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**Military Intervention in Africa
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Reversing the Stabilization Paradigm
Towards an Alternative Approach
Mark Knight

Prescription for an Affordable Full Spectrum Defense Policy
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Editor's Picks

Military Intervention in Africa: French and US Approaches Compared; Leadership Revised; Rethinking Liberal Democracy; The Crime-Conflict Nexus and the Civil War in Syria; Reversing the Stabilization Paradigm; and Prescription for an Affordable Full Spectrum Defense Policy

The level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between military operations by France and the United States in Africa, contends Professor Stephen Burgess in “Military Intervention in Africa: French and US Approaches Compared.” While both constructivist and realist perspectives are necessary for comparative analysis, the argument in this article is that strategic culture and attitudes towards risk as well as differences in perceived spheres of influence are more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the different ways that France and the United States chose to intervene in Africa. The Powell Doctrine and casualty and risk aversion explain why the United States is less willing to intervene directly militarily in Africa; however, the relatively lower level of US interests in Africa as compared with Southwest Asia must also be taken into account. In addition, the US military has an organizational culture of winning, while the French military is accustomed to messy outcomes, which also explains the differences in interventionism. Prepositioning of French forces in Northwest Africa increases the likelihood that they will be used in operations. The prepositioning of US forces in Djibouti has not led to direct military intervention in Somalia, even as the capital and country were on the verge of falling to violent extremists. However, the extensive use of US special forces in Somalia and Northwest Africa has begun a process of convergence with the French military posture.

The recent string of existential crises in Europe—the Euro crisis, Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, and the refugee crisis of 2015—have resulted in new dynamics within the European Union, posits Wolfgang Koeth in “Leadership Revised: How Did the Ukraine Crisis and the Annexation of Crimea Affirm Germany’s Leading Role in EU Foreign Policy?” In Brussels, Germany has emerged as the hardly contested nexus of decision making. It was

in particular through the Ukraine crisis and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 that Germany found itself assuming a leadership role also in the EU's foreign policy, a role it has shunned in the past. However, for Berlin this new role is far from obvious—it is only gradually that Germany grew comfortable with its enhanced role, which is due more to external circumstances than by its own design of its own image abroad and, due to the still prevalent feeling of historical guilt, the fear of being perceived as a dominating power has so far prevented Germany from occupying the forefront of the stage, preferring to pull strings from behind and presenting itself as the EU's "Chief Facilitation Officer." This article analyzes how Germany, in particular through the Ukraine crisis starting in 2014, affirmed itself—albeit reluctantly—as a nexus of decision making in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and became the de facto leading nation for defining the EU's response towards Russia. The article points out the internal and external consequences of this new role and, in particular, its impact on the Baltic States.

In the long course of human evolution and political experimentation, liberal democracy, especially after the events of 1989, has come to be seen as the best political system, asserts Dr. Isabel David in "Rethinking Liberal Democracy: Prelude to totalitarianism." In fact, she pursued, "we seemed to have reached the only system compatible with liberty, after the dreadful experiences of Communist and Nazi totalitarianism, and its twin in the economic realm - capitalism." But is liberalism really conducive to freedom? Or totalitarianism arises from the combination of both the Platonic and Augustinian views: ignorance of values and the pursuit of one's egotistic desires. Evil has an essentially private nature. In this sense, totalitarianism may arise from a utilitarian culture that sees people—or some forms of knowledge—as worthless and disposable objects.

Dr. Christina Steenkamp, in "The Crime-Conflict Nexus and the Civil War in Syria," postulates that there is a strong relationship between organized crime and civil war. This article contributes to the crime-conflict nexus literature by providing a consideration of the role of organized crime in the Syrian conflict. It provides an overview of pre- and post-war organized crime in Syria. The article then builds the argument that war provides opportunities for organized crime through the state's diminished law enforcement ability; the economic hardship which civilians face during war; and the abundance of armed groups who all need to generate revenue. Secondly, the paper argues that organized crime also affects the intensity and duration of war by enabling militants to reproduce themselves materially and to build institutions amongst the communities where they are active. The relationships between armed groups and local populations emerge as a central theme in understanding the crime-conflict nexus.

In "Reversing the Stabilization Paradigm: Towards an Alternative Approach," Mr. Mark Knight examines the dialogue concerning Stabilization that illuminates a paradigm based on the ideas of the so-called 'liberal peace'—defined minimally as democracy and free markets. This model proposes that if the liberal peace is delivered at the sub-national level via Stabilization interventions, then the desired outcome would be 'stability.' However, com-

mentators of Stabilization generally agree that the liberal peace is an unachievable objective that inhibits the desired outcome of 'stability.' This Practice Note contests this analysis and instead argues that 'stability' is an unachievable objective that inhibits the desired outcome of a liberal democratic functioning state. Therefore, Stabilization's desired outcome becomes the protection and enjoyment of human rights, rather than 'stability.' This practice note continues its examination of Stabilization and comes to the conclusion that Stabilization can be understood as political actions in support of an ideological outcome. This understanding of Stabilization is compatible with existing international engagements in support of national transition processes and can be applied across the spectrum from consent to coercion, concludes Mr. Knight.

In his essay "Prescription for an Affordable Full Spectrum Defense Policy," Professor Jan Muczyk affirms that as an indispensable nation the United States needs to pursue a full spectrum defense policy, which happens to be very expensive and in competition with domestic priorities. Therefore, the Defense Department must come up with an affordable strategy for crafting such a defense policy or lose out to high priority domestic exigencies. This undertaking offers proven suggestions based on lessons learned from wars and previous arms races for funding such a policy.

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Military Intervention in Africa

French and US Approaches Compared

STEPHEN BURGESS, PHD*

Recent conflicts in Africa have demonstrated the need for foreign military intervention to prevent violent extremist organizations (VEOs) from expanding their areas of operations and attacking vulnerable states and populations. Since 2013, France has undertaken *direct military intervention*; deploying a force in *Opération Serval* that defeated VEO insurgents in Mali,¹ as well as launching *Opération Barkhane* in the Sahel to monitor and interdict VEOs and armed militants spilling over from Libya's state collapse and Mali's feeble recovery from conflict. In addition, France has trained forces from Chad and other countries that have operated alongside French units in interventions. In contrast, the United States opted for an *indirect military intervention*, establishing the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti in 2002 and spending more than a billion dollars training, equipping, deploying and sustaining African intervention forces mainly for peace enforcement in Somalia in Eastern Africa and training and equipping forces in the Sahel region of West Africa to prevent VEO invasions. The United States has also used Special Forces and remotely piloted aircraft (RPAs) to assist in the fight against VEOs without engaging in major combat.

France and the United States have been among the leading countries when it comes to military intervention. This is because of both countries' relatively high level of global interests and high level of military capabilities as well as the willingness of most of their presidents to use military force. However, when context is considered, the nature of French and American military interventions has been

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quite different, which leads to a number of propositions. First of all, French and US interventions have taken place in different countries where their respective interests have been high. Second, *direct interventions with military force* have occurred in those places where those interests have been attacked or have been judged to be under imminent threat of attack by presidents inclined for various reasons to use force. Direct interventions have not occurred where interests may have been high but where the threat of attack on those interests has been moderate or low. The one exception to this proposition is the US humanitarian intervention in Somalia in 1993; however, the United States has not repeated such an intervention after its 1993 “Black Hawk Down” fiasco in which 18 US service personnel were killed in a mission that was not in the US national interest.²

Third, once France or the United States has intervened, other capable countries (including the United States and France) have not intervened but instead have lent support. For instance, France has a base in Djibouti from where it assisted the government of Djibouti in combating rebels in 1999–2001; however, it chose not to intervene in the 2000s to assist in the fight against VEOs in Eastern Africa. Instead, it chose the Sahel, because the threat to its interests there escalated in 2013, placing thousands of French nationals in Mali under threat of capture. It did not intervene in Eastern Africa because its interests there were not under imminent threat of attack and because the United States staged an *indirect military intervention* against VEOs there first by establishing CJTF-HOA in 2002. France instead chose to work through the European Union (EU) to aid the African Union (AU), the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the training of the new Somali military.³

The United States invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the Pan-Sahel Initiative followed by the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), including the training and equipping of the security forces of Mali, Niger, and Mauritania.⁴ Therefore, it could have been expected that US forces would have intervened in Mali in 2012 or 2013 to assist the beleaguered national military. However, the United States did not intervene in 2012 when jihadists took control of northern Mali and stood by in 2013, while France—which had greater interests that were under attack—intervened. Instead, the United States provided logistical and other support. Evidently, sunk costs were not a great concern in US calculations.

The United States *indirectly intervened militarily* when it established CJTF-HOA in Djibouti at Camp Lemonnier—a French military base—in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and also because Al Qaeda had attacked US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000. The declaration of the “Global War on Terror” led to a surge of military activity and to the US Department of Defense (DOD) and US Central Command

(CENTCOM) deciding to use CJTF-HOA to work against the Al Qaeda threat to Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and the growing ties among jihadists. The resources committed to Eastern Africa were smaller than those in Afghanistan—where the 9/11 attacks were planned (and Iraq)—from where attacks were “anticipated”. Also, the United States was unwilling to intervene directly in Somalia after the 1993 “Black Hawk Down” fiasco. Instead, the United States first worked with Somali warlords from 2001–2006 against Islamists and from 2006 onwards with Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya against the VEO, Al Shabaab. Even when Al Shabaab was on the verge of taking the Somali capital of Mogadishu from 2007 to 2011, the United States continued to rely upon African forces to save the day.

The timing of intervention is also important to consider. In Africa, France and the United States have intervened only after a crisis has occurred and not with *direct military deployment* to prevent a crisis. France could have intervened in 2012 when jihadists took over northern Mali and prevented them from moving towards the more populated half of the country. However, France only did so in 2013 when the jihadists launched an offensive, moving south towards the capital, Bamako, and threatening French nationals. In comparison, the United States *intervened indirectly* in Eastern Africa and Somalia by setting up CJTF-HOA and sending troops to Djibouti after 9/11 when the Bush administration assumed that Al Qaeda was going to launch more attacks in Eastern Africa and Yemen. When the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took over most of Somalia in 2006 and became more extreme, the United States indirectly intervened by supporting the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006 and the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) from 2007 onwards to counter Al Shabaab. In the Sahel, the United States trained and exercised with regional security forces with the aim of preventing a VEO takeover.

France decided to move from modest action to direct military intervention with Serval and, starting in 2014, sustained military action through Barkhane in spite of limited resources. Evidently, there was a change in the calculation of interests in Paris that led to the escalation of military activity. Prior to 2013, France was trying to extricate itself from the business of direct intervention and nation-building in Africa. It was indicative that in 2011, President Nicolas Sarkozy did little after the air campaign in Libya to rebuild the country. In spite of France’s determination to draw down and cut costs, it has continued to get sucked into saving some of its former colonies from collapse, with the intervention in Côte d’Ivoire (2002–2014), Mali (2013–2014) and Central African Republic (2014–2016) and the protracted defense of Chad (*Opération Épervier* 1986–2014). After Serval, France had the chance to resume the process of winding down its military

presence in Africa. However, Paris decided to escalate its military intervention in Northwest Africa.⁵ France launched Barkhane, an open-ended counter-terrorism mission that covers much of the vast Sahel and Sahara with only 3,500 French Army soldiers backed by French Air Force assets in Ndjamena, Chad and Niamey, Niger. The reversal seems to have occurred because Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the so-called Islamic State (Daesh) increasingly have posed a danger to French interests and to the countries of the Sahel and Maghreb, especially Libya, Niger and Mali. However, France's ambitious counterterrorism (CT) operation holds the danger of mission creep and raises questions about excessive risk-taking.

The United States has been content to take an indirect military approach in Africa. The United States has far more military resources than France and could have intervened directly in both Somalia and Mali. However, the administration of President George W. Bush decided in 2001 that the epicenter of the struggle against Al Qaeda was in Southwest Asia and not in Africa. The commitment of more than a hundred thousand troops to Afghanistan and Iraq from 2002 to 2014 significantly diminished the ability of the United States to use military force in Africa. Furthermore, VEOs did not appear as a serious threat in Somalia until 2006 and Mali until 2012. US backing for the Ethiopian invasion in December 2006 and AMISOM in 2007 substituted for direct action, especially at the same time as the United States was launching the surge in Iraq. While the United States thinks that Eastern Africa contains greater threats to US national security interests than Northwest Africa, it has not been as important as Afghanistan or Iraq or more recently Syria and Libya with counter Daesh operations. As for Mali and the Sahel, the United States has not deployed forces but has supported operations Serval and Barkhane with logistics and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). US Africa Command (AFRICOM) is currently focused on attacking Daesh in Libya.

Methodology

This article analyzes why French and US approaches to military intervention in Africa are different and argues that different strategic cultures and interests provide the explanation. The article also appraises similar features in French and US interventions: (1) *direct interventions with military force* occur in places where interests are high and have been attacked or judged to be under imminent threat of attack; they have not occurred where interests may be high but where the threat of attack on those interests has been moderate or low; (2) direct interventions take place after a crisis has occurred and not to prevent one from happening; (3) *indi-*

rect military intervention takes place in locations where interests are moderate and there is a threat of an *eventual* attack; (4) once France or the United States has intervened, that country plays the lead role and other countries cooperate.

