaliland a year earlier. In Somaliland the combination of education and civic engagement opportunities had the greatest impact on reducing support for political violence.

However, this new study also highlights the fact that the same program can yield different results. We noted that education reduced support for political violence in South Central Somalia and Puntland, while our survey found that education may increase such support in the relatively peaceful areas like Somaliland.

Why do we see these divergent outcomes?

As it turns out, context matters — even within the same country. In parts of Somalia where the provision of basic services is limited, increasing access to secondary education improved young people's perceptions of the government. We think this led to a reduction in support for armed opposition groups.

However, in the more developed and stable Somaliland, where people expected their government to provide higher levels of services, it's a different story. In some cases, the provision of education does not appear to be enough to stop youth from supporting political violence.

These studies have important implications for development programs in conflict-affected countries. The full impact that stability programs have on violence is driven in part by the context in which they are implemented.

In countries emerging from conflict with few, if any, functioning systems, simply investing in basic services such as education can be a quick win for the government — and

for donors focused on promoting stability. In the long term, however, this gain in popular support is not enough.

As conflict-affected areas of Somalia eventually stabilize and develop, education alone will likely not address all the grievances that drive youth to support political violence. Education gives young people the chance to gain knowledge and skills, but it also raises expectations and awareness of what citizens are lacking. Young people can grow angry and frustrated if they perceive the government is unable or uninterested in meeting their needs.

What does this mean for development strategies, and international partners? These shifting dynamics require the development of both short- and long-term strategies for managing and reducing violence — or risk exacerbating the situation.

This means investing in basic post-conflict reconstruction, including rebuilding public services, while laying the groundwork for long-term peace and development by improving governance and providing youth with meaningful opportunities.³⁰

³⁰ Beza Tesfaye and Beth Maclin, How educational programs in Africa can help counter violent extremism

CHAPTER 25

Political Crisis in Burundi

Background

Since gaining independence in 1962, Burundi has experienced multiple episodes of mass violence, including massacres in 1972, 1988, and during the early 1990s, which led to the outbreak of a twelve-year civil war in 1993. Burundi's past conflicts have stemmed from divisions between social groups, primarily along ethnic lines between Hutus and Tutsis, but intertwined with social and institutional control, economic opportunity, and a history of discriminatory policies. Burundi's history mirrors Rwanda's history. The two countries share the same ethnic groups and have experienced mass violence, but whereas in Rwanda a repressive Hutu government led a genocide against Tutsis in 1994, in Burundi a repressive Tutsi governments committed mass violence against Hutus. In Burundi, this violence led to civil war.

More than 300,000 people were killed during the civil war, which ended with the Arusha Accords, signed in 2000 but not implemented until 2005. The peace agreement created a power-sharing deal for political institutions and integrated the various rebel groups into the state military, using an ethnic quota system to ensure more balanced representation.

Though the last rebel group transitioned into a political party in 2009 and large-scale violence has not broken out again since the civil war, Burundi's president and the ruling party—the National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD)—have steadily consolidated their grip on power since the country's first democratic elections in 2010. In the lead-up to the election, CNDD-FDD members intimidated opposition supporters and used political violence—torture, disappearance, and murder—to suppress opposition. Members of CNDD-FDD's youth wing, the Imbonerakure, were implicated in political violence targeting opposition members, although no investigations or prosecutions were conducted.

Since 2010, Nkurunziza has enacted legislation targeting members of civil society and shrinking democratic space. The government passed a law in June 2013 curbing press freedom and six months later enacted a law restricting public gatherings.

In addition to tightening control over civil society, Nkurunziza illegally ran for a third presidential term and won in July 2015. This is the root of the current crisis. According to Burundi's constitution, presidents are limited to serving two five-year terms, which would have made Nkurunziza ineligible to run for a third term. CNDD-FDD claimed that Nkurunziza was first selected by the country's legislature in 2005, rather than by popular vote, and therefore he was eligible to run again.

