

Rising Asia

January-March 2016 Issue 04

Centre for East Asia (Foundation)
Bangladesh



Angela Merkel
TIME's Person of the Year 2015



Sheikh Hasina
UN Champions of the Earth 2015



Aung San Suu Kyi
'Above the President' of Myanmar

THE PRINCE OF COUNTER— TERRORISM

Washington's favorite Saudi, **MUHAMMAD BIN NAYEF**,
is the scourge of al-Qaida and Iran but no friend
of those who want to see major reforms in the kingdom

BY BRUCE RIEDEL





Ekushey February

A special kind of beauty exists which is born in language, of language, and for language.

Ekushey February - International Mother Language Day 2016 - Sunday, February 21



Independence Day

Freedom cannot be bestowed — it must be achieved.

45th Independence Day of Bangladesh 2016 – Saturday, March 26



Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

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January - March, 2016

Striving for Asian Solidarity

Centre for East Asia Foundation (CEAF)
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Rising Asia

A Quarterly Magazine of CEAF

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Editor's Note



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received the UN Champions of the Earth Award 2015, an honor indeed for Bangladesh. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to her.

It is our great privilege to thank Mr. Bruce Riedel, senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy, who allows us to reprint his remarkable article titled "The Prince of Counter Terrorism" in our current issue.

As the emerging economies are growing fast, the alliance between Russia and China is the "binding force" in a number of international and regional organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This kind of cooperation will help Beijing and Moscow enhance their influence on the international politics.

President Barack Obama looked to the future in his final State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress, touching on the issues ranging from healthcare and the economy to climate change, terrorism and military strength. Obama touched the achievements of his seven years in office and outlined how he thought his policies will help Americans for years to come.

Chinese President Xi Jinping inaugurated the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on 16 January, 2016 in Beijing. We believe, China will take more international responsibilities with the birth of the new lender. China wants to improve the investment environment and integration in Asia and the world as a whole through the 57 members of AIIB.

The USA and European nations lifted oil and financial sanctions on Iran on 17 January, 2016. Most of the UN sanctions also automatically ended. Undoubtedly, it is a victory for 'smart diplomacy'. USA may be willing for restart of economic ties with Iran and work for peace and stability in the region but whether or not it would be able to withstand the pressure tactics of Israel.

Concerning stars, it affords us a great delight to congratulate and extol the outstanding accomplishment of a young non-resident Bangladeshi astrophysist - Dr. Rubab Khan - at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the United States government agency responsible for the civilian space program as well as aeronautics and aero space research. Khan has made our nation proud as he has discovered massive stars that would help understand how stars die.

We wish Rubab's greater success and further achievements in his distinguished career. May your lucky stars continue to shine forever!

Nasim Mahmud

Editor

Rising Asia Magazine (RAM)

“Sheikh Hasina - The Champions of the Earth”



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, winner of the United Nations Champions of the Earth Award, 2015. – UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

The Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina has received the highest environmental accolade of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). "The Champions of the Earth" award in recognition of Bangladesh's far-reaching initiatives in addressing problems induced by climate change. UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner at a gala reception on 27 September, 2015 in New York handed over the award to Sheikh Hasina appreciating her as an inspirational leader since she showed the necessity to work for environment protection and climate change.

The award cities, among other initiatives, the progressive Bangladesh climate change strategy and Action Plan of 2009, which made the South Asian Nation the first developing country to frame such a coordinated action plan. Bangladesh is also the first country to set up its own climate change trust fund, supported by nearly \$300 million of domestic resources from 2009-2020.

The award was hosted by UNEP Goodwill Ambassador actor Ian Somerhalder and model Gisele Bundchen, as well as actress Nikki Reed, focused on supporting the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Receiving the award, Hasina said: "As the world talks about a common future for all, we are ready to do our part of commitment to protect and nurture our planet."

Recognizing adverse impacts of climate change, she said: "Since 2009, we have been mobilizing our own resources and people to address the existential threat. Bangladesh is one of the first in the developing world to set up a 'National Climate Change Fund' with our own resources."

She also said this award comes as recognition of Bangladesh and its people, its invincible spirit, resilience and innovation. "On behalf of my people, I accept the Award as a recognition of the values, ethos, culture that derive our people to protect, conserve and utilize nature for sustainable development". In these words, the Prime Minister has stressed her government's proximity with the people.



Angela Merkel-TIME's Person of the Year

Europe's most powerful leader Angela Merkel of The German Democratic Republic was neither democratic nor a republic. The shy daughter of a Lutheran minister, Merkel slipped into politics in the newly unified Germany of the 1990s, where easterners were still aliens. Her political style was just a survivor's sharp sense of power and a scientist's devotion to data. Merkel became Germany's Chancellor in 2005 and the German pundits called her Merkelvillian, when she outsmarted, isolated or just outlasted anyone, who might mount a challenge to her. While celebrating her 10th year as the first woman to be the Chancellor of the united Germany and being the European Union's de facto and the longest-serving leader, Angela Merkel is TIME's 2015 Person of the Year.

For years, Merkel was seen as a cautious, risk-averse leader who paid close attention to public opinion in formulating policy. But her leadership in recent years has changed that view.

TIME editors gave Merkel this nod for two overwhelming reasons that occurred in 2014. **First** was the euro crisis, which involves 19 nations, all of which were endangered by the possible default Greece. Merkel made it through the crisis with great determination and an unwillingness to bend.

The **second** was Merkel's government throwing open Germany's doors to a pressing throng of refugees and migrants; a total of 1 million asylum seekers were expected in Germany by the end of December 2015. Earlier in 2015 when tens of thousands of migrants fleeing war in the Middle East streamed into Hungary, threatening a humanitarian crisis, Merkel agreed to suspend the European Union's asylum rules and allow them to continue into Germany.

Growing up in East Germany, on the more oppressed side of the wall, Angela Merkel has left behind the German's 70 years of toxically nationalist, militarist, and genocidal past and brandished a different set of values-humanity, generosity, tolerance-to demonstrate how Germany's great strength could be used to save lives, rather than destroy.

A quantum chemist, a former research scientist, Angela Merkel made her stand in politics, firmly. German protesters called her a traitor; her allies warned of a popular revolt, and her opponents warned of economic collapse and cultural suicide, regarding her current stand in world politics. But she has said over and over again, "We can do this."

The pastor's daughter wielded mercy like a weapon against the recent refugee crisis and has not taken the easy road, even when her people did not want to follow her. For asking more of her country than most politicians would dare, for standing firm against tyranny as well as expedience and for providing steadfast moral leadership in a world, where it is in short supply, Angela Merkel is TIME's Person of the Year.

“Nine women envoys stand up against gender violence”



Ms. Marcia Bernicat, Ambassador,
Embassy of the United States



Ms. Sophie Aubert, Ambassador,
Embassy of the Republic of France



Ms. Merete Lundemo, Ambassador,
Royal Norwegian Embassy



Ms. Leoni Margaretha Cuelenaere, Ambassador,
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera, High
Commissioner, Sri Lankan High Commission



Ms. Pema Choden, Ambassador,
Royal Bhutanese Embassy



Madame Norlin binti Othman, High
Commissioner, High Commission of Malaysia



Ms. Hanne Fugl Eskjær, Ambassador,
Embassy of Denmark



Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega,
Ambassador, Embassy of Brazil



As women ambassadors representing nine nations, there are certainly a wide range of issues on which we focus. Yet we all vigorously agree on this: the urgent need to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in Bangladesh, in our own countries, and across the globe.

Studies show that gender-based violence (GBV) is disturbingly pervasive. Worldwide, the World Health Organisation estimates that one of every three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner during her lifetime. Here in Bangladesh, findings from the report on 'Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2011' published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics indicate that as many as 87 percent of married women have ever experienced any type of violence by their husbands.

We can do something to stop it.

Gender-based violence threatens entire communities, precludes economic growth, and fuels cycles of violence and conflict. A recent World Bank study showed that violence against women has significant economic costs. These include healthcare costs, lost income for women, decreased productivity, and negative impact across generations.

According to UN Women, violence against women causes more death and disability for women and girls between the ages of 15 and 44 than do cancer, traffic accidents, malaria and war combined.

Gender-based violence comes in many forms, from intimate partner violence to sexual assault to early and forced marriage. Each form of violence is a stain on our collective humanity, a barrier to peace and stability, and a call to action for all of us. Violence is not inevitable - and each of us can do something to stop it.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an opportunity for everyone to act. Every 25 November, the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women kicks off the 16 Days, which ends on Human Rights Day on 10 December. Launched by the United Nations, the campaign demands action from everyone - men and women, boys and girls, government officials and community leaders. Around the world and across Bangladesh, people

are taking action to raise awareness and promote social norms that refuse to tolerate GBV, prerequisites for preventing this scourge.

At a global level, the nations we represent - Bhutan, Brazil, Denmark, France, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sri Lanka, and the United States - are working with the United Nations to end gender-based violence with the new 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which emphasises gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a cross-cutting issue that we must address if we are to achieve any of our development goals. Now we must turn our attention to implementation. Partnership with other governments, the private sector, and especially the civil society will be critical to these efforts.

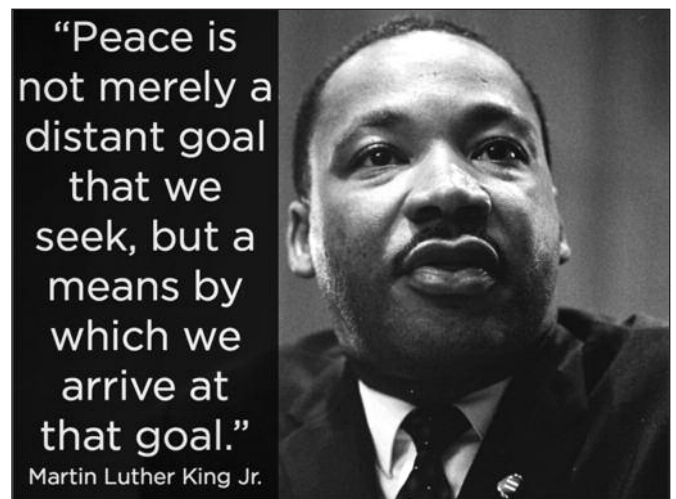
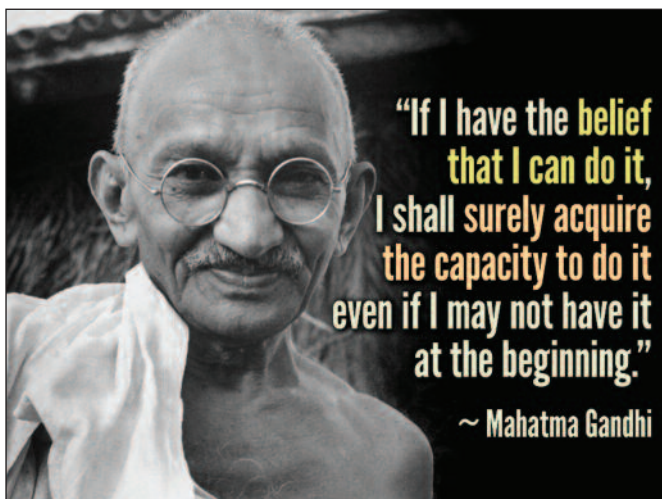
We can each take action in our own lives to end gender-based violence. Support survivors by listening to them and believing in them. Educate men and boys to support women and girls and stand up to violence.

At home and abroad, our governments support projects to raise awareness of gender-based violence, educate policymakers on this issue to increase legislative support, train service providers to better address the needs of survivors, and increase justice and accountability. We fund projects that provide safe spaces and vocational training for survivors, and work to mobilise religious, business owners, and community leaders to end different forms of gender-based violence.

We engage in these efforts because there is another issue on which we all agree: that only through collective action will violence against women and girls be eliminated once and for all.

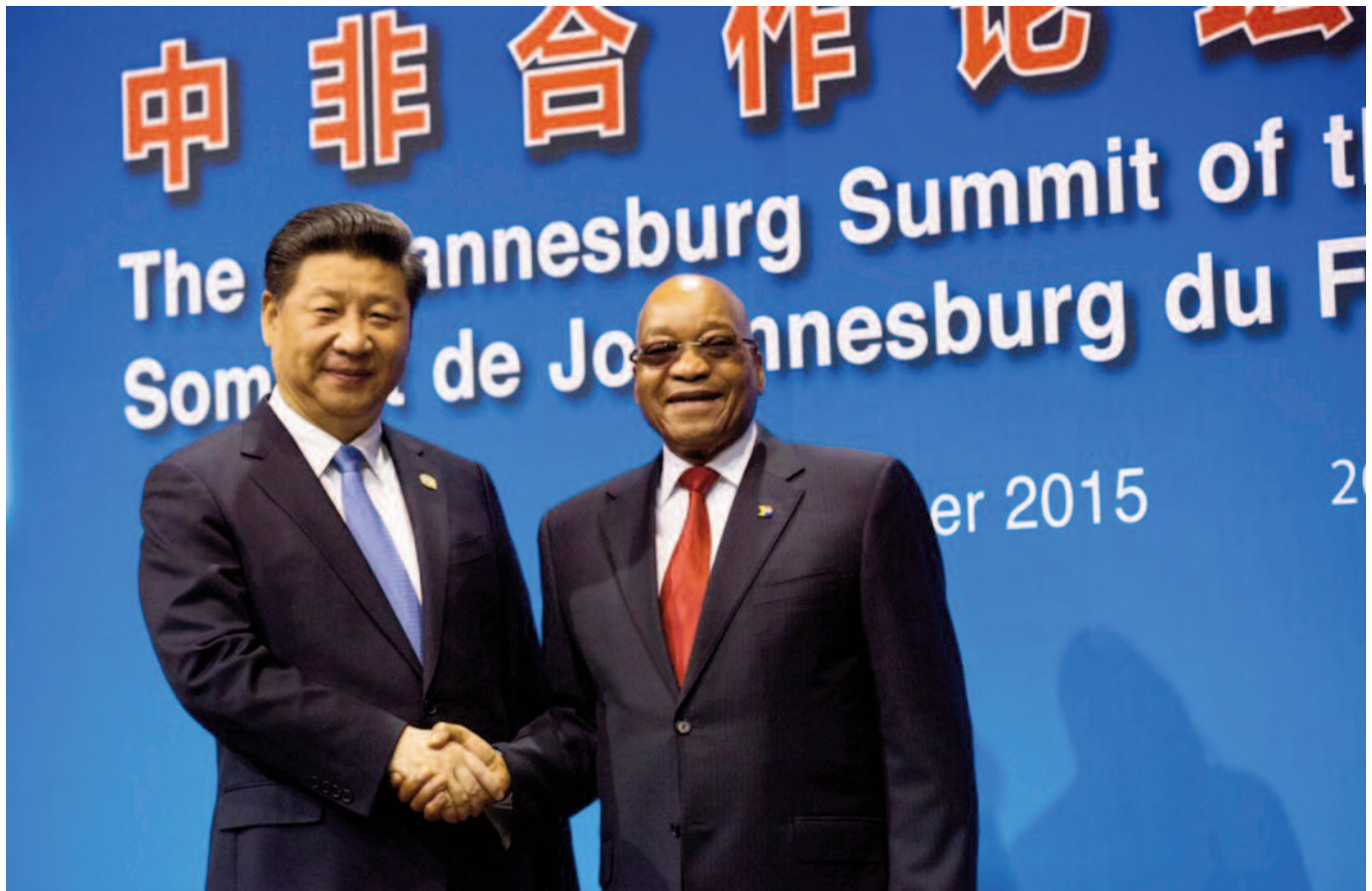
A joint Op-Ed written by nine women ambassadors and high commissioners in Dhaka, for 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign, December 08, 2015.

QUOTABLE QUOTES



Open a New Era of China-Africa Win-Win Cooperation and Common Development

Highlight of the speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in South Africa, December 4, 2015.



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) shakes hand with South African President Jacob Zuma at FOCAC Summit, December 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa.

It gives me great pleasure to meet so many African brothers and sisters, who are both old and new friends of mine, in the beautiful Rainbow Nation of South Africa. As co-chair of the Summit, I wish to express my warm welcome to you for attending the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to South Africa, host of the Summit, for the meticulous preparations and thoughtful arrangements it has made for this meeting.

This is my seventh visit to the African continent and also my second visit to Africa after taking office as the Chinese President. Every time I visit Africa, I see new progress and new changes on this continent.

Today's Africa is a continent of encouraging and dynamic development. Africa has actively explored a path of development suited to its conditions and adhered to the principle of solving African issues in the African way. Such a momentum of independent development is unstoppable. Africa has actively advanced industrialization and pursued sustainable self-development. Such a momentum of rapid growth is unstoppable. Africa has accelerated its integration process and speaks in one voice on the international stage. Such a momentum of pursuing strength through unity is unstoppable.



The late President Nelson Mandela of South Africa once said, "We stand at the dawn of an African century, a century where Africa will take its rightful place among the nations of the world." I couldn't agree more with this statement, and I am convinced that African countries and people are embracing a new era that is truly theirs.

We in China, both the government and people, heartily rejoice over and are proud of Africa's achievements. We sincerely wish African countries and people greater achievements and an even brighter future in pursuing development and progress.

China and Africa share a common future. We Chinese and Africans have forged profound friendship through our common historical experience and in our common struggles.

We have always supported each other in trying times. The Tazara Railway and the Convention Center of the African Union built with Chinese assistance are landmarks of China-Africa friendship. The Chinese government and people took the lead in helping Africa fight Ebola and led the international community in its efforts to assist Africa to combat the epidemic, demonstrating the bond of brotherhood between China and Africa in time of difficulty. On our part, we deeply appreciate the African countries' selfless support to China's return to the United Nations and their donations made to China when China's Wenchuan and Yushu areas were hit by massive earthquakes.

What has made China-Africa friendship durable and vigorous is that our two sides have always been guided by the principle of treating each other as equals, promoting win-win progress and common development and enhancing sincere friendship and cooperation. China and Africa will forever remain good friends, good partners and good brothers.

China and Africa both shoulder the mission of developing our respective countries and improving the livelihood of our peoples. Africa enjoys abundant natural and human resources and has reached the stage of taking off in industrialization. China, after reform and opening-up of over 30 years, now has the technology, equipment, professional and skilled personnel and capital needed to help Africa realize sustainable self-development. In particular, China has the strong political commitment to supporting Africa in achieving development and prosperity. China and Africa share mutual needs and complementarities and face a rare historic opportunity in pursuing development through cooperation.

In the new era, we should carry forward the traditional China-Africa friendship and translate the strengths of our traditional friendship into driving forces to boost solidarity, cooperation and development, so that we will deliver more tangible benefits to our peoples and make greater contribution to the development of the world in a more balanced, just and inclusive manner and to the building of a new model of international partnership based on win-win cooperation.

The world is undergoing profound changes. Economic globalization and IT application have tremendously unleashed and advanced social productive forces. We are facing unprecedented opportunities of development. On the other hand, hegemony, terrorism, financial turbulence and environmental crisis have become more pronounced, posing unprecedented challenges to us.