There are two theoretical frameworks—realism and constructivism—that are employed in this article to analyze the propositions. First, realism explains direct and indirect military interventions in terms of levels of interest and threats to those interests and the resources available to counteract threats and maintain the status quo. Accordingly, direct military interventions take place where vital interests are under great threat or under attack; and indirect interventions are launched where the threat is not as high and where action is needed to prevent spillover of a conflict.⁶

The realist perspective is that threats to French interests in Northwest Africa are higher than to those of the United States, which explains direct French military intervention there despite fewer military resources. Conversely, threats to US interests in Eastern Africa are higher than those against French interests, which helps to explain indirect US military intervention there. France has had high interests in Northwest Africa since colonial times, which have been under increasing threat of attack from VEOs. While France has comparatively low military resources and is confronting high costs, it has decided to intervene and sustain the intervention because of the level of interests. The realist view is that US indirect intervention in Eastern Africa has occurred because of VEOs in Somali, Yemen and Kenya that threaten US interests.⁷ Also, the United States has more military resources to deal with these areas than does France, which has made it possible for US forces to intervene. However, US interests have not been as high as in Southwest Asia and have not been so threatened that it has found it necessary to directly intervene. If US interests in Eastern Africa were higher, it would have been more willing to directly intervene militarily. For example, if bin Laden had stayed in Sudan and had been harbored by the Bashir regime and planned the 9/11 attacks from Sudan, the United States would have attacked Sudan and not Afghanistan. The epicenter of the war on terror would have been in Eastern Africa. As for Northwest Africa, the higher level of resources enabled the United States to expend considerable resources in an area which is not high in the US national interest.

Second, constructivist theory and more specifically strategic culture play a role in explaining the contrast between the tendency of France to directly intervene in Africa with subordinate partners despite a limited budget as opposed to the US pattern of indirectly intervening and seeking partners as surrogates when it has massive military and financial resources. Countries and their leaders hold certain beliefs and assumptions and adhere to a strategic culture in taking military

action. Strategic culture plays a role in determining whether military interventions are direct or indirect.⁸

Both France and the United States have constructed respective self-conceptualizations over the years and have formed two distinct “strategic cultures” that play a role in shaping the nature of their interventions. French strategic culture and past operations explain why and how France has intervened in Northwest Africa. France has chosen “ways” of intervention, which have achieved significant effects by employing relatively small, mobile military forces in actions that have carried a good degree of risk. In contrast, the United States has been more risk averse in its choice of “ways”, which can be traced back to the “Vietnam syndrome” and the “Powell doctrine” which advocated the deployment of overwhelming force if the ends to be achieved were considered to be in the US national interest. The strategic culture proposition is that the United States and French militaries will continue past behavior unless compelled by higher authority or an external shock to do otherwise.⁹

Therefore, the level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between France and the United States. While both perspectives are necessary for comparison, the argument in this article is that the constructivist (strategic culture) perspective and attitude towards risk is more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the differences between the French and US approaches.

French Military Intervention in Africa

The issue in this section is whether **realism (interests)** or **constructivism (strategic culture)** provides more of the explanation for why France has launched direct military interventions in Northwest Africa and not in Eastern Africa. A related issue is whether an external shock to French interests or a change in leaders’ perspectives caused a change in military intervention from 2013 onwards.¹⁰

Realism (interests): France has been intervening in Africa since 1830 when it invaded and colonized Algeria. By 1900, it had conquered Northwest Africa, defeating a number of militarily proficient kingdoms in the Sahel. The French established colonial military outposts throughout the Sahel and Sahara and used the Foreign Legion and other forces to put down rebellions against its authority. France created the states of Algeria, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso and considered its colonies to be part of the metropole. French nationals ran the administrations, companies and militaries in its colonies, and this pattern carried over into the post-independence era. From 1960 onwards, France maintained its nationals and companies and military outposts in Northwest Africa, and peri-

odic military interventions in the region in support of regimes were one of the indicators of neo-colonialism. Of particular importance were uranium mining operations in Niger and elsewhere that fueled France's extensive nuclear power industry. France considered Northwest Africa to be in its sphere of influence, and as late as 1994, Paris objected to a visit by a US Secretary of State to Mali.¹¹

In Eastern Africa, France established a base in Djibouti in 1894 that provided a way station that connected to French Indochina and to its interests in the Middle East. However, France had little interest in Eastern Africa, except to deter a possible Ethiopian takeover of Djibouti in the 1980s and to help the Djiboutian government counteract attacks by local Djiboutian rebels from 1999 to 2001.

In 1991, France supported the Algerian military when it prevented the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from taking power after elections. This gave rise to civil war and the eventual emergence of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Algerian violent extremists blamed France for the military coup and attempted to attack French cities and citizens. Thus, AQIM and other VEOs continued to attack French interests into this decade, seizing French citizens in Northwest Africa as hostages for ransom and other actions.¹²

Neo-colonialism finally began to fade away in the late 1990s. Threats to interests were not as great with the end of the Cold War and the containment of Colonel Qadhafi of Libya. In *Opération Turquoise* in 1994, French forces intervened to save a regime that had been responsible for genocide in Rwanda, which gave French neo-colonialism a bad name. In 1997, the death of Michel Foccart, the architect of neo-colonialism and the fall of the French-backed Mobutu regime in Zaire opened the way for a less paternalistic and more multilateral approach. The new French government decided to change course and act more in Africa as part of the European Union (EU). Prime Minister Lionel Jospin undertook the process of transforming France's role in Africa to one of leading EU assistance to Africa and launching a French-led peacekeeping training program—RECAMP.

Even as neo-colonialism faded away, France still was concerned about its interests (citizens and companies) and the sunk costs in its former colonies but chose to act in a more modest and even-handed manner. The 2002 French intervention in Cote d'Ivoire, *Opération Licorne*, did not support the regime of President Laurent Gbagbo but separated the government and rebel forces while a political settlement was being reached over eight years. Also, France led interventions to stop Sudan from taking over Chad in a dispute over war and genocide in Darfur. In 2006, Sudan sent an invasion force of Chadian rebels to seize Ndjamena. France increased the size of its force in Chad and helped the Chadian military fend off the rebels. In 2007, France took the lead in authorizing and

leading an EU force (EUROFOR) to provide protection for the regime of President Idriss Déby and tens of thousands of refugees from Darfur.

Strategic culture: While the colonial experience of 1840-1960 helped shape French strategic culture, the Algerian War and massive insurgency of 1954-1962 compelled France to formulate and implement a muscular counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. COIN operations in Algeria included desert and mountain warfare, which required a strategy of “clear and hold” and light mobile forces with extensive ISR and the ability to establish authority after clearing an area. After giving up Algeria in 1962, the struggle in the French defense establishment became one that pitted the “grand strategists” who wanted to make France a major *player* in the Cold War and the “neo-colonials” who wanted to ensure that French forces were capable of defending interests in Africa. Thanks to Colonel Qadhafi of Libya, France was compelled to shape a strategy to defend its former colonies and interests from both irregular and conventional warfare from the late 1970s until the 1990s. In particular, French interventions in Chad involved a strategy of working with and directing local forces in containing and then rolling back rebel and Libyan invasion forces that operated in some ways like today’s VEOs. A series of three operations involved extensive ISR and mobile forces with a large featured role of the French Air Force over a wide desert area, which in many ways laid the groundwork for operations Serval and Barkhane.¹³

In 1978, *Opération Tacaud* was launched with French troops, backed by the French Air Force, supporting the Chadian army and protecting the capital, Ndjamen, from rebel forces. In 1983, France launched its largest intervention since the Algerian war with *Opération Manta* and the dispatch of 3,500 troops to help stop an offensive by forces of an opposition government-in-exile and Libya. French forces imposed a red line which stopped the offensive from advancing beyond the 16th and 15th parallels. In February 1986, Qadhafi launched a new offensive that pushed south of the red line, which led to *Opération Épervier*. The French Air Force attacked the offensive and enemy bases north of the 16th parallel. France sent additional ground forces to create a force of 2,200 that successfully defended Ndjamen and allowed Chadian forces to take back all of its territory, including the Aozou Strip in the far north.¹⁴

With the end of the Cold War and the fading of the Libyan threat, France decided to maintain the French Air Force base in Ndjamen and a sizable French Army force in Chad. The Ndjamen base became known as its “desert aircraft carrier”, and the French Air Force has continued to conduct desert training and exercises from there in cooperation with the French Army and Chadian Army. With the rise of Boko Haram as a threat that was spilling over from Northeastern Nigeria, Ndjamen became a center for the “Lake Chad Initiative” against

the VEO which involved France and the bordering states of Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

The principles of prevention and projection helped to define France's strategic culture after the Cold War; prevention was based on the prepositioning of forces and intelligence about unstable situations on the ground.¹⁵ France has been able to achieve projection with rapid reaction forces of 5,000 troops or less in response to flashpoints in Africa. Prepositioning demonstrated that, even as French interests and threats to those interests faded, France's strategic culture became one of continuing to base its forces in Northwest Africa and using them in operations. Thanks to the wars over Chad, Ndjamena became the primary center of French activity in the Sahel and Sahara with *Opération Épervier* continuing until 2014 and being superseded by Barkhane. Prepositioning forces has provided French presidents with the temptation of using them in interventions in which a force of 5,000 troops or less is deemed sufficient, which has often been the case.¹⁶ Prepositioning enabled the projection of forces in defense of the Déby regime in the face of attacks from rebels from Sudan in 2006 and the launching of Serval and Barkhane. France has prepositioned 1,500 troops in Djibouti from where forces have been deployed outside of Eastern Africa to such places as Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the exception of the COIN operation in Djibouti. In the rest of Eastern Africa and Somalia, in particular, France decided to act via the EU.

France and the United States in Northwest Africa and the “War on Terror”:

After 9/11, France acquiesced to large-scale US security cooperation programs (PSI and TSCTP) in US security assistance to its former colonies in the Sahel. However, the United States was careful not to tread too heavily in what was considered to be the French sphere of influence. In 2008, President Sarkozy began cutting the defense budget and initiated the process of reducing France's bases in Africa. The plan was to maintain two bases in Dakar, Senegal and Djibouti and to close bases in Ndjamena, Chad and Libreville, Gabon and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. However, these plans stalled because of the 2011 war in Libya and the spillover of the conflict into the Sahel and continuing civil strife in Côte d'Ivoire and Central African Republic. Thus, until recently, France has been torn between cutting its presence in Africa versus defending what it had played a large part in building. However, the spillover from Libya and VEO takeover of most of Mali has led France to reverse its position and launch Serval and Barkhane.¹⁷

Interests and Timing: France did not intervene in 2012, because there was no imminent threat to French interests in southern Mali. Also President François Hollande was new to office and was weighing options in regard to the use of force. With the VEO offensive in January 2013, President Hollande wanted to lift his

public opinion polls by appearing decisive. The French people have traditionally been willing to let its president use force when they have been convinced that it is necessary. They have not been highly concerned about casualties and have been willing to accept risk if they can be convinced that national interests are at stake. French leaders believed that the VEOs would overrun Bamako, the capital of Mali; take some 5,000 French nationals hostage; and use Mali as a launching ground for attacks against the homeland.¹⁸ Furthermore, France had forces available in its prepositioned sites that could be quickly deployed. The perception of a French sphere of influence backed by military forces is one of the reasons why the United States expected France to intervene in Mali in 2013.¹⁹

Strategic culture and Barkhane: France's strategic culture has helped to define the operation. France is faced with threats to the homeland and interests in Northwest Africa and wants to contain AQIM and Daesh and interdict them. Barkhane's mission is twofold: support African armed forces in fighting VEOs and help prevent the re-establishment of their sanctuaries and strongholds. French strategy today focuses on counterterrorism with light forces that combine ISR, strike forces and air power. France avoids nation-building, which it leaves to the UN and other entities. Barkhane features the comprehensive approach involving the United Nations (UN), EU and the AU, which are all supporting the French effort and are involved in the security process, with training and peacekeeping missions. France has also worked closely with its G5 Sahel partners (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso) through its "Enlarged Partnership" process; the G5 is the main body for nations of the Sahel to coordinate their fight against violent extremism. Therefore, French strategic culture is much more multilateral than it was three decades ago, though France still asserts a leading role.²⁰

Conclusion: The constructivist perspective explains why France's strategic culture of prevention and projection with prepositioned forces enables it to launch direct military interventions in Northwest Africa when no other country will. France has experience and good ISR in the region and is able to calculate risk and avoid large-scale casualties. In contrast, the realist perspective on French intervention explains *when* France intervenes. The VEO offensive in Mali and threats to French interests led France to launch Serval. The threats to French interests in the Sahel and the homeland caused by state collapse in Libya led France to mount Barkhane. France's strategic culture today is such that Paris is less inclined to intervene than three decades ago and only after threats to its interests have reached the severe level. However, shocks to French interests stemming from the collapse of Libya caused French leaders to reverse course and order a surge of military intervention from 2013 onwards.

US Military Intervention in Africa

This section deals with the extent to which a constructivist perspective on US strategic culture is important in explaining US indirect military intervention in Africa as opposed to a realist approach that focuses on the level of US interests and threats to those interests.

Realism (interests): Threats to US interests since the Cold War rose with the activities of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in Sudan from 1991-1996, the 1998 embassy bombings, the 2000 USS Cole bombing and 9/11. As stated earlier, if bin Laden and Al Qaeda had been allowed to stay in Sudan, been harbored by the Bashir regime, and planned the 9/11 attacks from there, the United States would have attacked Sudan and not Afghanistan. The epicenter of threats against US interests and the war on terror would have been in Africa. However, bin Laden and Al Qaeda were forced to move to Afghanistan, and threats to US interests came from Southwest Asia, with Africa as a secondary theater. Since September 11, 2001, defeating Al Qaeda and Daesh and protecting Saudi Arabia and other Middle East allies have been in US interests, which has led the United States to try to contain the spread of VEO activity in Northwest Africa and to neutralize it in Eastern Africa.²¹

US strategic culture over the past three decades has been defined by the “Powell Doctrine”, which defined US interventions as requiring overwhelming force when and where the US national interest was under severe threat. The US direct intervention in Somalia in 1993 unfolded with overwhelming force but without compelling interests, and mission creep led to “Black Hawk Down.” The fiasco led to even more risk-averse strategic culture, enshrined in Presidential Decision Directive 25, which effectively ended US participation in UN peace operations in Africa. US risk aversion after Somalia led to the failure to respond to genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Subsequently, the United States apologized for not acting and pledged that it would work to stop future genocide. The failure to stop the genocide in Rwanda and PDD 25 led to the US strategy of developing the “African solutions to African problems” approach in which the United States would lead in training African peacekeeping forces and building partnership capacity (BPC) but would not directly intervene militarily.

