SMA Reach-back Report

Question (S2): *In light of their divergent goals and interests, what are the necessary factors that would permit the U.S.-led Coalition, regional stakeholders (including Israel, Russia, and Iran), or jihadist groups to achieve their aims in Iraq? Where do disparate groups' interests align and where do they diverge? What can the U.S. coalition do to deny adversaries the ability to achieve their goals?*

Contributors:

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Executive Summary

Diane L. Maye, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Considering their divergent goals and interests, experts assessed the necessary factors that would permit the U.S.-led Coalition, Israel, Russia, France, Bahrain, Iraq, Turkey, the Kurds, the Assad regime, Iran, and jihadist groups to achieve their aims. They assessed where several disparate groups' interests align and where they diverge. When looking at the broad range of actors, a few patterns emerged. The first is in terms of where national security goals and interests were in alignment. Unsurprisingly, perennial allies such as the U.S., Israel and France had several specific points of convergence, as did Russia and Syria. The second is in areas of divergence. As expected, nefarious actors such as the jihadist groups were completely divergent from the interests of the other actors. When assessed at the macro-level three major generalities surfaced.

Aims – Alignment

Promoting Strong and Stable States. The first overarching theme was the goal of promoting strong and stable nation states. While not all the actors agreed on which nation states should be promoted, nearly each actor in the assessment had at least one state that was a priority. Both Bahrain (Gengler) and Russia seek their own regime's survival (Thomas). Both the U.S. and France see the value of strong Iraqi state (Maye, Tenebaum). France also seeks to limit instability across the Middle East, avoid destabilization in Lebanon, and promote non-hostile state in Syria (Tenebaum).

Relationship Building and Cooperation. A second major generality that emerged was in relationship-building and cooperation. Each of the actors that the experts assessed is prioritizing their relationships or ability to cooperate with strategic partners. For instance, the Israelis are seeking to expand relations with European powers and Arab states, maintain their strategic alliance with the U.S., and develop relationships with rising Asian powers like India and China (Brom). For military reasons, Bahrain needs to maintain its ties to the British and the Americans (Gengler). France seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships with Gulf monarchies (Tenebaum). Strategic cooperation with China and the BRICS is a key tenet of Russian foreign policy (Thomas), yet the Russians are also open to areas of cooperation with the U.S. and NATO on Syria (Thomas). Even the Islamist groups, who are non-state actors, must maintain relationships with wealthy Gulf states like Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Hassan).

Aims – Divergence

Pressure Other States. The third major pattern emerged is where national security goals and interests diverged. Each of the actors in this study seeks to limit the expansion, interference, or hegemonic aspirations of another state. From the Russian perspective, NATO seeks to contain Russia (Thomas). Israel and Bahrain seek to break/slow Iran from regional hegemony or acquiring nuclear weapons (Brom, Gengler). Russia seeks to put pressure on European Union (Thomas). Assad wants to stop the Gulf States from pursuing regime change in Syria (Hassan). Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran would prefer to see less U.S. support for the Kurds (Carreau).

U.S./ Coalition Partners - Recommended Actions

Due to the complex nature of each actor's goals and interests, it will be very difficult for the U.S. and Coalition partners to create win-sets that will appease each group, yet nearly each actor (aside from the non-state actors and jihadist groups) would agree to the following generalized courses of action:

1. Develop a front to contain international jihadism (Tennebaum, Carreau)
2. Promote strong, yet sovereign, nation-states (Maye)
3. Uphold formally agreed upon spheres of influence (Carreau)

Points of Divergence / Negotiation

The central points of negotiation for the U.S. and Coalition partners is likely fall into the following three areas:

1. *Sovereignty* – While promoting strong and sovereign nation states is a goal, the issues of a two-state solution for Israel/Palestine; the independence of Kurdistan; and dispersed security/governance for Sunni Arabs in Syria and Iraq are going to be key points of negotiation.
2. *Regime leadership in Syria* –Each of the major players in this study would prefer to see stability in the Middle East, especially in Syria. The issue that U.S. policy-makers will face is compromising with Russia and Iran on who exactly will be the face of the regime in Syria; the Russians and the Iranians see value in the Assad regime, but a point of compromise may be in removing Assad yet keeping the regime Alawite (Carreau).
3. *Spheres of Influence* – It will be in the best interest of the major players to craft a reasonable "spheres of influence" strategy for the region (namely between Turkey, Russia, Iran, the GCC and the Western powers) while still upholding major tenets of the JCPOA, ensuring Israel's security, and not alienating the Sunni populations of Iraq and Syria (Carreau).

The table below shows a generalized composite summary of the interests/goals of the U.S., France, Israel, Russia, Iran, Bahrain, the Iraqi government, Iraq's Sunni factions, the Kurds, Turkey, the Assad regime, Syrian rebels and Jabhat Fateh al Sham, taken from the experts.

INTEREST/GOAL	U.S.	FR	IS	RU	IRAN	BA	IQ-Gov	IQ Sunni	KURDS	TURK	ASSAD	SY REBS	JFAS
Support Kurdish factions fighting ISIL					-		-	-		-	-	-	-
Promote a strong Iraqi state					-								
Defeat/degrade ISIL													
Expand peaceful relationships with Arab states													
Expanding relationships with the rising Asian powers: China and India													
Limit instability throughout the Middle East													-
Contain international jihadism													-
Promote the establishment of a stable and non-hostile state in Syria													
Avoid further destabilization in Lebanon													
Resisting the acceptance of Gulf-friendly Islamists													
Prevent Russia from taking step harmful to Israel in the Middle East				-									

Prevent direct Iranian material support for domestic Shia groups					-									
PREVENT IRAN FROM ACQUIRING MILITARY NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES					-									
Prevent Iran from using proxies against Israel					-									
Prevent Palestinian terror attacks in the West Bank and Israel														
Keep relations and cooperation with the European powers														
Contain Russia via political, economic, military and information pressure				-										
Mobilize a large coalition to help stabilize the region														
Limit the flow of refugees														
Promote a cohesive and representative government in Iraq														
Move Iran towards a greater opening and a more constructive foreign policy														
Maintain the diplomatic support and physical military presence of key international allies (the U.S. and the Britain)														
Stop the Gulf states from pursuit of regime change in Syria														
Exert pressure on the European Union	-	-												
Keep the United States from exerting too much influence over the region	-													
Strengthen Russian defense	-													
Restore Russian influence in the Middle East	-												-	-
Provide support to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad	-		-										-	-
Curtail outside support of Kurds	-									-				
Provide monetary and political support to Iraqi Shi'ia groups						-		-						
Push an Iranian soft power strategy in Iraq						-		-				-		
Two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict			-											
Keep strategic alliance with the US														
Prevent or slow the normalization of Western relations with Iran					-									
Prevent and defend against Hezbollah attacks														

Prevent and defend against Hamas attacks														
Break Iran's led axis					-									
Prevent Jihadist Salafist attacks against Israel														
Strengthening strategic partnerships with Gulf monarchies														
Make sure Turkey remains a stable and reliable ally														
Guarantee Russian regime survival														
Return Russia to great power status														
Implement Russian military policy through strategic deterrence														
Deflect attention away from Russian activities in Crimea, Ukraine														
Conduct integrated operations with Iranian, Hezbollah, and Syrian forces														
Ensure (Bahrain's) regime security					-									
Preserve the support of Sunni citizens via sectarian appeals								-						
Gain more political support from Gulf States												-		
Gain more monetary support from Gulf States														
Maintain an Alawite-led Government in Syria														
Maintain control over Iranian Kurds										-				
Degrade the PKK										-				
Maintenance of Territorial gains in Central Syria												-		
Strengthening the expansion of Salafi Jihadist movement in Syria.												-		
Rebranding Jabhat Fateh al-Sham												-		
Upholding JCPOA														
Moderating Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Jabhat al Nusra)												-		
Increase Jabhat Fateh al-Sham relevance and operational capability in Syria.												-		

INTEREST/GOAL	U.S.	FR	IS	RU	IRAN	BA	IQ-Gov	IQ Sunni	KURDS	TURK	ASSAD	SY REBS	JFAS
Support Kurdish factions fighting ISIL					-		-	-		-	-	-	-
Promote a strong Iraqi state					-								
Defeat/degrade ISIL													
Expand peaceful relationships with Arab states													
Expanding relationships with the rising Asian powers: China and India													
Limit instability throughout the Middle East													-
Contain international jihadism													-
Promote the establishment of a stable and non-hostile state in Syria													
Avoid further destabilization in Lebanon													
Resisting the acceptance of Gulf-friendly Islamists													
Prevent Russia from taking step harmful to Israel in the Middle East				-									
Prevent direct Iranian material support for domestic Shia groups					-								
PREVENT IRAN FROM ACQUIRING MILITARY NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES					-								
Prevent Iran from using proxies against Israel					-								
Prevent Palestinian terror attacks in the West Bank and Israel													
Keep relations and cooperation with the European powers													
Contain Russia via political, economic, military and information pressure				-									
Mobilize a large coalition to help stabilize the region													
Limit the flow of refugees													
Promote a cohesive and representative government in Iraq													
Move Iran towards a greater opening and a more constructive foreign policy													
Maintain the diplomatic support and physical military presence of key international allies (the U.S. and the Britain)													
Stop the Gulf states from pursuit of regime change in Syria													

Objective	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	C14	C15
Exert pressure on the European Union	-	-													
Keep the United States from exerting too much influence over the region	-														
Strengthen Russian defense	-														
Restore Russian influence in the Middle East	-													-	-
Provide support to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad	-		-											-	-
Curtail outside support of Kurds	-									-					
Provide monetary and political support to Iraqi Shi'ia groups						-			-						
Push an Iranian soft power strategy in Iraq						-			-			-			
Two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict			-												
Keep strategic alliance with the US															
Prevent or slow the normalization of Western relations with Iran					-										
Prevent and defend against Hezbollah attacks															
Prevent and defend against Hamas attacks															
Break Iran's led axis					-										
Prevent Jihadist Salafist attacks against Israel															
Strengthening strategic partnerships with Gulf monarchies															
Make sure Turkey remains a stable and reliable ally															
Guarantee Russian regime survival															
Return Russia to great power status															
Implement Russian military policy through strategic deterrence															
Deflect attention away from Russian activities in Crimea, Ukraine															
Conduct integrated operations with Iranian, Hezbollah, and Syrian forces															
Ensure (Bahrain's) regime security					-										
Preserve the support of Sunni citizens via sectarian appeals									-						
Gain more political support from Gulf States												-			