In conducting China's relations with Africa, we adhere to the principles of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith and uphold the values of friendship, justice and shared interests, and we will work with our African friends to embrace a new era of win-win cooperation and common development. With this in mind, I propose that the new type of China-Africa strategic partnership be upgraded to a comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership. To forge this partnership, we should strengthen the following "five major pillars":

- ◆ **First, we should remain committed to political equality and mutual trust.** A high degree of political mutual trust is the foundation of China-Africa friendship. We should respect each other's choice of development path and not impose one's own will on the other. On issues involving core interests and major concerns of each side, we should show mutual understanding, support each other and jointly uphold equity and justice. China strongly believes that Africa belongs to the African people and that African affairs should be decided by the African people.
- ◆ **Second, we should remain committed to promoting win-win economic cooperation.** We Chinese value both friendship and justice as well as shared interests and place more importance on the former. Friendship and justice, which defines China-Africa relations, require us to facilitate Africa's development endeavor with China's development and ultimately deliver win-win progress and common development through mutually beneficial cooperation. We should fully leverage the strengths of political mutual trust and economic complementarities between China and Africa, and focus on industrial capacity cooperation as well as the three networks and industrialization. By doing so, we can deepen China-Africa cooperation in all areas and bring its benefits to our peoples.

- ◆ **Third, we should remain committed to mutually enriching cultural exchanges.** Diversity makes the world beautiful. We are proud that both China and Africa have time-honored and splendid civilizations. We should strengthen cultural exchanges and mutual learning between China and Africa, facilitate more exchanges between the youths, women, think tanks, media, universities and other sectors of the two sides, promote cultural interactions, policy coordination and people-to-people exchanges to advance common progress and ensure the sustained growth of China-Africa friendship from generation to generation.
- ◆ **Fourth, we should remain committed to mutual assistance in security.** Poverty is the root cause of chaos while peace is the guarantee for development. Development holds the key to solving all problems. China supports the settlement of African issues by Africans in the African way. We are of the view that in resolving security issues, both the symptoms and the root causes must be addressed in a holistic way. China stands ready to take an active part in Africa's efforts in capacity-building for maintaining and strengthening peace and security and support Africa in its endeavors to speed up development, eradicate poverty and realize durable peace.
- ◆ **Fifth, we should remain committed to solidarity and coordination in international affairs.** China and Africa share common position on and interests in a wide range of international issues. We should strengthen consultation and coordination so as to make the global governance system more just and equitable and uphold our common interests. China will continue to stand up and speak for Africa at the United Nations and other fora to support Africa in playing a greater role on the world stage.



To build China-Africa comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership, China will implement ten cooperation plans with Africa in the next three years. Guided by the principle of government guidance, businesses being the major actors, market operation and win-win cooperation, these plans aim at addressing three bottleneck issues holding back Africa's development, namely, inadequate infrastructure, lack of professional and skilled personnel, and funding shortage, accelerating Africa's industrialization and agricultural modernization, and achieving sustainable self-development.

- ◆ **First, we will implement China-Africa industrialization plan.** China will actively promote industry partnering and production capacity cooperation between China and Africa and encourage more Chinese enterprises to make business investment in Africa. China will build or upgrade a number of industrial parks in cooperation with Africa, send senior government experts and advisers to Africa and set up regional vocational education centers and schools for



capacity building. China will also train 200,000 technical personnel and provide 40,000 training opportunities for African personnel in China.

- ◆ **Second, we will implement China-Africa agricultural modernization plan.** China will share its experience in agricultural development with Africa and transfer readily applicable technologies to it. We encourage Chinese enterprises to engage in large-scale farming, animal husbandry, and grain storage and processing in Africa to create more local jobs and increase farmers' income. China will carry out agricultural development projects in 100 African villages to raise rural living standards, send 30 teams of agricultural experts to Africa, and establish a "10+10" cooperation mechanism between Chinese and African agricultural research institutes. China is greatly concerned about the poor harvest caused by El Nino in many African countries and will provide RMB one billion of emergency food aid to the affected countries.
- ◆ **Third, we will implement China-Africa infrastructure plan.** China will step up mutually beneficial cooperation with Africa in infrastructure planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance. We support Chinese enterprises' active participation in Africa's infrastructural development, particularly in sectors such as railways, roads, regional aviation, ports, electricity and telecommunications, to enhance Africa's capacity for sustainable development. We will also support African countries in establishing five transportation universities.
- ◆ **Fourth, we will implement China-Africa financial plan.** China will expand its RMB settlement and currency swap operations with African countries, encourage Chinese financial institutions to set up more branches in Africa, and increase its investment and financing cooperation with Africa in multiple ways to provide financial support and services for Africa's industrialization and modernization drive.
- ◆ **Fifth, we will implement China-Africa green development plan.** China will support Africa in bolstering its capacity for green, low-carbon and sustainable development and support Africa in launching 100 projects to develop clean energy, protect wildlife, promote environment-friendly agriculture and build smart cities. China-Africa cooperation will never be pursued at the expense of Africa's eco-system and long-term interests.
- ◆ **Sixth, we will implement China-Africa trade and investment facilitation plan.** China will carry out 50 aid-for-trade programs to improve Africa's capacity, both "software" and "hardware", for conducting internal and external trade and investment. China is ready to negotiate with countries and regional organizations in Africa comprehensive free trade agreements covering trade in goods and services and investment cooperation and it will increase import of African products. China will support African countries in enhancing law enforcement capacity in areas such as customs, quality inspection and taxation. We will also engage in cooperation with Africa in standardization, certification and accreditation and e-commerce.
- ◆ **Seventh, we will implement China-Africa poverty reduction plan.** While intensifying its own poverty reduction efforts, China will increase its aid to Africa. We will carry out in Africa 200 "Happy Life" projects and poverty reduction programs focusing on women and children. We will cancel outstanding debts in the form of bilateral governmental zero-interest loans borrowed by the relevant least developed African countries that mature at the end of 2015.
- ◆ **Eighth, we will implement China-Africa public health plan.** China will help Africa strengthen its public health prevention and control system as well as its capacity building by participating in the building of the African Center for Disease Control. We will support pacesetting cooperation between 20 Chinese hospitals and 20 African hospitals, and upgrade hospital departments. We will continue to send medical teams to Africa and provide medical assistance such as the "Brightness Action" program for cataract patients and maternal and child care. We will provide more anti-malaria compound artemisinin to Africa, and encourage and support local drug production by Chinese enterprises in Africa to increase Africans' access to medicine.
- ◆ **Ninth, we will implement China-Africa cultural and people-to-people plan.** China will build five cultural centers in Africa and provide satellite TV reception to 10,000 African villages. We will provide to Africa 2,000 educational opportunities with diplomas or degrees and 30,000 government scholarships. Every year, we will sponsor visits by 200 African scholars and study trips by 500 young Africans to China, and train 1,000 media professionals from Africa. We support the opening of more direct flights between China and Africa to boost our tourism cooperation.
- ◆ **Tenth, we will implement China-Africa peace and security plan.** China will provide US\$60 million of grant to support the building and operation of the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for the Immediate Response to Crisis. China will continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and support African countries' capacity building in areas such as defense, counter-terrorism, riot prevention, customs and immigration control.

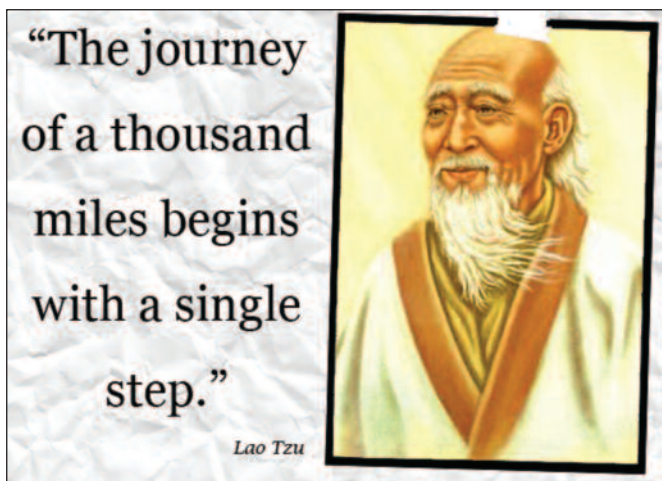


To ensure the successful implementation of these ten cooperation plans, China decides to provide a total of US\$60 billion of funding support. It includes US\$5 billion of grant and zero-interest loans; US\$35 billion of loans of concessional nature on more favorable terms and export credit line; an increase of US\$5 billion to the China-Africa Development Fund and the Special Loan for the Development of African SMEs respectively; and the China-Africa Fund for Production Capacity Cooperation with an initial contribution of US\$10 billion.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of FOCAC. The past 15 years have seen fruitful progress in China-Africa practical cooperation across the board. Two-way trade and China's total non-financial investment in Africa in 2014 were 22 times and 60 times that of 2000 respectively, which shows China's contribution to Africa's economic development has risen significantly. FOCAC has become a pacesetter in China-Africa cooperation, an example in South-South cooperation, and a champion for greater international attention to and input in Africa.

China-Africa relations have today reached a stage of growth unmatched in history. We should scale the heights, look a far and take bold steps. Let us join hands, pool the vision and strength of the 2.4 billion Chinese and Africans and open a new era of China-Africa win-win cooperation and common development.

QUOTABLE QUOTES





Russia adopts updated National Security Strategy



Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin

President Vladimir Putin signed a decree adopting the new Russian Federation National Security Strategy. The corresponding document was placed on the official legal information portal. The new edition of the Strategy, prepared by the Russian Federation Security Council (RFSC) includes means of fighting against radicalism and terrorism.

Consolidating Position

Russian Federation's national priority is consolidating its position as one of the leading world powers. The long-term national interests are: "...consolidating Russian Federation's status as one of the leading world powers, whose actions are aimed at ensuring strategic stability and mutually beneficial partnerships in the context of a multi-polar world." When it comes to national priorities, it emphasizes strengthening the country's defenses, protecting its constitutional system, sovereignty and territorial integrity, strengthening the national consensus, raising the quality of life, preserving and developing culture, improving economic competitiveness, and other principles of national security. Strategic tasks listed in the document include ensuring food security through "ensuring Russia's food independence." In addition, it calls for accelerated development of Russia's agriculture, increasing the effectiveness of government support for agribusiness, preventing uncontrolled traffic of GMO foods, and also training highly prepared specialists for the agricultural sector.

The Use of Military Force

The documents allows for military force to be used only if non-violent approaches prove ineffective. "Strategic deterrence and military conflict prevention is accomplished through the preservation of the strategic deterrent potential at



a sufficient level, and through ensuring the specified level of combat readiness in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other forces and military formations."

Crisis Risk

In view of the global economic imbalance, there is a high risk of financial/economic crisis re-occurrence. The document states, "Against the background of structural imbalances in the global economy and the financial system, the growth of sovereign debt, and energy market volatility, the risk of a repeated major financial and economic crisis remains high." The Strategy emphasizes, "The growing influence of political factors on economic processes, as well as individual countries' attempts to use economic methods, financial, trade, investment, and technology policies to achieve their geopolitical objectives weakens the resilience of the international economic system." The document calls for strengthening the financial system, ensuring a stable ruble exchange rate, and reducing interest rates.

The Strategy also implies the state will conduct socio-economic policy. "In order to counteract the threats to economic security, government agencies and local self-government entities in collaboration with civil society institutions will implement the state socio-economic policy which includes: ...strengthening the financial system, ensuring its sovereignty, stabilizing ruble exchange rate, optimizing foreign currency regulation and monitoring, reducing interest rates. ..."

Achieving Food Independence

One of the RF national priorities is achieving food independence. The document states that food security will be achieved through "achieving Russian Federation's food independence." Moreover, the documents implies accelerated development of the agricultural sector, increasing the effectiveness of state support for agribusiness, preventing uncontrolled trade in GMO foods, and preparing highly qualified specialists for the agricultural sector. At the same time, the sanctions introduced against Russia are hurting its economic security.

The main strategic threats to national security in the economic realm are the low competitiveness, the reliance on raw materials exports, and high dependence on the international economic situation. The document states, "Negative influences on the country's economic security include economic restrictions introduced against the Russian Federation, global and regional economic crises, the growth of dishonest competition, unlawful use of legal instruments, unstable provision of heat and energy to the subjects of national economy, and in the future also shortages of mineral, raw material, water, and biological resources."

Other economic threats listed in the document include lagging in development futuristic technologies, vulnerability of the financial system, budget system imbalance, the off shorisation of the economy, the exhaustion of natural resources, the high share of the "shadow economy" in the country's economy as a whole, conditions favoring corruption and criminalization, and uneven regional development.

Effective Fuel and Energy Industry Management

Improving the effectiveness of governmental direction over the fuel and energy industry is a necessary condition for ensuring Russia's energy security. "The necessary conditions for ensuring energy security include increasing the effectiveness of state control over the energy and fuel industry, reliability and constancy of delivering energy resources to end users, ensuring the country's technological sovereignty on the world energy market. ..."

Foreign Policy

Developing relations with CIS countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a major focus of Russia's foreign policy, according to the Strategy. The document states, "Developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with CIS member states, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is one of the key directions of foreign policy." The Strategy also emphasizes the importance of relations with China, India, and notes its importance for Latin American countries and Africa. The relationship with People's Republic of China (PRC) is viewed "as a key factor in preserving global and regional stability." Russia also assigns "a major role to the privileged cooperation with India." It is also noted that Russia is developing political, trade, and military-technical cooperation with Latin American countries, Africa, and regional organizations in which these countries participate. Humanitarian and educational contacts are also being maintained.



The Role of Special Services

Special services are playing an increasingly active role in the battle over international influence, according to the Strategy. The document notes, "The struggle for influence in the international arena involves the whole range of political, financial/economic, and information instruments. The potential of secret services is being utilized more actively." The Strategy states, "The process of forming a new polycentric world order is accompanied by the rise in global and regional instability. Conflicts are escalating due to the uneven global development and the growing differences between various countries level of well-being, the struggle over resources and market access, control over trade routes." "Competition between states is being extended to values and societal development models, human, technological, and scientific potential."

Partnership with the US

Russia's independent policies are provoking resistance from the US and its allies, the decree states. "Russia's strengthening is occurring against the background of new threats to national security which have a complex and interdependent nature. Russian Federation's independent internal and foreign policy is causing counter-actions by the US and its allies which are seeking to preserve their dominance in global affairs."

Nevertheless, Russia is in favor of strengthening cooperation with the EU and a fully-fledged partnership with the US. The document states, "Russian Federation is in favor of strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with European countries and the EU, and of harmonizing the integration projects in Europe and in the post-Soviet space, forming an open collective security system based on a clear legal and treaty framework and covering the Euro-Atlantic region." The text also states, "The Russian Federation is interested in building a fully-fledged partnership with the United States of America on the basis of common interests, including economic, with an eye on the Russian-US relations' key influence on the international situation as a whole. The most important aspects of such a partnership are perfecting control mechanisms over armaments specified by international treaties, strengthening mutual trust measures, resolving issues related to WMD nonproliferation, expanding counter-terrorism cooperation, resolving regional conflicts."

NATO Expansion

The expansion of NATO and its approach to Russia's borders creates a threat to national security. According to the document, "Expanding the force potential of NATO and endowing it with global functions which are implemented in violation of international law norms, the block's military activation, its continued expansion, the approach of its military infrastructure to Russian borders, all create a threat to national security."

At the same time, Russia is ready to expand its relations with NATO provided the alliance gives due consideration to Russia's interests. The document states, "The Russian Federation is ready to develop its relationship with NATO on the basis of equality in order to strengthen the overall security in the Euro-Atlantic region." The Strategy notes that the determining factor in the relationship with NATO is "the unacceptability to Russia of the growing military activity by the alliance and the approach of its military infrastructure to Russia's borders."

It is emphasized that Russia is interested in establishing a fully-fledged partnership with the US "on the basis of common interests, including economic, with an eye on the Russian-US relations' key influence on the international situation as a whole."

Color Revolutions

Inspiring "color revolutions" is one of the main threats to Russia's security. It notes that regions neighboring Russia are characterized by growing militarization and arms races. "The role of force in international relations remains high. The efforts to increase and modernize offensive armaments, creating and deploying new types of weapons weakens the global security system and also the network of treaties and agreements dealing with arms control."

The most important threats to Russia's state and societal security is "the activity of radical societal groups and organizations which are using nationalist and extremist religious ideology, of foreign and international NGOs and financial and economic organizations, as well as private individuals, aimed at undermining the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation, destabilizing the political and social situation inside the country, including through inspiring "color revolutions" and destroying traditional Russian spiritual and moral values."



The document notes that the practice of overthrowing of legitimate political regimes is becoming more widespread. "The practice of overthrowing legitimate political regimes, provoking internal instability and conflict, is becoming more widespread. In addition to the still existing areas of instability in the Middle and Far East, in Africa, South Asia, and the Korean Peninsula, new "hot spots" have appeared and the territory not controlled by any government authority has expanded."

The Schism in the Ukrainian Society

US and EU support for the coup in Ukraine led to a split in Ukraine's society. "US and EU support for the anti-constitutional coup d'etat in Ukraine led to a deep schism in the Ukrainian society and an armed conflict." The document notes that the West's effort to counter the integration processes and to create hot spots in the Eurasian region is having a negative influence on the pursuit of Russian national interests.

The document emphasizes, "The consolidation of an extreme right nationalist ideology, the deliberate effort to create a public image of Russia as an enemy...is turning Ukraine into a long-term source of European instability located right next to Russia's borders."

The US military-biological lab network

The Strategy states the US is expanding its network of military-biological laboratories on the territory of countries neighboring Russia. The document points out that the world still faces a high risk of proliferation and use of chemical weapons, "and also the uncertainty as to which foreign countries have biological weapons or the means to develop and produce it." There is also the danger that the number of nuclear weapons states will increase. Countries with unstable internal situation run a high risk of conventional weapons falling into terrorist hands, and the "physical protection of dangerous objects and materials" is in a critical state.

Block Approach

"The still-evident block approach to resolving international problems is not facilitating the response to a whole range of challenges and threats. The growth of migration from Africa and Middle East to Europe revealed the bankruptcy of the regional system of security in the Euro-Atlantic region that was built on the basis of NATO and the EU."

Nuclear Deterrence

"Strategic deterrence and the prevention of international military conflicts is accomplished through supporting the nuclear deterrent potential at a sufficient level, and the assigned combat readiness of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and other armed formations." At the same time, Russia is ready for further discussion on reducing nuclear arsenals. "In order to preserve strategic stability, Russia is ready for further discussion on reducing nuclear arsenals on the basis of bilateral agreements and multilateral formats."

The RF Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev said that the document included the ways of preventing the spread of radical ideology and its propaganda in mass media, and emphasized the importance of increasing the level of protection of critical infrastructure, key individuals, society, and the state as a whole against terrorist threats. According to Patrushev, the document openly states that spread of terrorism, extremism, inter-religious and inter-ethnic enmity was facilitated by the practice of overthrowing legitimate regimes using the "color revolution" and "hybrid war" methods. Patrushev emphasized, "The appearance and consolidation of the influence by the terrorist organization which names itself the Islamic State is the result of the policy of double standards which is pursued by some countries in the realm of fighting terrorism." "The result of such irresponsible actions was the prolonged instability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the war in Syria, widespread proliferation of weapons, organized crime, drug trafficking, and systematic violations of rights and freedoms of millions of people."

The new edition of the national security strategy prepared by Russian Federation Security Council (RFSC) and originally appeared on TASS; translated from Russian by J.Hawk.

India-Japan ties: Love in Tokyo endures



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and PM Modi perform a religious ritual during evening prayers on the banks of the river Ganges in Varanasi, India. (Source: Reuters)

Rup Narayan Das

The visit of the Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe to India in last December will hopefully give a fillip to the growing strategic India-Japan relationship. Japan has the potential to be India's most-preferred partner in its trajectory of development.