An external shock (9/11) and US strategic culture of indirect military intervention in Africa led to CJTF-HOA in Eastern Africa and PSI/TSCTP in Northwest Africa. The US has assisted partners in nation-building in Somalia and the Sahel and has trained and equipped African forces to conduct counter-insurgency operations (COIN). 9/11 and the experience in Afghanistan led to the introduction of US special operations forces (SOF). Today the United States

has 700 or so SOF engaged in the struggle against VEOs and building partnerships with African forces.²² The US has been more willing to use force in Afghanistan from where it was attacked and Iraq from where it assumed that an attack was coming and where forces became embroiled in nation-building. Higher authority in the United States was consumed by the struggle in Southwest Asia and less so in Africa. However, the creation of AFRICOM in 2008 led to a more focused counter-VEO strategy and operations in Africa.

US Strategy and Operations in Eastern Africa: After September 11, 2001, the United States directed more power towards countering VEOs and the ungoverned spaces in and around Somalia. The Bush administration decided that VEOs in Somalia and Eastern Africa posed more of a threat to its interests than did the Sahel and Sahara. The establishment of CJTF-HOA in Djibouti by DOD and CENTCOM enabled US Special Operations Command to undertake operations against Al Qaeda and other extremists in the region. CENTCOM selected Djibouti because of its strategic location between the ungoverned spaces of Somalia and Eastern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Also, Djibouti was chosen because of the receptivity of the government, which had hosted French forces since independence. Before 2002, the United States had never established a base in Africa, which stands in contrast to more than a century of French bases.

Before 2006, the VEO threat in Somalia and Eastern Africa was not as severe as had been anticipated. Thus, CJTF-HOA shifted its approach and adopted a more indirect and bottom-up “hearts and minds” campaign, which centered on the drilling of wells for Somali pastoralists living in areas adjacent to Somalia, especially in Kenya and Ethiopia.²³ The campaign scored some initial successes but experienced serious setbacks in Ethiopia in 2007 and Kenya in 2009. Also, mistakes were made, including drilling boreholes in areas that caused conflict between clans. CJTF-HOA was forced to reformulate the campaign, which became less focused on Somali pastoralists and relatively less effective in helping to achieve US security goals in the ungoverned spaces of Eastern Africa.²⁴

In 2004, the United States began to support the “Transitional Federal Government” of Somalia in the hope of reconstituting the Republic of Somalia, which would eventually be able to counter VEOs and reestablish sovereignty and territoriality. In 2005, the new Assistant Secretary of State for Africa assumed a leading role in the Horn of Africa policy, introducing a more robust strategy of combating violent extremism and reestablishing Somali governance by backing the development of the transitional government into a governing and military force. After the surging Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the US-backed warlords and united South-Central Somalia under its rule and began threatening Ethiopia’s Ogaden region, the Bush administration acquiesced to the Ethiopian inva-

sion of Somalia in December 2006, and the United States increased military assistance to Ethiopia. The Bush administration also backed the plan of the African Union (AU) to send a peace enforcement force, led by Uganda, to Somalia.

The US Department of State (DOS) led the way in arranging the training and equipping of Ugandan and Burundian African Union forces and the new Somali National Armed Force (SNAF). The DOS Political-Military Affairs office, its Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program, and security cooperation officials in embassies in Kampala, Bujumbura, Addis Ababa, and Nairobi engaged with African Union and Somali forces.²⁵ They organized the training and equipping of Ugandan and Burundian and the SNAF and arranged assistance for their operations in Mogadishu.²⁶

The Obama administration continued the peace enforcement and state-building policy for Somalia. By 2011, AMISOM and Somali forces strengthened and scored successes against Al Shabaab. Of particular significance were the August 2011 liberation of Mogadishu and the 2012 Kenyan intervention in Somalia that led to the takeover of the Al Shabaab stronghold of Kismayo and much of the surrounding province of Jubaland.²⁷ In 2012, the Federal Republic of Somalia was reconstituted.

The United States has spent over a hundred million dollars a year since 2007 on the security enterprise for Somalia and continues to spend over a hundred million dollars each year.²⁸ Most of the funds have been channeled through the State Department's program for training, equipping and supporting Ugandan and Burundian forces that became the core of AMISOM.²⁹ The DOD and AFRICOM provided support, with combined exercises and help in training. CJTF-HOA arranged intelligence sharing with AMISOM for defensive purposes. Finally, in April 2013, with the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia, the United States began arms shipments to the new Somali army.

In sum, the United States and its partners have made considerable progress in rolling back Al Shabaab and securing the ungoverned spaces of Eastern Africa. African Union forces have risen in size from 6,000 in 2010 to over 22,000 today. On a negative note, the Republic of Somalia government of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud started out well, but it soon sank into the same morass of corruption as had previous Somali interim governments. Therefore, the goal of Somali self-sufficiency in security is still years away. Al Shabaab still mounts attacks inside Mogadishu and against AMISOM and Somali forces and is still a major security threat.

US Strategy and Operations in Northwest Africa: In the ungoverned space of the Sahara, US strategy has been more about containing and preventing the southward flow of extremism and has been less coherent and focused than in

Eastern Africa. DOD and United States European Command (EUCOM) devised the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) in 2002 in the wake of 9/11 and the Bush administration's concern about ungoverned spaces and weak and failing states and the threats they posed to the United States and its allies in the Global War on Terror.³⁰ Saharan and Sahelian states were under similar pressures from VEOs as Eastern African states. In particular, the Sahel was vulnerable to militant groups, especially Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

The Bush administration proceeded first with the idea that building military counter-terrorism capacity would be the best places to start in defending the Sahara and Sahel from VEOs; protecting US and EU interests in Algeria, Nigeria and other states; and rolling back militant groups. In the Sahel, it was expected that weak states would be able to develop capabilities to contain threats. Therefore, the United States began funding programs in the Sahel states in 2002 to help build their ability to exercise sovereignty and territoriality and control their borders. From 2002–2004, the US military trained and equipped one rapid-reaction company of about 150 soldiers each, in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad to enhance border capabilities against arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and the movement of trans-national VEOs. US Special Forces and EUCOM took the lead in training and exercises. In regard to building capacity to establish governance in the Sahara, the strategy was unclear. For example, Toyota Land Cruisers were provided to Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad in the hope that it would strengthen border control in the vast Saharan Desert. However, there was insufficient follow-up to ensure that the aid had been effective.

By 2005, the Bush administration altered the strategy and launched the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), deciding that building state capacity and government capabilities and winning hearts and minds would be a better way of defending the Sahel from militant groups and preventing the spread of extremism. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department were given the lead, with EUCOM supporting. The United States funded the TSCTP with \$500 million from 2005 to 2010, and funding was extended from 2010 onwards.³¹ At the same time, EUCOM and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) launched Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) to train African forces to counter VEOs. EUCOM also continued to mount Operation Flintlock to jointly exercise US forces with regional forces. In 2008, EUCOM passed control of OEF-TS to AFRICOM.

Under the Obama Administration, it was made clear that development and diplomacy were under the purview of the State Department and USAID and that the TSCTP was primarily their program.³² The program provided regional uni-

versity students with useful work skills to better prepare them for the transition between school and the workplace, as well as provide rehabilitation and training opportunities for disenfranchised youth and vulnerable populations. However, there still was no measure to gauge the reduction of extremism.³³

In 2011, a USAID-sponsored survey found that USAID-funded TSCTP programs in Chad, Niger and Mauritania had diminished the underlying conditions that were leaving at-risk populations vulnerable to extremism. The programs included youth development, former combatant reintegration, and education, as well as rural radio and media programs, peacebuilding and conflict management, and small-scale infrastructure projects like drilling wells and constructing schools. In particular, USAID civic youth programs and TSCTP “peace and tolerance” radio programs were found to significantly reduce youth extremism.³⁴ Furthermore, it was found that the programs had built local government capacity and the ability to communicate with the youth of the Sahel and implemented the type of capacity and programs necessary to lessen extremism. It has been noted that the types of programs and projects that have been instituted are not complex and could be sustained once the US footprint is lessened.

While the TSCTP was found to help reduce support for violent extremism among youth in the Sahel, this was not the case in the ungoverned spaces of the Sahara (for example, among the Tuareg). Thus, the partnership can be considered a limited success, especially since most of the population lives in Sahel and not in the Sahara. It could be concluded that the TSCTP helped to prevent the southward spread of extremism and that a firewall had been built against extremism in the most populated areas of Sahel. The problem was in the northern Sahel and southern Sahara and how to change attitudes there and roll back extremism. It was problematic for US programs to reach those ungoverned spaces.

The US strategy produced disappointing results in Mali.³⁵ The relative success of Tuareg and extremist insurgencies showed that the tens of millions of dollars spent had not helped Mali defend itself and exercise territorial control over its northern spaces. He found that in Niger, VEOs remained a threat. In Nigeria, Boko Haram was continuing to conduct frequent mass attacks, which US programs have done little to help stop. In Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Chad, US efforts produced greater capabilities; merged US security and development specialties; and enhanced US security interests to some extent.³⁶ This was partly due to the relative strength of the regimes and professionalism of the security forces.

In sum, the United States and its partners have made mixed progress in the Sahel and not much progress in the Sahara and suffered severe setbacks with the collapse of the Libyan state and the VEO invasion of Mali.³⁷ The mixed record is due to a combination of ungoverned spaces in the Sahara and effectiveness of

VEOs, as well as Sahelian states' weakness and security forces' limitations. There is a debate over the future of the TSCTP. Some think it should be enhanced with a Joint Task Force-Western Africa. Others think TSCTP should be tightened and more focused on Mali, Niger and Nigeria, especially in countering Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Boko Haram.³⁸

Comparing US Strategy in Eastern Africa and Northwest Africa: A more assertive strategy of indirect intervention supporting offensive forces and attacking militant group leaders partially succeeded in securing an ungoverned space and curbing a violent extremist organization in Eastern Africa, in contrast to the partial failure of a containment approach in the Sahara, which focused on counterterrorism training for regional security forces and countering extremist ideology. In the Sahara, the US containment strategy of supporting regional regimes and providing programs for youth led to some progress in curbing extremism in the Sahel but very limited success in countering militant groups and other violent non-state actors in the Sahara and failure in preventing militant groups from taking over northern Mali in 2012. Since then, VEOs have expanded their activities to other parts of the region. The more assertive strategy in Eastern Africa led to the expulsion of Al Shabaab from ungoverned urban and some rural spaces and enabled the formation of a Somali government. Also, US forces launched occasional counterterrorist attacks that degraded Al Shabaab's leadership. Thus, the US strategy of neutralization in Somalia and Eastern Africa has achieved greater results than containment in Northwest Africa.

The US strategy of supporting Uganda and the AMISOM and using US counterterrorism attacks reaped a partial victory but did not neutralize Al Shabaab. While the United States has scored successes in Somalia, the Al Qaeda-linked militant group has not been eliminated; it has merely been curbed. Therefore, the assertive approach had an impact but did not achieve victory. Given the failure of US strategy in both Eastern Africa and Sahara to decisively defeat militant groups, it must be concluded that geopolitics, in the form of ungoverned spaces that cannot be controlled by weak regimes, provides a significant part of the explanation. Neither an assertive nor a containment strategy is likely to bring success in decisively countering violent non-state actors in ungoverned spaces. This fits the pattern established in the war against Al Qaeda Central in Pakistan and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen.

The vast size of the Sahara makes it difficult for all eight regional regimes, backed by the US and France, to control. Therefore, it is questionable if the more assertive strategy applied in Somalia and Eastern Africa could work in Mali and the Sahara. The Sahara is a bigger ungoverned space than Eastern Africa and appears to be a more dangerous place, where VEOs and other violent non-state

actors can sustain themselves and avoid interdiction. However, it is difficult to definitively conclude that the larger and more ungoverned the space where such actors choose to operate, the more sustainable a dangerous place will be and the more difficult it will be to pacify. One can only conclude that ungoverned spaces create an advantageous condition for such actors to make dangerous places.

The level of success in Eastern Africa can be explained by the level of US national interest and weight of effort, as well as the relatively small ungoverned space. The level of threat to US interests against violent extremism was greater in Eastern Africa than in the Sahara and Sahel. Also, the high degree of salience of Ugandan leaders and the capability of Ugandan forces, backed by other Eastern African forces, was greater than leaders and forces from Sahelian and other West African countries.³⁹ Comparison of US strategy in Eastern Africa and Sahara demonstrate that the United States is more likely to assertively attack militant groups if those actors are committed to attacking US interests, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, and less likely when they might attack the interests of a less important country or region. The more concentrated threat to US interests and absence of a state in Somalia influenced decision-making regarding Eastern Africa, which led to CJTF-HOA and support for AMISOM, while the more dispersed threat and weak states in the Sahara led to a less intensive approach, which resulted in the PSI and then the TSCTP. The United States was unwilling to intervene in Mali in 2012, because the threat to US interests was low and because the Obama administration was less-inclined to use force than the Bush administration had been.

