



# **Regional Economic Organizations, American Policy after the Arab Spring, Practices and War in Countering Terrorism, Oil as the Path to Institutional Change, Kenya's Truth Commission, and Missile Defenses and Strategic Nuclear Arms Control**

Prof. Leann Brown draws upon several theoretical literatures and empirical illustrations to explore the subject posed in the title of her article: “Why Regional Economic Organizations Take on Conventional Security Tasks.” After a brief discussion of the literature concerning organizational changes, critical junctures, and crises, she divides the literature of regional organizational change into publications that emphasize (1) structural and other power-related factors, (2) functional needs and institutional factors, and (3) cognitive and constructivist understandings. Dr. Brown concludes that structural and organizational-level factors provide both opportunities for and constraints on decision makers faced with a security threat. However, the decision to transform the regional organization from a predominantly economic actor into a conventional security one is most immediately influenced by decision makers’ perceptions of proximate threat and functional necessity.

Although rhetorically cordial as ever, the relationship between the United States and Israel underwent key changes in recent years, according to Dr. Khalil Marrar. In “Allies in Flux: American Policy after the Arab Spring,” he argues that with the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” the “Arab-Spring-turned-Winter,” and geopolitical challenges from Russia and China in their respective zones of influence, the United States’ commitments to Israel and other Middle East allies—most notably Saudi Arabia and Egypt—have necessarily evolved under scrutiny and in light of changes in the global and regional strategic terrain. Furthermore, even though American policy remains susceptible to influence from a variety of domestic lobbying and public opinion pressures, international forces have once again proven preeminent in the ultimate American approach to world affairs. Dr. Marrar examines how changes in the prevailing order

have trumped America's commitments to its Middle East allies, most notably Israel, and traces how those alterations supersede and influence domestic politics surrounding foreign-policy decision making in the United States. This approach warrants a larger study, but the author focuses on the effects of the Arab Spring and Winter on the American policy calculus in the Middle East and the subsequent impact on political pressure groups representing Arab and Muslim-American interests.

In "A Different Type of War: Practices and War in Countering Terrorism," Dr. Christopher McIntosh posits that the United States is finding it difficult to successfully end what began as a war on terrorism and what the 2015 *National Security Strategy* describes as a war on al-Qaeda and its affiliates. He argues that some quality of the enemy has not caused this difficulty; rather, it stems from common practices associated with and expected when one engages in a strategy of war. By employing practice theory to understand US actions, the author identifies areas where challenges have arisen, maintaining that by looking at the normal practices of war for contemporary US strategy, we can begin to see many of the problems facing the United States in terms of finally winning the conflict with al-Qaeda. Specifically, our troubles result from trying to rectify what is normal or expected behavior in a war with what is most effective in addressing the threat posed by this terror organization and its affiliates.

In an unlikely scenario depicted in their article "Oil as the Path to Institutional Change in the Oil-Exporting Middle East and North Africa," Prof. Mohammed Akacem and Prof. Dennis D. Miller propose an oil privatization plan whose goal is to transfer oil wealth from the oil Middle East and North Africa governments to the citizens, thereby empowering the latter. The authors argue that oil by itself does not prevent the onset of transparent and accountable democracy. Rather, the lack of sound democratic institutions that enforce property rights, nurture independent judiciaries, and support the rule of law prevents good government from taking hold. Privatization would enable the flow of financial benefits to citizens directly from the extraction of petroleum and natural gas. Governments would then have to tax citizens to gain revenues and would have to clearly justify their expenditures so that citizens would allow reasonable taxation. This shift in power would be conducive to the establishment of democratic institutions that would increase transparency and likely reduce the waste and corruption so endemic in these resource-rich countries. Furthermore, it would foster peace within and between countries by lessening strife among ethnic groups for central control of the oil resources and thus reduce the need for US projection of power into the region.

Transitional justice and reconciliation measures have been expanded to address widespread social and economic injustices. In "Justice for Economic Crimes? Kenya's Truth Commission," Prof. Kimberly Lanegran assesses how Kenya's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (2008–13) operationalized its mandate to investigate violations of socioeconomic as well as political rights since 1963, summarizes its findings with particular attention to misallocation of land, and considers the political battle sparked by the report. She concludes that, first, investigating a broad range of human rights crimes can reveal convincing evidence of linkages between economic and political violations. Second, truth commissions, frequently incapable of assessing the veracity of individuals' testimonies, struggle to precisely identify the nature of the truth they

have “found.” Third, commissions’ heavy reliance on existing secondary sources and reports calls into question their unique contributions to justice. Finally, addressing economic violations may provoke vehement political backlash from officials implicated in long-standing and continuing economic violations.

In “Missile Defenses and Strategic Nuclear Arms Control: Technology and Policy Challenges,” Dr. Stephen J. Cimbala and Dr. Adam B. Lowther argue that the Russian annexation of Crimea and the subsequent destabilization of Ukraine contributed to a downward spiral in US-Russian nuclear arms control, along with disagreements between NATO and Russia over missile defenses deployed in Europe. Nevertheless, opportunities exist for strategic nuclear reductions between the United States and Russia following implementation of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Either incremental or more ambitious post-New START reductions are theoretically possible within the confines of stable deterrence. In practice, modest reductions are more likely to survive the domestic politics of the United States and Russia. Missile defenses are wild cards in the nuclear arms control process, but they are far from game changers in technical terms. Their significance is as incubators of political mistrust—at least in Russia.

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