Gain more monetary support from Gulf States														
Maintain an Alawite-led Government in Syria														
Maintain control over Iranian Kurds									-					
Degrade the PKK									-					
Maintenance of Territorial gains in Central Syria											-			
Strengthening the expansion of Salafi Jihadist movement in Syria.											-			
Rebranding Jabhat Fateh al-Sham											-			
Upholding JCPOA														
Moderating Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Jabhat al Nusra)											-			
Increase Jabhat Fateh al-Sham relevance and operational capability in Syria.											-			

SME Inputs

Shlomo Brom, INSS

Actor: Israel

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
PREVENT IRAN FROM ACQUIRING MILITARY NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES	THE JCPOA CONCLUDED IN 2015 BETWEEN IRAN AND THE GREAT POWERS PREVENTS IRAN FROM ACQUIRING MILITARY NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES FOR 10-15 YEARS. ISRAEL'S INTEREST IS TO EXPAND THIS PERIOD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE AND PREVENT IRANIAN VIOLATION, AS WELL AS BEING ALERT OF THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHER MIDDLE EAST STATES FOLLOWING IRAN'S NUCLEAR PATH AND PREEMPT IT. A NUCLEAR IRAN WILL POSE AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO ISRAEL AND WILL ACHIEVE ITS AMBITION TO BECOME A HEGEMONIC REGIONAL POWER THAT WILL BE CAPABLE TO HARNESS OTHER REGIONAL STATES TO ITS WAR AGAINST ISRAEL.	X		X	X	
Prevent Iran from using proxies against Israel	The Islamic regime of Iran calls for the destruction of the state of Israel as an essential part of its identity and ideology. It adopted the use of Arab non-state proxies such as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad as a useful tool.	X		X		
Prevent and defend against Hezbollah attacks	Hezbollah is a non-state actor that acquired military capabilities that equal a small powerful state. It has the capability to cover the whole territory of Israel with rockets and missiles, and operates precision guided missiles and UAVs. Since its inception it perceives itself enemy of Israel and is a proxy of Iran and part of the axis of resistance that fights Israel and the Western influence in the Middle East.	X		X	X	
Prevent and defend against Hamas attacks	Hamas is an Islamic Palestinian terror organization that controls the Gaza Strip and holds the ideology that Israel should be destroyed. It is part of the axis of resistance and serves sometimes as a proxy of Iran. It acquired the capability to cover large parts of Israel with rockets fire and develops the capability to execute terror and guerilla operations in Israeli territory.	X		X	X	
Break Iran's led axis	Without the axis of resistance that Iran is leading it will be much more limited in its ability to harm Israeli interest. The weaker points in this axis are Syria and Hamas.					
Prevent Palestinian terror attacks in the West Bank and Israel	Palestinian terror groups and individuals lone wolves) operating from the West Bank and host countries try to execute terror operations against Israel. Some of them do that because they want to end Israei occupation of the West Bank, others because they have adopted the ideological goal of destroying Israel.	X		X	X	
Prevent Jihadist Salafist attacks against Israel	ALL THE Jihadist-Salafist armed groups share the goal of destruction of Israel though it is not always their priority. It is Israel's interest to prevent their attacks and prevent them from approaching Israel's borders.	X		X	X	
Expand	Israel and the Sunni Arab state have shared interests because of	X			X	

peaceful relationships with Arab states	common enemies, Iran, the axis of resistance and the Salafist-Jihadist groups. Its Israel's interest to form coalitions and alliances with these states, and eventually conclude peace with the Arab world.					
Keep strategic alliance with the US	The strategic alliance with the US is one of the main pillars of Israel's security. It provides Israel's for the means to defend itself, as well as security guarantees and it is giving it a diplomatic shield in the international arena.	X	X	X	X	X
Keep relations and cooperation with the European powers	Europe is a major trade partner for Israel and a source for scientific and technological cooperation. Israel also perceives itself part of the West and the Judeo- Christian civilization.		X	X	X	X
Prevent Russia from taking step harmful to Israel in the Middle East	Post-Soviet Russia is not ideologically hostile to Israel but its ambitions in the Middle East and its competition with the US cause it to take steps that harm Israeli interests.	X				
Expanding relationships with the rising Asian powers: China and India	China and India are playing a significant growing role one the world stage, and are becoming significant economic partners. India particularly is a major market for the Israeli defense industries	X			X	

Bernard Carreau, NDU

Joint Staff/J7 commissioned NDU's Center for Complex Operations to conduct a classified study that is nearing completion on the question of whether U.S. national security decision-making and strategic planning processes were effective in achieving national objectives in Syria. The research touches on all the study topics listed above. While these SMA topics are diverse enough to call for different approaches at the operational level, the findings of the research indicate that at the policy/strategic level they could potentially all be addressed by a change in OIR strategy.

Methods:

The study covers the period from 2011 through early 2016. It is based on interviews of high-level and mid-level officials involved in Syria policy at the National Security Council, the Departments of State and Defense, the Agency for International Development, and the intelligence community, as well as on a review of classified and unclassified U.S. policy documents, including NSC discussion papers, military options papers, State Department reporting cables, intelligence assessments, and other intergovernmental correspondence. It draws on public policy pronouncements made by the President and senior administration officials, as well as a literature review of academic and expert outside commentary on U.S. Syria policy.

Results:

Realigning U.S. Policy to Accommodate Divergent Interests of Allies and Regional Rivals

A major factor preventing the U.S from achieving its objectives in Iraq, Syria, and the C-ISIL campaign is the U.S. inability, or unwillingness, to accommodate the interests of our allies, especially Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States, and regional stakeholders, including Russia and Iran. ISIL is not the priority of any U.S. ally nor of any U.S. regional competitor. Yet U.S. policy is largely centered on making it their priority. Rather than continue to work at cross-purposes, there may be a way to meet our allies and regional rivals half-way while narrowing but preserving core U.S. interests in the region. One prime example is U.S. policy toward the Kurds. Extensive and deepening U.S. support for the Kurds may be providing short-term gains at the expense of long-term regional stability. Over-reliance on Kurdish forces has exacerbated far more important U.S. relations with regional allies and adversaries alike, including Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. An equally pernicious by-product of over-reliance on the Kurds is the perception among Sunni Arabs that the U.S. is encouraging Kurdish encroachment on Sunni Arab lands, similar to Sunni perceptions that the U.S. continuously supports Shi'a regimes over Sunni regimes. The U.S. should continue to protect Kurdish populations, but it should consider significant adjustments to its support of Kurdish forces, including the Peshmerga and the YPG.

In Syria, the U.S. should consider maintaining the same policy goals but altering the strategic objectives and the strategy for achieving them. The new strategy would accept the already *de facto* sphere of influence of Russia and Iran in Syria, including the continued reign of Assad, at least for some time. If the U.S., Russia, and Iran could eventually agree to pressure Assad to step aside, the U.S. might still be prepared to accept an Alawite-dominated government, but one offering much stronger protections for Sunni populations (discussed more fully below). With respect to Iran, the U.S would seek a quid pro quo: accept Iran's close ties and influence with Damascus but insist on no threats to Israel and no support for terrorist activities by Hezbollah. The U.S would have considerable leverage over Iran, including vigilant enforcement of JCPOA, and a reduction in support of Kurdish forces. Iran will have an interest in

maintaining JCPOA, in controlling its Kurdish population, as well as in controlling the restive Kurdish populations in both Syria and Iraq. Iran will also have an interest in degrading and defeating ISIL. The biggest leverage the U.S. will have over Iran would be a proposed reconfiguration of the C-ISIL campaign, complementing it with an explicit program of support to Sunni communities in Syria and Iraq, as explained below.

Turkey could become the most valuable U.S. ally in Syria and Iraq if the U.S. would simply curtail its support of the Kurds. Turkey might accept the U.S. disinclination to remove Assad in exchange for reduced U.S. support to the Kurds and perhaps even more U.S. support to Turkey in helping to degrade the PKK. The U.S. should welcome the Turkish incursion into northern Syria and could do so most effectively by reducing its support of the SDF and YPG.

OIR and a Sunni Empowerment Strategy

In addition, the U.S. could complement the C-ISIL campaign with a "Sunni Empowerment Campaign." The point would be to counter what LTG Nagata has observed is a strong perception in the region that the U.S will support "anyone but Sunnis." The U.S. could exert considerable leverage over events in Iraq, Syria, and Iran in accordance with U.S. national interests if it were able to provide greater support to Sunnis in the region. Such a strategy could act as a check on Iran's regional hegemony, discourage Saudi and Gulf State support of AQ and other extremist groups, check Sunni oppression by Assad in Syria, or his successor, and check Sunni oppression by Abadi and the Shi'a militias he relies on, in Iraq. *Most important, a Sunni empowerment strategy will create the strongest and most effective antidote to ISIL's magnetism (including for local recruits and foreign fighters) and worldwide expansion (including lone wolf attacks in the west) because it will finally provide an outlet for Sunni grievances and a viable alternative to violent jihadism as protection against various forms of Shi's oppression.* Current U.S. policy to "degrade and defeat ISIL" is only half-baked: U.S. policy must further answer the question "and replace it with what?" A viable Sunni empowerment strategy would answer that question.

The main elements of a Sunni Empowerment Campaign might be (details about issues such as the nature of the safe zone and types of arms to be supplied would be included in a classified annex):
- Scale back training and equipping all Kurdish forces. Reassure Sunni Arabs that the U.S. will assist them to maintain control of their traditional lands.
- In Syria, greatly expand CIA support for rebel forces, not with the intent of overthrowing Assad, but with the intent of protecting rebel-held lands from bombing raids and providing essential services and humanitarian assistance. The rebels would be advised, trained, and equipped sufficiently to cause major hardships for Assad and Iran, with the point being to force Assad into making political concessions.
- Consider establishing a safe zone around rebel-held areas, perhaps using Turkish forces, if Turkey could be persuaded to do so in exchange for U.S. reducing support to the Kurds.
- Train and equip Syrian Sunni (*not* Kurdish) militias in eastern Syria and let them fight the enemy that most oppresses them—whether Assad's forces or ISIL forces. For the current train and equip program in Syria, drop the requirement that they swear off fighting Assad and only fight ISIL, and provide close air support to protect them when they engage.
- In Iraq, continue supporting the ISF, but also institute train and equip and advise and assist programs aimed at creating an Iraqi "National Guard"—i.e., well-trained Sunni militias in al Anbar and al Ninewah.