Mass protests erupted in April 2015 ahead of scheduled elections and continued throughout the summer. The protests were met with political violence against opposition members and low-intensity skirmishes between police and civilians. In May 2015, former intelligence chief Major General Godefroid Niyombare and two other officials attempted a coup, which was foiled by government forces. Since then, both pro-government and opposition armed groups have committed a series of assassinations of prominent individuals, including General Adolphe Nshimirimana, Brigadier General Athanase Kararuza, and human rights activist Pierre Claver Mbonimpa (attempted), among others. Mass ethnic violence has not been widespread in the current conflict thus far, but many scholars and policymakers fear that lingering ethnic tension could intensify violence in the future.

Concerns

Weak institutions, extreme poverty (Burundi is consistently listed as one of the top three poorest countries in the world), and a colonial legacy that fostered ethnic divisions have contributed to the country's violent history. This violence risks repeating itself if the political crisis is not resolved. In the past, authoritarian governance and successive episodes of mass violence led to large-scale civil war between ethnic groups. Although the basic pillars of the Arusha Accords have held until now, Nkurunziza's disputed reelection risks unraveling the progress that Burundi has made toward reconciliation and instituting a representational political system.

Burundi is situated in the already volatile Great Lakes region of Africa and its political problems have the potential to further destabilize the area. On the other hand, the upcoming elections in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda—both Congolese President Joseph Kabila and Rwandan President Paul Kagame are likely to run for an additional, illegitimate term—pose the risk of spillover violence to Burundi.

Recent Developments

Following the July 2015 election in which Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza won a disputed third term, violence among state forces, suspected opposition members, and civilians has increased significantly, particularly after October 2015. In December 2015, security forces killed more than ninety people, mostly suspected anti-government supporters, in retaliation for an attack on a military base by gunmen opposing Nkurunziza's presidency. More than 285,000 refugees have fled Burundi, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and more than 400 people have been killed, although that number could be as high as 1,000.

In December 2015, the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council authorized the deployment of five thousand peacekeepers as part of the African Protection and Prevention Mission in Burundi. When Nkurunziza threatened to fight against the force, the African Union abandoned its plan in late January 2016. In early April, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed sending a force of 3,000 police to the country, but in response, Nkurunziza said he would only accept twenty unarmed police officers.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power for more than thirty years, was appointed as head mediator for peace talks between Burundi's government and opposition groups. Although the United States, African Union, and various European countries have urged both opposition groups and the government to negotiate since the election last July, Museveni has been unsuccessful in bringing the parties together.

Burundi Profile

Chronology of key events:

pre-1300s - Hutu people settle in the region.

1400s - Tutsi settlers arrive.

1500s - Distinct Burundian kingdom emerges.

1890 - The kingdoms of Urundi and neighbouring Ruanda (Rwanda) incorporated into German East Africa.

1916 - Belgian army occupies the area.

1923 - Belgium receives League of Nations mandate to administer Ruanda-Urundi.

1959 - Influx of Tutsi refugees from Ruandam half of the territory following ethnic violence there.

1959-1961 - Independence drive led by cross-communal UPRONA party of Prince Louis Rwagasore, which wins 1961 legislative elections. Prince Louis becomes prime minister of Ruanda-Urundi but is assassinated shortly afterwards.

Independence

1962 - Urundi secedes and becomes independent kingdom of Burundi, under King Mwambutsa IV.

1963 - Thousands of Hutus flee to Rwanda following ethnic violence.

1965 - King Mwambutsa refuses to appoint a Hutu prime minister after Hutus win a majority in parliamentary elections; attempted coup put down by army chief Michel Micombero.

1966 - Michel Micombero abolishes the monarchy and declares himself president.

Massacres and one-party rule

1972 - About 120,000 Hutus are massacred by government forces and their supporters in the wake of a Hutu-led uprising in the south.

1976 - President Micombero is deposed in a military coup by Jean-Baptiste Bagaza.

1981 - A new constitution makes Burundi a one-party state under UPRONA.

1987 - President Bagaza is deposed in a coup led by Pierre Buyoya.

1988 - Thousands of Hutus are massacred by Tutsis, and thousands more flee to Rwanda.

Dashed hopes

1992 - New constitution providing for a multiparty system is adopted in a referendum.