Conclusion: Constructivism and strategic culture (the Powell Doctrine and casualty aversion) have determined how the United States indirectly intervenes militarily (i.e., establishing a well-defended base and building partnership capacity). Realism and interests have determined the scale of intervention. In Eastern Africa, the threat from Al Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya has led to a large US military presence and CJTF-HOA in Djibouti. However, the threat is not so great as to invite direct military intervention. In contrast, the lower level of threat and the French sphere of influence in Northwestern Africa led the United States to launch PSI and TSCTP but no US military bases. Threats to US interests are greater in Somalia which led to efforts to neutralize Al Shabaab, in contrast to efforts in Northwest Africa to merely contain AQIM, Boko Haram and other VEOs.

Conclusion

The level of interests, level of resources, and strategic culture all factor into explaining the differences and similarities between France and the United States. While both constructivist and realist perspectives are necessary for comparative analysis, the argument in this article is that strategic culture and attitudes towards risk are more insightful than the realist perspective in explaining the different ways that France and the United States chose to intervene in Africa. The Powell Doctrine and casualty and risk aversion explain why the United States is less willing to intervene directly militarily in Africa; however, the relatively lower level of US interests in Africa as compared with Southwest Asia must also be taken into account. In addition, the US military has an organizational culture of winning, while the French military is accustomed to messy outcomes, which also explains the differences in interventionism. Prepositioning of French forces in Northwest Africa increases the likelihood that they will be used in operations such as Serval and Barkhane. The prepositioning of US Forces in CJTF-HOA has not led to direct military intervention in Somalia, even as the capital and country were on the verge of falling to Al Shabaab.

In regard to realism, external shocks and spikes in threats to interests determine when both the United States and France intervene. The level of interests explains the similar features in French and US interventions: (1) *direct interventions with military force* occurs in places where interests are high and have been attacked as in the case of French interests in Mali. US interests in Mali were not as high as French interests. US interests and threats to those interests have been higher in Somalia and Libya which has led to indirect military intervention and limited intervention by SOF. (2) Direct interventions take place after attacks on vital interests have occurred and not to prevent one from happening. The French doctrine of prevention and projection and the prepositioning of forces still did not lead to a deployment of forces to Mali, even when VEOs had taken over the northern half of the country. However, Barkhane can be considered both a counterterrorist operation and a preventive one. (3) *Indirect military intervention* takes place in locations where interests are moderate and there is a threat of an *eventual* attack on vital interests; this is the case of US military intervention in Eastern Africa. (4) French intervention in Mali and the Sahel and Sahara was not superseded by US intervention; instead, the United States supported France in Serval and Barkhane. The US intervention in Eastern Africa was followed by France leading in EU assistance to AMISOM and the new Somali government.

External shocks to interests caused changes in French and US military interventionism. The collapse of Libya and the VEO invasion of Mali caused France

to reverse course from winding down its presence in Northwest Africa to mounting Serval and a protracted counterterrorism intervention in the form of Barkhane. Black Hawk Down caused the United States to abandon direct military intervention in Africa, while the Rwandan genocide led to indirect military intervention. Al Qaeda attacks led to CJTF-HOA, while the threat of attacks from Algerian VEOs who allied with Al Qaeda led to TSCTP.

Notes

1. François Heisbourg, “A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 55, no. 2 (2013): 7–18.

2. A less significant exception was in August 2003, when the United States sent the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit to Liberia for a month in support of the Economic Community of West African States force that was overseeing the removal of Charles Taylor from power.

3. Major General (Ret) Maurice de Langlois, *The comprehensive approach and the European Union: a case study of the Horn of Africa*, Note de recherche stratégique (IRSEM, 2014), 10. See also “EEAS - European External Action Service - European Commission,” EEAS - European External Action Service, accessed 19 February 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/somalia_en, and “Peace and Security | The Africa-EU Partnership,” accessed 19 February 2016, <http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/priority-areas/peace-and-security>.

4. In contrast to the hundreds of millions of dollars that the United States spent to secure the Sahel, France gave Mali a million dollars to build its police force before 2012.

5. In this article, Northwest Africa refers to an expansive area extending from Central African Republic to Morocco and Libya to Côte d’Ivoire.

6. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (2001): 128–161.

7. Christopher S. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa’ida in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

8. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998). Christoph O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Constructivist theory would explain that France is driven by its civilian and military leadership’s self-conceptualization as the guardian of Northwest Africa which is within its sphere of influence. Strategic culture is defined as the beliefs and assumptions that frame decisions to take military action, as well as preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare and levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable.

9. Jan Bachmann, “‘Kick down the Door, Clean up the Mess, and Rebuild the House’—The Africa Command and Transformation of the US Military,” *Geopolitics* 15, no. 3 (2010): 564–585. More than \$300 million a year has been spent on United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) since it became operational in October 2008 in order to a large extent to focus on combating violent extremists in Eastern Africa. In 2011, AFRICOM generated the first of its campaign plans—the “East Africa Campaign Plan”—to deal with Eastern Africa. A West Africa Campaign Plan emerged soon afterwards and dealt with the Sahel. Also, there are proposals to establish a US Joint

Task Force West Africa, modeled on CJTF-HOA, which is also funded with more than \$300 million per year.

10. Shaun Gregory, "The French Military in Africa: Past and Present," *African Affairs* 99, no. 396 (2000): 435-448.

11. *Ibid.*, 437-438.

12. Frank Foley, *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms and the Shadow of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25-27.

13. Rachel Utley, "The Sacred Union? French intervention in Lebanon and Chad under François Mitterrand," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 10, no. 3 (1999): 10-17.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Gregory, "The French Military in Africa," 445-447.

16. *Ibid.*, 446.

17. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa*, 44.

18. Michael Shurkin, *France's War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2014).

19. Chivvis, *The French War on Al Qa'ida in Africa*, 44-45.

20. Interactions with and briefings by French military officers, Libreville, Gabon and Yaoundé, Cameroon, March 2015.

21. Interviews with US officials, US Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, June 2012. Interactions with US officials in Uganda and Tanzania, March 2013; Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana, March 2014; Cameroon, Gabon and Ethiopia, March 2015; and Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia, March 2016.

22. Eliza Griswold, "Can General Linder's Special Operations Forces Stop the Next Terrorist Threat?" *The New York Times*, 13 June 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/15/magazine/can-general-linders-special-operations-forces-stop-the-next-terrorist-threat.html?hpw&rrref=magazine>; and Bill Knarr, "Matching the Footprint of Governance to the Footprint of Sovereignty," in *The Role of the Global SOF Network in a Resource Constrained Environment*, ed. Chuck Ricks (MacDill AFB: Joint Special Operations University Press, November 2013), 31-40. The role of Special Forces (SOF) has been instrumental in combating violent extremists, especially in Somalia and the Sahara, and will continue to be so if the United States wants to intervene more assertively in resource-constrained environments. In both Eastern Africa and Sahara, good intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) are required to manage the dangerous places.

23. Karsten Friis, "Peacekeeping and Counter-Insurgency: Two of a Kind?" *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (March 2010): 49-66. This shift happened at a time in which US experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan were leading to adoption of stability operations, which focused on engaging from the bottom-up with local populations in order to mitigate violent extremism.

24. Interviews with US defense officials, US Embassy, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, June 2012.

25. Interview with US Somalia expert, US Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, 12 June 2012.

26. Interviews with Somalia experts at US AFRICOM headquarters, Stuttgart, Germany, 30 May 2012.

27. Ken Menkhaus, "After the Kenyan Intervention," (Washington, DC: Enough Project, January 2012), 1-15. <http://www.enoughproject.org/files/MenkhausKenyaninterventionSomalia.pdf>.

28. “Transcript: General Carter Ham Discusses Security Challenges, Opportunities at George Washington University,” US Africa Command, 3 December 2012, <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/transcript/10170/transcript-general-ham-discusses-security-challeng>.

29. “Senior State Department Official Previewing Conference on Somalia,” US Department of State, accessed 20 February 2016, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/02/184480.htm>. From 2008-2011, the United States spent \$385 million supporting the African Union Mission.

30. William F. S. Miles, “Deploying Development to Counter Terrorism: Post-9/11 Transformation of US Foreign Aid to Africa,” *African Studies Review* 55, no. 3 (December 2012): 27-60.

31. Government Accountability Office, *Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation on Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP)*, Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, July 2008), <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08860.pdf>. The GAO report found that there was no discernible effect on militant groups and a lack of focus and coherence; these problems have persisted.

32. “Programs and Initiatives,” US Department of State, Bureau of Counter-terrorism, <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/>.

33. United States Agency for International Development, “Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership,” US Foreign Assistance Performance Publication, Fiscal Year 2009, www.state.gov.

34. United States Agency for International Development, *Midterm Evaluation of USAID’s Counter-extremism Programming in Africa* (Washington, DC: USAID, 1 Feb 2011), 1-47. www.hsdl.org/?view&did=691725.

35. Miles, 27-60.

36. Ibid.

37. Heisbourg, “A Surprising Little War: First Lessons of Mali,” 7-18.

38. Research data collected from meetings during the US Air War College Regional and Cultural Studies program field visit to Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana, 2-13 March 2014. For certain US officials, the TSCTP is “an accounting line” and is rarely mentioned. However, regionally focused USAID officials believe that TSCTP is being taken more seriously, especially since the Al Shabaab attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. One US official commented that the TSCTP is now being accepted as a regional strategy for the Sahara and Sahel.

39. Matt Freear and Cedric de Coning, “Lessons from the African Union Mission for Somalia (AMISOM) for Peace Operations in Mali,” *Stability: International Journal of Stability and Development* 2, no. 2 (2013): 1-11, <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.bj/>.

Leadership Revised

How Did the Ukraine Crisis and the Annexation of Crimea Affirm Germany's Leading Role in EU Foreign Policy?

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The Annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 and Russia's destabilizing role in eastern Ukraine have put an end to the EU's illusion that Europe had for good arrived in the post-modern world, where military conflicts and territorial conquests would belong only to history books. For the last decade, the EU had built its foreign policy on the assumption that, in the absence of classical military threats, security challenges would stem from non-state actors: terrorism, failed states, organized crime and Balkan-style regional conflicts.¹ Brussels generally assumed that, in the twenty-first century, foreign policy was based on the projection of norms and values abroad rather than on military strength.² The belief that this post-modern policy approach would have the power also to transform former Soviet republics into modern European states was the main driver behind the association agreements signed between the EU and Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in 2014.

In line with its post-war pacifist traditions, Germany has been a strong promoter of a rules-based multilateral foreign policy.³ Its own foreign policy has been characterized by its role as a civilian power and its *Ostpolitik* or special relationship with the countries of the former Soviet bloc. Also, the German-Russian relationship had been significant for Germany not only in economic terms, but also in political terms, as it raised Berlin's significance in both EU and NATO. Therefore, the annexation of Crimea and Moscow's thinly disguised military aggression in Eastern Ukraine had a strong impact on German foreign policy, which not only prompted Berlin to reconsider the nature of its relations with Moscow, but also changed the dynamics in the European Union, where Germany saw its leadership

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role strengthened, although rather by accident than by design. This emancipation of Germany as an active player in EU foreign policy already became visible in Kosovo and in Afghanistan, after the Kohl government had been replaced by a Red-Green coalition in 1998. While not seeking out a leadership role, Berlin would also no longer avoid such a role, thus finding itself in a position of accidental leadership.⁴

This article analyses how Germany, in particular through the Ukraine crisis starting in 2014, affirmed itself—although reluctantly—as a nexus of decision making in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and became the de facto leading nation for defining the EU's response towards Russia. The article points out the internal and external consequences of this new role, also with regards to other policy fields, and, more in particular, for the Baltic States. For this, we first need to take a closer look at the tenets of German foreign policy and at the specificity of German-Russian relations.

German Foreign Policy: Coming in from the Cold (War)

For the casual observer, it might sometimes be difficult to understand the policy drivers behind German foreign policy. Whereas most countries see foreign policy as an instrument to defend their political and economic interest abroad by influencing other countries to behave in a certain manner, attempts to use foreign policy as a means to gain influence have been, for decades, a taboo for post-war Germany.⁵ Although in the first twenty years of the FRG's existence revisionist tendencies were still present in the country, the total rejection of the nationalistic ideology was one of the founding pillars of post-war Western German identity.⁶ This new approach to foreign policy, partly driven by a sense of guilt and shame about the Nazi past, partly driven by fear of the spread of communism, eradicated the concepts of "national interest" and identity from the mainstream political vocabulary.

Germany's uneasy relationship with its past, its reliance on its Western allies and its need to redefine its place in Europe and the World made the country a champion of European integration. The process of European integration allowed the Federal Republic to assume a new role among the civilized nations that would be compatible with its economic interests (access for its industrial products to the common market). This desire was perfectly compatible with the desire of Germany's neighbours to keep Germany in check through supranational cooperation mechanisms that would prevent it from again going its own *Sonderweg* (special path), while allowing them to benefit from the dynamism of the German industry. Thus, the FRG became the poster boy of European integration: a positive and

productive role for Germany in international politics existed only in and through Europe.

Whereas Germany's Euro-Atlantic integration proved to be a win-win situation for both Germany and its allies, it was the relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of the Eastern bloc that became, in the 1960s and 1970s, the litmus test of West German foreign policy. The geopolitical situation of Germany demanded a degree of pragmatism: the division of Germany, family ties of many Germans behind the Iron Curtain, and the question of West Berlin (a Western enclave within the GDR) made reasonable working relations mandatory. The *Ostpolitik* of chancellor Brandt in the early 1970s—symbolized by the famous *Kniefall* (genuflection)—towards the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1970) had the triple benefit of facilitating human exchanges, opening markets for the (West) German industry and allowing the FRG to occupy the “moral high ground” vis-a-vis Eastern Germany, since it assumed the responsibility for its past.