- A U.S. Sunni Empowerment Campaign might encourage Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States to support U.S. efforts to train and equip moderate Sunni militias in Iraq and Syria and cease their support of radical groups.

Justin Gengler, University of Michigan

Bahrain's Strategic Interests (Threats and Opportunities) regarding Regional Conflict

Actor: Bahrain

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Ensure regime security	*As with the other Arab Gulf monarchies, the most basic aim of the Al Khalifa family qua Bahraini government is the preservation of regime security – that is, to ensure continued Al Khalifa rule of the country.*			X		
Preserve the support of Sunni citizens via sectarian appeals	*Political support for the government is extremely low among Bahrain's majority (±55%) Shia population, and thus the ruling family's domestic political survival depends upon the continued sectarian segmentation of the citizenry such that political coordination among Shia and Sunni citizens is untenable. The state has accomplished this by successfully demonizing the Shia-dominated opposition as an Iranian fifth column, positioning itself as the best of two unsatisfying options for ordinary Bahraini Sunnis. The latter have been in effect scared away from cooperation with the opposition, despite a long list of shared grievances, by the threat of a full-scale Shia takeover (in the manner of Iraq) in the event of an overthrow of the Al Khalifa. The continued ability to portray the opposition as backed by a meddling and belligerent Iran is thus a core interest of the state's that is undermined by efforts to diffuse sectarian tensions in the region. In other words, the Bahraini government has a direct domestic political interest in continued Sunni-Shi'i tensions in the Gulf and Levant. (See my article for the MEI, "Sectarian Backfire? Assessing Gulf Political Strategy Five Years after the Arab Uprisings. http://www.mei.edu/content/map/sectarian-backfire-assessing-gulf-political-strategy-five-years-after-arab-uprisings)*			X		X
Prevent direct Iranian material support for domestic Shia groups	*The state has long made claims of direct material and financial support by Iran for what it calls "terrorist" cells within the opposition. To date, however, it has been unable to produce compelling evidence directly tying Iran to domestic groups. Still, the opportunity for indirect funding and support for opposition groups is considerable, both domestically and from outside, and the state has recently taken several steps to attempt to cut off such support. This includes most notably the banning of the khums ("one-fifth") tax through which Shia followers traditionally support clerics. More generally, the state has sought to bring all local charities and funds under central administration in order to exercise greater oversight.*	X		X		

Maintain the diplomatic support and physical military presence of key international allies (the U.S. and the Britain)	*Prior to the emergence of Da'ish in Iraq and Syria, Bahrain was sensitive to efforts by the U.S. Embassy in Bahrain (along with the State Department generally) to facilitate negotiations between the Shia opposition and government (i.e., Crown Prince) that would resolve some of the issues underlying the uprising. The emergence of Da'ish offered Bahrain (and patron Saudi Arabia) a temporary solution to this problem, as it could make its support in the anti-Da'ish coalition contingent upon U.S. withdrawal from domestic Bahraini politics, which has indeed occurred. However, the possibility of renewed U.S. pressure for political reconciliation and/or reform is not far from the minds of the ruling family.*	X	X			
Prevent or slow the normalization of Western relations with Iran	*Normalization of Western relations with Iran poses direct economic and political threats to the Bahraini state. The latter category is largely addressed above. Regarding the former economic challenge, Iran's reemergence as a major oil exporter threatens to further reduce what dwindling resource rents presently accrue to Bahrain. Bahrain is overwhelmingly reliant upon oil and gas revenues (a majority of which are provided indirectly from Saudi Arabia via the jointly-owned Abu Safaa field).*		X	X	X	X

Hassan Hassan

Assad Strategic Interests (Threats and Opportunities) regarding the Gulf region

Actor: Assad

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Stopping the Gulf states from pursuit of regime change	— The key Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, remain committed to supporting the Syrian opposition, even though a regime collapse is not their current goal, with the exception of Qatar. The regime believes that if the Gulf states stop supporting the rebels, it will be easier to crush the rebellion. — These states' priorities have changed over the past five years. Saudi Arabia, for example, is currently fearful of a rebel win, given that Islamist and jihadist groups dominate. The UAE has taken the backseat in support for the opposition, mostly focused on the Southern Front closely cooperating with Jordan and other countries. For the regime, these changes vindicate its policy in fighting the rebellion against its rule, and the Gulf role, along with Turkey's, will continue to be the focus of Damascus.	X		X		
Resisting the acceptance of Gulf-friendly Islamists	— The regime views its struggle with Islamist movements as a zero-sum game. Any compromise given to Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, will undermine the regime's edifice in its entirety. Despite suggestion the regime can accept opposition integration in a future power-share deal, it views Islamism in existential terms, something that the regime's popular base also agree on, broadly. This is due to historical hostilities with the Muslim Brotherhood but also because the regime and its supporters see any compromise as a slippery slope that will ultimately lead to the revival of the challenge it is facing now. The regime's top echelon,including Bashar al-Assad, sees the Gulf states as a source of this push to strengthen Islamism in Syria. — Even in the event of warming relations, the regime sees interest in maintain an ideological distance with the Gulf states, whether in terms of their worldview vis-a-vis American role in the region or in terms of Islamic movements.	x		X		x

Islamist and Jihadist rebels' Strategic Interests (Threats and Opportunities) regarding the Gulf region

Actor: Islamist and jihadist rebels

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Political support	— *With the exception of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, the rebels recognize the Gulf state's importance as a buffer between the regime and its backers, and Western countries that may consider abandoning the opposition. Through diplomatic and commercial links, the Gulf states emerged as key guarantors of opposition security on an internal level. Ahrar Al Sham's dependence on Qatar has made it amiable to political compromises when necessary, although such compromises are mostly posturing rather than an expression of real ideological realignment. The Muslim Brotherhood is also extremely interested in maintaining close ties to the Gulf states, especially Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.* — *Jabhat Fateh al-Sham is deeply suspicious of all the Gulf states, but it has also sought to avoid stoking their fears about its future plans. It has maintained links by proxy, mainly through Ahrar al-Sham, with Qatar, and is cautious about the close ties between Ahrar al-Sham and Doha. In principle, however, JFS is open to the idea of political engagement simolar to the Taliban's political engagement through its offices in Qatar and Beijin. It, for example, agreed in principle to participate in a political bureau during discussions for unity with jihadist and Islamist groups, primarily Ahrar al-Sham, but it insisted that the office would be "in compliance with sharia precepts". This is according to a serving high-ranking official of JFS.*		X	X	x	x
Financial support	— *The majority of rebel forces, including Islamist and jihadists, view funds coming from the Gulf, mostly from private donors or indirectly to battles against the regime through nationalist forces, to be essential. For Islamists, support from Qatar and Kuwait maintains their ability to dominate and have the upper hand on the ground, even if they dislike occasional pressure from donors.* — *JFS sees reliance on government or semi-government funds to be a time bomb, as this increases the prospect of infiltration and espionage. Its strategy, increasingly explicitly expressed over the past few months, is to make their allies on the ground suspicious of foreign funding. JFS members often blame Ahrar al-Sham's reluctance to merge with it on foreign support.* — The push in the Gulf for Ahrar al-Sham to push Jabhat al-Nusra, before it became JFS, to delink itself from Al Qaeda was partly to allow regional countries to provide support to JFS or to shield their proxies from being associated with Al Qaeda	x	x	X	x	

Diane L. Maye, ERAU

Achieving U.S.-led Coaltion Aims in Iraq

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Background – Disparate Aims

The absence of a sitting government in Baghdad for the majority of 2010 gave rise to social instability, insurgent attacks, economic uncertainty, and created a massive power vacuum in Iraq's outlying Sunni Arab provinces. In the beginning of his second administration, Prime Minister Maliki promised American policy makers he would develop a power-sharing arrangement that would bring the Sunnis back to the political table. Once the U.S. left the country, threats to Prime Minister Maliki's power base from within Iraq came from disenfranchised Sunnis with popular appeal, resurgent Ba'ath party politicians, and internal disputes with other Shi'ia political players.

To counter the internal threats, the Prime Minister appealed to long-standing Shi'ia militias to quell uprisings and eliminate emergent Sunni political players. Maliki also integrated Shi'ia paramilitary units and militias into the Iraqi Security Forces ahead of Sunni *Sahwa* groups, then cut the funding for the Sunni Sons of Iraq, leaving tens of thousands of military-aged Sunni Arab males without work. Maliki strictly enforced Iraq's Justice and Accountability (de-Ba'athification) Law and Article 4 of Iraq's antiterrorism law, which imprisoned individuals accused of terrorist activity without a timeline for due process. In doing so, Maliki aggravated large portions of the Sunni Arab population. To maintain civil order, the most organized Sunni groups began to declare their authority in matters of religion, justice, and the law. In the case of Iraq, the most organized and experienced groups were the ones in direct opposition to the standing government: former Ba'athists, revolutionary militants and rogue elements of the Al Qaeda network.

The other major hurdle facing Baghdad's politicians after the withdrawal of U.S. forces was the threat posed by neighboring countries: namely Iran and Syria. After years of enduring the chaotic politicking of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath party, many Middle Eastern policy makers welcomed a more tractable Iraqi government, with political and economic outcomes benefiting groups that had been marginalized under Saddam Hussein. Policymakers and elites across the Middle East saw an opportunity to penetrate Iraqi decision-making. Iraq's powerful neighbor to the east, quickly filled the void left by the U.S. military and policy makers. Iranian officials quickly seized upon the opportunity to work with the longstanding Shi'ia militias by providing military and financial support. **Iran pushed a soft power strategy**: non-oil industry trade as well as economic support to Shi'ia organizations and political parties.

The main problem facing the West is that a weak Iraq is likely to aggravate the balance of political power in the region. For instance, Turkey will have considerable influence in a northern Kurdish state, which is likely to instigate the ethno-separatist Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and rival political groups. The Shi'ia in southern Iraq will bend to Iranian interests, which in turn puts enormous pressure on the government on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Without being able to maintain strict control of borders, Iranian smugglers are able to freely traffic narcotics, arms, organs, and other illegal

merchandise across the region. Furthermore, the Jordanians, Lebanese, and Europeans will be host to ever-increasing numbers of refugees. Nefarious organizations and will achieve their aims as they obtain more and more political and military power. **Therefore, it is in the interest of the U.S. and coalition forces to deny jihadist groups and malevolent regional stakeholders this ability. The U.S. and coalition forces achieve their aims by promoting a stable and strong Iraqi state: a government that has a monopoly on the use of violence, territorial sovereignty, and legitimate political control over its population.**

Alignment and Divergence

Iraq's central government has a legitimacy problem: the Sunni Arabs of Iraq do not have an abundance of mature political alternatives to the Islamic State. For instance, the *Sahwa* movement of 2006 – 2008 quickly disintegrated after U.S. forces left the country, and most emergent Sunni political players have been tied to Ba'ath party loyalists or accused of supporting terrorist activity. In addition, Prime Minister Maliki's administration actively eliminated Sunni political rivals by threatening the lives of Sunni politicians, marginalizing the Sunni Sons of Iraq, and forcing prominent Sunni Arabs into political exile. While some political concessions were made, much of Iraq's Sunni Arab population, especially those in the western provinces, remained alienated from Baghdad politics.