1993 June - Melchior Ndadaye's Frodebu wins multi-party polls, ending military rule and leading to the installation of a pro-Hutu government.

1993 October - Tutsi soldiers assassinate President Ndadaye. In revenge, some Frodebu members massacre Tutsis, and the army begins reprisals. Burundi is plunged into an ethnic conflict which claims some 300,000 lives.

1994 January - Parliament appoints a Hutu, Cyprien Ntaryamira, as president.

1994 April - Plane carrying President Ntaryamira and his Rwandan counterpart is shot down over the Rwandan capital Kigali, killing both and triggering genocide in Rwanda in which 800,000 are killed.

1994 October - Parliament speaker Sylvestre Ntibantunganya appointed president.

1995 - Massacre of Hutu refugees leads to renewed ethnic violence in the capital, Bujumbura.

Buyoya returns

1996 - Ex-president Buyoya seizes power.

Transitional government

2001 October - Talks brokered by South African President Nelson Mandela lead to installation of transitional government, but main Hutu rebel groups refuse to sign and fighting intensifies.

2003 April - Domitien Ndayizeye - a Hutu - succeeds Pierre Buyoya as president, under terms of three-year, power-sharing transitional government inaugurated in 2001.

2003 July - Major rebel assault on Bujumbura. Some 300 rebels and 15 government soldiers are killed. Thousands flee their homes.

2003 November - President Ndayizeye and Hutu rebel group Forces for Defence of Democracy (FDD) leader Pierre Nkurunziza sign agreement to end the civil war at summit of African leaders in Tanzania. Smaller Hutu rebel group, Forces for National Liberation (FNL), remains active.

2004 - UN force takes over peacekeeping duties from African Union troops.

2005 January - President signs law to set up new national army, incorporating government forces and all but one Hutu rebel group, the FNL.

Nkurunziza becomes president

2005 August - Pierre Nkurunziza, from the Hutu FDD group, is elected as president by the two houses of parliament. The FDD won parliamentary elections in June.

2006 April - A curfew, imposed during the violence of 1972, is lifted.

2006 September - The last major rebel group, the Forces for National Liberation (FNL), and the government sign a ceasefire at talks in Tanzania. Sporadic clashes recur over the next two years.

2007 February - UN shuts down its peacekeeping mission and refocuses its operations on helping with reconstruction.

2007 April - DRCongo, Rwanda and Burundi relaunch the regional economic bloc - Great Lakes Countries Economic Community - known under its French acronym CEPGL.

2007 December - Burundian soldiers join African Union peacekeepers in Somalia.

Peace agreement

2009 March - The Paris Club of creditor nations cancels all of the \$134.3m debt Burundi owed to its members.

2009 April - FNL lays down arms and officially becomes a political party in a ceremony supervised by the African Union.

2010 June - President Nkurunziza re-elected in uncontested poll after main opposition parties boycott the vote.

2013 June - President Nkurunziza approves new media law which critics condemn as an attack on press freedom.

2013 August - The leader of the former rebel FML, Agathon Rwasa, resurfaces after three years in hiding and says he will stand in the 2015 presidential election.

2014 March - Parliament blocks a government attempt to introduce changes to the constitution seen as threatening the balance of power between the country's main ethnic groups.

Authoritarian moves

2015 May - Constitutional Court rules in favour of President Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term, amid reports of judges being intimidated. Protestors take to the streets and tens of thousands flee the violence. An army officer's coup attempt fails.

2015 July - President Nkurunziza wins a third term in the presidential election with 70% of the vote. Opposition leader Agathon Rwasa describes the polls as a "joke".

2016 January - President Nkurunziza threatens to counter the deployment of external peacekeepers after the African Union announces plans to send in 5,000 troops to protect civilians from escalating violence between government and rebel forces.

2016 March - With the political situation showing little sign of improvement, the EU

announces that it is suspending direct financial aid to the Burundian government.

2017 October - Burundi becomes the first ever country to leave the International Criminal Court (ICC).

2017 November - ICC judges approve the opening of a full investigation into alleged crimes against humanity in Burundi, where at least 1,200 people have died in unrest since 2015.