The possibility to promote freedom and democracy not only on behalf of itself, but on behalf of the whole Western world, helped Germany even more to reinforce its new post-modern identity based on multilateralism and “soft power”, which is still the driving force of German policy today. When the GDR collapsed in 1989, the magnetic attraction of the West German model combining economic wealth with democracy and the rule of law, moral superiority and a positive international reputation became thus irresistible for Eastern Germans.

Germany and the CFSP

The Slow Emancipation of Germany's Foreign Policy in a European Context

The “2+4” agreement of 1990 finally put an end to the old cold war order and restored Germany's sovereignty in foreign policy as well. Initial fears among its Western partners about the hegemony of a united Germany in Europe—in particular after Germany's uncoordinated recognition of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991—resulted in the setting up of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) with the 1993 Maastricht Treaty. The CFSP was defined as a greater diplomatic operation and balance of power exercise in which the Member States sought to firmly embed an enlarged German State in a stronger European entity.⁷ Also, in this period of major geopolitical changes, in which Europe had suffered a loss of face during the Gulf and Yugoslav crises, CFSP was seen as a tool to strengthen European identity.⁸

Tellingly, during the design phase of the Maastricht treaty, Germany was among the states that advocated a more supranational CFSP, including decisions made by qualified majority voting (which would have abandoned national veto

rights) and a greater involvement of the European Parliament—proposals that were strongly rejected by two other major foreign policy players, the UK and France. From an outside view, it could seem that Germany allowed its policy space in foreign policy to be reduced through its integration into the CFSP. However, it was the “uploading” of its foreign policy into the CFSP that enabled Germany to emancipate itself as a foreign policy actor within the EU framework.

But being a part of a European policy framework also made it more difficult for Germany to pursue its former policy of avoiding political responsibility by the means of *Scheckbuchdiplomatie* (cheque-book diplomacy) which consisted in financially contributing to policies implemented by its partners while staying itself out of the limelight. Taking political responsibility required Germany to overcome its patterns of avoidance and of military non-engagement (as in the 1991 Gulf war or in the first two Balkan wars).

This was not uncontroversial: when German troops started to participate in international peacekeeping missions in the 1990s, parts of the German political spectrum warned of an infamous return to a militaristic tradition that would fuel fears about a new German hegemony and imperialism: fears, that were, in general, more voiced within Germany itself than outside the country. It was in Kosovo in 1999 when Germany definitively managed to move beyond its history and accepted that its own military intervention was justified—as part of an US-led coalition—in order to honor its post-war commitment to the slogan of “never again” with regards to genocides and concentration camps.

With hindsight, the fear of Germany abandoning the European project in favor of a *Sonderweg* proved unjustified: the Kohl government, dominated by a generation of politicians that were still traumatized by the experience of fascism and WWII, were still wholeheartedly committed to the European project and had a natural dislike of any German attempts of domination. Instead, its economic power, demography and geographical position made Germany gravitate towards the power center of Europe. This role, which became very obvious with the financial crisis from 2008 on, was not only accepted, but actively supported by many of its central and eastern European neighbors. The attitude of these countries was best expressed by Polish foreign minister Sikorski when he publicly stated in 2011 that—within the context of the Euro crisis—“I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity.”⁹

Within the EU, Germany’s close partnership with France had allowed the country to stay out of the limelight while still actively shaping EU policies in line with its own interests. Major initiatives (as the economic and monetary union) were prepared in close cooperation and then proposed as a joint endeavor: this matched the desire of France to *increase* and of Germany to *decrease* its profile as

driving force behind shaping the European policy agenda. But not always did the interests of Berlin and Paris match: the enlargement process, which started in the second half of the 1990s (and culminated with the accession of ten mainly central and eastern European states in 2004) was, above all, driven by Germany striving to export stability to its Eastern neighbors while expanding the EU's single market eastwards. Paris saw enlargement rather as a threat to a closer political union and as a weakening of the French/German leadership in the EU.

Within the CFSP, the special relationship with Russia proved to be significant for Germany, not only in economic, but also in political terms. First of all, this relationship was highly symbolic, Russia being the country that had suffered most from German atrocities in WWII. Good relations with Russia served Germany as a way to exhort its militaristic past. Also, the privileged relationship gave Germany additional significance within the EU and NATO, thus compensating for a lack of military power. Therefore, Europe quite naturally started looking at Germany—which had already taken on a leadership role in the post 2008 Euro crisis—after the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Again, in order to properly assess Berlin's attitude in the Ukraine crisis, one would have to look at the history of German-Russian relations.

The Specificity of German-Russian Relations

Through the centuries, Germany and Russia have always played a key role for each other in their respective foreign policies. Both countries share many similarities: neither country has natural borders; both have historically expanded at the expense of their neighbor's liberty and sovereignty in an attempt to increase their influence and power,¹⁰ and both countries have repeatedly cooperated in this regard, as in Rapallo or with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In the twentieth century, both countries justified imperialist tendencies with ideology—and both found their imperial ambitions defeated by history. For both countries, the redefinition of their national identity can be explained by their past. Whereas Germany managed to acquire a new post-modern identity through a complete break with its past, Russia went the opposite way: trying to reconnect with the past by reclaiming its former glory.

The combination of historical guilt, the gratitude to Russia for having enabled German unification and the departure of Soviet troops, combined with its economic interests, may explain why Germany counted as one of the most fervent supporters of Russia in the early 1990s. At this time, Russia—as were the other successor states of the Soviet Union—was faced with a profound economic and social crisis. For Germany, the demise of the Soviet Union and the emancipation

of Central and Eastern European nations were seen as the confirmation of Francis Fukuyama's "End of History", in which European values like democracy and human rights were shared from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

But Germany underestimated the sense of humiliation of many Russians, who were more likely to suffer the dramatic fall of standards of living than to profit from the geopolitical benefits brought about by the end of the Cold War. The mismatch of perceptions was symbolized in the figure of Michael Gorbachev, who enjoyed pop star status in Germany,¹¹ but who was despised in Russia for bringing down living standards and for humiliating a nation that had been transformed in less than one decade from a fear-inspiring superpower to a pity inspiring recipient of humanitarian assistance.¹²

The ascendance of Vladimir Putin, a young KGB official in Dresden at the time when the GDR imploded, to the Russian Presidency in 2000, coincided with a period of rising commodity prices, in particular for gas and oil it exported, which boosted standards of living to previously unknown levels. The enlargement of NATO and the EU in 2004 was grudgingly accepted by Russia, which did not have the means to prevent it, since it was still tied up with the second Chechnya war and other internal challenges. Russia also did not respond to the EU's initiative of a "European Neighborhood Policy" regrouping all of the enlarged EU's neighbors in 2004, as it refused to be reduced to the role of a mere object of EU foreign policy.

Putin never dissimulated his disregard for the EU and his preference for a "divide-and rule" approach which consisted in exploiting potential divisions between member states. In particular, Putin reminded Germany that Russia had been supportive and had enabled the process of German unification against the resistance from France and the UK. In this regard, the building of the North Stream pipeline bringing Russian gas directly to Germany, while bypassing the Baltic States and Poland, was a main strategic achievement of Russia.

When Angela Merkel replaced Gerhard Schroeder in 2005 as chancellor of Germany, the relation between the two leaders drastically changed. Schroeder, who had qualified Putin as a crystal-clear democrat, had developed a strong *Männerfreundschaft* (male bond) with Putin. Merkel, socialized in the former GDR and knowing the mechanisms of authoritarian power from the inside, was much less susceptible than Schroeder to the wooing of Putin. Still, being one of Germany's major trade partners,¹³ and in line of German traditions of economic diplomacy, Russia remained an important building block of Germany's foreign policy. This reflects the continuity of Germany's policy of *Wandel durch Annäherung* (change through rapprochement or détente) with the Eastern bloc through a

bottom-up small scale cooperation which would ease the tensions, introduced by former chancellor Willy Brand in the late 1960s.

Throughout the building up of the Ukraine crisis Merkel had sought a close cooperation with her European partners. While firmly rejecting any calls for an accession perspective for Ukraine (highly unpopular on the political agenda), Germany strongly supported the EU association agreement with Ukraine as a basis for closer integration. For the EU—and for Germany—the association agreements had been designed as an instrument to export European norms and values, such as democracy, the rule of law and a free market economy, to its partner states. This approach had been perceived as uncontroversial, since it presupposed the will and the ability of every partner state to make sovereign policy choices.

But, born in a time where the EU was the sole integration model on the European continent, this approach now collided with Russia's plans to set up a Eurasian (Customs) Union. Therefore, the simple fact that another state could not only oppose its plans, but also openly try to challenge them, not shying away from a military conflict, had been unimaginable before March 2014. But unlike the EU, Russia has not yet arrived in a post-modern world: it rather sees its interest through the prism of the first-half of the twentieth century *zerosum realpolitik*, where geopolitical influence comes as a result of military and economic power. This was already apparent with Russia's military incursion into Georgia in 2008, although not widely acknowledged at the time. Thus, Russia interpreted the signing of the Association Agreement as a direct challenge to its geopolitical aspirations, which demanded a harsh response.

Whereas Russia had, until 2008, presented itself as the paragon of the inviolability of borders and national sovereignty,¹⁴ it had started shedding these principles already in 2008 in Northern Ossetia and Abkhazia, where it operated a dramatic rhetoric U-turn. Abandoning all references to territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, it cited the unilateral declaration of Kosovo—recognized by Germany and 23 other EU member states—as a precedent and militarily supported the secession of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia, referring to the right of citizens to self-determination and alleged human rights violations, of which Russian speakers were the victims.

The lack of reaction from the EU to the de-facto annexation of Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia in 2008—except for a few diplomatic protest notes from the EU and the MS—and the fact that business in Berlin and in Brussels went quickly back to normal also gave the impression to Putin that the West would not dare to confront Russia by intervening in what it still considered as its “*bližnij zarubež*” or “near abroad.”

German Reactions to the “Euromaidan” and to the Annexation of Crimea

German chancellor Merkel has never been known for bold politics. Her profound dislike of taking risks and her avoidance of decisive action had over one decade of being at the helm of the German government, become something of a trademark.¹⁵ Politically, her wait-and-see approach paid off, since she has hit record high ratings in the polls and has been re-elected twice. Staying out of the limelight in political controversies allowed the chancellor to foster her image of “mother of the nation.”

Nevertheless, during the *Euromaidan* which started in late 2013 and culminated in the fleeing of president Yanukovich and the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014, Merkel issued a number of stern statements that in other European capitals were perceived as a sign that Germany might be willing to assert its resolve and leadership. The Russian state media were quick to exploit German support for the *Euromaidan* for their own purposes, presenting their leaders to the domestic audiences as fascists and not refraining from drawing parallels between the fate of Russians in Ukraine and the fate of Jews in Nazi Germany.

In particular the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 sent a shock wave through Berlin: Russia, by annexing Crimea, had thrown overboard the post-cold war consensus based upon the respect of national sovereignty and democratic process, thus turning the clock back to nineteenth-century policy of territorial conquest by power. Merkel immediately reacted by condemning the annexation as illegal, later even qualifying it as “criminal.”¹⁶ While calling for a strategic rethink of Germany’s and the EU’s energy dependence upon Russia and favoring further sanctions (and thus risking to alienate her support base among the German industry), she also insisted on dialogue and cooperation.¹⁷ Merkel had spoken to Putin almost daily during the build-up of the Ukraine crisis and even after since the Russian leader sent troops into Crimea.

It was only after the shooting down of civil aircraft MH17 in July 2014 that an increasingly frustrated Germany went beyond rhetorical condemnation of Russia. Although not itself a strong proponent of harsh sanctions, Germany took a clear lead in consolidating a common sanctions policy.¹⁸ Still, Berlin constantly reminded its partners that the door towards a peaceful solution must be kept open and that emotions should not be allowed to be a policy driver.¹⁹ Germany also took its role as broker—together with France—of the Minsk II ceasefire agreement very serious, even as other states started losing their faith in this process.

Berlin was so keen to avoid a rhetorical escalation that, in spite of its high level of indignation, it specifically rejected any use of historical parallels: a number

of German observers pointed out that, ironically, the annexation of Crimea had taken place on the template of the annexation of the Sudetenland by Nazi Germany in 1938.²⁰ But when German minister of finance Wolfgang Schäuble (because of his age and reputation the most outspoken government member) openly pointed out the Sudetenland analogy, the reactions back home were unforgiving.²¹ even an indirect comparison of a European leader with Adolf Hitler was seen as a step too far, as it could serve to banalize the Nazi regime through means of historic comparison. Merkel, short of reprimanding her minister, immediately took her distances from him, declaring that the annexation of Crimea was a *sui generis* case.

The Sudetenland comparison highlighted the sensitivity of German-Russian relations in Germany's internal debate. Even if the annexation of Crimea was condemned by virtually the entire political class, there is still a strong opposition to being confrontational with Russia. Opposition comes not only from the far left side of the political spectrum, as from *Die Linke* party descending from former East German communists with a still strong anti-American and anti-NATO bias. Additionally, parts of the Social Democrats, such as former chancellors Gerhard Schröder and Helmut Schmidt, have come out with statements condemning the harsh approach towards Russia.²² These members of the intelligentsia expressing empathy for Russia and Putin are often referred to by the rather sarcastic term of *Russlandversteher* ("those who understand Russia" or Russia apologists). But by no means are the *Russlandversteher* confined to the political left: on the far right, Putin enjoys a degree of sympathy among the populist *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), and board members of some of Germany's large companies have been heavily lobbying against the impositions of sanctions.²³ However, the Green Party, in spite of its pacifist origins, is strongly favoring a tougher line towards Moscow.

