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SITREP



Dear Mr. Sajjan:

I am honoured that you have agreed to serve Canadians as Minister of National Defence.

We have promised Canadians a government that will bring real change – in both what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in this election, and our platform offered a new, ambitious plan for a strong and growing middle class. Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.

We made a commitment to invest in growing our economy, strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it. We committed to provide more direct help to those who need it by giving less to those who do not. We committed to public investment as the best way to spur economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. We committed to a responsible, transparent fiscal plan for challenging economic times.

I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do so individually and collectively – to improve economic opportunity and security for all Canadians.

Letter of Mandate to the Minister of National Defence

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From the Editor's Desk



It has been said that all foreign policy is self-serving, none of it is altruistic. An interesting thought to reflect upon as we await our 'not-so-new government' to roll out its foreign and defence policy. Self-serving can be exemplified by an election campaign pronouncement clearly geared to garnering an election such as the promise to pull the six CF-18s out of the coalition campaign against ISIS/Daesh. Here 'all politics are local' is a truism. After years of benign neglect by successive governments, Liberal and Conservative alike, Canada's military got 'stuck in' to Afghanistan. Over fourteen years our military had a rebirth. Obsolete equipment was replaced, tactics, techniques and procedures and counterinsurgency doctrine were refined and used in the Afghanistan 'battlespace', combat team and battle group operations at that tactical level in the context of the operational theatre level became the norm and the trinity of the combat arms was once again confirmed—the infantry need the direct aimed precision fire of tanks, tanks need the infantry for close intimate support and both need the wrath of the 'rain of steel' provided by the precision fires of the artillery. As in past conflicts Canada fought and punched above its weight by fighting in the most threatened part of the Afghanistan and in so doing won back the respect of our alliance and coalition partners. In the absence of an existential threat—ISIS/Daesh is not an existential threat—our national historical reality is that decisions to fund and employ our military will continue to be treated as discretionary. Absent a change in this reality our military will yet again be low in the government's priorities.

Our China expert and frequent contributor, Weixin Lu updates us on China's massive island-building operation in the disputed South China Sea that has reshaped the geopolitical landscape and caused increased security collaboration between the region's nations and the United States.

Shortly after the new federal government was sworn in the Prime Minister, in a remarkable demonstration of transparency, made public the Mandate Letters to each Cabinet Minister. The Mandate Letter to the Minister of National Defence clearly serves as his 'marching orders'. It is a worthy read and for the first time allows citizens to see how the expectations of the PM are articulated to a Cabinet Minister.

In a follow up to Reza Akhlaghi's November Security Studies presentation "Iran's Geopolitical Trajectory following the US/Iran Nuclear Deal", Tim Lynch shares with us a subsequent conversation had with Reza that provides additional depth of understanding in the realities of geopolitics and 'theopolitics' of the region.

Rensselaer Lee examines the Iran Nuclear Deal, the history of proliferation and the poor application of arms control regimes by the international community. The most recent re-election of the centrist-reformist Hassan Rouhani government coupled with this new deal may result in a lessening of nuclear tensions in the region. Lee posits that major risks remain.

Eric Morse and Stéfanie von Hlatky, in the spirit that history can repeat itself but in a different form, take us through two-hundred years of challenges to the continuing relevance of the concept of Westphalian sovereignty and the role of non-state 'bandit' actors.

Jenny Newton asks that we share the *Vacation for Vets* program with our injured CAF personnel and Veterans in order for them to be aware and benefit from this superb opportunity.

Colonel Chris Corrigan (retired) CD, MA
Editor and Chair of Security Studies



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The South China Sea Issue at a Stalemate: Beijing's Reclamation and Geopolitical Dynamics in the Region

by Weixin Lu

China's massive island-building operation in the disputed South China Sea has reshaped the geopolitical landscape. By construction of artificial islands, Beijing has asserted what's called indisputable sovereignty in the contested waters that is a significant challenge to the regional status quo. Southeast Asian countries with overlapping claims have responded to China's action by increasing security collaboration with each other and the United States. Through the U.S.-led collective security system, Washington has further strengthened military ties with allies and partners, thus maintaining its primacy of decades in the Asia-Pacific region.

China's Reclamation Dwarfs Neighbours' Works

Competition over disputed features in the South China Sea has existed for decades. China claims as hers most of the regional waters overlapping the areas of the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei. Beijing asserts its claims based on what's called the U-shaped nine-dash line, originally an 11-dash demarcation line advanced by Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalist Government in 1947. After its subsequent adoption by the People's Republic of China in 1949, two of the dashes were removed at the behest of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai.

China is the last country to partake in land reclamation, but its island-building drive has outstripped works by its neighbours in scale, speed and nature. Since late 2013 Beijing has escalated efforts to create artificial islands by pumping dredged sand atop rocks and shoals in contested areas. As of June 2015, according to a Pentagon report released on August 20, China has reclaimed 2,900 acres of landmass across a string of isles known as the Spratly Islands, up nearly 50 percent from May, when the Pentagon said Beijing claimed about 2,000 acres.

China has created seven sand islands on maritime features in the South China Sea. In less than two years, said the Pentagon report titled *The Asia-Pacific Maritime Security*

Weixin Lu, based in Toronto, is a freelance writer with a focus on China and East Asia topics. He perceives the pulse of the cyber-world, and interprets geopolitical issues from a journalistic perspective. This is his fourth contribution to SITREP, the previous one being in Issue #6 Nov-Dec 2014, "Low Profile or Advancement: A Media Debate between a Veteran Diplomat and a PLA General over China's Diplomatic Strategy".

Strategy, China has reclaimed 17 times more land than any other maritime neighbour has over the past 40 years, accounting for about 95 percent of all reclaimed land in the Spratly archipelago. At some sites China has excavated deep channels and built new berthing areas "to establish a more robust power projection presence into the South China Sea," according to the report.

Southeast Asian countries, mainly Vietnam and the Philippines, have also claimed maritime features in disputed waters, expanding into artificial islands built with military outposts including airstrips. Over the years, the Pentagon report said, Vietnam has taken about 80 acres of land, Malaysia reclaimed 70 acres, the Philippines occupied 14 acres, and Taiwan acquired eight.

The report said China was in the process of completing a 3,000-metre runway on Fiery Cross Reef, one of its seven artificial islands in the Spratly. Furthermore, the images taken on September 8 showed apparent construction of an airstrip on Mischief Reef, another China-created island in the Spratly, according to Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think-tank. The pictures, according to the Centre, indicated a rectangular area similar to work by China on Fiery Cross and Subi, two other China-reclaimed features. The runways on artificial islands would give Chinese military aircraft greater reach into the heart of maritime south-east Asia.

China's construction of airstrips raises fresh concerns that Beijing may enforce an air-defense identification zone (ADIZ) in the South China Sea. China has had an ADIZ in the East China Sea since late 2013. In addition, the U.S. satellite footage as of last May reportedly revealed two mobile artillery pieces on one of China-reclaimed features known as Johnson Reef in the Spratly Islands. The U.S. and other countries are deeply concerned about China's military facilities being built on the islands, but Beijing insists the works are mainly to provide a civilian service including search-and-rescue operations, disaster relief and maritime safety.

After the Pentagon report's issuance, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter reiterated the U.S. position on freedom of navigation. "The United States will continue to fly, sail and operate wherever international law permits," adding "as we've

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always the right to do, we will continue to do that, and none of this is going to change our conduct in any way.” The real test, however, is how the U.S. Navy would react to Chinese military action if American aircraft or vessels entered within 12-nautical-miles waters of China’s reclaimed artificial islands.