Much before India-Japan relationship was elevated to the strategic level, the film *Love in Tokyo*, produced in 1966, captured the romantic flavor of the Japanese locales on Indian celluloid and touched the sentimental chord of India's cine-goers. Today, it is truly a love story sustained and nurtured by convergence of political, economic, strategic and security interests of the two countries. It is a time-tested relationship based on mutual trust, sensitivity and concern. There is no contentious issue, no major irritants, rather a bounty of shared interests, values and reciprocal goodwill. In spite of the regime change in both the countries, the relationship between India and Japan has been growing in strength. The importance Prime Minister Narendra Modi attaches to Japan can be discerned from the fact that his first destination for a bilateral visit outside India's immediate neighbourhood was to Japan early September in 2014, ahead of his visit to the USA later.

To further the relationship between the two countries, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was visited India last December to participate in the Annual summit-level meeting between the two Prime Ministers. Besides Russia, Japan is only the second country with which India has the institutional mechanism of Annual summit-level meeting. Abe is no stranger to India. His grandfather Nobusuke Kishi as the Prime Minister of Japan had visited India in 1957. As a child, Abe might have heard from his grandfather the story of India, which endures in his memory even today. Abe has also the unique distinction of having addressed the Indian Parliament in 2007. He was also the chief guest at India's



Republic Day parade in 2014.

Though a distant neighbour, Japan's presence in the Indian economy is palpable. In the automobile sector, and also in the white goods sector, Japanese brands are household names. The Delhi Metro, the lifeline of the capital choked with pollution, is yet another icon of Japan's goodwill gesture. After the success of the Metro, it is likely that India will soon have its first bullet train between Ahmedabad and Mumbai with Japan's support.

The India-Japan strategic partnership jells neatly in the context of the transformation taking place in the domestic economies of the two countries. At a time when India has emerged as the fastest-growing world economy, Japan has the potential to become India's most preferred partner in its trajectory of growth. Japan is resetting its economy after it plummeted to third position, yielding to China in 2010, which occupied the position of world's second-largest economy. The calibrated approach to revamp the Japanese economy has been dubbed as "Abenomics," with monetary easing, an expansionary fiscal policy and long-term growth. There are signs of green shoots in the Japanese economy.

The recent trend indicates that the Japanese economy grew at an annual 1.0 percent pace instead of shrinking. India's projected \$1trillion infrastructural requirement offers a good opportunity for Japanese investments in roads, highways, smart cities. Japan has already committed to the flagship projects like the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor. Once the Land Acquisition Bill is passed by Parliament, these projects will take off, create jobs and boost the economy of the country. Besides, the economic aspects of the engagement between the two countries, security and defence cooperation have acquired salience in recent years particularly in the backdrop of China's rising profile in the maritime domain.

There is a regular Defence Ministers' dialogue and a dialogue mechanism between the National Security Advisers of the two countries after the creation of the National Security Council in Japan in 2014. Japan has been participating in the India-US Malabar exercises and there have been joint exercises between Indian Navy and the Japanese Coastguard. The lifting of the ban on export of defence equipment and technology by Japan has opened up avenues of cooperation in joint production and transfer of defence technology. Currently there is a joint working group on cooperation in the US-2 amphibious aircraft. The two countries are also trying hard to clinch an agreement in nuclear cooperation for civilian purposes. Since the issue is highly sensitive in Japan's domestic politics, the finalisation of the deal is taking a longer time. But it is only a question of time. This can be gauged from the fact that Japan has decided to remove six of India's space and defence-related entities from its end user list. The two countries are working together for India's membership in four international export control regimes, viz, Nuclear Supplier's Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group, with the aim of strengthening the international non-proliferation efforts. In India's external relations, perhaps it won't be an exaggeration to say that "East or West, Japan is the best".

No wonder that New Delhi looks towards Japan as India's "indispensable natural partner". It is USA which has been described by New Delhi as "India's natural partner". The prefix "indispensable" puts India's relationship a notch above the US. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his recent lecture at Singapore said, "There are few partnerships that enjoy so much goodwill in India as our relationship with Japan".

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Fact-Checking Obama's Final State of the Union

Experts Analyze Obama's Last Address to Congress on January 12, 2016



President Obama delivered his final State of the Union to a joint session of Congress. (Photo: Pool/Reuters/Newscom)

President Barack Obama looked to the future in his final State of the Union address, touching on issues ranging from health care and the economy to climate change, terrorism and military strength. Obama touted the achievements of his seven years in office, and outlined how he thought his policies will help Americans for years to come.

The president delivered the nationally televised speech to a joint session of Congress as well as members of his Cabinet, U.S. Supreme Court justices, military officers and dozens of special guests.

Here, The Daily Signal provides more context for some of Obama's claims:

Obama: *"Nearly 18 million have gained health coverage so far. Health care inflation has slowed. And our businesses have created jobs every single month since it became law."*

Despite the president's claim that more than 18 million Americans now have health insurance-credited to Obamacare's implementation-the majority of those who gained coverage qualified for Medicaid because of loosened eligibility.

Since the health care law went into effect in 2013, 31 states and the District of Columbia have opted to expand Medicaid, the federal health program for the poor.

From January 2014 to July 2014, more than 8 million Americans gained coverage under the president's signature health care law. However, 71 percent of those sign ups were attributed to Medicaid expansion.

Additionally, an October 2015 report found that though more than 9 million Americans gained health insurance in all of 2014, the Medicaid rolls swelled. Of the 9.25 million Americans who enrolled in health coverage, 97 percent-8.99 million Americans-received insurance through Medicaid.

For Americans who receive coverage through their employer or the individual market, many have been faced with skyrocketing premiums and deductibles. Premiums increased in 49 of the 50 states for 2016 on the individual market, with many premiums growing by double digits.

Obama: *"More than 14 million new jobs; the strongest two years of job growth since the '90s; an unemployment rate cut in half. Our auto industry just had its best year ever. Manufacturing has created nearly 900,000 new jobs in the past six years. And we've done all this while cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters."*

Though the deficit fell during Obama's presidency, Romina Boccia, a senior budget analyst at The Heritage



Foundation, said this can be attributed to the recovery following the 2008 recession and tax hikes on Americans.

Boccia also noted that Congress has cut spending, largely because of the caps put in place by the 2011 Budget Control Act. Still, in the years since they went into effect, Congress and the White House have weakened the caps.

Labor experts also argue that though the unemployment rate has fallen steadily, millions of Americans have left the workforce.

Obama: *"We spend more on our military than the next eight nations combined. Our troops are the finest fighting force in the history of the world. No nation dares to attack us or our allies because they know that's the path to ruin."*

In 2014, the U.S. accounted for more than one-third of military spending worldwide, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). America spends several times more on its military than does second-place China.

Still, U.S. military spending as a percent of total government spending dropped from 10.4 percent in 2013 to 9.5 percent in 2014. And military spending declined from its 2010 peak, although it is higher than in 2001, just before 9/11.

In its 2016 Index of Military Strength, The Heritage Foundation reports budget sequestration spending caps affected military readiness and capability. Though the U.S. military is able to engage in a single major regional conflict while tending to its normal presence in other countries, it would be "ill-equipped" to fight two significant wars at once.

Obama: *"For more than a year, America has led a coalition of more than 60 countries to cut off ISIL's financing, disrupt their plots, stop the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamp out their vicious ideology. With nearly 10,000 air strikes, we are taking out their leadership, their oil, their training camps, and their weapons. We are training, arming, and supporting forces who are steadily reclaiming territory in Iraq and Syria."*

Most of the airstrikes have occurred in Iraq, not in Syria, where the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, has its home base. In Syria, the U.S. has to contend with an unfriendly dictatorship -which it neither wants to coordinate with or attack-and with Russian airstrikes, which began this fall.

Some critics have argued the U.S. should send more ground troops to fight ISIS in Syria, but Obama has said Americans have no appetite for an enduring war, and that Sunni-Arab fighters must lead the effort to defeat the brutal Islamist terrorists.

In October, 2015 Obama ordered several dozen Special Operations troops into Syria, representing the first open-ended ground forces sent into that country.

Also in October, the Defense Department abandoned a \$500 million program to train moderate Syrian rebels. It decided instead to use the money to provide ammunition and weapons for groups already succeeding in the fight against ISIS.

The decision to drop the training program came after the administration announced it graduated only a few recruits among the Syrian rebels.

Obama: *"That's why we built a global coalition, with sanctions and principled diplomacy, to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran. As we speak, Iran has rolled back its nuclear program, shipped out its uranium stockpile, and the world has avoided another war."*

The United States and five other world powers last summer reached a deal with Iran that limits the Islamic regime's nuclear program in exchange for lifting international sanctions.

Iran agreed to reduce its stockpile of uranium by 98 percent. But the main provisions of the agreement expire in 10 to 15 years. After that, Iran can produce uranium on an industrial scale.

When Iran meets its obligations-during what is known as "**implementation day**"-the international community will allow Tehran to access some \$100 billion in frozen oil revenue. Iran has not yet reached implementation day, so technically its nuclear program has not been rolled back.

Iran completed an important step on January 11, 2016 when the regime reported it had removed the core of its plutonium-producing nuclear reactor, which limits the amount of plutonium to a level insufficient to make a bomb.

While the U.S. has said Iran is living up to its commitments under the nuclear deal so far, Tehran also has launched ballistic missile tests in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions and continued to support unpopular proxies in the region.



The Obama administration argues the nuclear deal with Iran is only about that issue, and that punishing Tehran for other actions could undermine the agreement.

Obama: *"But even if the planet wasn't at stake; even if 2014 wasn't the warmest year on record-until 2015 turned out even hotter..."*

The president is right when he says last year was the warmest year on record, but that data point doesn't necessarily translate into increased global warming.

In making this claim, Obama was referring to a 2015 study released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA). But there are serious questions about the data driving that study and the conclusions drawn from it by politicians.

Some of the weather stations that collect those measures are located in industrial areas, surrounded by buildings, parking lots, and other structures that retain heat and skew the data.

For instance, the official weather station in Washington, D.C., is located at Reagan National Airport. As Patrick J. Michaels of the Cato Institute explains, that station produces an inaccurate weather report because it measures increased heat produced by "several hundred feet lower in elevation ... the brick buildings nearby, and the pavement of urban Washington."

Geography could also play a significant role in some NOAA's dramatic numbers. The weather stations that provide the data for the report are not spread out.

"These stations are not distributed in a regular, comprehensive geological pattern" notes David Kreutzer, a senior fellow in energy economics at The Heritage Foundation. As a result, he concludes the data "doesn't prove a climate crisis is evident."

Obama: *"In fields from Iowa to Texas, wind power is now cheaper than dirtier, conventional power. On rooftops from Arizona to New York, solar is saving Americans tens of millions of dollars a year on their energy bills, and employs more Americans than coal-in jobs that pay better than average."*

Wind power isn't just cheaper than fossil fuels, as the president said. Often, as in Texas last March, wind-generated electricity is sold for negative prices. Slate reports that companies actually were paying Texas public utilities to take their excess electricity.

Among many factors artificially driving the price down was a generous federal production tax credit that pays producers 2.3 cents per kilowatt hour.

Nick Loris, an economist who is the Herbert and Joyce Morgan Fellow at The Heritage Foundation, explains that subsidies and regulation-like the Texas wind credit-govern and skew significant portions of the energy market. And although, as the president says, the solar industry does employ more Americans than coal, Loris says, that's because of an unfair playing field.

Loris says, "Heavy-handed regulations are driving out coal as an important, reliable energy source and destroying jobs in the process. Meanwhile, "solar benefits from generous taxpayers-funded subsidies."

Loris notes further that increased oil drilling, not solar production, does more to push down electricity prices.

The Energy Information Administration reported that in 2015, "wholesale electricity prices at major trading hubs ... were down 27 percent to 37 percent across the nation" and that the price drop was "driven largely by lower natural gas prices."

The analysts are:



Josh Siegel is the news editor for The Daily Signal, USA.



Melissa Quinn is a news reporter for The Daily Signal, USA.



Philip Wegmann is the congressional correspondent for The Daily Signal, USA.



China's economy is slowing, with annual growth now down to 6.9%. Many analysts, however, remain sceptical about the statistics.

Ashfaqur Rahman



The big news in the world today is the recent slowdown in China's economy. The economic growth of China in the past thirty or more years has been phenomenal. It has belied all predictions. No country has single handedly pulled itself out of economic morass to become the second largest economy after the largest economy the USA in the world. In spite of the largest population (read 1.3 billion) a single country with finite resources had engineered to produce and sell so much with scant resources. The phenomenon can be truly described as spectacular. Yet there is much riddle and questions surrounding this gargantuan achievement.

In 1948, China became an independent country. It adopted communism as its political philosophy. It also adhered to run the economy as a communist state. By that the government took charge of all factors of production. Thus it became the owner of all land. The working age people worked only in state run enterprises. There was no personal capital. All capital resources belonged to the state. Even entrepreneurship was a state matter. No individual had the right to determine what to produce, how much to produce and how much profit or loss to accumulate. It was the communist state to decide all these matters.

But in course of time although a few large enterprises sprung up in China but soon enough the growth in production and consumption slowed down. Several times, the state enterprises ran at great loss thereby depleting resources and the economy becoming bankrupt. But the Chinese leadership in 1978 changed course. Under the leadership of Deng Tsao Ping China decided to liberalize its economy. It took some phenomenal steps. As in the past, any five or more persons could join hands to form a cooperative and collaborate with the government of the day to produce goods. But the state remained in charge to sell similar quality of goods to anyone it chose. But then the Chinese leadership allowed these five men or more to form a cooperative. But it allowed five or more members of a single family to form this cooperative. It also allowed such cooperatives to sell their products at prices it would want. Thus production and distribution of products was increasingly left to the private cooperatives. This simple change in way to operate a cooperative immediately introduced dynamism in the economy. As



members belonged to a single family such cooperatives surged to produce goods which consumers wanted. It also allowed accumulation of private capital, which could be reinvested into further production. The state run factories and services were allowed to operate on their own with government functionaries buying, producing and selling goods at their own risk. Thus choice goods were manufactured which had demand. The capital accumulated through profit made could be reinvested on market conditions even by state run enterprises. Thus in a matter of two decades China at first became purveyors and then producers of cheap and low quality goods. But soon producers became savvy, acquired capital from local and foreign sources, engineered goods and services and began manufacturing world class products.



But the Chinese state did not liberalize its political system. It continued with the top down political structure. It only rationalized bureaucratic practices in order to soften the way economic decisions were taken. Today politics in China remains in a strait jacket. However the Chinese economy is as much free as in a capitalist economy. As a consequence the economy grew between 11-12 % per annum. The country became the largest market for choice products and a mega distributor of goods worldwide. Attendant services grew equally fast. The Chinese physical infra structure was remodeled, modernized and made more profitable.

Yet from 2015 the Chinese economy started to slow down .Last year the annual growth rate has fallen to 6+% per year. It is likely to slow down further in the near future. So what could be the reason behind this change? More so what are the likely consequences? Several responsible analysts think that it is a deliberate move by the Chinese government while many others think that this slowdown was inevitable. Worldwide the weakened performance of the Chinese economy is a matter of concern.

Those countries that sell raw materials like oil, minerals, iron, copper etc to China find that their sale is tapering. This is happening to countries like Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan and Chile. India that sells iron ore also would feel the pinch. Then there are countries who produce intermediate goods and export them to China. Japan is one such country. They manufacture components for production of consumer electronics in China. A slowdown in the Chinese economy will mean less Japanese exports to China. Yet all intermediate goods industries would be at peril. Japanese producers of smart phones and computers may not feel the pinch hard. These producers in Japan will export such products to other growing economies of Asia like India and Vietnam. However these economies and other similar ones like Indonesia and Malaysia would need to spend more on these intermediate goods as Japanese exports of these components are very expensive.

But what about those countries that sell their products to China? An interesting development is that with the rise of individual income of the Chinese their household consumption has also increased. So exporters of finished products will retain their market in China. Another aspect that remains a matter of hope for some other countries in spite of China's economic slowdown, is that the number of Chinese tourists to these countries are not likely to decrease. They are likely to continue taking advantage of Chinese habit of aggressive spending.

Even Bangladesh will be able to take advantage of Chinese economic slowdown. China has already withdrawn from producing low end garment manufacturing. As a result Bangladesh garment industries have jumped into the gap and by producing low end garments has become the world's second largest garment exporter after China. Along with Vietnam, Bangladesh has become Asia's fastest growing economies.

But do note that China's economic slowdown to 6% annual growth of its economy will in no significant way dampen its development. With greater efficiency in production and cutting away the fat China is likely to contribute more to world output than when it grew at 10% per annum. The world waits with abated breadth and watches this development.

Ashfaqur Rahman is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to China.



From left, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, President Park Geun-hye of South Korea, Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia and President Xi Jinping of China attend a meeting at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Manila in 2015. Source: Associated Press

Park walks a fine line between superpowers

Hiroshi Minegishi

When South Korean President Park Geun-hye and her Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, greeted each other at the G-20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, in mid-November, 2015 it was like a meeting of old friends, full of warm smiles and kind words. Two months earlier, the leaders were similarly chummy in Beijing, where Park was attending a massive military parade to commemorate the 70th anniversary of China's victory in "the war of resistance against Japanese aggression" as well as "the world anti-fascist war." She had made the trip against the wishes of the U.S. and Japan, and Xi expressed his thanks by showering her with an unprecedented level of hospitality.

It was another diplomatic love-fest on Oct. 31, 2015 when Park welcomed Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to the presidential office in Seoul, surrounded by children excitedly waving small Chinese and South Korean flags. Li was in town for a tri-lateral summit including Japan, though he showed up a day earlier than Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. China's No. 2 leader was treated like a state guest, with a guard of honor and a red carpet greeting him at the presidential Blue House.

Ties between Beijing and Seoul are said to be at their all-time best, but the fact is that South Korea has little choice but to keep China happy. The huge Chinese market is a lifeline for South Korea, whose domestic market is too small to support the economy on its own. South Korea's trade with China in 2014 totaled \$235.3 billion, more than twice that with the U.S. and larger than its combined trade with the U.S. and Japan. Some 25,000 South Korean companies have launched operations in China since 1980. It is often said that if China sneezes, South Korea catches a cold. This economic dependence is why Seoul prioritizes a free trade agreement with China over the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership.

South Korea has been moving closer to China for a while now, but the relationship has grown even tighter under Park. Considered something of a Sinophile, she is conversant in Chinese and likes Chinese books and pop music. Since taking office in February 2013, Park has held one-on-one talks with Xi six times and visited China three times. She and Xi have known each other for 10 years and exchanged birthday greetings since 2013.

SEEKING HEAT

While campaigning for the presidency in 2012, Park pledged to deepen ties with the U.S. and improve relations with China, which she described as a "strategic cooperation partner." Compared with her predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, who focused on the alliance with the U.S., Park has made China a priority. Another election pledge was to launch dialogue



Park's diplomatic activity, by the numbers

	ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS	TRIPS TO COUNTRY
Xi Jinping (China)	6	3
Barack Obama (U.S.)	4	2
Shinzo Abe (Japan)	1	0

Since Park Geun-hye took office in February 2013

with the U.S. and China on North Korea's nuclear development.

Soon after Park took office, Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se described relations with China as "economically hot but politically cold." He said the government wanted ties with China to be hot politically, diplomatically and in terms of security. That is partly



because Park believes China's cooperation is essential for promoting inter-Korean diplomacy, achieving unification and addressing North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. While flying home from her trip to China in last September, the president told reporters that broad discussions would soon start on how to achieve a peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula. She is said to be impatient to make progress on that front before her term ends in February 2018.

AIMING FOR THE MIDDLE

What Park is seeking is "middle-power diplomacy," in which South Korea maintains good ties with multiple superpowers while not aspiring to superpower status itself. Under this approach, the government picks and chooses different allies depending on its different economic, security and other needs. This style is said to be modeled after the Australian and Canadian approaches.