In 2015, there was a split between Sunni Arab tribes, some of which had been aligned with the U.S. and Baghdad's objectives, but many of which switched allegiances and joined the Islamic State. This split was largely because the Sunni Arab tribes in the western provinces were caught between swearing allegiance to the Islamic State, or supporting a government in Baghdad that ignored or rebuffed their political advances. Therefore, some Sunni tribal leaders decided the Islamic State was a more viable and organized alternative than the Iraqi central government. As the Islamic State gained more power and the central government failed to offer protection, some Sunnis were left with no choice but to adhere to the demands of the Islamic State.

Denying Adversaries and Creating Win-Sets

Western powers routinely use the advantages of superior airpower, battlefield intelligence, and precision strikes to target terrorist organizations. Oftentimes, however, terrorist organizations are more like a hydra, and quickly regenerate a new head after an attack. **An important element of denying regrowth is to use targeting in conjunction with a broader movement to engage the population against the terrorist network.**

To create political stability in Iraq, the interests of all the major parties involved in the conflict must overlap in a way that creates a viable win-set. For instance, when the U.S. and the Iraqis were negotiating the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in 2009, they were the two major parties involved in Iraq's security: Iraq and the United States. With the incursion of Iranian forces into Iraq since 2014, as well the vast flux of refugees fleeing the region, there are many more parties that have a vested interest in Iraq's security, including Russia, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Iran, the GCC, Lebanon and the European Union. Likewise, the domestic considerations and support for U.S. intervention has changed. From the Iraqi perspective, domestically they seek to reclaim the territories lost to the Islamic State, however, the Baghdad government is dealing with political pressure from Iran and Syria as well as an influx of foreign fighters from across the world. The challenge for the U.S.-led coalition is to develop a viable political alternative to the Islamic State for Iraq's Sunni population without upsetting the considerations of the other parties involved in the conflict.

To understand the importance of offering a Sunni Arab-based political alternative to the Islamic State in Iraq's western provinces, an important lesson can be learned from the Sunni Awakening of 2006 - 2008. The movement capitalized on growing cleavage in the Sunni political spectrum: Sunnis that supported Al Qaeda versus Sunnis that did not support the organization. Likewise, the importance of charismatic leadership as a source of legitimate authority was seen during the Sunni Awakening, but perhaps under-appreciated by coalition forces that were likely more accustomed to legal-rational and traditional sources of authority. The rapid rise a charismatic leader is a common theme in Middle Eastern politics.

The combination of eliminating a terrorist network and replacing the network with new security apparatus proved to be a winning formula during the Sunni Awakening. **To deny the actions of nefarious organizations, the U.S. and coalition forces should reject Iran's involvement in Iraqi affairs, promote strong, yet dispersed, self-governance, and actively work to secure the nation's borders.**

Eugene Rumer, Carnegie Endowment

DESCRIPTION NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY Assert great power status The middle east is the key global hotspot and Russia has to be involved with a seat at the table when the fate of the region is decided. It has to be counted as a full member of the global politburo.

Standing up to the United States and constraining its ability to operate freely is enhancing the stature of Putin's Russia on the global stage as an equal of the United States. x Boost domestic legitimacy Great power status is important for the putin regime's domestic standing at a time when the domestic economy is suffering. Russia's rebirth as a great power on Putin's watch is a major legitimizing theme for the regime in Russian domestic politics. X

Elie Tenebaum, USIP

France Strategic Interests (Threats and Opportunities) regarding Regional Conflict

Actor: France

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Limit instability throughout the Middle East	- *The Middle East's geographic proximity to France makes the region's stability an absolute priority for France's future security* - *France has been heavily present in the region for centuries and will undoubtedly remain involved in the foreseeable future*	X			X	
Mobilize a large coalition to help stabilize the region	- *France does not have the power to change regional dynamics alone: France needs to build partnerships and act within a coalition* - *The United States' commitment to the region's security is critical and will remain a prerequisite for any substantial military endeavor*	X	X			
Contain international jihadism	- *Destroying Jihadist sanctuaries: especially in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen* - *Controlling the flow of returning Foreign Fighters: especially those returning to Europe, and France's southern neighbors (North Africa)*	X		X		
Limit the flow of refugees	- *Promoting a more efficient EU external border control* - *Avoiding the potential negative impact refugee flows may have on the country's economy, security and domestic politics*	X		X	X	X
Promote the establishment of a stable and non-hostile state in Syria	- *Ending the civil war without returning to the status quo ante (That Bashar al-Assad remain in power is not an option)* - *Limiting the influence of radical factions over the future government*	X			X	
Promote a cohesive and representative government in Iraq	- *Restoring the Iraqi government's full control over its territory* - *Helping Baghdad regain some degree of legitimacy amongst both Sunnis and Shias* - *Preserving autonomy for the Kurdish Regional Government*	X			X	
Avoid further destabilization in Lebanon	- *Helping any Lebanese representative government maintain control over its territory* - *Limiting Hezbollah's influence over the government* - *Honoring century-long ties with Lebanon in cultural and religious fields*	X	X			X
Move Iran towards a greater opening and a more constructive foreign policy	- *Enforcing the JCPOA and preventing Tehran's to acquire an operational nuclear deterrence capability* - *Developing business opportunities for French companies in Iran* - *Limiting the influence of the regime's hardliners within the government* - *Preventing the escalation of tensions with Gulf monarchies*	X	X		X	

Strengthening strategic partnerships with Gulf monarchies	- *Promoting further business partnerships (arms sales, foreign investments) while being cautious of not giving Gulf Monarchies too much clout in France's key economic sectors* - *Limiting the exportation of radical Islam (Salafi Islam, Muslim brotherhood) towards Europe and especially France* - *Avoiding greater tensions between Gulf monarchies and Iran* - *Securing peaceful regimes' successions*	X	X		X	X
Keep on promoting the Two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	- *Preserving a sustainable security environment for Israel* - *Promoting the establishment of a stable and non-hostile Palestinian state with limited influence coming from Hamas* - *Avoiding the emergence of new jihadist groups in the Gaza Strip*		X	X		X
Make sure Turkey remains a stable and reliable ally	- *Countering Erdogan's regime's authoritarian evolution* - *Securing the EU-Turkish agreement regarding Syrian refugees* - *Making sure Turkey remains a reliable NATO member*	X			X	

Tim Thomas, Foreign Military Studies Office

RUSSIA'S NEW NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:

A LOOK AT NOUNS, VERBS, CONCERNS, AND WARNINGS

January 2016

Place of Publication: Unknown, target of opportunity

Synopsis: Through the publication of the National Security Strategy (*NSS)*, Russia has demonstrated a mixture of some realism (the discussion of the economy lists real problems, among other issues) alongside excuses for their current situation (such as failing to admit or take into consideration the effect of their actions as being responsible for new threats appearing on the border). Russia wants a return to great power status, and the Kremlin sees energy resources and military power as two of the most important paths to glory, along with developing more creative and innovative theorists according to the document. The *NSS* covers all of these issues. Putin added that in the fall Russia will publish a strategy on science and technology issues as well, since they are crucial for a state to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The sum total of measures covered in the *NSS* (information control, military modernization, energy security, S&T advances, etc.) can also be read as the Putin entourage's method of guaranteeing regime survival. The regime wants the population to focus on what it is doing for it, not what it has done to it. The idea is to offer the population the international prestige, power projection capabilities, and return to a respected status that it has sought over the past two decades.

Disclaimer

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Introduction

This analysis of Russia's new *National Security Strategy* examines two issues. The first is the use of words in the document as a way to decipher objectives and goals of the *Strategy* and, by implication, the aims of Russia's national security apparatus. Verbs such as creates, shapes, defines, focuses, blames, and worries and nouns like interests, priorities, stability, threats, goals, and struggles dot the strategy, and include both international and domestic issues. These types of terms are highlighted in bold in the discussion below for emphasis only (it helps speed the reading and comprehension of a policy paper). The second issue examined is the concerns expressed in the document and the responses in the month after the *NSS's* publication that members of Russia's Security Council offered. This latter component is highlighted in the section titled "Follow-up to the *NSS*." Here Russian experts expressed the desire of Russia for better relations with NATO and the US, as well as a list of the economic and national security threats to Russia.

When a statement in the strategy appears off base from a Western perspective of what has transpired, brackets follow the statement with a short counter explanation of events or, on occasion, a description of what has been omitted from the Russian contention to make it more persuasive. As an example, while Russia states it wants to ensure strategic stability, the phrase is followed by this type of reference: [in Ukraine, Russian actions have done the opposite, exacerbating and weakening strategic stability]. What follows then is a different type of analysis than is usually performed, such as simply comparing what is new or repeated from past strategies.

What should be followed closely?

Nowhere in the document is the term strategy actually defined, so its definition is left to the discretion of the reader. However, the document itself was defined as "the basic strategic planning document defining the Russian Federation's national interests and strategic national priorities, objectives, tasks, and measures in the sphere of domestic and foreign policy aimed at strengthening the

Russian Federation's national security and ensuring the country's sustainable development in the long term."[1] It consolidates the efforts of the organs of state power, and it is the basis for the shaping and implementation of state policy. Nor do the Russians mention the term hybrid, which basically follows the train of thought that only Westerners think Russia is applying hybrid methods. Of the terms indirect, asymmetric, and nonmilitary, which the Russians use to describe their military theory and actions, the document only used the terms indirect and nonmilitary, offering each only once.

However, other terms were used quite often. National, state, security, and some form of the word develop (past tense, gerund, etc.) were each used over 100 times. Some form of the term economy was used 97 times, organ 79 times, formation 54 times, and military 52 times. Some form of create (ing, ed, tion, etc.) and implement were used 37 times each, information 36 times, stability 35 times, threat and strategy 24 times each, power and culture 23 times each, law 22 times, some form of equal, moral, and values 14 times each, and priority 13 times.