China indicates construction of the islands is within its rights as a sovereign nation. In the Pentagon report, China’s foreign ministry reiterated Beijing’s position that the South China Sea is not a U.S.-China issue, and it “is resolving disputes with countries directly concerned through negotiation and consultation.” Asked about the photographs taken in early September showing construction of a new runway on Mischief Reef, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson repeated that China has “indisputable sovereignty” over the islands and the right to establish military facilities there.

Given the increased pressure, China has toned down its stance slightly. Beijing announced in a statement that it “completed the relevant island and reef area reclamation project” at the end of June. Furthermore the Chinese foreign minister reiterated Beijing’s decision to stop building artificial islands at a regional meeting in early August. Still, the U.S. and other concerned countries are skeptical about China’s announced stoppage of landmass reclamation.

The U.S. had no response to previous works by other maritime claimants, but has vigorously opposed China’s activity due to the geopolitical changes Beijing’s massive reclamation has brought to the waters, including one of the world busiest shipping routes, through which around \$5 trillion in maritime trade passes every year. As is known, the U.S. contends the South China Sea is international water, and sovereignty in the area should be determined by the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS).

UNCLOS explicitly states that “artificial islands, installations and structures do not possess the status of islands. They have no territorial sea of their own.”

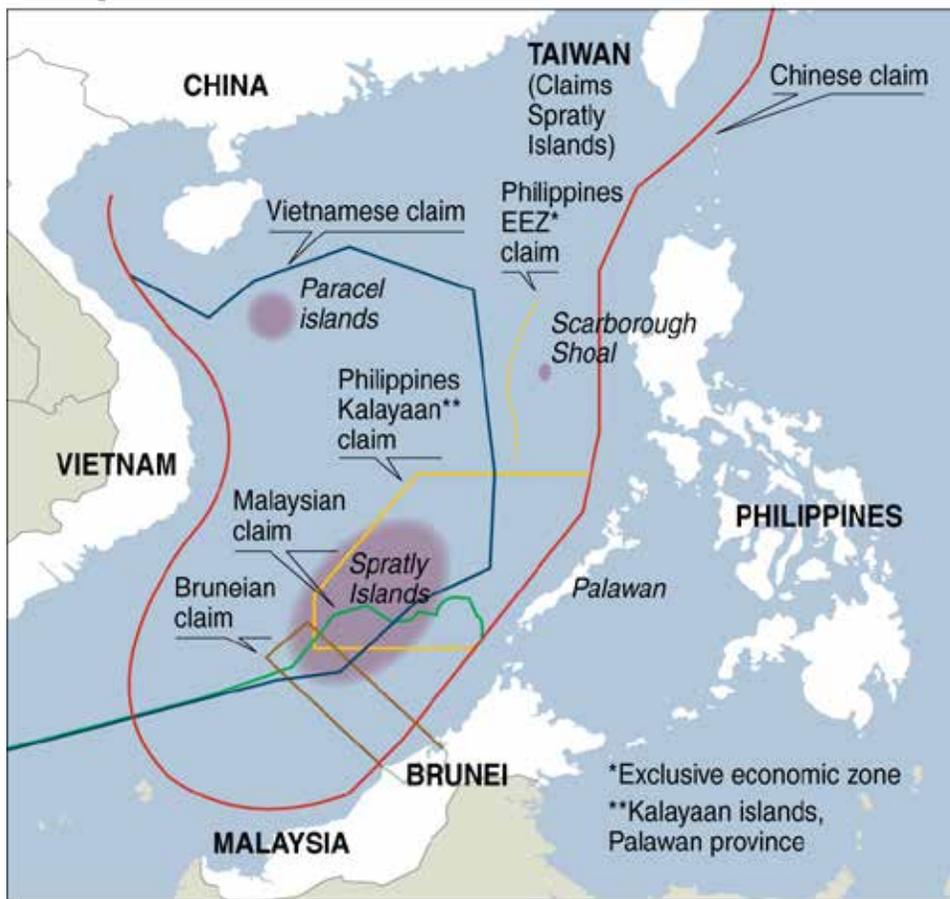
Legality of Reclamation and Freedom of Navigation

The South China Sea issue has taken centre stage of a series of recent regional meetings and security forums. The Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit and security sessions in Kuala Lumpur in early August, not only highlighted differences between China and its once-friendly neighbours over maritime disputes, but also underscored a deep rift between Beijing and the U.S. on freedom of navigation and other issues.

The annual gathering involved the ten ASEAN members and other Asia-Pacific countries including China, Japan, and the U.S.

At ASEAN meetings, despite Beijing’s persistent objection, regional leaders expressed angst over escalated

Disputed claims in the South China Sea



Sources: D. Rosenberg/MiddleburyCollege/HarvardAsiaQuarterly/Phil gov't



tensions, urging Beijing to stop building islands in disputed waters. And ASEAN leaders, along with U.S. officials, questioned the legality of China’s island-building activity, calling for a binding Code of Conduct (COC) for the concerned countries laying claims. Given the stalemate on the issue, it seems no breakthrough would appear in negotiation in the near future.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, host of this year’s meetings, broke with usual reticence, stating publicly it was time for ASEAN to “take a more active role” in managing “overlapping claims” and safeguarding regional security. ASEAN Secretary-General Le Luong Minh, a former Vietnamese diplomat, blamed Beijing for “eroding the very trust and confidence among the parties, and complicating the very process of negotiating” the code of conduct. ASEAN leaders are fearful that tensions may spiral out of control, threatening the

development and stability in the areas. Southeast Asia, home to some 600 million people, had a combined GDP of \$2.6 trillion in 2014, making it the world seventh largest economy.

In Kuala Lumpur Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed Beijing's position, saying China has the right to conduct reclamation and that the activity is within its territory. But U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry disagreed, saying "what's really needed though is an agreement to stop not just the reclamation but the large-scale construction and militarization." China also rejected a U.S.-proposed halt on constructing artificial islands in the areas, stressing such a suggestion is not feasible and that the U.S. should not impose double standards in reference to land reclamation by other countries.

Still, Mr. Kerry reiterated Washington's stand, saying "the United States will not accept restrictions on freedom of navigation and overflight, or other lawful uses of the sea. "But Beijing's top diplomat argued "China also has a stake in the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea." "The situation in the South China Sea is generally stable, and there is no possibility of a major clash," Mr. Wang said in a statement, adding that "up to now, there has not been a single case in which freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is impeded."

The South China Sea issue also dominated the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in late May, an annual security forum involving defence officials from around the world. As before, a wide divergence of views split up the U.S. and Chinese officials. During the session, Washington called on Beijing to stop being so assertive against other claimant neighbours, while China emphasized its legitimate right to defend its territory.

Admiral Sun Jianguo, the deputy chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army(PLA), argued China's construction work is "justified, legitimate and reasonable," saying the projects are for the purpose of providing international public services. "There are no changes in China's claims in the South China Sea. Nor are there changes in China's position on the peaceful resolution of the relevant disputes through negotiation and consultation," added Admiral Sun. Asked if China would set up an ADIZ over the South China Sea, the PLA admiral said it depends "on whether our security in the air and maritime area will be threatened and to what extent."

U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter criticized China's reclamation, saying Beijing is "out of step" with international norms amid the unprecedented pace of island reclamation. "China has reclaimed over 2,000 acres, more than all other claimants combined, and more than in the entire history of the region," said Mr. Carter, noting this concern has been a source of regional tension.

"There should be an immediate and lasting halt to land reclamation by all claimants. We also oppose any further militarization of disputed features," the defense secretary said. "We all know there is no military solution to the South China Sea disputes." The Pentagon chief singled out Beijing for its behavior, though he conceded almost all of the claimant

nations have conducted development of varying scope and size in the Spratly Islands.