Park's diplomatic activities this autumn highlighted her commitment to middle-power diplomacy. She emphasized close ties with China in September, sitting beside Xi during the military parade. On the other side of Xi sat Russian President Vladimir Putin. In October, she flew to Washington for talks with U.S. President Barack Obama and urged him to strengthen the bilateral alliance. The following month, she played host to Li and Abe in Seoul. She used the gathering to hold one-on-one talks with Abe ~ a direct response to Obama's call for making U.S., Japanese and South Korean

South Korea's diplomatic web





unity the foundation for security in East Asia. But while Park may see China as a vital player in creating a nuclear-free North Korea and a united Korean Peninsula, Beijing may have other ideas.

That became apparent at the joint news conference after talks between Park and Xi in Seoul in July 2014. While Park said the leaders agreed on the denuclearization of North Korea, Xi talked about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Beijing's influence was apparent in their joint statement, which included the phrase, "the two countries staunchly oppose nuclear development on the Korean Peninsula."

An expert on North Korea said that in China's eyes, "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" includes the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea, including aircraft carriers and bombers that would

enable the U.S. to launch nuclear attacks on the peninsula ~ demands that echo those of North Korea.

Park also said that Xi supported her goal of "peaceful unification." But his exact wording was "voluntary peaceful unification." Xi said he supported "self-directed" unification by North and South Korea and, according to sources, expressed a desire to keep the U.S. forces in South Korea in check.

VALUABLE BUFFER

However shaky relations between Beijing and Pyongyang have become, North Korea will always hold massive geopolitical importance for China because it serves as a buffer against the U.S. forces in South Korea. The main reason China is trying to draw the South into its camp is that it sees the country as strategically valuable from a security perspective.

China is especially concerned about a new missile defense system the U.S. is considering to deploy in South Korea. Called Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, it uses an advanced radar system that can quickly detect enemy missile launches. THAAD is designed to shoot down ballistic missiles when they re-enter the atmosphere in the final phase of their flights. The system is seen as a safeguard against potential North Korean nuclear attacks targeting the U.S. mainland.

Experts say the radar system is capable of detecting missiles from distances of 1,000km to 2,000km and obtaining intelligence on missile bases on the Chinese mainland. Beijing contends that the true U.S. objective with the system is to contain China. If THAAD were deployed in the South Korean city of Pyeongtaek, for example, it would presumably remove China's ability to launch a pre-emptive strike on the U.S. base there.

In November, 2015 an article written by the director of Stanford University's Asia-Pacific Research Center drew attention in South Korea. In the piece, Shin Gi-wook argued that improving relations with the U.S. and China would enable South Korea to defuse tensions between the two sides. But he also said positioning itself as a "balancer" between these superpowers comes with risks, as it could give the impression that the country is playing a game of political tug of war and cause unnecessary misunderstandings.





HEDGING BETS

The U.S. is making it increasingly clear that it is not ecstatic about the closer ties between Seoul and Beijing. Partly fueling the wariness in Washington is its frustration over China's construction of artificial islands in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea.

At a summit in Washington in October 2015 Park described her country's alliance with the U.S. as "core." She even called for expanding the success that the two sides have enjoyed in South Korea to the entire Korean Peninsula, creating an image for some of a U.S. military parked on China's doorstep.

At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus in Malaysia on Nov. 4, 2015 South Korean Defense Minister Han Min-koo urged his counterparts to peacefully resolve the disputes in the South China Sea. South Korean media reports portrayed Han as openly siding with the U.S. in front of China.

In South Korea, there is often talk about the "Group of Two," and how the U.S. and China control the world. Cho Sae-young, a former senior diplomat who now heads the Japan Research Center at Dongseo University, said it would not be good for South Korea or Japan if the U.S. and China established the order in East Asia on their own.



HIROSHI MINEGISHI is a staff writer at Nikkei Asian Review.





A Global Political Figure

Prof. Selina Mohsin



While studying in the convent school of Jesus and Mary in Delhi, India, the shy teenager probably had little idea that one day she would devote her life for democracy in her home country, Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi, born in 1946 to General Aung San, founder of modern Burmese army, who negotiated for independent Burma from the British, was assassinated when Suu Kyi was two. Now, Suu Kyi, a towering figure in the political scenario of Myanmar and the world, has had to sacrifice much in her life for democratisation of Myanmar.

Oxford educated and an Honorary Fellow of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Suu Kyi in 1972 married Michael Aris, a British Academic. She has two sons.

On returning to Burma in 1988 to care for her sick mother she found mass demonstrations for democracy after General Ne Win had stepped down in August 1988. Suu Kyi was drawn in and addressed a gathering calling for a democratic government saying, "I could not, as my father's daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on", and soon

formed the National League for Democracy (NLD). Her husband and her sons returned to Britain without her.

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi she held peaceful rallies for free elections but they were suppressed by the army who seized power in September 1988. They placed Suu Kyi under house arrest the following year. The military government offered her freedom if she left the country, but she bravely refused. In 1990 the military regime held a general election in which NLD campaigned. It secured 59% of the votes and 80% of the parliamentary seats. But the results were nullified by the military regime and Suu Kyi again placed under house arrest. This raised international condemnation; Suu Kyi received the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and the Nobel Peace Prize and many others.

During her house arrest Suu Kyi was prevented from meeting party people, media personnel and diplomats. The UN Working Group for Arbitrary Detention declared her arrest contravened Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and called on the Burmese regime to set her free. The request was ignored.

In 2009 an American journalist swam to Suu Kyi's house near Inya Lake to interview her and swam back two days later.

For this Suu Kyi was arrested and jailed thereby raising another world-wide outcry against the regime. At the US-ASEAN summit, President Obama personally advocated the release of all political prisoners in Burma, especially Suu Kyi.

Suu Kyi was under house arrest or in prison for 15 years over a 21 year period, suffering bouts of ill health and an attempted assassination. The military regime offered permission to go abroad, but it was evident she would not be allowed to return. She met her husband in Myanmar in 1995 for the last time, four years before his death from cancer.

After a bloody suppressed 'Saffron Revolution', in November 2010, Suu Kyi, to everyone's astonishment, was released. It appears the regime had decided they needed rapid domestic growth which was impossi-



A family portrait with Aung Sung Suu Kyi (in white) as a toddler, taken shortly before her father assassination in 1947.



ble under sanctions and without political reforms. According to a reporter who interviewed her in 2012 Suu Kyi's release as leader of NLD brought "a lightness in her". Her party participated in by-elections and won 43 of the 45 seats. Suu Kyi took oath in parliament and became leader of the opposition.

However, by November 2014 the government had not undertaken any fruitful reforms. She noted that in dropping most of the sanctions against Myanmar the US had been 'overly optimistic'.

In 2015 the military backed government of President Thien Sein held the first openly contested general election in 25 years. However, the military regimes 2008 constitution keeps the army's influence intact. It ensures that no legislative scrutiny of military expenditure can be made and the powerful ministries of Defence, Home and Border Affairs must be headed by army personnel. Chapter 3, no. 51 (f) of the constitution states, that the president or his/her family members must not be citizens of a foreign country thus barring Suu Kyi from becoming president. Also 25% of the seats in both houses are reserved for the army thereby giving it a veto power over any move to change the constitution. Although the NLD won two thirds of the contested seats in parliament the army could still veto constitutional change to allow Suu Kyi to lead the government. She also cannot run for president as her children hold foreign passports. Suu Kyi considers this bar, targeted specifically and unfairly at her, but she remains the undisputed NLD leader.



Suu Kyi's strong character and her determination to continue to promote human rights and democracy despite long years of detention, is well proven. How far can she now succeed in Myanmar's complex, fast shifting political scenario?

When after the victory of her party Suu Kyi was asked what democratic model she intended to see in Myanmar she replied "We have many lessons to learn from various places". She held a closed door meeting with important military personnel, ethnic minority groups and her party stalwarts. It is said that she has suggested that she would not aim to make changes too soon but would aim for reconciliation, like Nelson Mandela.

But, unlike Nelson Mandela she is not free from criticism. In particular she has virtually ignored the suppression and extreme harassment of the Rohingya Muslim minority group. The army and powerful buddhist movements unjustly portray them as recent immigrants and, under a 1982 citizenship law, refuse to recognize them as Myanmar citizens. They have long suffered discrimination, including movement restrictions, withholding of land rights and exclusions from education and public service. More recently this has become systematic persecution and a glaring human rights crisis.

In a famous speech Suu Kyi once said, "It is not power that corrupts, but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it." Is she now following her own beliefs? Human right activists have criticized Suu Kyi for her silence on the 2012 Rakhini state riots and during the 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis.

BBC reporter Jonah Fisher pointed to her need to obtain support from the majority Barnar ethnic group as she is in the middle of an election campaign. Her NLD had no Muslim candidates and Muslims were actively discouraged from joining the party. In 2015, the 14th Dalai Lama asked Suu Kyi to help the Rohingya, but was ignored. However strong the arguments of political expediency, it is distressing that Suu Kyi has ignored this most vulnerable minority group, despite the contravention of her principles of human rights and democracy

If and when Suu Kyi gains enough stability and authority to introduce major reforms in Myanmar this will have come too late for the Rohingya. Many have already languished in refugee camps in Bangladesh, perished miserably in Myanmar or in desperate attempts to escape by boat to Malaysia. Aung San Suu Kyi has for decades striven for good governance, human rights and freedom from fear. How far will she compromise her principles in the harsh game of politics and power?

Professor Selina Mohsin, Former Ambassador of Bangladesh.

Eight reasons why the UN climate conference in Paris led to historic deal uniting 195 countries

Alex Morales



It took years of careful planning by the United Nations and the 195 countries involved to reach the historic deal on climate change reached in Paris on 12 December 2015. With so many parties involved in highly technical and political discussion about how to limit emissions from fuels that drive their economies, it's remarkable anything was settled. The last time envoys attempted such a sweeping deal, the meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 dissolved in finger-pointing over who should do what to combat global warming.

Here are the eight lessons the UN and key delegates involved in brokering the Paris deal learned from Copenhagen that led to the success this year:

1. Make it voluntary: The 1997 Kyoto Protocol was a legally binding treaty setting limits for emissions of greenhouse gases - but only for industrial nations. After signing the deal, the U.S. backed out because developing nations had no obligations, leaving Kyoto covering just 37 mostly European nations and 12 per cent of global emissions. The Paris deal reaped pledges from 186 nations by making the system essentially voluntary. That meant more were willing to sign up - even the U.S.

2. Prepare the ground: French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius and his team made more than 100 official visits and held more than 400 bilateral meetings with 140 countries over the past two years. Half of those meetings were at the level of presidents and prime ministers. "I'm impressed with Fabius's leadership," said International Emissions Trading Association Chief Executive Officer Dirk Forrister, a climate adviser in U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration. "His sheer presence and seriousness and experience helped to provide some discipline."

3. Get the big players onside: It's a deal uniting 195 countries, but the U.S. and China are the most important since they account for 35 per cent of emissions. The two countries didn't co-ordinate positions in Copenhagen, where China stood with Brazil, India and South Africa in wanting to preserve distinctions in the way the talks deal with rich and poor nations. In 2009, President Barack Obama had to force his way into a meeting of that bloc to have his voice heard. This time, he and Chinese President Xi Jinping came to an agreement in November 2014, spurring other developing nations to join in on taking action.

Global Green Growth Institute Director-General Yvo de Boer said, "The United States has invested enormously in a better dialogue with China and the other major economies."

4. Choreography counts: Almost 150 heads of state and government attended the Dec. 1 opening of the summit in the



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and French President Francois Hollande enter the room at the Palace Elysee to deliver joint statements, in Paris, France, on Sunday, Nov. 29, 2015.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/Adrian Wylde ORG XMIT

biggest single-day gathering of world leaders in history. Their job? To provide the political momentum - and then get out of the way. In Copenhagen, more than 100 leaders came at the end of the conference, paralyzing the work of lower-level envoys who are experts in the forensics of treaty negotiation.

Japanese envoy Kuni Shimada said of the 2009 meeting, "all the negotiators had to babysit the ministers and at the same time their heads of state, so they didn't have any time to spare for the actual negotiations."

5. Little things are big:

Logistical snafus in Copenhagen helped poison the atmosphere of the talks. There were long lines to accredit and pass through security, leaving many negotiators standing in the cold while it snowed. The French ensured the little things worked. The food was a notch above previous meetings, with pastries and bottles of Mouton Cadet reserve wine. Water stations were ubiquitous, and the toilets were clean. Shuttle buses ran like clockwork, and public transport was free. During the final days, daybeds came in handy for tired delegates shuffling between round-the-clock sessions.

6. Learn from the past: France used the tactics that worked at previous climate conferences. They copied a formula from the meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in 2010 by using pairs of ministers from developed and developing countries to help work through the thorniest topics. They held open informal meetings open to all negotiators called "indabas," named for a traditional gathering of village elders that South Africa first used with great success in Durban in 2011. And they brought on board Claudia Salerno, one of the envoys who helped sink the Copenhagen deal, to work on a part of the text. Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton adviser said, "Engaging former critics is what good diplomacy is all about."

7. Transparency is essential: In Copenhagen, the Danish presidency that ran the meeting picked a group of countries to work on an accord. The countries left out lost trust in the process, accusing the hosts of drawing up a "secret text." France was careful to include everyone at each stage - logistically difficult but politically necessary.

Salerno from Venezuela said, "When we've seen the presidency straying from the right path, we've immediately told them, and they've listened and corrected."

8. Involve business: Companies were given a portal to register their own efforts to slash emissions, making them far more supportive than in Copenhagen. More than 2,400 companies and investors have posted pledges so far. Ultimately, it's business that will have to deliver many of the emissions cuts and technological solutions to climate change, so involving industry made reaching a deal seem possible or even desirable.

"In Copenhagen business was more bad cop than good cop," said Ikea Group chief sustainability officer Steve Howard. "Now it's more good cop than bad cop."



France's President Francois Hollande (R) hugs Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Christiania Figueres (C) after the adoption of a historic global warming pact at the COP21 Climate Conference in Le Bourget, north of Paris, on December 12, 2015. (FRANCOIS GUILLOT/AFP)

Alex Morales is a senior journalist at the Bloomberg News in New York, USA.

"What happens when the Thai king's gone?"

Nicholas Farrelly



Back in February 2005, Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai was re-elected with a bumper majority. But as Thaksin consolidated ever more power, his opponents became anxious. The Democrat Party worried that it would never again control the levers of government, as the outspoken telco billionaire effectively monopolised the political process. His influence on military and bureaucratic promotions hinted that he would not stop until all key positions were held by his trusted aides.

In the lead up to the 2006 coup Thaksin was targeted by a chorus of self-righteous outrage. But Thaksin must still have felt confident. Many had suggested that Thailand's heavily politicised armed forces had 'returned to the barracks' for good. We now know that such talk was premature.

For almost a decade, Thai politics has been caught in a seemingly limitless spiral of push-and-shove between Thaksin's supporters and those who backed the 2006 coup. But the deadlock has more to do with the Thai palace than the politics of Thaksin's democratic rise.

Since the May 2014 coup that brought General Prayuth Chan-ocha and his military machine to power, there have been few indications of a quick return to electoral protocols. Even under military rule there are clear signs that any loosening of draconian internal security procedures would lead to a quick resurgence of pro-Thaksin politics.

But the fundamental worry is about what happens when King Bhumibol Adulyadej is no longer on the throne. Everything else pales in comparison to this potential crisis. For almost 70 years, King Bhumibol has been at the centre of national life. Almost every hour of every day the Thai people absorb messages about his contributions and the special status of his family.

The armed forces have also worked tirelessly to keep the king on the throne. Whenever other military factions have sought to undermine royal standing they have been promptly stamped out. General Prem Tinsulanonda, the chairman of the king's privy council, has surrounded the king with retired officers who form a protective ring around a man whose fragile health is fading.

The mortality of the king will come as a shock to many Thais, 95 per cent of whom were not alive the last time anybody else was on the throne. This gives the king an aura unmatched by other modern political figures.

Yet the conversation about



*In 1946 the King of Thailand, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, came to the throne:
He is now the longest reigning monarch in the world.*



succession cannot happen in public. The use of the *lèse-majesté* law, Article 112 of the Criminal Code, and the Computer Crimes Act - another tool in the repressive armoury - mean that any hint of palace-related criticism can lead to a spell in prison.

Whether royalist or republican, there is agreement on one thing: there is no obvious or unanimous path back to more representative or participatory government. Nor is there any indication that General Prayuth is tiring of his time as prime minister.

Back in 2006 the military rulers under the leadership of General Surayud Chulanont took only 15 months from coup to election. The lesson has likely been drawn that this is insufficient time to do a full job of dismantling Thaksin's influence. The fact that Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was prime minister from 2011 to 2014 only serves to reinforce the generals' sense of having to start all over again. De-Thaksinisation, this time around, will take more time.

Thailand is perched precariously at the end of King Bhumibol's reign. Thailand's elders and leaders may yet find a way to muddle through and create space for a new compromise between the different forces still looking for any chance to destroy their opponents.

Yet it is precisely this winner-takes-all approach to statesmanship that has created the conditions for a decade's worth of grief. This can be measured not just in the blood spilled, careers destroyed and buildings burned, but in the immense loss of opportunity that the country has suffered. The rest of the world has not been standing still. Across Southeast Asia some countries have begun to take big strides towards closing gaps in development with their Thai neighbours.

The most obvious example is Myanmar, which has made moves towards normalising its internal and foreign affairs since 2011. This does not mean that Myanmar enjoys Thailand's economic or cultural heft, but there is certainly the potential for the country to make significant moves in that direction. Much will hinge on the performance of its government after the November 2015 election. As Thais well know, a democratic system takes decades to fully bed down.

So what will happen next for Thailand? Without its own robust institutions to manage legislative, judicial and executive power, the country once again looks to the palace for inspiration and guidance. The military knows that royal charisma helps to support their longer-term goals. Questions about authoritarianism can be quickly deflected as rebellious, anti-monarchy talk. Such conflation of different powers leaves the country without any immediate prospect of positive change.

General Prayuth and his opponents are stuck, all waiting for the inevitable transition when King Bhumibol is no longer on the throne. Many millions still also wait for Thaksin's return. They do not tend to believe the charge that Thaksin seeks to overthrow the monarchy. Some even wonder whether he might not prove its greatest saviour, perhaps returning triumphant to support a future king or queen.

We tend to expect that we can understand alliances in ways that mean they will stay constant across time. But Thailand's topsy-turvy last decade suggests that there are too many different factors at work and that a violent showdown could be catalysed by the succession. Under these conditions the military will be forced to decide whether it ever wants to return power to the people.

Dr Nicholas Farrelly, *Director, Myanmar Research Institute, Australian National University.*

THE PRINCE OF COUNTER— TERRORISM

Washington's favorite Saudi, **MUHAMMAD BIN NAYEF**, is the scourge of al-Qaida and Iran but no friend of those who want to see major reforms in the kingdom

BY BRUCE RIEDEL



THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, America's oldest ally in the Middle East, is on the verge of a historic generational change in leadership. King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, 79, who ascended to the throne in January, 2015 following the death of King Abdullah, will be the last of the generation of leaders who built the modern kingdom, transforming it from a poor desert backwater into a prosperous, ultra-conservative regional power with enormous oil wealth.