There were two items of special interest. The *Strategy* used the term struggle on two occasions, but the sentences containing the word may be some of the most important in the document. Struggle indicates an active confrontation among various factors for control, where east meets west, and is an area that the West should consider to remain as a point of contention. There is a struggle underway, the *Strategy* notes, for resources, access to markets, and control over transportation arteries. There is also a struggle for influence in the international arena, which includes the use of political, financial-economic, and information instruments. A second item of special interest is the section on "indicators for evaluating the state of national security," factors that will purportedly allow Russian security officials to know if the *Strategy* is being fulfilled.

The Russian Federation's objective is defined in the document as the attempt to acquire as many equal partners as possible in various parts of the world. Goals include national defense goals, which are defined as the creation of conditions to develop and ensure military security. Goals are achieved by implementing military policy through strategic deterrence, preventing armed conflict, improving military organizations and forms and methods for armed force deployments, and increasing mobilization readiness according to the document. Strategic deterrence is the result of the interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, information, and other measures, such as maintaining the capacity for nuclear deterrence. Strategic interests and priorities, values, and future partners are highlighted as well as numerous threats to national security.

The *National Security Strategy*

The document **defines** national interests, priorities, objectives (which the strategy says is to acquire as many **equal** partners as possible in various parts of the world), tasks, and measures to strengthen national security and ensure long-term development. It **consists** of a domestic legal basis that intends to consolidate the efforts of organs of state power. It **aims to create** favorable internal and external conditions for realizing national interests and strategic national priorities (this is perhaps the overarching goal of the *Strategy*). It is the basis for **shaping** and implementing policy, and is **based** on the interconnection between national security and the country's socioeconomic development.

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[1] "The Russian Federation's National Security Strategy," *President of Russia* website, 31 December 2015. See Appendix One for terms defined in the text. All items referred to in this article (until the section "Follow-Up to the *NSS*) are from this document.

Main concepts are: protect the individual, society, and the state against internal and external threats. National security includes the country's defense and all types of security (state, public, information, environmental, economic, transportation, energy, and individual security). Russia wants to **protect** the **rights** of compatriots abroad (this was discussed twice in the *NSS*) and resolve and settle international problems and ensure strategic stability [in Ukraine, they have done the opposite, exacerbating problems]. The rising generation is being fed values that **shapes** a proper attitude toward Russia's history [whose version of history is being used? The history Putin had rewritten?].

The US and its allies are trying to **contain** Russia via political, economic, military and information pressure. In the meantime there is a **struggle** underway for resources, access to markets, and control over transportation arteries. There is also a **struggle** for influence in the international arena, which includes the use of political, financial-economic, and information instruments [struggles are the areas in which Russia will focus its attention]. Russia, on the other hand, is offering its l**eadership** in exploiting Arctic resources [by militarizing the Arctic]. The principles of **equal and indivisible security** (there were four mentions of the equal security concept) are not being observed [this Soviet era term, equal security, has now returned to the lexicon. It envisions equal security as, for example, the placement of weaponry in Cuba to offset proposed missiles in Poland. If both sides are threatened with deployments, then equal security exists according to this line of thought. Equal security deters through a balance of threats directed at each side.].

Russia **worries** about the **militarization and arms-race** processes developing in regions adjacent to Russia. NATO's buildup is also threatening Russian national security [Russia caused the buildup—it wasn't there before Ukraine and Crimea. NATO's expansion, however, played a role in Russia's decision-making process.]. **Stability** opportunities are **shrinking** due to US missile defense systems that are **implementing** the "global strike" concept, and **deploying** strategic nonnuclear precision weapons systems and weapons that could be deployed in space. The US has used a persistent **block approach** in international relations with the EU and NATO [no mention is made of Russia's block approach, such as the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or BRICS]. The West has tried to **counter integration** processes and has **created** seats of tension in the Eurasian region [Russia created even more instability and tries to shift blame. Intervention in Ukraine made the Baltic countries feel that they could be next on Russia's intervention list.].

Russia **blames** others for overthrowing legitimate political regimes and provoking instability [Russia offered fixed elections in Crimea; Russian elections are suspect as not being representative of the people but of the one's in power, who worry over what successors might do, which is Putin's problem]. Russia writes that **migration** flows demonstrate the non-viability of regional security systems [however, migrants are a small aspect of a regional security system and an occurrence that just took place. More to the point, immigrants go to places where they feel they have chances for employment and a decent life, and few went to Russia as a result]. Some **countries aspire** to information and communication technologies to achieve geopolitical objectives, sometimes unlawfully, by manipulating public awareness and falsifying history [no one has manipulated the media recently more than Russia has. It selectively eliminated important historical facts from its rendering of reality and created its own new objective reality, such as Putin's refusal to admit applying pressure on Ukrainian President Yanukovich to side with Russia and not the EU.]. **Stability** is **weakened** by financial, trade, investment, and technological policy to resolve geopolitical tasks [Russian overreliance on oil has weakened its

stability at home]. Russia is **focusing** efforts on strengthening its internal unit [instead of focusing on why it appears to be so threatening to others].

The document lists the following **strategic interests**: strengthening the country's defense, national accord, and ensuring the inviolability of the RF constitutional order [except when Putin changes it for him to remain as President]; raising living standards; preserving and developing culture and moral values; increasing economic competitiveness; and consolidating the Russian Federation's (RF's) status as a leading world power. **Strategic national priorities** include: national defense, state, and public security; economic growth; science, technology, and education; healthcare and culture; ecology; and strategic stability and **equal** strategic partnership. National defense goals are to create conditions for development and ensure military security. **Goals** are achieved by implementing military policy through **strategic deterrence**, preventing armed conflict, improving military organization and forms and methods for armed force deployment, and increasing mobilization readiness. **Strategic deterrence** is the result of the interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, information, and other measures, such as maintaining the capacity for nuclear deterrence. **Military organization** is to be improved though identifying existing and potential military risks and threats [and it is influenced by the impact of Western conspiracy theories often dreamed up for domestic consumption in Russia]. The **nature** of modern war is studied [no mention of hybrid war is offered]. National defense is based on **rational sufficiency** and effectiveness, to include responses that use **nonmilitary** methods and means, peacekeeping and **diplomatic mechanisms**, military-technical cooperation and **arms control and legal instruments**.

The *NSS* states that some countries aspire to utilize informational and communication technologies to achieve their geopolitical objectives, including by manipulating public awareness and falsifying history [in Ukraine, these methods were used extensively by Russia's media]. **Threats to state and public security** are foreign state intelligence services, the activities of terrorist and extremist organizations, radical public associations (nongovernmental organizations) that incite **color revolutions** (there was only one mention of color revolutions, expected more mentions), criminal organizations, information and communication technologies that disseminate the ideology of fascism, criminal offenses, corruption and national disasters. An increase in the effectiveness of oversight bodies is desired, as well as eradicating conditions and causes of corruption [is Russia's political order the most corrupt?]. The system for **identifying and analyzing threats** to the information sphere is being improved [which could include limiting the type of information Russian citizens receive]; **protecting** citizens from extremist, foreign special services, and propaganda structures is being increased; and technical support for law enforcement agencies is improving [better System of Operational Investigative Measures or SORM equipment, all aimed at domestic deterrence, that is, ensuring the population they are being cared for while systematically watching their every move on the Internet.]. "**Quality of life**" strategic objectives include **developing** human potential, satisfying material, social, and spiritual needs, and reducing social and property inequality.

Economic threats to Russia include **eleven points of concern**: low competitiveness; dependence on external economic circumstances; the lagging development of future technologies; lack of protection for the financial system against foreign capital speculation; information infrastructure vulnerabilities; imbalances in the national budget system and the deterioration of the state's raw-materials base; reduction in the extraction of strategically important minerals; labor shortages; corruption and criminalization; and restrictive economic measures imposed on the RF. **Provisions must be made** for

ensuring stability of the macroeconomic situation; increasing state management's efficiency; strengthening the financial system; ensuring a balance in the budget system; increasing the attractiveness of Russian jurisdiction; reducing critical dependence on foreign technologies; developing high-tech sectors and the defense industry complex; creating strategic reserves of mineral and raw-material resources; forming a single transport space; widening the use of state-private partnership instruments, such as in the Arctic; stimulating the development of small and medium-sized business; reducing informal employment; ensuring the balance of interests of the indigenous population and migrant workers; and developing more international business contacts and attracting foreign technologies [this is the opposite of what was said earlier, where the strategy states that Russia needs to implement import substitution and reduce critical dependence on foreign technologies].

In the **science and technology** sphere it is important to develop scientific potential; develop a national innovation system; form a system of basic and applied scientific research; develop promising high technologies (genetic engineering, robotic engineering, biological, information, communications, cognitive technologies, and nanotechnologies); ensure Russia's leading positions in the spheres of basic math, physics, chemistry, biology, technical sciences, and humanitarian and social sciences; and enhance education with traditional Russian spiritual-moral and cultural-historical values. One threat to national security in the sphere of protecting citizen's health is to limit the availability of psychoactive and psychotropic substances for illegal consumption. However, Russia believes there is the threat of bioweapons appearing on its borders, with the *NSS* stating that "the network of **US military-biological laboratories** on the territory of states adjacent to Russia is being expanded." This issue was mentioned twice, and shows Russia's concerns over what they deem to be bio-planning between NATO and other nations.

Traditional Russian spiritual and moral values include the priority of the spiritual over the material, the protection of human life and rights and freedoms, and other factors (family, service to the homeland, etc.). **Threats** to national security include the erosion of these traditional spiritual and moral values, a propaganda of permissiveness and violence, racial, ethnic, and religious intolerance, attempts to falsify Russian and world history, and **encroachments upon cultural objects** [can the destruction of a statue in Poland be construed as a national security threat?]. Strengthening the sphere of culture is aided by taking measures to **protect** Russian society against an external expansion of ideologies, values, and destructive information and psychological impacts on Russia; the implementation of control in the information sphere; and the prevention of the spread of extremist products, propaganda of violence, and racial, religious, and interethnic intolerance. **Creating a state order for Internet resources** and other information outlets is required.

Foreign policy relies on international law and the principles of **equality** and noninterference in a states' internal affairs. Long-term steady development to ensure strategic stability includes freeing the world of nuclear weapons, strengthening universal reliable and **equal security**, and other factors that influence global strategic stability. **Strategic cooperation with the People's Republic of China** is a key factor in maintaining global and regional stability, and **India** is playing an important role. Of real importance is that, after accusing the US of several infractions, the RF states it is interested in a full-fledged partnership with the US on the "basis of coincident interests." This involves economics, arms control measures, the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, cooperating in the fight against terrorism, and settling regional conflicts. Also of interest is developing **equal** and mutually "**beneficial international cooperation in the Arctic**."