2018 May - Official results say a referendum backed constitutional reforms that could allow President Nkurunziza to stay in office for another sixteen years.

2018 December - Burundi issues international arrest warrant for former president Pierre Buyoya over the killing of President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993. Mr Buyoya's supporters say the move is politically motivated.

Insights from the Burundian Crisis (III): Back to Arusha and the Politics of Dialogue

When Burundians, and international mediators, finally meet in Arusha, they must remember the lessons of the last hard-won peace process more than a decade ago. The root causes of conflict in Burundi are political, not ethnic, and cannot be resolved by force. Compromise will be necessary, since neither the government nor the opposition have the means to win a definitive victory. Pursuing maximalist positions will only mean more hardship and bloodshed, which will further erode the real progress in reconciliation made since 2000. Genuine dialogue, addressing not only immediate problems but also fundamental political differences is needed to resolve the current crisis and chart a peaceful future for the country.

7 July 2016

On 28 August 2000, Burundian political parties signed the “Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi” (the Arusha Agreement) under the eyes of the late South African President Nelson Mandela, the agreement’s facilitator, although the civil war was still ripping the country apart.

The agreement was not really a peace agreement: it was a deal between the government and political parties, and it urged armed groups, which did not initially sign it, to suspend hostilities and negotiate a ceasefire. It was a manifesto for a possible return to peace, including long passages on how to re-organise the security forces, which had been responsible for much of the violence in the 1990s. It included a commitment to tackle the conflict’s root causes, which the agreement presciently noted were “fundamentally political” and “stem from a struggle by the political class to accede to and/or remain in power”.

Most of all, it read like a constitution, laying out the founding principles of what was hoped to be a fresh start: justice, reconciliation, fundamental rights and freedoms, national development and the organisation of the country’s political institutions based on power sharing between Hutu and Tutsi. Espousing the principles of consensual democracy, it indeed became the basis of a new constitution in 2005.

Undermining Arusha

One insurgent group not in Arusha in 2000 was Pierre Nkurunziza’s National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). Locked in a bloody struggle with the Tutsi dominated armed forces, and with rival Hutu armed groups, the CNDD-FDD continued to fight for another three years before signing up to the agreement, grudgingly, in 2003. Imbued with a sense of entitlement from their long struggle in the bush, the CNDD-FDD have consistently criticised the agreement they

themselves accepted when leaving the bush and the armed struggle. Comfortably elected as the ruling party in 2005 and again in 2010 – this time helped by an opposition boycott – they started, gradually at first, to chip away at the letter and spirit of the agreement: undermining political pluralism and basic freedoms as well as reducing the institutions provided for in the constitution to a shadow role as they ran the country for the narrow interests of a small ruling clique.

Within the broad principles of the agreement and the constitution are two major elements, both intended to balance the belligerent parties' interests and thereby reduce the chances of future conflict. Firstly, a system of quotas and power sharing guarantee the minority Tutsi group (which accounts for 15 per cent of the population) representation in the armed forces, parliament and other national institutions: a 50/50 ratio in the armed forces and a 60/40 Hutu/Tutsi ratio elsewhere. In short, the agreement and constitution provide a form of protection to preserve the physical and intellectual capital of the minority group and guard against majority domination – inspired in large part by South Africa's transition out of apartheid. Secondly, the constitution limits the president to two terms in office. This provision, as elsewhere in Africa, was intended to signal that power could be rotated between different political groups and that incumbents would not be able to build systems of authoritarian government allowing them to stay in power indefinitely.

President Nkurunziza's decision in 2015 to seek a third term as president was therefore read by many as a sign of his ultimate intent to bury the agreement. This sparked off a double crisis. On one hand by breaking with the balancing act of Arusha he antagonised a large part of his own movement, contributing to a coup attempt in May last year and the departure into exile of many former political allies and comrades in arms. On the other, anger was not confined to the CNDD-FDD. Already driven to the wall by a declining economy, in part due to government corruption, and the ruling party's stranglehold on the remaining commercial and employment opportunities, Bujumbura's youth, of both ethnic groups, expressed their anger on the street. They were met with a brutal police reaction.