On the South China Sea issue, Beijing insists on having direct talks with the concerned neighbours, and rejects U.S. involvement in it, saying Washington is not a party to the dispute. The issue, however, is of importance to U.S. interests from a geopolitical perspective. It has been among the priorities at recent summits between the two sides including President Xi Jinping's visit to Washington in late September. To Americans, in the final analysis, Beijing's action has broken the status quo, posing a challenge to freedom of navigation and decades-long U.S. primacy in the region.

As is well known, China reiterates its indisputable claims to territories as a sovereign state from an angle of history. For China, laying claims to maritime features would mean control over potential natural resource reserves and one of the world major commercial shipping lanes. Coordinately, Beijing has proposed "the Maritime Silk Road," a Chinese strategic drive to increase investment and economic cooperation in the adjacent areas. And the China-initiated 57-member Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has also taken shape for the same purpose.

Chinese Navy Flexes Its Muscles in the Open Seas

China made an important shift in its naval strategy and mission in the defence white paper released in late May 2015 entitled China's Military Strategy. In line with the strategic requirement of offshore waters defence and open seas protection, the PL navy will gradually shift its focus from 'offshore waters defence' to the combination of 'offshore waters defence' with 'open seas protection,' and will build a combined, multi-functional and efficient marine combat force structure."

As such, the PLA navy is expected to further expand despite China's recent decision to downsize its military. When commemorating the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II on September 3, Beijing announced it would cut 300,000 personnel from its 2.3-million troops by the end of 2017 in an attempt to streamline the military including the adoption of a U.S.-style joint-command structure. Xinhua news service quoted a Beijing's military spokesman as saying that "the move will mainly target troops equipped with outdated armaments, administrative staff and non-combatant personnel."

By reduction China would shift focus to the more advanced navy, air force and strategic missile force from the traditional ground force so as to effectively deal with what's called "the grave challenges from the sea." Now the personnel ratio between China's army, navy and air forces is 72 to 11 to 17, according to Xu Guangyu, a retired PLA general. The navy would undoubtedly emerge as a winner after the reduction, given the new maritime environment.

The Chinese navy has regularly flexed muscles in international waters in support of the country's territorial claims in contested areas. In late July 2015 the PLA navy conducted grand manoeuvres in waters to the east of Hainan Island,

a largely unpopulated region of reefs and shoals in which other neighbours maintain competing claims. Asked about the PLA's drills, a PLA navy spokesperson said "the annual exercise by the Chinese navy aims to test the soldiers' real combat effectiveness, boost their manoeuvrability, search and rescue operations and the capabilities to fulfill diversified military missions."

With rival neighbours forging alliances with each other and the U.S., China has restored the military partnership with its old ally Russia through a series of defence exchanges including joint exercises. In late August the PLA joined Russian forces in Peter the Great Bay near the eastern Russian port-city of Vladivostok in the largest combined naval exercise in history. The joint naval manoeuvre involved a total of 22 ships, 20 aircraft, 40 armoured vehicles, and 500 marines from both countries. It came three months after the two navies held a smaller maritime drill involving nine ships in the Mediterranean Sea.

The larger-scale joint naval exercise included training courses ranging from anti-aircraft, counter-submarine attacks to simulations of attacks on enemy ships. Chinese and Russian commanders coordinating the drills hailed the exercise as an "unprecedented show of military cooperation." The two countries have held the joint maritime exercises since 2012, including one taking place in Chinese territorial waters last year.

The enhanced military relationship between China and Russia reflects a changed geopolitical reality, especially after Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Rather than being bound by nostalgic political ideology, the two countries believe their robust defence cooperation is a pragmatic way to increase their military weight concurrent with managing regional geopolitical challenges.

Following the "open seas protection" strategy, Chinese navy vessels have sailed as far as the Bering Sea. Five PLA navy ships including three surface combat ships, one amphibious assault ship and one supply vessel, which just completed a China-Russia joint drill days earlier, were spotted in the Bering Sea off the Alaska coast on early September 2015. The U.S. military was reportedly aware of the Chinese ships and tracked their movements for days as they moved through international waters.

In light of the guidelines for a multi-functional and efficient marine combat structure, Chinese authorities announced in early June the new industrial standards that would make civilian vessels quickly convertible for military use in the future. In recent years many of China's confrontations with its maritime neighbours in disputed areas have been reportedly conducted using both military and civilian vessels including fishing boats.

As an assertive measure, the China Coast Guard, the country's maritime law enforcement unit, has regularly enforced claims in both the East and South China Seas. According to the recent Pentagon report, China has stepped

up patrols in the contested waters with expanded use of its paramilitary maritime enforcement ships. Chinese coast enforcement units are taking "small, incremental steps" that avoid military conflict, but work to "increase its effective control" over the islands. Meanwhile, the PLA navy vessels are operating over the horizon to be ready to respond to any escalation if necessary, said the report.

Beijing is pragmatic and flexible while implementing the maritime strategy. In mid-September China staged the first joint naval drill in the Strait of Malacca with Malaysia, a key ASEAN member with overlapping claims. Over one thousand PLA troops from its navy, air forces and ground units took part in the six-day combined drill, including a Chinese fleet of one guided-missile destroyer, one guided-missile frigate, one medical vessel, shipboard helicopters and transport aircraft. The largest joint exercise ranged from search and rescue, disaster relief to live-fire drills.

The combined exercise indicates that China, despite the strained ties with some ASEAN members, has maintained a decent relationship with an important member of the regional bloc even in military affairs. And, more importantly, it seems to demonstrate to other powers in the area that the PLA navy has the ability to assert its maritime presence including securing navigation safety for its huge merchant fleets in the crucial Strait of Malacca, through which 50 percent of China's exported goods and 80 percent of imported oil pass every year.

The U.S. Boosts Ties with Allies and Partners

Given the changed geopolitical environment, the Obama administration has reshaped the global strategy with its "Pivot to East Asia." Washington has been on track to station 60 percent of the U.S. Air Force and Navy in the region by 2020 with deployment of 55 percent of the Navy's 289 ships, including 60 percent of its submarine fleet.

With the U.S. Army withdrawal from Afghanistan, Washington has re-deployed more than 80,000 soldiers in Hawaii, Alaska, and Japan in support of its Pacific Pathways multilateral initiatives in the area, and also maintained an effective deterrent on the Korean peninsula. Pacific Pathways, part of a comprehensive plan to keep a "semi-permanent" U.S. presence in Asia, would include 29 exercises across 12 countries in the region over the next five years.

In accordance with this re-balance strategy, the U.S. has strengthened defence ties with allies and partners in the region by helping boost their military capabilities, and providing them with updated defence equipment so as to counter China's military challenge both in quantity and quality. A trilateral security convergence between the U.S., Japan and the Philippines is one of the significant dynamics, which is exemplified by a series of U.S.-led naval exercises in the contested South China Sea.

The U.S. and the Philippines launched a joint naval exercise from late April to early May 2015 in a demonstration of U.S. commitment to its treaty ally of over half a century.

More than 11,000 American and Filipino troops took part in the largest combined military exercise in 15 years, part of the U.S. Pacific Pathways initiative. The large-scale joint drill took place a few days after the Philippines, which is heavily dependent on the U.S. for external defence, said it was seeking more “substantive” support from the U.S. to counter China’s rapid expansion in the areas.

The Philippines, though with a smaller defence budget, has grown its modest troops including nearly doubling the fleet of surface combat vessels over the past five years. The Philippines has had direct clashes with China over disputed maritime territories. In 2012 China took back control of the Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal, and in the following year stepped up action against the Filipino troops deployed on the Second Thomas Shoal. Given the deadlock over the dispute, the Philippines took Beijing to an international tribunal in early 2013, thus kicking off a protracted, bitter legal showdown at The Hague.