Strategic stability for the RF is preserved under the following circumstances: preserving the stability of the system of international law; honoring international treaties in arms limitation; preparing for a reduction of nuclear potentials; contributing to the strengthening of regional stability through participating in the reduction and limitation of conventional armed forces; considering peacekeeping as a way to settle armed conflicts; contributing to the formation of an international information security system [which the West rejects as an attempt to control information on the part of the RF and China]; and participating in UN activities to alleviate disasters. The RF wants to develop relations with NATO based on **equality** in order to strengthen security in the Euro-Atlantic region. The RF finds it unacceptable for NATO's increased activity toward Russia's borders and the building of a missile-defense system.

The *Strategy* **is executed** on a planned basis and makes comprehensive use of political, organizational, socioeconomic, legal, information, military, special, and other actions developed as part of strategic planning. With regard to information, the following was highlighted:

> The information basis for implementing this *Strategy* is provided by the federal strategic planning information system, which incorporates the information resources of organs of state power and local self-government, and also by the systems of distributed situation centers and state scientific organizations. In implementing this *Strategy*, particular attention shall be paid to ensuring information security in light of strategic national priorities. The RF Security Council has a coordinating role in the information and information-analytical support for the implementation of this **Strategy** and also in its amendment once every six years…

Indicators for evaluating the state of national security are the citizens' degree of satisfaction with the protection of their rights and freedoms; the proportion of modern models of arms and military and special equipment; life expectancy; per capita GDP; decile coefficient (ratio of income to the most and least prosperous ten per cent of the population); inflation; unemployment; proportion of expenditure of the GDP on science, technology, and education; proportion of expenditure of the GDP on culture; and the proportion of territory of the RF not conforming to environmental standards.

Follow-Up to the NSS

After the *Strategy* was published, commentary on the document continued from both domestic and foreign sources. The Security Council in particular rolled out a host of deputies to discuss the *Strategy*, and each official seemed to have a specific aspect of the NSS to highlight. This section is broken into three parts from various sources: those directly associated with the Putin regime, editorials (signed and unsigned), and commentary from foreign nations.

Official figures:

12 January, Security Council Deputy Secretary Vladimir Nazarov: he noted that Russia's list of **national interests** had expanded to include strengthening the country's defense, desiring national accord and the unity of society, enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, and protecting the culture and traditional and ethical values of Russian society. The peaceful and socioeconomic development of Russia, he noted, depends on favorable external conditions, domestic stability, and public accord. The *Strategy's* provisions are mandatory for all state and local self-government bodies. Emphasis is also

placed on the development of interaction between the state and civil society's institutes. The *Strategy* will be **fulfilled through monitoring of the main indicators of national security**.[2]

13 January, Security Council Deputy Secretary Mikhail Popov: he stated that Russia will only **use force as a last resort**. Russia's foreign policy does not want confrontation and a new arms race. Strategic deterrence is achieved through Russia's nuclear potential and AF combat preparedness; and through the prevention of conflicts via a package of interlinked political, military, military-technical, and other measures that aim to prevent the use of force against Russia. The **NSS has been harmonized with the new military doctrine** and it stresses mobilization readiness.[3]

14 January, Foreign Ministry official Maria Zakharova: **Russia is ready for relations with NATO** on the basis of **equal rights** for strengthening universal security in Europe and the Atlantic. The alliance must take account Russia's lawful interests and respect the norms of international law. The *Strategy* does, she notes, list factors where NATO's activities may be detrimental to Russian national interests (increasing NATO's forceful potential and obtaining a role in breaching international law, expanding the alliance, more military activities, and moving military infrastructures closer to Russia). The alliance is increasing its military presence in the east, conducting drills on Russia's borders, deploying troops and armor, creating advanced command post units, reinforcing patrols in the Baltic Sea, maintaining their presence in the Black Sea, and deploying Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense systems in Romania and Poland. Russia is just responding to attempts to change the existing balance of forces in Europe, she noted.[4]

18 January, Security Council Deputy Secretary Yevgeny Lukyanov: Washington is reinforcing unions and associations oriented towards them and are pursuing policies to destabilize regimes disliked by the US. Still **Russia is ready to partner with the US** as long as the US does not conduct a dialogue from a position of force. Russia intends to maintain its deterrent potential guaranteeing Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while giving priority attention to disarmament issues and observing the non-proliferation regime.[5] The *NSS* shows Russia's commitment to an open and rational foreign policy promoting international law and respect for people and their cultures, traditions, and interests. The strategic partnership includes China and India. The Arctic merits special attention. Economic and information pressure is being exerted on Russia due to its independent foreign policy. Russia does not use Cold War terminology, categorize countries as good and bad, or declare individual states or regions to be enemies.[6]

19 January, comment from Sergei Vakhrukov, the aide to the Secretary of the Security Council: key **strategic economic threats** are Russia's low competitiveness, lingering resource export developments and the current high dependence on the foreign trade environment and raw material exports, lags in cutting-edge technologies, national budgetary system imbalances, insufficient resources for lending, and the vulnerability of the national financial system. **Key tasks** are eradicating economic imbalances, reducing differentiations in disparities in social and economic developments, mitigating the level of exposure to external negative factors, participating in international economic cooperation, and obtaining higher effectiveness in the state's regulation in economic areas. **To accomplish these tasks** the

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[2] *Interfax*, 12 January 2016.
[3] *Interfax*, 13 January 2016.
[4] *Interfax* (in English), 14 January 2016.
[5] *Interfax* (in English), 18 January 2016.
[6] *Government of the Russian Federation*, 18 January 2016.

industrial and technological base and national innovation system will be enhanced, economic sectors modernized, investment appeal nurtured, financial systems improved, and the business environment consolidated. **Strategic goals** are to develop the country's national economy, ensure economic security, create the conditions to facilitate personality development, transition the economy to a new technological level, make Russia a leader in terms of GDP, and withstand the impact of internal and external threats. **Energy security** includes sustaining domestic consumption of energy resources, growing energy efficiency, and increasing the competitive power of domestic resources and supply systems. With regard to a **citizen's quality of life**, decreasing social inequality, ensuring food supplies, improving access to good housing, high-quality goods and services, and modern education and healthcare, and creating more effective jobs were all stressed. Finally, **food security** was stressed, to include system regulations, sanitary and safety control measures, broadening access to sales markets, and other issues.[7]

20 January, comment from Alexander Grebenkin, an Assistant Secretary of the Russian Security Council: **main threats to national security** are the intelligence gathering of foreign security services, terrorism, extremism, criminal organizations and groups, radical public associations, natural calamities, and the deteriorating technical condition of infrastructures. Information and communication technologies that distribute the propaganda of fascism, extremism, and separatism are threats. It is necessary to maintain the political and social stability of society. The *NSS* underlined the need for interaction among security and law enforcement agencies and civilian society, as well as building confidence in the judiciary.[8]

21 January, President Putin: it is necessary to place a strategy of **scientific and technological** development on a par with the *NSS*, he noted. The strategy must be ready by the autumn, since it is "the key factor of sovereignty and security of a state."[9]

Foreign Opinions

6 January, Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, Oleksandr Turchynov: the *NSS* carries threats to Ukraine, since it notes that an **anti-constitutional coup** took place and that the conflict in eastern Ukraine **was created by the West** and the US. Countering Russian aggression remains the key to Ukraine's' national security priority. The *Strategy* is "full of empty slogans and is advertising the grandeur of Russia."[10]

6 January, Chinese PhD student Cui Heng: the *NSS* identifies NATO as a potential threat for the first time and stresses cooperation with the Asia-Pacific countries (mentioning China first). The *Strategy* is assertive, an active approach. The *NSS* is cooperative and not confrontational; even though the leadership considers that the country faces confrontation with some world actors. To cope with confrontations military modernization must be sped up. Diplomatic suppression and economic sanctions due to the Ukraine crisis have destabilized Russia's domestic security situation.[11]

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[7] *Interfax* (in English), 19 January 2016.
[8] *Interfax* (in English), 20 January 2016.
[9] *Interfax* (in English), 21 January 2016.
[10] *Interfax-Ukraine* (in Russian), 6 January 2016.
[11] Cui Heng, "Russia Assertive Facing Threat from West," *Global Times Online* (in English), 6 January 2016.

18 January, Chinese *Xinhua* press: Russia has upgraded its *NSS* taking into account how the US has worsened the international situation. The article cites the views of Lukyanov (noted above). The article does not list a Chinese opinion on the *NSS*.[12]

Editorials:

4 January, *Sputnik* in English: Western media are quick to point out that **NATO and the US are threats to Russia but ignore the fact that Russia states it is also willing to cooperate with them** on a full-fledged partnership basis if it is mutually beneficial. Russia's new found strength has caused the US and its allies to initiate counteractions and attempt to maintain their dominant position in the world. The US deployment of weapon systems has decreased the maintenance of global and regional stability. The US is expanding its network of military-biological labs in countries neighboring Russia. US President Obama, on the other hand, has not suggested a way for cooperation with Russia, according to the report.[13]

12 January, in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: Putin said the **biggest mistake in the past 25 years was that Russia did not declare its national interests**. Main aims of the *NSS* are to strengthen defense and national unity, increase the population's living standards and the economy's competitiveness, and consolidate Russia's status as one of the leading world powers. The *NSS* is needed, since the security situation has changed and new threats have emerged. **More than 20 sections cover strategic stability** and Russia's mutual relations with the outside world; 17 sections cover increased defense capabilities and state security; 12 sections cover the economy; 7 cover culture, 5 each cover increasing citizens living standards and healthcare, and 4 each cover the environment, science, and education. Priority is given to cooperation with BRICS, RIC, APEC, G20, and the SCO. The CIS and China, along with India, also garnered special recognition as important cooperative partners. Ukraine is listed as a main threat and the US and EU are blamed for supporting an anti-constitutional *coup d'état* [Putin's role in trying to persuade Yanukovich to side with Russia is not mentioned]. NATO and the EU are accused of not being able to ensure Europe's security [none of the countries associated with these organizations wants Russia to ensure their security], and criticism is leveled against both the expansion of the missile defense system and the network of biological weapon laboratories near Russia's orders. While the documents tone is more militarily aggressive and Russia's foreign policy is deemed to be independent, the *NSS* still shows that "Moscow does not intend to turn its back on a 'full partnership' with Washington."[14]

Conclusions

The security environment that the document projects is holistic, taking in culture, values, economics, science, national interests, health, education, and a host of other issues. The overall focus is on the well-documented desire to maintain strategic stability and the Russian penchant to control propaganda and enhance regime survival. Overall, many of the issues raised in the *NSS* were discussed piecemeal over the past two years. The *NSS* is just the first place they have all been brought together. Many points of the *NSS* were repeats from the 2009 *NSS*.