HOUSE OF SAUD: A PRIMER



SALMAN BIN ABDUL-AZIZ AL SAUD (SALMAN)

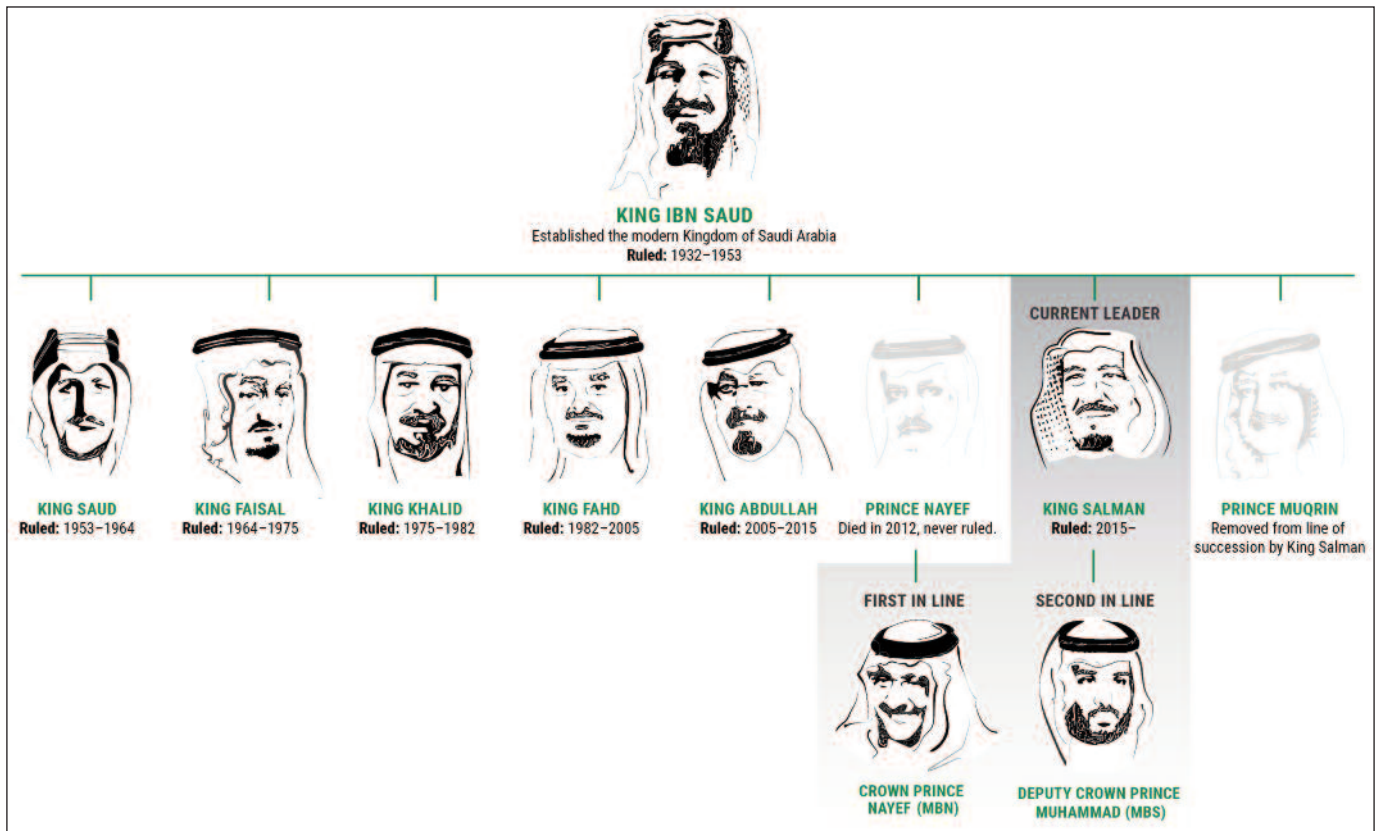
The current king of Saudi Arabia. He ascended to throne in 2015. Wikipedia

What the future has in store for the kingdom is of great concern to Washington. Within months of becoming king, Salman plunged into what appears to be a quagmire war in Yemen, snubbed President Obama, and endorsed hardline clerics who are opposed to reforms that Obama argues are necessary if Saudi Arabia is to remain a stable partner for the United States. Not a promising start from the American point of view. However, one of the king's first moves was greeted very enthusiastically: he changed the order of succession, pushing aside his half-brother Muqrin bin Abdul-Aziz as next in line to the throne and making one of his nephews, Muhammad bin Nayef (MBN), 56, the new crown prince and heir.

MBN, as he is known, will be the first of his generation to rule the kingdom—unless, of course, the king reshuffles the deck again. U.S. officials are keeping their fingers crossed, since MBN is the darling of America's counterterrorism and intelligence services, having performed several critical services for the U.S. in his capacity as deputy minister of the interior and then minister of the interior—the office that oversees all domestic security matters. Unlike his father, who preceded him in those positions, he is pro-American, almost certainly more so than any other member of the Saudi leadership.



LINE OF SUCCESSION



Only rulers and certain would-be rulers are shown.

THE BLACK PRINCE: NAYEF BIN ABDUL-AZIZ

IN THE SAUDI MONARCHY bloodlines are all-important. Who your father is in the royal pecking order is the major factor in determining your fate. If your father is a direct descendant of the king, you may become king. Since Saudis have many wives and concubines, the mother's bloodline is less important but not irrelevant.

The founding patriarch of modern day Saudi Arabia, and father of all the kings who have followed him, was King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud, known in the West as Ibn Saud. He led his tribal army into power in Riyadh early in the 20th century, and by the 1930s he was the undisputed master of the Arabian Peninsula from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, including the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Since his death in 1953, six of those sons have ruled the kingdom in succession. His 23rd son, Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz (Nayef)-MBN's father-was second in line to the throne, but died in 2012, just a few years before he would have succeeded King Abdullah.

Born in 1934 near Taif, Nayef was educated in Riyadh at what was called "the princes' school," where his teachers were clerics of the Wahhabi faith, the brand



King Ibn Saud and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt near Cairo in 1945. The alliance between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia goes back decades. Wikimedia Commons



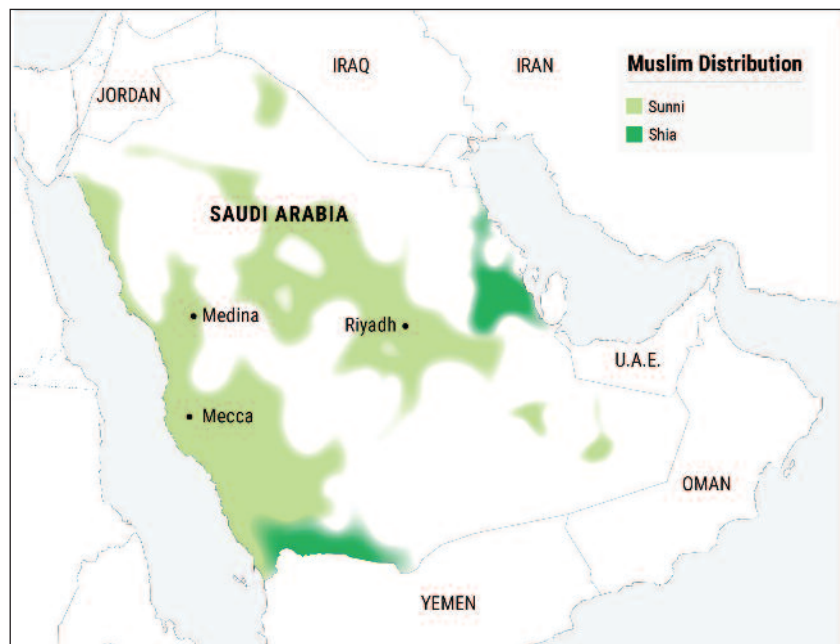
of Sunni Islam that runs the kingdom. The alliance between the House of Saud and the Wahhabis dates back nearly three centuries, to the very beginning of the rule of the Saudis. In 1744 an itinerant preacher and cleric named Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab joined forces with the then head of the Saudi family, Muhammad al-Saud, to create the first Saudi kingdom. While the Saudis provided political and military leadership, Wahhab and his descendants provided religious leadership and legitimacy.

Early in the 19th century, at a time when the Ottoman Empire was preoccupied with fighting off Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Palestine, the Saudis mounted a land grab against the empire. Their tribal armies conducted raids into today's Iraq and pillaged the Shiite holy city of Karbala, then turned west and conquered the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, purging them of any symbols of Ottoman rule and anything that struck the Wahhabi faithful as deviationist. Most of the Islamic world at the time viewed the Saudis and their clerical allies as fanatics and usurpers, similar in some ways to how the Islamic State is regarded by mainstream Muslims today. This first Saudi state was larger in territory at its peak than today's but their reign was brief. Once the French were defeated, the Ottomans sent armies into Arabia to recover the holy cities and then destroy the Saudi capital at Diriyah, just outside of today's Riyadh. Later the Saudis were exiled to Kuwait, not to resume power over the Arabian Peninsula until Ibn Saud led his tribal army out of exile, re-captured Riyadh, and established the third Saudi kingdom, which has lasted until the present day-as has the power of the Wahhabis.

IN THE 19TH CENTURY, MOST OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD CONSIDERED THE SAUDIS FANATICS AND USURPERS-MUCH LIKE MAINSTREAM MUSLIMS TODAY REGARD THE ISLAMIC STATE.

The Wahhabis' alliance with the royal family allows them to oversee Saudi society and enforce Islamic law and customs, which they do in part by working closely with the Ministry of the Interior, their most important ally in the government. In 1970, when Nayef's full brother Fahd was the minister, he made Nayef his deputy minister. In 1975 when Fahd became crown prince, after their older brother King Faisal was assassinated by a disgruntled prince angry at the introduction of television in the kingdom, Nayef succeeded Fahd as the minister.

As interior minister, Nayef had a reputation as an arch-reactionary. He aligned himself very closely with the most puritanical elements of the clergy, opposed reform and change, rejected demands for more freedom of expression, continued the treatment of the kingdom's Shiite minority-around 10 percent of the population, located mostly in the oil rich Eastern



Saudi Arabia is 85-90% Sunni and 10-15% Shia. The minority is mostly concentrated in the oil-rich Eastern Province and near the border with Yemen. Gulf/2000 Project, Columbia University

Province-as second-class citizens, and only reluctantly tolerated any kind of development. When asked why he opposed reforms that would start the kingdom on the path to becoming a constitutional monarchy, Nayef, who clearly had his eye on the throne, replied, "I don't want to be Queen Elizabeth." His policies were so extreme that Nayef was known as the Black Prince among the large expatriate Western worker population in the kingdom.

In November 1979, the kingdom experienced a major challenge to the Saudi royal family's legitimacy and governance. A band of Islamic extremists who believed the apocalyptic End Times had arrived took control of the Great Mosque in Mecca. The largest in the world, it houses the Kaaba, the holiest site in Islam, which is believed to be the first house of worship.

Only after weeks of hard fighting by troops from the Interior Ministry and the Saudi



National Guard, aided by French commandos whom the royal family secretly recruited, and by lethal chemicals that the family persuaded the Wahhabi clergy to allow them to use in the Grand Mosque, was the government able to rout the extremists. Much to the embarrassment of the government, however, when the culprits were interrogated it became clear that many of them had been known to the Interior Ministry. Some had even been detained prior to the attack on the mosque, but had been let go at the recommendation of senior clerics close to Nayef.

SAUDI ROYALTY WAS FRIENDLY WITH OSAMA BIN LADEN DURING THE RUSSIAN-AFGHAN WAR AND SLOW TO REALIZE THAT AL-QAIDA POSED A THREAT TO THE KINGDOM.

However, the Black Prince escaped blame for the attack. Instead, the governor of Mecca, one of the most liberal Saudi princes, was made the scapegoat in yet another instance of the familiar royal pattern of appeasing the clerics and their close allies at the expense of reformers.

The episode frightened the royal family into moving even closer to the Wahhabi establishment, slowing reform, and stepping up support for militant Islamic causes in other countries. In particular, the Saudis—with much help from the United States—armed and otherwise supported the Afghan mujahedeen fighting the Soviet invasion of their homeland during the years 1979-89.



The so-called Black Prince, Nayef (left), with his son MBN—now Crown Prince—in Mecca in 2008. AP

The current King Salman, who was then governor of Riyadh, was put in charge of raising private funds for the mujahedeen from the royal family and other wealthy Saudis. He funneled tens of millions of dollars to the mujahedeen, and later did the same for Muslim causes in Bosnia and Palestine. Later, when Osama bin Laden founded al-Qaida, Nayef was conspicuously slow to recognize that al-Qaida posed a threat to the kingdom. He had become friendly with bin Laden during the Russian-Afghan war when bin Laden was allied with the mujahedeen, and viewed him as being exclusively focused on defeating the Soviets. Nayef believed al-Qaida's reputation as a terrorist organization was a product of American propaganda and was sure that al-Qaida posed no real threat

to the kingdom—a delusion he had in common with much of the royal family.

When George Tenet, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other senior American intelligence officials warned Nayef that al-Qaida had created an extensive underground infrastructure inside the kingdom, he was skeptical, largely because he had long been suspicious of the United States' motives in the region. As President Clinton's Middle East advisor I dealt extensively with Nayef during this period. He was cordial but often uncooperative. When Shiite terrorists bombed the U.S. Air Force base at the Khobar Towers in Dhahran in 1996, killing 19 airmen, Nayef was reluctant to share with the Americans information on the perpetrators and their links to Iran. He claimed to fear that Washington would use the information to justify military action against Iran, which would drag the kingdom into a war. But I felt the deeper reason was that he was, essentially, anti-American.

Nayef continued to ignore warnings about al-Qaida for years. But the threat would eventually become impossible to ignore, and it would be none other than Nayef's own son, MBN, who would lead the battle against it.

THE SON ALSO RISES

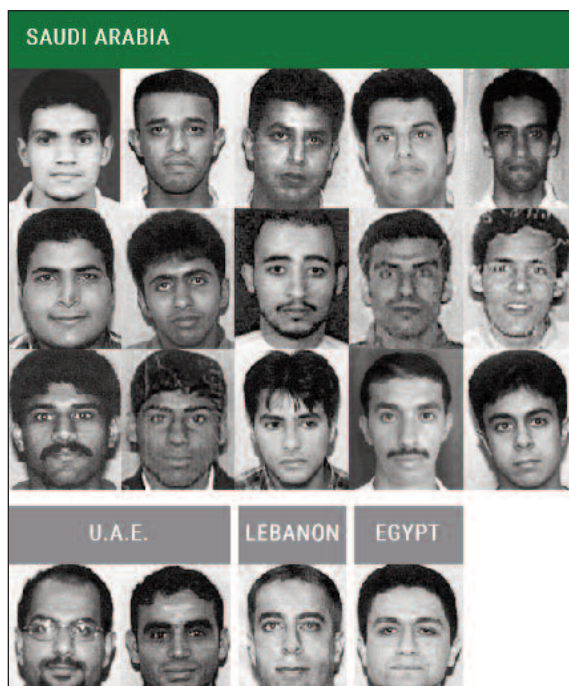
LIKE MANY OF HIS GENERATION OF SAUDI ROYALS, MBN went to school in the United States, attending classes at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, though he did not get a degree. To prepare him to succeed his father at the Ministry of the Interior he studied at the FBI in the late 1980s, and at Scotland Yard's antiterrorism institute between 1992 and 1994. It was around that time, in my capacity as a senior CIA officer dealing with the Middle East, that MBN began to register on my horizon as an up and comer.

Later, as special assistant to President Clinton for Near East and South Asia affairs in the National Security Council, I accompanied Vice President Al Gore to the kingdom during a tour we took through the Middle East in May 1998. We met with both father Nayef and son MBN during our calls in Riyadh. Only afterward did we learn that the Interior Ministry had disrupted a plot by al-Qaida to attack the United States Consulate in Jiddah while the vice president was there to meet with then-Crown Prince Abdullah.

The plot against Gore was the exception to what had been bin Laden's general rule of avoiding violent operations inside the kingdom. Since al-Qaida's infrastructure inside Saudi Arabia provided him a large number of recruits and much financial support, he preferred to keep it off the Interior Ministry's radar, and thanks in part to Nayef's blindness was largely successful at doing so.



Popular with U.S. officials, MBN shakes hands with President Obama during the 2015 Arab Summit in Washington. AP



Fifteen of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 were Saudi citizens.

Then came 9/11, and the news that 15 of the hijackers aboard the planes that were downed in the U.S. were Saudis. But minds were slow to change even then. As late as December 2002 Nayef, like many in the royal family, was still not convinced that al-Qaida had a base within the kingdom's borders, insisting that the Saudi hijackers were "dupes in a Zionist plot"-despite the fact that, according to Saudi sources, two of them had earlier been involved in the plot to attack Gore.

Nayef's son was a different matter. By 2001, MBN was already a major-and respected-figure in the war on terrorism. He had become assistant minister of the interior two years earlier. In that capacity, much to the relief of U.S. officials, he had taken over most of the day-to-day management from his father. This would prove fortunate for the Saudis, because bin Laden was about to turn his attention to his native land. After 9/11 and the subsequent American overthrow of the Taliban, al-Qaida's hosts in Afghanistan, he ordered al-Qaida's underground cells inside Saudi Arabia to begin operations against the monarchy and its American ally.

On February 14, 2003-the Muslim holy day of Eid al-Adha-bin Laden's intentions in Saudi Arabia became unmistakably clear. He issued an audio message titled "Among a Band of Knights," accusing the House of Saud of betraying the Ottoman Empire in the First



World War to the British and Zionists. And now the royal family, he said, was turning over the mosques and other holy places to the American Crusaders and secretly colluding in a plot with "Jews and Americans" to betray Palestine and create a "Greater Israel" in the region. Predicting that American air bases in the kingdom would be used to launch part of the invasion of Iraq that he said was imminent, he called the Saudi royals and their allies in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar "quislings."

The first major attack in the kingdom came on May 12, 2003, at a compound in Riyadh that housed foreign military experts working for the Saudi armed forces. Over a dozen al-Qaida terrorists attacked the compound with car bombs and small arms. At least eight Americans, two Australians, and several other westerners were killed along with Saudi security guards. It was the first volley in what became a campaign of terror against foreign workers in the kingdom and their Saudi hosts. Robert Jordan, then the U.S. ambassador in Riyadh, had been pressing the Saudis to take al-Qaida more seriously for months; now he called the May attacks Saudi Arabia's Pearl Harbor.

HOUSE OF SAUD

A TIMELINE

1744

Cleric Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab joins forces with the Saudi family to create the first Saudi kingdom.

EARLY 1800S

Saudi forces push into today's Iraq and conquer the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. A few years later, the Ottoman Empire reclaims the cities and destroys the Saudi capital, Diriyah.

1932

King Ibn Saud establishes the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 30 years after recapturing Riyadh from the Al Rashid dynasty.

1979-89

With help from the U.S., Saudis arm and support the Afghan mujahedeen against the Soviet Union.

1996

Shiite terrorists bomb the U.S. Air Force base at the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, killing 19 U.S. airmen.

2001

On September 11, al-Qaida launches four coordinated terrorist attacks on the United States. Fifteen of the 19 hijackers are Saudi citizens.

2010

Al-Qaida plants bombs on UPS and FedEx planes headed from Yemen to Chicago. MBN helps foil the plot.

2015

King Salman replaces his half-brother as crown prince, names his nephew MBN the heir apparent, and positions his son as second-in-line.

Immediately after the May attack, George Tenet, the director of the CIA at the end of President Clinton's administration and in the first years of President George W. Bush's, flew to the kingdom to see Crown Prince Abdullah, who had been serving as de facto regent for almost eight years, after King Fahd suffered a stroke. According to Tenet's memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, he told the Crown Prince, "Your Royal Highness, your family and the end of its rule is al-Qaida's objective now. Al-Qaida operatives are prepared to assassinate members of the royal family and attack key economic targets." Tenet warned the Saudis that, "we have great specificity with regard to the planning. It is directed against your family." Tenet convinced Abdullah and MBN that the danger was acute.