Given the updated U.S.-Japan defence cooperation guidelines, Washington has been relying more on Japan, which is at odds with China in the East China Sea over a group of uninhabited islands known in Chinese as Diaoyu and in Japanese as Senkaku. As a prime U.S. security partner, Japan is equipped with advanced naval and air military expertise as well as amphibious assault capabilities. With Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s security bill making its way through the legislature and the U.S.-Tokyo military relations strengthening, an aggressive Japan has been moving closer to centre stage in regional geopolitical games amid fears from its neighbours especially China and South Korea, victims of Japanese invasion during World War II.

Japan takes sides with ASEAN claimants. Its high-profile involvement in the South China Sea dispute has drawn strong criticism from China. And the U.S. has also been slammed by Beijing for “militarizing” the areas and endeavoring to “sow discord” between China and its maritime neighbours. Japan’s involvement carries a significant geostrategic implication of hedging against an emerging China as well as beefing up defence ties with ASEAN countries, which are highlighted by Japan’s role in several combined drills with the U.S. and the Philippines.

In mid-August 2015 Japanese forces joined a U.S.-led maritime humanitarian drill off the coast of the Philippines for the first time ever. Japan took part in U.S.-initiated Pacific Partnership missions in other areas in the past. Noticeably, the chief of staff of Japanese Self-Defense Forces was at the scene this time. Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano’s presence “speaks volumes about their commitment to the region and their commitment to being part of a multilateral engagement,” said U.S. Rear Admiral Charles Williams, whose remarks underscored Tokyo’s heavy weight in the regional collective military platform.

The Japanese Defence Force’s participation in the trilateral naval drill came less than two months after Japanese and the

Philippine troops staged the second joint drill, during which Japanese pilots flew a P3-C Orion surveillance aircraft near the disputed features in the South China Sea. The two countries held their first joint naval drill in the areas in mid-May after Tokyo and Manila signed a defence pact earlier this year.

Meanwhile Japan considered transferring to the Philippines more defence equipment and advanced weaponry including patrol aircraft, submarines and destroyers, a significant symbol of substantive military cooperation. “We have affirmed that the Strategic Partnership between our two countries has entered an enhanced and elevated stage,” Filipino president Benigno Aquino III said during his visit to Japan on June 4. The Japanese prime minister as he appeared at a Japanese House committee on July 29, signaled that Tokyo could conduct mine-sweeping operations in the South China Sea. It obviously shows the Abe administration’s desire to expand collective self-defence to other areas by virtue of the regional issue.

Japan has also increased defence cooperation with Vietnam, another vocal opponent of China’s assertiveness. The Japanese prime minister promised the visiting Vietnam’s party chief Nguyen Phu Trong more used ships and equipment to help Hanoi with maritime patrols. “I find it highly meaningful that we have shared serious concerns over the continuation of unilateral behaviors that change the status quo and escalate tensions, such as large-scale reclamation and building of outposts in the South China Sea,” Shinzo Abe said at a joint news conference in Tokyo on September 15, in a veiled reference to China.

Vietnam, like the Philippines, has been confronted by China. Hanoi has mixed feelings for its northern neighbour in spite of the sharing the same ideological background. Over the decades the bilateral relations have been like a roller coaster ride, from comrades-in-arms during the anti-American war to enemies in a massive border war and then back to normal neighbourly relations. Recent years have seen the two former communist allies jostling each other over the South China Sea issue.

In May 2014 China deployed a giant drilling rig into the waters that Vietnam deems as its exclusive economic zone. The move led to a fierce confrontation between two vessels, touching off a series of massive anti-China protests followed by riots in Vietnam. The relationship sank to the lowest point since 1988. The incident reinforced the Vietnamese perception of Beijing’s assertiveness in maritime disputes.

Given the maritime challenge, Vietnam is upgrading its fleet with new advanced frigates from Russia and the Netherlands, two new Russian submarines and modern anti-ship cruise missiles, in addition to receiving the used boats from Japan. The U.S. has also been in the process of loosening restrictions on maritime defence-related arms sales to Vietnam. The two countries have stepped up military exchanges.

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Letter of Mandate to the Minister of National Defence

Dear Mr. Sajjan:

I am honoured that you have agreed to serve Canadians as Minister of National Defence.

We have promised Canadians a government that will bring real change – in both what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in this election, and our platform offered a new, ambitious plan for a strong and growing middle class. Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.

We made a commitment to invest in growing our economy, strengthening the middle class, and helping those working hard to join it. We committed to provide more direct help to those who need it by giving less to those who do not. We committed to public investment as the best way to spur economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. We committed to a responsible, transparent fiscal plan for challenging economic times.

I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do their part – individually and collectively – to improve economic opportunity and security for Canadians.

It is my expectation that we will deliver real results and professional government to Canadians. To ensure that we have a strong focus on results, I will expect Cabinet committees and individual ministers to: track and report on the progress of our commitments; assess the effectiveness of our work; and align our resources with priorities, in order to get the results we want and Canadians deserve.

If we are to tackle the real challenges we face as a country – from a struggling middle class to the threat of climate change – Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians. We will direct our resources to those initiatives that are having the greatest, positive impact on the lives of Canadians, and that will allow us to meet our commitments to them. I expect you to report regularly on your progress toward fulfilling our commitments and to help develop effective measures that assess the impact of the organizations for which you are answerable.

I made a personal commitment to bring new leadership and a new tone to Ottawa. We made a commitment to Canadians to pursue our goals with a renewed sense of collaboration. Improved partnerships with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are essential to deliver the real, positive change that we promised Canadians. No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation

relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Our platform guides our government. Over the course of our four-year mandate, I expect us to deliver on all of our commitments. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we fulfill our promises, while living within our fiscal plan. Other issues will arise or will be brought to our attention by Canadians, stakeholders, and the public service. It is my expectation that you will engage constructively and thoughtfully and add priorities to your agenda when appropriate.

As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and the public service; constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including business, organized labour, the broader public sector, and the not-for-profit and charitable sectors; and identifying ways to find solutions and avoid escalating conflicts unnecessarily. As well, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them is essential.

Canadians expect us, in our work, to reflect the values we all embrace: inclusion, honesty, hard work, fiscal prudence, and generosity of spirit. We will be a government that governs for all Canadians, and I expect you, in your work, to bring Canadians together.

You are expected to do your part to fulfill our government's commitment to transparent, merit-based appointments, to help ensure gender parity and that Indigenous Canadians and minority groups are better reflected in positions of leadership.

As Minister of National Defence, your overarching goal will be to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces are equipped and prepared, if called upon, to protect Canadian sovereignty, defend North America, provide disaster relief, conduct search and rescue, support United Nations peace operations, and contribute to the security of our allies and to allied and coalition operations abroad. It will be important

that you ensure a close link between defence policy, foreign policy, and national security. I also ask you to work closely with your colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, to ensure a seamless transition for Canadian Forces members to the programs and services of Veterans Affairs.