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[12] *Xinhua* (in English), 18 January 2016.

[13] No author listed, "Western Media Alarmed US Becomes Threat to Russia, but Fail to Read Deeper," *Sputnik* (in English), 4 January 2016.

[14] "Russia Recognizes Itself as Country Surrounded by Enemies—Moscow Takes Its Most Anti-Western Turn in 20 Years," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 12 January 2016.

The *NSS* presents concern over the state of international relations between Russia and the West, while relations with the East are listed with more enthusiasm for their continued cooperative ventures. Still the document offers openings for potential areas of cooperation with both NATO and the US. It is not known if Russia's offer of some conciliation is designed to find a way to reduce the sanctions that were imposed on the nation after its acquisition of Crimea and intervention into Eastern Ukraine; or if this is a sincere offer to change behavior. It is clear that those speaking after the documents release underlined this point of potential cooperation repeatedly but gave no indication of the rationale behind it.

Domestically there is concern over the potential impact that economic and national security threats present to Russia. Suggested ways to get out of the current morass are listed. There is also a list of indicators to allow people to evaluate the current state of national security in Russia and thus whether it is making progress in its desire to protect national security. The *NSS* appears to be seen by the Kremlin as a roadmap that outlines the important aspects for shaping domestic and international policy as well as the interaction between national security and socioeconomic affairs.

It is apparent that not everyone is happy with the document, most likely due to the current shape of the economy. For example, a report in *Vedomosti Online* (*Business Online*, indicating concern in that community) on 20 January noted that "practically all of Russia's top officials (expect maybe for the President) have admitted that the economy is in a severe crisis." Further, the article notes that "the authors fail to notice that the economy is closed off and shrunken (including as a result of the policy of 'protection of the country's interests'), by cutting itself off from world trade, finances, and technological completion."[15]

To help ensure economic stability in the coming years, a series of areas are considered "off limits" to foreign governments, such as Russia's national interests and stakes in specific geopolitical property (in particular, the Arctic). These warnings are made quite clear in the document. It is also off limits to allow intrusions into Russia's domestic propaganda apparatus as well, since the impact of foreign information and communication systems on the population may threaten regime survival in the Kremlin's view. The document places blame on nongovernmental organizations and individuals for upending stability in Russia as well. State-owned TV and other media outlets, assisted by FSB control of the Internet, are ways to ensure information security.

Through the publication of the *NSS*, Russia has demonstrated a mixture of some realism (the discussion of the economy lists real problems, among other issues) alongside excuses for their current situation (failing to admit or take into consideration the effect of their actions as being responsible for new threats appearing on the border). Russia wants a return to great power status, and the Kremlin sees energy resources and military power as two of the most important paths to glory, along with developing more creative and innovative theorists. While the *NSS* is an important document, Putin's January announcement on science and technology issues may be even more important. He stated that a

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[15] Pavel Aptekar and Andrey Sinitsy, "Sacred Security Strategy: Special Services Refine Document That is Increasingly Disconnected from Reality," *Vedomosti Online* (*Business Online*), 20 January 2016.

strategy on S&T issues is crucial for a state to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and one will be ready in the fall. International prestige and power projection capabilities come from a good S&T strategy that offers high-tech methods to counter threats from within and without. The sum total of information control, military modernization, energy security, and S&T advances is can also be read as the Putin entourage's method of guaranteeing regime survival. The regime wants the population to focus   on   what   it   is   doing   for   it,   not   what   it   has   done   to   it.

APPENDIX ONE The current Strategy makes use of the following main concepts:

-- The Russian Federation's national security (hereinafter national security) -- the state of protection of the individual, society, and the state against internal and external threats in the process of which the exercise of the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens of the Russian Federation (hereinafter citizens), a decent quality of life and standard of living for them, sovereignty, independence, state and territorial integrity, and sustainable socioeconomic development of the Russian Federation are ensured. National security includes the country's defense and all types of security envisioned by the Russian Federation Constitution and Russian Federation legislation -- primarily state, public, informational, environmental, economic, transportation, and energy security and individual security;

-- The Russian Federation's national interests (hereinafter national interests) -- objectively significant requirements of the individual, society, and the state with regard to ensuring their protection and sustainable development;

-- Threats to national security -- the set of conditions and factors creating a direct or indirect possibility of harm to national interests;

-- The safeguarding of national security -- the implementation by organs of state power and organs of local self-government in conjunction with institutions of civil society of political, military, organizational, socioeconomic, informational, legal, and other measures aimed at countering threats to national security and satisfying national interests;

-- The Russian Federation's strategic national priorities (hereinafter strategic national priorities) -- the most important areas of the safeguarding of national security;

-- The system for safeguarding national security -- the set of organs of state power and organs of local self-government carrying out the implementation of state policy in the sphere of safeguarding national security and the instruments at their disposal.

Introduction

On 30 September 2015 Russian air operations began in Syria. Earlier, a military equipment buildup had taken place, lasting over several weeks, at an airfield near Latakia and at the naval base at Tartus, the latter designed to serve Russia's air, naval, and ground (naval infantry) components.

Why did Russia take these preparatory steps and then intervene in this particular conflict at a time when Kremlin leaders were heavily focused on Eastern Ukraine and potential problems in the Baltic? The rationale appeared simple: first, and foremost, to support the Bashar Al-Assad regime, which had lost control of, according to some Russian accounts, up to 70 percent of Syrian territory to the Islamic State (IS) in September 2015.[16] Second, Russia noted with alarm that its southern belly was again exposed to the return of extremists who had fought on the side of IS against the Syrian government and were now bringing back to Russia both their ideology and lessons learned from fighting there. After quieting the near decade long struggle inside Russian in Chechnya, which is very near the region of conflict, Russia's leaders did not want a new threat recreated there or spread to other parts of the country. Both points appeared to have spearheaded the Kremlin's decision-making and influenced its resolve to intervene.

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[16] Yuriy Gavrilov, "Syria: Russian Thunder. The Commander of the Russian Federation's Troop Grouping in Syria Has Given His First Interview to *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 24 March 2016.

Upon further examination after several months of fighting, however, other reasons beyond this initial rationale began to appear. They can be summarized as geopolitical, national, and military:

Geopolitical: restore Russian influence in the Middle East as its main arbiter; provide support to its best friend in the region, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad; keep the United States from exerting too much influence over the region; place the US in a conundrum—does it overextend its influence in Syria at the expense of Afghanistan, Iraq, and a tired force?; deflect attention away from Russian activities in Crimea, Ukraine, and elsewhere on its periphery; conduct integrated operations with Iranian, Hezbollah, and Syrian forces; and exert pressure on the European Union.

National: use cooperation with the US in Syria as leverage to perhaps curtail sanctions and thus energize Russia's failing domestic economy; divert attention from an increasingly unpopular conflict against brother Slavs in Ukraine; and reassure the population that the Kremlin is directing its attention toward the emerging threat to the south of the nation.

Military: test new weaponry and transport capabilities; demonstrate professional competency to the international community that was lacking in Georgia; learn to work with other nations/groups (Iran/Hezbollah, etc.) and establish new alliances; learn to identify the forms and methods that insurgents/terrorists use in combat; demonstrate the command and control capabilities of the new National Defense Control Center in Moscow and its ability to integrate combat assets; destroy the financial (oil facilities, etc.) means supporting IS's operations; and demonstrate new military deterrence means (with new weapons) as the military continues to implement reforms and reequip the force after years of neglect.

The emphasis in Syria is on military operations and not nonmilitary issues, which is of note since General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov stated in 2013 that nonmilitary activities were used over military ones by a 4:1 ratio in today's context. Instead, the testing of new weaponry and the heavy use of the military's Aerospace Force (space, air force, and air defense assets) was emphasized. The primary use of aerospace operations also confirmed Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu's assertion that they represent the center of gravity of modern conflicts. There appeared to be little cyber or propaganda input other than efforts to persuade Russia's domestic population of the validity of the military's deployment. There was some attention provided later in the campaign to humanitarian operations, but overall the 4:1 ratio seems to have been reversed.

The focus on testing new equipment was prioritized not only under Syria's battlefield conditions but also in exercises. Of interest was that nonstandard (atypical) decisions were emphasized, as there were no scripted solutions. Gerasimov added that as military art develops, defensive operations must be active, since the boundary between defense and the offense is becoming increasingly blurred. Commanders must be able to foresee how to incorporate preventive offensive operations in certain sectors.[17] Finally, regarding missiles and mobility, it was noted that S-400, Kalibr, and Bastion systems

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[17] See for example, Aleksandr Tikhomnov, "In the Southwest Sector," *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 16 September 2016; and Oleg Falichev, "The Long Arm of the Bastion: Why the Strategic Command Staff Exercise Kavkaz-2016 Elicited Heightened Activity of Foreign Intelligence Services," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online*, 21-27 September 2016.

were fired, and the Strelets reconnaissance and target attack system was exercised along with air, rail, river, and sea operations.[18]

This article will only discuss the military aspect of the Russian intervention. It will analyze the thinking of the General Staff's Main Operations Directorate about actions on the ground and in the air; the equipment that Russia has used in the region from both Russian and Western sources; the forms and methods of fighting used by the Islamic State as detailed in Russian articles; and the thinking behind the partial pullout of forces in March 2016.

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[18] Ibid.