In the year that has followed, street-level violence in Bujumbura has diminished, but all other crisis indicators have deteriorated: over a quarter of a million people have fled, mostly to neighbouring Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, including many members of the Burundian intellectual elite; targeted assassinations and disappearances continue, with victims on both sides of the political divide; and violence has spread to the provinces. The government has simply continued its project of dismantling the spirit of the agreement through a closely-controlled "national dialogue" in which people are put forward to call for an end to presidential term limits and ethnic quotas, all in the name of majoritarian democracy. The core of the problem is therefore political, as the writers of the Arusha Agreement noted, and flows from Nkurunziza's desire to overturn any limit to his power.

Former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa convened talks between the parties at the end of May 2016 in Arusha, where the peace agreement was signed in 2000. These largely failed, as the Burundian government used its control of the East African Community

secretariat, which is currently led by a Burundian and that supports Mkapa's mediation, to ensure that the main exiled opposition platform CNARED (Conseil National pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha et de l'Etat de Droit) was not invited as a group; instead the opposition arrived in a trickle and too late to engage in any real discussion. Nor was the agenda clear. A further round was scheduled for the start of July, but has been put off to allow more time for preparations. Having engaged in shuttle diplomacy with the parties, Mkapa should be in a better position to understand their points of view and get the right attendance, including from CNARED, which needs to attend as a single body.

However, even if the attendance is fine-tuned, the conditions will be far from optimal. Both sides are camped on maximalist positions. The government, reeling from the withdrawal of international financial support but for now seemingly oblivious to the clouds darkening over its economy, thinks it has the situation under control and is portraying the opposition as coup plotters. The opposition still wants Nkurunziza to leave power now, and sees no advantage in climbing down from that position. In addition, much blood has already been spilt and mistrust and the desire for revenge colour the views of all parties. These are serious problems, but they should not discourage Mkapa from his efforts.

As in the 1990s, the 2016 talks have to address the most obvious and pressing challenges: an end to violence and hate speech, which is aggravating ethnic polarisation; disarmament of militia, particularly the CNDD-FDD's Imbonerakure, which acts as a parallel police force controlling rural areas, is deployed along the border with Rwanda and Tanzania and supports the security forces as a back-up force for repression in the capital; greater freedom of expression and assembly; and creating the right conditions for refugees to return. Incremental confidence-building measures are needed and guarantees extracted from the Burundian government.

Rebuilding Arusha

But in a context where the government is dismantling the foundations of the country's post-civil war settlement, talks cannot succeed unless they address the fundamental issue: what future for the Arusha agreement? Should it continue to be the foundation of the country's political institutions, and if so with which modifications? The position of some in the opposition that the agreement is untouchable and not up for discussion risks playing into the hands of those who want to dismantle it by keeping it off the agenda. Faced with the current crisis the best way to preserve the undoubted gains made is to openly discuss the advantages and flaws of the Arusha system, and allow those unhappy with it to express their point of view. Such a discussion will provide a clear assessment of the peacebuilding process since 2000 and this assessment should be the basis for charting Burundi's future.

The other reason to talk about "Arusha in Arusha" is the return of ethnic rhetoric. While most Burundians thought they had turned the page of ethnic politics, it is in fact making a return. The ruling party is playing dangerously with ethnicity, suggesting the coup and subsequent violence in 2015 is a Tutsi plot (backed by Tutsi-dominated Rwanda) and

trying to scapegoat the Tutsi community to better rally the Hutus to its cause, eating away at the country's hard won ethnic solidarity.