In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities:

- Work with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to end Canada's combat mission in Iraq and Syria, refocusing Canada's efforts in the region on the training of local forces and humanitarian support.
- Ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the equipment they need. This includes:
 - working with the Minister of Finance to maintain current National Defence spending levels, including current planned increases;
 - working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to launch an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 fighter aircraft, focusing on options that match Canada's defence needs; and
 - working with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to invest in strengthening the Navy, while meeting the commitments that were made as part of the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy.
- Work with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to renew Canada's commitment to United Nations peace operations. This includes:
 - making Canada's specialized capabilities – from mobile medical teams, to engineering support, to aircraft that can carry supplies and personnel – available on a case-by-case basis;
 - working with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to help the United Nations respond more quickly to emerging and escalating conflicts and providing well-trained personnel to international initiatives that can be quickly deployed, such as mission commanders, staff officers, and headquarters units; and
 - leading an international effort to improve and expand the training of military and civilian personnel deployed on peace operations, while insisting that any peacekeepers involved in misconduct be held accountable by their own country and the United Nations.
- Maintain Canada's strong commitments to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) and to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

- Conduct an open and transparent review process to create a new defence strategy for Canada, replacing the now-outdated Canada First Defence Strategy.
- Renew Canada's focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory and approaches, particularly our Arctic regions, and increase the size of the Canadian Rangers.
- Work with senior leaders of the Canadian Armed Forces to establish and maintain a workplace free from harassment and discrimination.
- Work with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence to reduce complexity, overhaul service delivery, and strengthen partnerships between National Defence and Veterans Affairs.
- Support the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in a review of existing measures to protect Canadians and our critical infrastructure from cyber-threats.
- Work with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence to develop a suicide prevention strategy for Canadian Armed Forces personnel and veterans.

These priorities draw heavily from our election platform commitments. The government's agenda will be further articulated through Cabinet discussions and in the Speech from the Throne when Parliament opens.

I expect you to work closely with your Deputy Minister, the Chief of Defence Staff, who has direct responsibility for the command, control, and administration of the Canadian Forces, and their senior officials to ensure that the ongoing work of your department is undertaken in a professional manner and that decisions are made in the public interest. Your Deputy Minister will brief you on issues your department may be facing that may require decisions to be made quickly. It is my expectation that you will apply our values and principles to these decisions, so that issues facing your department are dealt with in a timely and responsible manner, and in a way that is consistent with the overall direction of our government.

Our ability, as a government, to successfully implement our platform depends on our ability to thoughtfully consider the professional, non-partisan advice of public servants. Each and every time a government employee comes to work, they do so in service to Canada, with a goal of improving our country and the lives of all Canadians. I expect you to establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister, whose role, and the role of public servants under his or her direction, is to support you in the performance of your responsibilities.

In the coming weeks, the Privy Council Office (PCO) will be contacting you to set up a meeting with PCO officials, your Deputy Minister, and the Prime Minister's Office to further discuss your plans, commitments, and priorities.

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Middle East Politics: Trade Makes the World Go Around in a Religious Context

by Tim Lynch

At the November 2015 RCMI Security Studies Roundtable, Reza Akhlaghi, Managing Director, Foreign Policy Concepts, gave a presentation on Iran's Geopolitical Trajectory following the US/Iran Nuclear Deal. Reza delivered an informative account of how the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiated between Iran and the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, Russia, and the European Union will provide many opportunities for trade and he stressed Canada should be at the forefront in exploiting them.

In the course of his presentation Reza highlighted how the countries neighboring Iran would be affected by such arrangements. Following his presentation, he agreed to explain to me these complex, historical, socio-geopolitical, religious and cultural nuances in the region. My objective was to develop an understanding of how these realities may affect global security going forward.

The Relevance of Religion

Much of what Reza described related to the prevailing geopolitical and religious history of Iran and its neighbouring states. Following a University of Toronto conference on Canadian Foreign Affairs in May 2015 Janice Stein, Founding Director, Munk School of Global Affairs noted that, *“Seventy years ago we made a deep mistake in thinking about the world; we didn't foresee the importance of religion in politics. The post-war consensus was rather that secularization would continue to grow as societies developed and became more educated. As religious beliefs became a respected private matter, the secular liberal order would deepen and strengthen around the world. We now need to understand the important role that religion plays in large parts of the world and build that into our foreign policy.”* At Reza's session it became clear that appropriate interpretation of religious nuances is critical to understanding how alliances and rivalries will evolve in the region.

I began my discussion with Reza by inquiring about the relationship between historic Persia and the country today known as Iran. Reza went back in history to 600 BC describing how the Persian Achaemenid Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great. He described how the Persians controlled the land from the eastern borders of China to the Roman Empire. It covered all of today's Middle East, central Asia, and Northern Africa. The Empire came to an end with the invasion of Alexander the Great in the early 330s BC.

The Arabs were keen traders and sought to establish trade routes to Asia; the Persians were not cooperative in

such matters. The Persians were defeated by the Arabs in sixth century AD, around the same time Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad. The Arabs were keen on spreading trade as well as Islam all over Asia. A religion that called on its followers to be honest in the dealings with fellow believers facilitated trade. Conversions to Islam grew along with trade. Conflict resolution procedures needed to conduct trade were developed as Islamic Jurisprudence evolved.

The Fragmentation of Islam

Reza explained that the differentiation between Sunni and Shia Islam occurred with succession of the faith following the death of Prophet Muhammad. There were four key candidates for the caliph role following Muhammad's death: Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman (Osman) and Ali. Many threw their support behind Abu Bakr who assumed the role of first caliph. This choice was disputed by followers of Ali (Ali ibn Abi Talib) who was the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law. Ali's followers had designated Ali as the Prophet's immediate and first successor.

The faith divided into the traditional believers: Sunnis, who did not believe that Ali deserved to be the first Caliph and Shiites who chose Ali as the first Caliph. There was a marked difference in culture and civilization between Persians and Arabs. The Persians gradually identified with Ali and his followers. The Arabs, along with most other cultures that converted to Islam, form the dominant Sunni sect of Islam which comprises the largest religious body in the world, followed by Roman Catholicism.

Shiites are in majority in Iran and the Iranian state is governed by the Shiite interpretation of Islam. Tracing their Persian history to 600 BC the Iranians claim a defining status in the region. Shiites represent a slight majority in neighboring Iraq. In all Middle Eastern countries there are minority Shiite communities, as within most modern economies. Ismailis, a branch of Shiite Islam, have emerged as a significant contributor to Canadian society with the building of the Aga Khan Centre in the Toronto suburb of Don Mills.

The prevailing turmoil in Iraq arose from the lack of understanding, as Stein cites, of the the role of religion at the time of the invasion by the 2003 US/UK led coalition of the willing. Iraq was then governed by the Sunni Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party under the leadership of Saddam Hussein. His hold on power required suppression of the majority Shiite Iraqi population as well as all intellectuals. Attempts at ameliorating these relationships by the US climaxed with President George W. Bush supporting Shiite Nouri al-Maliki, as Prime Minister of Iraq. Mr. al-Maliki served as such from 2006 to

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2014. This appointment does not seem to have included an explanation of the democratic principle of minority rights. Under the al-Maliki regime the Sunni Iraqis were not equally included in government and Iran exerted significant influence over state matters in Iraq and its Shiite-rule neighbor, Syria. Meanwhile, military leaders in the Ba'ath Party became the acorns from which ISIS grew, creating the horrific, global, political imbroglio we witness today.

Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria, belongs to the Alawite minority religious sect which has historical alliances with Shiite Islam which results in Assad being an ally of Iran. The Assad family has been a dictatorial regime that has successfully manipulated religious and ethnic tensions in Syria, with force when necessary, to retain power.

Syria borders Lebanon. The Assad Regime has contaminated the political maturations of Lebanon. The Regime helped establish Hezbollah, a Lebanese based religious army founded by Shiite clerics and funded by Iran, to fight against Israel. Discussing these relationships, Reza noted that there is some truth in the Israeli comment "today Iran is a neighbor of Israel."

Iran also has an historic and linguistic relationship with the Kurds. The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group inhabiting lands in Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), western Iran (Eastern or Iranian Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern or Iraqi Kurdistan), and northern Syria (Western Kurdistan or Rojava). While they practice a brand of Sunni Islam, they are culturally and linguistically related to the Iranians and are inclined to accommodate their Sunni brand of Islam in urban western modernity.