Actor: Jabhat Fateh al Sham

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Maintenance of Territorial gains in Central Syria	*Since the emergence of Jabhat al Nusra now rebranded as Jabhat Fateh al Sham (JFS) one of the core principles was an integrated approach to expansion (based on direction from Al-Qaeda). In this regard JFS has attempted to gain the support of communities while slowly (after several missteps) implementing their version of Salafi islam. To this extent JFS has become key to some of the major gains that have been accomplished by opposition groups in Idlib, northern Latakia, Aleppo and Hama. It should be noted that the success of this integration, including the coalition known as Jaysh al Fateh, may have been one of the key reasons for Russian intervention in the region. In the fall of 2015 it was widely observed that Syrian Army losses were mounting quickly. That JFS has continued to maintain ground despite Russian airstrikes only deepens their perceived value as an opposition amplifier in the region.*	X	x	X		
Strengthening the Expansion of Salafi Jihadist movement in Syria.	*The efforts of the "moderate" opposition in tempering Jabhat Fateh al Sham (JFS) have acted as checks and balances to JFS' application of strict sharia law. There are several instances of opposition groups and communities clashing with JFS as a push back against their attempts for dominance. This has forced JFS to continually test the waters before proceeding or backing down where they appeared to be losing support. This is in fact part of a larger strategy started by AQ to embed itself in communities. It has also however resulted in JFS taking in more extremist elements as they came into conflict with moderate groups. Perhaps the most concerning example being the acceptance of Jund al-Aqsa (an ISIS sympathetic group) into JFS in early October 2016. Based on these most recent actions JFS is likely to continue to be at odds with larger groups like Ahrar al Sham and Jaysh al-Islam, both of whom are both attempting to present as the "moderate" islamist alternative.*		X	X		x
Rebranding	*In August 2016 Jabhat al Nusra cut its "official ties" with Al-Qaeda most likely with the goal of avoiding increasing pressure and targeting by Russia and the US. According to the group it intended to remove "external direction" from AQ and continue its focus on opposing the Syrian government. It is also thought that by breaking away it will put JFS in a position to absorb other groups that previously didn't want to come under the AQ umbrella. While it has changed in name JFS is likely to have retained many of its long term goals including the creation of an Islamic Emirate within Syria.*		x			x

Actor: Ahrar al-Sham

INTEREST	DESCRIPTION	NATIONAL SECURITY/ POPULATION SAFETY	INT'L/ INTERGROUP PRESTIGE	DOMESTIC POLITICS/ REGIME SECURITY/ CONSTITUENT SUPPORT	ECONOMIC SURVIVAL/ PROSPERITY	IDENTITY/ IDEOLOGY
Moderating Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Jabhat al Nusra)	*One of the largest and most effective islamist groups in the region is Ahrar al-Sham (AaS). Due to early ties to AQ in their emergence they received little traction outside of region players. As time has progressed, AaS has come to demonstrate an interest in being considered a more moderate alternative to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. There are numerous examples of AaS contesting JFS expansion and actions in the region. Due to its size this has generally had the effect of forcing JFS to back down in several instances or pushing issues to sharia court for decisions. In July 2015, AS's head of foreign political relations encouraged dialog and re-examination of labelling of Syrian opposition groups. In October 2016 AS joined Turkey's Euphrates Shield initiative in northern Syria putting it at odds with JFS, and giving the group increased operational relevance.*	X		X		x
Increasing Relevance and operational capability in Syria.	*During 2015 Ahrar al-Sham (AaS) was involved in many of the strategic victories in Syria as a part of Jaysh al-Fatah (Army of Conquest). This led to large territorial gains in Idlib, Latakia and Aleppo. In July 2015, AS's head of foreign political relations encouraged dialog with the US and a re-examination of labels given to Syrian opposition groups. In October 2016 AS joined Turkey's Euphrates Shield initiative in northern Syria putting it at odds with JFS, and giving the group increased operational relevance. In the same month AS gathered a coalition of 50 opposition groups to eliminate Jund al-Aqsa (JaA) after repeated attacks by the group who was sympathetic to ISIS. This forced JaA to pledge to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham to prevent their annihilation and placed JFS and AaS at further odds with each other.*	x	X	X		x

Author Biographies

Shlomo Brom

Shlomo Brom, a senior research associate at the Institute for National Security Studies**,** joined the Jaffee Center in 1998 after a long career in the IDF. His most senior post in the IDF was director of the Strategic Planning Division in the Planning Branch of the General Staff. Brig. Gen. (ret.) Brom participated in peace negotiations with the Palestinians, Jordan, and Syria, and in Middle Eastern regional security talks during the 1990s. He continued to be involved in Track 2 dialogues on these subjects after his retirement from the IDF. In 2000 he was named deputy to the National Security Advisor, returning to JCSS at the end of his post. In 2005-2006 Brig. Gen. (ret.) Brom was a member of the Meridor committee established by the Minister of Defense to reexamine the security strategy and doctrine of the State of Israel. His primary areas of research are Israeli-Palestinian relations and national security doctrine.

Bernard Carreau

Bernard Carreau is the Deputy Director of the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) at the National Defense University. He established and currently supervises a lessons learned program focusing on the operational and strategic effectiveness of the military and interagency teams in overseas contingency operations. He has led numerous collection and analysis teams to Afghanistan and Iraq. Mr. Carreau is the author or supervisor of recent reports related to the strategic effectiveness of special operations forces, stability operations, transitional public security, civilian stabilization capabilities, and socio-cultural intelligence analysis. He is currently completing a study on behalf of the Joint Staff/J7 on the question of whether the national security decision-making and strategic planning processes were effective in achieving U.S. national objectives in Syria. Mr. Carreau was an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Washington and Baghdad on private sector development and an advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Trade. He has a Master's degree from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Justin Gengler

Justin Gengler is research program manager at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University, where he heads the SESRI Policy Unit. He received his PhD in political science in 2011 from the University of Michigan. Gengler's research focuses on mass attitudes, political behavior, and group conflict in the Arab Gulf states. He is the author most recently of Group Confict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf: Rethinking the Rentier State (Indiana University Press, 2015), and he publishes regularly in both scholarly and policy publications on topics related to sectarian politics, Arab Gulf public opinion, and survey methodology in the Middle East.

Hassan Hassan

Hassan Hassan is a resident fellow at TIMEP focusing on Syria and Iraq. He is the author, with Michael Weiss, of ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror, a New York Times bestseller, and was previously an associate fellow at Chatham House¹s Middle East and North Africa Program in London and a research associate at the Delma Institute in Abu Dhabi. He is a columnist for the National in Abu Dhabi, where he previously worked as deputy opinion editor. Working in journalism and research since 2008, he focuses on Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf States, and he studies Sunni and Shia movements in the region. His writing has appeared in the Guardian, Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs, and the New York Times, among others. He has also written for the European Council on Foreign Relations on the Gulf states.
Mr. Hassan received an M.A. in international relations from the University of Nottingham. You can follow him on Twitter: @hxhassan.

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Prior to her work in academia, Diane served as an officer in the United States Air Force and worked in the defense industry. Upon leaving the Air Force, Diane worked for an Italian-U.S. defense company managing projects in foreign military sales, proposal development, and the execution of large international communications and physical security projects for military customers. During the Iraq war, she worked for Multi-National Force-Iraq in Baghdad, managing over 400 bilingual, bicultural advisors to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of Defense. She has also done freelance business consulting for European, South American, and Middle Eastern clients interested in security and defense procurement. Diane is a member of the Military Writers Guild, an associate editor for *The Bridge*, and a member of the Terrorism Research Analysis Consortium.
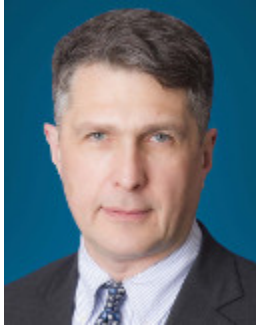
Eugene Rumer

Eugene Rumer is a senior fellow and the director of Carnegie's Russia and Eurasia Program.

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Prior to joining Carnegie, Rumer was the national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the U.S. National Intelligence Council from 2010 to 2014. Earlier, he held research appointments at the National Defense University, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, and the RAND Corporation. He has also served on the National Security Council staff and at the State Department, taught at Georgetown University and the George Washington University, and published widely.

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Élie Tenenbaum is a Research Fellow at IFRI's Security Studies Center and coordinator of the Defense Research Unit (LRD). His research focuses on guerrilla and irregular warfare as well as on military interventions and expeditionary forces. He holds a PhD in History from Sciences Po and has been a visiting fellow at Columbia University (2013-2014). He has taught international security at Sciences Po and international contemporary history at the Université de Lorraine. He is the author of several articles in peer-reviewed journals (Studies in intelligence, Journal of strategic studies, etc.)

Tim Thomas

Timothy L. Thomas is an analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He retired from the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in the summer of 1993. Mr. Thomas received a B.S. from West Point and an M.A. from the University of Southern California. He was a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer who specialized in Soviet/Russian studies. His military assignments included serving as the Director of Soviet Studies at the United States Army Russian Institute (USARI) in Garmisch, Germany; as an inspector of Soviet tactical operations under CSCE; and as a Brigade S-2 and company commander in the 82nd Abn Division. Mr. Thomas has done extensive research and publishing in the areas of peacekeeping, information war, psychological operations, low intensity conflict, and political-military affairs. He served as the assistant editor of the journal *European Security* and as an adjunct professor at the U.S. Army's Eurasian Institute; is an adjunct lecturer at the USAF Special Operations School; and was a member of two Russian organizations, the Academy of International Information, and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

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Books published by Mr. Thomas regarding Russian military operations are (all are US Government publications and not available in bookstores):

- *Recasting the Red Star*, 2011, in digital form on our website

- *Russian Military Strategy: Impacting 21st Century Reform and Geopolitics*, 2015, available at our website http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil
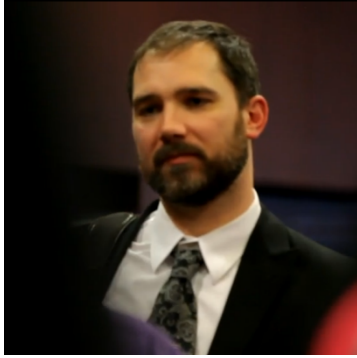
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Jeff Weyers is a decorated police veteran from Ontario, Canada with an academic background in investigative psychology and intelligence studies. He currently lectures in the areas of Terrorism and Open Source Intelligence with Wilfrid Laurier University. He is a regular contributing author to the Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC). Jeff is also a Senior Intelligence Research Analyst with iBRABO, an intelligence research group based in Canada and the UK. With iBRABO Jeff was one of the lead analysts involved in producing daily SOCMINT/OSINT reports on Syria in support of the Access to Justice and Community Security (AJACS) program in 2015. As a result Jeff has developed an intimate understanding of many of the groups and conflict dynamics still ongoing in the region.

He is currently in the final year of his PhD studies with the Tactical Decision Making Research Unit at the University of Liverpool where he is examining extremist social media, monitoring and prevention. He is a recognized expert in terrorist's use of social media and open source intelligence gathering and has assisted governments and intelligence agencies around the world in this regard.