There is a further reason that the Arusha agreement needs to be on the table. In 2000, African countries supported the peace talks and those on the continent with the highest moral authority applied themselves to the task, including former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and, after Nyerere's death, Nelson Mandela. Crucially, the agreement called on their countries to act as witnesses to the commitments made by the signatories. Among the witnesses was Benjamin Mkapa, then president of Tanzania. He has understood the historic responsibilities that entailed. But the individuals, countries (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa) and organisations (the African Union and the UN) that bore witness to the Burundian people's desire to find ways of living peacefully together are today reluctant to put their full weight behind him, partly as they are tied up with their own domestic issues, partly because they do not feel that violence has reached a point to justify strong action against an incumbent regime. This passivity is dangerous, and the U.S., the EU and regional leaders should back Mkapa more strongly, and ensure that those in power in Bujumbura are not permitted to dismantle the legacy of Arusha.³¹

³¹ International Crisis Group

Burundi's Dangerous Referendum

On 17 May 2018, Burundians vote on constitutional amendments that would prolong the rule of President Pierre Nkurunziza, dismantle a carefully negotiated Hutu-Tutsi ethnic balance, and ultimately could lead to instability. In this excerpt from our Watch List 2018 – First Update early warning report, Crisis Group urges European policy makers to explore channels for pressuring the government, and African leaders to renew mediation attempts between the regime and opposition.

Africa 15 May 2018

On 17 May, Burundians will vote on constitutional amendments that would allow President Pierre Nkurunziza to prolong his stay in power. Those new provisions also could start to dismantle the carefully negotiated Hutu-Tutsi ethnic balance, defined in the 2000 Arusha agreement that helped end Burundi's civil war. A major outbreak of violence in the country does not appear likely around the vote, despite a deadly attack on a village on 12 May; the status quo could even drag on for years. But the regime's repression, the potential demise of power sharing in Burundian institutions and the crumbling economy are harbingers of instability.

Although the European Union (EU) has lost leverage over Nkurunziza's government in recent years, it retains a strong interest in preventing such instability. The EU and its member states should closely watch developments before, during and after the referendum, and continue to explore channels for pressuring the government while supporting the population. These include encouraging African leaders and the African Union (AU) to renew mediation attempts between the regime and the opposition, while keeping Burundi in the international spotlight. As the Burundian economy collapses, the EU, which suspended direct budgetary support to the Burundian government in 2016, should also take steps to ensure that the aid it now channels through the implementing agencies of the UN, EU member states and international non-governmental organisations helps Burundians as best possible.

Increasing Repression as the Referendum Approaches

The government's main intention with the forthcoming referendum is to lengthen presidential mandates from five to seven years. This change would restart the clock on the two-term limit – rather than annulling it – potentially giving President Nkurunziza a further fourteen years in power. The new draft constitution also stipulates that ethnic quotas in parliament, government and public bodies be reviewed over the next five years. These quotas, intended to protect the Tutsi minority by guaranteeing the Tutsi 40-50 per cent representation in different state institutions, including the army, were a key part of the Arusha agreement.

The regime has designed the constitutional changes primarily to remove any obstacle to its control of the state apparatus. But in the process it may also be laying the groundwork

for reversing ethnic checks and balances. The same is true of the draft constitution's provisions to reduce the number of vice presidents (currently there are two, one Tutsi and one Hutu) to one and to replace the two-thirds majority requirement for parliament to pass particularly significant legislation with a simple majority.

The regime, including the ruling party's youth wing, the Imbonerakure, has carried out a campaign of intimidation against anyone who opposes the referendum or calls for a No vote. It is using threats of violence to push Burundians to register for the vote in hopes of minimising abstention, and identifying people in campaign meetings. The government has banned Western media outlets – the BBC and Voice of America – from radio broadcasting for the duration of the campaign, while its own propaganda machine is in full swing. It has forced citizens to make financial contributions that it claims will support forthcoming elections.

The forced march to the referendum has further accentuated divisions among President Nkurunziza's opponents, despite opposition factions making a renewed attempt to align their positions at the start of 2018. The Amizero y'Abarundi coalition and the Sahwanya-Frodebu party, which remain in Burundi, have both declared they intend to campaign for a No vote. The exiled opposition, under the umbrella of the Conseil national pour le respect de l'accord d'Arusha (CNARED), is calling for a boycott. The divide over the referendum exacerbates the historical divisions over strategy and personal rivalries within the opposition.