Tenet regarded MBN as the CIA's closest partner in fighting al-Qaida and the key to the defeat of the al-Qaida threat to the House of Saud between 2003 and 2006. "My most important interlocutor," he wrote. "A relatively young man, he is someone in whom we developed a great deal of trust and respect." It was during that period that MBN came into his own.

For the next three years the kingdom was a battlefield as al-Qaida attacked targets that included even the Interior Ministry's own headquarters in Riyadh. Other compounds for foreign nationals were attacked and an American was kidnapped and then beheaded. Shootouts between al-Qaida terrorists and the police took place in virtually every major Saudi city and many towns. More attacks followed on foreign targets, including a major assault on the United States consulate in Jiddah on December 6, 2004, in which a young female American diplomat was almost captured by the terrorists. Hundreds died and many more were wounded during these battles. It was the longest sustained campaign of violent unrest Saudi Arabia had endured in 50 years, and the most serious internal challenge to the House of Saud since the establishment of the modern state in 1902. Before it was over, the war would cost the government well over \$30 billion.

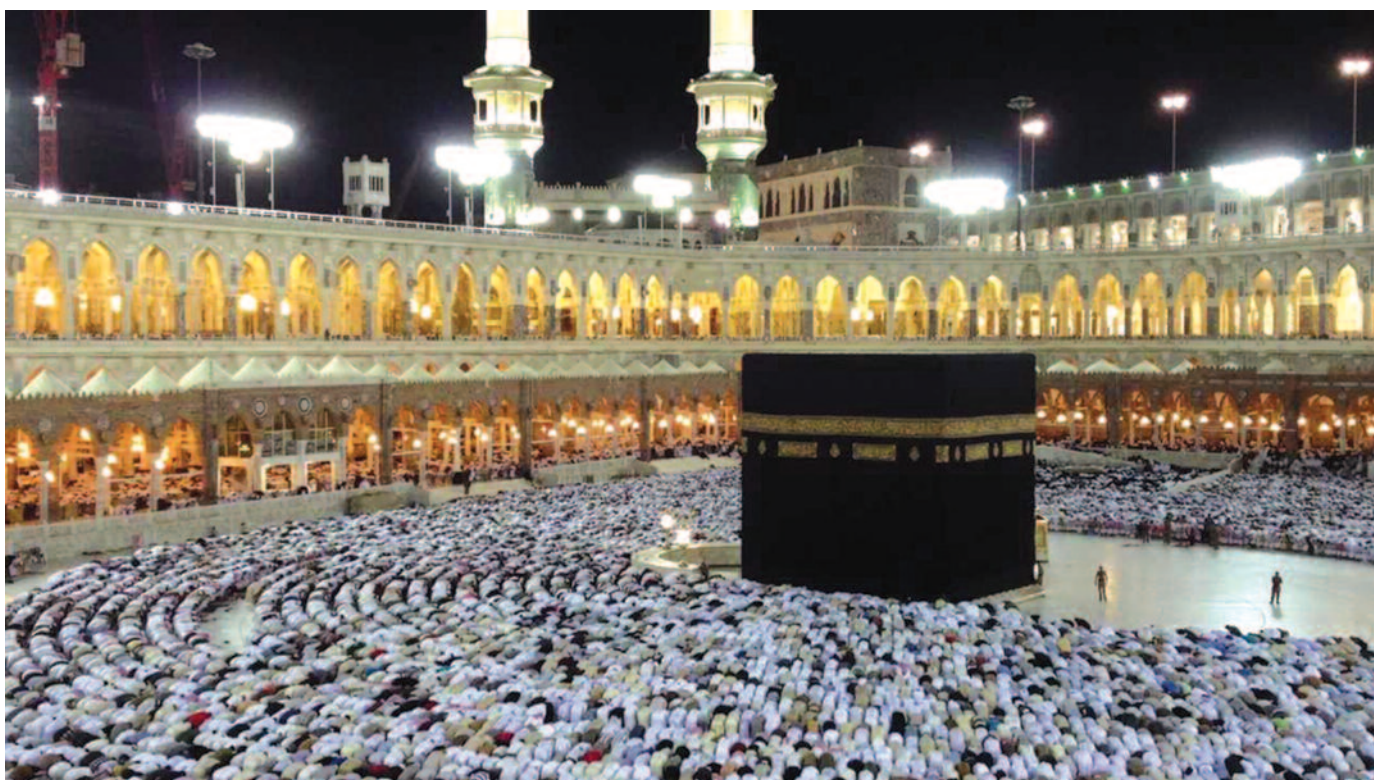
MBN led the counteroffensive. The Interior Ministry issued lists of the most wanted al-Qaida terrorists and then proceeded to hunt them down ruthlessly. Whenever any of the men

on a list were eliminated in firefights or ambushes, the ministry would update the list with the names of the next most wanted al-Qaida fighters. It was a tough and dangerous time-most foreigners who could leave the kingdom did so, or at least sent their families away. MBN was the face of the Saudi war on al-Qaida, appearing on television and in the newspapers to explain the threat the kingdom was facing.

THE CIA VIEWED MBN AS ITS CLOSEST PARTNER IN FIGHTING AL-QAIDA AND THE KEY TO DEFEATING THE THREAT TO THE HOUSE OF SAUD.

Efficient and deadly as MBN's strategy was, he was careful not to engage in the kind of massive and disruptive search-and-destroy operations that would have entailed collateral damage, and created an impression that the kingdom was in flames. His manhunts were targeted and selective, avoiding civilian casualties and the violence that characterized counterterrorism operations in Algeria in the 1990s and in Iraq today. Thus his Interior Ministry commandos were able to hunt terrorists without causing blowback among the population. The prince understood the need for proportionality and discretion in fighting a terror underground.

By 2007 it was apparent that MBN and the Interior Ministry had gained the upper hand on al-Qaida and the threat was dissipating. The jihadists lost the battle for hearts and minds in the country. While many Saudis sympathized with bin Laden's battle against America, they were disillusioned when innocent Saudis died in al-Qaida attacks and the war was brought to their own homes. The terrorists failed to gain popular support for their cause, which doomed them to defeat.



The Great Mosque in Mecca receives millions of Muslim worshippers each year. Reuters

THE SPYMASTER: MUHAMMAD BIN NAYEF

IT TOOK THREE YEARS TO BEAT BACK AL-QAIDA inside Saudi Arabia, but it has not gone away. Instead, the organization has metastasized throughout much of the Middle East and into Africa. In 2009 al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, the successor to the group MBN defeated at home, surfaced in Yemen. In December 2009 it sent Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, to blow up Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day as it was descending over southern Ontario to Detroit. But the explosives Abdulmutallab had hidden in his underwear failed to detonate properly and he was subdued by a fellow passenger and members of the airplane crew.



MBN CV

MUHAMMAD BIN NAYEF

1959

Born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

LATE 1970s

Attends Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

LATE 1980s

Studies at the FBI.

1992 - 94

Studies at Scotland Yard's antiterrorism institute.

1999

Named assistant interior minister, leads crackdown on jihadist militants after 9/11.

2003 - 06

Becomes CIA's closest partner in fighting al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia.

2009

Targeted by al-Qaida suicide bomber, escapes with minor injuries.

2012

Named minister of the interior.

2015

Named crown prince.

Ever vigilant against the danger al-Qaida continues to pose to the kingdom, MBN has cultivated a network of informants, and has foiled more than one plot against the U.S. When al-Qaida planted bombs on UPS and FedEx planes headed from Yemen to Chicago on the eve of the 2010 U.S. congressional elections, MBN called the White House and gave President Obama's terrorism advisor, John Brennan, the tracking numbers for the deadly containers. The planes were then detained at stopovers in Dubai and East Midland in the United Kingdom and the bombs were removed.

In addition to his international reputation as a resourceful spymaster, MBN is a hero in his own country as the result of an incident in which he nearly lost his life six years ago. He agreed to meet Abdallah Asiri, an al-Qaida terrorist, who said he would turn himself in if he could surrender directly to the Saudi deputy minister of the interior. Asiri promised that if he could meet the minister face-to-face, he would then be able to convince his comrades-including his own brother, Ibrahim Asiri, al-Qaida's premier bomb maker, the very man who would later build the bombs that were on the planes to Detroit and Chicago-to surrender as well. When the meeting took place on August 27, 2009, Asiri triggered a bomb, blowing himself up but only lightly wounding the prince. Hours later MBN appeared on Saudi television to tell the story to the kingdom, without getting into the details.

A few days later, Leon Panetta, then the director of central intelligence, who was visiting Riyadh, got a fuller account. After Abdallah Asiri entered his office, MBN said, the two men sat on the floor on a set of pillows. Suddenly Asiri began to shake and cry. He produced a cell phone from his robes, saying he wanted to call his family. After talking intensely on the phone with his brother, Ibrahim, he passed the phone to MBN, who opened the conversation with the traditional Arab greeting, salaam alaykum (God's peace be with you). At that moment, Asiri blew himself into a thousand pieces. The explosives, hidden in Asiri's rectum, blasted downward and left a crater where he had been sitting, but spared MBN.

This was at least the third major attempt on the prince's life. But these near misses only reinforced MBN's determination to lead Saudi Arabia's counteroffensive against al-Qaida. He has always been characterized by an intense sense of duty, something he inherited from his father, who was minister of the interior for 37 years.

In 2011, MBN's father, Nayef, moved up to become crown prince, much to the worry of American officials, who did not want him on the throne.

That same year saw the blossoming of the Arab Spring. Many in the West welcomed what seemed to be the peaceful overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, accompanied by protests elsewhere in the region, including in Saudi Arabia's neighbor, the island emirate of Bahrain. Nayef, however, like many people in power in the area, was horrified by what was happening-and irate when President Obama pressed Hosni Mubarak to quit the presidency of Egypt. Nayef pushed for Saudi intervention in Bahrain to shore up its Sunni royal family, which was facing unrest among its Shiite majority. A brutal crackdown ensued, crushing the reform movement there. Despite muted American protests Saudi troops remain on the island today.

At home Nayef urged his half-brother King Abdullah to respond to demands for change without compromising. But Abdullah took a more flexible line. For years he had been cautiously, incrementally, introducing limited reforms. Under his rule many more Saudi women had access to higher education and to at least a few mid-level government jobs. There were even hints from his court that someday Saudi women might be allowed to drive cars. He also appointed representative councils that had a voice in municipal affairs. And he appropriated over a hundred billion dollars in new spending to improve the conditions of the Saudi lower and middle classes.



The late King Abdullah (right) and the Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheikh. The Saudi royal family has always been close with the country's Wahhabi establishment. Today, thanks to King Salman, that relationship is closer than ever. Getty

But Abdullah's reforms never challenged the fundamentals of the Saudi system. The Interior Ministry, now being run by MBN, cracked down mercilessly on dissenters, imprisoning anyone who advocated reform. MBN was savvy about terrorist threats to the kingdom, but less so about the dangers of refusing to allow its citizens to express themselves freely. Abdullah's reforms gradually got reversed or stalemated. The reactionaries had again thwarted the reformer.

Nayef's health failed him in 2012. When he died at 78 in June of that year in Geneva, there were quiet sighs of relief down the official corridors of Washington and a spirit of optimism about working with his son MBN, who by then had already taken on the mantle of the Prince of Counterterrorism.

MBN has been at the forefront of innovative new tactics in fighting terrorism, especially in the effort to rehabilitate terrorists who were either captured by the police or defected from the terror apparatus because of disillusionment with the jihadist cause. The Ministry of the Interior today runs five special high security prisons with some 3,500 prisoners, almost all former al-Qaida operatives, where the goal is not incarceration but rehabilitation. The prisoners are showered with perks, can receive visits from their relatives and are even allowed to go to weddings and funerals with supervision; their families get special allowances from the government for better housing, medical care, and education. The objective is to make the former terrorists' families take responsibility for their sons' future. The theory is that if the family feels it has a stake in the rehabilitation of their wayward children, it will take on the job of convincing them of the error of their ways.

The Interior Ministry acknowledges that 20 percent of the "graduates" of its rehabilitation prisons return to terrorism, but that's a rate of recidivism considerably below that of prisons in the U.S. and Europe.

President Obama has been a strong supporter of the kingdom; it was the first place in the Middle East he visited as president. But he has said that while the Saudis face real external threats, including from Iran, it is the internal threat that is most serious. The kingdom's population is "in some cases alienated, youth are underemployed, (with) an ideology that is destructive and nihilistic, and a belief that there are no legitimate political outlets for grievances." The president has promised "tough conversations" with the leadership about liberalizing some of its policies.

King Salman has instead moved the kingdom even closer to the Wahhabi establishment. He fired the only female cabinet level minister shortly after coming to the throne; she had been an advocate of physical education for girls and a target for hardliners. Salman has met often with notoriously reactionary members of the clerical elite. He built close ties to them during the 50 years he was governor of Riyadh, a period when the city went from a population of about 200,000 to over 7 million, but retained its status as the most conservative city in Islam.

ENTER THE ISLAMIC STATE AND YEMEN

THE KINGDOM'S WAHHABI ISLAM is the most fundamentalist Sunni branch of the religion. But it has now been outflanked by religious radicals who are even more intolerant, xenophobic, and far more violent. The blood-curdling appearance of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in 2014 represents a new challenge to the world and, in particular, to MBN and his counterterrorism program. Heir to al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, which went deep underground during the American surge in Iraq in 2007 only to resurface after the withdrawal of foreign forces, the Islamic State has staged a multipronged comeback campaign. In 2012-13, it began targeting Iraqi prisons where al-Qaida terrorists were incarcerated.



ated and creating an infrastructure in neighboring Syria to assist in its revival. In the summer of 2014 it waged a blitzkrieg-like offensive across Sunni populated Iraq, took command of the country's second city, Mosul, and declared the creation of a caliphate to rule all of Islam.

In November 2014 the Islamic State announced that its goal is to take control of the mosques in Mecca and Medina and oust the "serpent's head"-the Saudi royal family. Its English language magazine published a cover story with a photo of the Kaaba with the Islamic State's black flag flying over it. Islamic State militants have attacked Saudi security posts along the Iraqi border and sent suicide bombers to attack Shiite mosques inside the kingdom in order to fuel sectarian enmity. In response to the threat the Interior Ministry has arrested hundreds of Islamic State operatives and is constructing a 600 mile long security fence or wall along the Saudi-Iraqi border, similar to a 1,000 mile long wall it built along the Saudi-Yemeni border to defeat al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

THE ISLAMIC STATE ANNOUNCED THAT ITS GOAL IS TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE MOSQUES IN MECCA AND MEDINA AND OUST THE SAUDI ROYAL FAMILY.

Abdullah died in January, 2015 after almost 20 years of ruling the kingdom, first as crown prince filling in for an incapacitated King Fahd, then as king in his own right. Having outlived two crown princes, Sultan and Nayef, Abdullah had tried to prepare for an orderly succession. In July 2012 he made his half-brother Prince Muqrin the deputy prime minister, second in line to the throne after Crown Prince Salman, now king, also a half-brother. Muqrin was very close to Abdullah and his reforms.

Abdullah's passing marks a major milestone in the kingdom's history. A reformer by Saudi standards, he ruled longer than any of his brothers and through perilous times. His designated successor was Salman, 13 years younger. Once Salman ascended the throne, he made Muqrin crown prince, as was expected, and moved MBN up to second in line as deputy prime minister. It was assumed that Muqrin, who was born in 1945, the 35th son of Ibn Saud, would become king some day, and that MBN would then have some years to prepare for his own ascension, and to get the country ready for the generational transition from the sons of Ibn Saud to his grandsons.

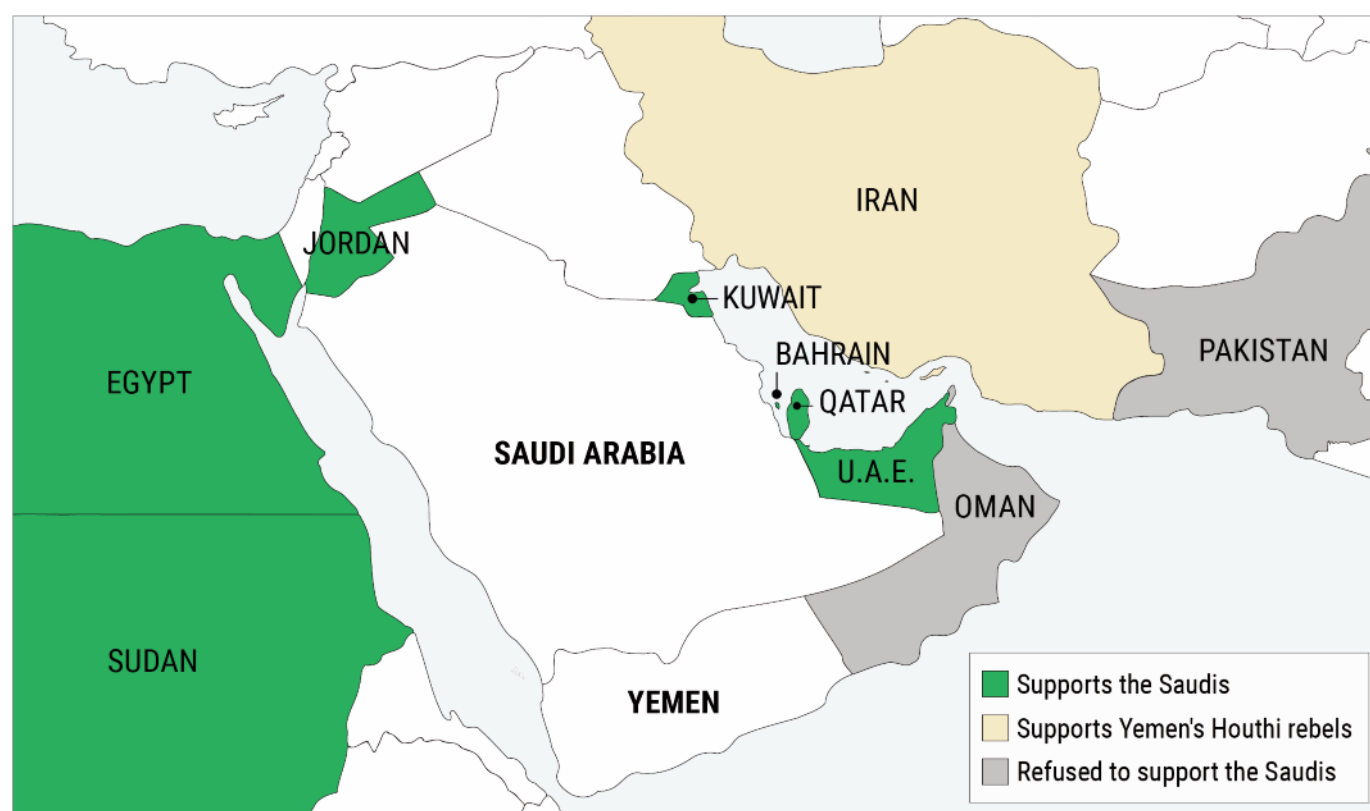


A Saudi government-issued photo celebrating Operation Decisive Storm reflects the new order of royal succession: MBN (left), who's next in line for the throne; King Salman (center); and the second-in-line, MBS. Saudi government

Then came a stunning and unprecedented family reshuffle. At four o'clock in the morning on April 29, 2015 Salman sacked Muqrin and made MBN crown prince in his stead. Salman's son Muhammad bin Salman (MBS) became the new number two. No explanation for the unprecedented ouster of a crown prince was given then or since. There is intense speculation that Salman made this change because MBN has no sons of his own (only two daughters), which means that MBS—who some sources say is not yet 30—will have a better chance of one day succeeding to the throne. Some speculate that MBN will sooner or later get the boot himself to ensure MBS makes it to the top.