As a Social Democrat and former protégé of then-chancellor Schröder, Foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was also politically closer to the *Russlandversteher*. But Putin's blunt and undiplomatic behavior during the crisis made it easier for Steinmeier—and, at a later stage, for Merkel—to shed their reluctance, as any attempts to revive the more cooperative *Ostpolitik* approach of the 1970s in the present context would have looked naive and would have risked undermining Germany's standing among its transatlantic and European partners.

Assuming that most countries see the relations with Russia through the lens of their own individual history, experience and interests, Germany is not different from the other EU Member States. The particular sensitiveness of German-Russian relations can explain why Germany has, from the beginning, taken a cautious and even ambiguous position. Whereas the UK, Poland, the Baltic and

the Scandinavian states followed a rather US-like confrontational approach, most of the Southern and South-East European members are—for economic reasons or fear of harming energy supplies—loathe to see relations with Russia souring over Ukraine. In this context, the question is how a common EU position can be more than the lowest common denominator of 28 individual national positions? This is where the question of leadership comes into play.

The Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on Germany's Leadership Role in the EU

In January 2014, beyond the background of the *Euromaidan*, German President Joachim Gauck pleaded at the Munich security conference for a new German foreign policy strategy based on more active engagement on the international stage, and embedded into the EU framework. Although as a president Gauck has a mere ceremonial role, his speech hit a nerve among German politicians born after the war. A number of government ministers, including foreign minister Steinmeier, openly acclaimed Gauck, even if this could be seen as an open challenge of the chancellor. In fact, this statement was not only intended as a signal to Germany's European partners. It was also meant as a “wake-up-call” for Merkel, seen as lacking resolve not only in foreign policy matters.²⁴ According to Gauck (who, in his inauguration speech, had defended the German culture of military restraint), Germany should get rid of its habit of “looking the other way” when facing an international crisis.²⁵

The home-grown drive for a more active role of Germany coincided with an obvious lack of political leadership not only within the CFSP, but also globally: entangled in their own internal problems, the United States were not ready to assume a leadership role; unlike the Bush administration, Barack Obama does not feel a specific responsibility of the United States for Europe. He expects Europeans to take the lead with regards to crises on their own continent. Given the inability of the EU to speak with one voice, the EU institutions were also unable to take on any leading role. The other potential leaders at the European level, the UK and France, were too entangled by their own domestic problems. Whereas Britain, with its double identity crisis highlighted by the Scottish referendum and the uncertainty of its European future, has retreated into “unsplendid isolation,”²⁶ France is on a nearly permanent basis absorbed by its own economic and political woes.

The annexation of Crimea had challenged German foreign policy in several regards. Germany is a strong supporter of a common EU foreign policy, since the EU, like Germany, has consistently favored norms and rules over power in inter-

national relations. Also, the German-Russian relationship has been significant for Germany not only in economic terms, but also politically, as a source of Berlin's significance in the EU and NATO.²⁷ With these elements of its foreign policy being challenged, and the United States standing with Europe but not taking the lead, all eyes were turned towards Berlin to coordinate the EU's response.

Still, it was only after the shooting down of flight MH17 in July 2014—allegedly by Russian supported separatists—that Merkel fully assumed the role the rest of Europe was expecting from her. Although not itself a strong proponent of harsh sanctions, Germany became the clear leader in consolidating a common sanctions policy in the second half of 2014.²⁸

It was not the first time that Berlin found itself, without France as a co-pilot, in the EU's driver's seat. With the economic and financial crisis that started in 2007/2008 the political center of gravity within the EU has shifted from Brussels towards the capitals of the EU member states. In particular, the crucial role played by Berlin in the Eurozone's sovereign debt crisis (and Germany's economic strength in general) shifted Germany towards the nexus of EU decision making. As in the Euro crisis, Germany found itself at the top of EU foreign policy in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, not by design, but rather as consequence of the vacuum of leadership within and beyond the EU.

Germany's restraint in terms of foreign policy has always been more prominent than in other policy fields. It was only gradually, at the turn of the century, that the country began to act like a "normal" foreign policy actor and gradually shed its "leadership avoidance reflex"²⁹ by assuming responsibilities in Kosovo and Afghanistan. But assuming a leadership role meant also taking a risk, since the fear of being accused of hegemony was always present in Berlin. With a reason, as in particular, any unilateral moves towards Moscow were met with suspicion in the "new" EU member states. In April 2006 Radosław Sikorski, then Poland's defense minister, compared the North-Stream gas pipeline project between Russia and Germany that would bypass the Baltic States and Poland to the infamous 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany.³⁰

Although most member states see the Ukraine conflict through the lenses of their own experiences and interests, in practice most EU members generally closely align themselves with Germany's position. This informal acceptance of German leadership is partly due to Berlin's combined advantage of sufficient diplomatic capacities and privileged access to information, which significantly enhances its authority among its peers. But it is even more due to the European credentials of Germany, which is generally perceived as less self-interested and more sensitive with regards to the positions of the smaller countries than the other big EU member states.

In addition, the practice of “informal governance”, where key decisions are hammered out in informal meetings between the EU leaders before they are formalized in an official way, and the strong bonds between Berlin and Warsaw, helped to reassure Germany’s partners to accept German leadership in order to realize the EU’s shared foreign policy ambitions: to stop Moscow from pushing back EU and NATO and from regaining control over what Putin still considers its “near abroad.”

On the Russian side, given Putin’s obsession with status and prestige, it is also unlikely that Moscow would have accepted to deal in substance with a less “heavyweight” interlocutor than Germany, since both France and the UK were unable or unwilling to fulfill this role. The choice of key interlocutor is supported by the personal relations between Merkel and Putin, who speak each other’s language. Furthermore, Moscow is aware that Germany, due to the weight of history and of its economic stakes in Russia, is less keen on damaging bilateral relation and therefore likely to adapt a more moderate approach. Thus, it can be concluded that Russia, through the annexation of Crimea, its military intervention in Eastern Ukraine and its clear preference for a dialogue with Berlin rather than with Brussels, indirectly promoted Germany as a key player in the EU’s foreign policy.

What does this mean from a Baltic perspective? For Russia, with a worsening economic situation, the defense of its citizens against perceived outside enemies (which includes the Baltics) has replaced economic wellbeing as a source of legitimacy. By escalating tensions, Putin can deflect public anger about falling living standards and direct them against the West. Although sheltered against a direct military aggression from Russia through their NATO membership, as direct neighbors, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are among the first to suffer from the political and economic fallout. Seen from Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn, Germany’s moderating influence on Russia might look as an indicator of lacking firmness. However, any further rhetorical escalation would only contribute to strengthening the Putin system, as it would allow the Kremlin to further justify the increasing hardship of ordinary Russian citizens while fighting off internal opposition.

Conclusion

The three successive crises—Euro, Ukraine, and refugees—that shook the EU in just a few years have exposed wide rifts among its member States and put into question some basic assumptions about the EU’s internal cohesion. In all three crises, Germany found itself in the driver’s seat, first reluctantly, but with increasing comfort. The Euro crisis exposed the objective need for a strong leadership, and this leadership went to Berlin as a default solution. Boosted by the

mainly positive reception of its new role by most of its partners, and in view of another leadership gap during the Ukraine crisis, Germany grew more assertive also in the field of foreign policy—much facilitated by Russia’s increasing hubris and gross violation of both European core values and international law.

Seen from Vilnius, Riga or Tallinn, the specter of a possible German hegemony in Europe currently looks like the “least worst option.” As the EU’s resistance to its leading role faded away, Berlin saw its approach of uploading its foreign policy to the EU vindicated, as it had managed to conciliate the defense of its own interests with strengthening its image as a value-driven society, upholding the EU’s norms and values.

Beyond this background, Berlin’s role in the third European crisis—the 2015 refugee crisis—might seem illogical, given that Germany, by opening its borders widely to Muslim refugees from Syria and other war-torn regions, took the risk of alienating its European partners and of undermining its leadership acceptance. However, a second look reveals some logic behind Berlin’s attitude. The policy space of post-war Germany is today bigger than ever, as its leadership role is now widely accepted externally, and given that internally there is no destructive populist opposition strong enough to seriously harm the government. As a result, Berlin can therefore afford the “luxury” to implement a value-driven policy to an extreme by opening its borders to Muslim refugees.

Berlin hopes that the short-term negative impacts and the unpopularity of this measure at home and abroad is likely to be outweighed by the long-term benefits in terms of perception management and economic growth. At a time where nationalism, populism and religious intolerance are making a forceful global comeback, Germany’s reputation as a value-driven, open and tolerant nation is likely to stand out brighter than ever, making its brand name increasingly attractive on the global markets. When it comes to “Made in Germany,” values and interests are never far apart.

For Berlin, the preferred option would certainly be to “upload” its refugee policy to the EU—thus sharing both the risks and the opportunities that come with this approach. But the present political climate in the EU does not support such hopes. In the end, German leadership risks being weakened and centrifugal forces in the EU strengthened as a consequence. This is a perspective which, bearing the alternatives in mind, does not look attractive neither to Berlin and Brussels, nor to Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn.

Notes

1. “European Security Strategy - A Secure Europe in a Better World - EU Global Strategy—European Commission,” (Brussels: EU Global Strategy, 2003), <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world>.

2. For the EU, these norms and values are defined in art. 2 of the EU Lisbon Treaty: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” European Union, *Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community*, 13 December 2007, 2007/C 306/01.

3. In this article, “Germany” and “German Foreign Policy” refer, for the period 1949-1989, to Western Germany (the FRG), which became the template for the foreign policy of unified Germany after 1990. In the former GDR, the space for an autonomous foreign policy was strongly limited and defined by the USSR.

4. Nicolas Wright, “Germany and the CFSP: The accidental leader?,” paper prepared for the 37th Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of German Politics, London, 16-17 May 2011.

5. Lisbeth Aggestam, “Germany,” in ed. Ian Manners and Richard Whitman, *The Foreign Policies of European Union Member States* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 71.

6. The other two pillars being Euroatlantic integration and its redefinition of patriotism as *Verfassungspatriotismus* or constitutional patriotism, where the allegiance moved from the ethnic nation state towards a value system, expressed in the *Grundgesetz* (basic law).

7. Stephan Keukeleire and Tom Delreux, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union* (London: Palgrave, 2014), 46.

8. *Ibid.*, 47.

9. Radek Sikorski, “I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity,” *Financial Times*, 28 November 2011.

10. Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

11. But for different reasons: whereas many on the German left saw him as a reformer of socialism, those on the right (and in Eastern Germany) cheered him for bringing down the Soviet Union and for enabling German unification.

12. The agenda of the EC’s Maastricht Summit of December 1991, where the Member States discuss the Maastricht Treaty that would two years later give birth to the EU, also features the issue of the food supply situation in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

13. Russia is Germany’s 11th biggest trading partner. In 2013, Germany exported goods and services worth € 23 billion to Russia.

14. These principles were frequently quoted by Russia for refusing to endorse in 2007 the UN-led Ahtissari plan to settle the Kosovo status, since it would encroach upon Serbia’s sovereign rights and territorial integrity.

15. Even adding a new entry into the German dictionary: “merkeln,” meaning to be unable to take decisions or give your own opinions.

16. "Merkel nennt Annexion der Krim 'verbrecherisch,'" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 5 October 2015, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/70-jahre-kriegsende/gedenken-in-moskau-merkel-nennt-annexionder-krim-verbrecherisch-13585275.html>

17. "Kanzlerin Merkel droht Russland mit Sanktionen," *Deutscher Bundestag*, 13 March 2014, https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2014/49865952_kw11_de_regierungserklaerung_ukraine/216288.

18. ECFR foreign policy scorecard 2015, www.ecfr.eu/scorecard/2015.

19. Walter Steinmeier, "Wut und Empörung dürfen in der Ukraine-Krise nicht das letzte Wort sein," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 8 March 2014.

20. A part of Czechoslovakia bordering Germany with an ethnic German majority until their expulsion in 1947. The Sudetenland was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938. This was motivated by Hitler with the alleged oppression of ethnic Germans by the Czechoslovak authorities and by their desire to live within the borders of the German Reich.

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22. "Helmut Schmidt hat Verständnis für Putins Krim-Politik," *Zeit Online*, 26 March 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/2014-03/schmidt-krim-putin>.

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Rethinking Liberal Democracy

Prelude to totalitarianism

ISABEL DAVID, PHD*

The Theoretical Foundations of Liberal Democracy

In the long course of human evolution and political experimentation, liberal democracy, especially after the events of 1989, has come to be seen as the best political system, or, at least, as Winston Churchill put it, “the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”¹ In fact, we seem to have reached the so-called *end of history* and of all ideologies. By portraying itself as the only valid way of thinking, what this language entails is, in fact, the obliteration of alternative modes of thinking, and thus the effective dominance of this particular ideology. The effect of this mechanics is self-evident: the persistence of one particular form of thinking self reproduces and, through repetition, generates its own legitimacy. Tocqueville has brilliantly described its essence: in a democratic society, where the passion for equality is the prevalent and irresistible dogma, all people have to work, which means that all live in a state of perpetual agitation.² This state of affairs is simply incompatible with contemplation and its ultimate end—the search for truth—if by no other reason than that thinking requires time, something which is lacking in such societies. In other words, democracies have no leisure class, precisely that which has traditionally dedicated itself to these matters. In the absence of theoretical concerns, people turn to their material well-being and live for the present, a context in which science comes to exist not *per se*, but only possesses a utilitarian rationale that merely conceives of its immediate and practical application.