Significant violence around the referendum appears unlikely, despite a 12 May attack on a village near the Democratic Republic of Congo border in which 26 people were reported killed by unidentified assailants. This attack comes after a relative absence of major security incidents since 2016, as armed opposition groups have suffered several setbacks. Some of their members were arrested by the Tanzanian government in 2017, sent back to Burundi, and have since disappeared. Those attacks that have taken place, which were launched from South Kivu in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, have failed to inflict significant losses on Burundian security forces or generate local support. But if the frequency of armed clashes between the army and insurgents has declined since 2016, human rights abuses continue. According to the human rights organisation la Ligue Iteka, 456 people were assassinated, 283 tortured and 2,338 arbitrarily arrested in 2017, the vast majority by the government.

President Nkurunziza and his party are developing a doctrine that mixes personality cult, religion and historical mythology to justify his prolonged stay in power. The president is now referred to as "supreme traditional leader". The president and his wife, both active in new Pentecostal churches and prayer crusades, adhere to a theocratic vision that blends traditional Burundian signs of power with divine attribution; tellingly, the government is planning to build a large prayer centre in Gitega where ruling party members will be required to attend lengthy retreats. More broadly, this emerging doctrine presents a Manichean view of history wherein a harmonious pre-colonial Burundi was later spoiled by the machinations of

external powers, in particular Belgium, though language pointing the finger at foreigners also tends to contain veiled references to the role played by their supposed Tutsi allies.

Economy and Development in the Doldrums

The Burundian economy has been severely hit by the loss of overseas aid since 2015, and by the flight of human and financial capital. Gains made in health and education since the early 2000s – notably drops in infant mortality and increasing numbers of Burundian children in school – have stalled. Shortages of currency and fuel have afflicted all sectors. Some 430,000 Burundians have fled to neighbouring countries, principally Tanzania.

Though many Burundians already struggle to make ends meet, the government is introducing new taxes and ad hoc levies. As its relations with Western governments have worsened, it has turned to Turkey, China and Russia for aid. But while these countries might afford the government political support and some financial respite, they are unlikely to offer the sort of budgetary or technical help that Western donors provided. Meanwhile, the impact of private investment in the mineral sector on the wider economy is unlikely to be significant, at least in the short term.

After negotiations with the government under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, the EU and its member states decided in March 2016 to suspend cooperation due to Burundi's rights abuses. Instead, it now channels development aid through international NGOs, the implementing agencies of EU member states and UN agencies. The president and his top officials paint European aid policy and sanctions (which target a handful of those officials) as deliberately aimed at hurting the Burundian people. In some cases, the regime has cracked down on civil society groups that have worked with international donors, including by imprisoning NGO members on spurious charges.

Mitigating Conflict Risk through Continued Support to the Population

The EU and its member states should take steps to help check Burundi's repressive authoritarianism and alleviate deteriorating living conditions for its people.

On the former, Nkurunziza's government has brushed off sporadic pressure from Western donors and actors such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to open space for its opponents. Nor have mediation efforts of the sub-regional body, the East African Community (EAC), made progress. Indeed, some African leaders appear inclined to believe the government's argument that there is no crisis to mediate.

That argument is flawed. The regime probably can keep dissent under wraps for some time. But the consolidation of its rule and dismantling of the Arusha power-sharing provisions augur ill for the country's stability over time. The EU and its member states should press African powers and the AU to renew mediation attempts between the regime and the exiled opposition, with the aim of ensuring a credible election in 2020. They should strive to maintain international attention on Burundi, with EU member states on the UN

Security Council pressing to keep Burundi on the council's agenda. The EU also should uphold its position that conditions in the country do not allow for a free and fair referendum.

In light of its 2016 suspension of direct support to the government, the EU needs to redouble efforts to find ways to ensure its aid supports the population. In addition to the support it channels through international NGOs, it should continue pursuing its plan to directly support local NGOs, but with particular caution not to expose them to risk. This could mean providing them with adequate funding to reinforce their own management and legal capacity in case the government continues to harass them through the courts. The EU should also reinforce its delegation in Bujumbura and strengthen the tracking mechanisms with its implementing partners to prevent any misuse of its funds.³²

³² International Crisis Group