Yemen has always been a thorn in Saudi Arabia's side. Ibn Saud went to war with Yemen in 1934. His armies captured much of the low-lying coastal plain along the Red Sea but could not conquer the mountainous interior of the country. A peace treaty ceded several border provinces to the kingdom, thus ensuring a long-standing irredentist movement in Yemen. In the 1960s the Saudis backed the Zaydi Shiite monarchs who traditionally ruled Yemen against an Egyptian backed republican movement that threatened to topple all the monarchies in the peninsula.

But in March of 2014 the Saudis launched air strikes against the Houthis, the Zaydi Shiite rebels who had deposed the pro-Saudi government in Sanaa and taken control of much of the country. The Saudis were particularly alarmed by the Zaydi decision to open direct air flights to Tehran (a first), offer Iran use of Hudaydah port, and negotiate a cheap oil deal with Iran. Riyadh got support for its air war from all the other Arab states of the Gulf region except Oman. Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt have also joined Saudi Arabia in the war effort but Pakistan, a longtime Saudi ally, refused.



Backed by the U.S., Saudi Arabia's coalition against Yemen comprises fellow Gulf nations as well as Egypt and Sudan.

The United States is providing intelligence and logistical help, despite getting only a few hours' notice from Riyadh about the first strikes. The Saudis initially called the campaign Operation Decisive Storm, a deliberate echo of the United States' pummeling of Saddam Hussein's regime and the eviction of his forces from Kuwait in 1991. It is by far the most assertive foreign policy move in the kingdom's recent history. Previous Saudi interventions in Yemen were clandestine, covert affairs. King Salman is projecting Saudi military might in an aggressive manner unprecedented since the days of his father Ibn Saud in the 1930s. The stakes are high.

So far the Yemeni adventure has not gone well, however. The war seems to be bogged down in a stalemate. Saudi Arabia



and its allies control Yemen's airspace and coastal waters and the southern port of Aden, but the Zaydi Houthis and their allies control most of northern Yemen.

The Yemen war, which is King Salman's first major foreign test, has profound implications for the stability of Saudi Arabia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the region as a whole. The war has a Sunni-Shia sectarian dimension, and it's also an arena of the broader Saudi-Iranian struggle for regional hegemony. Moreover, because the war is partly about Yemeni aspirations for a more inclusive government, it represents, in effect, the unfinished business of the Arab Spring, which the Saudis have resisted so vigorously.

The conflict is likely to draw in more players as it goes on and to spill out of Yemen to other countries. Already it has sparked violent clashes between MBN's Interior Ministry forces and Shiite militants in the Saudis' Eastern Province.

MBN may be the most pro-American prince ever to be in line to the throne. He is probably the most successful intelligence officer in the Arab world of today. Panetta, like Tenet, praises him, calling MBN the "smartest and most accomplished of his generation." Only King Fahd, another former minister of the interior, may have been so instinctively inclined to support American interests. Unlike his father, MBN seems altogether comfortable working closely with Americans. He seemed to get on fine with President Obama at Camp David. His agents just captured the mastermind of the 1996 Saudi Hezbollah attack on U.S. military barracks in Khobar, Saudi Arabia, that killed 19 American service members. MBN has already had more responsibility than any Saudi of his generation, and his burden is likely to become all the heavier given the chaos in the post-Arab Spring Middle East. He knows he needs allies.

But Washington should have no illusions that MBN will take Western advice to reform the kingdom. Saudi Arabia makes no bones about being the leading opponent of everything the Arab Spring stood for when it began in 2011 and everything that so many in the West were cheering for. The Saudis helped engineer the 2013 coup in Egypt that restored military rule to the largest Arab country and dealt the Arab Spring a fatal blow. They are skilled counter terrorists, but they are also accomplished and unabashed counter revolutionaries.

Saudi Arabia is the world's last significant absolute monarchy. It will not have a Gorbachev moment, because the royal family will not give up their control of the nation, nor will they loosen their ties with the Wahhabis and their faith. King Salman, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, Deputy Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, and virtually all of the rest of the Saudi establishment believe they have survived more than two and a half centuries in the rough politics of the Middle East not just because of their ruthless determination to stay absolute monarchs, but because of their alliance with the Wahhabi clerics.

The House of Saud has outlasted the Ottomans, Nasserism, Communism, Baathism, and most other royal families. In 1979 many thought they would go the way of the Shah of Iran. As a young analyst at the CIA charged with the Saudi portfolio I predicted then that they would survive for many decades to come. It is too soon to write their epitaph, but I suspect it is too late to expect them to change.



BRUCE RIEDEL serves as a senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy. He retired in 2006 after 30 years of service at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) including postings overseas. He was a senior advisor on South Asia and the Middle East to the last four presidents of the United States in the staff of the National Security Council at the White House. He was also deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Near East and South Asia at the Pentagon and a senior advisor at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels.



Justin Trudeau and Canada-China Relations

Hugh Stephens



The election in Canada of a majority Liberal government on October 19, 2015 headed by 43-year old Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has engendered a sense of anticipation regarding a more activist role for Canada internationally. For Canada-China relations, the assumption of power by Trudeau fils provides a new opportunity to re-energize the bilateral relationship. It was Trudeau's father, Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister for over 15 years (1968-79; 1980-84), who provided the political push for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Canada and China just over 45 years ago, a diplomatic initiative finally achieved on October 13, 1970. At the time this was an important breakthrough since, among west-

ern countries, only Britain (which had never technically broken off relations with Beijing), Switzerland, the Nordics, and France, (which recognized the PRC in 1964), had an embassy in Beijing. In the aftermath of Canadian recognition the floodgates opened and many other countries, from Australia to Japan to Germany and beyond, moved to recognize the PRC using the "Canadian formula" with respect to the mainland's claims to Taiwan. That issue had been the sticking point in over 14 rounds of negotiations between Canadian and Chinese officials in Stockholm. China insisted that the communique recognize its claim to Taiwan.

The Chinese government reiterates that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. The Canadian government takes note of this position of the Chinese government.

Pierre Trudeau had first travelled to China in 1949 when it was in the grip of revolution and returned again in 1960 after which he and friend Jacques Hebert wrote their book, "Two Innocents in Red China." When Mr. Trudeau succeeded Lester Pearson as Prime Minister in 1968, part of his platform was to recognize the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and help bring the PRC into world forums such as the United Nations, which it joined in 1971. These were heady early days for Canada-China relations, as Canadians discovered that they had an unknown hero in China, the Canadian Communist Norman Bethune immortalized in Chairman Mao Zedong writings, and as the two countries began exchanges of delegations in every area, from culture to ocean science to geology. The U.S. too was carefully evaluating how to approach China while trying to extricate itself from the Vietnam quagmire. Canadian recognition no doubt helped socialize the idea in North America of normalizing relations with Mainland China, but Trudeau never had to face the kind of Taiwan lobby that Richard Nixon faced. Nixon's manoeuver of sending Henry Kissinger to Beijing in 1971 to negotiate with the senior Chinese leadership is well known. Both countries established "Liaison Offices" in their respective capitals in 1973. Finally, on January 1, 1979, the U.S. broke off relations with Taiwan and formally established diplomatic links with China.

The normalization of relations between the PRC and most of the developed world was part of China's return to the world stage and the remarkable economic growth story that began with Deng Xiaoping's reforms. Canada-China relations, like those of other countries in their relations with China, enjoyed steady growth in the ensuing years, interrupted briefly in 1989-90 by the events in Tiananmen Square, but accelerating again after China joined the WTO in 2001. In early 2006, however, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper came to power in Ottawa and Canada-China relations became a casualty of that change of government. For their first few years in power the Conservatives showed little interest in developing Canada's relations with China. The relationship was



Former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau meets Chinese Great Leader Mao Zedong 45 years ago. (Source: Ajax News, Toronto, Canada)

looked at primarily through the lens of human rights issues, and there seemed to be suspicion of Chinese motives in the investment field where state-owned CNOOC made a \$15 billion bid for the Canadian oil company Nexen. (The bid was ultimately approved by Canada's foreign investment review agency, but only after much debate and a statement by the Harper government that any further such investments by state-owned firms in the oil sector would be approved only on an "exceptional basis." Later in their mandate, the Conservatives changed course somewhat, and Mr. Harper found time to visit China. Two pandas, a sure sign of diplomatic success, were secured for the Toronto Zoo, a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA) was signed with China and a Canada-China Economic Complementarities Study was launched. That study, however, has sat on the shelf since 2012.

Enter of Justin Trudeau



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

Relations with China were not a significant part of Mr. Trudeau's campaign, but doing things differently certainly was. This mandate for change ran the gamut from domestic economic and political reform measures to Canada's role in the world. No sooner had Mr. Trudeau taken office than he was off to the G20 Summit in Turkey and the APEC Summit in Manila where among the first leaders he met was President Xi Jinping. Reaching back to the legacy of Trudeau's father Pierre, Xi is reported to have commented that Trudeaupère had "'extraordinary political vision" that China would always remember. Trudeau fils indicated that Canada looked forward to working with China on building economic, political and cultural ties. He invited Xi to visit Canada, and a trip to China by Trudeau may also be in the offing.

Although the Liberals are intent on conveying to the world that Canada has turned a page, on its position on climate change for example, in fact when it comes to China Mr. Trudeau can build on some solid work done by the Conservatives in the latter years of their mandate. Much of the basic infrastructure has been put in place—Canada has approved destination status for Chinese tourists, it has a designated RMB exchange hub, a dialogue mechanism for foreign ministers and economic senior officials and the bilateral investment agreement is now in force. However, in 2005 during President Hu Jintao's visit to Ottawa, Canada and China agreed on building a strategic partnership but no strategic plan was ever developed. Both sides now have the opportunity to give real meaning to that agreement. For example, China has called for using the 2012 Economic Complementarities study to lead to the start of negotiations on a bilateral FTA, while it would be timely for Canada to reconsider its decision to decline China's invitation to join the AIIB.

With a new government and a new Prime Minister in Ottawa, experienced policy commentators see an opportunity to redirect the future of Canada's relations with China. Professors Paul Evans at UBC and Wendy Dobson at the University of Toronto have called for "a new approach to China" that would build on the complementarity of the Chinese and Canadian economies, while supporting "Canadian" (i.e. democratic) values. This new approach would also see Canada play a more proactive middle power role in the Asia Pacific and make relations with China and Asia a strategic priority, along the lines of the commitment made by Australia. Above all, this new approach would recognize China for what it is rather than what Canada would perhaps like it to be and will accept that while China will change, it will change at its own pace and in its own way rather than according to any script written in the West.

Will Justin Trudeau pick up on the legacy of his father and make a new relationship with a resurgent China one of his signature foreign policy pillars? Time will tell, but there is a wellspring of goodwill to be tapped, a new young sheriff in town, and bilateral opportunities for both Canada and China to develop if they wish. As the U.S. moves to recalibrate its own relationships with a rising China on trade, the environment and security issues, its neighbors and allies are forging their own path.

Hugh Stephens is Senior Fellow at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada. He is also Vice Chair of the Canadian National Committee on Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Cambodia's slide into repression



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen meeting with the cabinet ministers. (Photo: CHINE NOUVELLE/SIPA/Newscom)

Olivia Enos



Cambodia's prime minister Hun Sen ousted opposition leader Sam Rainsy, stripping him of his seat in parliament and calling for his arrest. These latest actions against Rainsy are representative of Cambodia's long muddle through a sort of unfree democracy.

Cambodia's latest actions should remind the international community of the commitments it made in the Paris Peace Accords, which ended the 1978-1991 war in Cambodia. The agreement did not only formalize the end of the war begun by Vietnam's invasion and establish the basis for elections, but parties to the accords also committed to hold Cambodia to liberal ideals.

The U.S. must uphold commitments made during the Paris Peace Accord and ensure that it is taking sufficient action to ensure political freedom for the people of Cambodia.

Rainsy's removal was prompted by comments he made suggesting that repressive regimes in Southeast Asia—especially dictatorships like Cambodia, where Hun Sen has retained power for almost 30 years—must feel threatened by the success of recent elections in Burma. Rainsy's arrest warrant was based on 2011 convictions, which were never enforced for alleged defamation against Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Namhong. Now Hun Sen is calling for their enforcement.

Rainsy remains abroad, visiting with the Cambodian diaspora in Japan and Korea and has been urged by the international community not to immediately return to Cambodia.

Tensions have escalated over the past several months between Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). In November 2015, vice president of the national assembly and opposition leader Kem Sokha was removed from power. This came on the heels of violence against other opposition parliamentarians who were beaten up by ruling party members calling for Kem Sokha's removal.

Democracy in Cambodia is more a turn of phrase than a reality. July 2013 elections were replete with error and voter fraud. Despite this, the 2013 elections were closer to an opposition victory than in a great many years. For months, the CNRP boycotted parliament, alleging vote-rigging on the part of the CPP and calling for a second, more credible inves-



tigation into election results.

Democracy in Cambodia is more a turn of phrase than a reality.

While the two parties did eventually reach an agreement in July 2014, and CNRP parliamentarians took their seats in parliament, the agreement was not ideal. Originally the CNRP had requested reform to the election oversight body, the National Election Committee (NEC); early elections in February 2016; and a television station for the CNRP. They were also looking for the release of political prisoners and a clean investigation into 2013 election results. The deal really only resulted in a promise of reform to the NEC. While the two parties undertook NEC and National Election Law reform, recent violence undermines progress.

These latest actions against Rainsy and Sokha, as well as the violence against CNRP parliamentarians, represent yet another step away from the inclusivity required to maintain a democratic framework in Cambodia. The U.S. Department of State has called upon the Cambodian government to immediately reinstate Rainsy and revoke the warrant for his arrest.

There are other steps that the international community can and should take. In 1991, the Paris Peace Accords, which were signed in the wake of the Khmer Rouge, obligated signatories to monitor and assist Cambodia in its adherence to democratic principles. Due to the significant decline in democratic freedoms in Cambodia (failure to hold free and fair 2013 elections, continued detention of political prisoners, violence against CNRP protesters post-2013 elections, and the targeting of high-level CNRP officials including Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha), the Paris Peace Accords signatories should form a contact group to evaluate the state of human rights and political and economic freedom in Cambodia, as well as provide assistance to ensure that Cambodia remains on a path to democracy.

The international community should closely watch Cambodia to see whether democracy continues to disintegrate. It is in the best interest of Southeast Asia and the international community that Cambodia adhere to democratic principles, especially as other historically repressive nations like Burma are turning from their wayward ways toward democracy.



Olivia Enos is an Asian Studies Center Research Associate within The Davis Institute for National Security, USA.

Getting a taste of forbidden fruit in the paradise - Seychelles

'The Story of the Coco De Mer'

Md. Amiruzzaman



In the 18th century (and in many preceding centuries) people used to find enormous Coco de Mer seeds (or 'nuts') washed up on the beaches of the Maldives islands in the Indian Ocean. All the washed up nuts immediately became the property of the sultan, who either sold them for a high price or gave them away as royal gifts.

No one knew where the Coco de Mer nuts came from. Local legend would have you believe that the nuts grew inside fruits which hung off trees growing on the bottom of the sea. When the fruits ripened they fell off the trees and rose to the surface.

Fishermen sometimes believed that they saw Coco de Mer fruits growing on trees on the sea bed. By the time they dived into the sea to investigate further the trees had mysteriously disappeared!

The mystery was finally solved in 1768 when French explorer Mr. Marion du Fresne discovered Coco de Mer nuts growing on dry land. He found them growing inside fruits of a previously unknown species of palm tree. This new species of palm (named the 'Coco de Mer') grew in isolated valleys on Praslin Island in the SEYCHELLES.

Botanists soon realized that all the giant nuts found washed up on beaches in the Maldives had actually grown on the Seychelles islands some 2130 kms (1324 miles) away!

COCO DE MER description

The awesome coco-de-mer (*Lodoicea maldivica*) is a giant of the plant world; this palm has some of the longest leaves and the largest and heaviest seeds of any plant in the world. The tall slender trunk may tower up to 34 metres in height, bearing at its crown a mass of palm fronds. In mature individuals the leaf blades may be 4.5 metres wide and are fringed at the edges; withered leaves hang from the palm below the vibrant, healthy green crown.

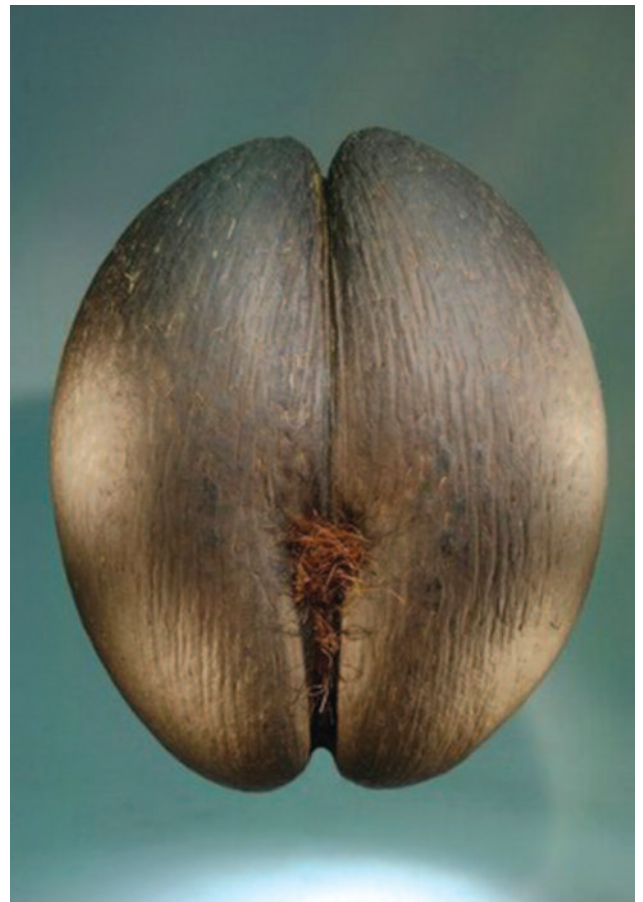
Unlike other Seychelles palms, the male and female flowers of the coco-de-mer are borne on separate trees; the male catkins can reach up to a metre in length, making them the longest in the world.

Fruits of coco de mer are developed only on female trees. Male trees have long phallic-looking catkins, both of these unusual, erotic shapes.

The seeds usually have two lobes and can weigh up to an enormous 30 kg. Coco de mer. Size/Height: up to 34 m, Leaf length: up to 10 m, fruits weight: 30kg

COCO DE MER biology

Coco-de-mer palms take 25 years to reach maturity and start bearing fruit, and the fruits themselves reach maturity after a further 7 years. Once fallen to the forest floor, the fruit wall disintegrates over 6 months and germination takes another 2 years. Coco-de-mer flowers are visited by a variety of different animals such as bees, slugs and geckos with pollination carried out by small insects such as flies.





Getting a Taste of Forbidden Fruit -

The few people that get to taste them usually describe a sweet earthy taste with a hint of citrus. The kernel of the coco de mer, which is the inner edible part of the nut, are normally thrown away in order to make the shell lighter to be sold as souvenirs to the many visitors to the Seychelles shores.

Despite not being commercially available in Seychelles over the years, the introduction of licenses have allowed for the dried kernel of coco de mer to be exported mainly to Asian countries like China where it is believed to have aphrodisiac properties.

COCO DE MER conservation

The Seychelles is a World Heritage Site, and a third of the area is now protected. The main populations of coco-de-mer palms are found within the Praslin and Curieuse National Parks), and the trade in nuts is controlled by the Coco-de-mer (Management) Decree of 1995. The sale of the fruits-though not the empty shells- is strictly prohibited by law, with the punishment of two years in prison and a \$800 fine for those that try. There are also strict laws governing the possession and distribution of the nuts.