This prevalence of the economy, of the technical sphere, and the advent of a *government of things*, instead of a *government of men*, seems to be intimately con-

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nected with a qualitative change which took place in the 16th century, namely, the Reformation. The most important break in Western unity was especially espoused by the most economically developed areas, by those most favored by natural resources and by the wealthiest towns of the Holy Roman Empire; in one word, by the bourgeois way of life. The emphasis on earthly salvation through work and *economic rationalism*, as Max Weber put it, instead of after-life salvation, and the rejection of transcendentalism, seems to compose a materialistic picture duly incompatible with the spiritual and ascetic essence of Christianity.³ Once implemented, this system tends to develop a legitimacy that increases in proportion to its stability.

These “ethical maxims,”⁴ having penetrated the cultural realm, gave rise to an ideological foundation—liberalism—traceable to the writings of John Locke, and later continued by Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant and David Hume. John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*⁵ were as much a reaction against Sir Robert Filmer’s *Patriarch*⁶ and Stuart’s absolutism as they were a eulogy of Whig interests, associated with emergent industrial lobbies and wealthy merchants.⁷ Hence his fierce defense of the doctrine of unalienable natural rights—individual liberty, life, property—that constituted the inviolable private sphere of a civil society, conceived as a domain in which there could be no state interference. The cornerstone of his theoretical edifice lay in the social compact, based on consent and choice, as the means to create a body politic. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he proposed the famous *tabula rasa* doctrine, arguing that there are no innate universal moral notions—speculative and practical principles—in the human mind.⁸ Rather, moral principles, along with faith and revelation, require reasoning and discourse, in order that their truth is discovered. In fact, all knowledge begins with experience, through the senses, and must be made dependent on the end one wants to achieve. Among the ideas which are received from sensation and reflection are pain and pleasure, in reference to which good and evil can be measured. Hence, that which is called good is that which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain. Evil, on the contrary, is that which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us. Happiness consists in the maximum pleasure we are capable of, and misery the maximum pain.⁹ Hence, principles such as virtue are generally approved, not because they are innate, but because they are profitable to each individual.

It was with Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* that freedom decisively acquired its markedly economic tone.¹⁰ For him, people’s actions are guided by the utilitarian consideration of self-interest, in a supposedly well ordered competitive system, guided by an *invisible hand*.¹¹ Jeremy Bentham was responsible for the

doctrine of utilitarianism as such.¹² As for Locke, for Bentham pain and pleasure are the sovereign masters which decide what we ought to do and determine right and wrong. Based on these foundations, the principle of utility “approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question.”¹³ The final goal of the system thus created is felicity, by the hands of reason and law. In fact, the principle of utility, as the true source of morality, is aimed not only at individual action, but also at government action. The individual is the best judge of his own utility, due to man’s reasonable nature. In this sense, the art of directing a man’s own actions is named private ethics, or art of self government and the sum of the interests of the several members who compose the community forms the interest of that community. The art of directing people’s actions to happiness and augmenting it through the law is called the art of government. In this context, punishment, which is an evil in itself, should only be admitted if it can exclude some greater evil.

John Stuart Mill elaborated on the concept of utilitarianism, considering general happiness as a moral standard and the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions.¹⁴ It is anchored on the natural social feelings of mankind, and is, for that reason, the most important and desirable end. Money, fame and power are components of happiness. Hence, the best government is that which is most conducive to progress. Mill mitigates this understanding of utilitarianism, by advocating the superiority of intellectual and moral pleasures, with a view to a “higher mode of existence,” reflecting the distinctive human faculty of reason.¹⁵ Here resides the justification for the absolute sphere of human sovereignty in matters of lifestyle, inner consciousness, personal conduct and opinion—and hence unhindered individualism¹⁶—in which the state has no power to intervene, even with an ethical purpose, to restore moral standards—the “despotism of custom,”—save in those cases where the aim is to prevent harm done to others. In his view, liberty is the only trustworthy source of improvement. Thus, each individual, bringing with him an endless diversity of experiences, is a possible independent centre of improvement.

The role of the state, in this context, should be that of a central depository, circulator and diffuser of these experiments. Immanuel Kant’s philosophy rests on an optimistic view of the human condition, based on the assumption that men are originally predisposed to good and able to perfect themselves.¹⁷ Hence, morality can be built on the postulation that man is a free agent who can bind himself through reason alone to laws, therefore not needing either religion or any other incentive than the law to apprehend and do his duty. Right and wrong are determined solely by reason. In this context, the categorical imperative is that which represents an action as necessary in and of itself, being able to ignore all ends.

There is only one categorical imperative: “Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation.”¹⁸ Thus, what each of us calls good must be desired by all rational men, which means that a universal kingdom of ends can be conceived, binding all rational beings by common laws. The final outcome will be that each one of us will treat others, in every case, as an end, and never as a means.

For David Hume, knowledge comes from experience, through the senses.¹⁹ This is the case of morality, which depends on subjective perceptions and appetites. Thus, good and evil can be distinguished according to the impressions they produce: if the impression is agreeable, then something is good; if, on the contrary, the impression is uneasy, we are in the presence of evil. There are, therefore, no objective moral standards. Similarly, justice does not exist *per se*, but rather arises artificially from education and human convention to remedy some inconveniences such as selfishness and lack of generosity. From then on, the pursuit of happiness—traceable to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*—for the greater number and avoidance of pain as the only ends of human action were to be considered as the guidelines for all moral considerations, capable of defining good and evil, instead of considering an action good in and of itself.²⁰ This view, which can be best described as a revival of sophism, has come to dominate the political and philosophical debate and was translated into neoliberalism, drawing mainly from the works of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. The view also gave birth to the doctrine of state neutrality that emerged in the 1970’s, which regards the liberal state as one that does not impose upon its citizens or favor any definition of the good, leaving people free to pursue their own private moral conceptions.

This regression from the public sphere—the sphere of freedom *par excellence*—to the despotism of the household can only be looked at with great concern. In fact, when private interests take over public life and governments start acting as companies—privatizing public utilities and welfare, marketizing health services, social insurance and pensions, promoting competition between universities, introducing private sector forms of management into public service, treating citizens as clients—that is, as mere providers of goods and services, politics will be built “on the basis of private law” and the common good becomes a sum of private interests.²¹ In the impossibility of “linking the individuals’ responsibilities and obligations to a well defined political order (...), the very possibility of politics is put into question.”²² For economy, as Hannah Arendt mentions, can never decide “which form of government is better; tyranny or a free republic.”²³ Because the two spheres, the economic and the political one, have divergent goals, and once politics is evicted by the market, democratic decisions lose credibility, given that money can be neither democratized nor held accountable,²⁴ and citizenship is

converted into plain “ratification of decisions or consumption of services.”²⁵ At the same time, representation fails and elections turn into a simple appointment of agents and delegates of interest groups. The reduction of freedom to such a “diminished normative”²⁶ conception—the economic rationality of the consumer, who has replaced the citizen—puts aside the moral component that is supposed to underlie public space, built on the idea of reciprocity associated with the *categorical imperative* (or with the *general will*) in which the citizen comes to participate on an equal basis in the *polis*, a possibility immediately denied by the market, which merely “reproduces, and augments, the comparative advantages, *previously established*, of enterprises, of the domestic and of people.”²⁷ The people, by definition a public law concept, dilutes into a shapeless mass of isolated individuals incapable of being held accountable. For liberalism, by reducing the role of the state and by making the private sphere the only domain where freedom could be maintained, has shielded the citizens from the public realm. Liberal morality is reduced solely to the endeavor of preserving oneself as the first and only basis of virtue. However, as Hannah Arendt noted, “nothing proved easier to destroy than the privacy and private morality of people who thought of nothing but safeguarding their private lives.”²⁸

Beyond Good and Evil

The relativism that ultimately springs from egalitarianism, in that all opinions are alike in dignity, even wrong ones, as Mill argued,²⁹ can best be summarized in Rousseau’s *volonté de tous*, a sum of individual private and egoistic wills from which no general will can ever emerge.³⁰ St. Augustine reinforces the private nature of evil, which arises when man starts focusing on the lower goods, to satisfy his egotistic interests.³¹ Reason cannot be the measure of morality, as Kant wanted, for, as Horkheimer and Adorno claim, “Reason is the organ of calculation, of planning; *it is neutral with regard to ends*; its element is coordination.”³² Nietzsche’s superman, someone capable of creating values ex-nihilo, tries to replicate Kant’s categorical imperative.³³ This is the problem with liberals: trying to create values ex-nihilo.

The full implications of these doctrines are not, as a matter of fact, liberation from state tyranny, but rather from traditionally accepted and established known values, as Socrates inaugurated them—it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong—then their subversion and, finally, their destruction.³⁴ Values thus became “social commodities that have no significance of their own but, like other commodities, exist only in the ever-changing relativity of social linkages and commerce.”³⁵ Ultimately, this extreme mutability seems to be intimately connected

with utilitarianism, a process in a strict dialectical relation with scientism, the new religion associated with economic progress, by which humanity has reached the end point of the eschatological interpretation of history of which Auguste Comte spoke—the scientific or positive stage—having successfully abandoned the theological and the metaphysical stages.³⁶

Here lies precisely the explanation for the replacement of one God by another. In fact, faith in progress rests on the fact that it is more readily accessible to all, saints and sinners, and hence more egalitarian and consistent with the spirit of democratic morality. In addition, it reflects the abandonment of the uncertainty of faith in a hereafter, which may not exist, to embrace a more certain man-made world. The killing of God, the one thing that ultimately ensures the stability and immutability of all things human, comes, in this respect, as the necessary prerequisite for the inversion of known values and the advent of ever-changeable sets of new ones. In fact, once God is killed, in a first stage values still exist, but not their ultimate source—call it God or natural law—and, once their guarantor is not there any longer, those values completely disappear.

In effect, what this continuous change means is that “the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world—and the category of truth vs. falsehood is among the mental means to this end—is being destroyed.”³⁷ After the killing of God, as Montesquieu had noticed; only customs—*les mœurs*, the morality of every civilization—could prevent the moral and spiritual breakdown of Western culture.³⁸ But, contrary to what he noticed—that the decline begins with unlawfulness, either when the laws are abused by the government or when the authority of the law’s source becomes doubtful and questionable—³⁹ it is not the corruption of the laws that leads to decay but rather, as Plato noted, that corrupt mores encroach upon the laws and transform them.⁴⁰ In a context in which freedom becomes a means, and not an end, and is replaced by free will, the arbitrariness of isolated individuals reigns supreme.

Since the absolute barrier that once separated good from evil was blurred by relativism, indifference becomes the prevalent feature of democratic societies. From indifference, the leap to skepticism is only a very short one, and an even shorter one to nihilism.

The attempt at a new beginning by man alone, through secularization, which has been the driving force behind all modern revolutions—all openly atheist—could only have one outcome: tyranny. The full implications of such a conception showed to what extent the demiurge—the superman of which Nietzsche spoke,⁴¹ in an attempt at imitating divine art, an apocryphal manifestation of God—hadn’t liberated himself from the political order which he ruled, but, as Locke had anticipated,⁴² from natural, and hence, divine law, to which he had been subjected

prior to the Modern Age, having tried to create a secular religion and thus tried to find “within the political realm itself, a fully satisfactory substitute for the lost religious sanction of secular authority.”⁴³ Modern times have indeed become a witness to the most unacceptable crossing of ethical boundaries, having reached its height in the open criminality of totalitarian regimes—it is well known that the elite formations of the Nazi party were organized after the model of criminal gangs and trained to commit mass murder, while criminals received a fairly better treatment in concentration camps than totally innocent people—but not solely confined to them. The events in former Yugoslavia or Rwanda fully demonstrate that totalitarian solutions are here to stay and can indeed be extraordinarily popular.

The Shape of Things to Come

And if moral virtues remain in us through education and habit⁴⁴, as Aristotle noted, the greatest danger lies in that “no one who spent his life among rascals without knowing anybody else could have a concept of virtue,”⁴⁵ when all references have been eliminated. In the end, the last resort will be human nature.

From lack of moral standards, emerges a particular type of citizenship: apathetic, passive and unenlightened⁴⁶ and thus incapable of adequately choosing its representatives. This fact is particularly disturbing in a system which was meant to rely on a high degree of discernment on the part of its people. In a context in which individuals lack time and thus proper knowledge to effectively participate in the *res publica*, state power is bound to grow. More so when people are willing to lose their freedom, in the name of safety, as the current crisis has proved, with the rise of the far right all over Europe. This thought is particularly troubling and aggravated in our time, marked by the “ethos” of the market and by the “transformation of the world into industry”⁴⁷:

The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. Political, social and economic events everywhere are in a silent conspiracy with totalitarian instruments devised for making men superfluous. (...) Totalitarian solutions may well survive the fall of totalitarian regimes in the form of strong temptations which will come up whenever it seems impossible to alleviate political, social, or economic misery in a manner worthy of man.⁴⁸

Mass murder in the political sphere merely emulates mass production in the economic realm. People are judged by their market value. Reified, people become eventually obsolete and thus disposable. As things, human beings can be used and manipulated. In this utilitarian world, ideas, religions, ideologies are of interest

“only insofar as they increase or decrease the survival prospects of the human species on the earth or within the universe.”⁴⁹ In the end, the origins of such concepts must reside in the utilitarian formula that obliterates meaning and purpose and blurs the difference between means and ends.