At the other end of the Sunni religious spectrum are the Wahhabis which are described as ultraconservative or orthodox Muslims. From a strategic perspective, it is necessary to recognize that Wahhabism is the official form of Sunni Islam practiced in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a longtime ally of the US. Using its petro-dollar the Kingdom has been funding the globalization of Wahhabism since the 1970s.

A Sunni sect, regarded as a form of Wahhabism, follow the Salafi movement. This sect within Sunni Islam has allied itself with Jihadi movements and promotes offensive Salafi jihad as a legitimate expression of Islam against those they deem to be enemies of Islam. Their most famous Jihad was the 2001 9/11 attack on the US by al-Qaeda. Evidently, Saudi Arabia has been involved in creating the "Great Divide" that has emerged between Islam and the rest of the world following the 9/11 attack and yet it remains a close ally of the US.

Socio-geopolitical Realities

While Shiites may be a minority group in a Sunni Muslim country, Reza stressed that they provide a valuable strategic network for the Iranian government. He illustrated such influence by referring to Sunni Pakistan's refusal to assist its Sunni brethren in Saudi Arabia in the fight against the Houthi militias in Yemen. Reza maintained that this was due

to direct actions taken by the government of Iran.

Comparing the way Iran influenced Pakistan with the overt attempt by Israel to influence the US JCPOA Treaty negotiations illustrates how Middle East religions influence world politics. A majority of US Legislators voted for the JCPOA Treaty against the wishes of Israel. That done, President Obama compensated Israel by increasing its US military funding; illustrating the sensitivities of Middle East politics—you shake the hand that does you harm!

My discussion with Reza was facilitated by reference to maps of the Levant countries, Caucuses and North African countries. Reza claimed the Arabs of North African countries have a more secular approach to religion and government than those in the Arabian Peninsula.

Throughout my talk with Reza he referred to the high level of education and urbanization of Iranian society; stressing that women make up 67% of the student population at Iranian universities. He maintained that this young political force is the biggest threat to the ruling conservatives. It is recognition of this reality that allowed the JCPOA Treaty to reach fruition. By contrast, the Bedouin Arab culture is being preserved in the Arabian Peninsula as is evident by the novel involvement of women for the first time in recently held elections in Saudi Arabia. Essentially, Iranian society provides a benchmark for gender equality in Islam.

The Strategic Location of Turkey

I met with Reza before the downing of a Russian tourist plane in Egypt by ISIS, a Russian military plane by Turkey and soon after the exodus of Syrian refugees to Europe through Turkey had started. We both agreed that Turkey holds a strategic location not only between Europe and the Middle East but also between Russia and the Middle East.

The re-alignment of relationships between Russia's President Vladimir Putin (the Czar) and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (the Sultan) could provide some insight on how east / west as well as Muslim / West relationships evolve. Both leaders represent regions that were empires accustomed to authoritarian rule; Putin the USSR, Erdoğan, the Ottoman Empire. Both interpret democracy as having control over the majority of their citizenry; Erdoğan by practicing theocracy, Putin through media control and propaganda. Both leaders have problems accepting social media or allowing their people to guide themselves without a ruler. Looking at the map of the Caucasus countries Reza described them as Putin's "strategic backyard" where the majority of the inhabitants, along with the neighboring Russian Federation provinces like Chechnya, are Sunni Muslims. He suggested the geopolitical quagmire that is the Caucuses is worthy of a separate session for RCMI Security Studies.

From Iron Curtain to Mesh Curtain

Anyone who witnessed the 2010 G20 Conference in Toronto knows how mesh fencing divides communities;

particularly when complemented by a line of military attired police. Following the turmoil in Syria, 2015 will go down in history as the year Europe was divided, and sub-divided, by mesh fencing to stop refugees escaping war.

The ideological cold war era that was defined by an imaginary Iron Curtain separating the USSR in the east from the “free world” in the west is being replaced by a real “Mesh Curtain” attempting to stop terrorists in the war ravaged south coming to the peace secured north.

Unfortunately, the nuclear standoff that precariously preserved peace during the Iron Curtain era has no substitute for the prevailing “Mesh Curtain” era of terror as is evident from the following litany of supplications in the form of global Islamic terrorist attacks: San Bernardino California, USA Dec. 2015; Paris, France, Nov. 2015; Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, Nov. 2015; Paris, France Jan. 2015; Sydney, Australia Dec. 2014; St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Canada, Oct. 2014; Ottawa Canada, Oct. 2014; Volgograd, Russia, Dec. 2013; Nairobi, Kenya Aug. 2013; Woolwich UK, Apr. 2013; Boston, USA Apr. 2013; Oslo, Norway 2011; Mumbai, India 2008; Glasgow, UK 2007; London, UK 2005; Madrid, Spain 2004; Bali, Indonesia 2002; New York City / Washington DC, USA 2001; Nairobi, Kenya / Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 1989; Lockerbie, Scotland UK, 1988.

Religious comparisons

When it was founded, Islam provided a valuable means of conducting business as part of the Arab's need to trade. Regardless of their ethnic origin all Muslims had a common understanding of the Quran; which came first: trade or Islam? Disputes that arose in business were resolved through Islamic jurisprudence, as were all areas of societal morality: albeit with

males dominating females.

The founding of Christianity had nothing to do with trade. Christianity professed salvation into heaven after death, provided believers led a moral life while on earth. Christianity teaches that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to assume entry into heaven. Such proclamations did not stop Christian merchant and artisan classes from evolving and thriving. The jurisprudence necessary for dispute resolution was conducted in a more secular setting; separating civil law and criminal law from Canon law.

The existence of Popes over the millennia who claimed to descend from the apostle, St. Peter, Christ's chosen leader, and who are believed to be endowed with Ex Cathedra powers, limited prima donna Christian clerics in assuming self-perceived authority. Acknowledging episodes like the Inquisition and Crusades, medieval Christianity has its black holes. The impression is that in modern day Islam any cleric is the equivalent of a Pope and can interpret the Quran in any form of religiosity that attracts a following.

There is no denying Islam in its totality offers a wealth of knowledge about human survival on earth over the millennia. Rather than commercialize and trade its history to the world, Islam seems more intent on living its history, with extreme viewpoints grabbing the agenda and inciting medieval behaviors among believers, which makes Islam a security risk. This is unfair to Muslims who practice their Islamic faith and portray a code of ethics in a globalized world. ❁

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.

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We have committed to an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards, and applies the utmost care and prudence in the handling of public funds. I expect you to embody these values in your work and observe the highest ethical standards in everything you do. When dealing with our Cabinet colleagues, Parliament, stakeholders, or the public, it is important that your behaviour and decisions meet Canadians' well-founded expectations of our government. I want Canadians to look on their own government with pride and trust.

As Minister, you must ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the *Conflict of Interest Act* and Treasury Board policies and guidelines. You will be provided with a copy of *Open and Accountable Government* to assist you as you undertake your responsibilities. I ask that you carefully read it and ensure that your staff does so as well. I draw your attention in particular to the Ethical Guidelines set out in Annex A of that document, which apply to you and your staff. As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of

honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. Please also review the areas of *Open and Accountable Government* that we have expanded or strengthened, including the guidance on non-partisan use of departmental communications resources and the new code of conduct for exempt staff.

I know I can count on you to fulfill the important responsibilities entrusted in you. In turn, please know that you can count on me to support you every day in your role as Minister.