Here to be mentioned that tourists need a special licence from Government to be carried from the island.



Md. Amiruzzaman, *Honorary Consul, Consulate of the Republic of Seychelles, Bangladesh.*



Vajramunee the Superhuman : A Body-Mind Miracle

"Body and mind are like you and your image in the mirror you move your body moves too."

Dr. Yuree Vajramunee



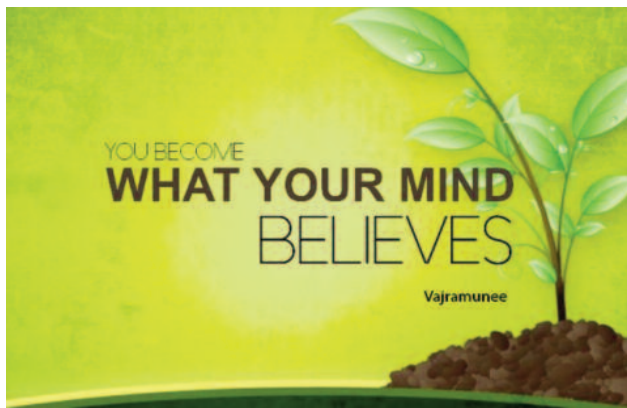
Dr. Yuree Vajramunee is an inspirational global icon in the field of psychophysical development, an International foremost authority in the field of Mind Training, Meditation and Art of Self-defence. Vajramunee the mystic was also selected and featured as one of the top five SUPERHUMAN of this planet by Discovery Channel. He is an author, philosopher and the founder of Butthan combat sports & Vajrapran meditative exercise system. His systems are based on ancient Indian sub-continental heritage aimed to obtain body-Mind balance, personal development rather human transformation through the systematic practice of breath control, meditation and so on. He is a multi world record holder and his 4th World Record is for the highest neuro-engagement ability (96%) in the world as confirmed by the scientific laboratory tests conducted by the team of scientists and experts. He advocates spiritual enlightenment through cultivating physical strength and mindfulness in balance. Dr. Yuree Vajramunee with his Supernatural ability is considered to be the strongest shin kicker of the World. He is also included in the famous archive of "Believe It or Not", USA. He created sensation as an author with his self help book "100 wisdom to change your life." To name few of his other upcoming books are like "Door To Infinity", "Five Spoon Sugar" and "Essence of Mastery" etc.

Vajramunee's guidance touched the millions of life across the globe. Dr. Yuree inspires and empowers for a life without medicine, pursuing psychophysical balance, behavior reconstruction and mind reprogramming to achieve positive goals as well as to embrace healing from past physical and mental traumas. Besides his research, counseling and teaching he speaks to multi national companies, governments, public officials, non-profit leaders, educational authorities etc. He searched out mentors and teachers from Himalayan Tibet to South India, from Myanmar to Swaziland, traveling to countless destinations in over fifty countries, in order to learn from the masters of the different arts, from different saints, shamans, gurus and sufi's, to continue to enrich his bag of knowledge. Although he has done a research and development and trained in over forty (40) different kinds of Combat Arts, his teachings put great weight on self-development and enlightenment.

Vajramunee teaches that body and mind are like two wings of a bird which need continued balance and equally strengths body and mind to achieve ultimate transformation of life. It can also help change the young generation and the social mind set. He advocates that to realize the gift of life one should enrich one's physical and mental development. Vajramunee thinks of a society rather the World with psychophysically empowered people to build a better world blessed with happy productive life with peace and brotherhood. Vajramunee's view, psychophysically empowered youth can build a non violent, healthy, positive thinking society with sustainable development. He emphasizes on leading a balanced life aligned with the mother nature and encourages to attain success in life besides attaining spiritual austerity. Vajramunee also believes human life is actually a priceless gift full of joy and setting the YOG Chetana (Plus thinking mindset) that can open the door to everyone.

It is a Sanskrit word that means up-liftment or defense with distinction. Butthan is a system of self defense and personal development with South Asian heritage. Butthan is also a combat Sports practiced in different parts of the world and included as a form of sports approved by National Sports Council (NSC). Ministry of Youth and Sports, Bangladesh. This combat sports besides Butthan is also known as a meditation system. Yuree Vajramunee is the founder of Butthan Meditation and Butthan Martial Art system aimed at human transformation. The three pillars of Butthan are Sports, Self-defence and well-being and Butthanchariya's (Butthan Practitioner) life forms a triangle with Sadhana (Endeavour), Praggya (Wisdom) and Saggya (Intuition) and the International Butthan Federation (IBUF), promotes this sports worldwide. On the other hand, Vajrapran which means Life force or the art of rejuvenating life. Mainly two types of Vajrapran are practiced like Sthir Vajrapran (Static Exercise) &





example for others and help in need specially the frail and weak (8) Butthan system for attaining special accomplishments rather escalating self with continued inspiration to unlock potentials to pick. (9) Butthan to attain the light of (Purno Gyana) omniscience.

Dr. Yuree is a ten (10th) degree Black Belt & Professor in Martial science. He is also credited for the research over the decades to revive the historical linkage of Kanchipuram India and Shaolin temple ,China - a contribution to global Martial Art development. He is the official successor of the Grand Master Khin Maung Gyi (President South East Asia Bando Association), Myanmar and blessed by late Grand Master Shi De Qian, the 31st head abbot of historical Shaolin Temple, China.

Vajramunee was born in Dhaka in the capital of Bangladesh and after his birth Vajramunee Yuree was named Yuree after the name of the Soviet cosmonaut, the first human to the journey of outer space, Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin. His early childhood education began in a British missionary school. (Elizabeth marble primary school), when he was in class five, he started a club on physical training with his fellow and junior friends. Later that time he wrote small book on physical training (handwritten manual) and distributed to all of his friends and all. He started to learn Burmese Bando and Minzing (mind training system & energy healing from Myanmar later he was admitted in to Jhenidah cadet college (military feeder institution) and grew up in the midst of iron discipline and the regimental grooming. When he was in standard nine, he formed a society called 'self defence society' where he taught self defence, yoga and meditation. Later he was selected as a distinguished color party member and national flag bearer leading the march past during all ceremonial parades. His special hobby was spending time in library exploring different types of books on physiology, mind training, yoga, military drills and exercises etc.

Professionally Mak Yuree Vajramunee started his career as a master defensives tactics trainer to different government ,military, intelligence agencies. He completed his commission officers course from National Security Academy (NSA), USA and got his SIA -3 qualification (highest degree in close protection) from New Swindon College , under Home office UK. Besides his certification on explosive search recognition, fire marshal, anti terrorist course ,first aid at work, aviation security , bank security , high raised building security and others he also owns a business enterprise security management and training sector .

He was also honoured with World's five major hall of fame awards including the " Grand Master Pinnacle award, USA" in 2009 by the Grandmaster's council USA. Today he is promoting Butthan to revive the lost heritage of South Asia and to empower youth groups globally.



Dr. Yuree Vajramunee, Founder, World Butthan Foundation, Vajrapran Mind Training Institute and International Butthan Federation (IBUF).

Iran and the Arab World after the Nuclear Deal

Rivalry and Engagement in a New Era

Payam Mohseni



The recent nuclear agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 in Vienna, or the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" (JCPOA), is an historic agreement which is consequential not only for international security and nuclear proliferation but for Iran and the broader Middle East as a whole. In particular, one of the key arenas that the agreement will impact is Iran-Arab world security relations and, at its center, the Iran-Saudi cold war. Spawning regional conflicts and proxy wars from Yemen to Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, the confrontation between these two regional powers serves as the geopolitical and security background upon which the nuclear deal was forged. How this cold war proceeds-whether or not it is effectively managed and resolved, or how it escalates-will largely

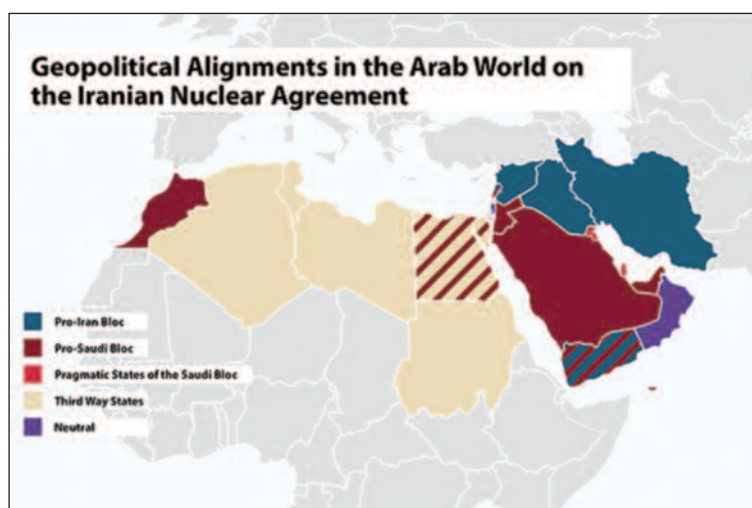
determine the security dynamics and landscape of the Middle East for years to come.

As a potential catalyst for further diplomatic means of conflict resolution, the comprehensive agreement provides a unique opportunity to seriously engage Iran and possibly alleviate these tensions, especially if it leads to Iranian rehabilitation within the formal security architecture of the Middle East. In this light, President Obama's call for a "practical conversation" between Iran and Arab states is an important step towards resolving the conflicts enflaming the region. Addressing the sectarian dynamics of the conflict, Obama recently stated that the best opportunity for "reducing the scope of those conflicts is for the Saudis and other Sunni states or Arab states to be at least in a practical conversation with Iran that says, 'The conflict we are fanning right now could engulf us all in flames.'" Moreover, signaling a possible shift in U.S. policy towards its Arab partners, the President emphasized that "America has to listen to our Sunni Arab allies, but also not fall into the trap of letting them blame every problem on Iran. The citizens of more than a few Arab Gulf states have been big contributors to Sunni jihadist movements that have been equally destabilizing."

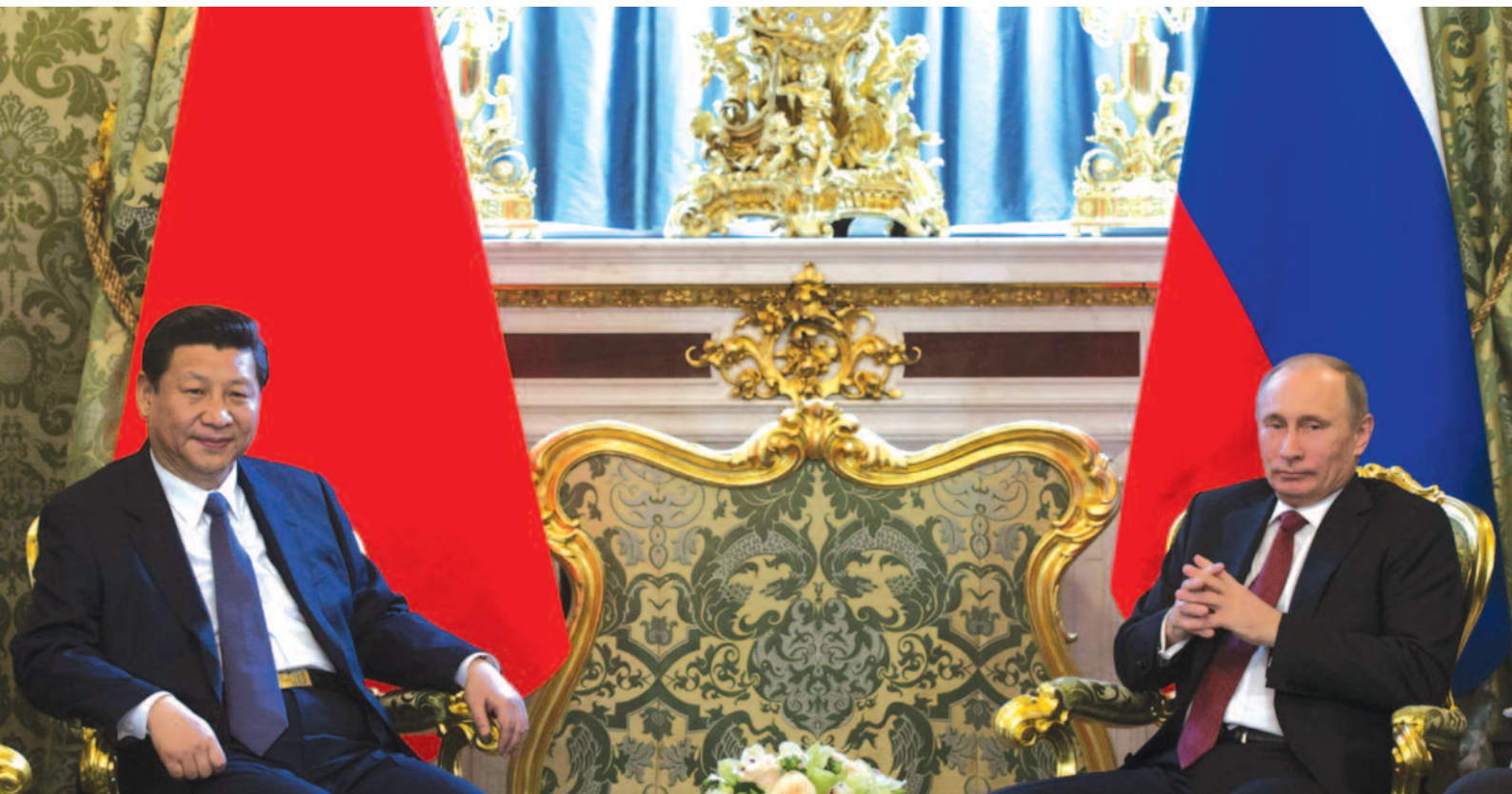
Echoing these sentiments in a letter to the Lebanese daily, al-Safir, addressing the Arab world, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif warned of the shared security threats that confronted all Middle Eastern states alike: "it is incumbent upon us all to accept the reality that the age of scheming has long passed and that we are all together winners or we are all together losers. Thus lasting peace cannot be actualized with an assault on others' security, and it is not possible for any peoples to actualize their interests without taking into consideration the interests of others." In the same letter, Zarif proposed establishing regional talks for a peaceful resolution of violent conflict in the region. The Iranian Foreign Minister's statements were all the more significant as they were orchestrated with his tour of Kuwait, Qatar, and Iraq following the conclusion of the comprehensive nuclear agreement, thus signaling Iran's renewed focus on its immediate neighbors and its commitment to diplomacy.

Given the significant ramifications that these openings may herald for the future of Iran-Arab world ties, it is more important than ever to engage and analyze viewpoints from scholars and analysts based in the region on the future of Iran's role in the Middle East and Arab security.

Payam Mohseni, *Director of Iran Project and Fellow of Iran Studies, USA.*



Russia-China Partnership Plays Key Role in Establishing New World Order



Chinese President Xi Jinping (L) and Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin.

Since 2008, international relations has witnessed various events that have put an end to the unipolar world.

Chinese political analyst Zheng Yu writes, "This unipolar world suffered greatly due to the economic crisis, after which Washington lost much of its influence. Nevertheless, economic problems affected many other countries making them realize that cooperation is vital to accelerate the growth of economy." The authority of these emerging economies is growing stronger while the influence of the 'Big Seven' is plummeting.

A researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Zheng Yu, wrote for the Chinese Global Times saying that cooperation between Russia and China is now playing a key role in establishing a new world order.

The alliance between Russia and China is the 'binding force' in a number of international and regional organizations such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This kind of cooperation will help Beijing and Moscow enhance and strengthen their influence, both on the international arena as well as in Central Asia.

In this region, the interests of Russia and China intersect so the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, which was initiated by Moscow and through the Chinese strategy of the 'New Silk Road' are all very promising steps.

The visit of Chinese President, Xi Jinping, to Russia in May, 2015 showed that the relations between the two countries have now reached an "unprecedented level." This means that under the right circumstances, the promise of friendship between Moscow and Beijing will help not only them but also contribute to the prosperity and the "harmonious development" of the world as a whole.



Source: *Sputnik*

Factsheet | Middle East

Country	Capital	Land Area* (sq km)	Population 2015 **	Population growth rate 2015 (%)**	Sex ratio - m/f (2015 est.)****	Life expectancy at birth -years (2015 est.)*****	Nationality*	Languages*	Literacy Rate 2015***	GDP Real Growth Rate 2014 (%)*****	Population below poverty line *****
Bahrain	Manama	665	1,377,237	1.4125	1.54	78.73	Bahraini(s)	Arabic, English, Farsi, Urdu	95.4	4.50	N/A
Cyprus	Nicosia	9,250	1,165,300	0.9649	1.04	78.51	Cypriot(s)	Greek, Turkish, English	99.1	-2.30	N/A
Egypt	Cairo	1,001,450	91,508,084	2.0288	1.02	73.70	Egyptian(s)	Arabic (official), English, French	73.8	2.20	25.2 (2011)
Iran	Tehran	1,648,195	79,109,272	1.1736	1.03	71.15	Iranian(s)	Persian Turkic	90.6	4.30	N/A
Iraq	Baghdad	437,072	36,423,395	3.04	1.02	71.15	Iraqi(s)	Arabic, Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian	79.5	-2.10	18.9 (2012)
Israel	Jerusalem	20,770	8,064,036	1.58	1.01	82.27	Israeli(s)	Hebrew (official), Arabic (Arab minority), English	100 (2011)	2.60	N/A
Jordan	Amman	92,300	7,594,547	1.9978	1.02	74.35	Jordanian(s)	Arabic (official), English	94.5	3.10	14.4 (2010)
Kuwait	Kuwait City	17,820	3,892,115	2.9127	1.41	77.82	Kuwaiti(s)	Arabic (official), English	95.6	0.10	N/A
Lebanon	Beirut	10,400	5,850,743	2.3214	1	77.40	Lebanese	Arabic (official), French, English, Armenian	93.9	2.00	N/A
Oman	Muscat	212,460	4,490,541	3.5855	1.2	75.21	Omani(s)	Arabic (official), English, Baluchi, Urdu, Indian dialects	87.8	2.90	N/A
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	1,960,582	31,540,372	1.9392	1.19	75.05	Saudi(s)	Arabic	89.3	3.50	N/A
State of Palestine	Gaza Strip West Bank	6,220	4,668,465	2.721	1.04	74.87	Palestinian	Arabic, Hebrew , English	96.2	-15.00	25.8 (2011)
					1.04	75.91				0.50	
Syrian Arab Republic	Damascus	185,180	18,502,413	0.3301	1.01	74.69	Syrian(s)	Arabic (official); Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian; French	86.3	-2.30 (2011 est.)	35.2 (2007)
Qatar	Doha	11,437	2,235,355	2.4749	3.39	78.59	Qatari(s)	Arabic (official), English	96.6	4.00	N/A
Turkey	Ankara	783,562	78,665,830	1.2082	1.01	74.57	Turk(s)	Turkish (official), Kurdish, Arabic, Armenian, Greek	95.5	2.90	2.3 (2012)
United Arab Emirates	Abu Dhabi	82,880	9,156,963	1.1942	2.18	77.29	Emirati(s)	Arabic (official), Persian, English, Hindi, Urdu	92.8	2.40	N/A
Yemen	Sana'a	527,968	26,832,215	2.3768	1.03	65.18	Yemeni(s)	Arabic	70.2	-0.20	34.8 (2005)

*http://geography.about.com** World Population Review *** UIS Estimation, UNESCO ****The World Factbook, CIA *****UN Data

Rising Asia



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