If “all of European history through many centuries had taught people to judge each political action by its *cui bono* and all political events by their particular underlying interests,”⁵⁰ in the absence of values, what can be the boundaries to political violence? A nihilist society, however committed to science, can only have totalitarianism as its final destination. Totalitarianism, then, does not proceed from ignorance. And from this cycle there seems to be no escape: “whatever the punishment, once a specific crime has appeared for the first time, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been.”⁵¹ There is indeed a strikingly frightening similarity between democracy and totalitarianism, in that the former paves the way for the latter.⁵² One needs only to compare the brilliant studies conducted by Tocqueville and Hannah Arendt, *Democracy in America* and *Totalitarianism* respectively, to understand the meaning of such an affirmation.⁵³ Once the difference between right and wrong is no more⁵⁴—and then we will have attained what Plato saw as the cause of evil: ignorance—men relapse into a Hobbesian state of nature since the instinct of self-preservation prevails when each one of us does what he wants,⁵⁵ paving the way for the utmost perversity and fully demonstrating its consequences once such men reach government, as Plato noticed.⁵⁶ The ultimate perversion is the trivialization of all feelings which enoble and elevate the human condition—love, friendship, loyalty. And this development proves how easily modernity has destroyed both man’s ability to think—and especially to reflect on himself—and his practical reason,⁵⁷ the one faculty on which Liberal philosophy rests, by trusting human nature. Hitler’s election is the living proof—action alone determines the nature of the moral person and not intention, as Aristotle noted.⁵⁸

Conclusion

The Need for the Definition of a Common Good?

When wrong actions are dismissed as normal and acceptable and even criminality goes unpunished, reversing legality, as Plato noted,⁵⁹ even in the eyes of intelligent people,

there is usually more involved than just nonsense. There exists in our society a widespread fear of judging that has nothing whatever to do with the biblical ‘judge not, that ye be not judged.’ (...) For behind the unwillingness to judge

The Crime-Conflict Nexus and the Civil War in Syria

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By January 2017, the Syrian civil war had produced close to 5 million refugees, 6.3 million internally displaced persons, 13.5 million Syrians who required humanitarian aid¹ and estimates put the number of fatalities due to the war at 500,000.² Western popular interest in the Syrian civil war tends to focus on the use of chemical weapons by the government of Bashar Al-Assad; the military successes and brutality of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS);³ Russian military involvement and the refugee ‘crisis’ which resulted from the conflict. This paper focuses on an often-overlooked aspect of the conflict, but one that is central to its longevity and intensity: the role of organized crime in the Syrian civil war.

Early in the conflict, UNESCO raised alarm about the increased illegal trade in antiquities and artifacts from Syria. Both the policymaking⁴ and academic communities⁵ have since acknowledged the proliferation of organized crime during the war. These studies show how protagonists in the Syrian conflict are involved in a range of illegal economic activities, including people trafficking, oil smuggling, the illegal narcotics trade, kidnapping and looting. These activities vary in profitability, but they generate sufficient funds to allow insurgents and the government to buy weapons, pay combatants, provide social services and establish institutions in the areas under their control. These factors are crucial in reproducing the armed groups and maintaining the conflict. Yet, very little is known about how the war provides opportunities for this illicit economy to expand. This paper asks how war and organized crime affect each other in the context of the Syrian civil war.

There has been a steady recognition of the role of organized crime in sustaining violent conflict⁶ and the threat it poses to international peace, security and stability.⁷ This interplay between organized crime and war, the ‘crime-conflict

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Reversing the Stabilization Paradigm

Towards an Alternative Approach

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In reviewing existing policy documents, articles, and commentaries on stabilization, it becomes evident that current academic and policy materials fail to elucidate core concepts or approaches that would define stabilization, particularly as a theory under the generic heading of international aid. Based on this review and the author's experiences, this Practice Note presents an approach to stabilization that is entirely compatible with existing international engagements in support of national transition processes, can be applied across the spectrum from consent to coercion, and establishes an organizing principle for stabilization actions through clarity of purpose. The Practice Note concludes with a definition of stabilization, as:

Stabilization is action, or coordinated actions, designed to support a **strategic process**. A suite of stabilization actions constitutes a stabilization intervention. Stabilization interventions aim to engender support amongst **actors present** for the strategic process, through **focused actions** on their **capacities** to impact that process. The outcomes of stabilization interventions are measured and assessed in terms of achieving the aim, and their human rights impacts.

Within this definition, **strategic process** is understood as the national transition process, and the multitude of international engagements designed to support the national transition. **Actors present** related to actors' abilities to influence the strategic process, regardless of geographic location. **Actors' capacities** are defined in terms of assets and/or legitimacy. **Focused actions** in stabilization fall into three categories: (1) Influence an actor's position (related to the strategic

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Prescription for an Affordable Full Spectrum Defense Policy

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Persons knowledgeable in international relations consider the United States an indispensable nation. Hence, it needs to pursue a full spectrum defense policy. However, a full spectrum defense policy is expensive indeed and must compete with pressing domestic priorities. Therefore, viable ways of making it more affordable have been presented. They include: total asset visibility; looking in the right places; reducing federal bureaucracy; building weapons from low-hanging fruit; exploiting economies of scale; lesser reliance on military specifications, focused leadership education; and growing the technological fruit tree.

Economic Limitations to the Arms Race

The belief by many of our civilian and military leaders based on outdated formulas developed by Frederick Lanchester at the height of WWI that technology will negate numerical superiority has led to a reliance on transformational technology which, in turn, has resulted in staggering product development costs and unprecedented product development life cycles. The cost of one B-2 bomber is \$2 billion, which compelled Congress to limit its volume to 21 aircraft; and one has already been lost in an accident. The cost of one F-22A is \$355 million (\$420 million with retrofit items), and it took 22 years to field it. If it were being developed for WWII, it would not have seen service until the Vietnam conflict. The joke in the Pentagon has it that the 22 stands for the number of years it took to develop this plane. The F-35 is on the same glide path as the F-22A with respect to cost and product development time.¹

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Since insurgencies, the existential and near term threats, lack air forces and navies, the United States can fight them without the so-called fifth generation platforms. However, insurgencies last a long time and are expensive, and the United States cannot afford to bankrupt itself with prohibitively expensive high-tech weapon systems with dubious military advantages for fighting insurgencies. Former Congressman, Barney Frank, D-Mass., speaks for many legislators:

The math is compelling: If we do not make reductions approximating 25% of the military budget starting fairly soon, it will be impossible to continue to fund an adequate level of domestic activity even with a repeal of Bush's tax cuts for the very wealthy. American well-being is far more endangered by a proposal for substantial reductions in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security or other important domestic areas than it would be by cancelling weapon systems that have no justification from any threat we are likely to face.²

Indeed, the opportunity costs of a large defense budget are considerable. Conservative historian, Robert Kagan, offers a rebuttal:

2009 is not the time to cut defense spending. A reduction in defense spending this year would unnerve American allies and undercut efforts to gain greater cooperation. There is already a sense around the world that the United States is in terminal decline. Many fear that the economic crisis will cause the United States to pull back from overseas commitments. The announcement of a defense cutback would be taken by the world as evidence that the American retreat has begun.³

What Robert Kagan overlooks is the fact that our allies have not paid their fair share of their own defense since the end of WWII, and it is about time that they become unnerved.⁴

Historically, the United States has contributed 50% of NATO's budget. Recently, the United States share has jumped to 75% with Europeans using their economic woes as an excuse for not doing more. In light of the population size of the European Union and its combined GDP, this is inexcusable. Europe should heed the warning issued by former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, in his NATO valedictory address to contribute much more to its own defense because the United States can easily lose the appetite to do so. A more recent Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, echoes Robert Gates. These gentlemen were not just crying "wolf." With the inauguration of Donald Trump as president, the time has actually arrived. There is some talk that the European Union should have its own unified military. This notion should receive full support from the US government.⁵

Lessons learned from the arms race

Nations should learn lessons not only from their war experiences but from arms races as well. As the Soviets realized, quantity has its own quality advantages, even with superior equipment. Wonder weapons, with the exception of nuclear warheads, are not a substitute for simpler but effective counterparts available in large numbers. When Soviet Field Marshal, Georgy Zhukov, who knew more about large scale warfare than anyone, with the possible exception of Napoleon, was asked at the end of WWII what it took to win a large scale military conflict, he responded, “more—more troops, more tanks, more planes, more ships, more artillery, etc.” The US WWII experience mirrors Marshal Zhukov’s advice.⁶

Does the United States get good value for its huge expenditures?

There is an old British saying: “When you run out of money, you must begin thinking.” It appears as though exotic weapon systems expand to exhaust the money available in the Defense Department (DoD) budget. As a result, fiscal austerity becomes the mother of an efficient and effective military. The size of the US defense budget should not be confused with national security. It took a former general, President Eisenhower, to alert the nation to the military/industrial/congressional complex, but we did not listen. Eisenhower was convinced that the “Pentagon Boys” exaggerated threats in order to get larger military budgets. The politicians went along because jobs in my district get me elected and reelected, and that is what matters. Lockheed/Martin has subcontractors for the F-35 in 47 states to gain maximum political support. And this is not an isolated exception. The Navy F-18E/F has subcontractors in 44 states.

A report by the Government Accountability Office meticulously documented in 2012 that the Pentagon’s 95 largest weapon systems were nearly \$300 billion over budget.⁷ Deloitte Consulting LLP concluded that cost-overruns have steadily worsened.⁸ Technical complexity accounts for an ever-increasing percentage of weapon’s cost overruns. Complexity is also the enemy of reliability and meeting deadlines. The F-35 is so computer code dependent that writing and debugging the code has become the “long pole in the tent.” The F-35 is not only over budget and behind schedule, but the critics of the F-35, the most expensive weapon system of all time, make a compelling case that the plane can’t climb, can’t turn, and can’t run, and is no match for the top of the line Russian fighters if it is thrust into aerial combat. Quite frankly, the US taxpayer and our allies who are counting on this plane to be the backbone of their future air fleets deserve better. In time, the F-35 may become a viable platform since complex weapon systems experience lengthy teething problems. But that will not happen anytime soon.⁹

Flawed funding processes based on unrealistic cost estimates are an integral part of the problem. Realistic cost estimates frequently are unavailable because most programs are funded and launched while there is still significant uncertainty about most everything. Hence, only fixed cost contracts should be negotiated by the DoD so that contractors also incur the risk associated with cost overruns.

How to Make the Arms Race More Affordable?

How much a nation spends on its national defense is a necessary condition, but the sufficient condition is how wisely the money is spent. We cannot risk unilateral disarmament because we no longer can count on two oceans for creating the lead time to rearm, as was the case in the past. Intercontinental ballistic missiles have seen to that. However, potential enemies continue to exist. Yet, we have pressing domestic priorities that compete with the defense budget. Hence, we must make a realistic defense policy more affordable. The ways exist. All we need is the will. First, we must guarantee that the books of the Pentagon and all the military branches are auditable. Until that is done, we cannot know what we need because we have no way of knowing what we have.¹⁰

Relying on the intelligence community

The United States has a robust Intelligence Community—both human intelligence as well as signals intelligence.¹¹ The information that it possesses should be the starting point with regard to identifying the assets needed to neutralize current and potential threats. Relying on government contractors may result in the procurement of inordinately expensive systems of dubious military value. Moreover, such systems could unnecessarily fuel the arms race.

Vital nature of total asset visibility

The United States sent twice as much materiel to the Persian Gulf as was required, and our troops did not know where half of it was at any given moment. Half of the 40,000 bulk containers shipped into the theater had to be opened in order to identify their contents, and most of it failed to contribute in any way to our success on the battlefield. If we recognize the coalition nature of present and future conflicts, then it becomes obvious that there is a big payoff associated with integrating our asset visibility system with those of our allies.

Look in the right places

The largest savings potential rests in the mission and roles category. For example, not only does the Navy have its own Air Force, the Marines has its own air force as well. Incidentally, the Army has its air force (and a large one at that when rotary aircraft are included) and a navy Corps of Engineers too. The Air Force is anxious to rid itself of the A-10 close air support aircraft, and the best one available, which leads the ground forces to question its commitment to close air support. Little wonder that the Marines insist on providing their own close air support. Perhaps, given the fact that Air Force generals appear to be ensorcelled by high tech wizardry, the close air support mission and the A-10 should be assigned to the Army.¹²

Reducing the size of the federal defense bureaucracy

The US force structure and budget have declined by about one third from their 1985 peak levels. The infrastructure, however, has declined about 18%.¹³ Therefore, the two should be brought into balance before reducing the end strength of combat forces, and it should be done by proven re-engineering methods instead of for political reasons. After all, the WWII experience reveals that lean organizations produced the most impressive results.¹⁴

Re-engineering means excising those activities that are either unrelated or marginally related to the central mission (occupational hobbies), removing redundancies, and creating or refining processes through which mission relevant goals and objectives are attained in an efficient and effective manner. Re-engineering requires evaluating the value chain and eliminating or reducing components that either add no value or very little, while retaining and even enhancing those that add considerable value.

A good place to begin re-engineering efforts is activity-based accounting (ABS)—a systematic method for assigning costs to business activities. First, a reasonable number of business activities needs to be defined, and all costs associated with each activity need to be assigned to the appropriate activity. Once this much has been accomplished, the activities with their associated costs can be allocated to products, processes, customers, or vendors. Next, activities need to be assigned priority on the basis of cost, with the most expensive activity receiving top priority for scrutiny with respect to redundancy, relevancy, and criticality. Last, whenever appropriate, the unnecessary or marginal activities are eliminated. Whenever practicable we must insist that all technology, processes, and procedures “buy” their way into the organization in terms of reducing the total cost of doing business.¹⁵

ing domestic needs create serious competition for the federal dollar, and potential enemies, reverting to historical tendencies, refuse to go away. While arms limitation treaties have slowed the arms race, the United States still needs to fashion an affordable defense policy. Toward that end recommendations have been made that include: rationalizing missions and roles, streamlining the federal defense bureaucracy, discontinuing failed practices, exploiting economies of scale, lesser reliance on military specifications, setting “drop dead” deadlines on change orders, giving serious consideration to 80% solutions, integrating US asset visibility with that of our allies, increasing joint ventures with allies and partners, providing focused education, and building weapon systems through an evolutionary process rather than through transformational technology in case diplomatic strategies fail.

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