I am deeply grateful to have this opportunity to serve with you as we build an even greater country. Together, we will work tirelessly to honour the trust Canadians have given us.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

The Iran Nuclear Deal: Still Reasonable Causes for Concern?

by Rensselaer Lee

The thinking behind the much-discussed Iran nuclear deal reflects broad foreign policy considerations - the expectation that better relations with Iran will reduce the threat of war in the Middle East, contribute to the fight against ISIS, and advance a peace settlement in Afghanistan. But how good is the deal as a nuclear agreement? Will it really prevent Iran, now defined as a nuclear threshold state, from getting a nuclear bomb, as the Administration claims? Or might Iran already, in some measurable sense, have crossed that threshold, and - if so - is the international inspection regime contemplated under the agreement adequate to uncover evidence to this effect?

Negotiations leading up to the deal have focused on limiting Iran's own production, including covert production, of highly-enriched uranium (HEU) and weapons-grade plutonium, as well as activities related to the design and fabrication of a nuclear device. These are legitimate objectives, and the stipulations of the agreement will severely crimp Iranian ambitions to develop a sizable nuclear arsenal (comparable to, say, Israel's or Pakistan's). But while supporting and complementing its indigenous nuclear materials production, Iran has made wide-ranging forays into the international marketplace to obtain nuclear weapons-related goods and services - an effort encompassing Pakistan in the 1980s and (more consequentially) the states of the former Soviet Union in the early and mid-1990s. A vitally important task before the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors is to clarify issues regarding the "possible military dimensions" of Iran's nuclear program - which could reveal weaponization activities incompatible with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which Iran belongs.

The inspectors have their work cut out for them. The (stated) baseline justification for the Iran deal seems to reflect the conclusion of a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that Iran had halted aspects of its nuclear weapons program in 2003. The NIE also judged with moderate to high confidence that Iran did not have a nuclear weapon. But the NIE may have underestimated the scope, stealth, and sophistication of Iran's external procurement programs, as well as important contextual factors such as the conditions that existed in the newly independent states of the former USSR and their newly insecure nuclear complexes - certainly a potential supply-side bonanza for an aspiring nuclear power. Iran, in fact, may have crossed the nuclear threshold some years before its program was allegedly halted. In a June 2002 news conference, Russian general Yury Baluyevsky reportedly acknowledged that "Iran

does have nuclear weapons. Of course, these are non-strategic nuclear weapons; I mean they are not ICBMs within a range of more than 5,500 kilometers and more." He went on to say that he saw no danger of aggression against Russia by Iran, not exactly a comfort for Iran's regional adversaries. Baluyevsky, then Deputy Chief of Staff (and later Chief) of the Russian Armed Forces hardly qualifies as your average CIA walk-in. To be sure, the general might have been pulling our chain - perhaps to deter a US-Israeli strike on Iran. Yet he could well have been referring to some tactical nukes that had strayed from Soviet or Russian control as the USSR unwound, and been sold by unscrupulous persons or entities to third parties, including Iran. (If Iran's military lacked the launch codes needed to activate the weapons, they probably would try to extract the component uranium or plutonium cores to fashion weapons of their own design.)

Alternatively, the Iranians might have assembled a weapon from stolen and smuggled fissile materials. The end of the Cold War and Soviet communism as well as the loss of state orders for nuclear goods ushered in a period of crisis in much of Russia's vast nuclear archipelago - one that persisted more or less to the end of the 1990s. Soviet-era controls evaporated, workers went for long periods without pay, and security barriers such as perimeter fences and alarm systems were left untended or simply disintegrated. A manifestation of the general malaise was a massive leakage of nuclear and radiological materials from Soviet legacy enterprises and the emergence of a black market of sorts for such substances. Much of this flow was radioactive junk, useless for making a weapon, but the desperation that it symbolized presented an important opportunity for the Islamic Republic's military procurement networks. Iranian front organizations could have relied on trusted intermediaries to bid for weapons-quality HEU and plutonium or other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) components, or sent representatives to liaise directly with corrupt Russian managers and officials who had access to the materials Iran wanted. Unlike other aspiring nuclear states at the time, such as Iraq, Iran enjoyed wide-ranging nuclear-technical-commercial relations with Russia, which in the turbulent post-Soviet years, may have provided a convenient cover and justification for deal-making applicable to a nuclear weapons program.

In any event, the IAEA and its inspectors should not exclude the possibility that by the end of the 1990s Iran had stockpiled enough fissile material to produce one or more bombs, and perhaps a small number of fractional-yield nuclear charges - so-called battlefield weapons. Such weapons would suit a deterrence strategy against an invading army, but might

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Sovereignty Collapsed: Daesh and the Return of Bandit Kings

by *Eric Morse and Stéfanie von Hlatky*

Could 1914 happen again? That question was frequently speculated about at the beginning of 2014. Then, most analysts were firm in their conviction that big shifts in national borders were unlikely. The integrity of sovereign states, the majority of them members of the United Nations, was sanctified by international convention. By the beginning of 2016 that convention had been ruthlessly challenged by two actors, one sovereign—Russia; the other, state-seeking—Daesh.

Russia forcibly annexed Crimea and sponsored an invasion of East Ukraine (where the fighting rages on) thereby redefining borders to suit its national interest. Daesh, capitalizing on growing regional instability, eradicated the Iraqi-Syrian border, a victory that may prove lasting. Daesh has gone on to seize other territories in the Middle East and North Africa. Russia and Daesh have transformed our common understanding of borders, sovereignty and the international system in just a couple of years.

Where Daesh is unique to our era though, is not in its religious fanaticism, or its brutality, but in its ability to take

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strategic advantage of the 'ungoverned spaces,' the chinks in the mortar of the international system.

The concept of 'ungoverned lands' was around long before 2014. Pre-16th century civilizations, existing in nodes around the world, took it as a matter of course. Nineteenth-century colonialism left an overlay—a thin one as it turned out—of multicoloured wallpaper that from about 1920 onward took on the appearance of Westphalian states. Fast forward to 2008 and global governance still had its cracks, as when Canadians Robert Fowler and Louis Guay were kidnapped in Niger. They happened to be travelling in the eight percent of the country that was designated safe for travelers, but realistically, if only eight percent of a country is safe then none of it is.

In 2016, it has become far too clear that many states (including but not limited to Mali, Niger, Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic and Nigeria) are in that position, and that non-state actors exercise free rein in large parts of the territory, often paying lip-service to Daesh and its extremist brand of religion.

Reduced to its barest conceptual bones, Daesh is a bandit kingdom with a delusion of grandeur. It is dependent on oil smuggling, forced taxation, and looted antiquities to sustain an offensive military effort that, in its Middle Eastern heartland,

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Vacation for Vets: Thanks to our Industry Partners

by *Jenny Newton*

Lush tropical rainforests, majestic mountains, active volcanoes, barren lands of dried lava remnants and volcanic ash, balmy beaches and, a warm ocean thriving with multi-coloured sea life - from desert to subarctic tundra, the Big Island of Hawaii has it all. It is thanks to the *Vacation for Vets* program and to Shell Vacations Club (SVC) that my travelling companion and I were able to enjoy seven nights of free accommodations in this tropical paradise. Before I explain how this was possible, a little more about our trip.

Having arrived in the late evening at Kona International Airport, we travelled north on Highway 19 arriving at Paniolo Greens Resort in Waikoloa some 30 minutes later. Our two-storey condo within this 162-unit Hawaiian resort had all the amenities of home: two bedrooms, two baths, a

Jenny Newton, a long-time RCMI member who has made multiple contributions to Sitrep, is a retired army reservist Lieutenant-Colonel and a former Detective in the Toronto Police Service. As a senior logistics officer she served on operations in Afghanistan.

full-service kitchen, dining room, living room and laundry closet. The two balconies overlooked the Waikoloa Village Golf Course, a Robert Trent Jones Jr designed course complete with roaming wild turkeys. The resort club house, with its pool, hot tub, exercise room and BBQ pits also housed the Customer Service staff. Patrick and Kelly, who were gracious hosts, took the time to enlighten us on all the sights we should partake in while visiting the Big Island.

Our adventure began with a 13-hour bus tour around the island with stops at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, the Punalu'u Black Sand Beach, Rainbow Falls, a Kona coffee mill, a Macadamia nut factory and, a candy shop. We followed this up in the following days with a snorkeling trip to Kealahou and Honaunau Bays, a sunset dinner at the Kahua Ranch and, finally, a luau with authentic Polynesian entertainment.

As mentioned earlier, the complimentary accommodations would not have been possible without SVC Owners

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generously donating their excess timeshare points to a central military bank. With the success of the American initiative, which began in 2009, SVC Canada and the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS) collaborated to launch a Canadian *Vacation for Vets* program in 2012. This specific program benefits those serving and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) who have sustained an injury or illness attributable to military service in a Special Duty Area or Operation and, who are in receipt of a Veterans Affairs benefit as a result. With 52 free accommodations donated annually to CFMWS by SVC, eligible members can apply for one vacation every 2 years with 24 SVC resorts located in Canada, the US and Mexico to choose from.

As the Support Our Troops Outreach Coordinator at CFMWS, Brienne White has received many calls, emails and letters of thanks from grateful military members and Veterans returning from their *Vacation for Vets* holidays. One member wrote: “This is our first vacation to Hawaii, which will be all the more memorable given your generosity. I will be retiring shortly from the CAF with 42 years of service with nothing but fondest memories at this gesture, just adds to the wonderful experience.” White and her team recently assisted a World War II Veteran with his application. He wrote: “Thank you so very much for all your help in assisting me in securing this much needed vacation. It is people like you that make this world a better place.”

In addition but separate from the Vacations for Vets program, CFMWS has partnered with the Armed Forces Vacation Club (AFVC) as a part of the CF Appreciation Program. After registering for your CFOne card, members can then access, when space is available, over 4,000 accommodations in 100 countries for as low as \$349 (USD) per week. For example, AFVC is currently offering 7-night resort stays for as low as \$299 (USD) per week for families of up to 6 people in several countries including Fiji, New Zealand and Kenya.

Vacation for Vets is a superb program benefitting our injured CAF personnel and Veterans. To find out more about the program, please visit: <https://www.cfmws.com/en/SupportOurTroops/Programs/Pages/Vacations-for-Vets.aspx>. To sign up for a CFOne card providing access to discounts and other offers provided by caring industry partners, visit www.cfappreciation.ca. Finally, take advantage of thousands of resorts, apartments and condominiums offered by AFVC through their website: www.afvclub.ca.

Please reach out to all veterans, both serving military members and retired, DND civilian employees and the RCMP about these great morale and welfare programs. 🍁

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is quickly running out of steam. If the regional powers could coordinate their efforts—and they have so far been unwilling to do so—Daesh might now be far more degraded than it is, without prejudice to whatever might succeed it in the area.

They are certainly under sufficient pressure in Syria/Iraq to want to migrate to greener fields. At the moment, Libya looks like the field of choice; it is certainly ungoverned enough to meet their needs and some Daesh leadership may be transplanting themselves there.

If it is true that Daesh is trying to shift its centre of gravity to Libya, this is in fact a greater threat to Western security than its original location in Iraq and Syria. There it has no

coastline, which automatically circumscribes its potential for growth. Occupying a fertile Mediterranean coastline has the real potential to threaten Europe, with piracy, terror or both, in a way that has not been seen since the Barbary Pirates fended off the US Marines from the shores of Tripoli in 1805.

Syria and Iraq are intractable in terms of long-term military intervention, as the Russians may be about to find out. Libya may be no less tractable in the event, but the threat may be great enough to turn the day toward full-fledged military intervention. The question, as always, is by whom? 🍁

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South China Sea—continued from page 7

On April 6, 2015 a U.S. guided missile destroyer and littoral combat ship sailed to Vietnam conducting a joint exercise. The five-day naval drill came as the two countries marked 20 years of normalized diplomatic relations.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, while visiting Hanoi in early August, praised highly the reconciliation with the former foe, marveling at the growth in bilateral relations over the past two decades. One month earlier, the Vietnamese party chief Nguyen Phu Trong made a successful trip to the U.S. to elevate the bilateral relationship to a new level. Diplomatically, Vietnam takes a balanced, phased approach when handling its ties with the U.S. and China especially in economy, a reminder of Mao's China deliberately coping with Washington and Moscow back in 1970s. In addition, Vietnam has kept its ties with Moscow stable over decades.

Other countries in the region are also joining the naval race. Malaysia, a relatively lower profile claimant, has been among the first in the region to add advanced submarines to its fleet and is building six new advanced French-designed frigates. Australia, one of the major U.S. allies in the area, is planning to build new air warfare destroyers and a new fleet of submarines. Indonesia, a non-claimant country, has also increased its naval spending, adding two new Dutch-designed frigates and two improved South Korean submarines to its fleet as part of its ambitious twenty-year modernization program.

Conclusion

The South China Sea issue is virtually at a stalemate, with neither side willing to give up reclamation efforts. Fights for control of territory, however competitive they might be, are unlikely to spiral out of control, given that Asia-Pacific countries, including ASEAN nations and Japan, are all maintaining closer economic connections with China and stronger security ties with the United States. So long as economic exchanges and communication are unimpeded, risks of miscalculation will be greatly reduced. Under no circumstances, could a country, regardless of its size or system, afford an armed conflict, not to mention an all-out war and the tremendous damages incurred, solely for land reclamation.

China and the U.S. are well aware of each other's bottom line. Beijing insists on integrity of its national sovereignty and political system, while Washington asserts freedom of navigation and its geopolitical interests in the region. There might be differences between diplomats and generals over the assessment of the situation on each side, these differences should not result in misjudgement on the part of the decision-makers.

With U.S. rebalancing security initiatives in full swing, Washington has maintained its geopolitical primacy in the region. As for China, whose economic expansion relies on peace and stability, the country is expected to continuously follow an ambitious but pragmatic growth-oriented path. Contest over sovereignty will continue, so will diplomatic

posturing, along with the constant flexing of military muscle. There might be friction but hopefully not conflict between the concerned nations. ✦

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Iran Nuclear Deal—continued from page 13

also be configured (with additional design work) to fit onto a medium-range ballistic missile (like Iran's Shahab-3) capable of reaching almost anywhere in the Middle East. Naturally, such a possibility or scenario imposes a huge burden on the inspection regime. The agreement, in theory, subjects Iran's past and present work toward a bomb to an unprecedented degree of intrusive monitoring, and this includes access to sites of suspected "undeclared nuclear materials and activities."

Yet, even with unimpeded access to rogue sites and a full range of verification procedures, it would be hard to detect the existence of a finished nuclear device or the fissile components of one - unlike, say, a covert enrichment facility, which would leave more obvious signatures. (Reliable and timely human intelligence supported by national technical means will need to complement the evolving inspection-verification process.) Also, the IAEA is obligated to provide a final report on "the resolution of past and present outstanding issues" by mid-December of this year, an amazingly short time in which to expose whatever post-threshold capability the Islamic Republic might have developed over the years. On a more positive note, the implied prospect of a US-Iranian détente might work in favor of the implementation of what is not a particularly good agreement. The Iranian authorities - anticipating the end of punishing sanctions, a reviving economy, and a conditional restoration of international legitimacy- could decide to roll back their weapons program even before IAEA inspectors and other international monitors descend upon them. Ultimately, the hope of a change in Iran's behavior as it re-engages the international community may be the best argument for proceeding with the deal, though major risks remain. ✦

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